

*Rachel's Light Spring 2024*

# NEWSLETTER

Rachel's Light instills faith and empowers women experiencing homelessness to become self-sufficient by utilizing a strength based approach.



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## Executive Director's Letter / Amanda Starks



Greetings,

As we enter a new year, one can't help but reflect on the prior year as an organization; the growth, the challenges, the setbacks, and most importantly, the successes. Rachel's Light has been operational for more than four years now, thanks to the tremendous support that we continue to receive from the community and surrounding area. When thinking back on the last four years, the key words below represent the years we have advanced as an organization.

1. *Resilience.* When a shelter opens, there is no magical book to guide the operations to it, or warn of the challenges that will arise. I often refer to us as the gray area. We learned very quickly that there is not a "one size fits all" to remedy the situations we face on a daily basis. As people are unique in their own way, as you and I walk different paths of life, people also require outcomes to fit their needs, obstacles and successes. Many women who are guests have run out of resources when they arrive at the shelter, and have no other option than to be strong and resilient, whether it be for themselves or their families. It's crucial to allow the first month of their arrival to be a time of rest and reset while allowing the resilience and strength to do its thing. From an organizational standpoint, we can relate to these sentiments. Shortly after opening our own doors, COVID-19 swept through, seeding worry through guests, staff and the board. Safety was the top concern; how do we keep everyone safe and healthy? Funding was also on people's minds- in the business world we were in our infancy, how were we going to remain open? Fears and doubts can be paralyzing, but we had to model what we stood for- believe in ourselves; carry out the mission, do the work, and trust that God will provide and do his part. And that's what HE did.
2. *Support.* There was no denying that the strength of this organization was fueled by the support of our community. People continuously show up (for us), through giving of their time, acts of service, tangible donations, and in big ways like when the St. Paul Lutheran Church decreased our rent and offered to help. We're grateful for each monetary donation made, as this is how we stay open, and operate. Community awareness has started to show strides this past year by various organized groups putting forth efforts in raising money for us, including fun events that we were honored to be included in their occasion! There is no greater compliment than knowing your community stands with your mission and organization.
3. *Growth.* Through resilience and support there are opportunities of growth. As an organization we have created practices and policies proven to provide a thriving, positive environment. We see this play out when women and children enter our home. Women come to Rachel's Light without hope and who have lost vision, support, and need help. We guide them into taking baby steps forward, and can see when and where individual growth happens organically. It is incredibly hard work tackling barriers that have paralyzed the past, yet we assure guests they are not fighting alone. As an organization, we continuously look for ways to grow, collaborate, and serve at a larger capacity. We continue to utilize partner programs and organizations in the community to support our residents' growth. We are better when we join efforts and strengthen our organization when we can work together.
4. *Change.* With growth comes change, and change can feel uncomfortable. Humans fear the unknown and find comfort in what is identified as normal. We see this in our residents, too. Providing a safe, stable, non-judgmental space consistently helps eliminate the toxicity and fears that can arise from previous barriers. Through the years we have worked on fine-tuning the programming we offer, and

connecting with community providers to be culturally relevant and accessible. Community partnerships, conversations and collaboration have led to the potential for growth, expansion, and serving residents who we would not be able to serve in our current location due to capacity restraints, transportation hindrances and other issues. Allowing families to be in a centralized location, together, enriches all our community resources. We see the need, gaps, and are confident that together we can serve at a larger capacity to bring value to this much needed space. As always, we thank you, our community, for standing with us as we continue to put forth efforts towards ending the cycle of homelessness.

Love & Blessings,

Amanda Starks

### *Employee Spotlight: Tara Curl*

Meet Tara Curl a past resident, and now a part-time guest advocate

**What made you want to work for Rachel's Light?**

I think it's a caring and wonderful place to get a second start and I think everyone is on board with trying to improve. Even working at Rachel's Light helps us become better, the blessing is a mutual thing.

**Has your perspective changed since living at Rachel's Light versus working here?**

I think that Rachel's Light is even better. It's a wonderful place to work. Every day when I work there it just makes me feel good. I feel happy there and I'd love to learn more, help more, and improve.

**How would you describe the Rachel's Light environment?**

Caring. It seems like as soon as someone comes in, we are there to do whatever we can to make it feel like a home to them. For example, a new resident was crying, and when I asked her what was wrong she said she's just happy to be here and have a place to stay, which in return made feel good and like I'm doing something and giving back, especially in a world that seems so negative.

There will always be some bumps in the road but the good that we experience daily makes the bumps look like nothing. **Thank you, Tara!**

## Upcoming Events

Celebrate Ending Homelessness - One Woman at a Time  
**Brunch** - May 4, 2024 - Torey's Restaurant in Owatonna, MN

Rachel's Ride - June 22, 2024 - Details coming soon!

## 2023 Statistics

Total referrals: 156

We housed 89% of the residents that were in our shelter. Some guests were referred to other resources.

100% have remained housed.

*At a 6 month check-in throughout 2023 from past guests:*

80% remained sober | 100% remained connected to mental health | 100% were still receiving income (employed and/or supplemental)

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## Spring Wish List

**We are in need of the following items to keep our home running smoothly. Contact us before you come as our drop off location has recently changed. Thank you!**

Questions can be directed to [donate2rachelslight@gmail.com](mailto:donate2rachelslight@gmail.com)

Kwik Trip Gas cards	New/gently used sheet sets (twin,queen size)
Pots and Pans (new/gently used)	Clorox Wipes
Silverware, sharp knives (New gently used)	Bleach
Toothpaste (Kids/Adults)	Zip lock baggies (all sizes)
Toothbrushes (Kids/Adults)	Paper Towels
Brush/Combs (New)	Toilet Paper
Tampons	Laundry Soap
Pads	Dryer Sheets
Shavers	Toilet Bowl Cleaner
Kleenex	Floor Cleaner
shampoo/conditioner	Postage Stamps
Baby Wash	Cork board (new)
Baby Lotion	3M Strips
Body wash	Copy Paper
Fitted mattress covers New	Deodorant (mens/womens)
New Socks (Kids/Adults)	Disinfectant Cleaner
New Underwear (Kids/Adults)	Affresh washer cleaner
Bras (all sizes)	Printer-Ink Cartridges #952 Color #952xl Black
Softener salt	Shower curtains (new/gently used)
Furnace Filters - Sz 20x25x1	13 gallon trash cans (new) and garbage bags
Small garbage cans for guest bedrooms	Small lamps for bedrooms
Vacuum (NEW)	Clear totes w/lids (Small)
Gift cards (Fleet Farm, Kwik Trip, Walmart, Target etc.	

# Volunteer | Ways to Support Rachel's Light | Contact Us

## Volunteer Spotlight: Dawn Rud

**We thank you for your time and all that you have done for us as an organization - What does being a volunteer mean to you?** Volunteering with Rachel's Light is very important to me as I strongly believe in all the help they give to the women and children in our community. I believe Rachel's Light is truly a light in our community.

**What made you choose Rachel's Light when deciding to volunteer?** I chose Rachel's Light because I believe they make a difference and the committee and house workers have a heart of gold.

**What is one of your best memories of volunteering with Rachel's Light?** My biggest memory would probably be the first soup supper I volunteered at that was at Good Shepherd, I felt like this was such an eye opening experience for our community to learn that this is such a huge need and also see what great things have been done with such beautiful women.



**What would you tell others who may be considering becoming a volunteer (For Rachel's Light?)** To me, it's doing the right thing, I'm simply giving my time in a way that I can because we always should help others when we can. To me, God has called me to serve whenever I can.

*Want to volunteer or serve on our board? We're looking for a treasurer! Please contact [volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com](mailto:volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com)*

### *Here are three ways to support Rachel's Light:*

- Attend an upcoming event. We love meeting you and connecting with the community!
- Buy a t-Shirt and/or sweatshirt from our [secure web store](#) partnership with Court Sports. Visit the website to see and shop different garments displaying our name and logo on the front with our mission on the back.
- Visit our website at [www.rachelslight.com](http://www.rachelslight.com), to stay updated on all the latest events, needs, and activities in our busy home!

## Contact Us

Email Rachel's Light at [RachelsLight55060@gmail.com](mailto:RachelsLight55060@gmail.com) for general inquiries

Volunteer related: [Volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com](mailto:Volunteer4rachelslight@gmail.com)

