



October Newsletter

Executive Director Update:



Greetings,

Wow, what a year we have encountered personally, and as a community. When I reflect on this year and compare it to the work we do, day in and day out, one thing continues to come to mind- Sudden change. Most of us can agree that our worlds were impacted in the blink of an eye this year, and it was almost immediate how fast our ways of life changed. This type of sudden change, unfortunately, is not foreign to the women and children here at Rachel's Light. The ability to keep moving, and to get up each and every day when the path remains unclear deserves a badge of bravery and honor, in my opinion. I do believe we can learn a lot from these women- they stand tall when their whole world is crumbling, they allow us to support and love them when trust remains an obstacle, and they keep moving even when the cards are stacked against them. Are there hard days? Yes! But love continues to win and shine through as we stay committed to *bringing the homeless home*.

When COVID-19 hit we knew that our job would be essential, and as the financial impact started to set in the homeless population started to grow. Without hesitation we remained open to serve our community during this time of need. Our organization continues to check in with public health and follow all necessary protocols to ensure the safety of our guests and staff. With these procedures and policies in place, and your continued prayers, we have been able to keep Rachel's Light COVID free.

During COVID we have helped 5 women, who have not had a job in 2-3 years, find and sustain employment. Additionally, three beautiful babies were born while residing here at Rachel's Light, with the support of our staff standing by the mother's side being birthing coaches. Although resources are much harder to access during this time, we have found ways to navigate through and we continue to stay committed in finding ways to provide support to our residents to help them reach their goals. The family environment we have created here has fueled the success of Rachel's Light. This is not limited to just staff and our amazing hands on The Board, but it also includes you as our community family. We are beyond grateful and appreciative in all the ways you continue to show up and support our mission- Without your continued support we would not be successful as an organization.

There have been a few emergency grants that we have applied for and have been awarded directly correlated to COVID. These grants include, Otto Bremer Trust, Heading Home Minnesota, United Way Emergency Food and Shelter grant, and Paycheck Protection Program. We are extremely grateful for the support that we received to help us during this difficult time.

We are proud to announce that we hit our 1-year anniversary of being open on September 9th, 2020. In one year, we have sheltered a total of 46 guests, 23 children and 23 women. Of the 46, 32 have found permanent housing and 100% have remained in permanent housing. We have also developed a mentorship program to provide guests continual support during the different transitional phases. These numbers speak loud to us and we are excited to watch them continue to grow, as we stay committed to providing love, support, and growth.

Again, a huge thank you to all who continue to support us. One thing that continues to remain consistent- our community stands with us united, because together is better and so much stronger, and for that we will be forever grateful.

I hope this letter finds you well.

Love and blessings,

Amanda Starks

Executive Director

A Success Story



Payton's Story

My Journey

My story is not that different than the women who live at Rachel's Light. It is a story of shame, fear, loneliness that turns into strength, faith, and hope. It is a story of getting my relationship with God right. It was work and at first it was hard to give it to God and trust that the relationship would carry me through.

I was born to a mother who was addicted to methamphetamines. She could not take care of me and my brother. I assumed the role of my brother's keeper. It was not always easy getting him ready for school and ensuring he had supper. We were in and out of foster care growing up. One of my earliest memories was of an orphanage where nuns tried hard to take care of us and love us, but all I wanted was to be back home with my mother. No matter how emotionally abusive my mother was; as a child it was important for me to be with my mother.

I was in and out of foster care until I was about 14 or 15 years old. I left foster care and moved in with a friend where I met my son's father. I became pregnant at seventeen, so I decided to get my GED instead of graduating high school. My son's father was abusive. He would have parties, do drugs, and control me. He did not want me to have a job or a vehicle. I planned to leave him, but I did not have anyone to support me, so I went back to my mother's. Things did not go well there; more of

the same problems. I returned to my son's father under the condition he would let me get a job. I saved for my own place and eventually left him.

Things were on track for the first time in my life. I was working and going to college online. It was hard to work, studying and take care of my son on my own, but I was doing it. I was on my way, and then tragedy hit, my step-brother was murdered. He was beaten and shot and I had no idea why. Law enforcement never found out resolved the case. I could not cope with this and I returned to using substances. I found out I could make more money selling drugs then working my PCA job. In some ways, it was easier to sell drugs then it was to manage working, daycare, and going to college. I got pregnant again and was expecting a little girl.

Child protection became involved after I was pulled over by law enforcement and they found a pill on me. My children went to live with family and this loss made it difficult for me; I dove deeper into the drug world. I had several bad relationships, another pregnancy, many more drug charges. I went to Teen Challenge and stayed for 45 days and then because I had no support on the outside I went back to living with my mother. I was lonely and felt I did not want to be a mother. My children were living with family and I was not living my life the way God had intended.

I went to jail and from jail I went to Teen Challenge and this time I stayed for a longtime. I was pregnant again and needed to be able to take care of my child, so staying sober was going to be an important part of recovery. There are so many things that came to light when I was at Teen Challenge. I learned that I needed support and that I can not do it on my own. I learned that I needed others and that there were people who would support me that did not include my parents. Teen Challenge made me focus on my relationship with God. When I spent time working on my relationship with God everything fell into place.

I came to Rachel's Light after I left Teen Challenge. For the first time in my life, I left treatment and went to a supportive home. The staff at Rachel's Light taught me to cope with the shame I was feeling. I learned to trust others and be open about how I was feeling and my worries. They supported me and encouraged me to maintain my sobriety. They drove me to my support groups, bible study, and helped me find my own apartment. They helped me cope with the worries of CPS taking my new baby. The staff at Rachel's Light stayed with me when I delivered my baby and helped me make sure I was going to be the kind of mother my baby needs – sober, joyful, happy, and for the first time experiencing hope. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to be a part of the Rachel's Light family.

Please Join Us for Our Open Table Event



November 14th 4-7pm
Trinity Lutheran Church
609 Lincoln Ave. S.
Owatonna, MN 55060

This year our Open Table Event will look a little different in an effort to keep everyone safe due to COVID 19. We still hope that you will join us for a drive up soup dinner at Trinity Lutheran Church. We will be serving Chicken Noodle Soup or Chili. This year the soup will be served cold along with fresh bread, a cookie, and coffee provided by Straight River Coffee. Please watch for signs directing you to where you will be invited to order and we will meet you carside with your order.

To learn more about Rachel's Light please join us in watching a recorded program on our social media sites and our website.

We appreciate your continued support during these uncertain times and pray blessings of good health on all families.

Love and Light,

Rachel's Light Board of Directors

Rachel's Light Needs:

Whether we like it or not, winter is coming and we're preparing at Rachel's Light. We are in need of the following items:

Women's stocking hats, gloves, and mittens

Women's winter boots size 7.5 or 8 (2 pairs) and size 10

Leggings size XL

T Shirts size XL

Hooded zip up sweatshirts size 2x

All purpose cleaner

Toilet bowl cleaner

Dry swiffer cloths

Quart sized freezer and storage bags

Small vacuum

Bed pillows

Size 2 diaper

Please email our donation coordinators to arrange for pick up of donations or to ask questions:

Sarah Buttera

psbuttera@gmail.com

Jolene Balvitsch

wholebodymindspirit@gmail.com

We also can use gift cards to grocery stores and gas stations to help us bring guests to appointments and pay for food items.

Monetary donations are always helpful for us to pay our rent, utilities and staffing costs. Operating costs at Rachel's Light equal \$415 per day. We are a 501(c)3 organization, so your donation will be 100% tax deductible. If you are interested in becoming a monthly donor we can send/email you an automatic withdrawal form.

You can send donations to:

P.O. Box 118

Owatonna, MN 55060

Or click our donate button on our website: www.rachelslight.com

Or find us on Venmo @Rachel-Light-14



We are also looking for community members to join us in *bringing the homeless home* by becoming board members (secretary and communication chair), committee members, volunteers or mentors to our guests. If interested please email our volunteer coordinator Ashlan Zurbriggen: ashlan.carnel@gmail.com

Follow us on our social media pages for updates:



