



BUFFALO, NY, September 26, 2022 – The Board of Directors of Lutheran Charities of WNY announces that Melanie Rushforth will be Lutheran Charities of WNY’s next Chief Executive Officer. Rushforth succeeds Thomas Madden after 8 years of dedicated service and begins her duties immediately.

Rushforth brings to the role a wealth of experience in the nonprofit sector, along with over 25 years of serving in community and volunteer leadership roles. During her career, Rushforth led community initiatives that developed relationships among federal and statewide government, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations that led to the investment of millions of dollars in philanthropic support to strengthen networks, safety net systems, and services to families in need of assistance. Melanie’s skillset and drive will align well with Lutheran Charities of WNY’s history of supporting regional social services centered around education, healthcare, and social support.

Rushforth returned to the WNY area from the Pacific Northwest in mid-2020 to serve as the Vice President of the SPCA Serving Erie County. Previously, she held the position of Executive Director of Washington State’s largest nonprofit, limited-service veterinary hospital, Northwest Spay and Neuter Center. Prior to taking on leadership roles in the animal welfare industry, Rushforth served as the Executive Director of the Combined Federal Campaign of the South Puget Sound. Prior to entering the nonprofit sector, Melanie served honorably in the United States Army.

Lutheran Charities of WNY’s rich history of supporting partners and mobilizing resources requires a leader with an eye for strategy, a commitment to collaboration, as well as a deep love for the Western New York community. With a track record of successful collaborative partnerships, the Board of Directors is confident that Melanie will remain strategic while improving sustainability with the overall goal of helping more organizations do great work in the community.

Beyond her work, Rushforth currently serves as Co-President for the Rotary Club of Buffalo-Sunrise. Melanie has been recognized as a 40-under-40 recipient in 2010 and a Puget Sound Woman of Influence. Melanie has served as the President of The Children’s Fund and is a founding member of the Pet Alliance of Washington. Melanie is also the creator of the Tacoma City Kid’s Marathon, a prevention-focused health initiative for school-aged children. She is an avid runner and is preparing for the November 6th NYC Marathon, running in support of NY-based charity, Team for Kids. Upon her return to WNY, Melanie settled in the beach community of Evans NY. She has one adult son.

A WNY native, Rushforth holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology along with an undergraduate degree in Human Services Management. She looks forward to future collaboration amongst the ecumenical and secular communities that make the Western NY region the true City of Good Neighbors. With a passion for cultivating a culture of compassion, Melanie is eager to lean in, inspire, and contribute to the living legacy that is Lutheran Charities of WNY.