

redeemer center for life

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

Decades of Leadership

Pastor Kelly's Retirement as Executive Director

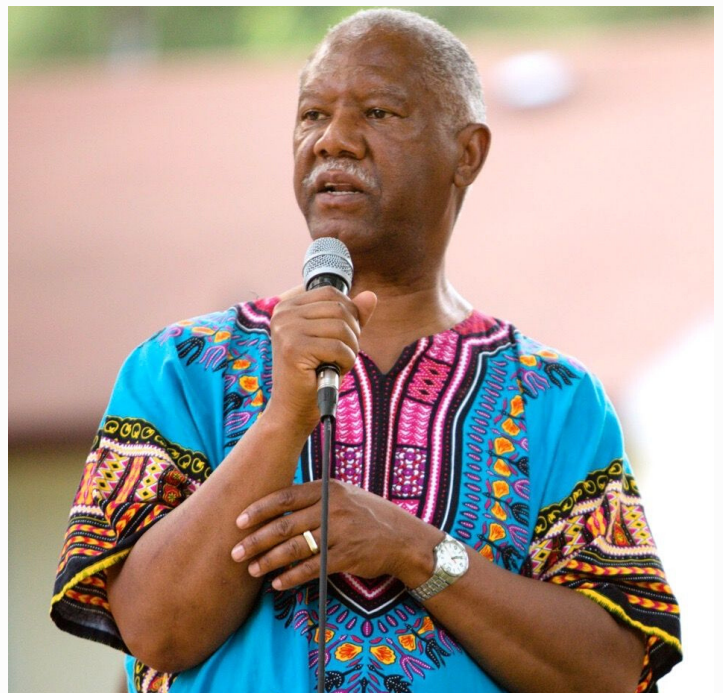
PK sat down with Becca Sandness, RCFL's Administrative Assistant, and discussed his experience leading RCFL for the past 20 years.

Becca: How would you describe your leadership style and how does that work for you?

PK: My leadership style is built on vision as opposed to management. Leadership is driven by values and mission. My desire is to take us beyond what is established to what I hope are new possibilities -- things like racial equity and gender equity. Rules tend to support the status quo and I don't want to live or work for the status quo. As an African American who lives predominantly in White spaces, I need more than just fitting in to their established ways or cultures. I need to be able to bring myself fully into that and more importantly, I need to create spaces for others who follow me. That way they will be able to fit into that space without necessarily struggling with what I struggled with to have a voice. I want more for not just me, but for our world. I want more for other people.

Becca: What is your favorite aspect of working at RCFL?

PK: I love so many things about Redeemer. The community, the space to do things I didn't think I could, and working with young leaders whose impact will stretch into the community. A wonderful honor for me is working with young leaders. I think they are really gifted and well-equipped for the world of work AND able to wrestle with values to incorporate into the broader community.



PK speaking at the Block Party 2014

Becca: What memorable stories would you say epitomize your time at RCFL?

PK: The Glenwood House is a memorable milestone from my time at RCFL. It was not planned and not popular. I had to take my own initiative and break the rules. By the time I'd gone through the process of asking for permission, the house would have been resold. I saw it as an embodiment of our mission and couldn't pass up this opportunity. Also, I remember when the kids would come in for youth programs and my office would be littered with coats. It was as if Redeemer were their home and the act of throwing their coats down, like one would at home, shows they are so comfortable and safe in that space. They were simply being kids.

Becca: What will you miss about working at RCFL?

PK: I will miss most of all the people, staff, the challenge of making things happen, problem solving, believing that anything is possible, and doing that with a community of people that are invested and committed to making a difference. There's so much about what's wrong in the world and about the challenges that we live in everyday, but the opportunity to actually do something about it with really gifted, talented and committed people that invest themselves in making it happen is special. From the very beginning, even before I stepped foot at RCFL, it seemed in the news, media and broader White community that the stigma and dominant message of North Minneapolis is that it's lesser than a community. This is a lie, but it's a lie that's perpetuated out of racism and bad messaging. I didn't believe that and having an opportunity to demystify that and celebrate North Minneapolis through Redeemer has been a blessing. Moving from the negativity and stigma to a new narrative that is positive and celebrative is something I'll miss doing with the anchors of housing, youth, and employment to be a beacon of hope in the neighborhood.

Becca: Thank you so much for your time and work put into RCFL. You leave big shoes to fill!

Welcome Veronica Hawman!

New RCFL Executive Director



New Executive Director, Veronica Hawman

Redeemer Center for Life is thrilled to introduce our next Executive Director: Veronica Hawman! Veronica has spent her career working in nonprofit development. Earning her bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota and her Master's of Nonprofit Management degree from Hamline University, Veronica is an experienced and skilled leader and fundraiser who is passionate about racial justice. We are so excited to have her at RCFL!

We had the opportunity to chat with Veronica about her upcoming role as ED with RCFL.

Here's what she had to say:

Bex: I know this is a daunting question, but who are you?

Veronica: I am a Minnesotan who loves warm weather and the summertime. I like being busy and doing meaningful work with others, whether that is in my professional or personal time. I am very involved with my church and, at heart, I'm an artist. I originally wanted to be an architect and I still draw to relax as well as play the piano. I love music, traveling, and being around friends and family.

Bex: Very cool! Would you say being an artist impacts your professional work?

Veronica: I think that being an artist has influenced me professionally because working in the nonprofit sector requires creativity and the ability to interpret the world as it is and interpret for others. And being an artist requires you to work within constraints, like time, resources, or space, which is also true professionally in the nonprofit sector. We have limited resources and have to solve issues creatively.

Bex: That makes a lot of sense! In addition to your creativity, how would you describe your leadership style?

Veronica: My leadership style is very teamwork-based. I like to bring everyone along in the process. I like to get to know people and make sure everyone is okay with what we're doing and onboard with our decisions. Naturally, I am a coach and a leader and I'm comfortable in that space. Outside of work, I often end up leading projects.

Bex: As a staff member at RCFL, I'm excited to experience your collaborative leadership style and learn from your mentorship. Beyond staff support, what are you hoping to bring to RCFL?

Veronica: My dream as an outsider coming in -- which will change once I get into the thick of things -- is to tell everyone about the work we do. It is unique that RCFL answers the call from the neighborhood and is so rooted in the community. As an organization, RCFL doesn't do the work that we think should be done; RCFL does the work that the neighborhood says needs to be done. That's a story I want to tell because I believe that if people knew about that, they would want to come along with us. Learn with us. Support us. I see the great work that's already been done at RCFL, so I want to build on our foundation to take it to the next level.

Bex: I resonate with what you're saying. One thing I love about working at RCFL is that we flip the traditional nonprofit model on its head to center the neighborhood and our community's needs. Another related question: obviously, RCFL works for racial justice in North Minneapolis. How would you describe what drives your commitment to racial justice?

Veronica: I am an African American woman, born and raised in Minnesota, so I lived and grew up in a place of injustice. In 2020, we have opportunities to make change, so I don't want to waste this opportunity that I have. I don't want to sit in a corner and leave it to someone else. If I'm able to do something, I'm going to do it. As a Black woman, racial injustice is not something I can escape. Even if everything is fine for me on any particular day, it's not going to be fine for someone else. We all have to stand up for each other.

Bex: Absolutely. Thank you for sharing. Switching gears, what's your connection to North Minneapolis?

Veronica: Growing up, I went to the Glendale SDA Church a few blocks away. As an adult, I worked at Urban Homeworks, another nonprofit in North Minneapolis. I still haven't wrapped my head around all the changes in Harrison since I was a kid. The neighborhood felt more residential then. I feel very comfortable in North Minneapolis. Neighborhoods -- like North Minneapolis or where I live in East St. Paul -- get labeled as "bad neighborhoods," but once you get there it's fine. Of course, all neighborhoods have good and bad. But there is a huge difference between how North Minneapolis is portrayed and how it actually is.

Bex: We're extremely excited to have you and your leadership. Thank you so much!



Volunteer bike mechanic working at 10th & Lake St.



One of the many bikes sold this spring!

Venture North Happenings

All About Bikes!

Since late March, Venture North has had restricted hours in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. With the stay at home restrictions, people have turned to biking as an outdoor outlet! Being the only Northside bikeshop, Venture North has provided a service for the community. They have sold over 55 bikes since April! Adding the bikes sold at the garage sale, Venture North has sold over 135 bikes!

FREE Emergency Bike Service

In response to George Floyd's death, the protests gave an opportunity for Venture North to serve more people by offering Free Emergency Bike Service. People could call 952-300-9944 for service or volunteer at a pop-up bike stand. Over 100 people have been given free bike service! We still offer a weekly pop-up stand at Powderhorn Park every Sunday 1-7 PM for service!

Garage Sale

On Friday, May 22, Venture North held a spring garage sale where bikes were sold for \$20. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, staff, volunteers and visitors were asked to wear masks. With over 70 bikes sold, the garage sale was quite a success!



Garage sale on the lawn behind Redeemer Lutheran Church

Venture North Hours

Thurs - Sat. 10 AM - 5 PM

Bike service only, Coffee bar to open July 9!

Visit our [Facebook](#) for more updates!

Making Home Happen

Emergency Rent Fund

Due to COVID-19, some tenants in RCFL housing lost their jobs. In order to keep them housed and safe, RCFL initiated a fundraising campaign called the Emergency Rent Fund. With a goal of \$9,000, this cycling fund will give tenants financial security if they are unable to pay rent.

The response was overwhelming, as the goal was exceeded after only 10 days of being advertised!

Thank you to everyone who donated and/or continues to support RCFL and our tenants!

Give at Home

During the week of May 1-8, GiveMN hosted a fundraising campaign called GiveatHome. RCFL took part, creating a fundraiser aimed at uplifting our Affordable Housing program. We asked donors to help us raise \$6,000 for building updates and other expenses required by this program.

The response to this fundraiser was similar to that of the Emergency Rent Fund when we exceeded our goal and raised over \$12,000! With these funds, updates including new flooring and walls were made in the 16-plex building.

We have received over 60 new donors through these campaigns! Thank you to everyone who supports RCFL's Affordable Housing!

From a Resident:

"I'm grateful to not only have an apartment I can call home, but I'm also grateful to live within a community of people who genuinely care for each other through the way they share information and resources--especially during a time of such great need!"

--Joe Davis, Poet, Educator and RCFL Housing Resident



We  N Mpls

RCFL Housing tenant Joe Davis referencing COVID-19 & Emergency Rent



RCFL tenant Joseph Sandin

Visit [RCFL's Donate Page](#) to Give!
Thank you for your support!

Zoe's Testimony

Our Director of Development & Communications, Bex Klafter, got a chance to interview Zoe, Director of Operations & Housing, about her position and what it means to her. Here is what she had to say!

Bex: Why is affordable housing important to you?

Zoe: Affordable housing is important to me for many reasons. I was a participant in affordable housing. I lived in one of them in my own country. I still own it today. Now I rent it to other people who need housing. It's a good industry. For the community, it's a good project because we do a lot in the neighborhood. The need for housing is always increasing; it's always on the rise.

Bex: What is your favorite aspect of working as Director of Housing and Properties?

Zoe: One of my favorite aspects is that I get to take people from our waiting list, who might be homeless or in transitional housing, and offer them a home. It makes me feel so good. They are living their life and all of a sudden they get a call from me, inviting them to RCFL because we have an opening they can now occupy. They come so excited with their eyes lit up and I enjoy seeing that. They often say, "Wow! This is where I am going to live?" Their excitement is so high and they quickly get their things to move in. Another aspect I like is that we take someone from unstable living conditions and put them in affordable housing. We save them from a lot of problems. Especially, during this time where they can stay at home and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Bex: What should our supporters know about our Affordable Housing program?

Zoe: Our program is a unique program because it is not transitional housing and it's not a halfway house. It is affordable housing where people can move in and turn their lives around. If you are homeless and now have a home at RCFL, most don't want to be homeless again. We have a tenant who moved in through the Salvation Army. After moving in, they found a job, were able to pay their own rent, and are doing pretty well now. I had one tenant say, "I want you to help me. Show me how to write a money order." After I helped they said, "I feel so good now that I can pay my own rent and can regain my dignity."

Bex: Why, in your opinion, should people financially support our Affordable Housing program?

Zoe: During this pandemic, affordable housing is an industry that is being hit hard because of the realities that have been brought to us by COVID-19. This pandemic is a crisis unlike anything we have ever seen. People are going through unemployment at high rates. For our tenants, it is important to continue to live in stable housing to reduce the spread. Some people in our housing have illnesses and are not on the street. I ask our supporters to come and help us to keep our tenants and community safe and healthy. Keeping them at home while still being able to get to food shelves and grocery stores is a good thing. This way they are not on the street and can practice social distancing at home. Their health is very important.

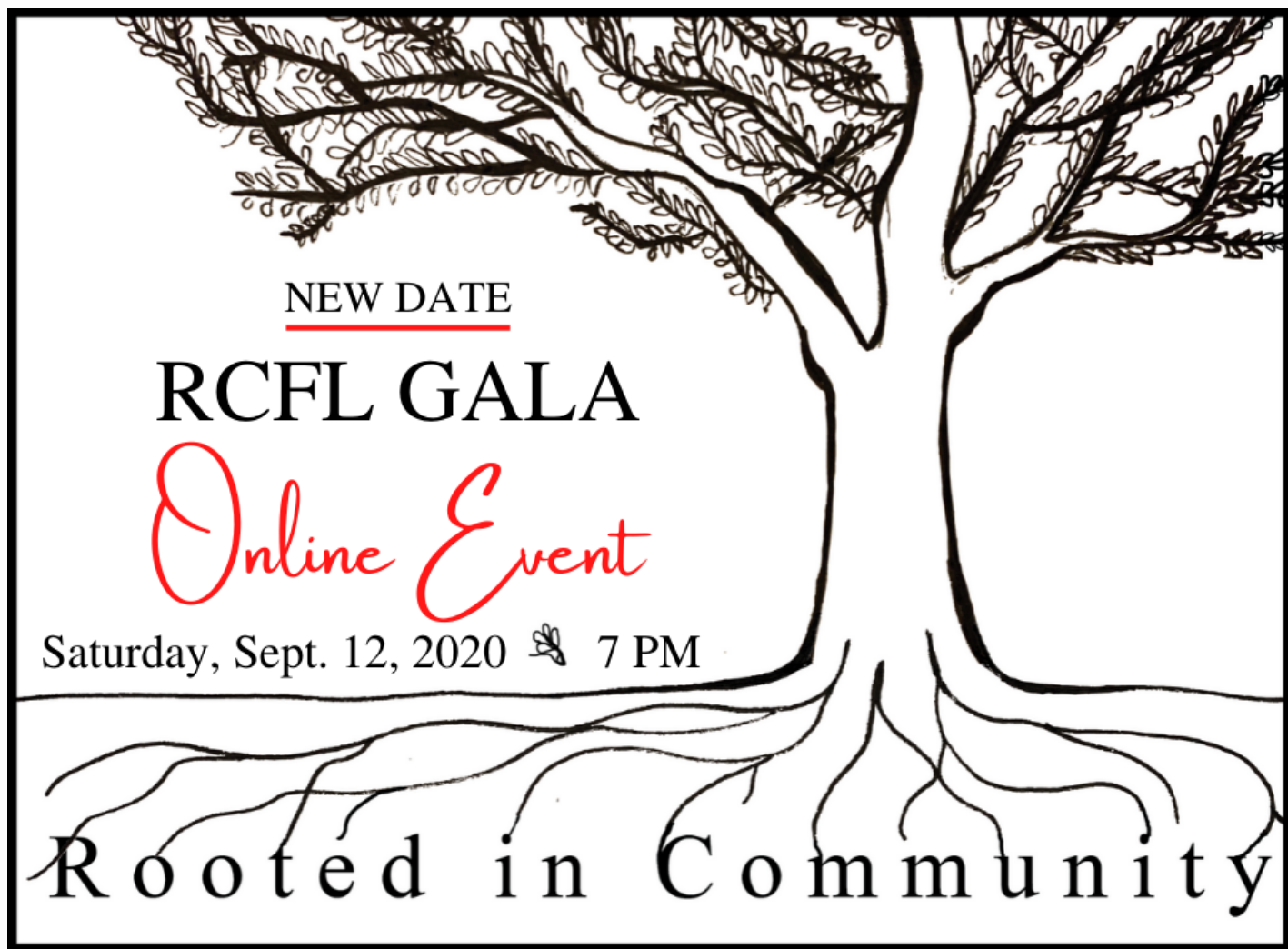
Bex: If you had unlimited funds, what would you do to improve our Affordable Housing program?

Zoe: I would build more houses because we have people on our waiting list and it keeps getting longer. People really need a home. RCFL's housing program is a living industry and is growing. It is never going to stop growing. There will always be a need for housing and affordable housing. Unlimited funds would allow me to expand our project and help reach more people.

Bex: Thank you so much for sharing Zoe! We truly appreciate what you bring to this role.



Director of Operations & Housing, Zoe Massaquoi



Gala 2019 speaker Rashan Moore with Vee.



*Youth Program Coordinator Jazz (and Noble!)
speaking at the Gala 2019*

***For more info, visit www.redeemercenter.org/gala
FREE for EVERYONE!***

Current Happenings

Response to COVID-19

RCFL offices are closed until further notice.

As RCFL is strongly rooted in our community in the Harrison neighborhood, we have assessed how best to serve our neighbors and tenants, while keeping the safety of those susceptible in mind. We will provide updates for the time being through emails and our website. Also look for more Facebook and Instagram posts!

We appreciate your continued support and understanding during this time. If you have immediate concerns, please email rebecca@redeemercenter.org.

Sincerely,
Pastor Kelly Chatman, RCFL Executive Director
The RCFL Board & RCFL Staff

Redeemer Community Garden

Want to learn more about gardening while meeting people in the neighborhood? Join us every Sunday from 1 PM - 4 PM!

Lot behind Venture North

Events

7/12-Sundae Sunday 1-3 PM

7/19-Drum Circle + Pizza 4-7 PM

7/24-Sunset Movie 8:30 PM



Volunteers watering tomato plants in the garden

Response to George Floyd's Murder

RCFL has made a statement of hope and encouragement during this time of racial unrest. For the whole statement, visit our Facebook page [here](#). RCFL has received over 200 new donors in June as people feel compelled to give to POC led organizations. Thank you for your support!

Milda's Cafe

As a staple eatery on Glenwood, Milda's Cafe as been hit particularly hard as a business during COVID-19. When Milda's opened its doors on April 1, 1965, it was a tiny cafe with a staff of three. After years of service and dedication from many employees, and the goals and determination of Milda, her dream has become a reality. Milda's is now minority-led, but with the same atmosphere it has had since it opened. It continues to be the "Small Town Cafe" in the big city. The focus will always be on good food, great service, reasonable prices, and a clean and friendly atmosphere. Neighborhood friends say that they never tire of their old favorites like homemade cinnamon and caramel rolls, the famous pasty (a meat pie sealed in a homemade crust), and custard-style bread pudding.

For the continuation and sustainability of this wonderful restaurant in Harrison, we ask our supporters to consider buying their meals and/or donating specifically to Milda's.

Milda's Hours

M-F 6 AM - 3 PM

Sat. 8 AM - 2 PM

Sun. 8 AM - 1 PM

To order takeout & pickup call:

612-377-9460

Visit Milda's FB [here](#) for more

