

# KENOSHA NEWS

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SNAPSHOT | WENDY CROSS

## SNAPSHOT: Wendy Cross reflects on 20 years at Shalom Center in Kenosha

Jillian Craig

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Wendy Cross, Hope Hub director for the Shalom Center, has worked for the center for 20 years, following in the footsteps of her mother, who also worked for the Shalom Center.

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**T**his year marks 20 years working at the Shalom Center in Kenosha for Wendy Cross.

Cross has been named director of the Shalom Center's Hope Hub, a new 10,500 square-foot facility featuring washing machines, dryers, a warming/cooling center and housing and homeless diversion professionals to help connect those in need with vital services.

Cross comes from a background of philanthropy and helping others, as her mother helped start the sexual assault treatment program at the former St. Catherine's Hospital in the 1980s, and later worked for Women and Children's Horizons and the Shalom Center.

### **How did you get involved?**

(My mom) had us involved with everything, with helping people in the community and that's what I wanted to focus on was helping people in the community. My mom was huge role model for us for that, so that's why I continue to live on with her legacy of helping people in need.

### **How did you get started?**

I started as a shelter supervisor. I did that for about 13 years up in the family shelter at the old building on 62nd Street. About a year before we moved here, I moved on to just managing the INNS program and the family shelter. From there, that's where I became shelter programs director and now the whole pub director. I thought, "Oh, it's about time for me to move on." The new opportunity came, and I'm like, "Oh, God, I would love to do this."

### **What is the most fulfilling part of the work you do?**

It's making a difference in people's lives, just smiling. I start my day every day with a quote that's on my desk, and it says, "Hello, beautiful. It's going to be a great day." That quote right there, when people see it, they have told me "You don't know how much that has helped. Just that quote alone has helped me."

I love every day when someone says, “Thank you, you’ve helped me so much,” or when somebody gives me a hug and says, “You really made a difference for me,” I love it. I go home every night, honestly, (and) there’s a smile on my face ... It’s not a job for me, it’s coming to a place where I can be with people that just need someone to help them, and I’m that person.

### **What is something people may not understand about your role?**

That I’m not just sitting behind a desk, on the computer, barking orders at people. I’m on the front lines. I’m helping any way I can. I meet, greet everybody that comes in. I create relationships with them. I create trust with them, so they can succeed in what they’re doing. They’re people, they’re not just homeless people, they’re people, and they all have a story.

### **Did you see yourself working for a nonprofit?**

My goal when I was young was to always help with people in need. It was either going to be by being a lawyer or following my mom’s footsteps, and I chose to follow my mom’s footsteps. It’s the best decision I ever made.

### **Anything you’d like to add?**

I just want people know that I love every minute of every day of making a difference in people’s lives. And if it’s just one person I made a difference for, it’s all the difference in the world, and just a smile will get you far with somebody.

*For more information on the nonprofit Shalom Center Hope Hub, visit online at [www.shalomcenter.org](http://www.shalomcenter.org).*

By Jillian Craig

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