

John Cooper Jr. takes over at Niagara Gospel Mission

Says 'My family and faith have always taught me to care for those in need'

John Cooper Jr. has taken the helm as executive director of Niagara Gospel Mission, 1317 Portage Road, Niagara Falls. He replaces Tom McLaughlin, who retired at the end of 2023.

A graduate of Niagara Wheatfield High School, and a member of the Cooper Sign Company family, Cooper said his family has been a part of the Niagara Falls community since the late 1700s.

"I have a deep love for helping people and for the City of Niagara Falls," Cooper said. "My family has served in the business community and local organizations for decades. We've fought in our nation's wars and as part of the Underground Railroad. My family and faith have taught me to care for those in need."

Cooper was hired at the agency as a development director in February 2022



Tom McLaughlin (in gray) passes the torch to John Cooper Jr.

after serving in the Army as a sniper section leader. But his relationship with the Niagara Gospel Mission actually be-

gan in 2011 when he volunteered as a chapel speaker.

"I've always wanted to share the love of Jesus Christ in word and deed," he said.

Recently ordained as a Baptist pastor, Cooper graduated from Clarks Summit University in Pennsylvania and is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree in leadership through Liberty University.

"I want Niagara Falls to become a strong city again, and I believe that happens when we focus on those in need and love them," he said.

Cooper's military background, and focus on leadership, discipline and mental

health, have already driven changes to Niagara Gospel Mission's programs and services. In the fall of 2022, the agency opened the Liberty Suite exclusively for homeless military veterans. In 2023, he instituted a series of symposiums dealing with veterans' and mental health issues. In 2024, he plans to initiate a structured discipleship program, offering life-skills classes, regular work assignments, and Bible study.

The Niagara Gospel Mission will also begin a three-year campaign to open a women's center in Niagara Falls.

Cooper, his wife Elizabeth, and their three boys live in Niagara Falls.

Niagara Gospel Mission is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit providing services to the homeless and poor. Visit <https://niagaragospelmission.org/> to learn more.

IN THE NEWS

HAL program to highlight Mother Leonarda Hannappel

The Historical Association of Lewiston's next program, "Leon-

arda's Journey," will take place at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 25, at the Lutheran Church of the Messiah Fellowship Hall, 915 Oneida St.

A press release noted, "Sister Mary Serbacki and Sister Diane Gianadda will present a short

film that relates the life of Mother Leonarda Hannappel and her journey to establish the North American foundation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity. It begins with her childhood in Germany, including a tragedy that likely helped to set the course of her life. It chronicles her later voyage to the U.S. and the difficulties and joys encountered along the way as she was instrumental in establishing the presence of the Sisters of St. Francis in this country in 1874 and the establishment of Stella Niagara on the banks of the Niagara River in 1908."

Sister Mary will speak about the foundation of the congrega-

tion and the importance of 2024 as the community celebrates the 150th anniversary of its presence in the U.S. Sister Diane, as executive producer of "Leonarda's Journey," will share some of her experiences in making the movie.

Sister Diane is a social worker and is the director of the Women's Respite Program (Francis Center), which provides weekend respites for women in Western New York. These events are held at Stella Niagara and provide opportunities for relaxation and support for low-income single mothers, grandmothers raising their grandchildren, mothers of children on the autism spectrum, and women with cancer.

Sister Mary is native of Niagara Falls and a graduate of Stella Niagara. After obtaining a M.A. in history and archives administration from the University of Michigan, she returned to Stella to serve as archivist for Holy Name Province. She also serves as congregation archivist and has worked in those archives, which are located in the congregation's generalate in Rome, Italy. Sister Mary is also a past president of the Historical Association of Lewiston.

This community event is free and open to all, "but donations are greatly appreciated to help support the museum." Refreshments will be served.

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Stamm-Philipps announces candidacy for Niagara County Family Court

Press Release

Wheatfield Town Justice Angela Stamm-Philipps has announced her candidacy for Niagara County Family Court judge. This is a newly created position that will be in addition to the two Family Court judges currently serving Niagara County.

Stamm-Philipps brings a wealth of experience to the Family Court judge position. She was elected as Wheatfield town justice in 2018 and reelected in 2022. In addition to her experience as a judge in Wheatfield Town Court, Stamm-Philipps also works in Family Court where she sits as a support magistrate and decides cases involving child support, violations of child support orders, and paternity cases. She previously held the position of the chief clerk of the Niagara County Surrogate's Court, as well as prosecutor for the Town of Wheatfield, assistant Niagara County Social Services attorney, and maintained a general law practice. In her general law practice, Stamm-Philipps was a court-appointed attorney for the child, as well as representing individuals in family court.

"I've spent my 26-year legal career helping families," Stamm-Philipps said. "From my work helping children navigate the court system, and as attorney for the Niagara County Department of Social Services prosecuting abuse and neglect cases, my fo-



The Hon. Angela Stamm-Philipps (Submitted photo)

cus has been on helping families when they need it the most.

"My experience makes me uniquely qualified to take on this role. I have advocated for numerous children struggling with turmoil at home. I have advocated for those escaping abusive relationships who need a fresh start. I have represented families in adoptions, who want to give a child a loving home. I know the importance of a fair and impartial judicial system, and I will use my broad scope of experience to ensure that all voices are heard."

Stamm-Philipps is a graduate of SUNY Buffalo and earned her juris doctor degree from Western Michigan University Cooley Law School in 1998. She began her

legal career in 1998 by opening her general law practice where she represented clients in a variety of matters including family court and in matrimonial cases. She worked as an attorney for the Niagara County Department of Social Services for seven years, prosecuting abuse and neglect cases, child support matters, as well as fair hearings for indicated CPS reports.

She joined the Unified Court System in Niagara County Surrogate's Court in 2013, first as the deputy chief clerk, and later became the chief clerk. She now works as a support magistrate in Family Court, hearing and deciding cases involving child support, violation of child support orders, and the establishment of paternity.

Stamm-Philipps lives in Wheatfield with her husband of 24 years, John, and their two children. A lifelong resident of Niagara County, she graduated from Starpoint Central School. She is the vice president of the Niagara County Magistrate's Association, former president of the Lockport Bar Association, former adjunct professor at Daemen University, and has been a panel speaker for the numerous continuing legal education classes for the Niagara and Erie bar associations.

The office of Family Court judge will be voted on at the election to be held Nov. 5, 2024.