

Mt. St. Mary's Hospital Foundation welcomes new executive director

Catholic Health and the Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation welcome Ashley Misko as the new executive director of the Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation.

They stated, "Misko brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in nonprofit leadership, fundraising, and major gifts solicitation. Most recently, she led the scholarship program for Niagara University serving as a major gifts officer in the university's Office of Institutional Advancement. Over the last decade, Misko has held diverse positions at Niagara University, People Inc. and Amherst Youth Foundation in the areas of executive administrative support, quality improvement, service operations."



Ashley Misko (Submitted photo)

pleting her Master's in Business Administration. She has been a member of the diversity, equity and inclusion task force; International Humanitarian Assistance Program advisory board; Community of the Workplace Professional Development Committee; and Fifty Fabulous Women Giving Circle.

As executive director of Mount St. Mary's Hospital Foundation, Misko will lead efforts for executing, directing and coordinating activities that increase philanthropic support for the hospital.

She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English education from Niagara University, where she is currently com-

Devotion-by-distance winter/spring book clubs by Stella Niagara's Center of Renewal

The Western New York community is invited to join the winter and/or spring book clubs featuring books No. 3 and No. 4 in the "Sensible Shoes Series" by author Sharon Garlough Brown.

Part of the devotion-by-distance online retreat programming offered by the Center of Renewal Retreat & Conference Center at Stella Niagara, the book clubs will each meet six consecutive Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30 p.m. with winter book club from March 8 through April 12, and spring book club from April 26 to May 31. Most participants will attend the book club sessions via online Zoom since those

attending in person at the retreat center must have proof of having been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus and agree to other on-site and masking protocols.

Organizers said, "Even for those who have not yet read the first two books in the series, each book can also stand independently, so feel free to join in now for an enjoyable hour-a-week with others on these books based on four women going through their respective and unique spiritual formation journeys."

The winter book club will feature book No. 3, "Barefoot: A Story of Surrendering to God," by author Sharon Garlough Brown,

with book No. 4, "An Extra Mile: A Story of Embracing God's Call" for the spring book club.

Participants are urged to acquire books from area booksellers. Advance registration for the book club is required at least two days prior to the start of each book club. To register or for more information, call 716-754-7376, Ext. 2 or 1, or visit the website, www.stellaniagararetreats.org.

The Center of Renewal Retreat & Conference Center at Stella Niagara is sponsored by the Sisters of Saint Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Holy Name Province.

Free tax filing assistance available in WNY

Virtual sessions pair taxpayers with Tax Department experts to guide them through filing process at no cost

The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance encouraged Western New York residents in need of tax filing assistance to register for a free virtual session. Taxpayers with federal adjusted gross income of \$73,000 or less qualify to receive free virtual tax assistance from the Tax Department.

"Our free tax filing assistance program is a simple, safe and secure way for taxpayers to submit their returns at no cost," Acting Commissioner Amanda Hiller said. "Virtual sessions are available right now for Western New York residents, and I encourage all those who are eligible and in need of filing help to register today."

During a prescheduled virtual webinar session using WebEx or Zoom, a Tax Department expert will guide taxpayers through free tax preparation software, step-by-step, as they complete and file their own tax return.

To register, see "Register for a virtual FSA session."

Once registered, taxpayers will receive a confirmation email with a link to an intake questionnaire. Taxpayers can review and fill out the intake questionnaire to ensure they have all the documents and equipment needed to complete their return during the session.

Those documents and equip-

ment include:

- ✓ A laptop, desktop or tablet, plus a smart phone or webcam to verify identity;
- ✓ Basic computer skills;
- ✓ An active email account;
- ✓ All tax documents; and
- ✓ A copy of a 2020 tax return (if filed).

All sessions are virtual so, if a taxpayer's preferred site is fully booked, they can choose another site.

If a taxpayer can't find a free virtual session to fit their schedule, they can access Free File software on their own right from home. Free File software is available at the Tax Department website, www.tax.ny.gov. Taxpayers with income of \$73,000 or less in 2021 can electronically complete and submit their federal and New York state income tax returns online at no cost.

Nearly 255,000 taxpayers

used this software last year, saving them a combined \$51 million in tax preparation fees. To be directed to the free filing options, click "Free File your income tax return" on the Tax Department's website. The department noted, "It's easy, fast and secure."

It added, "Free File can help millions of taxpayers claim valuable tax credits without the cost of hiring a tax preparer. The software will help ensure you claim all the credits you deserve, including the earned income tax credit (EITC).

"To ensure you're not charged a fee, you must go to the Tax Department's website to complete your return. You'll save on preparation fees, prevent costly errors, and ensure that you receive any refund you're owed in the most efficient way possible."

Municipalities offering rain barrels & compost bins

Homeowners encouraged to reduce runoff, recycle nutrients into the soil

Erie County, in partnership with the City of Buffalo, the Town of Wheatfield and the Western New York Stormwater Coalition, is once again offering rain barrels and compost bins to encourage households to reduce their environmental footprint through water conservation and reducing fertilizer use.

A press release said, "Rain barrels reduce stormwater runoff, water produced in heavy rainfalls that does not soak in to the ground and that can transport many pollutants to our local waterways. By using harvested rainwater for watering lawns, gardens and potted plants, rain barrels conserve water. As an added bonus, the natural nutrients in rain water make it far better for plants than tap water,

which has chlorine and fluoride in it. With a rain barrel, gardeners can also minimize or eliminate their use of chemical fertilizers.

"Home composting is a simple way to restore nutrients to soil. The addition of compost enriches soil, stimulates plant growth, and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers. Composting yard trimmings and food scraps has the added benefit of keeping those wastes out of our local landfills."

For more information, visit <https://erie.compostersale.com/>.

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Worship and Holy Communion Sunday 9am

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NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH

March is National Kidney Month! This national awareness month is an opportunity to spread awareness about kidney disease, practice prevention methods and learn more about our lifesaving services available to those fighting kidney disease. March is the perfect time to partner with the American Kidney Fund to raise awareness through their website, on social media, on the airwaves and at events around the country.

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