



Meet Debra MacDonald, Agency Director Catholic Charities of Chemung and Schuyler Counties...

1. Describe Your Business:

Catholic Charities is committed to fighting the effects of poverty and its root causes through its work. Catholic Charities provides a number of needed programs and services in this community with a priority toward the poor. Catholic Charities is a service agency that provides essential services to those in needs. This includes assistance with food and housing, utility shut-offs, applying for SNAP benefits, domestic violence victim services, runaways, and Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

2. Tell us your story:

Debra has been working in Human Services for most of her adult life. She received her Associate degree in Human Services at Corning Community College, and went on to receive her Bachelor degree in Non-Profit Management in 2010 from Empire State College. Prior to starting her current job at Catholic Charities, Debra was an executive director for a small agency. "I did finances, HR, program management, and realized that all of that was too much for one person," Debra said about that job. "Part of the reason I chose this job [at Catholic Charities] was because I didn't have to try to do it all. I very much support the mission of Catholic Charities and the programs and services that are offered."

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

"I progressed from position to position, each requiring more responsibility than the one before it," Debra explained. "So, as I went along, I learned new pieces. I continue to learn because my supervisor is a good example and supports me."

4. What inspires you?

"I love the stories of the people who are helped," Debra stated. "A lot of people are just having a bad time, and they just need to get over the hump. So, maybe they come and we help them pay their utility bills or apply for SNAP benefits. And then they come back and are so grateful. It is inspiring to see those people who come back later and are successful on their own. All of those things are rewarding."

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

"There are some people we can't help, or can't find the resources to help," Debra said. "And it is frustrating and sad. You can't do everything and you can't always find someone who does each thing."

6. What is your favorite local activity?

Debra's family has property at Seneca Lake with a camper, and she enjoys spending time there boating, relaxing, and spending time with family. "And I do like to tour the wineries," she added with a laugh. "It's a nice Saturday activity."

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

"In my spare time I do make jewelry," Debra said. "It is a good stress reliever."