



City of Rochester
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3/27/2025

Caleb Feine
Assistant Fire Chief
201 4th St. SE, Room 10
Rochester, Minnesota 55904

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter is being written in attestation to the impact CERT has had on the community and Rochester Fire Department. In a time when building community relationships was strained, CERT was there to guide us and help facilitate conversations that have cultivated into deep, meaningful relationships. Their willingness to go above and beyond to help bring "community" back to Rochester has been noticeable and they have become a trusted go-to source for public safety.

Their team is always there and willing to go above and beyond to continue to make Rochester a destination community by helping keep it safe.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Feine'.

Caleb Feine





LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR CERT NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAMMING

From: Grace Pesch, VP of Community Impact at United Way of Southeast Minnesota

To: Whom It May Concern

March 25, 2025

This letter is in support of Barbershop and Social Services' funding application for its Community Engagement Response Team (CERT) program. United Way of Southeast Minnesota has been an enthusiastic partner with CERT in its work at the Edgewood apartment community over the past few years, and we have been impressed with the work they're doing to make a difference in the lives of people in Olmsted County.

Since 2022, we've made a commitment to fund their work and to partner with Barbershop and Social Services in any way we can to help drive their success with this neighborhood-based work. We don't make that commitment lightly but only after careful review and a shared agreement to participate in ongoing co-learning activities.

We can't sustain the CERT program's important work in the Edgewood community alone. Barbershop and Social Services and United Way of Southeast Minnesota will need additional partners, and additional funders, in order to fully realize the program's potential in the community. None of us can achieve the impacts we envision in isolation.

CERT has demonstrated its commitment to changing long-term conditions and outcomes for individuals and families in the Edgewood community. We have seen the CERT team serve hundreds of residents in the neighborhood, host over 30 events, and provide countless mentoring opportunities for youth. They continue to support the leadership development of residents and work to support a sense of belonging and purpose throughout this multifamily housing community in Rochester.

Barbershop and Social Services has shown its collaborative nature in our community and continues to reach out to enlist additional partners to carry out its vision for change. As one of those partners, and as a committed funder and partner, United Way of Southeast Minnesota invites you to join us in supporting the CERT program.

Thank you for considering this partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grace Pesch", written over a horizontal line.

Grace Pesch

Vice President of Community Impact

United Way
of Olmsted County



August 15, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is in support of Sports Mentorship Academy's funding application for its SMA Rec Center program. United Way of Olmsted County is an enthusiastic partner with the SMA Rec Center, and we've been consistently impressed with the work they're doing to make a difference in the lives of people in need in Olmsted County.

We've made a commitment to partner with Sports Mentorship Academy in any way to help drive their success with this program. As a part of that, we're also committed to provide program funding through July of 2026. We don't make that commitment lightly, but only after an extensive review process, and an ongoing continuous improvement process to ensure that outcomes are realized.

But we can't sustain SMA Rec Center alone. Sports Mentorship Academy and United Way of Olmsted County will need additional partners, and additional funders, in order to fully realize the program's potential in the community. None of us can achieve the impacts we envision in isolation.

SMA Rec Center has demonstrated its commitment to changing long-term conditions and outcomes for people in our community. Through our partnership with Sports Mentorship Academy, United Way expects to continue to make a lasting difference in Olmsted County.

Sports Mentorship Academy has shown its collaborative nature in our community and continues to reach out to enlist additional partners to carry-out its vision for change. As one of those partners, and a committed funder, United Way of Olmsted County invites you to join us in supporting The SMA Rec Center.

Thank you for considering this partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerome Ferson". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "J" and a distinct "F".

Jerome Ferson
President
United Way of Olmsted County

March 27, 2025

To the Minnesota State Congress

My name is Shane Gauthier. I work for Olmsted County Ongoing Child Protection in Rochester, MN.

I have known Bud and Stephanie Whitehorn for the past nine years. They have been a blessing to my family and community.

The C.E.R.T Team have selflessly gone out of their way to assist our community by helping youth and families to better themselves.

I have personally worked with families through Child Protection. When our work was completed the Whitehorn's and the C.E.R.T. Team continued to come along side of individuals and families even when our organization terminated rights or removed children from their parents. They support people no matter what their circumstances might be. They never give up.

I fully endorse their work and am very proud to be able to call them friends.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shane Gauthier".

Shane Gauthier

Lead Social Worker

Olmsted County Ongoing Child Protection

gauthier_shane@yahoo.com

507.261.3747



To whom it may concern,

My name is Tierre Webster, I serve as the executive director of Damascus Way, which is a state-wide organization serving families that have been impacted by incarceration. I am writing this letter in support of the Community Engagement Response Team of Rochester, MN.

Since their inception they have provided support to our community by engaging some of the highest risk individuals and families with community programming, mentorship programming, and also by providing employment for those in a second chance context. This same group can be seen in our schools, Correction and Human Service facilities as advocates to the same demographics that are often underserved and overrepresented in these same circles. CERT has also helped to bridge relationships between the Rochester Police Department and community members who have historically been at odds with them.

I am pleased to be a support of the CERT and am hopeful that others would see them as valuable as our BIPOC and underserved communities do. I strongly believe ongoing funding will allow them the opportunity to continue to support public safety, create wealth pathways, and contribute to our city of destination.

For any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me and consider this letter as a voice of support.

Sincerely,

Tierre A. Webster-LGSW
Executive Director

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Kristin Welsh

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kristinwelsh@gmail.com

March 26th, 2025

To whom it may concern:

My name is Kristin Welsh and I am writing today as a resident of Rochester, Minnesota to convey the importance of the C.E.R.T. (Community Engagement Response Team) organization to the Rochester community, who is currently lobbying a public safety bill to be able to maintain the positive impact they continue to have on the residents of Rochester and neighboring communities.

I have seen and felt their impact firsthand. As a public school teacher at one of the local high schools, C.E.R.T. has worked directly with our parents and students to build relationships that have contributed to the success of many young people, which includes helping them graduate high school. They are there helping to break down barriers, fostering relationships, and building trust between families and the schools that directly impacts student success.

I have also seen members of C.E.R.T. in action as they engage in a multitude of community events, bringing people together and establishing positive relationships between our BIPOC community and local law enforcement- something that is desperately needed in today's day and age.

These are just two examples- there are many more that I could write about, but I picked these two because of the impact they demonstrate; they show how important the C.E.R.T. organization is to the Rochester community.

Sincerely,

Kristin Welsh

Emily Watkins
2131 9th Ave. NE
Rochester, MN 55906
erwat76@gmail.com
507-250-4593

March 26, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Community Engagement Response Team

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for Community Engagement Response Team (CERT), an invaluable organization in Rochester, MN. As a committed advocate for social justice and community development, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of this organization's work in fostering equity, inclusion, and opportunity for marginalized communities.

CERT plays a crucial role in addressing systemic barriers faced by communities of color, immigrants, low-income individuals, and other underrepresented groups. Through their comprehensive programs, they empower individuals and families to achieve social well-being.

The ongoing efforts of CERT align closely with Minnesota's commitment to building a more inclusive and thriving state for all residents. I respectfully urge you and your colleagues to prioritize policies and resources that strengthen organizations like CERT, ensuring they can continue their mission and reach even more individuals in need.

Thank you for your time and dedication to fostering a more equitable Minnesota. I appreciate your leadership and look forward to your support for CERT and the communities they serve.

Sincerely,
Emily Watkins