



Esperanza Director Mary Hernandez carries boxes at the Sept. 17 food drive at New Creation Lutheran Church in Shakopee. The boxes are placed in the trunks of cars as families drive away, Hernandez said. The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community partners with Esperanza to compost any leftover or spoiled food. "I always tell my volunteers not to hand anything out that they wouldn't buy themselves," Hernandez said.

Many seeking food assistance in Minnesota have jobs, raise families, work toward education and struggle with health problems. Unfortunately, difficult trade-offs have to be made to provide enough food for their families. Hungry is everywhere – in rural, urban and suburban areas, of every age and background.

And some people in Shakopee do not have enough food to survive. And when that happens, Mary Hernandez and her supportive friends and helpful businesses help make food insecurity, the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food, less of a problem in the community of Shakopee.



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Mary Hernandez

Immigrated in 1980

In Shakopee since 1993

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Mary Hernandez was born in Mexico City, Mexico on July 16, 1975, daughter of Alberto and Angelica Hernandez and Angelica. Mary's older brother is Jose Hernandez and her younger brother is Marco Hernandez.

Mary's parents wanted to work, and to have the American dream. Alberto and Angelica wanted their three children to have a better life and future. And so in 1980, the family moved to Minnesota.

In St. Paul, Mary Hernandez, along with her two brothers, learned English in the St. Paul public schools. In 1993, Mary moved to Shakopee.

In May of 2003, Mary married Jorge Gomez. They have four children.

During the last 20 years, Mary has earned a reputation as a strong advocate for the



Mary Hernandez



Mary Hernandez has lived in Shakopee for more than 20 years, and is a strong advocate for the residents of the community. On the right is Mary's family, including her husband, Jorge Gomez, and Karla Montoya, Carlos Montoya, Ashley Gomez, and Danny Gomez. Three of her children were born here in Shakopee.



residents of the community of Shakopee. According to Mary, "I will always do my best in serving whoever in needed to build a strong, loving, inclusive community."

Mary Hernandez starting working as a cultural liaison for the Shakopee School District. She also was the co-founder of the nonprofit organization Esperanza.

She was also co-founder of the Shakopee Diversity Alliance. Formed in 2012, the Shakopee Diversity Alliance is a community-based group made up entirely of volunteers and is aimed at celebrating the city of Shakopee's culturally diverse community as well as addressing its needs. The SDA's vision is that through collaboration and awareness, Shakopee is united as a vibrant, diverse, inclusive community.

Mary also was a member of the St. Francis

Regional Center Board of Directors, and was an at-large member of the Shakopee Community Education Advisor Council. She also volunteered with the FISH network and IsaiahMn.org as she fights for racial and economic equality for all Minnesota, according to the list of 20 Influential Latinas from the MPLS YMCA.

Mary Hernandez is the Community Project Coordinator at the Scott, Carver, Dakota CAP Agency. The Scott Carver Dakota Community Action Partnership (CAP) Agency's vision is to create a strong community with healthy individuals and families, quality education, safe and affordable housing, and work that dignifies. More than 50,000 individuals help achieve social and economic well-being.

Mary worked to help feed neighbors who are missing a meal. The face of hunger is not what some people might expect.

