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## David Kersten continues mission-based career with OLV

Feb 12, 2020, 2:01pm EST

*Growing up in a Catholic family, David Kersten always knew he wanted to serve the church. The Cheektowaga resident attended Canisius High School then Niagara University before heading to Rome for seminary, studying with future priests from around the world. But he realized he was being called in a different direction and after earning his master's degree in theology, he returned home to marry and have a family. He has since dedicated his life to serving his faith, starting as a church administrator. He later held leadership posts at Niagara Catholic High School, Catholic Charities of Buffalo, the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo as well as Catholic Health as vice president of development. In 2018, he **became CEO** at Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity, which rebranded this summer as OLV Charities. The organization runs IT and HVAC divisions for the campus and serves as the fundraising arm for human services as well as the basilica and shrine.*



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David Kersten, CEO, OLV Charities: "I realized this role here kind of represented the confluence of so many things that were part of my past."

**What led you to spend your career working for Catholic nonprofits?** I felt I was rooted in the ministerial side of the church, so it was difficult to consider being with a company that was concerned with quarterly profits. The mission part of it was an important part of who I was at that point. I kept following the opportunities that were presented and I've been very happy with the result.

**Were there similarities in working for a health-care system, a service provider and a fundraising organization?** I've spent 30 years in mission-based organizations, and you could say also the fundraising side dominated at least part of all those roles. I was happy at Catholic Health, thinking I'd probably retire from there, then OLV came knocking. I realized this role here kind of represented the confluence of so many things that were part of my past.

**Why the rebranding?** I am a pretty connected person within the Catholic community in Western New York. But when I came here, I realized how much I didn't know about this organization. Our previous name, Our Lady of Victory Homes of Charity, was confusing. People said, do you have homes? Well, no. We realized we needed to simplify, unify and clarify who we are as a group.

**Is fundraising becoming more difficult?** We recognize that our wonderful and supportive donors over many years won't be with us forever, so we have to begin to resonate with different generations in different ways. We have to be attentive and try to innovate and update how we go about engaging people in the community and engaging prospective donors.

**Do you see a next chapter for your career after OLV?** There's tremendous change happening in our community and tremendous change in the nonprofit sector and lots of leadership changes, certainly on the board and at the senior leader level. I'm staying, and happy to be here. I hope to be part of leaving the organization — when that time happens — in a stronger position and to have had some small role in carrying on this wonderful legacy of Father Baker.

**Tracey Drury**  
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