



Erica Staab-Abscher

SOCIAL WORKER WITH HOPE

MEET **ERICA STAAB-ABSHER**, FHS CLASS OF 1995, DIRECTOR OF HOPE CENTER IN FARIBAULT AND AUTHOR ON THE TOPICS OF GRIEF, DOMESTIC ABUSE, AND SPIRITUALITY.

College and her first adult job took Erica Staab away from Faribault to Wisconsin and South Carolina. But she returned in 2008 and has become a highly-respected member of the community. She was recently recognized as one of Faribault's foremost young leaders in the Chamber of Commerce "40 Under 40" initiative, a year-long program honoring community leaders under the age of 40.

Erica received a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and went on to work at Face to Face Health and Counseling in the Twin Cities. She was fascinated by how our bodies respond to trauma and the implications for overall health and healing so she moved to North Carolina to study the art of massage. Her stay in the South continued as she worked for 7 years in South Carolina on policies to improve response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence at the state and national level.

A tragedy inspired her move back to her original hometown of Faribault. When her 27-year old brother passed away in an accident, she felt the need to be close to her family and her brother's unborn daughter. She remarks how the community of Faribault surrounded her family with amazing support at that difficult time, "I've never felt so loved and cared for."

She is dedicated to making a positive difference in Faribault and inspiring residents to stay healthy in body and mind. She continues to be a part-time massage therapist, but her full-time work is as the Director of HOPE Center striving to help victims

of sexual and domestic violence through the four pillars of **H**ealing, **O**utreach, **P**revention, and **E**ducation. Erica frequently speaks on those topics to various groups in Faribault: faith communities, law enforcement, educators, and community organizations. She has recently written a book, *She Stays*, examining domestic and sexual abuse. She also authored *The In-Between*, a meditation on moving through grief, trauma, and loss. She writes a blog related to her interest in deep listening and the Spiritual Direction program.

Erica enjoys living in Faribault with her husband Matt and daughter Kalea. "I love that we are a small town just a few miles away from the big city. I love going to the grocery store and seeing people I know. In my position, it's most amazing to work with people who are actively involved in making Faribault a better place."

Erica's work at HOPE Center, along with her volunteer activities in church, Youth in Government, Coalition Against Domestic Violence, United for Kids, and Growing Up Healthy illustrate her commitment to insuring that Faribault is a healthy community for all. Just as Erica turned to Faribault when her brother died, she works to make sure that people in crisis always have somewhere to turn for help.