



Responding to God's love,
WAFER provides food and
works to eliminate hunger.

Summer 2022

WAFER Breaks Ground!

On June 15th, WAFER stakeholders joined WAFER Board of Directors in the exciting and historic groundbreaking ceremony. This day was long awaited, the start of renovations that came from years of dreaming and planning. There were dreams of serving people in a welcoming space with the look and feel of a grocery store with a thoughtful layout for the most nutritious food items. Being able to readily adapt to the ever-changing needs of the community and capitalize on opportunities will create boundless impacts for people right here at home.

Not only will this new facility provide for the basics of serving people, but will enhance programming, services, and efficiencies. A large education space will provide opportunities for patrons to learn how to utilize all the food WAFER offers, but provide empowerment to make good choices to improve health. A garage will provide a space to store vehicles often the target of vandalism. A loading dock, warehouse, and cold storage will provide for safe receipt of donations and opportunity to accept all offers of food that haven't been possible. And, so much more!

Most importantly, the new facility will provide a more dignified and intentional services. The space will be one where people are cared for, where basic needs are met for today, and hope is provided for a better tomorrow.

You can follow along as the project progresses on the WAFER website on the "New Facility" page.



In this issue.....

A message from the Director and donation acknowledgement letters explained
Building Capacity, Hope & Dignity; A Campaign Update
Meet Sara and learn how your gifts are put to work

A Message From The Executive Director

Hello Friends!

Since the last correspondence we have broken ground at the new facility, managed a formula shortage, and are now seeing a growing need for families right here at home. Through June, we are averaging 200 more households monthly compared to 2021. In fact, **we haven't experienced this type of need since March 2020!** The staff stays updated on state assistance programs, but currently there is only speculation as to when programs will officially cut back or end altogether. We watch the situation closely since it will likely have a great impact for families, create increased need, and effect our operations.

Why are we seeing such a rapid increase in need? What are the staff hearing on the frontline?

First, the formula shortage had devastating effects for families with infants not only in terms of procurement, but price gauging. Spending more for formula and driving lengthy distances, if transportation was available, to find what was needed put further strain on already tight budgets. As is typical in any basic need choice situation **food budgets are always the first to get cut.** WAFER was able to be a great help during this time thanks to a donated pallet of formula. This gift helped relieve pressure families were experiencing in addition to the food package. Second, Laura and Diane register patrons requesting food. They are hearing a theme on the frontline; inflation and inability to afford quality items like meat, dairy, and produce. Many families are now returning after years of not having to tap into community food resources. In June we also saw a 50% spike in the number of families brand new to WAFER. Your support ensures that we can quickly adjust to the changing needs for the population we serve. Thank you!



Speaking of changes, revitalization of the Nutrition Education and Tools Program has been exciting. Since changing the format and offering in-person education options, **participation has increased to classroom capacity.** UW-Extension Nutrition Educators, Mary and Karie, have been creating and delivering monthly curriculum. The designated education space in the new building will provide the opportunity to welcome even more people.

We made a systems change 2 years ago to do a better job thanking you for your generosity and offer more customizable methods to receive acknowledgements. It has come to light that there might be some confusion about the tax receipts we send. First, we began offering different methods (mail or email) and frequencies (upon receipt, quarterly, year-end, or none) for the letters. You are welcome to send instructions with your gifts indicating your preference. Second, only donors who choose year-end statements receive a letter with all gifts at the end of the calendar year. Donors choosing immediate or quarterly receipts receive a letter for gifts given in the previous quarter or the most recent gift, but *not* a cumulative summary of year-to-date gifts. I hope this provides a back-office glimpse at how tax receipts are issued, if not I would happy to chat with you.

I am grateful for your continued faithful and generous support to ensure not one person goes hungry, like Sara who you will meet on the next page. You make a difference for 3000+ people every month and I sincerely thank you for the role you play today and in years to come to make WAFER a reliable resource for those in need!

Erin Woodhart



Building Capacity, Hope and Dignity

The WAFER Board, staff and volunteers are thrilled with the renovations taking shape at our new location at the corner of George and Gillette Streets in La Crosse. Board members and staff have worked tirelessly generating community investment in the project. To date we have received several major gifts to WAFER's building campaign. We are grateful to the organizations who have graciously supported our project. The board would like to acknowledge and thank the following groups that have made commitments thus far:



ARPA Grant (La Crosse)	\$150,000
Otto Bremer Foundation	\$125,000
Kwik Trip	\$ 75,000
US Dept of Agriculture	\$ 70,000
Altra Federal Credit Union	\$ 60,000

In addition, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration provided \$500,000 gift to purchase the building. The

greater La Crosse community is truly a place that considers all of its citizens worthy of dignity and it shows with these significant gifts! Later this year we will be inviting YOU to consider a gift that will continue to bring hope to our brothers and sisters in need.

Respectfully, Campaign Co-Chair Madalene Buelow

Your Gifts in Action - Meet Sara

Mark, Sara, and their four children recently moved to La Crosse from another state. Mark quickly found a good paying job while Sara stayed home with the children. There was a waiting period for insurance before it went into effect. During the waiting period Mark contracted COVID and ultimately passed. One of the children also contracted the virus, was extremely ill, and hospitalized. Sara found herself as a widow and single-parent with no healthcare, no income, and no family in the area to help them through this devastating situation.

Thankfully Sara had a caring neighbor who stepped in. The neighbor was familiar with WAFER and suggested she utilize the resources. Sara did come to WAFER and make use of the multiple food packages offered each month. Once here she met, Diane, who referred her to the county for Food Share and medical care assistance. Sara was also connected to another local agency who was able to help with rent and utility assistance.

This is an extreme situation in which the critical nature of what WAFER provides becomes so abundantly clear. WAFER is a lifeline for so many people in our local communities, sometimes for more than just food. There are many others like Sara dealing with seemingly unsurmountable circumstances. Food doesn't have to be cut from the budget, no one should skip meals or go hungry, because together we ensure the basic need of food is available for everyone.

WAFER is more than *just* a food, and Sara found that out. She was met with compassion, had her needs heard, provided with food and resources, and left with hope for a better tomorrow. All of this was possible because you have chosen to address food insecurity and food inequities head on. Your gifts matter, making a difference for people like Sara and her children! Thank you!

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WAFER is a Partner Agency with United Way and Feeding America's Channel One Regional Food Bank.



Our Mission: Responding to God's love, WAFER provides food and works to eliminate hunger.

How You Can Help Now

VOLUNTEER | DONATE FOOD | DONATE ONLINE

Call, click or visit WAFER to volunteer and donate food.

Donate online at www.waferlacrosse.org and use the PayPal link .

If you would like to write a check to donate, please use the envelope enclosed.

Thank you!