



WAFFER, Inc.

Annual Report

January 1-December 31, 2022

Mission Statement

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

Vision Statement

WAFER is committed to addressing hunger related needs in La Crosse County, while treating each person with personalized service and dignity. We will procure food, develop resources, and collaborate with other programs, organizations, and businesses to alleviate hunger and food insecurity in our area. We will strive for effective stewardship of resources in order to provide successful food assistance programs.

Over the course of the next five years, WAFER will be working to reach those in our population most at risk, children and seniors. Our strategic directives include:

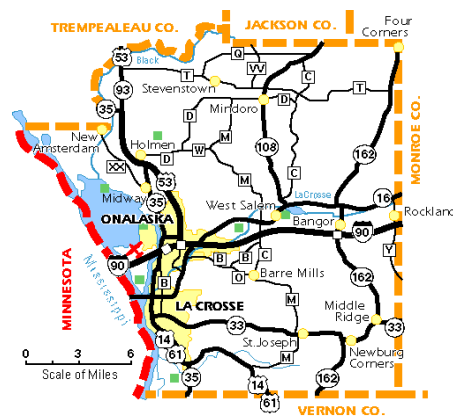
- Expanding and developing food procurement and food distribution
- Educating patrons on nutrition and food preparation
- Securing a new facility to facilitate efficiencies, build capacity, and increase patron dignity

December 2022 Board of Directors

Taylor Haley, President
Mike Voss, Vice-president
Anne Clarkin, Secretary
Lee Bluske, Treasurer

Madalene Buelow
Brad Clarkin
Dorothy Stroschein
Mike Swinghamer

Dedicated to fighting hunger
in La Crosse County
since 1986



Dear Friends,

What a year 2022 shaped up to be! We started the year on a high after having announced to the community that a decade-long search for a different facility finally ended. In the months after the announcement, the



building planning team comprised of WAFER staff, board members, and the architect team was hard at work designing the new location. The early 1900's building, with two additions, did pose some challenges in working around existing and critical structure. For example, the west wall of the original building is a load bearing wall that created challenges when laying out the flow of the pantry and warehouse. There was a lot of work to do to get to the point of having plans and project details before local construction companies could bid on the project.

In the meantime, the vacant parking lot was the perfect spot for the Mobile Pantry to establish a regular distribution point. It was an amazing opportunity to get acquainted with the neighbors and serve people in the area who have difficulty getting to the Causeway Blvd. location. Mobile Pantry Manager, Tony, would update the street sign each month until it was removed for good. Eventually the stop was moved to Northside Elementary School just around the corner when it was time to remove and replace the parking lot. Hearing the positive, encouraging, and welcoming comments from the neighbors and community members has been such a heart-warming experience for staff, board members, and volunteers at WAFER.



In November of 2021, I applied for ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding through the City of La Crosse. Funding was requested to be used toward the walk-in freezer and cooler project. Our current situation is patchworked together, tapped for space, and physically demanding for staff and volunteers to work within.



Walk-in units would provide the opportunity to physically handle frozen (and very heavy) product, instead letting our equipment do the work. The entire project is just over \$260,000. In March, I received word that the City had approved the funding request at \$150,000! WAFER was one of two local organizations invited to be a part of the press conference announcing awards. La Crosse Community Foundation managed the grant process, and their Director, Jamie Schloegel, was a part of the announcement along with Mayor Mitch Reynolds.

Fundraising and special collection events for WAFER are common. This looks like businesses, organizations, clubs, etc taking care of all the details for the event – logistics, planning, marketing, recruiting, volunteers, etc. WAFER benefits from proceeds from events and item specific drives. For instance, in the spring, UWL's PERIOD club (pictured on the left below) held a feminine hygiene drive and then put together "period packs". Drives such as this supplement sporadic donations and grant funds from Women's Fund of La Crosse to purchase items in low supply. Then in May, River Valley Media Group and Copeland Park & Events Center collaborated for the first ever "Bacon Fest" (pictured middle below). Attendees got to sample the best bacon dishes and vote for various vendors in the area. There was even a bacon eating contest. Event organizers asked for volunteer help. Viterbo's Men's Volleyball Team stepped up and provided two groups to help from set up to tear down. WAFER received a portion of the proceeds from the event. Finally, La Crosse Concert

Band designates one concert annually as “WAFER night”, this year in July. They promote the night for weeks in advance to attendees and through social media. Every year the goal is to outdo the last. Attendees and players are encouraged to bring specific items low in supply such as canned goods and hygiene items. Long-time volunteers, Mary and Dale (pictured right below), set up in front of the bandshell to collect food and funds, and share WAFER’s story, services, programs, and impact as people drop off donations.



Local construction companies were invited to submit a bid for the facility renovation and new build addition. Bids were due in May. In June, the board reviewed and accepted the new facility construction proposal from Fowler and Hammer. Pictured below is the pre-bid facility tour (L) and Board President (R), Taylor Haley, signing the contract.



Once project insurance was in place a groundbreaking ceremony was held with many supporters, local media outlets, partners, funders, volunteers, staff, and community members in attendance. Pictured below are board members and staff (L to R): Dorothy Stroschein, Mike Voss, Anne Clarkin, Madalene Buelow, Judy Seifert, Taylor Haley, Lee Bluske, Executive Director Erin Waldhart, Operations Manager Brad Gerdes, and Mike Swinghamer.



Demolition was first on the priority list. The building was formerly used as a grocery store. While that makes the facility a good fit for us in some regards, in other ways it needed to be modified to meet food pantry operational needs. For instance, the building had very little warehousing space most product was stored on the sales floor. Our operations require dedicated spaces for warehousing, donation sorting, education, USDA compliant dedicated repackaging space, patron shopping, and administrative offices.



The facility the pantry has been located at for the past 20 years was estimated to be one-half of the size needed for our operations. To create the spaces needed, an addition was planned for and includes a reception area, administrative office, conference room to provide space for community resource partners to discuss privately with patrons, a loading dock, and garage space for the Mobile Pantry and cargo van (both of which have been vandalized in the past). Architect renderings were released to the public. They were well received due to the aesthetic lift to the neighborhood and the attempt to preserve some of the historical aspects of the oldest part of the building.



As government commodity increases related to COVID response started to decline, the amount of food we needed to purchase slowly started to inch up. This trend continued through the year, shifting from primarily canned goods to also include produce. The pandemic significantly disrupted the food system for everyone, but has been particularly hard on food pantries due to the unpredictability. In the past, retail food donations were pretty consistent and it was easy to estimate what we would have to work with in a given day. Since March 2020, everything we thought we knew about access and supply has been flipped on its head. We used to be flush with produce, but now we have to purchase produce to supplement retail rescue and the product that comes from government funding. Of course, as your pocketbook has been affected by inflation so has ours. At times we are spending three times or more for the most commonly purchased items. Making every dollar count has never been more critical than now.



This summer we also experienced the “great formula shortage”. Parents panicked to find the formula their baby needed, sometimes any kind at all. Prices skyrocketed. Families implemented online ordering, traveling hours away to pick up orders, asking friends and family all over the country to ship it, nursing mom’s pumping extra for family or friends, and some trying to concoct recipes. While this situation was stressful on families we can only imagine what this looks like for people, like those WAVER serves, who don’t have resources – transportation and funds – that a middle-class family might have. Thankfully, a generous donor gave an entire pallet of the most commonly used formula. We had an abundance which allowed us to share with other food pantries and organizations that serve a similar population. We advertised this on our social media page so people knew they could get what they needed from WAVER. Unfortunately, this also turned into an ugly situation when people wanted to buy it from us and that is not something allowable per federal guidelines. We certainly empathized, we just couldn’t do anything to help in that situation.

For the last 7 years, Bangor FFA has been growing crops of all varieties and donating the produce to WAVER. It is such a blessing for our patrons to have fresh from the field produce. This year, the students outdid themselves by providing 20+ gaylords (think the large cardboard watermelon containers) of sweet corn! Again, an abundance allowed us to share with our many partner food pantries, organizations, and our food bank in Rochester, Channel One Regional Food Bank, a Feeding America Food Bank.



In the fall, two large events stocked WAVER’s shelves and provided funds to purchase what was in short supply. Students, their families, and staff at First Lutheran School designated WAVER as their quarterly mission. Not only did they collect food and personal hygiene items, but the school staff used this as an opportunity for students to learn about hunger and poverty. I was invited to speak to the students about what WAVER does and who is served, general hunger statistics, and about the ripple effects of poverty in one’s life. The students asked great questions. Their generosity filled our cargo van 1 ½ times! Students from the upper grade level packed the food into crates and carried them up the stairs to the van waiting outside. What might seem like a huge chore took them hardly any time at all. Best of all was their enthusiasm for helping others and knowing that they made a difference.





In October, the 4th Annual Coulee Region Hunger Walk was held in the Myrick Park and marsh area. Though this fundraiser and awareness event was the 4th annual, the organizers previously coordinated what was called “CROP walk” (a national event) and have done so since early 2000’s. In 4 years, they have raised over \$55,000, all of which now stays local. Planning takes place over the course of an entire year as the group makes improvements to attract more people which impacts the amount of funds raised.

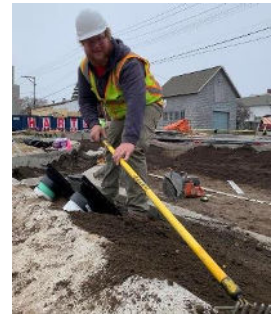
As colder temperatures moved in, the facility project progressed and the visible changes became more evident. Eventually the outside work paused and was shifted inside when the elements impacted the work.




In early November, the Capital Campaign team held a press conference officially kicking off the fundraising portion of the building project. It was at this media event that Campaign Co-Chairs, Madalene Buelow and Taylor Haley, announced the projected cost of \$3.6 million for revitalization and the addition to the north side of the building. Many WAFER stakeholders and supporters were present for this event; local media outlets, major donors, local politicians, volunteers, staff, board members, and more. Prior to this announcement, the campaign team was quietly working behind the scenes meeting with major gift donors, soliciting businesses, submitting grant requests, and giving presentations to any group that wanting to learn more about WAFER.




In late November, on a day it was snowing, Western Technical College horticulture students volunteered for the landscaping project. They took care of planting trees and perennials, plus the required mulch. Despite the frigid temperatures, the students were so enthusiastic about helping out and even thanked the project team for being included. The students and their instructor, and the Human Services instructor who works closely with WAFER for placing students for internships, are pictured.



In December, we had two new opportunities from local community supporters. As is typical from Thanksgiving through the end of the year, Rotary Lights collects food donations as people visit Riverside Park to enjoy the holiday lights display and activities. This year, the Rotary Lights members wanted to have a part in supporting the building project, thus “Paddy” was born. The bear has the Rotary Lights logo embroidered on the foot and is manufactured by Build-a-Bear. The bear was sold in the park and at various businesses for \$20 with proceeds benefitting the building campaign. The Rotary Lights team has been so supportive of WAFER over the years, working hard to collect food items to stock shelves and create awareness about hunger in general. When an opportunity to make an even greater impact presented they acted.




THE ROTARY LIGHTS TEDDY BEAR



“PADDY”

\$20



The need to help our food pantries has never been greater. Facing higher prices, inflation and unemployment, families are having a tough time making ends meet. The largest food pantry in the La Crosse area is WAFER and they are building a new food center that will serve thousands of needy families. The mission of Rotary Lights is to “feed the hungry”. Rotary Lights is selling these cute Teddy Bears to help WAFER with their construction costs. 100% of all profits are earmarked for the WAFER project.



The other new opportunity was with the Holmen Area Foundation. In 2022, the foundation celebrated their 25th anniversary. In celebration, the foundation members organized the first ever “Jingle Fest”. The first Saturday in December, the downtown streets were filled with street vendors, food, games, and more. Food was collected for WAFER. At the conclusion of the event, the foundation members presented WAFER with a \$500 check in thanks for the service provided to their community. Pictured are foundation members and WAFER volunteer representative, Tom Tucker.

Further into the report you will find a list of community partners who provided food donations to WAFER in 2022.

I will also share with you just a snippet of some of the amazing volunteers giving their time at WAFER. It is truly one of the greatest joys of my “job”, to meet and get to know the people who make WAFER possible. It is hard to encompass the greatest of them, but it is definitely identifiable watching them in action. There are so many truly invested people that will do just about anything asked of them for the good of the team. Volunteers give in many different ways and talents. Some volunteers help for food package distribution, make food packages, stock coolers and shelves, receive donations, make deliveries, offload route vehicles. There are others who make repairs to equipment or the facility, shovel snow, weld carts, and so much more. WAFER doesn’t exist without volunteers, and our friends and neighbors have food on the table at mealtime thanks to amazing volunteers! You will find more information about volunteer impact on page 12.



Finally, there is one person I must recognize who quietly works behind the scenes in various capacities. In January 2022, Operations Manager, Brad Gerdes, announced he would be leaving his position to pursue other projects. Through a lengthy and unsuccessful search, the duties were ultimately spread among the other staff. In June we started flying solo – well, sort of. Brad stepped out of his Operations role and into the Project Manager position for the new facility. He is frontline with me for all the meetings (and there are so very many of them), decision making, problem solving, and so much more. This project is massive, complex, and time consuming, especially for someone who volunteered for the role. His professional experience and attention to detail has made his involvement in the facility project an extremely valuable asset. Along with the Architect Project Manager, Brad keeps the project moving forward in a timely fashion.

In addition, without really filling the Operations role, Brad has continued to come in to the office to help with reports, talk over facility or operational issues, help train staff on his previous duties, and anything I ask for help with. Having the ultimate responsibility for

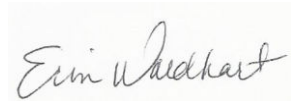
WAFER can be overwhelming at times, and I am grateful for the time Brad shared the load with me. Brad helped me to grow professionally, grow as a leader, and helped me to see opportunities when I might otherwise see challenges. Brad didn’t just push me to be better, but he lead in a way that also encouraged the rest of the team to strive for better without making it obvious. WAFER as an organization, and the

people served, have definitely been blessed by Brad's service. I will forever be grateful he found his way to WAFER.....but I am pretty sure it's a "God thing".

Thank you for taking some time to celebrate the successes of 2022. As you will see in my report, many more families were in need of food assistance this year. I break down the programs WAFER offers and the impact each one has had for people in our local communities. Together we continue to change lives and offer hope.











Thank you for choosing to partner with WAFER in 2022. Your gifts of time, talent, food, and funds make a world of difference for thousands of people every month. As we prepare to move into our new facility to serve people with greater dignity and compassion while offering hope. I invite you to join us for a historic 2023!

In Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erin Waldhart", is displayed on a light beige rectangular background.

Erin Waldhart, Executive Director

Service At A Glance – A 2022 Highlight Overview

-  Approximately 35,000 people fed through in-house food package distribution, senior food package delivery, weekend backpacks, and mobile pantry distribution sites.
-  Complete food packages maintained increased in availability at twice monthly, not including the package provided at the once monthly Saturday distribution event. Prior to 2020, about 10 families would request an additional food package monthly. Usage has increased exponentially since, reaching an all-time high in 2022 as 160+ families each month requested additional assistance.
-  The number of new families served increased by 13 families each month. In total, 600 families were new to WAFER in 2022.
-  Nearly 1.7 million pounds of food, equivalent to 1.5 million meals, were provided.
-  More than 800,000 pounds of food was rescued from local retailers.
-  The Mobile Food Pantry distributed 3672 food packages, an increase of more than 100 households monthly.
-  Mobile Food Pantry had 20 established stopping points each month by the end of the year.
-  The “Backpack” program operating at the Bangor School District provided weekly weekend food packages to 40 children throughout the school year.
-  The once monthly Saturday “Food Fair” extra food package distribution event provided nearly 3000 food packages between the La Crosse and West Salem locations. This opportunity saw an increase of 400 households this year.
-  Nutrition Education classes continued thanks to a partnership with UW-Extension FoodWI Nutrition Educators, Mary and Karie. We were able to return to in-person classes and participation soared.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of WAFER. Without an amazing and dedicated group of individuals, WAFER wouldn't be nearly as impactful for people struggling with food insecurity. Curbside registration and grocery pickup remained throughout the year. As the virus situation ebbed and flowed, WAFER leadership opted to best protect the volunteer base and wait until the move to the new facility before offering personal shopping. Therefore, volunteers literally do the heavy lifting. For those that volunteer for distribution, at ~100 pounds for each food package, serving 30+ families a shift results in physical fatigue from lifting all that food. Each and every day volunteers willingly walk through the door knowing that their dedicated service ensures no one goes hungry.

WAFER volunteers reflect the best of our local communities. They are filled with compassion, determination, and service above self to serve others in need. WAFER staff are honored to stand alongside amazing volunteers and to witness their love in action.

In 2022, volunteers gave 12,067 hours of service! The value of a volunteer hour is \$29.95 according to Independent Sector. Based on this rate, WAFER volunteers contributed a value of \$361,407. Even if each person was paid minimum wage, volunteers saved WAFER \$87,000 in staffing expenses.

"Giving" the gift of time looked different for each volunteer in 2022. There were a handful of volunteers that devoted one or more days each week; others contributed their talents whenever and wherever they could.

Volunteers filled a variety of needs, routine and new. These included:

- Packing food packages based on family size to decrease wait times during drive-thru distribution.
- Distributing food packages from the Mobile Pantry.
- Loading vehicles during special drive-thru events.
- Picking up donations and unloading vehicles.
- Sorting food donations.
- Stocking shelves and coolers.
- Assembling food packages for delivery programs and special event distributions.
- Delivering food packages to households with transportation or mobility issues.
- Cleaning shelves, coolers, bathrooms, floors, and more.
- Assisting with administrative projects such as mailings, volunteer form filing, and more.
- Representing WAFER at community events.
- Attending food drive events to collect donations.
- Facility repairs.
- And stepping in wherever possible to just get things done.

Just A Few Of WAFER's "Rockstar" Volunteers



Carol is one of a group of ladies that heard our pleas during COVID, to help with sorting Rotary Lights donations. Carol was hooked immediately, returning until all donations were sorted for the season. Since then, she has been volunteering two days each week. Carol pitches in where needed during distribution, helps to assemble senior packages to be delivered, keeps track of special sections like baby food and the gluten free section, washes the cleaning clothes, and so much more. Carol always wears a smile, is quick to welcome new volunteers, and makes the pantry a happy place to be with her infectious laugh.



In addition to regular distribution and receiving deliveries, there are many projects that need plenty of hands to accomplish. There are typically enough volunteers to get through daily operations, but rarely enough to tackle big projects. These projects are usually sorting and packaging bulk produce, repackaging bulk donations like bakery, bagging and labeling rice, sorting dry good donations, and more. Thanks to regular visits from a group of friends at APTiv, many of these projects are taken care of. Not only does this group get an amazing amount of work done in the 1 ½ hours they are volunteering, but they also bring an energy and joy to the pantry for staff and the other volunteers.



Deb has been an evening volunteer for years. Though, we are unsure how many years exactly because in true Deb fashion, she just pops in to help with the rush and any critical need for however long that takes. Deb helps during distribution, with pantry prep, assembling food packages, and whatever else needs to be done.



Dave, wearing the red jacket, is part of the “fantastic four”. Dave, Sig, Mike, and Al volunteer together in the warehouse on Mondays and Wednesday. They work on receiving deliveries, weighting and sorting product, and then putting it in its appropriate place. Dave is one of the do-it-all folks, pitching in wherever needed. When a driver calls in sick, Dave will run the route (probably with one of the other guys) to make sure it gets done. He also works the Saturday Food Fair event in West Salem.....EVERY month!



Thursday mornings are occasionally thin on volunteers to help with distribution. Janet, Myrna, and Trish (left to right) sure do know how to buckle down and work like a well-oiled machine. It is amazing to watch their system in action and how quickly they are able to serve people. Not only that, but they are happy and having fun through the hard work.

Janet (far left), has also recently started helping out on the Mobile Pantry as well. Tony, Mobile Pantry Manager, said the same thing about the energy and fast service she provides.



This is Helen (left). A social worker before retirement, Helen is well acquainted with the patrons utilizing WAVER. She doesn't like her picture being taken, hence the strained look. But, Helen is hilarious. Helen takes a “2-minute” break during her shift (it is actually more like 5-10) and she always says she has 30 seconds left regardless of how long it has actually been. She often tells the staff to get back to work, and then giggles as she walks away. Helen is a jokester, creating such a fun pantry environment on Fridays. Also, don't tell Helen she made the cut, she would give me a hard time about it. She deserves a little recognition, but would fight me on that.



Al has been a volunteer for an unknown number of years. Al didn't start signing into the volunteer log until 2017, but he was around a long time before that. In the 6 years since recording his hours, Al has given more than 1600 hours! A part of the “fantastic four”, Al volunteers on Mondays and Wednesdays, and then Fridays and covering for staff vacancies and the food fair and delivers senior packages and Al does a lot, knows a lot, and is just like one of the staff. He can be counted on in a pinch and is willing to do anything to see WAVER successfully serving people. One new responsibility Al took on in the last year was to join the campaign fundraising committee for the building project.



“The other Deb” is a familiar face during the evening shift. She too is a do-it-all volunteer, pitching in wherever and however she can. And like all the others, does so while offering a smile. Deb began volunteering just two years ago, and in that time has recorded over 1000 hours of service.



Jo (left) and husband, Don (not pictured), have been volunteering for the past 5 years. A part of the Monday crew, they work extra hard to clear out any past prime fresh product before replenishing the coolers prior to distribution. Jo and Don are great leaders, welcoming new volunteers and showing them the ropes. Prior to locking in Mondays, Jo and Do helped with sorting holiday donations and packing senior boxes to be delivered. Jo and Don are also a part of the “smile while serving” club.



Jane was a regular pantry volunteer until Tony, Mobile Pantry Manager, recruited her to serve on the bus with him. Jane helps at a few of the regularly scheduled stops, helping to assemble packages (fresh product) as people register.

Jane is picture here with a donation of personal care items. She recognized a frequent request from the people at her sites, so she bought detergent, soap, and deodorant for the food packages.



Tom (left) and wife, Lois, are also the cheerful, do-it-all type volunteers. They help with distribution, receive deliveries, assemble packages, help on the Mobile Pantry, and more. Tom and Lois can be counted on to positively represent WAFER by sharing our story out in the community, most recently accepting a donation from the Holmen Community Foundation “Jingle Fest” event in December.

Volunteer groups play a critical role in tackling more involved and larger scale projects. In 2022, volunteer groups started returning, but not to the level experienced several years ago.

Pictured below are just a few of the groups who have spent time with us this year: The Watkins Company, DSG, Gundersen Health System, Altra Federal Credit Union, Viterbo Student Service Saturday, UWL student service groups, Viterbo Men's Volleyball Team, Gensler, and Coulee Montessori Adolescent Program.





Who Does WAFER Help?

WAFER provides food to individuals and families throughout La Crosse County (the city of La Crosse, Mindoro, Holmen, West Salem, Onalaska, Bangor, Rockland) and La Crescent, MN due to their distance from their TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program – government commodities) outlet.

The face of hunger for the people served at WAFER is similar to the face you see passing by you on the sidewalk. Hunger does not discriminate, it affects all people regardless of age, gender, race, family upbringing, social status, or any other factor. WAFER families/individuals come from every walk of life: single parent household, two parents working yet still unable to get by, chronically disabled, newly diagnosed, jobless, homeless, veterans, seniors, and more.

WAFER's Programs and Services (see statistic graphs below)

Food Package Distribution

The main program is food package distribution. Patrons receive 4-5 day's worth of food a minimum of one time per month; quantities vary with food package size. The food package consists of non-perishables (canned fruit and vegetables, pasta, beans, tuna, cereal, peanut butter, crackers, soup, tomato products, mac-n-cheese, and side dishes as available), bakery items, dairy products (milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs), frozen meat, a plethora of produce (such as lettuce, greens, onions, potatoes, oranges, apples, bananas, peppers, melon, squash, berries, cabbage, green beans, carrots), and hygiene items. Across all programs, 17,566 food packages were provided in 2022.

Mobile Food Pantry

New in September 2017, The Mobile Food Pantry program is a specially designed vehicle that travels to various communities and neighborhoods throughout La Crosse County to provide food package distribution closer to home. The Mobile Food Pantry has a similar set up to the in-house food pantry and offers the same foods - canned goods, bakery items, frozen meat, dairy products, fresh produce, and hygiene items. Patrons are able to board the vehicle to choose their foods. Patrons may either receive a food package at the food pantry or at the mobile food pantry, not both. Regular scheduled stops make the service predictable, reliable, and accommodating. Days, times, and locations where the Mobile Pantry stops can be found on the calendar on the WAFER website. In 2022, 3674 food packages were provided.

Senior Share

The Senior Share program provides WAFER's normal food package to low income senior citizens. Food is pre-packed according to preferences, as much as possible, and delivered to La Crosse County senior meal sites, apartment complexes, community sites, or individual residences. In 2022, 536 senior packages were delivered.

Hmong Food Package

The Hmong Food Package contains 5 basic staples found in the Hmong diet and is one of WAFER's longest operating programs. This food package has been offered for more than 10 years since many of the Hmong families do not use or eat a portion of the foods available in the "traditional" food package. Many

traditional American staples are not a part of the Hmong diet. Therefore, Hmong families can receive bamboo shoots, fish sauce, two varieties of rice noodles, and rice in their food package if they so choose.

Feeding Today's Youth

Coordinating with the Bangor School District, we provide easy to prepare or prepared foods for children to take home on the weekend. Though Bangor isn't technically considered a "food desert" (meaning urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food within a one-mile radius and ten-mile radius respectively) there are few community resources for people to utilize. This program assures children have access to food outside of the school setting, return to school on Monday ready to learn, and have better opportunities for proper development. Children identified by school staff take home a backpack of food a minimum of one time per week, about 40-50 children participate. In 2022, approximately 430 food packages were provided.

Food Fair

In partnership with Channel One Foodbank, a Feeding America Foodbank, we are able to offer an additional food giveaway one time per month. The Food Fair is typically held the 4th Saturday of each month. Each account holder is issued a ticket for the Food Fair in order to receive the food package, however we implemented no pre-registration options mid-year. This event is a no-contact, drive-thru food distribution. The contents of the food package vary from month to month based on availability at Channel One but typically contains cereal, produce, bakery, meat, canned goods, and crackers. In 2022, Channel One provided an extra 125,000 pounds of food to 2900 households (not included in the total number of food packages given in 2021) through this event.

Nutrition Education

This project began in 2014 as a collaboration of community education partners. Pre-pandemic, Gundersen Health System Dietitians, Mayo Clinic Health System Dietitians and Drs. Logan and Faller, Viterbo Dietetic Students, Chartwell Chefs, and UW-Extension Nutrition Educators provide produce-emphasized education and food preparation skill development. Understanding that many of our patrons lack basic kitchen tools and food preparation knowledge to fully utilize all WAFER offers, this project was launched to tackle some root causes of food insecurity and poor health associated with food choices. Education sessions are offered monthly and each participant, typically 12 each session, receive education, recipes, samples, and an "incentive" (kitchen tool, cookbook, ingredients) related to the session topic in order to implement new skills at home. In 2021, classes resumed to in-person attendance. With the uncertainty of the building completion it was difficult to plan far in advance. UW-Extension FoodWI Nutrition Educators continued providing monthly classes in the short term. In 2022, 9 classes were provided.

Food Rescue

Food Rescue is a major component of WAFER's overall functioning and the means by which we are able to offer a large assortment of fresh food items as well as some dry products. Each day of the business week at least one driver is making stops throughout the community rescuing food that is "unsalable" in the store because of a dented box, close sell-by date, package mislabeling, and more. Produce in particular is typically quite bountiful, giving patron families a wonderful choice of healthy, nutrient-dense foods. Due to the generosity of WAFER's regular donors, people have an abundance of wholesome fresh foods to choose in addition to produce; dairy, baked goods, eggs, meat, and more. In 2022, rescued food accounted for 900,000+ pounds. Where 1 pound = \$1, \$900,000+ in product was rescued for the expense in vehicle and staff costs of roughly \$30,000.

Financial Information

WAFER receives financial support from personal and business donations, foundations, grants, and the United Way.

Operating Expense Accounts, contain minimum of 6 months of financial reserves to insure uninterrupted service...\$490,147.40*

Capital Improvements and Maintenance Accounts, for future expansion, building and equipment needs...\$765,259.96**

Capital Improvements and Maintenance Accounts, for ongoing programs including Nutrition-Education Training and the Mobile Food Pantry...\$149,193.03 ***

Receivable - United Way Pledge....\$16,182.00

Total Current Assets.....\$1,444,914.80

Other Assets including property and equipment.....\$2,563,545.52

Total Assets.....\$4,008,545.52

*Operating Expense Accounts include checking and money market accounts.

**Capital Improvement and Maintenance Accounts for future expansion, building, and equipment needs, includes money market accounts and bond funds.

***Capital Improvement and Maintenance Accounts for ongoing programs including Nutrition Education Training and the Mobile Food Pantry, includes money market accounts.



We wish to acknowledge community donors that partnered with WAFER from January – December 2022.

This list does not contain financial donors.

****Due to human and unintentional error, it is possible a donor may be emitted.***

Weekly Food Donors

Aldi
Bluebird Bakery and Cafe
Hy-Vee
Kwik Trip
Linda's Bakery
Panera Bread
Reinhart Companies
Sam's Club
Starbucks
Target
Walmart La Crosse
Walmart Onalaska
Westby Creamery

Churches

Bethel Lutheran Church
Bridges United Methodist Church
English Lutheran Church
First Baptist Church
First Lutheran Church
First Presbyterian Church
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Hope Christian Reformed Church
Living Word Christian Church
Mindoro Lutheran Church
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Our Savior Lutheran Church – West Salem
Our Savior's Lutheran Church – La Crosse

Roncalli Newman Center Parish
St. James Catholic Church
St. John's UCC, W.G.
St. John's United Church of Christ
St. Joseph Cathedral

Business and Corporate Partners

3 Amigos Property Management
360 Realty
Ace Hardware
Agropur Ingredients
Altra Federal Credit Union
APTiv - Riverfront
Bakalars Sausage Co.
Balanced Bodywork Massage
Bernie Buchner Plumbing
Big Lots
Burn Boot Camp
Canteen Vending
Century 21 Affiliated
CFS Egg
Channel One Food Bank
Chart Energy and Chemicals
Coulee Bank
Creamery Creek Farms
CSL Plasma
Dairyland Power
Dakota Supply Group
Edward Jones Investments

Business and Corporate Partners Cont...

Fastenal
Fed Ex Ground
First Supply
Friends of the Upper Mississippi
Frito Lay
Gillette Pepsi
Goodwill Industries
Great Lakes Cheese
Great Lakes Coca Cola
Green Lite Lighting Corp
Gundersen Health System
Gundersen Onalaska
Hansen's IGA
Hidden Trails Corn Maze
Hillside Animal Hospital
Home Federal
Homegrown Valley Fresh, LLC
Institutional Supplies
Jimmy John's
Jinglefest Holmen
Jolivette
Kunes RV
Kyle Visker, State Farm
La Crosse Area Realtors Association
La Crosse Center
Marine Credit Union
McLoone Metal Graphics Inc.
MDS
MOKA
Moser Trucking
Neighbor for Neighbor Food Pantry
Old Dutch
OptumServe Health Services
People's Food Cooperative, Inc.
Pepperidge Farm
Pogy's
Potato King
River Bank
River Rats
Sacia Apple Orchard
Schilling Paper Company
St Clare Health Mission
The Watkins Company
The Wharf Lounge
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans

Touchpoint Logistics
Trane Company
Tyson Foods
UW Provision Company
Van Lin Orchards
VanMeter
Westby Creamery
WINN, Inc
Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Coop

Governmental Partners

Democratic Party
Housing Authority of La Crosse
National Weather Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service

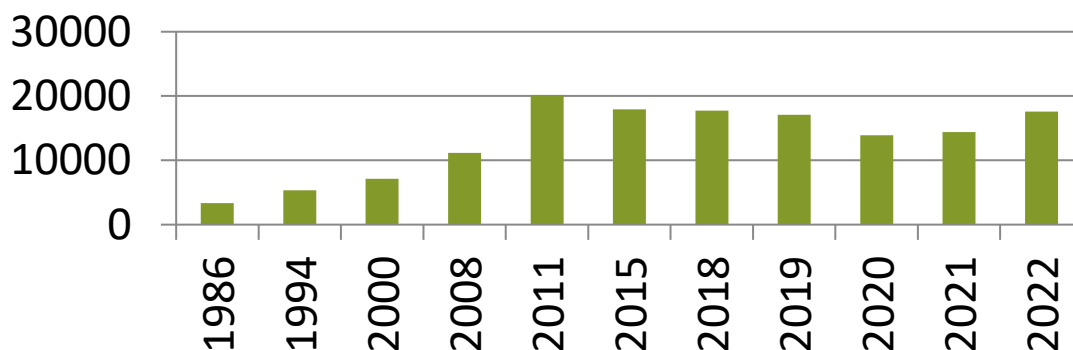
Service Groups

Bangor Township 4H
Beer by Bike Brigade
Gateway Area Boy Scouts
La Crosse Chamber Chorale
La Crosse Concert Band, Inc
North American Squirrel Assoc.
Operating Engineers Local 139
PEO Sisterhood Chapter CR
River City Rough Riders
River City Running Club
Rotary Lights
Women of the Moose, Chapter 1526

School and Education Partners

Aquinas Middle School
Bangor FFA
Cathedral School
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
Coulee Rock Christian Church
Great River Montessori
Luther High School
Northside Elementary School
PERIOD - UW-La Crosse
Southern Bluffs Elementary School
UW-La Crosse
UW-L Women's Track Team
Viterbo University
West Salem Elementary School
West Salem FFA

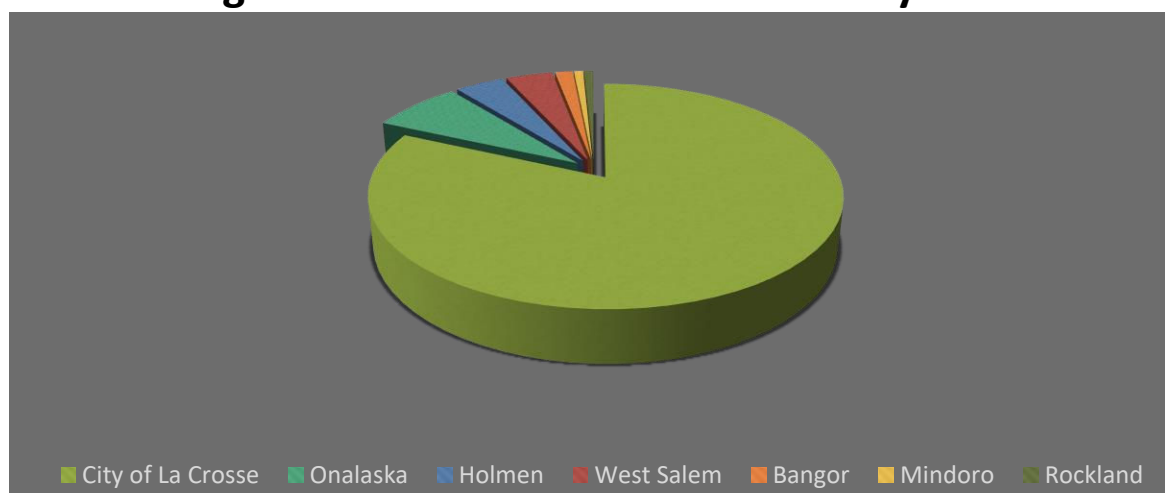
Food Package Distribution 1986-2022



Food Packages Distributed by County

County	Number of visits in 2021	Number of visits in 2022
La Crosse	14107	17123
Vernon	92	147
Trempealeau/Jackson	71	126
Monroe	10	29
Richland	3	3
Houston, MN	109	127
Other	12	11

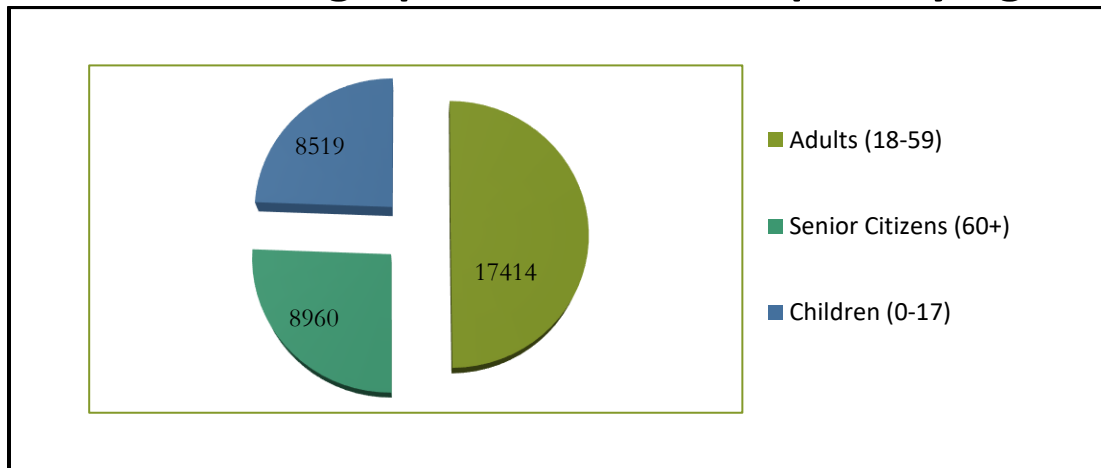
Food Package Distribution in La Crosse County Communities



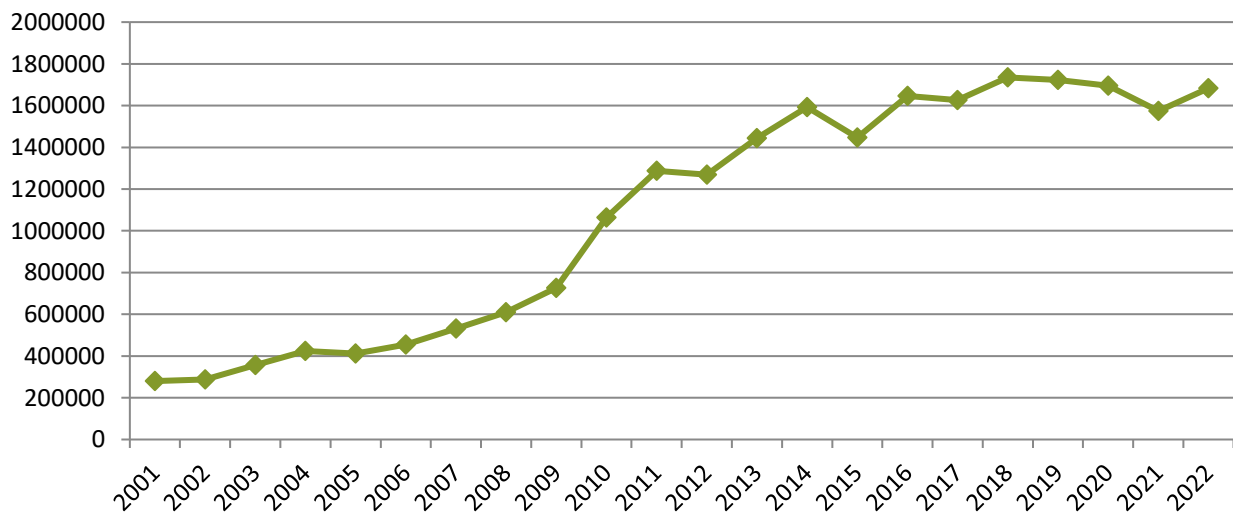
Unique People Served by County 2022

County	2022	2023
La Crosse	5372	
Vernon	67	
Trempealeau/Jackson	71	
Monroe	32	
Richland	4	
Houston, MN	70	
Other	15	

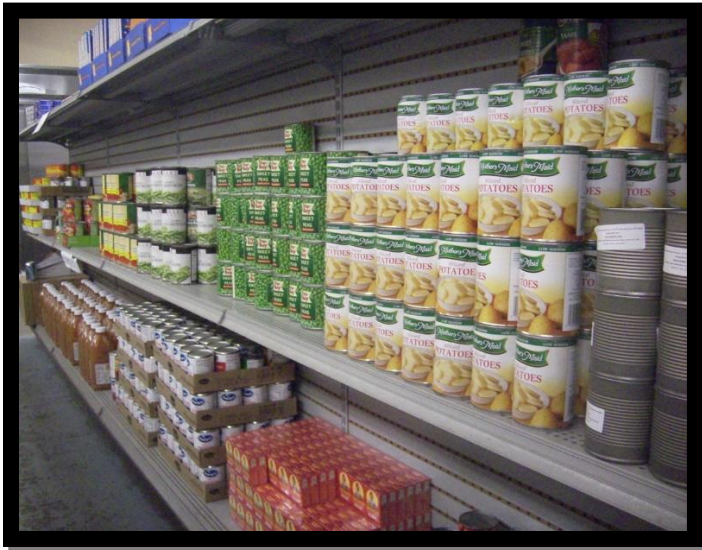
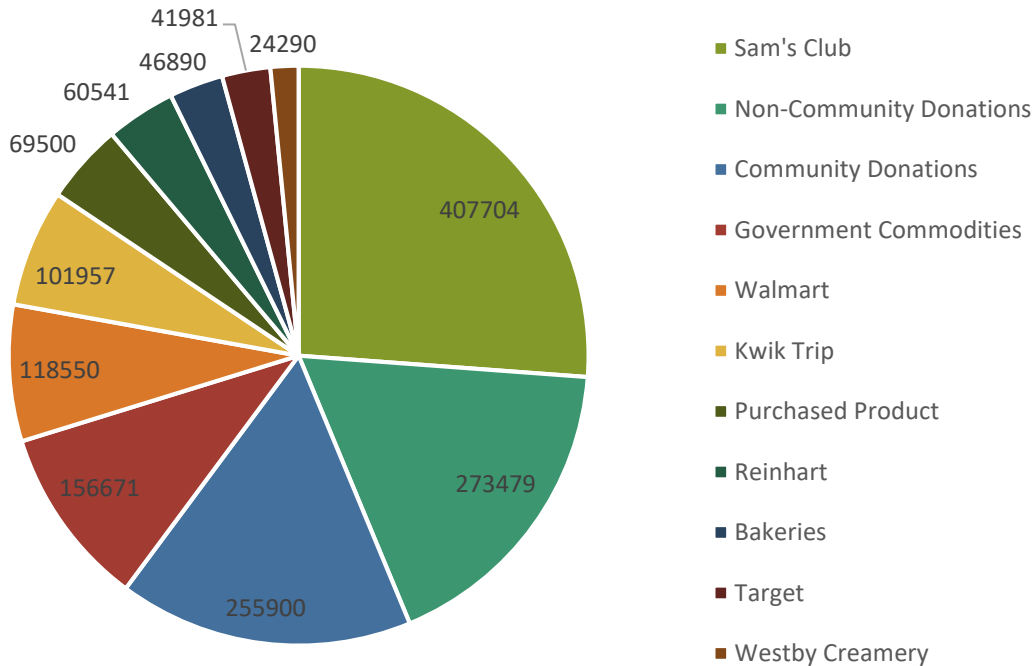
Household Demographics of Total People - by Age 2022



Total Pounds Distributed 2001-2022



2022 Food Sources and Poundage



THANK YOU FOR
HELPING TO FILL THE
SHELVES AND HELPING
YOUR NEIGHBORS RIGHT
HERE AT HOME!

If you should have questions regarding the contents of WAFER's annual report, please contact a board member or the Executive Director.

Address: 403 Causeway Blvd, La Crosse, WI 54603

Phone: 608-782-6003

Email: waferdirector@waferlacrosse.org

Website: waferlacrosse.org