



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

Winter 2022

# Campaign Kickoff



In early November, the campaign team publicly kicked off fundraising efforts and offered an invitation to everyone in the communities which benefit from WAFER's services. Board President, Taylor Haley, spoke of dignity and hope the new building will provide for patrons. "When you are hungry there can be a sense of feeling powerless, and hopelessness grows. I am inviting, if not challenging, each person, family, church, and business to be a part of a beacon of dignity and hope that won't just serve the north side, but our greater coulee region. When you give a gift to WAFER you are giving hope and dignity to a senior, a young mother, a person without a home, a veteran. Won't you join us in restoring dignity and hope?"

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# A Message From The Executive Director

As excitement for the campaign grows, so does the number of requests for tours and presentations. People are so curious about the building project, and always ask when the new facility will be ready to open. As of this newsletter, spring 2023 is the projection. Interestingly enough, the second most asked question is, “how is inflation affecting WAFER and the people who need food help?”

The current food system situation was complex and disrupted at the onset of COVID, inflation just added to the strain. Warehouses pulled back stock for retail vendors leaving us few options for acquiring the food needed to supplement other sources. Though the situation has improved, supply chain issues still remain. This year we have also experienced a decrease in donations across the board - government commodities, community food donations, and retail partners - averaging 10,000 pounds less monthly (equivalent to 8000+ meals) compared to previous years. As a result, food expenses are increasing (some items 3 times more than typical) and because of having to purchase more to keep basic staples on hand. Even the process of purchasing has changed as many items are difficult to find in the quantities we require if even at all, items as simple as canned vegetables. We are also purchasing more fresh produce now than we have in the past 10 years. Thankfully we get much of it at a reduced cost from our Feeding America partner, Channel One Regional Food Bank. I personally have worked in the food pantry system for 17 years and have never before experienced anything like this.



‘But, what about need?’ Demand has seen a shift too, an average of 300 more households monthly needing food assistance compared to 2021. Our staff is hearing how inflation is impacting the people WAFER serves. Public benefits are no longer enough to supply for an entire family’s need for the month. The ability to purchase high quality foods such as meat, dairy, and produce is suffering. I can only imagine the anxiety parents must feel knowing how important good food is for growing children and having fewer options and resources. People here at home are making hard choices. Thanks to you, the choices are lessened and people are receiving good quality food to support a healthy lifestyle!



In September we welcomed Victoria to the team as the Operations and Development Manager. She brings a varied background to WAFER which will provide consistency in daily operations and also the drive to help grow services, programs, and impact. You can read more about her on the following page.

If you aren’t already, please follow WAFER Food Pantry on Facebook. We love highlighting the unique and amazing ways that so many are pitching in to support WAFER to make sure no one goes hungry. To name a

few recently, Coulee Region Hunger Walk, UW-L Ladies Track and Field Team, Aquinas Middle School Students, Altra Federal Credit Union employees, APTiv interns, First Lutheran Elementary, Rural Virtual Academy, CSL Plasma, Cranksgiving participants, Marine Credit Union, Creamery Creek Farm, and so many more. WAFER is a community project and so many from local communities are stepping up to the challenge to ensure no one goes hungry. Thank you for stepping up too! Blessings in the New Year,

*Erin Wedekart*





# Building Capacity, Hope and Dignity

Political campaigning may have ended for the year, BUT Mark Solyst and Madalene Buelow are hitting the campaign trail hard. They've been presenting WAFER's story, both past and present, to service organizations in the area. It's a wonderful way to share the WAFER legacy and how it intends to go forward. Fundraising efforts are increasing so if you belong to an organization and would like a presentation please contact Victoria (608-782-6003 x2) and she will schedule a time for you.

In November, we kicked off the public phase of the building renovation campaign. There is great momentum after raising more than one-third of projected project expenses prior to publicly announcing the beginning of the campaign. We are pleased to share that in a few short weeks we'll be asking our friends and neighbors to join in this endeavor to bring the pantry to the new location. Along with sharing campaign progress, the Board would like to acknowledge new gifts from the following donors:

George & Virginia Schneider Family Fund  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
LCF Community Giving Fund  
Gundersen Health System  
Cleary Kumm Foundation  
Xcel Energy  
Emma Ledbetter, MD  
Mark & Jennifer Brumm  
English Lutheran Church  
Shapiro Family Fund  
Cheryl & Cindy Vieth Fund  
Mayo Health System



## Welcome Victoria



Hi! My name is Victoria Yocum, and I'm the new Operations and Development Manager at WAFER.

I grew up on a small farm in northern Minnesota. When I moved to Winona for college, I fell in love with the area. I met my husband during my senior year and we decided to stay in the area. Together we have a 3-year-old son, a dog named Buck and a cat named Kitty. After work you can usually find me hiking with my son or making a mess in my kitchen—I love to cook! In my free time I also enjoy reading and sewing. I'm always looking for recommendations from fellow bookworms!

I earned a bachelor's degree in Cellular and Molecular Biology from Winona State, and a master's degree in Nutrition from the University of Natural Medicine. I spent 6 years doing senior care in various settings while earning my degrees. Working with memory care patients has been one of my favorite jobs. I've studied food systems and food justice extensively in my coursework. It's awesome to be in a place where everyone is so compassionate and dedicated to helping the community. I'm excited to be here at WAFER and will do my best to contribute to relieving hunger in the Greater La Crosse area.

## BOARD MEMBERS

Taylor Haley, President  
Mike Voss, Vice-Pres.  
Lee Bluske, Treasurer  
Anne Clarkin, Secretary  
Madalene Buelow  
Brad Clarkin  
Dorothy Stroschein  
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## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Erin Waldhart  
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Victoria Yocum  
Operations and Development  
Manager  
  
Tony Meyers  
Mobile Pantry Manager



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Visit waferlacrosse.org to sign up and receive a monthly e-newsletter.



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](http://www.waferlacrosse.org) and use one of the donation links provided .

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

# Thank you!