



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

SUMMER 2023

YOUR DOLLARS CHANGE LIVES

WAFER is a food pantry, but that isn't all. In addition to providing groceries to people who struggle to put food on the table, WAFER offers a variety of programs and services to address barriers to accessing food. You can find full program descriptions on the website, but services generally target children, seniors, persons with physical limitations, and rural families. WAFER isn't *just* a food pantry and your dollars do more than *just* provide food. Your dollars change lives.

Patrick has come to WAFER for years for groceries. "Pretty soon I won't be coming to WAFER. I passed all the tests needed to move to a management position at work and I will be getting a raise!" Things are turning around for Patrick, but while he worked to make life more stable, WAFER was there for him because of you.

For Marie, your dollars provide opportunities to eat healthier and try new foods. "I count my blessings when I am eating WAFER food. I've learned to like foods that I normally wouldn't eat in the past and you've helped me utilize more types of food. Thank you for helping me find a way to enjoy kale." Marie shared that very little is wasted in her home, that imagination can go a long way in the kitchen and her monthly food budget. Yet, compassionate service is at the heart of what WAFER does. "Thank you WAFER for all the kindness you've ever given me. Thank you for never letting me feel embarrassed or bad when I come to get food."

Tracy retired after a career in health care with a comfortable nest egg that provided for her needs, but an incurable disease and a stroke left her with medical expenses far exceeding her income. Unable to drive, the Mobile Pantry came close enough to her apartment to walk. Tracy just found a part-time job with benefits and no longer needs WAFER, but we were there for her when she needed it most.

The value and impact of your dollars through WAFER is also recognized by volunteers and community members. "Thank you WAFER for supporting individuals and families with fresh and healthy food. You make a huge difference in this community and I have seen it first hand."

In this issue.....

*A message from the Director; increased need and WAFER has moved!

Our new address is 1603 George St, La Crosse, WI 54603

*A growing number of events, fundraisers, and food drives.

A Message From The Executive Director

The last 6 months have been a blur of activity and momentous change for WAFER. My thirty second elevator speech would include a busy holiday season, construction meetings, facility completion in April, interior brick wall graphics restored, a slow transition of product and equipment while the punch list was completed, volunteer training the first week of May focusing on the patron shopping experience, an open house on May 10th, and projected first day of service in the new facility on May 15th (which hinged on occupancy permits).



Occupancy permits were issued late on May 11th. Diane and Laura (pictured right) distributed the last food packages at the Causeway Boulevard location on Friday, May 12th, and the grand opening was on Monday, May 15th. What a whirlwind! We are so grateful you joined us on this great adventure!

Moving operations from one facility to another is not for the faint of heart. Former Operations Manager turned Project Manager, Brad Gerdes, led teams of volunteers and staff through a nearly seamless transition. The time, effort, and thoughtfulness he gave to the project is invaluable. As we settle into our new space, Brad continues to guide volunteers and staff, and create an easy and safe environment in which to serve people. The reaction patrons have when they see the facility for the first time makes the long process worth it. "Wow, it is just like a grocery store." With those types of reactions I can confidently say we reached our goal!



Opening the new location couldn't have come at a better time. We are seeing 100% more new families than typical per month, and people who haven't been to the pantry in 4+ years. May was the busiest service month in nearly 5 years. One patron hadn't been to WAFER since located at St Paul's Lutheran Church on West Avenue twenty years ago. Inflation, federal benefit rollbacks, and inside shopping seem to be the biggest contributors to the increase.

Thankfully, the number of new volunteers is also increasing. In the last 2 months we have welcomed nearly 20 new volunteers into the regular rotation, which is about 15 more than expected. Longtime volunteers do a great job of recruiting by simply sharing the impact they see WAFER has for people and how volunteering also benefits them. "Volunteering at WAFER has been an amazing way to give back to the community in a powerful way. It is a fun and engaging place to be! I'm grateful for all the connections I've made so far." "I've been a volunteer for almost 5 years. I like meeting new people and making some friends in the process." "Thank you for helping us to serve our community."

You support WAFER with your gifts of food and funds, and I invite you to spend some time with us and see how those resources are put to use. Thank you for choosing to partner with WAFER, because together we make a meaningful difference for thousands of people right here at home.

In Service,

Erin Wardhaugh



Community Involvement Update

Volunteer groups not only provide manpower for daily operations and food distribution, but are also a tremendous help for events and getting large projects completed quickly. For instance, we received a donation of 8 pallets of bulk eggs. Employees from Fox 25/48 spent a morning with us and worked at repackaging into cartons to get them out for patrons.



In the past 6 months we have had many groups from our local communities spend some time with us. Just a few have included Coulee Christian School, a summer school class from Logan High School (pictured left), Mississippi Valley Mayhem (pictured second from left), Coulee Bank (pictured third from left), Associated Bank, Hydrite Chemical employees (pictured far right), Watkins employees, Viterbo Core Program, and more.



WAFER has many partners helping to support the missions work. Through summer you will find volunteers, staff, and board members at many community resource fairs and events at local churches, businesses, parks, and even a Craft & Vendor Fair in our parking lot on August 5th from 10-3.

As we get back to regular life there has been an increasing number of fundraisers and food drives to support WAFER's services. Just some of the events to come and those in the last 6 months have been Rotary Lights food collection, Holmen Area Foundation Jingle Fest (bottom left), Rotary Lights bear sales to raise funds for the new facility project (bottom row middle), Hydrite Chemical Steals for Meals promotion with La Crosse Loggers, Kids from Wisconsin Stage to Table Tour, postal food drive (first row right), a period product drive from Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse, Bacon Fest, Washburn on the Park Apartments park night, La Crosse Concert Band "WAFER night" food collection at Riverside Park, Kiwanis Club backpack food drive (top row middle), Roncalli Newman and Blessed Sacrament Parishes food drive, and Coulee Montessori 100 days of school food drive (bottom row right). WAFER is impactful thanks to great community partners.



BOARD MEMBERS

- Taylor Haley, President
- Mike Voss, Vice-Pres.
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- Anne Clarkin, Secretary
- Madalene Buelow
- Brad Clarkin
- Dorothy Stroschein
- Mike Swinghamer

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

- Erin Waldhart
Executive Director
- Laurie Sullivan
Operations Manager
- Tony Meyers
Mobile Pantry Manager



1603 George St ← **NEW ADDRESS!**

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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 one of the donation links provided .

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

Thank you!