



WAFFER, Inc.

Annual Report

January 1-December 31, 2023

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:

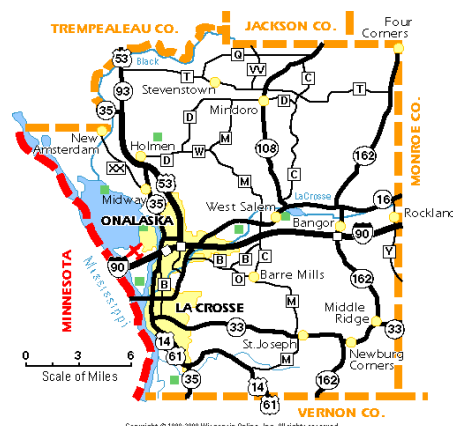
- Expanding and developing food procurement and food distribution
- Educating patrons on nutrition and food preparation

December 2023 Board of Directors

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

Madalene Buelow
Brad Clarkin
Cory Gylock
Dorothy Stroschein
Mike Swinghamer
Kelly Wilde

Dedicated to fighting hunger
in La Crosse County
since 1985



Dear Friends,

Long awaited dreams, intense planning, and people wholly invested in WAFER made 2023 momentous! For the past decade, the board of directors had been searching for a new facility to meet WAFER's and the community's needs for the next 40+ years. Thanks to a "Seeding the Legacy" grant from the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, the board was able to move forward and with the purchase the former Gordy's Market at the corners of George and Gillette in August 2021. In October 2021, demolition of interior walls and the removal of grocery store equipment was completed to allow the architects to start developing a facility plan. Many people asked why we needed to make these changes. Simply, WAFER is not a grocery store. There was a need to have designated spaces for food pantry operations; shopping, warehousing, education, USDA compliant food repackaging, programs, vehicles, and equipment.



From November 2021 to May 2022, the architect team and a team of staff and board members met to plan the facility; pantry flow for shoppers, equipment, general layout, administrative areas, education space, and more. In June 2022, construction began with renovations and construction of an addition to the north side of the building. One of the first steps in restoration was to remove stucco that had been added overtop of the original brick on the exterior. This revealed previous alterations to the building, such as cement block use to fill in original window openings. These blocks were used as "billboards" with hand painted advertisements on them. Unfortunately, these couldn't stay. Another amazing find was the original 1900's brick wall which had been painted and converted to an entrance during a building addition to the west, it is believed. The wall was cleaned and sealed, then restored as much as possible by local artist, Michael Martino. You can find more photos on the "capital campaign" tab on the website.

As the completion date approached in March 2023, Project Manager and former Operations Manager, Brad Gerdes, recruited volunteer groups and coordinated logistics of moving from one facility to the other. Pallet racking was disassembled from the Causeway Boulevard building, moved, and set up in the new facility. Pictured (left) is Kevin, Warehouse Manager, and longtime volunteer, Dave. A team of mostly new volunteers (right) assembled shelving and set up the pantry.



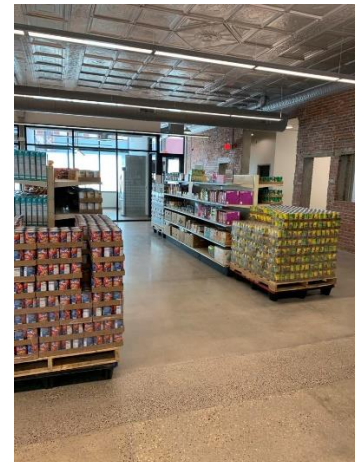


Staff moved equipment over just days before we were set to open in May 2023. Equipment included a few industrial cooler/freezer units, forklift, and office equipment. Pictured are: route driver Mike, Warehouse Manager Kevin, and Evening Manager Ben.

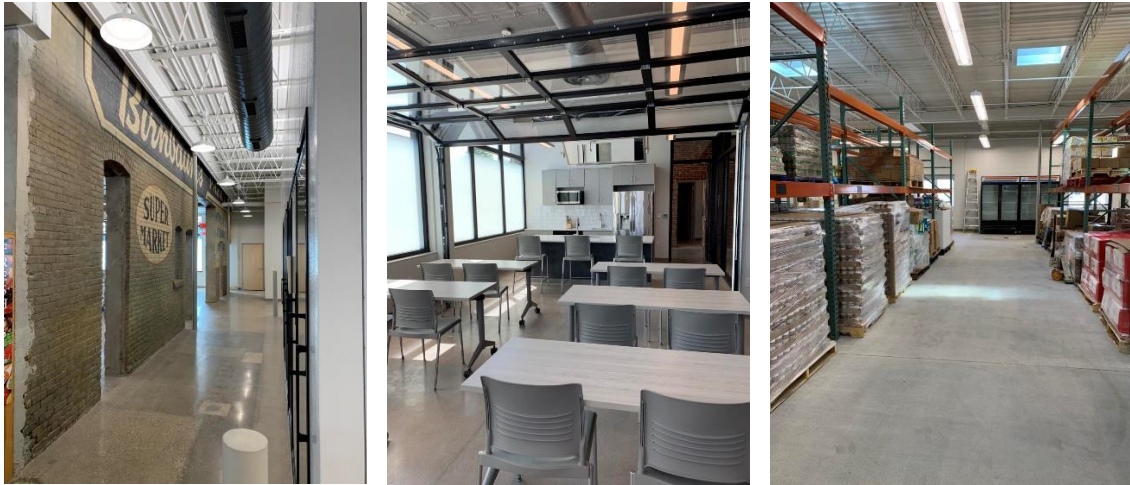
On Friday, May 12th, Laura and Diane (l to r) provided the last food packages to patrons from the Causeway Boulevard location and closed up the office for the last time.



The board hosted an open house for the community. This gave individuals, donors, businesses, stakeholders, patrons, volunteers, staff, and their families an opportunity to tour the facility, see the improvements, and learn more about WAFER during hours patrons were not shopping. The community turnout was fantastic and the positive feedback was validating. We all worked so hard to keep patrons at the forefront of the pantry design; considering hope, dignity, and compassion in all decisions. “This looks just like a grocery store.” This was heard many times during the open house, and continues today when we have new shoppers in for their first visit. Pictured below is the lobby, produce section of the pantry, and the canned goods aisles. The space allowed us to return to in-person shopping vs curbside grocery pickup that was implemented during the pandemic. However, a drive-thru system was added to the new facility to accommodate for seniors, people with physical limitations, and parents with small children.



Pictured here is the restored storefront, education space, and warehouse.



Building plans allowed for garage space for the van and mobile pantry. Over the years the vehicles have been vandalized. The worst incident was the catalytic converter being cut out of the mobile pantry twice in 6 months at \$2500-3000 each.



Personally, I was honored to be supported by so many non-profit leaders, colleagues working hard in local communities to make life better for so many, and partners who took time out of their busy schedule to attend the open house.

On Monday, May 15th, we celebrated the grand opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony just prior to the start of service. There were donors, board members, volunteers, elected officials, and stakeholders present to join in such a long awaited achievement. It was a great and proud moment for those dedicated to WAFER!



As we settled into a new “normal” we also experienced some firsts, like the first donation offer from a trucking company. The addition of a loading dock, and abundant cooler/freezer space, has provided opportunities to capitalize on product donations we might otherwise turn down. Having abundant produce for patrons to choose is the best!



During the summer, we were invited to be a part of so many wonderful community resources fairs and events. During the pandemic, these types of events were few. Volunteers excitedly offered to represent WAFER at the events to answer questions, hand out service information, recruit volunteers, and generally get people interested in getting involved at WAFER. Pictured (l to r) are: Lois, Carol, Sue, and Kelli.





Early in the year we started noticing an upward trend in the number of people needing food help. As a result, our surplus was quickly depleted. Expanded food package services implemented during the pandemic (increasing the number of visits allowable per month) was rolled back to one visit per month and weekly produce pickups the other weeks of the month. In July, we served 1500+ families, the most in nearly 5 years. We shared our need with the public, and the response was immediate. We are SO very grateful for individuals, businesses, churches, service clubs, etc who hear our requests and respond.

In September, a solar panel project kicked off. Working with structural engineers, the architects, solar company, and the local utility, a plan was devised to maximize roof space for panels. Of course, there were a few hiccups along the way, but were able to max out the space with 161 panels. Thanks to a few private local donors, and several federal incentives and grant programs, the entire system was funded. On January 3rd, 2024, the system was tested and commissioned and as of 11am we were receiving power from the panels. It is estimated this system will provide for 50% of current energy usage. As of January 1st, 2024, this would be approximately \$1200-1400 in saving per month.



New this fall was a partnership with the Viterbo Dietetics Program. Students developed nutrition facts, recipes, and handouts for a particular food. Mostly the foods they chose were those we had in abundance. Students then prepared one of the recipes to give samples of during shopping hours. The students spent ~2 hours in the pantry on Tuesdays in October, chatting with patrons and answering questions. The feedback was terrific, so much so that we also asked our partners at UW-Extension FoodWise if they too would be willing to offer a series of mini “demos”. Patrons enjoyed this new experience, and the samples!



Another really interesting opportunity presented in 2023 was being contacted by a national research company contracted by the CDC to conduct a diabetes prevention study in a pantry setting. Target population was rural pantry users at risk for diabetes and internet connectivity barriers or instability. The study would provide a device for participants to work through a 6-week course, some people offered additional supports and others not. After intense interviews and many meetings, WAFER was chosen as one of three food pantries in the county to participate, the other two from California and Tennessee. However, when it came time to sign a contract, the 30-page document that was provided was too limiting. What an honor to be considered and chosen to be a part of such critical research for the population we serve.

In my time with WAFER the staff has worked toward gauging need, mission effectiveness, and quality of service. In the past, surveys have been conducted every other year. Questions typically focus on choice and quality of food, quality of interactions with staff and volunteers, if one food package per month is sufficient for their needs, if other food resources are utilized, if meals are skipped, if household items are used in place of personal care items, and other barriers. I found these surveys could provide good data and feedback, if people would take the time to fill out the one-page form I inherited from my predecessor. In any given year we would receive back about 200 surveys (out of 1300+ served). During the pandemic the surveys were not a critical part of our work and surveys were suspended.

In early 2022, I decided to pivot and rethink how we could still gather the information we wanted or needed for grant reporting, but do so in a more effective and equitable way. I chose questions from the previous surveys that I felt were the most important to keep aware of trends and emerging needs. Instead of a full page survey given during one month each year, one question is asked at registration. A different question is asked each month, and then the results are compared with previous year’s results. Still gathering the same data, just in a new and easy format. In January 2023, the surveys were halted as we prepared for the move.

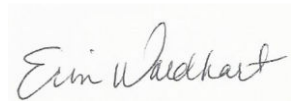
In October, the monthly questions were restarted, and planned out for the next 8 consecutive months. The questions have yes or no answers, but staff collect any additional comments as patrons share on the topic. The surveys completed October through December were:

1. Is the availability of abundant produce important to you? 733 people surveyed, 82% responded yes.
 - a. A similar question was asked on the 2018 patron survey, the likelihood that they would take more produce if it was available. 94% indicated yes.
2. Does having access to food services that WAFER offers help to free up money in your budget for other needed areas? (those other needed areas could be housing, utilities, healthcare, personal care items, transportation, etc.) 1221 people surveyed, 99% responded yes.
3. Thinking back through the past year, have you had to substitute non-personal care items in place of actual personal care items? (for example, toilet paper/paper towel for menstrual pads, dish soap for shampoo, alternatives to laundry soap). 750 people surveyed, 30% responded yes.
 - a. This question was asked on the 2018 patron survey. 47% responded yes.

Please take a few moments to read more about WAFER in 2023. In the report you will find a highlight overview, information about volunteers, an introduction to just some of the amazing volunteers who spend time with us, a snapshot of volunteer groups, programs and services, financial information, community donors list, and a thorough breakdown of service statistics including a historical viewpoint.












Thank you for choosing to partner with WAFER in 2023. Your gifts of time, talent, food, and funds make a world of difference for thousands of people every month. I invite you to get to know us or get to know us better. Come spend some time in the pantry, consider serving your friends and neighbors here at home, and maybe learn a little bit more about who WAFER is and all WAFER does for people who need it most.

In Service,



Erin Waldhart, Executive Director

Service At A Glance – A 2023 Highlight Overview

-  Approximately 38,500 people fed through in-house food package distribution, senior food package delivery, weekend backpacks, mobile pantry distribution sites, and mass distribution events.
-  The Mobile Food Pantry distributed 3672 food packages, an increase of more than 100 households monthly over 2022.
-  Mobile Food Pantry had 19 established stopping points each month by the end of the year.
-  The “Backpack” program operating at the Bangor School District provided a total of 333 weekly weekend food packages, 30-40 children were served throughout the school year each month.
-  The once monthly Saturday “Food Fair” extra food package distribution was discontinued beginning in July due to a cut in funding from our food bank. Mass distribution and pop-up events provided an extra 1853 food packages.
-  Complete food packages maintained an increased availability twice monthly through May when need increased to a point where this was no longer sustainable. We returned to one time per month complete food packages and produce/surplus packages the other weeks of the month the complete package wasn’t utilized.
-  The number of new families served increased by an average of 26 families per month compared to the year before. In total, 917 families were new to WAFER in 2023. The last time more new households were served in a year was 2011 at 1006.
-  Nearly 1.8 million pounds of food, equivalent to 1.5 million meals, were provided.
-  More than 980,000 pounds of food was rescued from local retailers.
-  Nutrition Education classes continued thanks to a partnership with UW-Extension FoodWI Nutrition Educators, Mary, Emily, and Karie. The first cooking class in the new education space was held in September. The session was well attended, the most since prior to the pandemic.
-  In August, we welcomed community educators from Gundersen Health System who presented a session on “smart shopping”. They continue to offer sessions every other month focused on topics ranging from nutrition to mental health.

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 at the Causeway Boulevard location. Therefore, volunteers literally did 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. As the virus situation ebbed and flowed, WAFER leadership opted to best protect the volunteer base and wait until the move to the new and larger facility before offering in-person shopping.

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 2023, volunteers gave 20,071 hours of service! The value of a volunteer hour is \$31.80 according to Independent Sector. Based on this rate, WAFER volunteers contributed a value of \$638,257.80 and nearly a \$300,000 value higher than 2022. Even if each person was paid minimum wage, volunteers saved WAFER \$145,515 in staffing expenses. While the increase in volunteerism can be attributed to the move from one facility to another, the in-person self-select shopping process has really needed more volunteers to keep up with the increased number of shoppers.

"Giving" the gift of time looked different for each volunteer in 2023. 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 and then assisting patrons through the shopping experience in the new facility.
- 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 and equipment repairs.
- Assisting with preparing the new facility and moving the operations from the old facility.
- And stepping in wherever possible to just get things done.

Just A Few Of WAFER's "Rockstar" Volunteers

(It was a busy year so we don't have as many pictures as we would have loved to share.)



Sue has been volunteering for more than a decade. Originally a part of the Monday crew, Sue moved to Tuesdays during the pandemic when help was in short supply. In addition to helping shoppers during their visit, Sue helps with special events and is a great representative to WAFER.

Outside of WAFER, Sue is involved in a number of activities and groups; exercise and cards at the YMCA, golf in the summer, neighborhood ladies' monthly gatherings, and more. Everywhere Sue goes she talks about WAFER. For Christmas this year her exercise and cards groups decided to donate to WAFER instead of doing a gift exchange. The other groups collected socks and hats for other local service organizations.



Carol came to WAFER in 2020 when we put out a plea for help sorting Rotary Lights donations. She came with two friends, and now she has found her niche. Carol brings a lively and energetic presence to the pantry. She is so joyful, passing that positive energy to the people she assists shopping. In addition to helping in the pantry (with shoppers and stocking) 2 or more times per week, Carol has also assumed responsibility for packing senior packages that go out for delivery and helping with special events like fundraisers or mass distributions.



Monica also came to WAFER in 2020, with Carol. Monica has also found her niche, volunteering twice a week helping with pantry preparation prior to service and assisting patrons during shopping. Like many other volunteers, Monica just goes about her time at WAFER helping in whatever way she can. She sees a need and just takes care of it.

In this picture, which we talked her into, Monica is posing with gluten free items. The picture was used for a client impact story about a young, single mom whose son needed these items due to a medical condition.



This is Donna and Jane (L to R) and they routinely volunteer together on the mobile pantry. This volunteer job, while similar to in-pantry volunteering, can often be a little more taxing due to the environment. In the last 2 years, the usage on the mobile pantry has sharply increased. It isn't uncommon for the volunteers to provide 20+ food packages in 2 hours, and it is just the two of them. Also, the majority of the work is inside the vehicle, but regulating temperatures during the extreme weather we see isn't very easy. These two stick with it during 90 degrees and humidity and the bitter cold of winter.



Lois, and her husband, Tom, have been volunteering for 1 year and 4 years respectively. As a couple they assist patrons during shopping, assemble packages at Mobile Pantry sites, represent WAFFER at events and food/fund drives, and more. Tom refinished a bookcase to be used in the lobby of the new building, and recently has been part of the team working to resolve issues with the Mobile Pantry. This dynamic duo generously blesses WAFFER and the people served with their time and passion.



Terry has been volunteering for the past 2 ½ years. Terry is very quiet, and some days we don't even know he is here until he checks out for the day. Terry quietly goes about his volunteering and spends his time mostly on stocking the shelves. Starting around the holidays Terry increased the amount he volunteers to get food collection items sorted and on the shelves. When Terry ends his shift, the shelves look just like a grocery with products faced to the front and tidy.



Sig has been volunteering for nearly 8 years. He is part of the warehouse crew who help with receiving deliveries and donations on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. There is a group of about 4-5 guys that all volunteer together. When the route drivers get back with retail product, this crew goes to work sorting items and then putting them in their appropriate area – cleanroom to break down bulk items, refrigerated items to the cooler, frozen items to the freezer, and dry goods to the shelves or their warehouse area. In addition, Sig will also fill in on retail pickup routes when one of the drivers is absent. Not only is Sig a great help, he also adds an element of energy and laughter to the environment.



Jim joined the WAFER volunteer team – specifically a part of the warehouse crew – a little over a year ago and just before we began preparation to move. In the last year, Jim has provided over 200 hours of service and can be counted on to pitch in wherever needed. Jim's calm demeanor and humble service makes him a great role model for younger volunteers.



Pictured here (left to right) is Board Member, Anne Clarkin, WAFER staff, Laura Kim, and volunteer, Al. These three pitched in to get government commodities put away after the truck was late and all the other volunteers went home. Al, pictured right, has been volunteering with WAFER for more than a decade, but only started logging his hours 8 years ago. Since then, Al has accrued more than 2000 hours. Al, also part of the warehouse crew, fills in on retail pickup route when needed, delivers senior packages when needed, delivers family packages to Mindoro, helps with events, and SO much more. This last year Al has also served on the Building Campaign Committee. Al was a Jefferson Award recipient in 2018 for his community-wide service efforts.



Chuck and Sharon have been volunteering for the last 2 years. This sweet couple is game for nearly anything; delivering senior packages, volunteering for events, representing WAFER at events or food drives, and wherever there is a need. Most recently, Sharon has also been assisting at the front desk to answer phones, receive donations, and other administrative duties to help relieve some pressure from the staff as the number of people needing food assistance has increased.



Kara, and husband, John, have been volunteering for 1 ½ years. Like most volunteers, Kara just pitches in when she sees a need. Stocking shelves, sorting product, and assisting shoppers are just a few of the ways in which Kara serves at WAFER. This picture was taken within the first few days in the new facility. You can see the excitement on her face!



Mary has been volunteering with WAFER for 3 ½ years, starting just a few months into the pandemic, spending time assembling packages, stocking, sorting, assisting shoppers. Mary also has promoted WAFER in her congregation, coordinating food drives and suggesting items typically in short supply or specialty items for people on restricted diets.



Jo, and husband, Don, have been volunteering with WAFER for the past 6 years. Having spent most of that time at the facility on Causeway, this couple was so excited for the move. This is Jo on the very first day we opened the doors of the new facility. Jo and Don roll in the door first thing on Monday morning and get to work prepping the cooler and pantry for shoppers. In addition to in-pantry jobs, this couple represents WAFER at events, food/fund raisers, train new volunteers, and so much more.



David (left) and John (right) volunteer on the Mobile Pantry at least once monthly. These two do such a great job of providing good service, but moreover they serve in a compassionate and approachable way. They will nearly bend over backwards to help in whatever way they can particularly since many of the people they meet at the sites struggle with mobility or physical barriers. The Mobile Pantry can be physically challenging because of the amount of product moved out in a 2-hour time frame as well as the weather condition, but they continue showing up to serve.



MaryBeth is a regular evening volunteer, spending two nights a week at WAFT. She arrives early for each shift to make sure the pantry is ready for shoppers, getting coolers and fresh produce displays staged with options. MaryBeth brings with her a genuine smile, compassion, and an approachability to both volunteers and shoppers. MaryBeth can be counted on to just do whatever is needed, finding the gaps, and making sure shoppers at night have a good experience. MaryBeth is also an avid reader and will bring books to stock the lending library.



Emmett, also known as Butch, has been volunteering for the last 2 years. Emmett spends nearly each evening we are open volunteering. He also comes early to get a start on pantry prep. Emmett is the go-to guy when there is a staff absence at night. Emmett gets the process of product rotation, where to find the product we need in the freezers and coolers, and is a great resource for the other volunteers. Evenings can sometimes be slim with volunteer help and that means more work for everyone. However busy the nights can be hasn't one-bit deterred Emmett.

Volunteer groups play a critical role in tackling more involved and larger scale projects. In 2023, group volunteerism returned to levels we experienced a few years ago. Businesses were especially eager to volunteer in the new space. People who had spend time in the old building we amazed by the open, bright, spacious, and clean space.

Pictured below are just a few of the groups who have spent time with us this year: Logan High School summer class, Hydrite, Van Meter, Altra Gives Back day, RMS, Associated Bank, Watkins, Machinists Union, Viterbo students, Remedy Staffing, WIPFLi, Coulee Bank, Coulee Montessori, United Way Day of Caring, Select Custom Solutions, Viterbo CORE program, Nesnah Ventures, Mississippi Mayhem, Fox 25/48, and Coulee Christian.







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.

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 and services, 19,478 food packages were provided in 2023.

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 2023, 3838 food packages were provided.

Senior Share

The Senior Share program provides WAFER's normal food package to homebound low-income seniors. 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 2023, 449 senior packages were delivered. There is a small handful of individuals who volunteer specifically for this program.

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 12 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 culture or 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 children participate. In 2023, approximately 330 food packages were provided.

Nutrition Education and Education Opportunities

This project began in 2014 as a collaboration of community education partners. Pre-pandemic, Gundersen Health System Dietitians, Mayo Clinic Health System Dietitians, 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, and Gundersen Health System Community Educators were added in the rotation beginning in August. The first true cooking class in the new facility was held in September and had amazing turn out! Pictured left to right is the classroom in the old facility's multi-purpose room and the new facility's dedicated education space. In 2023, 6 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 nearly \$100,000 pounds. Where 1 pound = \$1, a value of \$1,000,000 in product was rescued for the expense in vehicle and staff costs of roughly \$30,000.

Food Fair and Distribution Events

In partnership with Channel One Foodbank, a Feeding America Foodbank, we are able to offer an additional food giveaway one time per month through June. Funding for the program was cut and therefore this event ended. The Food Fair was typically held the 4th Saturday of each month. Each account holder was issued a ticket when they came in food, however we implemented no pre-registration options mid-year 2022. This event is a no-contact, drive-thru food distribution. The contents of the food package vary from month to month based on availability, but usually a combination of fresh and shelf-stable items. To distribute surplus items before spoiling, such as produce in the summer months or pallets of product from trucking companies, there were several impromptu drive-thru events. This is offered as surplus items are received.

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...\$382,998.68*

Receivable - United Way Pledge, prepaid insurance, promises ...\$118,446.92

CIMA \$16,626.49**

Current Assets: \$517,072.09

Property and Equipment: \$4,821,550.05

Non-current Assets: \$5,147.56

Total Assets: \$5,343,769.70

*Operating Expense Accounts include checking and money market accounts.

**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 2023.

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

Service Groups

Badger State Sportsmen Club
Bangor FFA
La Crosse Concert Band, Inc
La Crosse Country Club Ladies Golf Assoc.
La Crosse Kiwanis Foundation
La Crosse Lions Club
La Crosse Marathon
North American Squirrel Assoc.
PEO Sisterhood Chapter CR
Rotary Club of La Crosse, INC
Rotary Lights
Viking Youth Soccer Association
West Salem FFA

Churches

Blessed Sacrament Parish
English Lutheran Church
Faith Free Evangelical Church
Faith United Methodist Church
First Baptist Church
First Congregational Church
First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation
First Lutheran Church
First Presbyterian Church
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Good Shepard Lutheran Church
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Lewis Valley Lutheran Church
Living Word Christian Church
Mindoro Lutheran Church
Mt Calvary Lutheran Church
Northwoods International School
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Our Saviors Lutheran Church
Prince of Peace
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Roncalli Newman Center Parish
St. John's UCC, W.G.
St. Joseph Cathedral

School and Education Partners

Aquinas Middle School
Cathedral School
Central High School
Coulee Christian School
Coulee Rock Christian Church
Great River Montessori
Head Start La Crosse
Houston Public School
La Crosse School District
Onalaska Middle School
Southern Bluffs Elementary School
UWL Women's Track Team
Viterbo University

Governmental Partners

County of La Crosse
Democratic Party
National Weather Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Post Office - La Crosse

Business and Corporate Partners

3 Amigos Property Management
Ace Hardware
Altra Federal Credit Union
American Red Cross
Anytime Fitness
APTiv - Riverfront
Big Lots
Bimbo Bakeries
CFS Egg
Cindy Gerke & Associates Realtors
Coulee Bank
Creamery Creek Farms
CSL Plasma
Driftless Crossfit
Fed Ex Ground
First Supply
Five Guys
Galileo Group, LLC
Gillette Pepsi
Good Steward
Goodwill
Goodwill Industries
Great Lakes Cheese

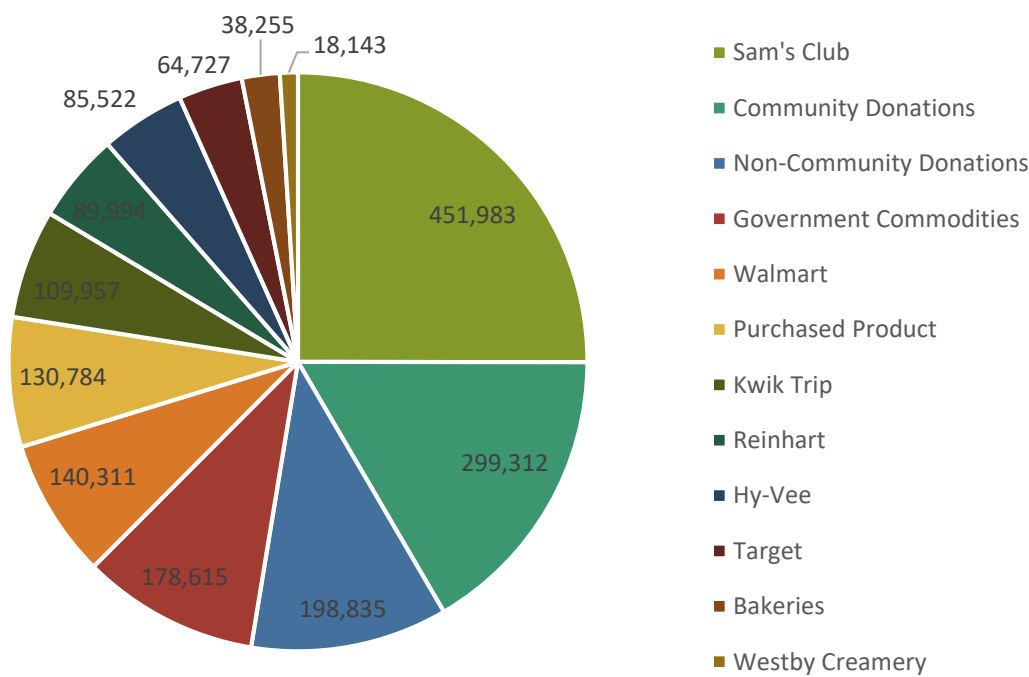
Great Lakes Coca Cola
Gundersen Health System
Gundersen Onalaska
Hansen's IGA
Havenwood of Onalaska
Hillside Animal Hospital
Holmen Cheese
Hydrite Chemicals
Jolivette
Kottke Trucking
Kunes RV
La Crescent Animal Rescue
La Crosse & 3 Rivers Railroad Show
La Crosse Center
La Crosse Chamber Chorale
McLoone Metal Graphics Inc.
Midwest Family Radio Group
Mississippi Welders Supply
MOKA
Norskedalen
NuYou Aesthetics & Weight Loss
Old Dutch
People's Food Cooperative, Inc.
Peter's Farms
Pizza Ranch
Pogy's
Potato King
Prairie Farms
Remedy Staffing
Renier Enterprises
Reyes Holdings
River Architects
River Bank
Root Note Cafe
Rumor's Bar & Grill
Sakura Foods
Select Custom Solutions
SmithFoods
Sparta Tomah Raceway
St Clare Health Mission
Tattoo Artist Show and Music Festival
The Alpine Inn
The Watkins Company
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
Trane Company
Tyson Foods
Walmart Distribution Center
Washburn on the Park Apartments

Business and Corporate Partners Continued

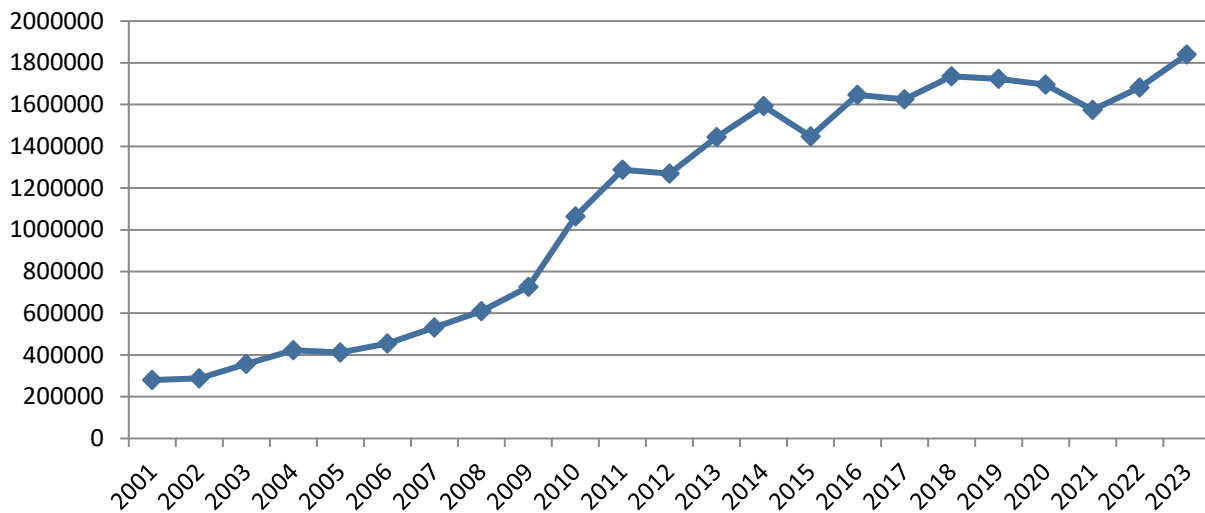
Westby Direct Distributors
Wieser Brothers
WINN, Inc

WIPFLI
Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse
Yahnke Dental

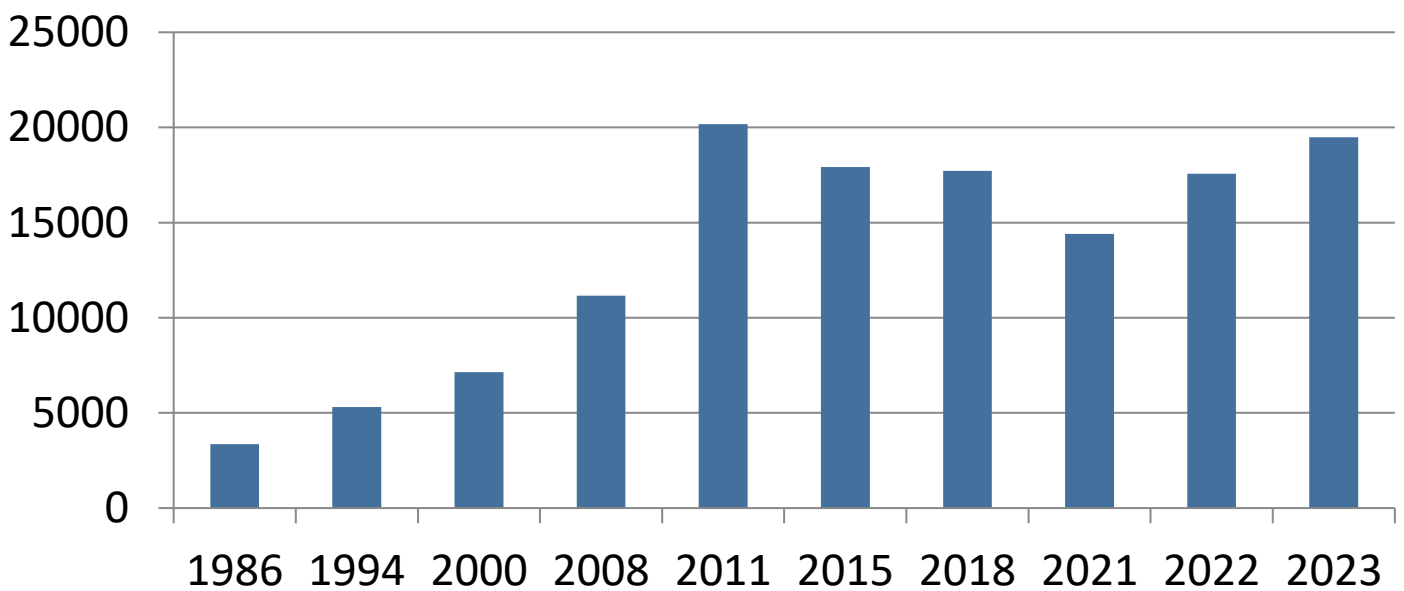
2023 Food Sources and Poundage



Total Pounds Distributed 2001-2023



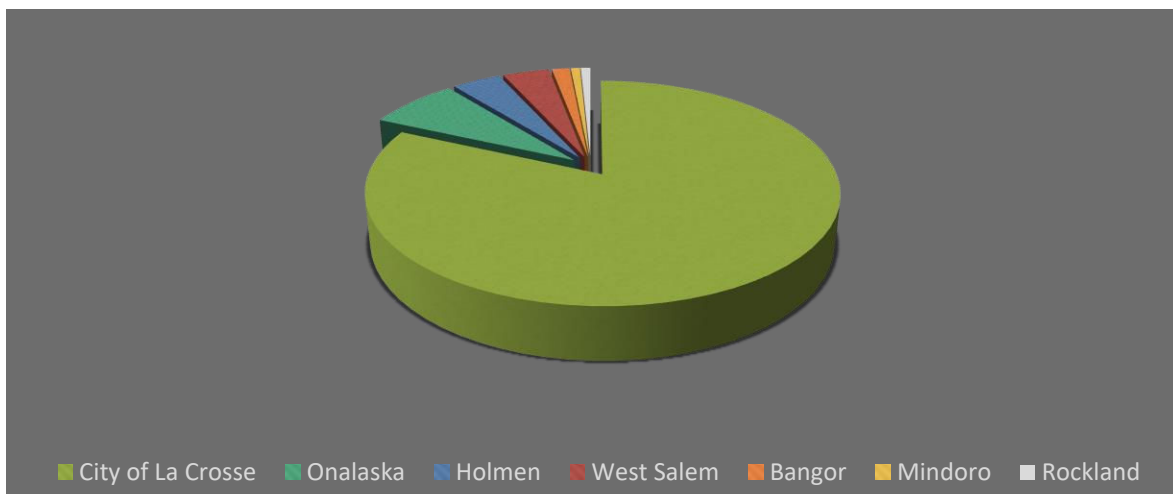
Food Package Distribution 1986-2023



Food Packages Distributed by County

| County | Number of visits in 2022 | Number of visits in 2023 |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| La Crosse | 17123 | 18745 |
| Vernon | 147 | 115 |
| Trempealeau/Jackson | 126 | 129 |
| Monroe | 29 | 32 |
| Richland | 3 | 0 |
| Houston, MN | 127 | 91 |
| Other | 11 | 6 |

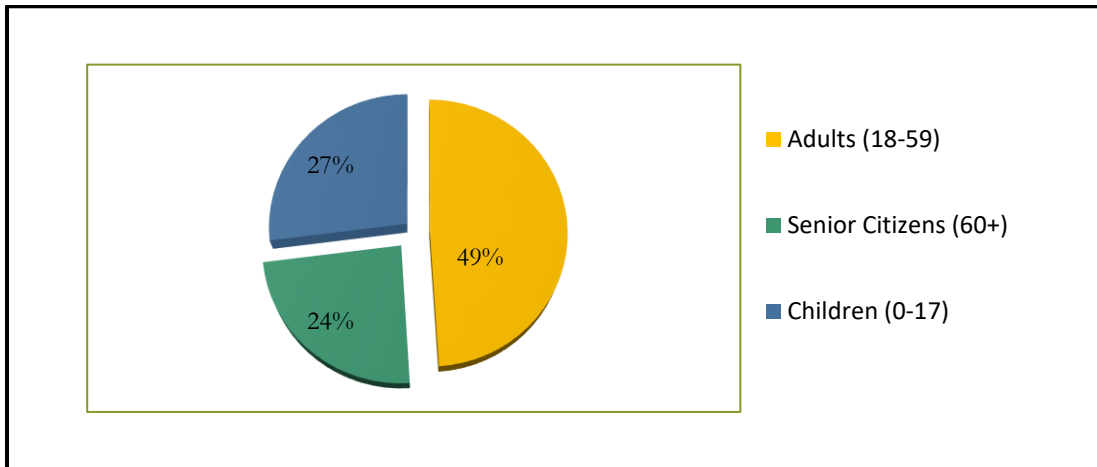
Food Package Distribution in La Crosse County Communities



Unique People Served by County 2023

| County | 2022 | 2023 |
|---------------------|------|------|
| La Crosse | 5372 | 7609 |
| Vernon | 67 | 72 |
| Trempealeau/Jackson | 71 | 91 |
| Monroe | 32 | 33 |
| Houston, MN | 70 | 96 |
| Other | 15 | 17 |

Household Demographics of Total People - by Age 2023



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: 1603 George St, La Crosse, WI 54603

Phone: 608-782-6003

Email: waferdirector@waferlacrosse.org

Website: waferlacrosse.org