



Spring 2025

# New Refrigerated Truck Fuels WAFER Food Pantry Mission



**WAFER's mission is to “provide food and work to eliminate hunger.”** Our services aim to offer nutritious and well-balanced food options, especially fresh items that often exceed the budget of our shoppers.

**We are thrilled to announce the acquisition of a new refrigerated truck to further our mission and care for our friends and neighbors.** After a nearly two-year acquisition process, the truck arrived on the last day of 2024. This vehicle will enable the safe transport of perishable items, such as those donated by generous community partners through our “Retail Recovery” program. Annually, more than 1,000,000 pounds of food are rescued from retail partners. More detailed information about our retail partners can be found on our website.

**This acquisition, made possible through generous support, underscores our collective commitment to addressing food insecurity in our region and providing balanced, nutritious meals to our community.**

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, we wish to thank the following WAFER supporters for their commitment to advancing our mission to fight hunger right here at home:

- Otto Bremer Trust
- ALM Charities
- Gundersen Health System/Emplify
- Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research
- Three donor-advised funds at La Crosse Area Community Foundation - The Robert and Eleanor Franke Fund, George and Virginia Schneider Family Fund, and Guenther-Froegel Family Fund
- Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection “Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure” grant.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

As we look ahead in anticipation of spring, I'm grateful to be able to share some upcoming events, things to be aware of, and developments since our last correspondence.

### An Update On Ava . . .

You may remember Ava from the last newsletter. The family relied on WAFER while they navigated an unexpected move as Ava awaited a critical surgery. I am thrilled to report that Ava and her family are now settled into their new home and Ava came through surgery like a champion. Your financial support and food donations made sure Ava and her family were cared for during one of the most tumultuous situations in their life. I am deeply grateful for you, and so is Ava!

### Navigating Uncertainty . . .

In recent years, changes to government and foundation policies and funding priorities have created significant unpredictability for nonprofit organizations. WAFER's leadership have diligently monitoring these changes to adapt quickly and ensure no disruptions to our community. In full transparency, several areas are of current concern - promised federal reimbursements for funds already spent, proposed cuts to nutrition programs that would increase reliance on emergency food outlets, and proposed reductions to supplemental food programs. We kindly ask you to stay informed about these challenges and for your continued financial support.

### Program Update, Ensuring No Child Goes Hungry . . .

For more than a decade, food insecure children have benefited from our "Backpack" program, which provides already-prepared foods to take home on weekends or extended breaks. Research shows that food-insecure children face unique challenges such as developmental differences, poor academic performance, and chronic health and mental health conditions.

Our "Backpack" program ensures that students have access to food over the weekends, helping them return to school on Monday ready to learn. Your generous gifts make a significant difference for nearly 40 elementary students who receive a backpack of nutritious food each weekend. Your continued financial support is greatly appreciated. If you would also like to provide program specific foods, we could use individual servings of canned meals and soups, breakfast items, fruit and vegetable cups, and healthy snacks.

### Looking Ahead . . .

The second Saturday in May is the annual **Letter Carriers Food Drive**, the nations largest one-day food drive. We look to our community to help restock the shelves prior to the start of summer, and this drive makes giving easy. If you would like to participate, have your non-expired shelf-stable foods out to your mailbox by 8am on Saturday, May 10th. Community volunteers and post office employees will come by to collect your items. That's it! Thank you for considering joining forces to make this event a success.

If you are a Thrivent Financial member there are two easy ways to partner with WAFER. First, members can make a personal, fee-free donation and can also contribute to eligible organizations - like WAFER - by designating a portion of the grant fund through the **Choice Dollars®** program. Second, members can tap into \$250 in seed money and gather a volunteer **Action Team** to host a fundraiser, drive collection event, offer an educational event, service activity, or your unique idea. For example, WAFER has received birthday party kits and hygiene drive items. **Choice Dollars® must be designated by the end of March.**



In our previous newsletter, we invited you to vote for WAFER in the Thrivent Financial Christmas carol competition. Thanks to the support from local media, Facebook friends, the community, and dedicated volunteers reaching out to their networks, WAFER achieved 3rd place and earned a \$10,000 award. Competing against larger organizations from Madison and Milwaukee, our small community made a significant impact to secure vital funding for essential services.

## CHALLENGE UPDATE

We appreciate your enthusiastic response to the *Valiquette Challenge* presented by friends of WAFER. Your support enabled WAFER to conclude the year on a high note and gear up for another year of meaningful service to the community.

### INCREASED RMD AND QCD GIFTS

The challenge also prompted donors to consider making contributions from retirement accounts, leading to a record number of gifts from this source. You can find “More Ways To Give” on the website, or contact your financial advisor.

THANK  
YOU!

## CHECK OUT HUNGER

For over ten years, Woodmans Food Market has spearheaded a campaign to generate funds for food pantries throughout the state, with WAFER being the local beneficiary. This year, nearly \$15,000 in gift cards were provided, which are utilized to acquire items that are in short supply. We extend our gratitude to the devoted employees whose hard work drives this campaign and contributes to its remarkable success.





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**SEE INSIDE**  
 YOU Help Fuel Student Success!

OUR MISSION: RESPONDING TO GOD'S LOVE, WAFER PROVIDES FOOD AND WORKS TO ELIMINATE HUNGER.



270 Backpacks Provided to Bangor Students



40,000+ People Fed



1.1+ Million Pounds of Food Recovered



78,000 kWh Captured, saving \$7,000 in energy costs.

*2024, What a Year!*

23,000+ Volunteer Hours



400+ Senior Packages Delivered



860 New Families Served



8 Nutrition & Wellness Classes Offered

