

Volunteer *Spotlight*

Meet Sr. Meg Earsley, FSPA

I've been volunteering at WAFER Food Pantry for about a year, and it has been a truly fulfilling experience. Each week, I look forward to working alongside friends, helping provide food and a sense of security for neighbors in need.

I assist in various ways — stocking shelves with generous donations, delivering food to those unable to visit the pantry, and packing boxes for the mobile food pantry, a role I deeply enjoy. With each box, I thoughtfully choose items, imagining the recipient and ensuring a mix of useful and comforting foods. Other volunteers contribute as well, making it a true community effort.



At times, when lines of shoppers form, I step away from packing to guide individuals through the aisles. One winter day, during one of these trips I witnessed God in the loving conversation of a father. I was so moved by this, that I shared “Today, I met God at WAFER Food Pantry” with my Facebook friends.

It's easy to see God's goodness at the pantry — grocers donate unsold produce, ensuring healthy options, and churches and businesses fill shelves running low. That generosity was evident today, but I saw God most clearly in Henry's face.

We don't typically learn the names of those we accompany through the grocery store-style aisles, but this older gentleman, looking worn and a bit unkempt, felt like a Henry to me. As we walked, he shared his story — his son's degenerative condition that leaves him completely dependent, the loss of two wives, and the weight he carries each day. His words broke my heart.

Somewhere along the way, I realized this was a sacred encounter. I slowed down, listened more than I spoke, and gave him my full attention. His love for his son was undeniable — asking for extra milk for smoothies, choosing ground meat because chewing is difficult, and lighting up when he found sour patch licorice candy, his son's favorite.

As Henry left, he thanked me, but I was quick to thank him. Our time together was a gift.

Was I Christ to Henry? I hope so. He was certainly Christ to me. #todayimetgod

These sacred encounters happen often at WAFER. Each week, someone inspires me, challenges my assumptions, or brings me joy. Indeed, I am blessed to volunteer here — the gifts I receive far outweigh what I give. This is a holy place.

Nutrition Education Opportunities



The pandemic paused nutrition education opportunities, but after many discussions, we're excited to welcome back nutrition educators from Emplify Health and Mayo Clinic Health System. Together with UW-Extension FoodWise, we've scheduled classes through 2025 to help WAFER shoppers explore new foods, increase produce consumption, and stretch their food budget. Thanks to a grant from People's Food Co-op, participants also receive kitchen essentials to apply their new skills at home.

Pictured at the left are nutrition educators from Emplify Health and their class *"It's Not Easy Being Green"* focused on green foods.

Impactful Giving: The Power of QCDs & RMDs



After sharing information about Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) and Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), we saw a remarkable increase in donors using these methods to support WAFER's mission. These giving options not only benefit donors by offering tax advantages but also provide critical program funding, ensuring continued access to nutritious food for those in need.

We are deeply grateful for this response and excited to see how thoughtful, strategic giving continues to strengthen our impact. If you're interested in learning more about how QCDs and RMDs can support WAFER while aligning with your financial goals, visit our website or consult your financial advisor.

Community Engagement Events



Staff, board members, and a newly formed volunteer committee have been exploring new ways to connect with the community. Recent events include a resource fair, a community food drive, and a fundraising night at Burrachos. More events are on the horizon, such as WAFER Night with La Crosse Concert Band, a community carnival at Riverside Park, "Hops for Hunger" with 608 Brewing, Bingo with Beer By Bike Brigade, and "Pints for a Purpose" with Turtle Stack Brewery. Visit our Facebook page for ways to get involved and join us out in the community!

Financial Institution Food Drive Challenge



Former Board Member Sue Horne (pictured left) continues to hold WAFER close to her heart. When she learned about the urgent need for food donations, she took action — bringing a unique food drive concept to her professional world of finance.

The idea was simple, the goal achievable, and the impact significant: a weekly challenge passed from one financial institution to another.

On May 5th, State Bank kicked off the initiative on social media with the goal of collecting 100 cans of soup in one week. Engaging both staff and customers, they provided regular updates throughout the week, ultimately surpassing their goal with an incredible 360 cans of soup. At the week's end, they passed the challenge to a new financial institution — Coulee Bank (pictured right and below left). Rising to the occasion, Coulee Bank collected over 1,000 boxes of pasta in just one week!



At the time of printing, the challenge continues to run strong. It has been exciting to witness the engagement, enthusiastic participation, and creativity that each institution has brought to the effort. As of now, the challenge is set to run through mid-July — unless more institutions decide to hop on board. Follow along on our Facebook page.

Our deepest gratitude to the financial community for coming together to provide vital food supplies. If you are a member of one of these participating institutions, please take a moment to thank them. And if you don't see your financial institution on the list, consider encouraging them to connect with WAFER staff and join the movement! A shout out to:

**Coulee Bank - State Bank Financial - Marine Credit Union - River Bank -
Citizens State Bank (pictured below right) - Citizens First Bank -
Winona National Bank Financial, Holmen - 1st Community Credit Union -
32 Financial, Mutual of Omaha - TrustPoint**





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