Newsletter

WAFER Food Pantry
Fall 2026

Mike Voss
Board President

Erin Waldhart
Executive Director

A Shared Journey

WAFER Celebrates 40th Anniversary

I have fond memories of growing up in La Crosse, but what I did not know was that food insecurity was an issue in our local communities. That reality set in for me when I joined the WAFER board.

While reflecting on WAFER's 40th Anniversary, I took the opportunity to stop by Erin's office to chat. Both Erin and I have served WAFER over the past 14 years: Erin as Executive Director and I serving on the WAFER Board.

I asked Erin, *"Is there any single moment that stands out to you over your time serving at WAFER?"*

Erin replied, *"Just one moment does not stand out to me. Instead, I carry a collection of experiences that have stayed with me and shaped how I approach this work. I have seen individuals who are hurting, anxious, and desperate. I have witnessed people so hungry that they began eating their food in the parking lot. Those moments always cause a catch in my throat because they demonstrate just how urgent the need is for our neighbors."*

"WAFER is so much more than putting food in bags. It is about being human, connecting, and encouraging people who are going through difficult times. Sometimes a simple smile matters as much as the food we provide. I have talked with seniors whose cupboards are bare but who are almost too proud to accept help. I have overheard a young mom say she did not know how she was going to buy new shoes for her toddler who had outgrown his. I have met people who once had high incomes but suddenly found themselves facing cancer and walking through our doors for the first time in their lives."

"When I think about my time at WAFER, it is these moments and faces—and there are so many more—that stay with me. They remind me why this work matters and why compassion, dignity, and presence are essential parts of what we do."

Erin then asked me, *"Mike, what do you think the future holds for WAFER?"* *"The future of WAFER is rooted in one essential: we need to continue to be a welcoming space where people feel respected. Human dignity must remain central to all we offer. This commitment is reflected in the intentionality of the new building and in a legacy of service that will last for decades."*

Forty years is an incredible milestone, but it also reminds us that our work will continue in local communities. There will always be a need, and we hope WAFER can continue to fill that need and support our neighbors who need it most. Thank you to our generous community.

Together, we have helped WAFER march towards eliminating hunger right here at home. Every financial gift, volunteer hour, food donation, and word of encouragement make a difference for our neighbors. We are truly blessed to serve!

–Mike & Erin

Happy 15th Anniversary to Laura!

"Over the years, I have had the privilege of working alongside so many caring volunteers and dedicated staff who have truly become like family to me. When I first began volunteering in 2011, I had no idea just how great the need was. I remember feeling overwhelmed, not only by that need, but also by the incredible outpouring of kindness from volunteers and the community's unwavering support."

"Throughout this journey, families have trusted me with pieces of their lives, their stories, their struggles, and their hopes. In those shared moments, I hear firsthand about the weight of food insecurity and the hardships they quietly carry each day. But just as often, they're seeking something simple and deeply human: someone to listen. In just a few minutes, they open their hearts, sharing concerns about their health, stories about their children and grandchildren, or the joy of milestones they are proud to celebrate. And then, so often, they look at me and say, "Thank you." Not just in passing, but in a way that truly stays with me, because they are grateful for the difference WAFER has made in their lives."

"Those moments mean everything to me. They remind me that this is not just a job; it is a purpose. It is the reason I show up every single day with my whole heart, grateful to be part of something that truly matters."

–Laura

For more stories like this, visit WAFER's Facebook page and donate a $40 gift to help us reach our $16,000 goal for our "Providing Food, Fueling Hope" 40th anniversary campaign. See the people who make WAFER special while you make a donation to support your community.

Ways to Give

IRA Charitable Distribution

Individuals age 70.5 or older may want to consider making a gift commitment through a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). A QCD is a direct transfer offunds from your IRA to WAFER.

Donor Advised Fund

A donor-advised fund, or DAF, is a charitable investment account for the sole purpose of supporting charitable organizations. If you currently have a DAF, you may contribute a gift from this fund to WAFER's Campaign.

Appreciated Assets

WAFER can accept gifts of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or personal property. You can transfer stock to WAFER and take a tax deduction based on the market value of the stock at the time of the gift.

Life Insurance

There are ways you can use life insurance as a gift-giving approach. For example, you could give the cash value accumulated in a policy or donate the annual dividends of a policy Consider making WAFER the full or partial beneficiary of your policy.

Employer Matching Gifts

Double the impact of your donation! Your gift to WAFER could be matched dollar for dollar by your employer. Contact the Human Resources Department of your company to find out if they have a matching gift program.

Deferred Trust Fund Gifts

There are a variety of ways to give through trust funds, which have advantages for short-term and long-term giving, as well as tax planning.

It is important to contact a donor advisor, accountant, or attorney for guidance if considering one of these gift options.

Thrivent Choice

WAFER is an approved organization for the Thrivent Choice® program, which allows eligible members to direct Choice Dollars® to support our mission. These funds, earned through your premiums and contract values, can be designated to WAFER at no cost to you. Or gather a Thrivent Action Team. Action Teams have access to $250 for the project. It's a simple and impactful way to help our community. To learn more or to direct your Choice Dollars, visit thrivent.com.

Donate Food

Bring unopened food and personal care item donations to WAFER during business hours: **Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 12:30 pm and Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.** Items can be brought to the service door in the alley. We will issue you a receipt upon request.