



LEAVEN

Turning Hardship Into Hope

Fall 2019

Executive Director: Leading with Purpose

By Mary Parsons

For the past 16 years, LEAVEN has provided me with so much more than a paycheck. The work fulfills me emotionally, challenges me mentally, and strengthens me spiritually. The mission provides me perspective, fills me with gratitude and rewards me with job satisfaction I wouldn't experience elsewhere.

*To understand LEAVEN's impact to others, I solicited feedback from our various stakeholders – volunteers, donors, beneficiaries, board members, community partners and members of the faith community. I am humbled and grateful for the many testimonials we received. **This newsletter is dedicated to those stories.***

A Volunteer's Story: Giving and Receiving

By Helene Iverson

Why did I start volunteering at LEAVEN?

A friend asked me if I could find three hours a week to answer phones and tell people where to go... I had lots of experience talking on the phone, it was air conditioned and I could sit down. What's so hard about that?

Met many friendly volunteers, enjoyed talking to the people who came in, and was happy that they had come to a place where we could help them.

Fast forward... My curiosity grew... Did we help that mom with a new baby? The man in the wheelchair who had no food? The young couple with twins who needed their power turned on? The disabled woman whose car needed new tires? The man who didn't speak English who needed a bike to get to his job? The couple who couldn't pay rent because they lost their jobs? I wanted to do more.

So I volunteered to help with the case reviews, making phone calls, reviewing files, contacting landlords, and eventually calling a client and saying, "We can help you with the rent," "We will buy new tires

for you," "Here are some diapers for your baby," "We will help you get your electricity turned on." And hearing the sighs of relief, the tears, the choked up thank you's. Getting a spontaneous hug when I handed someone a gas voucher.

Why do I continue at LEAVEN?

I can't change national politics. I can't get roads paved. I can't fix health insurance. I can't get us out of Iraq. But I can help to keep someone in her home, get food on the table for a family, get a baby's bottom in a new diaper, provide transportation to a new employee who was homeless, educate someone about how to find a better job. I kind of think this is the message I have heard in church for many Sundays. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give shelter to the homeless, treat others as you would like to be treated.

This is one way I can give back. This is one way I can help others. ***This is one way I can walk the talk.*** This is one way I can appreciate all that I have been given.

Board of Directors Perspective: Advancing the Mission

By Rick Stach, Board President

In its 32 years of existence, LEAVEN has created a legacy of outstanding leadership and success in meeting its goal of bringing hope to area families faced with financial hardship.

In 2016, LEAVEN's board of directors conducted a strategic planning meeting. One key outcome from that meeting was ***an expanded vision and mission; one in which we accepted a role of coordination of community resources.***

This expanded strategic direction was reaffirmed by our current board during this year's planning meeting.

There are several factors that lead me to be extremely optimistic about LEAVEN's future:

- ◆ Outstanding executive and program leadership
- ◆ A highly skilled and dedicated staff
- ◆ Over 150 retooled volunteers whose

contributions allow us to maintain low administrative costs and provide compassionate support to thousands of households each year

- ◆ Fifteen on-site partner organizations who share a common vision
- ◆ A new, continually expanding and improving technology platform which allows us to share information and track outcomes better than ever before
- ◆ A strategic, actively-engaged and operationally-savvy board of directors and a board committee structure that provides oversight and strategic direction to LEAVEN's key functions
- ◆ An incredibly loyal and generous donor base

I feel honored to have served as the President of the Board for this outstanding organization and leave my term with a profound sense of pride and optimism.

A Donor's Account: Motivation to Give

By Jeff Knezel

When my wife and I consider making a charitable donation, we believe it is important to look closely at a prospective organization's mission, leadership practices evidenced by actions taken by the staff, volunteers and Board members, as well as fiscal accountability when spending donor dollars.

With LEAVEN, we decided to dig deeper to gain a clear perspective of the services provided, its fiscal integrity, actions to provide meaningful volunteer support, and quality of leadership for not only the LEAVEN organization, but also for the community. This curiosity about LEAVEN resulted in my being invited to join its Board of Directors. My experience as a LEAVEN Board member provided me a unique insight into the dedication, professionalism, and commitment to its mission by both staff and volunteers.

In brief, I can sincerely attest to my belief that I have never encountered, in my over 50 years of living in this community, a not-for-profit organization as well run, as mission oriented, and as fiscally responsible as LEAVEN.

The Fox Cities communities are extremely fortunate to have LEAVEN to serve the needy who are in crisis.

Check out our website for additional stories: leavenfoxcities.org

Clergy Commitment: Partners in Service

By Congregational United Church of Christ-Neenah/Menasha

The beauty of LEAVEN is that all resources are used to help people in our own communities. We are proud that LEAVEN has as one of its founding principles to assist in the coordination of requests that churches get from people in crisis. We designate one month each year to feature LEAVEN for the collection of special offerings that are matched at 50% from our endowment fund. In addition, we have a table at our Alternative Gift Market every November to raise awareness for financial needs in our community.

The value LEAVEN brings to our community is multi-faceted; not only are financial funds made available to clients, but additional resources are explained to help in their overall well-being.

We have referred people to LEAVEN, financially supported LEAVEN and enthusiastically promoted an understanding of LEAVEN's vision, goals and value. Being able to help those in our community so they can continue to be independent in their living is a service we graciously will continue to support.

A Client's Testimonial: Hardship to Hope

Coming here has given me hope that there are options and that my situation can improve. You have given me tools to help my situation -- with my finances and my family. I feel welcomed here. Everyone is nice and treats us with dignity and respect. ***I'm thankful there are places like LEAVEN.***

Partner Experience: Doing More Together

By Olivia Olszewski, Outreach Advocate

Our slogan at Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services is "Help is Here". I think our presence at the LEAVEN Community Resource Center is a visualization of this slogan. When I meet with a client at LEAVEN, I can walk around and point out all the resources available to them. This brings to life the concept that help really is here. People experiencing domestic violence are often isolated by their abuser and told that no one will ever believe or help them. ***When they come to LEAVEN, it becomes clear that many people will believe and help them.***

Since being in this space, I have been pleasantly surprised by the level of curiosity among other staff and volunteers about domestic violence. With compassionate hearts and listening ears, they ask questions which have led to many meaningful conversations. These connections, along with the resource center service model, makes me wonder what conversations we will be able to have in 10 or 20 years about domestic violence. Is this the solution to how we respond to domestic violence in the Fox Cities? It is very exciting and humbling to think about.



Stakeholder relationships are important to us. We want to ensure we're meeting your needs, interest and satisfaction with the organization. Your feedback is always welcome!



Staff

Mary Parsons - Executive Director
Liz Schneider - Client Services Director
Cheryl Marciniak - Client Services Coordinator
Debbie Prentice - Accountant
Linda Vandenberg - Community Resource Center Coordinator
Kiara West - Volunteer & Community Development Coordinator

LEAVEN Main Office -

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LEAVEN Satellite Offices -

Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Hortonville
Calumet County Courthouse, Chilton
Community 2000, Seymour

LEAVEN Board of Directors

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