



## Navigating These Challenging Times by Mary Parsons, Executive Director



In these unprecedented and uncertain times, the importance of LEAVEN's mission has never been more evident. With nearly half of all Americans living paycheck to paycheck, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it's more than a healthcare crisis. It's also an economic crisis that has propelled many households into a financial crisis. Lost jobs and reduced hours have left many struggling to cover essential expenses. Whether it's help with rent, utilities, mortgage payments, and other basic needs, LEAVEN is helping address the financial consequences impacting so many.

## Our Clients Speak

**People are hurting.** The reality of the crisis can be felt in their stories:

- ♥ *Because of the pandemic I was laid off in March. Recently my employer had to let me go permanently. Because of the change in my employment status, unemployment compensation is under review and I haven't received any income since June 15<sup>th</sup>. I am a single mother of one child, and I have managed to keep up on bills until recently...and I am in dire need of rental assistance.*
- ♥ *My last day of working was March 16<sup>th</sup>. I've had no income since, and unemployment still has not come through – and they can't give me any idea of when it might/will. I am out of money, 3 months behind on almost everything and utilities may be shut off soon. I am a 60-year-old who has worked in the hospitality industry most of my life, and there is no work I can find right now. At this point, any assistance I could possibly get would be a great help, as I am at the end of my ability to get by.*
- ♥ *I have been unemployed since April 30<sup>th</sup> and have been waiting to receive payments for over 8 weeks. My bills are piling up and I have exhausted all sources of savings and credit available to me at this time. Although I am apprehensive about returning to work due to concerns of the virus's increased spread, I do plan to return as soon as possible. I am in desperate need of assistance paying my rent and utilities.*
- ♥ *I have been out of work since May 26<sup>th</sup> and am down to the last few dollars in my bank account. I went for a job interview on Friday and my car died on the way to the interview and I never made it. I am so stressed out and in dire need of help. I don't have anything saved up to cover this unexpected expense. My spirit has completely been crushed.*

Although 2020 has been a year like no other in our lifetime, LEAVEN was specifically created to provide basic needs assistance in times of crisis. It is why we exist and what we continue to do for the many individuals and families impacted by the pandemic.

## LEAVEN was founded for times like these...

Although our office has been closed to the public, we are still delivering on our mission of providing financial assistance, resource coordination and case management to help people through these difficult times. Our well-established systems and processes ensure our ability to address needs in an effective and efficient way.

We are grateful for our interviewers who are conducting intakes from their homes using our cloud-based system as well as the many volunteers who returned to the office in June. Their ongoing commitment to the mission provides continued service to those in need. We're also grateful for our fourteen LEAVEN Community Resource Center partners who continue to connect with our clients virtually. As a service model built on human interactions, we look forward to the day we can reopen and provide in-person service and resource coordination.

An important element of our mission is to educate people about existing resources and assist only when no other help is available. We actively promoted and referred clients to the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program (WRAP). Funded through the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, this \$25 million program assists renters who suffered a significant loss of income due to the pandemic. Government safety-net programs like this shift some of the burden away from local nonprofits, like LEAVEN. Even so, our rental assistance is up nearly 25% from the same time last year as the number of people and the size of grants has grown.

## Our community's response has been overwhelming...

LEAVEN is blessed with reliable and diverse funding sources whose support ensure assistance to vulnerable individuals and families:

- Funders who rapidly deployed essential relief to LEAVEN and other frontline services to help people disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- Individuals who contributed for the first time and long-time donors who made extra gifts, many giving their stimulus checks.
- Businesses who have donated PPE supplies as well as financial resources.
- Our faith community partners who took up special collections or continued to support LEAVEN at a time of diminished attendance.

LEAVEN seeks resources appropriate to our needs. Although we didn't foresee or budget for this year's events, your outpouring of support has put us in a healthy financial position. This newsletter is NOT a solicitation for money, but rather an opportunity for us to update and **thank you** for stepping up to help the people most in-need during these difficult times.

And yet, we acknowledge that this has been an unprecedented year and its impact will be long-lasting. We expect recovery will be protracted as some jobs may never be recovered. We expect the demand for utility assistance, down 75% from this time last year, to increase dramatically when the ban on disconnections is lifted. We anticipate the need will be greater when government funding ends and the full impact of the economic consequences are manifested. It will then be back to the nonprofit organizations to fill in those gaps. We intend to be here for our community when that happens—and if it does, we will likely be turning to you for help.

## LEAVEN Staff

LEAVEN is blessed to have a staff of mission-driven, dedicated professionals who have continued coming to work every day to help those who aren't working. Due to some recent retirements and departures, our staff has changed. Liz Schneider and Debbie Prentice, our former Director of Client Services and Accountant, respectively, have retired after a combined 31 years with the organization. While missed, we wish them well as they enjoy time with their grandchildren.

I'd like to introduce you to our current staff:

### **Kathy Dean, Director of Client Services**

*The staff and volunteers at LEAVEN are the gold standard of professionalism. Everyone pitches in where help is needed, and everyone does it with kindness and good humor and a "nose to the grindstone" attitude that is both inspiring and motivating. I couldn't be happier working with such a phenomenal group of people.*



### **Kiara West, Volunteer and Community Development Coordinator**

*Working at LEAVEN is so much more than a job to me. It is the chance to be a part of something larger than myself, a way to make a difference in my community and an opportunity to see good happening in the world around me.*

### **Cheryl Marciniak, Client Services Coordinator**

*I have been so impressed by LEAVEN and the careful and faithful stewardship of resources, volunteers and staff. It has been exciting to see the growth of the building and the strengthening of our relationships with our Partners in the community. This organization has adapted well through many changes and has not wavered in its mission to serve the community even in the face of the recent challenges of COVID.*



### **Mary Meyers, Client Services Coordinator**

*It is so rewarding to work with such a dedicated team of volunteers and staff members at LEAVEN to help the people in our community through the difficult times in their lives by providing financial assistance and connections to other community resources.*

### **Danielle Schneeberg Iddrisu, Front Office Coordinator**

*What drew me to LEAVEN was the possibility of helping those in financial crisis and working along side passionate and caring volunteers.*





## Staff

Mary Parsons - Executive Director  
Kathy Dean - Director of Client Services  
Kiara West - Volunteer & Community Development Coordinator  
Cheryl Marciniak - Client Services Coordinator  
Mary Meyers - Client Services Coordinator  
Danielle Schneeberg Iddrisu - Front Office Coordinator

## LEAVEN Main Office -

1475 Opportunity Way, Menasha

## LEAVEN Satellite Offices -

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

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