



Overview for Board of Directors Candidates

"What you do makes this community so much more welcoming and kinder for families and people that tend to feel swept under the rug." Paula, former client



Organizational Information

Valley Outreach

1911 Curve Crest Blvd. W.

Stillwater, MN 55082

Phone: 651-430-2739

Website: www.valleyoutreachmn.org



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@ValleyOutreach



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Chief Executive Officer: Tracy Maki **Board Chair:** Claudia Swendseid

Who We Are: Valley Outreach is a basic needs organization that provides food, clothing and personalized client support. Client support can include resource and application information and referrals, financial assistance and in-depth case management, all based on individual client needs. Valley Outreach is the only St. Croix Valley nonprofit providing this range of services for low-income populations. Our food and clothing programs are open to anyone, regardless of address. Our target population is those living at 200%, or less, of federal poverty guidelines, or those in crisis.

Annual Budget: Approximately \$4.5M, with 51% of that cash and 49% in-kind donations of food and clothing. Eighty-seven cents of every dollar goes to direct programming with the remaining 13 cents being core mission support of administration and fundraising.

Staff: Fourteen full-time employees, four part-time employees, one contractor and up to four social work interns annually.

Mission: We help people move their lives forward through basic needs services and personalized support.

Vision: We help create a vibrant and resilient community where everyone's needs are met.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: We are better together.

As an organization, we are building and nourishing an environment in which equity and inclusiveness is a reflex, not an initiative.

We strive for consistent progress towards social and economic equality. We are an ally in creating positive change, never hesitating to advocate for justice, and listening to those most affected by broken systems.

In all we say and all we do, we commit to diversity, equity and inclusion across race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, status as a veteran, basis of disability and other aspects of personal identity.

These values are nonnegotiable.

History

Valley Outreach is the only organization in our community engaged in comprehensive, basic needs support. It was founded in 1983 as the St. Croix Valley Food Shelf. We are a privately-funded, community-based 501 (c) 3 that serves residents of the St. Croix Valley and surrounding communities in need of food, emergency financial assistance, clothing, resources advising and case management.

Late 2005. The St. Croix Valley Food Shelf assumed operations of the St. Croix Valley Emergency Fund and changed their name to Valley Outreach (early 2006). This merger, and the addition of Dawn's Closet clothing program (now StyleXchange), allowed expansion of essential basic needs services.

2007. We moved to our current location (1911 Curve Crest Blvd. W., Stillwater), almost tripling our available space. Integral to our success and growth are our partners, including other local nonprofits, county and state human and social service organizations, faith communities, and a strong network of committed volunteers.

2011. Growth required significant expansion of Valley Outreach's leased space.

May 2015. We cemented further our place in the community by purchasing the building in which we now operate. Initially we leased about half of the building but due to continued program growth, we now use over 90% of the building.

August 2016. We expanded our programs to include social service case management. This program provides an array of long-term, intensive help to low-income families and individuals so they can gain greater stability.

December 2018. A local foundation made an extraordinary, one-time gift to pay off the \$1.2M mortgage we held on our building, freeing up significant resources for Valley Outreach to use for program growth and client services.

March 2020. The clothing closet program, previously limited to local residents only, moved to a new space in the building, doubling the square footage available. Rebranded StyleXchange, the program is open to any family or individual with a need. Plans for this program include a social enterprise component with sales of clothing to the general public, too.

July 2021. We reopened our building following more than 15 months of being closed to in-person shopping due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on what we learned during the pandemic, we now offer three ways to shop for food: expanded home delivery, curbside pick-up and shopping inside. We also launched a mobile app for shopper intake and recently entered into a partnership with Door Dash for home delivery.

Program Snapshot from FY21-22

There is more inside Valley Outreach. We're proud to say Valley Outreach continues to be resilient, nimbly adjusting and creating a path towards stability for our community. We are seeing substantial growth in the use of our programs. Last year, more than 14,300 people used our services.

Basic Needs: Our basic needs programs focus on food and clothing. We help people deal with food scarcity as the income issue that it is, so they can redirect budget savings into things that may be harder to address (e.g., rent, medical bills, transportation, etc.).

Food – Through our recently expanded and remodeled SuperShelf certified food shelf and related programs, we distributed 1,206,000 meals (or more than 1.45 million pounds of food). We offer access to healthy foods while promoting individual choice. Last year, we served 1,468 families on average per month through more than 17,620 visits to our food programs. Within those numbers we:

- Delivered food to 44 homes monthly for clients and seniors with limited mobility through our Mobile Choice program.

- Through a new collaborative effort with Washington County, Open Cupboard Food Shelf, White Bear Lake Food Shelf and NewTrax (initially)/Door Dash (now), we supported 1,270 food deliveries to 480 distinct families in 5 counties.
- Of the people we served, 39% were children. This percentage remains relatively consistent year over year.
- We supported seniors (55+) through 8,442 visits to our food programs. A 32% increase from last year.
- Starting in the summer of 2021, we also began supporting on-site food distribution events twice a month at Cimarron mobile home community in Lake Elmo in partnership with Cimarron community liaisons and our friends at the Open Cupboard food shelf.

A thank you note from a client: “I wanted to reach out and say thank you again. Today was such an unexpected, incredible blessing! I cannot say enough how wonderful everyone was during my visit. Needing help is never an easy thing to feel and I am ever so grateful for what you all do.”

Clothing – Our clothing program, StyleXchange, aligns with our food programs so any client – no matter where they are from – may receive clothes at no charge. About 30% of our clients use both StyleXchange and the food shelf.

We served about 1,500 unique households and distributed more than 76,600 items, including 18,745 pairs of new socks and underwear. Through June 2021 we fulfilled just over 2,000 orders. Once we opened in July, we had about 2,000 visits to StyleXchange – which is about 50% of our total clothing program visits in just three months!

A client shopper story: “A first-time client visited us in StyleXchange. She browsed the store, made selections for her family, and at checkout said, “It looks just like a TJ Maxx in here! This is so cool.” She went on to tell us she heard about the clothing program and came to check it out but didn’t think she would find so many items that she loved.”

Client Support Services: We provide a variety of supports and services to help people move their lives forward on their terms. When people come to Valley Outreach, they often need help with more than food and clothing. Last year, our Client Support Services team, which includes licensed social workers, served about 1,450 households.

Of the households we served:

- 27% received resource advising support
- 60% received deeper case management services
- 12% accessed financial assistance
- 75% also accessed our food programs
- 28% also accessed our clothing programs

Our Client Support Services program is so important because Valley Outreach is where people show up when they need help. It often starts with help with food and from there our team can learn more about a client’s situation and connect them to available resources.

When a client has an urgent, often larger expense, the funding usually comes from multiple sources - the client, Valley Outreach, and other funders, like the Community Sharing Fund at the St. Paul and Minnesota Foundation. Our team helps put all the financial pieces together to help folks stay in their home, make a deposit on a new place to live, fix a vehicle or even pay a medical bill.

A thank you note from a client: “Thank you so much for applying for the St. Paul Foundation grant and Valley Outreach grant to get my car fixed! You really stepped up to the plate for my safety and welfare. Your organization, Valley Outreach, has been a help to me since my children were small many years ago. I truly appreciate you all.”



Looking to the Future

Valley Outreach is a leader in food shelf administration, having successfully piloted the first ever “better shelf for better health” choice model, now called SuperShelf. SuperShelf seeks to create a more equitable and reliable hunger relief system in Minnesota. This is achieved by emphasizing nutritious, whole foods; applying stocking standards; and using behavioral economics (layout, signs, displays, etc.). See www.supershelfmn.org for more information.

Valley Outreach has a reputation as an innovative collaborator, willing to pilot projects for the benefit of our clients and for the sector. In the fall of 2021, we were awarded a \$100,000 grant – for use on behalf of 8 other organizations – to further the use of Mobilize, a text-based, online platform for client data collection and communications.

Strategic Framework

Our strategic framework takes advantage of the unique strengths and positioning of Valley Outreach. These three strategies will best support us in achieving our goals:

Improve and Increase Access to Basic Needs Support: Through collaboration, Valley Outreach will reduce barriers to current services and more comprehensively meet clients’ needs. As we put our commitment to social justice into action, we work to increase our organization-wide understanding of basic needs access as a social justice issue.

Ensure Operational Strength: Building from our current strengths, Valley Outreach will ensure operational continuity through engagement among staff, board and volunteers; maintaining strong and documented systems and practices; and regularly gathering input and feedback to partner with our clients and community while optimizing the use of our facility. To ensure operational strength, we will maintain or grow resources with a focus on a diverse mix of income that allows for autonomy for our organization and our clients.

Grow Our Influence: Valley Outreach will champion basic needs access while destigmatizing the use of basic needs services. By leveraging our platform and influence, we will expand access and proactively address structural and systemic inequities that affect our clients.

Sources of Funding

Just under half of Valley Outreach’s \$4.5M annual budget is attributed to in-kind donated food and clothing. Cash contributions come from (in order from highest percentage of income to lowest): individuals, grants, community and church groups, , special events, businesses and tenant rent. We receive no fee-for-service revenue. We typically do not receive government funding, however via the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan, food shelves were eligible for dollars specifically related to capacity building and food distribution; we received dollars in the last fiscal year as a result this pandemic aid.

Board of Directors

Valley Outreach is overseen by a 14 to 21-member volunteer Board of Directors. The Board meets nine times per year (no meetings in March, July or December) with additional meetings at various times dependent on organizational activity. Board structure includes several standing committees and working groups.

New Board Members

We seek to represent the community we serve and welcome board members who are individuals with personal lived experience or professional expertise in basic needs and support services, BIPOC individuals, LGBTQ+ persons and people with a disability.

Candidates must first and foremost be passionate about Valley Outreach’s mission, vision and values. In building a board with a variety of skills and life experiences, we will consider applicants with some or all of the following attributes:

- Committed to increasing racial equity and social justice
- Thoughtful strategic thinkers and problem-solvers with skills and expertise needed by the board
- Willing to advocate for the organization with external stakeholders
- Connected with community leaders and familiar with organizations and resources serving our clients
- Motivated to succeed yet open to risk, failure and learning opportunities

Overview of Board Service

Board Member Term: Three-year terms with opportunity for two re-appointments (total possible service of nine years).

Annual and Monthly Time Commitment:

- **Board meetings:** 2-3 hours monthly (excluding March, July and December)
- **Standing Committee/Work Group meetings:** 2-4 hours monthly depending on workload. Board members are expected to serve on at least one standing committee and/or work group. New members are invited to serve where their expertise and skills can best be applied.
- **Annual retreat:** About 6 hours; may be on a Saturday or split over two weekday evenings

- **Fundraising and outreach events:** Board members are expected to be present at the annual fundraiser – Vibrant. Participation is welcome at other public and private events as schedules allow.
- **Volunteering:** In addition to their board service, board members are encouraged to volunteer in Valley Outreach’s food and clothing programs to better understand the work and mission of the organization they oversee

Board Member Duties

Board member duties are detailed in the Valley Outreach Board Member Job Description, included below.



Job Description: Member, Board of Directors

Revised: November 2022

Function: Set Valley Outreach’s (VO) strategic direction; ensure the organization fulfills its mission; oversee management; make sure the organization’s financial situation remains sound; and represent VO to the community.

Duties: General

- Serve as a VO ambassador at civic, community, faith and business events.
- Develop and approve VO’s mission and organizational strategy for meeting it.
- Support VO fundraising; donate annually at a personally meaningful level.
- Participate in Board meetings; assigned committee and work group meetings; scheduled retreats and workshops; and major functions and special events.
- Stay informed about Board matters; prepare for meetings; discuss and address recommendations; and review minutes, communications and reports.
- Speak with “one voice” - support Board decisions once they are made.
- Volunteer for board-related assignments, consistent with skills and availability; honor commitments and complete them in a thorough and timely manner.
- Maintain collegial and collaborative working relationships with other board members.
- Approve major policies.
- Ensure compliance with relevant laws affecting the organization.

Duties: Operations

- Monitor and evaluate results achieved by management against VO’s mission, strategic plan, annual objectives and major projects.
- Approve major actions of the organization, including large capital expenditures and major program and service changes.
- Bring a racial equity and social justice lens to board work.

Duties: Financial

- Ensure VO’s financial situation is sound and adequate to support current and longer-range needs.
- Stay informed of VO’s financial condition and plans to fund VO’s operations, services, and new initiatives.
- Ensure financial reports reflect accurately the operating results and financial condition of VO.
- Review and approve VO’s annual operating budget.
- Ensure management has appropriate fiscal policies and procedures in place and they are followed.
- Appoint an independent auditor to conduct an annual audit; review the audit and recommendations; ensure recommendations are implemented.

Duties: Organization

- Oversee management of VO; hire and evaluate CEO; conduct annual performance review and establish compensation.
- Conduct annual review of Board performance and biannual assessments of individual directors; take action to strengthen Board effectiveness based on results.
- Ensure management has effective policies and procedures in place to support an efficient and effective organization.
- Ensure management has up-to-date risk management policy and procedures in place; monitor key risks and ensure mitigation strategies are working.

I have read the Board Member Job Description and agree to perform the duties listed to the best of my ability.

Name

Date