



## 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](http://www.valleyoutreachmn.org)



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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, homelessness prevention work, 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 at no cost to clients. Our food and clothing programs are open to anyone, regardless of address. The majority of people we serve live at 300%, or less, of federal poverty guidelines, or those in crisis.

**Annual Budget:** Approximately \$4.5M, with 55% of that cash and 45% in-kind donations of food and clothing. Eighty-two cents of every dollar goes to direct programming with the remaining 18 cents being core mission support of administration and fundraising.

**Staff:** Twenty full-time employees, one part-time employee, one full-time Ampact housing navigator, 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 non-negotiable.

## 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.

**January 2023** We celebrated our 40th anniversary and hired our 20<sup>th</sup> staff member. We also became a Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance (FHPAP) grantee expanding our homelessness prevention efforts.

## Program Snapshot from FY22-23

"Thank you so much for remembering my mom's name." This is what a son whose mother comes to Valley Outreach for support said to a team member. It's the little acts of kindness that people remember. Every number noted below represents a person who felt the impact of our organization's values of connection, collaboration, kindness, and trust.

Last year, we served over 8,600 unique households with more than 31,400 people. The number of total households increased by 27% over the previous year and more than half of the families visiting Valley Outreach came for the first time last year. This data aligns with research that suggests poverty is fluid and for many people, short-term. According to analysis by Mark Rank, author, and professor of social welfare at Washington University in St. Louis, 60 percent of

Americans will spend at least a year of their life in poverty. We are here when people need us and ready to help get them moving towards a place of stability.

**Basic Needs:** Our basic needs programs focus on food and clothing. We help people address 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.). About 30 percent of our clients use both our food and clothing programs.

- **Food:** Through our SuperShelf-certified food shelf and related programs, we distributed more than 2,370,000 meals (or nearly 2.8 million pounds of food).
- **Clothing:** 2,500 unique households received clothing and we distributed more than 135,000 items through 9,759 visits to our clothing shop, StyleXchange. Some of the most important clothing we distribute is winter gear. Last year we gave out coats to just over 50% of the households who visited StyleXchange during the winter season. That’s about 810 households receiving 1,051 adult winter coats and 728 kids winter coats for a total of 1,779 coats.

**Client Support Services:** Last fiscal year our client support services team, served about 1,604 unique households, a total of more than 4,800 individuals. These services are so important because Valley Outreach is where people show up when they need help – we start with food and from there our team can learn more about a client’s situation and connect them to available resources. The most requested help from our clients comes in the form of assistance with housing, keeping utilities on and maintaining transportation. Of the households client support services assists, 69% received deeper case management services, 17% received resources advising support, and 14% accessed financial assistance.

**Below are some examples of the impact of our work.**

**Food Support:** A newer client commented on her reluctance to come to a food shelf, it was a new support for her. Now that she has been a few times, she is pleased and surprised at how it helps her overall budgeting. Spending less on food allows her to use her resources for other expenses.

**Our Clothing Program - StyleXchange:** We had a client come into StyleXchange who shared with our program manager that it felt fun and relaxing to shop today – she called it her “me-time!” This was a huge step – in the past, she’d felt overwhelmed shopping and did not feel comfortable. Additionally, she shared that she just finished moving into her first apartment after two years of searching and other difficulties. So, good news all around! She thanked the manager and everyone else on staff for their work over the years to help her feel successful, “You guys just don’t give up.”

**Client Support Services – Homelessness Prevention:** Valley Outreach receives a significant number of referrals through United Way 211 – the coordinated entry point in Washington County for homelessness prevention work – since becoming a Family Homelessness Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP) subgrantee in October of 2023. In less than four months we are already at capacity for current funding, through June.

WE PROVIDE  
PEOPLE WITH A  
WIDE RANGE  
OF SUPPORT

31,400+  
people used  
our services



IN 2023

We distributed food for  
**more than 2.3 million meals.**



We distributed more than  
**135,000 items of clothing.**



We assisted **1,604 households**  
through deeper client support.



**445 volunteers** donated  
**23,258 hours** of their time.

 Valley Outreach



The current system is incredibly difficult for people to navigate, increasing their risk of becoming homeless. For example, a mother at risk of becoming homeless was flagged by our partner at Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services as needing assistance. We had already informed 211 that we were at capacity and could no longer accept new referrals and they should move forward with referring to another provider, in this case, Solid Ground. While our team researched this case to see where it was in the process, the client came to Valley Outreach in person. When our staff spoke with the client, we learned they hadn't yet contacted 211, didn't have a working phone, and had 48 hours to pull together their rent before being evicted. We walked them through the call to 211 to connect to Solid Ground and start the process of FHPAP support. Our staff member was then able to coordinate the next steps with key partners across the provider network so the client could get this funding in time, including another organization representative working with them to fill out the relevant forms and paperwork. Through highly personalized, timely, and efficient coordination, the client was able to secure the \$3,000 in funding they needed to stay in their home.

## Focus on 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](http://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 2023, we were invited to further homelessness prevention work by becoming a FHPAP grantee for Washington County. Our staff has been involved with this type of work for more than a decade, however, this is the first time we've had the capacity to leverage a county grant to do this work. We are in the middle of distributing funds for the biennium during which these grant dollars must be used.

## 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 about 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 are also leveraging FHPAP dollars for the next two years through Washington County.

## 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 depending 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: 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: 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: 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.

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Name

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Date