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WHEAT Community Connections Names New Director

April 30, 2024 (*Clinton, MA*) Paul Mina, President & CEO at the United Way of Tri-County (UWTC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Liz Leonard as the new Director of WHEAT Community Connections, effective April 29, 2024. UWTC is the parent organization of WHEAT.

Ms. Leonard replaces Jodi Breidel who recently accepted a position with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Liz will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of WHEAT's programs including the food pantry, community café, and Hidden Treasures Gift Shop.

Ms. Leonard most recently served as Program Manager at WHEAT but her connection to the local non-profit began 10 years earlier as a volunteer at the food pantry.

Staff and volunteers at WHEAT wear many hats, and Liz has worn them all. She picked-up weekly grocery store donations and assisted with WHEAT's seasonal programs: Tools for School, Feed-A-Family, and Hope for the Holidays. Being at WHEAT so often, Ms. Leonard subsequently began volunteering in the office, and in 2021 accepted a part-time Case Manager position. Part time developed into full-time, and in addition to her case management responsibilities, began assisting the director, working across all of WHEAT's programs.

Ms. Leonard graduated from Merrimack College with a BS in Business Administration and worked for many years in State Street's Master Trust Division as a pension fund Client Service Manager. Later, she moved to BNY Mellon in the Business Implementation Unit, coordinating the custodial conversions of defined benefit and defined contribution plans.

Liz left BNY Mellon to raise her family, and once her children entered school and became involved in sports and various activities, she jumped in and volunteered with many of those organizations including soccer, little league, scouts, and school.

Liz, a Lancaster resident for 19 years, loves the area and cares greatly about those who struggle to get by in the Greater Clinton Community. "I am thrilled and grateful for the opportunity to carry on the important work WHEAT has been accomplishing for decades," Ms. Leonard commented. "The need in our community is greater than ever, and we are working diligently to meet this challenge with our own continued growth and evolution."

While making the announcement last Thursday evening at WHEAT's Annual Volunteer Recognition Event, Paul Mina said, "We are extremely excited to have Liz as the new Director here in Clinton. Liz is a collaborative and generous team member with a positive approach to the many challenges of running a direct service program. She is a strong leader and has already demonstrated a positive impact in the community. I am confident she will be a great fit in the Greater Clinton region and will continue the high service delivery standards that the community has come to expect from WHEAT."

For residents not familiar with WHEAT, below is a summary of their programs and services. WHEAT Community Connections has served residents of the Greater Clinton area (Berlin, Bolton, Clinton, Lancaster, and Sterling) since 1982 and in 2012, became a direct service program of the United Way of Tri-County. WHEAT continues to be a local organization supporting local residents through care, compassion and quality programs and services.

WHEAT Community Cupboard (Food Pantry) provides monthly groceries to families and individuals in need.

WHEAT Community Café provides homemade lunches for pick-up and delivers lunches to local housing authorities. Homemade dinners are also served Monday through Friday.

WHEAT's Outdoor Marketplace provides breads, pastries, pre-made foods, fruits, and vegetables Tuesday through Friday as available.

Case Management staff provide a collaborative process that assesses, implements, and coordinates options and services required to meet the client's basic health and human service needs.

Seasonal programs including "Tools for School" (backpacks with school supplies), "Feed-A-Family" (turkey meal for Thanksgiving), and "Hope for the Holidays" (toys for the holidays).

Hidden Treasures Thrift Store provides everyone with low-to-no cost furniture, household items, clothing, shoes and so much more in a clean, organized retail setting. All proceeds help subsidize our food programs.

To speak with Liz or other staff at WHEAT, please email Liz at liz.leonard@uwotc.org or call 508.370.4942. More information about WHEAT's programs, events, volunteer opportunities, and hours of operation can be found on the United Way's website at www.uwotc.org/wheat.

About the United Way of Tri-County

The United Way of Tri-County (UWTC) is a community building organization that brings people together to care for one another. UWTC provides programs and services, connects volunteers, strengthen agencies, teaches social responsibility, and meets the critical needs of the community with the help of people like you. For more information visit the United Way website at www.uwotc.org

About WHEAT Community Connections

WHEAT Community Connections is a direct service of the United Way of Tri-County, that owns and operates three food pantries and two hot meals programs within the thirty-four communities they serve. The United Way of Tri-County and WHEAT Community Connections is a community building organization that brings people together to care for one another. We provide programs and services, connect volunteers, strengthen agencies, teach social responsibility, and meet the critical needs of the community with the help of people like you. For more information visit the United Way Website at www.uwotc.org

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