

# FAITH IN WATERVILLE



## MAILI BAILEY & LARRY DICKEY

*by Avery Munns '21*

Winter started on a scary note this year, with a storm of rain, ice, and snow. The storm began the Monday afternoon of Veteran's Day and continued into Tuesday. Waterville Public Schools canceled classes due to the conditions, and Maili Bailey, the director of the Evening Sandwich Program based in the Universalist Unitarian Church, didn't want to risk her usual Tuesday morning commute to Waterville from Skowhegan. She called Larry Dickey, one of her volunteers, and told him she was canceling the [Evening Sandwich Program](#) for that day.



One of the other volunteers called Larry later that morning and asked why the Evening Sandwich Program was closed. Larry responded, "It's clearing off. Why don't you and I go in and make sandwiches?" The volunteer Larry spoke to on the phone called a friend while Larry called another volunteer who lives near the church. They ended up having six volunteers come in, allowing them to serve 80 meals that icy Tuesday. As Maili said when recounting her team's perseverance that day, it was because "they love it and they want to serve."

The Evening Sandwich Program began in 1990 when Universalist Unitarian Church members,

the late Steve and Winnie Kierstead, heard that people were diving into trash cans searching for food. Maili began volunteering a few years later. “I was a member of this church, and I volunteered the day after one of my birthdays 26 years ago,” Maili said. “At the time, most of the volunteers were elderly people, and after a few months, Steve Kierstead informed me that I was the new director. No preamble whatsoever.” Maili embraced the position and has coordinated and overseen the program ever since.



**FAST FACTS: EVENING SANDWICH PROGRAM**

Description: Serves hot soup, sandwiches, etc., six days a week

Impact: Provides about 4,000 meals each month

Needs: Donations (\$1 funds 2.5 meals!)

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The Evening Sandwich Program now operates six days each week due to an increase in involvement from other organizations. Maili is proud not only of the increased number of volunteers but of the program’s volunteer retention rate as well. “Once people become

involved, they’re very loyal.”

One of the loyal volunteers who has come on board during Maili’s tenure is Larry Dickey. After his partner passed away, Larry wanted to get out of his house, so in 2012, he began attending services at the Universalist Unitarian Church. During one of his first times at the church, the lady sitting beside him asked Larry if he cooked. “I said, ‘Yes, I do.’ And she said, ‘Tuesday, come here and report to Maili Bailey and see if she needs any help.’ So I came, and she said, ‘Yes,’ but Maili said the same thing: ‘Do you know how to cook?’ And I said, ‘Yes, I’ve cooked all my life. Don’t you think I know how to cook?’ She said, ‘Well here’s the pot, here’s the stuff, make a soup.’ So I made a soup, and I’ve been here ever since.”

Larry continues to volunteer on Tuesdays. When the team leader for the Friday volunteer group stopped coming, Larry said, “nobody jumped in to do it. They needed somebody to be their leader, so I said, ‘I’ll do it.’” In addition, Larry acts as the director for the program during the summertime when Maili is away.

Larry dedicates nearly his entire day on both Tuesdays and Fridays to the Evening Sandwich

Program. He leaves his house at 8:15 am and goes to Hannaford, Save-A-Lot, Sacred Heart's soup kitchen, and sometimes other places in order to gather the necessary supplies to prepare the meals. "I love doing it. I can see all these people need food. I like to meet people and talk to them." Larry said he thinks people like talking to him, too, but he laughed and said he doesn't believe his personality is the only reason he sees many of the same people each week. "They come on Tuesdays [because] they like my soup."

Every individual who comes to the Evening Sandwich Program can get two cups of soup, four sandwiches, and a variety of other items including bread, produce, salads, and desserts. One of the things both Larry and Maili highlight about the Evening Sandwich Program is that anyone is welcome. "This program asks no questions," Maili said. "No one has to qualify, and that fits in perfectly with Universalist Unitarianism... we're open and welcoming to everyone." People sometimes come in and talk about how "they're stressed out about having to work, to pay the rent, and we say, 'We're here and don't worry.' So I think it's great that people don't have to worry about being fed, and they don't have to jump through any hoops. I think that's really important."

Maili wishes more people knew about the Evening Sandwich Program. One way that she hopes people will support the program is through donations, because just \$1 can fund two and a half meals. Maili has dedicated much of her life to the Evening Sandwich Program, and she said the people are what keep her coming back. "All the volunteers, they love it," Maili said. "And I guess the customers like it because they come time and time again."

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By **vmpaqu20**

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