

Meet The Team: Harvey & Margaret Lorenz



Donors

It takes a **team** to provide shelter and affordable housing to people experiencing homelessness and housing instability in our community. The Pillars team includes dedicated **staff**, selfless **volunteers**, and generous **donors** contributing to common goals:

SHELTER, SUPPORT, SOLUTIONS

Harvey and Margaret Lorenz moved to Neenah from Milwaukee in 1968. While it was a job transfer for Harvey that brought the couple to the Fox Cities, they soon discovered what they call “a great place to live.”

“The Fox Cities always has nice big city amenities such as sports, concerts, and fine arts,” said Harvey.

“I think it’s a pretty place to live, too,” added Margaret. “The Neenah community is pretty, the lake. We don’t do a lot of hiking anymore, but there are a lot of places that you could go like the Loop the Lake or Friendship trails.”

The Lorenzes have also filled their years in Neenah donating their time as volunteers for multiple community organizations including Pillars.

Building a foundation to give back

Margaret remembers service on display from a young age when her mother served on the Milwaukee County Girl Scout Board. While she did not think much of it then, she believes it made an impression on her about the importance of giving back. Years later, one opportunity caught her attention.

“A month before we moved to Neenah, in Milwaukee, I was in a young women’s church group meeting,” said Margaret. “There was a speaker from Social Services in Milwaukee talking about foster care. I wasn’t sure that being around so many little kids all the time would suit me very well, but when he started talking about pre-adoptive infant care, I thought, ‘I like babies. I would be good at that.’”

One year and one day after the couple moved to Neenah, Margaret called Winnebago County officials to ask about pre-adoptive infant fostering opportunities. That started a three-year chapter in their lives that lasted until 1972. “We had more than a half dozen newborn babies cycle through our house,” said Margaret.

The Lorenzes opened their home once again years later to foster rescue dogs through Schnauzer Rescue of Wisconsin. The couple fostered 28 Miniature Schnauzers over the years and adopted four more into their family, which also includes their daughter, three grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, two grand-dogs, and one great-grandbunny.



Pictured above are Baron, age 16, and Duke, age 9.

Community involvement outside the home

Harvey and Margaret credit their careers for helping them get connected in the community. Harvey worked at Marine Bank in Neenah while Margaret went to college in her late 30s and early 40s for a degree in journalism/business, which she put to use working at Miles Kimball in Oshkosh. Both spent time working as loaned officers in local United Way chapters.

"I started volunteering through United Way and then branched from there because of all the connections I made," said Harvey. "It just triggered something in me that has been very satisfying over the years to be able to do something and share what I do have to make somebody else's life maybe a little bit easier."

Harvey retired from BankOne (now Chase) in 1995 and spent years as an active volunteer, board member, and officer with many area organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, and the former Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities, now part of Pillars.

"I got involved with the Housing Partnership because of my job as Community Reinvestment Act Officer and trying to make sure that the bank was meeting the needs of the low- to moderate-income populations in fair housing," said Harvey.

Margaret showed her support for the organization behind the scenes by putting together baskets for auctions and other events. Her other activities have included volunteering for the Fox Cities Book Festival, the Neenah Public Library, and visiting hospitals and nursing homes with her trained therapy dog, Kaiser.

Support spanning more than two decades

A lot has changed since the couple first got involved with Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities. Most notably, the organization merged with Homeless Connections and the Fox Valley Warming Shelter in October 2018 to form Pillars. Even so, the Lorenzes' support remains steady.

"Safe, sound, and affordable housing is ground zero where people start to build independent and secure lives. I think about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," said Margaret. "The basic requirements for well-being begin with food, water, sleep, and warmth, then safety and security. Supporting Pillars is a good way to put your contribution dollars to work locally to help support those goals."

While they are not hands-on Pillars volunteers anymore, in addition to financial support, they cook and freeze E2F meals as part of their church's quarterly mission to bring meals to area shelters.

Inspiring others to make a difference

When it comes to getting connected, Harvey believes word of mouth advertising is a powerful tool. "If I've been involved in an organization, I feel free to talk about it, and I think that goes a long way to make people feel comfortable volunteering."

He encourages people with questions to call organizations they are interested in or stop by the office to get more information about needs they might be able to help fill.

"As little as an hour a week, anything like that, means something to the organization, because it frees the staff up to do what their focused mission is," said Harvey.

For more information about how to join the Pillars team, visit our website: www.pillarsinc.org.



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