

STARFISH FOUNDATION PRESIDENT’S REPORT

2024 A YEAR IN REVIEW

First and foremost, I wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to my fellow board members (Mark Spindler, Ramesh Upadhyaya, Mary Harvey, Lisa Johnson, Nancy Guerrero, Laura Nitschke, and Becky Yunk) for your hard work and dedication to serving on this board. As a board member who has served as an officer on the Starfish Foundation Board of Directors for the last three years, I acknowledge the commitment it takes to govern, to raise funds, and to be responsible and trusted agents of the foundation and this important work.

A sincere thank you to the chair of the Veterans Program Committee, Founder of Healing Warrior Hearts, Patricia Clason. Thank you for your leadership and trusted guidance in this last year, and for me personally, for the last 8+ years. Your steadfast dedication to supporting trauma survivors find healing is nothing less than inspiring!

In 2024, the combination of our hard work and dedication allowed us to continue to accomplish great things. Of course, we could never fully do the important work of helping heal hearts without the generous support of our membership and community advocates – for that we cannot say thanks enough to each and every one of YOU!

Weekend Retreats

Patricia Clason and program instructors responsibly led numerous successful retreat weekends filled with healing and hope for all participants and staff. Here is a summary of 2024 retreat attendance in Milwaukee:

Program	Month	# Of Participants	# Of Instructors	# Of Staff
Healing Warrior Hearts	January	2	2	7
Taking It Lightly	February	6	2	11
Healing Warrior Hearts MST	March	3	3	12
Healing Warrior Hearts	June	5	3	11
Healing Warrior Hearts COUPLES	July	10	3	12
Taking It Lightly	September	4	2	9
Healing Warrior Hearts MST	September	5	2	9
Healing Warrior Hearts LGBTQ+	December	2	2	8
Totals		37	19	79

A total of 37 participants went through Healing Warrior Hearts and Taking It Lightly programs at the Center for Creative Learning. If you have ever staffed a weekend retreat, you know it is almost certain the amazing volunteers that contributed to the success of each and every weekend walked

away with additional lessons learned, changed perspectives, and/or lighter hearts . . . I know I did. I am always humbled to be a witness to the way each weekend transpires, the way the participants transform, and the manner in which the instructors, supervisors, and staff work together to ensure the success of all retreats.

For those of you who have participated in a weekend retreat, I encourage you to think about the staff members who were witnesses to your experiences, how they supported your process, and how they may have aided your experience. How could YOU help a Veteran or other trauma survivor find the courage to share a story, trust in the process, and find healing and hope? Sign up to staff a weekend retreat in 2025. If you have yet to experience a weekend retreat, sign up to participate and/or staff a weekend retreat in 2025.

Community

We started the year wrapping up The Save 100 Lives Campaign. This was a collaborative effort between the Starfish Foundation, Healing Warrior Hearts, and Country Music Artist Trey Taylor, who gifted a concert to thank the major donors of the campaign. This effort was also supported by numerous and very generous individual donors and corporate sponsors.

In addition to the generous support of Trey Taylor, The Chef's Table, and our charitable event sponsors, we also had a silent auction to help meet our fundraising goal to the donors of the silent auction items. Gratitude to Mark Krause and Guitars 4 Vets for donating one guitar each, which were signed by Trey Taylor, and all of the other companies and individuals who made the silent auction a success.

This event would not have been possible without the months of hard work put in by Patricia Clason and Evan Lenhardt – thank you! A special thanks to Chef David Magnasco, Secily Clason, and all of the wonderful people at Chef's Table – a truly beautiful venue with remarkably talented staff. To all of the individual donors, corporate sponsors, and volunteers who made this a wonderful success – thank you! Last and certainly not least, thank you to Sam (Trey's manager) and to Trey Taylor for your kind heart, generous spirit, and for providing a special evening of wonderful music, camaraderie, and lasting memories. In the words of Trey's mentor, Dolly Parton, I "hope life will treat you kind, and I hope you have all that you dreamed of, and I wish you joy and happiness, but above all "we" wish you love."

Weekend retreats are possible partly because of fundraising and community outreach. This last year we had many opportunities to get out into the community to network and to spread the word about the Starfish Foundation and Healing Warrior Hearts. There were numerous weekends of staffing booths at Frost Fest, Dare to Be Aware Fair, Locust Street Days, National Nights Out, Military Day at the Zoo, Irish Fest, Mexican Fiesta, Live on the Plaza, and many, many more. Thanks to the countless volunteers who stepped up to staff these notable events - without YOUR support, we could not continue to do this important work! I'd also like to take this time to highlight a few major events that occurred this last year.

Healing Warrior Hearts was again invited to be the Milwaukee Milkmen Charity of the Game on July 13th. Board member Mary Harvey worked hard in advance of the event to invite members and create excitement about attendance. Sandra Eihler and Thrive Therapy sponsored the event for another year. In large part to Mary's efforts, our community attendance was greater than any prior year. Foundation Treasurer Mark Spindler and his wife Karen worked the crowd and walked the

aisles of Franklin Field selling MANY, MANY 50/50 raffle tickets. Last but not least, Team Hawley turned out again – your continued support of our events is truly inspiring. Overall, this event has grown in popularity, community, and profitability, and we cannot wait to participate again in 2025. Many thanks to the ROC Foundation and the Milwaukee Milkmen for continuing to include Healing Warrior Hearts. Don't miss the fun - mark your calendars now for Sunday, July 20, 2025.

On December 14, donned in our winter attire, Mary & Don Harvey represented us this year interacting with the sponsors and donors of the Fill the Boat event in Delavan. The donors of this event provide cash donations, along with paper products (i.e., toilet paper, paper towel, napkins, etc.), coffee, and individually wrapped snacks used during our weekend retreats. Many thanks to the creators and sponsors, Reed's Marine and Whiskey Ranch, and their staff for continuing to support Healing Warrior Hearts!

The calendar year ended with another successful Operation Grateful Giving. We personally hand deliver gifts to patients at the VA Medical Center. This year approximately 500 bags were stuffed by amazing volunteers on December 22. Then on Christmas Eve, boxes of bags were delivered to the VA Medical Center for hand delivery to individual hospital units. Bags were also delivered to the Vets Place Central, Boudicca House, and the Fisher House. This year's event was done in partnership with Rogers Hospital, BMO, Di and Gary Philippi, Warrior Songs, Liquid Mind, Humana, Unit 18 Auxiliary, and many other generous donors too numerous to list. Admittedly this is one of my personal favorite events and I'm grateful we had the opportunity to be back in the community demonstrating our gratitude and making connections with our Veteran community. Many thanks to Patricia and Alannah McReavey for leading this effort and for the many donors and volunteers that made 2024 Operation Grateful Giving an enormous success.

As demonstrated, we continue to actively spread the word about the Starfish Foundation, Healing Warrior Hearts, and connect with the community. We would love for you to join us in 2025. It doesn't have to be EVERY event. Perhaps make a commitment to staff one weekend or staff a shift at one of the many outreach events we hope to return in 2025 (Locust Street Days, National Nights Out, Zoo Military Appreciation Day, Milwaukee Milkmen game, Operation Grateful Giving, etc.). Connect with us on social media – share and like our content to help spread the word. We all have the capacity to make a positive difference in the lives of others – how will you choose to support the Starfish Foundation in 2025?

In closing, I'd like to thank you all for trusting me to serve the Starfish Board for the last three years. We come together in this community because most of us have come through difficult times before and/or choose to be of service to those who need emotional healing. Because we have chosen this path, we have been provided with many tools to aid in moving forward (and helping others along the way). Please remember the lessons and your rosters, they have been proven to lift hearts and to save lives. It has been my honor to serve you.

Thank you for your continued support, we cannot do this important work without you!

Respectfully submitted,
Robert Frost
President, Starfish Foundation