



# The Lighthouse Waterville Area Soup Kitchen

*More than 218,000 meals served*

Meals Served	• 2022 - 19,381	• 2024 - 82,040	Average Cost per Meal • \$2.50
	• 2003 - 52,664	• Through June 2025 - 50,440	

## When Benefits Drop, Community Support Must Rise

Hunger remains a daily reality for far too many Mainers. 1 in 7 adults and 1 in 5 children struggle to get enough to eat. Here in Kennebec County, 14.5% of our neighbors face food insecurity. This fall, many SNAP recipients will lose about \$26 per month in benefits, forcing more families to turn to soup kitchens, food pantries, and nonprofits for help. At WASK, we're already seeing the impact. As of mid-August, our cooks are on track to prepare 100,000 meals in 2025 - more than double the number we served in 2023, our first full year at the Lighthouse. In June alone, we averaged over 400 meals a day, some days topping 500.

With the strength of this caring community, WASK will continue to rise to the challenge. Your generosity will ensure that neighbors who might otherwise go without can count on a warm, nourishing meal.

## Community Events

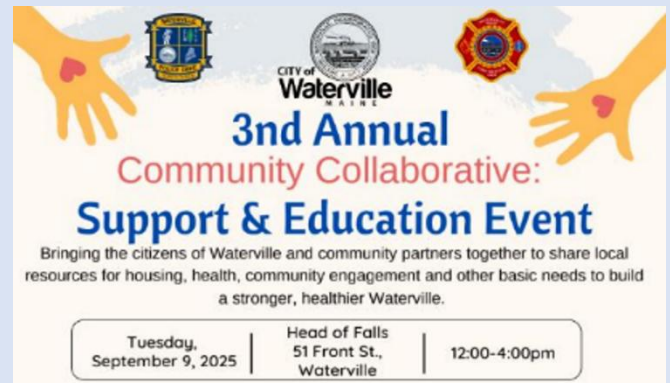
*The Waterville Area Soup Kitchen is delighted to take part in community activities.*

We recently participated in 'National Night Out' hosted locally by the South End Neighborhood Association. This event, a community-building initiative, aims to strengthen police-community partnerships and foster camaraderie by providing an opportunity for residents to interact with local law enforcement and community organizations.



WASK volunteers had a great time offering attendees face paint and temporary tattoos.

## 3rd Annual Community Collaborative: Support and Education Event



We'll be there, along with nearly 3 dozen agencies, offering information on topics from health services and adult education to domestic violence, substance use services, and housing resources.

## Festival of Trees

WASK will be returning to the Waterville Elks Banquet & Conference Center for the 2025 Festival of Trees. It was great fun last year and we look forward to this year's event. Our entry will be a 7 foot, 5 tier tree with the theme:

*It Takes a Village.*



Presented By  
Central Maine Community Betterment Collaborative



In Conjunction With  
Alford Youth & Community Center and  
Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce



Follow our FB  
page for details.

## 2nd Annual Tropical Escape

After the success of our 1st Tropical Winter Escape, we are all looking forward to this event! We had SO much fun in March, as supporters in the community joined us to enjoy some yummy goodies while being entertained with music and a fun live auction. The evening raised more than \$30,000. We hope that you'll join us again on March 19th, 2026 to do it all again - except maybe bigger and better!



## REORGANIZATION

If you follow the activities of the Waterville Area Soup Kitchen, you've seen the steady growth over the three years since the Lighthouse opened. Our cooks produce an ever-increasing number of meals each week. The scope of the mission has evolved, too. WASK works hard to make services beyond food available to those who visit the Lighthouse, whether those services are provided onsite or elsewhere in the city.

To better manage our growing activity, we've made some organizational changes. Carla Caron has stepped down as President of the Board of Directors. She will now focus on her other role - 'Executive Director' of the Waterville Area Soup Kitchen, managing day-to-day business, facilitating the many connections in place, and continuing to form in the community. Carla will remain an Ex Officio member of the Board of Directors. Dean Dolham, a long-term member of the Board, will take on the duties of President. Dean has long been instrumental in managing the physical facility and food supply, as well as spearheading fund-raising activities. Finally, Jessica Beedy has been named Dining Room Manager.

Every person working as a part of the Waterville Area Soup Kitchen, in whatever capacity, continues to be a volunteer. There is no paid staff.

## Thank you, Audra

Audra Weisel joined WASK when meals were being delivered out of vehicles at Green Street Park. After four years, she has decided to step down from the Board of Directors.



Audra is a regular member of the kitchen staff, overseeing or assisting with meal preparation a few days each week and assures us she will continue in that role. Thank goodness as we don't know what we'd do without her!

## New on our Board of Directors

Meet two individuals who have been elected to our Board of Directors.

WASK is excited to welcome **Jason Furchak** to the Board. Jason is known in the community as the co-owner of Holy Cannoli, a wonderful downtown bakery and deli. In addition to this very full-time job, Jason serves on the city's 'Taskforce on Homelessness' and has previously been a part of Mid-Maine's United Way. We look forward to his informed voice.



**Audra Ezzell** is joining the Board, having served as a volunteer at the Lighthouse. Audra's welcome experience includes her current position as Community Outreach Coordinator at Blue Sky Counseling. She has also served in a number of volunteer roles, including with the Lioness Club and the emergency warming center. Welcome, Audra!

## In the Spotlight

**Cooking with Heart: Meet Volunteer Jessica Starling**  
*From cooking in New Orleans to serving in Maine, Jessica's journey is one of resilience, compassion, and community*

18 months ago, Jessica Starling arrived in Waterville by train from New Orleans, where she'd lived since she was 21.



From a military family, she moved often and found her calling in food service as a teen, eventually working for many years as a chef.

Jessica was in the thick of Hurricane Katrina 20 years ago this month, spending three days in the aftermath helping evacuate people and rescuing animals. She has a big heart for helping others and is now volunteering her time and skill in the Lighthouse kitchen. She's been free from drugs for years, is many months into sobriety, and is building a new chapter here in Maine.

She loves the community and the outdoors - though winter still gets a side-eye. You'll find her in the Lighthouse kitchen two days a week, sharing her skills and her heart. We hope she warms up to the cold and stays a long while.



**Learn more about us**

Visit our website at

[WatervilleAreaSoupKitchen.org](http://WatervilleAreaSoupKitchen.org)

WASK is grateful to all who support our operations, including our monthly donors. An individual donation of \$50/month allows us to provide 1 meal a day for a guest all year long. Any amount is helpful and goes a long way.

**DONATE**  
on our  
website



**Waterville Area Soup Kitchen**

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