

# STARFISH FOUNDATION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## 2025 A YEAR IN REVIEW

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First and foremost, I extend my sincere gratitude to my fellow Board members—Mark Spindler, Rheanna Smith, Mary Harvey, Mary Muse, Rosie Wolbrink, Laura Nitschke, Dawn Winters-Bowers, and partial-year members Becky Walsh, Sheady Kyle, Carla Sivak, and Tanya Lakins—for your dedication, service, and commitment to the mission of the Starfish Foundation.

As someone who has served as an officer on this Board for the past four years, I fully appreciate the time, responsibility, and care required to govern effectively, steward resources, raise funds, and serve as trusted agents of this organization and its important work.

I also offer my heartfelt thanks to the Chair of the Veterans Program Committee and Founder of Healing Warrior Hearts, Patricia Clason. Your leadership, wisdom, and unwavering dedication to supporting trauma survivors continue to inspire all of us. On a personal note, I am deeply grateful for your trusted guidance over the past nine years and for your continued commitment to creating spaces for healing and hope.

### Program Impact

In 2025, the combined efforts of our Board, volunteers, staff, and community partners allowed us to continue making meaningful progress in support of those we serve. This work would not be possible without the generosity of our members, donors, and advocates. Your support sustains every program we offer, and we are truly grateful.

### Weekend Retreats

Throughout the year, Patricia Clason and our program instructors successfully led multiple Healing Warrior Hearts and Taking It Lightly retreat weekends at the Center for Creative Learning. Each retreat was thoughtfully facilitated and grounded in safety, compassion, and transformation—for both participants and staff.

2025 Retreat Attendance (Milwaukee):

Program	Month	# Of Participants	# Of Instructors	# Of Staff
Healing Warrior Hearts	January	5	3	12
Taking It Lightly	February	3	2	6
Healing Warrior Hearts MST	March	1	2	9
Taking It Lightly	June	3	2	8
Healing Warrior Hearts MST	September	4	2	10
Healing Warrior Hearts LGBTQ+	October	3	2	9
<b>Totals</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>54</b>

In total, **19 participants** completed Healing Warrior Hearts and Taking It Lightly programs in 2025. Anyone who has staffed a retreat knows that the experience is transformative not only for participants, but for volunteers as well. Many leave with new perspectives, deeper understanding, and lighter hearts—I know I did.

It is always humbling to witness the courage of participants, the collaboration among instructors and staff, and the powerful transformations that unfold over the course of a weekend. These retreats are at the heart of our mission.

If you have previously participated in a retreat, I encourage you to reflect on the staff members who supported you along your journey. Consider how you might now support others in finding the courage to share their stories and begin healing. We invite you to sign up to staff or participate in a retreat in 2026 and become part of this life-changing work.

## **Community Engagement & Fundraising**

We began the year with an ambitious fundraising goal for 2025 of \$65,000, which is more than the foundation has ever received in one year. Thanks to some major donors, supported by numerous individual donors and corporate sponsors, we were able to exceed our goal for 2025.

In addition, we had our 1st annual "**Salute and Swing Invitational**" golf outing, the event also featured a successful silent auction. A special thank you to the golf outing event planning committee, Lisa Perry, Jack Perry, Nicole Perry, and our Past Starfish President, Michelle Hawley. We're hoping this may turn into an annual event for us.

## **Outreach & Community Presence**

Our ability to offer weekend retreats is strengthened by consistent fundraising and community outreach. Throughout the year, volunteers represented the Foundation at numerous events, including Fall Fest, Dare to Be Aware Fair, National Nights Out, Military Day at the Zoo, Live on the Plaza, and many others. We are deeply grateful to the volunteers who staffed booths and shared our mission—your presence makes a lasting impact.

Several major community events deserve special recognition:

- **5th Annual - Milwaukee Milkmen Charity of the Game (July 20th)**

Healing Warrior Hearts was once again honored as Charity of the Game. Board member Mary Harvey played a key role in promoting the event, resulting in great attendance. Hopper Corporation sponsored the event and Mark and Karen Spindler enthusiastically supported fundraising through 50/50 raffle sales. Team Hawley's continued presence and support, from selling raffle tickets and promoting the ball toss, remain truly inspiring. This event continues to grow in visibility, community engagement, and fundraising success. We look forward to returning **again in 2026**.

- **Dockhounds Charity of the Game (July 3rd)**

Healing Warrior Hearts was honored as Charity of the Game. Master Electronics sponsored the event with a large donation, and Mark and Karen Spindler enthusiastically supported fundraising through 50/50 raffle sales. We hope to return **again in 2026**.

- **Fill the Boat – Delavan (December 13th)**

Many came out and represented the Foundation at this winter event, engaging with donors and sponsors whose generous contributions of supplies and funds directly support retreat weekends. Thank you to Reed's Marine, Whiskey Ranch, and their teams for their continued partnership.

- **Operation Grateful Giving**

The year concluded with another meaningful Operation Grateful Giving. Approximately **500 gift bags** were assembled by volunteers and delivered on Christmas Eve to the VA Medical Center, Vets Place Central, Boudicca House, and the Fisher House. This event was made possible through partnerships with Rogers Hospital, Di and Gary Philippi, and Michael Hemmer, Wisconsin Veterans Community Fund and others. Special thanks to Patricia Clason and Alannah McReavey for leading this effort. This remains one of our most impactful and heartfelt community traditions.

## **Looking Ahead**

As demonstrated throughout the year, the Starfish Foundation continues to actively engage with the community and expand awareness of Healing Warrior Hearts. We invite you to join us in 2026—whether by staffing a retreat, volunteering at an outreach event, or supporting us through social media and advocacy. Even a small commitment can make a meaningful difference.

We all have the capacity to positively impact the lives of others. How will you choose to support the Starfish Foundation in 2026?

## **Closing**

In closing, I thank you for the trust you have placed in me to serve on the Starfish Foundation Board over the past four years. We come together as a community because we understand the importance of emotional healing and service to others. The tools and lessons gained through this work have been proven to lift hearts and save lives.

It has been my honor to serve as your President.

Thank you for your continued support. We could not do this important work without you.

Respectfully submitted,

**Robert Frost**

President, Starfish Foundation