



ANNUAL REPORT  
**2023**

# Headwaters

RELIEF ORGANIZATION





# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



## Dear Friends of Headwaters Relief Organization,

We have learned that one of the keys to success is to act as a team in order to take care of one other as we respond in communities that need our services. It is important to recognize that the team concept also applies to decisions on how to utilize our resources to maximize the beneficial results to those we serve. The team concept is broad, beginning with the accumulation of both financial and human resources that will in turn define the degree and level of support we can offer. As such, I feel all of us who are current team members can help the cause in many ways. We can be creative and open minded about growing our team not only, in terms of adding new members who can bring additional resources, but in new connections, and enhanced recognition to the organization. A common trait of strong organizations is that they are active and not static. They grow and change to welcome new members. They adapt to new circumstances and opportunities and seek ways and means to expand the current boundaries that define our capabilities.

The challenges of the past few years have taught us that we are better when we first carefully assess where we can have the most impact. Headwaters is an organization that has been able to act nimbly to be responsive. We need to wisely deploy our resources to achieve positive and hopefully long-lasting benefits to the people we provide assistance and care to.

We look forward to another year in which we can support people affected by disaster with our very dedicated volunteers.

Very Truly,  
Daniel G Leitner  
Board President

**Front cover** - A Nepali woman strides with purpose across a swaying suspension bridge. Dressed in vibrant local attire, she deftly balances a heavy load of lush green grass upon her back, vital sustenance for her cherished animals waiting on the other side. Headwaters Relief Organization remains committed to the goals of reducing poverty, gender inequality and equal opportunity for decent work and economic growth.

**Back cover** - Our volunteers responded in the aftermath of the devastating Maui fire in Hawaii. This makeshift shrine, a testament to the collective grief and solidarity of those affected by the tragedy with photos and names of lives lost, arrays of vibrant flowers and symbols, carefully arranged in patterns, symbolize both loss and renewal, a poignant reminder of the fragility and resilience of life. The Hawaiian flag flutters proudly in the background, serving as a reminder of the enduring spirit of the islands and the strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Dear Friends and Family,

As we reflect on the past year's journey, we are filled with gratitude for the unwavering support from each one of you. Stories of heroes and triumphs have echoed through the years, and Headwaters Relief Organization stands as a testament to what a devoted group of individuals can achieve.

Headwaters' was established almost two decades ago, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, as a commitment was made to bring aid when additional support was needed. With over 3000 volunteers globally, we've faced challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, hurricanes, and storms nationally, supporting families affected by the war in Ukraine and most recently ravaging earthquakes in Turkey.

In Minnesota, our volunteers continue to engage in a monthly volunteer event. This provides the opportunity to volunteer for those who want to help locally.

At the heart of every achievement is the realization that the small steps taken in 2005 have resulted in an organization which has reached over 20 states and 15 countries. Headwaters' disaster relief work has expanded to include psycho-social, public health, medical support, and social justice, which include women's empowerment, and anti-human trafficking efforts.

As we welcome the New Year with heightened spirits and enthusiasm, we remain committed to inspiring volunteerism, building connections, and supporting communities in need. None of this would be possible without your continued support.

Thank you for being a part of our journey.

Dr. Roshan Khatri  
Executive Director



# LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR



## Hello Everyone,

In 2023, we continued our sponsorship program in Haiti. We were able to provide the orphanage we work with the resources for education, shoes, backpacks, and food. We are committed to continuing this sponsorship program as we believe it makes a big difference in the lives of the children at Life Christian. We also were able to distribute more Asha dolls to girls in Nepal. These dolls provide a source of joy and comfort to the girls and also promote education and empowerment. We also were able to increase our local volunteer opportunities.

Over the past year, we have been dedicated to supporting troops and their families, children, and communities locally, nationally and internationally through North American Banking Company's generous sponsorship. One of the ways we have done this is by packing military care packages, children's activities, and hygiene kits. Our military care packages consist of snacks and other baked goods that are carefully packaged and sent to soldiers deployed overseas. These care packages provide a taste of home and show our troops that we appreciate their service and sacrifice.

We have also created activity packs for children living in areas affected by disasters. These packs are designed to help children stay busy and engaged. The activities support the development of coping skills, particularly in times of a disaster. Additionally, we have put together hygiene kits that include essential toiletries such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, and shampoo. These kits are distributed to individuals after a disaster as they may not have access to these items.

It has been incredibly rewarding to see our community come together to volunteer and support others in their time of need. The grant provided by North American Banking Company has allowed us to provide opportunities for volunteering.

We believe that these small gestures make a big difference in the lives of those affected by disaster and our deployed troops. We are incredibly grateful to continue this work in 2024.

Ashley Emry  
Program Director

## 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dan Leitner



Amy Kelly



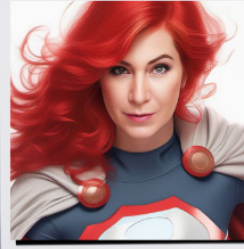
Tony Vannelli



Judy Guerrero



DelRae Messer



Kelly Trolander



Susan O'Keefe



Brad Benesh



Mary Anderson



Dave Combs

## SUPERHERO SUPPORT



Ashley Emry



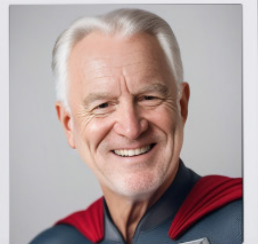
Cheryl Vennerstrom



Roshan Khatri



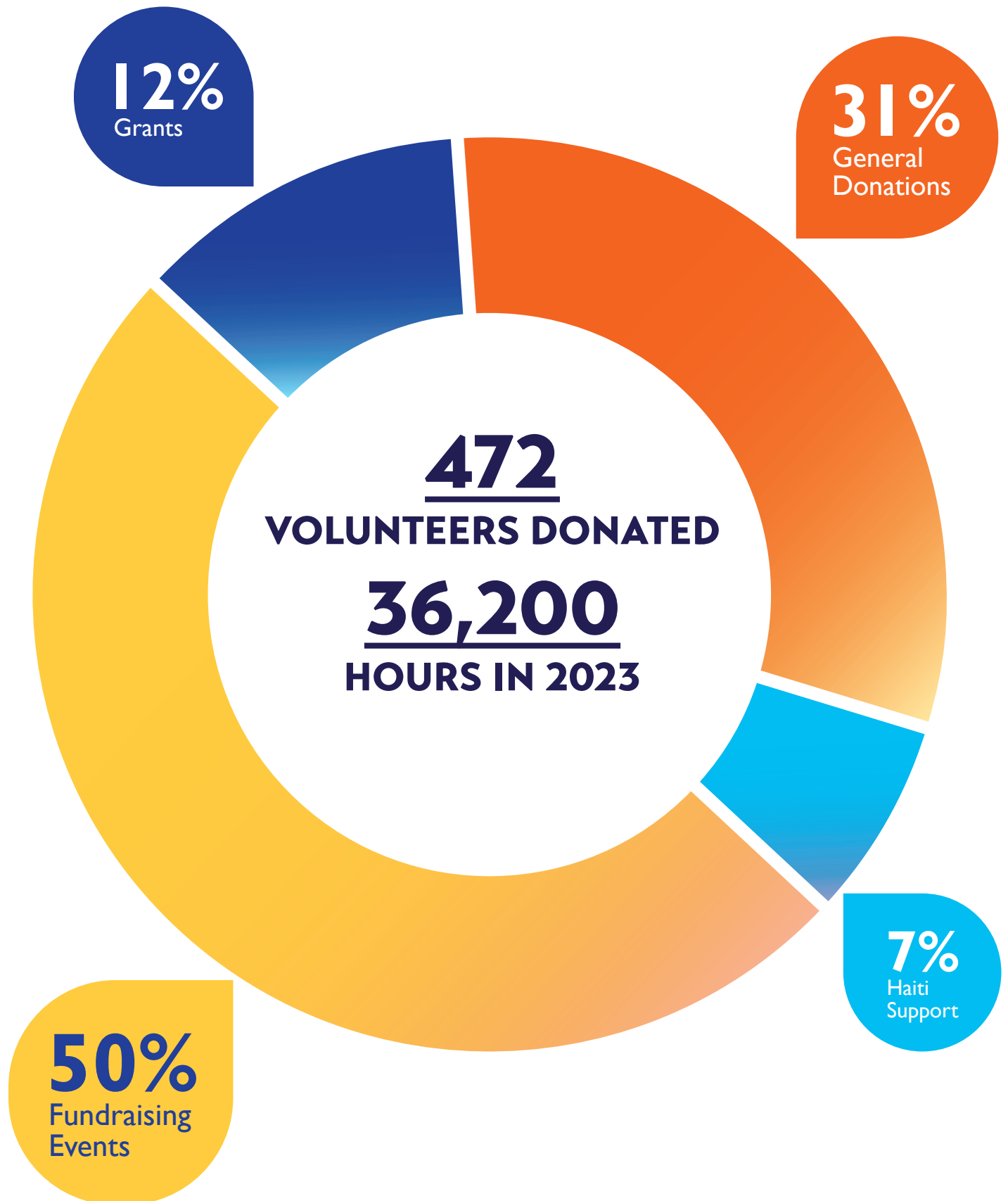
Rebecca Thomley



Joel LeVahn



# HEADWATER RELIEF ORGANIZATION 2023 FUNDING



# 2023 TIMELINE



## JANUARY

**Mentorship Monday Elixir Mixer** Headwater's board member, Dr. DelRae Messer, hosted Mentorship Monday Elixir Mixer. Women entrepreneurs sipped and sampled Adaptogen, Nootropic and Collagen Elixirs, disrupting the well-being industry. Participants were encouraged to ask pressing questions to gain clarity on mental and emotional well-being, nutrition and physical fitness, financial literacy, business and marketing, healthy relationships and family dynamics. All proceeds from this event were donated to Headwaters Relief Organization.

**The Women Entrepreneurial Experience** Challenges as a entrepreneur include navigating uncertain times, maintaining employee enthusiasm and loyalty and developing a deeper sense of dignity, meaning and respect in our work. Women entrepreneurs connected and took this educational opportunity to learn about emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. Participants learned small group exercises and team building activities that could immediately be implemented in their businesses. All proceeds from this event were donated to Headwaters Relief Organization.

## FEBRUARY

**4th Annual Mardi Gras Gala** Headwaters Relief Organization has been hosting a Mardi Gras themed fundraising gala for the past four years, with each year better than the previous, thanks to your presence, help and generous donations. The 2023 gala featured a jazz band, piano music with John Autin from New Orleans, a tarot card reader, a juggler and a Mardi Gras creole meal. Jean Junior Nelson, a Haitian man who was a team lead for us during our many Haitian trips, came to the gala from New York City to talk about Headwaters' support of Haiti. Our 4th Annual Gala was sold out. Our board members, Amy Kelly, DelRae Messer, Judy Guerrero, Kelly Trolander and Susan O'Keefe all were very involved in all the planning that goes into the gala.

**Days of Defending Freedom Ukrainian Resource Center** Headwaters participated in the Days of Defending Freedom event to recognize the strength and perseverance of the Ukrainian people, and the dedication of local Ukrainian American Community supporters and volunteers. The Ukrainian community members and friends gathered at the Ukrainian American Community Center on Saturday, February 25th. Headwaters connected with local Ukrainian community members before traveling to Europe to work with Ukrainian refugees, children and their parents.



## MARCH

**MNVOAD Conference** Headwaters Relief Organization has been a member of Minnesota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MNVOAD) since our inception in 2007. We have been an active member, participating in committees, board activities and the MNVOAD annual conference. During local events we collaborate statewide with other voluntary organizations such as the Twin Cities Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Necomah and many other faith-based organizations.

**Nepal Trip** Headwaters Relief Organization has continued to support communities in Nepal since the earthquake of 2015. In March, a group of our volunteers traveled to several schools and institutions in various locations of remote Nepal to help create awareness of major public health issues. Another focus of the trip was to advocate for girls' education and support the development of healthy self-esteem. Headwaters volunteers have created three children's books in support of Nepalese families and children. The first book, *Nepal Quakes*, was written to help children process the devastating 2015 earthquake and build skills towards greater resiliency. The second book, *Together Again*, provided preventative education about human trafficking and the harmful social and cultural practices that support it. The most recent book, *Stronger Together*, was created to encourage and support girls in making choices in their lives including the pursuit of educational goals.



## APRIL

**Golden Valley Library Art Exhibit** Headwaters had the opportunity to display the artwork that supports the children's books at the Golden Valley Library Art Exhibit. Our art work was on display in our community for the month of April.

**Michigan State University Art Display** A team of faculty and students at Michigan State University called for inclusive and accessible exhibits that illustrate how people used creativity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Headwaters was invited to submit examples of our creative work, with the story behind it, and share more about our creative practices and experiences over the last year.

As part of the exhibition our artwork was demonstrated along with the work of more than 80 artists online and at displays in Frandor Sears Building, Michigan State University, Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center, Impression 5 Science Center, and The Refugee Development Center in Lansing, Michigan throughout the month of April.

**Shoes and Backpacks Arrived At Lifer Christian** Headwaters' board members donated the funds for shoes and backpacks for the children living in Lifer Christian Orphanage. The shoes and backpacks were purchased in the United State and shipped to Haiti in September 2022 to provide for the 30 children in the orphanage. The shoes and back packs were not delivered for 6 months due to systems issues facing Haiti. When they finally arrived the children were overjoyed.

## MAY



**Monthly Packing Event** Headwaters Relief Organization holds monthly volunteer events sponsored by North American Banking Company. The funding request was supported by board member, Brad Benesh. Each month, a different packing event is held at our offices to support our work locally, nationally, and internationally. We welcome all community members to participate and help us prepare in the wake of disasters. Some of our past packing activities have included packing children's activities for Ukrainian and Russian refugees and for working with children affected by the earthquakes in Turkey. We packaged hygiene kits to bring to Turkey after the earthquake devastated areas in Turkey and Syria. Additionally, we packed baked goods for troops that are friends and families of employees and prepared disaster clean-up buckets to give to homeowners after natural disasters.

## JUNE

**Twins Game Volunteering** Headwaters Relief Organization was provided a unique opportunity to fundraise by volunteering at multiple Twins' home games during the 2023 season. Our volunteers staffed the stadium food stands during the Twins games. Headwaters committed to staffing a food stand for 10 games. Our board members and other volunteers participated in these activities. We were able to raise over \$12,000 and bring awareness to Headwaters' work. We have been invited to participate in this program again in 2024.



**Turkey Trip** Headwaters Relief Organization has been working in Turkey with communities affected by the devastating earthquake of February 2023. During our trip in June we collaborated with 12 Dev Adams Sports Complex, in Iskenderun, in Hatay region of Turkey, serving as a multi-faceted facility designed to cater to various aspects of a child's physical, mental, and social development through sports and recreational activities. Our volunteers read and provided psycho-social support through the use of our children's book, *The Night Our World Shook* and our doll Asha. The children were also engaged in craft activities prepared by the volunteers who attend our monthly packing event.

**Polarized, Movie Premier by Shamim Sarif and Hanan Kattan** Headwaters attended the opening of the movie *Polarized* directed and produced by Shamim and Hanan respectively. Shamim and Hanan originally partnered with Headwaters Relief Organization after publication of Sarif's *The Athena Protocol*. Our human trafficking initiative included the children's book, *Together Again*. A portion of the sales from *The Athena Protocol* were donated to Headwaters. This partnership with Shamim and Hanan also inspired an initiative to keep girls in school. A second book written by Shamim, *The Shadow Mission*, resulted in the creation of the children's book, *Stronger Together*. *Stronger Together* focuses on inspiring the education of girls.

## JULY

**Children Volunteers** On an annual basis, Headwaters typically hires a summer intern to assist us with various activities, including in-house organization. This year we used children volunteers to help us with specific tasks and activities including organizing children's activities made by the monthly packing groups. The kids love being part of Headwaters' volunteer efforts, particularly as they relate to helping other children.

## AUGUST

**Jett Beauty Grand Opening** Jett Beauty invited Headwaters to have a booth at their grand opening celebration. Jett Beauty's owner, Amy Kelly, is a board member and has supported Headwaters in many ways, but also significantly with our Asha Dolls distribution. Our Asha dolls were created for girls in India and Nepal as dolls that look like the school girls there. The Asha dolls promote self-esteem in young girls. They are used in conjunction with our initiative that encourages girls to stay in school. Jett Beauty promoted the dolls by adding the option to purchase a doll or donate a doll with any Jett Beauty service.

**5<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament** We enjoyed a fun golfing event at The Links at Norfolk. There were games and giveaways at a few of the holes, including free snow cones and brats on the grill. There was a raffle and silent auction. The event includes sponsorship of the golf holes by our supporters. All proceeds from this fundraising event went to support Headwaters' disaster relief projects. Board members Tony Vannelli, Mary Anderson, along with advisor Joel LeVahn and key volunteer Melissa Hofstede and Tony took on an active roll in this event.

**Headwaters Trailer Maintenance** Headwaters has an emergency equipment trailer, filled with equipment and tools that are used when we provide clean-up after a disaster. We use the trailer for local and national disasters. Our board member, Dave Comb undertook trailer repairs and maintenance, volunteering his time and providing the funds for the repairs. The trailer was originally procured with funding from North American Bank Company.



## SEPTEMBER

**MPHA Board Representative** Executive Director of Headwaters, Dr. Roshan Khatri has been invited to participate on the Minnesota Public Health Association's board. This allows us to further contribute to the field of public health as well participate in the public health community's goals and objectives.

**New Orleans Community Event** New Orleans, a city rich in culture and resilience, has been a focal point for Headwaters Relief Organization since the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Over the years, we have forged lasting partnerships with local entities, notably the New Salem Baptist Church. These collaborations allowed us to establish a walk-in mental health resource



center for the families of the Ninth Ward. This initiative evolved into a youth center, which has been in operation for more than 15 years. To express our gratitude to the community and rekindle connections, we organized a fall festival held on September 30th, 2023 at the youth center. This event was not only a celebration of the longstanding bond we share with the residents of the Ninth Ward, but also an opportunity to showcase the services we provide and reinforce our commitment to the community. In addition to fun activities for children, a medical clinic was provided in partnership with Baptist Community Health Services. The purpose of the Fall Festival was to celebrate the enduring spirit of the community and to introduce newcomers to the impactful work we continue to do. Tony Vanelli, Billy Jeans and Mark Swanson from TDB Builders traveled with us to repair one of the church buildings.

## OCTOBER

**Turkey Trip** The official numbers indicate that over sixty thousand people lost their lives with over three million more displaced. The loss of life was overwhelming with many survivors describing how they searched for days for family members, relatives, and friends, many of whom were never found. Cities including Antakya and Gaziantep, both of which are near the Syrian border, struggle as they begin to rebuild to create a new life and future for themselves and their children. What stood out to us was the incredible power of sports in uniting a community in the face of adversity. We witnessed the impact of sports on children and their training brought about a remarkable sense of togetherness among the families. The complex served as more than just a training ground; it became a hub for sharing, support and community building. Parents and their children found solace and a sense of belonging in this space, gathering for a few hours each week.

**Mosquito Termite & Rodent Control Board** As part of our public health work, Headwaters participated in a four part series about urban rodent control. A multifaceted approach is taken including sanitation, pest-proofing, trapping and the use of rodenticides. In urban areas, rodents cause property damage, transmit diseases and exacerbate asthma.



**Halloween Extravaganza** Headwaters hosted our Second Annual Halloween Extravaganza, on October 27th, 2023. The event brought together a community of families and friends to celebrate the Halloween season. The event was planned by our board president, Dan Leitner, and his daughter, Emily Waldock, along with a group of volunteers and donors.

We had a great turnout for the event, with over 60 children and families in attendance. The event's highlights were the Halloween costume contest, a dance competition, bingo, and other fun-filled children's activities. The atmosphere was lively, and the children's excitement was contagious. The children had an unforgettable time, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and donors. We are grateful to everyone who participated in the event and contributed to its success.

## NOVEMBER

**Philippines Book Da8l TV** On the 10th year commemoration of the Typhoon Haiyan disaster, DAAI TV station, a subsidiary of the Tzu Chi Foundation, showcased how different NGOs have supported the victims in various ways over the past decade. We were asked to showcase our organization's assistance to the community affected by the typhoon. We provided information for the project along with our children's book, "When Strong Wind Blow". This book was shared with the teachers and students of Palo DAAI Kindergarten school and children in Great Love Villages in Palo and Ormoc districts. Headwaters worked in Tacloban Cit, Leyte; Pinabacdao, Western Samar and Cebo in the Philippines.

**MPHA Coffee Chat Holidays and Mental Health** Headwaters' Executive Director was invited to chat with colleagues from the Minnesota Public Health Association about the holidays and mental health issues that may affect individuals.

## DECEMBER

**New Orleans Youth Center Christmas Party** We held our annual Youth Center Christmas Party. Participants included children of all ages as well as mothers and grandmothers and other family members. We decorated Christmas ornaments and enjoyed a pizza party with Christmas cookies.

**Baltimore Global Health Department** Headwaters had a networking meeting with faculty from Johns Hopkins University's Global Health Department. John Hopkins was the nation's first research university and is preeminent in Public Health.



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Susan O'Keefe

Susan O'Keefe is an Account Director for KNOCK Inc., a full-experience creative agency. KNOCK's work includes branding, advertising, and design. KNOCK is also a minority and women owned company. Susan has been a Headwaters' board member since 2018. Susan credits the drive to volunteer to her parents. Her mother volunteered counseling single mothers and working at food banks. Her father visited mental health patients supporting many young men in facing daily challenges. When Susan moved to Chicago, she volunteered on the West Side, an area devastated by the riots of the 1960's. Susan volunteered at a youth center that served as a safe haven for children 3 to 18 years old. Susan says it was not only a food desert, but there were also not any businesses that allowed kids to work, or safe places for children to play. Susan is dedicated to volunteerism and volunteered on weekends at the youth center for 17 years. Susan was drawn to Headwater's focus on volunteerism, children and mental health. Over the years, Susan and KNOCK have volunteered time and marketing support. During the Zika public health crisis they created health awareness materials, she also designed a puzzle used in conjunction with our children's book, *When Haiti Shakes*, a story that tells children what to do in the event of an earthquake. Several of Susan's team members have also participated in trips to Haiti to work with the children after the 2010 earthquake.

Susan brings creative ideas for things to do for our fundraisers. She designed the wine "ring toss" for special bottles at the Headwaters' gala. We appreciate all that Susan contributes to the board. She says she enjoys being on the board with such a great group of compassionate people. About volunteering, Susan philosophically says: "You get more than you give".



**INSPIRING PASSION TO SERVE OTHERS.**



## GET TO KNOW US!



**IN 2005, WE EMERGED AS A GRASSROOTS VOLUNTEER RESPONSE NAMED “RIVER OF HOPE” TO ADDRESS HURRICANE KATRINA IN NEW ORLEANS. WE OFFICIALLY BECAME THE “HEADWATERS RELIEF ORGANIZATION” IN 2007 AFTER RECEIVING NON-PROFIT STATUS.**

- Initially focusing on cleanup and rebuilding partnerships, we established a mental health resource center in the Ninth Ward by 2007.
- By 2010, Headwaters extended its disaster response efforts to Minnesota and other national disasters.
- Our inaugural international disaster response occurred in 2010 following the devastating Haitian earthquake.
- Over the years, we have delivered disaster relief and humanitarian aid in multiple countries, responding to typhoons, hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding, tornadoes, Ebola, refugee crises, and trafficking.
- Ongoing collaborations with other organizations continue for cleanup, rebuilding, and public health services, including education, medical services, and psychosocial support.
- Headwaters Relief Organization has authored ten children’s books, aiding children and families in processing emotions related to disasters, losses, and the development of coping skills. These books have been translated into over 15 languages.
- All donations, 100%, directly contribute to the people and programs we serve.
- Boasting over 3000 volunteers, we welcome local, national, and international individuals. Almost 70% of our volunteers are external to any related organization.
- With only two full-time positions (Executive Director and Program Director), donated salaries cover administrative needs, and volunteers provide additional administrative support.
- Since 2007, we have offered psychosocial services, securing a recent grant for an after-school support program in New Orleans. We have been providing on going educational support in Haiti since 2015.
- Often partnering with other organizations nationally and internationally, we are members of various disaster relief and emergency management associations.
- Funding primarily comes from fundraising and grants tied to specific initiatives, with consistent funders supporting our 100% model.
- Over 70% of our volunteers engage in volunteering with us more than once.

**OPTING TO STAY ADMINISTRATIVELY SMALL ALLOWS US TO REMAIN RESPONSIVE AND NIMBLE, EXPANDING OUR SERVICES BASED ON THE EVOLVING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITIES WE SUPPORT.**





# GLOBAL GOALS

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) OR GLOBAL GOALS ARE A COLLECTION OF 17 INTERLINKED GLOBAL GOALS DESIGNED TO BE A “BLUEPRINT TO ACHIEVE A BETTER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR ALL.” IN 2015, AT THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE, MORE THAN 190 WORLD LEADERS COMMITTED TO ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES WE FACE, INCLUDING POVERTY, INEQUALITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, PEACE, AND JUSTICE BY 2030.

WE EACH HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IF WE'RE GOING TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS. HEADWATERS RELIEF ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES CURRENTLY SUPPORT 10 OF THESE 17 GOALS.

WE SHARE WITH EACH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW OUR WORK IN 2023 ADDRESSES THESE GOALS



## 1. NO POVERTY

Global poverty had a historic decline between 2015 and 2018. Owing to the global pandemic, the global poverty rate increased sharply. This has been exacerbated by rising inflation and the war in the Ukraine. Headwaters responded to the Covid-19 pandemic providing support to families and children. Headwaters also responded to the war in the Ukraine providing support to the refugees and to the organizations serving them.

## 2. ZERO HUNGER

The number of people going hungry and suffering from food insecurity has been rising since the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 crisis combined with the war in the Ukraine has disrupted global food supply chains and has created the biggest global food crisis since the second World War.

In addition to our work with Covid-19 and the war in the Ukraine, we have launched nutrition education programs wherever we serve.



## 3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Ensuring healthy lives and supporting wellbeing at all ages is essential for sustainable development. By mid-2020 Covid-19 had infected more than 500 million people worldwide. It impacted health services and lowered life expectancy. Immunization coverage dropped for the first time in 10 years, and deaths from malaria and tuberculosis increased.

Headwaters worked to provide education to families and children about the pandemic nationally in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Internationally we provided assistance in 15 countries. In addition, we provided health and wellbeing education and training to the children sponsored by volunteers in Haiti.

## 4. QUALITY EDUCATION

A fundamental element in creating a peaceful and prosperous world is quality education. School closures brought about by the pandemic had devastating consequences. It is estimated that 147 million children missed more than half of their in-class instruction. These closures have affected girls, children in rural areas, children from ethnic minorities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds greatly. Headwaters' creation of the book, Stronger Together, is a story about girls continuing their education. This book was brought to multiple communities in Nepal.



## 5. GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality remains a fundamental right. Progress in many areas, such as time spent on domestic work, unpaid care, and decision making regarding sexual and reproductive health, saw major setbacks. Violence against women is endemic and women's health services already poorly funded, were greatly disrupted. Headwaters continued with the Asha Doll campaign which is designed to educate, support, and empower young girls to fight gender inequity. Through this doll and accompanying educational materials, girls can navigate a path of self-awareness and individual development.



## 8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

It is important to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Sadly, the pandemic precipitated the worst economic crisis in decades and reversed gains that had been made toward decent work for all. In all activities that Headwaters is engaged in, we strive to deliver services that a community can embrace and make their own. This creates opportunities for people to support one another and carry the information/education to other individuals and communities. This year jobs were created for individuals with the Youth Center in New Orleans, for an internship with Headwaters in Minnesota and for support in our work in Nepal as well as Haiti..

## 10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES

The goal to achieve sustainable development reducing inequalities is fundamental to Headwater's work. One of the ways we have been actively engaged in advancing this goal is by providing humanitarian aid and support to marginalized communities worldwide, particularly in regions affected by conflict, natural disasters, or socioeconomic disparities. By delivering essential supplies, medical assistance, and educational resources to those in need, Headwaters Relief helps to alleviate the unequal burden of poverty and hardship faced by vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, we also emphasize inclusive and diversity within our volunteer base, ensuring that individuals from different backgrounds and experiences have opportunities to contribute their skills and expertise toward humanitarian efforts. In addition, we also engage in advocacy and awareness-raising activities to highlight the root causes of inequality and promote policies and practices that foster greater equity and justice.

## 13. CLIMATE ACTION

The impact of climate change includes floods as well as droughts. The number of people at risk for displacement is expected to reach an estimated 700 million by the year 2030. It is also believed that the frequency and severity of storms such as hurricanes is directly affected.

Headwaters responded to flooding in Randall, Minnesota and to Hurricane Ian in Florida.

We understand that taking immediate action on climate change is paramount to safeguarding the future of our planet and all the life it supports. Recognizing the urgent need for collective efforts, we are steadfastly committed to addressing this global challenge and we pledge to continue more to our climate action initiatives.

## 16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

We want to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. We want justice for all, and for institutions to be inclusive at all levels.

Headwaters, in the creation of the children's book, "Together We Stand," worked in several communities to promote these values in support of refugees from the Ukraine.

## 17. PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS

The Global Development Goals can only be reached with strong commitments to cooperation and global partnership.

Headwaters works in partnership in almost all activities. We continue to be members of organizations that work to coordinate services in times of disaster, and we seek out partnerships in new endeavors.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





# OUR WORK IN TURKEY



Headwaters Relief Organization has been working in Turkey with communities affected by the devastating earthquake in February 2023. We collaborated with 12 Dev Adams Sports Complex, in Iskenderun, in Hatay region of Turkey, serving as a multi-faceted facility designed to cater to various aspects of a child's physical, mental, and social development through sports and recreational activities. We were inspired by the stories we heard about their quest to support the community that was so profoundly affected by the earthquake.

The official numbers indicate that over sixty thousand people lost their lives with over three million more displaced. The loss of life was overwhelming with many survivors describing how they searched for days for family members, relatives, and friends, many of whom were never found. Cities including Antakya and Gaziantep, both of which are near the Syrian border, struggle as they begin to rebuild, to create a new life and future for themselves and their children.



What stood out to us was the incredible power of sports in uniting a community in the face of adversity. We witnessed the impact of sports on children and how their training brought about a remarkable sense of togetherness among the families. The complex served as more than just a training ground; it became a hub for sharing, support and community building. Parents and their children found solace and a sense of belonging in this space, gathering for a few hours each week.

Our volunteers not only distributed books, our doll Asha and engaged in activities but also became an integral part of this community, bonding with its members. We played, shared stories, and learned from the resilient families that opened their doors to us.

The success of our mission wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and, most importantly, the warm welcome and openness of the sports complex and families in Iskenderun. It was a humbling experience to witness the strength and unity within a community striving to rebuild after such a catastrophic event.



# NEW ORLEANS FALL FESTIVAL, 2023 CELEBRATING THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

New Orleans, a city rich in culture and resilience, has been a focal point for Headwaters Relief Organization since the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Over the years, we have forged lasting partnerships with local entities, notably the New Salem Baptist Church. These collaborations allowed us to establish a walk-in mental health resource center for the families of the Ninth Ward. This initiative evolved into a youth center, which has been in operation for more than 15 years. We organized a fall festival held on September 30th, 2023, at the youth center. This event was not only a celebration of the longstanding bond we share with the residents of the Ninth Ward, but also an opportunity to showcase the services we provide and reinforce our commitment to the community. Our long term supporters, TDB Builders, demonstrated their commitment to the community by providing construction support in preparing a home that the church will use to house families in need.

The fall festival was a one-day event filled with joy, laughter, and camaraderie. In addition to the fun activities for children, a medical clinic was provided in partnership with Baptist Community Health Services. The purpose of the Fall Festival was two-fold: to celebrate the enduring spirit of the community and to introduce newcomers to the impactful work we continue to do. The event served as a testament to the resilience of the community and our unwavering dedication to supporting the well-being of its youth.

The festival featured an array of engaging activities catering to all age groups. From bouncy house, snow cones to interactive games for the children to informative workshops and discussions for adults, the event aimed to create an inclusive and enjoyable atmosphere. Local artists and musicians added a vibrant touch, infusing the air with the unmistakable rhythm of New Orleans.

No celebration is complete without the joy of shared meals. The New Salem Baptist Church provided delicious food, showcasing the diverse culinary traditions that make New Orleans a gastronomic haven. This not only stimulated the local economy but also emphasized the importance of communal dining and fellowship.



## Acknowledging the Partners:

The success of the New Orleans Fall Festival would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners. New Salem Baptist Church played a pivotal role in facilitating the event, showcasing the power of collaboration in community development. Additionally, the Baptist Community Health Services contributed significantly to the festival's success, underlining the importance of holistic well-being. The nurses at the health center offered consultation, blood pressure and blood glucose level checks.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the volunteers, partners, and supporters who made this event possible. As we move forward, we are inspired by the spirit of New Orleans. We remain committed to providing services to the community. The festival was not just a moment in time; it was a celebration of the enduring strength and resilience of the people we are privileged to serve.



# HALLOWEEN EXTRAVAGANZA



We hosted our Second Annual Halloween Extravaganza, on October 27th, 2023. The event brought together a community of families and friends to celebrate Halloween. The event was planned by our board president, Dan Leitner, and his daughter, Emily Waldock, along with a group of volunteers and donors.

We had a great turnout for the event, with over 60 children and their families in attendance who participated in a variety of exciting activities. The event's highlights were the Halloween costume contest, a dance competition, bingo, and other fun-filled children's activities. The atmosphere was lively, and the children's excitement was contagious. The children had an unforgettable time, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and donors. We are grateful to everyone who participated in the event and contributed to its success.



# GOLF TOURNAMENT

We had a successful 5th Annual Headwaters Golf Tournament on August 11th, 2023. The morning was absolutely perfect weather for golfing. We had a fantastic turnout, and everyone had a great time. The golfers were treated to a fun-filled day, with games and giveaways at some of the holes. We had several exciting contests, including the longest drive and hole-in-one, which added to the excitement. The winners of each contest received awesome prizes. In addition to the contests, we also provided free snow cones and brats on the grill for all participants. The food was delicious, and everyone enjoyed it tremendously. It was a great opportunity for all the golfers to take a break, socialize, and refuel before continuing their rounds. It was an incredible day for our golfers to come together and support Headwaters and our programs. We are grateful for their support, and we look forward to seeing all of our golfers in 2024.







Winning photo submitted by Kirstin Hage

## 2023 PHOTO CONTEST

Headwaters Relief Organization held its first photo contest in 2023. We extend our sincerest gratitude to you for your invaluable contribution to the contest. Your captivating photographs have not only showcased your talent but have also stirred powerful memories related to your dedicated work in the diverse communities we serve.

As we immersed ourselves in the stunning imagery submitted by talented photographers we were reminded of the incredible impact we've made on various locations and the indelible memories we've created along the way. Your lens has beautifully captured the essence of our shared journey, illustrating the diversity and beauty of the places where we've worked.

The winning submission, along with several other notable photographs, stood out for their creativity, storytelling, and ability to reflect the spirit of our mission.





## MONTHLY VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Each month, Headwaters Relief Organization hosts volunteer events, each with a specific focus aimed at addressing critical needs within disaster-affected communities. These monthly volunteer events are a comprehensive initiative aimed at engaging volunteers in essential aspects of Headwaters Relief Organization's services. These events are a dynamic and impactful initiative designed to mobilize community members in support of disaster relief efforts where volunteers from diverse backgrounds and age groups come together to participate in activities that address critical needs within disaster-affected communities.

These volunteer events also serve as a platform for our partnering organizations to bring in their own team for a meaningful engagement and service, offering participants the opportunity to contribute to various aspects of global disaster relief work locally. From packing military care packages to organizing therapeutic activities for children, each activity is carefully curated to make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by disasters.

### Breakdown of the some of the volunteer activities:

**Military Packing:** Volunteers gather to assemble small gift bags, or "care packages," for military personnel stationed overseas. These packages typically contain items such as home-baked cookies, confectioneries, thank-you notes, and personal care kits. The event holds particular significance during active wars and times of crisis, providing a tangible expression of gratitude to troops, especially during the holidays.

**Therapeutic Activities for Children:** Volunteers focus on creating and packing therapeutic activities for children affected by disasters. Volunteers, including youth volunteers, engage in crafting activities designed to enhance connections with communities. Given the substantial need, with sometimes hundreds of children served during a single response, advanced preparation is crucial due to the time and resources required.

**Educational Material Development:** Headwaters' develops therapeutic children's books and other educational materials, distributed globally in response to various crises such as the COVID-19 and Ebola pandemics, hurricanes, and efforts to promote girls' education. Seeking additional support, Headwaters continually develops materials to serve disaster-affected populations, sometimes requiring assistance from outside consultants.

**Disaster Kits:** Twice a year, volunteers assemble disaster kits containing emergency relief items and personal hygiene materials. These kits are vital for individuals forced to evacuate their homes during disasters, ensuring they have essential supplies readily available. The focus on preparedness underscores Headwaters' commitment to facilitating effective recovery from disasters.

**New Program Development:** One month is dedicated to developing innovative programs in response to emerging needs or unforeseen circumstances within communities. This flexibility allows Headwaters to promptly and effectively address crises, as demonstrated during the notable response to the COVID-19 crisis.

**Thank you to North American Banking Company for sponsoring these volunteer events and making them possible!**







From left to right: Patti Hawkinson, Marya Hage, and Kay Stickney  
Mardi Gras Gala 2022

Trinity Episcopal Church and its women's guild are long term supporters of Headwaters Relief Organization. The guild has hosted events, packed supplies including donations of much needed medications and vitamins for children in Haiti. Several members of the guild have personally sponsored children so their basic needs are met and educational opportunities are provided.

Four women in particular led these efforts, Kay Stickney, Marya Hage, Nancy Barks and Eileen "Patti" Foss Hawkinson. With heavy hearts, we bid farewell first to Nancy and most recently to Patti. Their unwavering dedication, boundless generosity and profound compassion left an indelible mark on countless lives.

Patti continued to uplift and empower those in need by requesting that in lieu of flowers, memorials were preferred to Headwaters Relief Organization, ensuring her commitment to making the world a better place. Though they are no longer with us, Patti and Nancy's spirit of kindness, generosity and compassion will forever inspire us to carry on their legacy of love.







**Headwaters**  
**RELIEF ORGANIZATION**

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