

# Family Focus

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER

Winter 2023

Volume 33, Number 1

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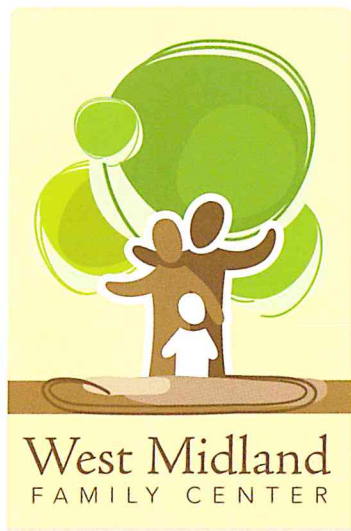
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Thriving,  
Giving,  
Growing...  
Together



## "Back on the Rack" Coming Soon

There is always something exciting happening at *West Midland Family Center* (WMFC). WMFC continues to repurpose



*"We have contracts with the Walmart stores in Midland, Mt. Pleasant, Alma and Bay City," explained Roth. "Typically, I pick up one or two pallets of goods each week, from each store. Let me tell you, they can get a lot of stuff on just one pallet!"*

current facility spaces and implement new programming to meet the growing needs of the community it serves. Currently WMFC is in the process of making a big move to help the community in yet another innovative way. Within the next few months, what was once the **WMFC Clothing Room**, will morph into a community repurposed goods outlet.

For three decades, WMFC has collected donations and facilitated the distribution of gently used second-hand clothing out of the WMFC Clothing Room. The clothing room has served the community well over the years but now there are new plans for this space that WMFC believes will help families even more.

In August 2018, WMFC entered into partnership with the **Walmart Corporation** with the intention of re-purposing merchandise from area Walmart stores that either didn't sell or had been returned. In the past, these items would have gone into a dumpster because they could not be re-sold or stored.

As a result of the collaboration with Walmart, WMFC has been able to distribute an estimated \$1,000,000 worth

*...continued on page 2*

## Active Seniors Make Some Noise at WMFC

WMFC has some great activities for anyone, especially active seniors, looking for a new adventure. Zumba, pickleball and yoga are currently some of the most popular recreational activities at WMFC.

"It sure gets noisy around here when the seniors are onsite," laughed **Chelsea Davis, WMFC Recreation and Aquatic Director**. "When they are in the gym, you can hear them laughing all the way to the

Welcome Center!"

"Zumba is low impact dance fitness, using latin and international music. Any move can be modified to your level of fitness," stated **Zumba Instructor Stephanie Oster**. "I try to cue specifically for newcomers and for those that might not catch onto a step right away. I tell them it's ok if they don't know the steps...to

*...continued on page 7*



## Susan Love Rides Off Into the Sunset Of New Adventures

**Susan Love, New Initiatives and Promotions Director**, was hired as a grant writer for WMFC in December of 2000. At the time, WMFC was in the middle of its extensive *Phase Two of the Dream Come True* building expansion. It was a chaotic time that might have unnerved your typical newly hired employee, but not Love. True to her easy-going nature, Love spent the first five months, of what would become a 22+-year tenure, bouncing seamlessly from one temporary office to the next, before finally landing in her beautiful, newly outfitted office space in what would later be known as Cubeland.

Love was an anomaly of sorts when she was first hired because she initially came to WMFC with no grant writing experience. Thankfully **WMFC Executive Director, Greg Dorrien** saw a diamond in the rough in Love and his instincts proved to be right on the money. As the years went by, Love proved herself to be the tremendous asset to WMFC that Dorrien knew she would be.

"I had an opportunity to grow, expand my horizons and learn a new skill," explained Love. "I was probably about Mike's age when I started writing grants for WMFC."

Although Love's shoes will be hard to fill, **Mike Sobolewski** will do his best to do just that. Sobolewski is already well ahead of the learning curve having spent the last year working alongside Love in preparation for her March 16, 2023 retirement date. "It's hard to image a Center without Susan," shared Sobolewski. "She has been my supervisor since I first started working for the Center in August 2013 as the **Dow College Opportunity Program Director**. She's always been so supportive and encouraging. I will definitely miss her support and her listen-



Mike Sobolewski

ing ear but I'm excited to be able to put my writing experience to use in this new position. Research and writing, planning and development, all of these are just as important as being on the 'front lines' in the programs."

Although ready to take her leave from WMFC, retirement is bittersweet for Love.

"It's been an awesome run. I've had lots of adventures and seen a great many changes. I met many great people at WMFC and through collaborations along the way," shared Love. "The Midland community is an awesome place. Our non-profits, other human services, schools, medical providers, etc. have a wonderful collaborating relationship that works well to benefit the people of **Midland County**."

"I'm looking forward to writing new chapters in my new book of retirement...and new horizons, new experiences and new opportunities," shared Love. "I will always be grateful for the time I've spent working with our awesome staff at WMFC, and to all the wonderful people in our community who diligently work 'in the trenches' on behalf of those we serve," concluded Love.

Someone once said "Retirement is not the end of the road. It is the beginning of the open highway." WMFC salutes Susan Love as she hits the open highway to new life adventures.



Susan Love "practicing" retirement on a recent trip to Maine's Acadia National Park.

## Back on The Rack...continued from page 1

of household merchandise to the community in the last four years. Merchandise has included such things as bedding, curtains, flatware, dishes, towels, clothing, toys, pet food, electronics and personal care products to name a few. The partnership between WMFC and Walmart allows for the aforementioned items to now be put into the hands of those in the community who need them. As a result, the distribution program fills in crucial gaps for WMFC families as they struggle to cope with today's rising food prices and higher cost of living.

"Our collaboration has been wonderful. The Walmart staff members are such a great group to work with! They enjoy being part of a program that helps get needed goods into the hands of those in the community," shared **Helen Roth, WMFC Connect and Serve Coordinator**

"I'm so pleased that WMFC is a part of this endeavor. It's rewarding to provide people with nice things that they wouldn't have a means to purchase," stated **Greg Dorrien, WMFC Executive Director**. "With tons of overstock coming to the Center weekly, Helen intentionally devised procedures to store and manage product before distribution to the community. The logistics involved and resulting space constraints led to strategic planning sessions which ended with a very logical and natural conclusion. We now plan to use the space currently designated to *used* clothing distribution, to prepare and distribute *new/unused* items received from Walmart."

"Once we get the new space up and running," smiled Roth, "I think we'll name it 'Back on the Rack'...it seems fitting."



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## He Left Footprints in Our Hearts

**Eleanor Roosevelt** once said, "Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart". This quote best describes who **Jeff Myers** was to many in the WMFC community.

Jeff was hired in 2001 as the **West Midland Family Center Maintenance and Facilities Director**. In the thirteen years Jeff worked at WMFC he was passionate about the mission of the Center and the services the Center provided to WMFC families. Sadly, on November 24, 2022, our big-hearted friend left us for what he knew to be, a better world.

"Jeff worked with volunteer **Greg Janoch** to reduce energy usage throughout the facility...originally changing all the ballasts and florescent lights before LED bulbs came about," shared **Greg Dorrien, WMFC Executive Director**. "Jeff had worked for an area hospital before joining WMFC. He brought a level of best practice professionalism with him, and had a great relationship with many vendors who helped get us great service during emergencies and with day-to-day troubleshooting."

After leaving employment, due to disability, in 2014, Jeff continued to volunteer at the Center in whatever capacity he could be of help.

Passion. That is the word that best describes Jeff Myers. If he was spending his time at something, he was 110% passionate about it. First and foremost, Jeff had a passion for

helping people. He loved to love people. He was always generous with his time and everything he had. He'd help anyone in need, and then he'd give the shirt off his back, if they needed more. There was no end to the lengths he'd go to help someone.

"Jeff was one of the most giving and thoughtful people I've ever worked with. He had such a huge heart for the community, his coworkers and WMFC," shared **Jason Green, WMFC CFO**.

Jeff had a passion for homesteading, gardening, cooking and his family.

"Jeff was a kind, big hearted friend...and was always good for laugh," shared **WMFC Office Manager, Missy Finney**. "He had a love for food.... especially spicy...sometimes a little too spicy for some of us! But nothing was more important to Jeff than his grandchildren, he loved to spend as much time as possible with them," continued Finney. "He always had a fun story to tell about what they were doing together, whether it was cooking or taking care of the goats or chickens."

Jeff loved music and playing his guitar.

"I'd often walk by his office door and hear him strumming on his guitar during a break. It was how he relaxed. He also loved his dog, Charlie. We all did. That's why Charlie was the unofficial WMFC mascot back in the day," shared



*Jeff and his best friend, Charlie*

**Renee Allen, WMFC Safety Officer.**

Jeff and Charlie were the best of friends. Jeff would have Charlie perform for people, especially the preschool students. Play dead... STOP-DROP-ROLL...any trick Jeff could get Charlie to do that would put a smile on a face. Jeff loved making people smile, especially if they were sad or having a bad day. Smiles were important to him.

There are some people that you meet in life, that leave you in a better place just from having known them. To many of us, that was Jeff Myers. So long sweet, friend, you are already dearly missed.

## Active Seniors Make Some Noise at WMFC ...continued from page 1

just keep moving...even if they just march in place."

"Most of our regulars are 60 years or older. Many of them have been with me since I began teaching ten years ago," continued Oster. "We have a ton of fun, and laughs, but we're also able to support one another through the challenges and struggles life throws at us. We also socialize together and go on day trips, like our annual trip to Bronner's."

Since WMFC added pickleball courts, the Zumba ladies have learned how to play pickleball. They are also recruiting their friends. As a result, pickleball is taking off at WMFC. The ladies joke they are getting so good at pickleball, they will soon be heading to the Pickleball Olympics!

Yoga has recently been added to the growing list of activities at WMFC. **Certified Yoga Instructor Terri Ullery** teaches yoga once a

week for an hour. "A few of the benefits of yoga are stress management, mental health, healthy eating and quality of sleep," stated Ullery.

WMFC loves when new faces join in! Currently Zumba meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Pickleball follows from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Yoga is held on Thursday evenings from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.





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Renee Allen

**WMFC  
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## Dave Parrillo Rejoins WMFC Board of Directors

WMFC is pleased to announce that **Dave Parrillo** has returned to the **WMFC Board of Directors** for a three-year term starting January 2023. Dave had previously served for six years with a two-year break (during which he continued to serve on our investment and budget committees).

Dave is employed at **Dow** as a **Vice President of Research & Development**. He is originally from **Rhode Island** where he met his wife Christine, at the **University of Rhode Island**. Their children, **Laina** (25) attends school at **Johns Hopkins University** (pursuing dual doctorates) and Jack (15) is a sophomore at **Calvary Baptist Academy**.

Dave and his family currently live in **Midland**. They love to play tennis and cook meals together. When he's not working or having family time Dave is an avid reader and a sports shooter.

When asked why Dave volunteers to help at WMFC, he answered, "The best fulfillment there is in life is service to

others, I am blessed to be part of the West Midland Family Center team".



*Dave and his family at daughter Laina's 2019 graduation from Boston College. Laina graduated with a Nursing Degree and a Registered Nurse Certification. Pictured left to right: Dave, Laina, son Jack and wife Christine.*