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Signs pave the road to service

BY GRACIE GIESE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

GREEN BAY – Whether you remember him from his days appearing on television or have seen him in action serving the people of Green Bay, Bob Hornacek has been a staple of the community.

From decades in journalism to working with Paul's Pantry, Hornacek certainly has a story of dedication in community service.

Before beginning his journey at the Green Bay food pantry Paul's Pantry, Hornacek worked as a journalist and investigative reporter for Fox 11 News.

Over the course of 20 years, he would also host "CW 14 Focus," where Hornacek worked on over 200 episodes featuring interviews with prominent communities.

His first ever episode was with Craig Robbins, executive director of Paul's Pantry, beginning a serendipitous series of events that lead Bob to the company many years later.

In 2017, Hornacek was ordained as a deacon in the Catholic Church.

"It's a very service-oriented ministry," Hornacek noted.

As service became a more important part of his faith, Bob began looking at professional service opportunities within the Green Bay community.

While he hoped that an opportunity would align itself with his job contract ending, "all of the sudden every opportunity [he] was looking at disappeared."

It wasn't until 2019 — close to his next contract expiring — that Bob saw a posting for an assistant executive director role at Paul's Pantry.

The position would entail "learning the whole operation, forwards, backwards, everything."

Hornacek was not immediately sold on the position, but over the following weeks the role weighed



Bob Hornacek, left, said that his job at Paul's Pantry has continued to bring him into encounters with a wide variety of people.

Submitted photo

on his mind and Bob shared, "it almost got to the point where it was keeping me up at night."

Hornacek couldn't shake the call to service at Paul's Pantry, telling that on a rare occasion of bringing his eldest two sons to school and "having an argument in [his] head with God" that "some people might call prayer" he suddenly felt a calling from God to service.

During this awakening Hornacek asked God for a sign, and "at that moment, from the other direction, a big Paul's Pantry truck pulled out right in front of [him]."

After this, Bob turned in his application to the pantry.

The signs would continue during the interview process, with the repetition of seeing Matthew 25.

This passage appeared in a book he borrowed from his church, a radio show opening and his parish's bulletin and even on the side of Paul's Pantry.

Bob went in for what he described as "the worst interview

See **HORNACEK** page 7

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Submitted photo

Wisconsin voters with disabilities demand a better way to vote absentee

BY ALEXANDER SHUR
VOTEBEAT/NEW NEWS LAB

NORTHEAST WISCONSIN – When Stacy Ellingen, a 38-year-old Oshkosh resident with athetoid cerebral palsy, wants to cast a ballot, she relies on voting absentee, because she can't drive, and caregiver transportation to the polls is unreliable.

But even voting from her home is a struggle — and the process may well mean sacrificing her constitutional right to a secret ballot.

Unlike more than a dozen other states providing fully electronic absentee voting for people with disabilities, Wisconsin requires absentee voters to cast their votes on a paper ballot.

Ellingen, a university graduate and small business owner, lacks the fine motor skills to fill out a paper ballot herself.

She's welcome to use help under current law, but Ellingen said she prefers not to have her caregivers assist, because she usually feels uncomfortable sharing her political preferences with them.

At times, she has turned to her parents, who live an hour away, for help filling out ballots, but they're not always around.

Ellingen knows her obstacles under current law may only increase.



Don Natzke, 69, who is blind, was unable to vote in Wisconsin's April elections as COVID-19 kept him from his in-person polling place and he was unable to fill out an absentee ballot.

Will Cioci/Wisconsin Watch photo

"Each election, a question always comes to mind: What's going to happen when my parents are no longer here?" she said. "Will I be able to vote? I honestly don't know. It's a disheartening, but very real thought. Having to rely on my mom or dad for something I could easily do independently if given the appropriate accommodation is extremely frustrating."

Ellingen is among four voters with disabilities who, along with Disability Rights Wisconsin and the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, sued the Wisconsin Elections Commission to allow them to receive and return absentee ballots electronically, just as military and overseas voters in

many other states do.

The lawsuit alleges that the state's election system places undue burdens on the right to vote for Wisconsinites with disabilities. It also alleges that the state's failure to provide accommodations within its absentee ballot system violates the Americans with Disabilities Act's guarantees that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to benefit from government services.

Wisconsin Elections Commission spokesperson Riley Vetterkind declined to comment for this story.

The issue isn't unique to Wisconsin.

Nationwide, 1 in 7 voters with disabilities faced difficulties voting in 2022, compared with 1 in 9 in 2020, according to a Rutgers University and SSRS analysis.

Americans with vision and cognitive disabilities were likeliest to face difficulties voting, the analysis found.

And Americans with disabilities were far likelier than nondisabled Americans to run into difficulties voting, whether absentee or at the ballot box.

Push for accessible voting grew during COVID-19

The Wisconsin case is similar to several successful lawsuits filed across the country.

See **VOTE** page 5



A beacon of light

Algoma Area Chamber of Commerce presented their Beacon awards on April 29 at the Robert Ray Gallery Lakeside Event Space. Pictured from left are Rosemary Paladini, executive director, Algoma Area Chamber of Commerce; Eddie & Jen Owen of Timber Trail Campground, Rose Improvement Award; Russ & Kim Nockerts of Steel Belly BBQ, Rising Star Award; John & Kim Lyon of Ladybug Glass – Studio & Gallery, Tower Business Award; and Pat Qualman, Lighthouse Award; Algoma School District Superintendent Jesse Brinkman, Lantern Education Award.

Courtesy Algoma Chamber of Commerce

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