AMBER KIGGENS-LEIFHEIT, BS
by Georgette Frazer

Amber Kiggens-Leifheit's decades of dedication to community life, and especially to the quality and accessibility of our children's educational opportunities here, has made a lastiang impact on our city.

Amber was born in Portage, Wisconsin, attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, earning her BS in Medical Technology. She moved to Marshfield in 1990 with her husband, Tom, and their two children, Matt and Kate. In Marshfield, Amber found what became a lifelong passion for education and community service. After moving to town, Amber began volunteering at her kid's preschool, Pied Piper Preschool. She served as the administrator for ten years, culminating her time there by negotiating a merger between the Marshfield YMCA and Pied Piper Preschool to form the YMCA Pied Piper Preschool Early Learning Center. This merger helped both organizations maintain enrollment and balance their budgets.

She later volunteered in leadership positions with the YES Committee, passing four successful school district referendums, most notably the referendum that provided the funding to build the new Madison and Washington Schools, and remodel Lincoln and Nasonville schools. During her tenure almost $50,000,000 in referendums were passed.

At the same time, Amber dedicated herself to hands-on work in the schools. She was a substitute teacher in the Marshfield School District from 1998 -2008, often taking on long-term assignments and supporting students with special educational needs. She served as the Executive Director of Pathway Partners Mentoring Program from 2005 to 2008, matching Marshfield High School students with professional mentors from the larger Marshfield community.

Amber was elected to the school board in 2008 and served three consecutive three-year terms, deciding not to run again in 2019. She served many roles in her time on the board. She served eight years as Vice-President and four years as Treasurer. She chaired the Employee Relations, Curriculum, Finance, and Communication committees. Over this period, Amber championed many of the board's positive steps in the areas of curriculum, personalized learning, new schools and athletic facilities.

Many of these projects involved collaborating with members of the larger community. She is proudest of the work she did in conjunction with the foundation to help make sure all students could have the tools they needed to succeed, whether that



Amber Kiggens-Leifheit

be a warm coat, new boots so they could walk to school, or a bed to sleep in.

Amber was the Director of the Marshfield Area Community Foundation for eleven years. During this time, she increased the Foundation's assets from $2.8M to $16.2M, while growing the number of funds from 79 to over 215.

She began the foundation's Speak Your Peace initiative, providing training to Marshfield's business leaders in civil discourse and conflict resolution. This curriculum gave the participants tools to use in everyday conversations with co-workers, neighbors, friends and family. Groups from organizations like Simplicity Credit Union, The Marshfield High School Student Council, the Wood County Human Services Department, and Staab Construction took part in the program.

As the Foundation's Director, Amber was an expert at building relationships with donors. She made a point of meeting one-on-one with donors large and small and was always just a phone call away. She made donors feel valued and was uniquely skilled at identifying charitable opportunities that could maximize community impact, while staying true to donors' vision for the community.

Thanks to Amber's sharp intellect and financial savvy, donors knew they could trust the Foundation to grow their donations and maximize their tax deductions. Jim Conterato described Amber as "thoughtful, open-minded, creative, and motivated." Amber Leifheit created a community foundation that swept broadly across the city of Marshfield, enhancing the quality of life for all citizens.

Under Amber's wise management, and with $7,738,000 in gifts from over 550 donors, the Com-

munity Foundation played a key role in developing or improving major projects in Marshfield including the Adler Bear Exhibit at Wildwood Park, Hamus Park, the Boson Tennis Complex, Griese Park, Weber Park, and the Graham Olson and Miller baseball fields, Marshfield Area Pet Shelter, the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library, Wenzel Plaza, and the foundation's largest project, the new Marshfield High School athletic facilities.

Amber enjoyed working with community leaders to help make these projects successful. She saw that Floyd Hamus was a powerhouse. When he threw his support behind a project it was going to happen. Bill Heiting was a tremendous fundraiser. Everyone knew if you got a call from Bill, he wanted a donation. The Everett Roehl Public Library took several years to raise the $3.1M the city required for the project to begin. Lori Belongia and Bill Hocking were amazing, sticking with the project, and leading it to a successful outcome.

Alongside her busy career, Amber was an active volunteer with many Marshfield organizations. She is especially proud of the work with Marshfield Habitat for Humanity. She served on the board for eight years, with two terms as chair. During those years, Habitat built or refurbished five houses for deserving families.

She served in leadership positions on other boards, including the Personal Development Center, Sunrise Rotary, AFS, Sister Cities, Chapter CY PEO, Marshfield Area United Way Allocation Committee, Wood County Literacy Council, Healthy Lifestyle Coalition, New Visions Gallery, 80 Feet is Enough! and the Wisconsin Easement Action Team. She was also a deacon at her church. Having volunteered with Amber on many of these initiatives, Dr. Mark Borchart said, "Amber is an exemplar of selfless civic service. She never sought personal accolades; her first thought was always about successfully completing the work at hand."

You can't drive through Marshfield without seeing at least one project that Amber helped to make happen; and you certainly can't raise a child here without feeling her lasting impact.