FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rally for the Valley to Bring Fox Cities Together for Tornado Recovery

Free October 3 event in Downtown Menasha will unite music, comedy, storytelling and giving to support a community still rebuilding after the July 27 tornado

MENASHA, Wis. — September 15, 2026 — When a tornado tore through the Fox Cities on July 27, the damage was visible almost immediately. Homes and businesses were damaged. Families were displaced. Neighborhoods that had felt familiar just hours earlier suddenly looked different.

What followed was just as immediate: people started asking how they could help.

On Saturday, October 3, that instinct will bring the community together in Downtown Menasha for **Rally for the Valley**, a free day of music, comedy, storytelling and giving created to support the Fox Cities as recovery continues.

From 2:00–10:00 p.m., Rally for the Valley will fill Downtown Menasha with live performances, local businesses, artists and makers, nonprofit organizations, food and beverage, and opportunities for people to turn a day together into meaningful support for recovery.

The idea began simply: get some friends together and put on a show for a community that was hurting.

For filmmaker and Neenah native Phil Johnston, the impulse was personal.

“Even though I haven’t lived in the Fox Valley for 30 years, it’s still the place I think of as home. As soon as my mom, who still lives in Neenah, told me about the tornado, I wondered how I could help. My first thought was to ask a couple of talented friends if they wanted to pitch in. ‘Ahoy fellas,’ my text to Butch Vig and Charlie Berens began, ‘How about you guys do a benefit concert?” They both said some version of ‘hell yeah,’ and we were off to the races.”

What began as an idea for a show in a local pizza place quickly grew into something much bigger. But Johnston says the heart of the idea hasn’t changed:

“Get a bunch of good friends together, put on a cool show and show up for a community that’s hurting. That’s still what Rally for the Valley is about.”

Recovery doesn’t look the same for everyone.

For some families, recovery means covering an unexpected expense. For others, it means repairing a damaged home, finding stable housing or simply having somewhere to turn when the next challenge arrives.

That’s why Rally for the Valley is connecting supporters with three local nonprofit organizations working on different parts of the recovery:

LEAVEN

Meeting immediate needs when families need help most.

LEAVEN provides emergency financial assistance and basic-needs support to people throughout the Fox Cities facing financial hardship, helping households navigate unexpected expenses while connecting them with additional community resources.

Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity

Repairing homes. Restoring stability.

Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity works to create and preserve safe, affordable housing throughout the Fox Cities. Following the July 27 tornado, Habitat is helping address tornado-related home repair needs and supporting residents working to make their homes safe and stable again.

Pillars

Helping people find safety, stability and a path forward.

Pillars provides shelter, support and housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability throughout the Fox Cities, helping community members access safe shelter, assistance and resources that can lead to greater stability.

You choose where your support goes.

Rally for the Valley is built around a simple idea: **people should be able to support the part of recovery that speaks most to them.**

Rather than pooling individual charitable donations into a central fund for later distribution, Rally for the Valley will connect supporters directly with LEAVEN, Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity and Pillars. Donors can learn about each organization, choose where they want their support to go and give directly to one or more of the nonprofits.

Corporate and community partners can also choose how their charitable support is directed.

More than a fundraiser

Recovery isn’t only about dollars raised. It’s also about showing up.

Rally for the Valley is creating ways for people to participate whether they give, volunteer, contribute their talents, support local businesses or share what they experienced.

Community members can volunteer at Rally for the Valley, with opportunities ranging from setup and guest assistance to accessibility support, parking, beverage service, communications, vendor support and teardown.

Artists and makers, nonprofit organizations, small businesses and food vendors can apply to participate as event vendors, with priority given to those directly impacted by the July 27 tornado.

People affected by the tornado are also invited to share their stories and experiences through interviews, photographs, video, oral histories and other forms of documentation that may become part of event storytelling or historical preservation. Private and anonymous participation options are available.

Volunteer sign-ups, vendor applications and story submissions are available at rallyforthevalleywi.com.

Built by the community

Rally for the Valley is being organized by a volunteer advisory event planning committee in partnership with **Hear in the Fox Cities**, a Fox Cities-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving as the event's nonprofit and fiduciary partner.

Hear in the Fox Cities provides administrative oversight for event expenses, contracts, invoices and insurance, while the volunteer committee leads event planning and community coordination.

LEAVEN, Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity and Pillars remain independent nonprofit organizations, and charitable donations directed to a beneficiary are made directly to the organization selected by the donor.

Rally for the Valley

Saturday, October 3, 2026
2:00–10:00 p.m.
Downtown Menasha, Wisconsin
Free admission

Advance RSVP is encouraged to help organizers plan for the event.

Visit rallyforthevalleywi.com to RSVP, volunteer, apply as a vendor, share your story, make a donation and find the latest event schedule and information.

Media Contact

Adrienne Palm
Event Organizer, Rally for the Valley Committee

rallyforthevalleywi@gmail.com
920.202.4540