



‘A better way to feed people’

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Taste Project is one of more than 60 cafes across the country connected to One World Everybody Eats. Photo by Rachel DeLira

When it came time to name Christie Melby-Gibbons' pay-what-you-can community café in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, she remembered a phrase her mom used when referring to a tough project: "tricklebee." Later in life, Melby-Gibbons realized her mom was saying, the *trick will be* getting the right tools, the trick will be getting enough money.

"I mused about it as an adult," says Melby-Gibbons, a reverend in The Moravian Church and executive director of *Tricklebee Café*. "We say, the tricklebee sustaining a restaurant when people don't have to pay to eat there."

Tricklebee Café is a member restaurant connected to [One World Everybody Eats](#), a nonprofit founded in 2005. OWEE supports individually operated cafes across the country. Members follow seven principles including serving excellent food, allowing guests to determine what they can pay, welcoming everyone, and providing space for community and opportunities to volunteer.

True community café

For six years, Melby-Gibbons coordinated a weekly community dinner through her church in Southern California, using leftover ingredients from her food rescue efforts.

"I wondered if I was being nudged to do something more in the realm of food and making sure everyone has access to healthy meals," she explains. "I stumbled upon the One World Everybody Eats network."

In 2016, Melby-Gibbons opened Tricklebee in northeast Milwaukee's Sherman Park neighborhood, after considering several Midwestern cities. The area was neglected and access to grocery stores was limited.

"We really wanted to be the spot for people to get a warm meal," she says. "We went to an area where joblessness is rampant, and most people live at or below what Wisconsin calls the poverty line."

The menu, which changes daily, is 100% plant based. The café is open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and serves 75 to 100 people each day. Half of the guests live within a few miles of the café.

Volunteers sign up for shifts or may drop in to help with laundry, wrap silverware, pack snack bags for the neighborhood children and bus tables. Donations from the faith community, individuals, grants and fundraisers provide funding for operations and thriving wages for staff.

"We can be a place for everyone to come," she says. "It's a true community café. We are offering real food."

A movement

In 2003, when Denise Cerreta opened One World Café, a pay-what-you-can community cafe in Salt Lake City, Utah, she didn't realize she was sparking a movement. A couple in Denver, Colorado, asked for help launching S.A.M.E. (So All May Eat) Café with the same business model as One World. Over the next decade after founding OWEE, Cerreta continued to mentor other restaurants following the pay-what-you-can model.

OWEE offers resources such as an annual conference for established pay-what-you-can cafés and for people thinking about starting one.

Julie Williams and husband Jeff Williams opened [Taste Project](#) in Fort Worth, Texas, in 2017. Julie joined the OWEE Board of Directors to assist in developing a long-term strategic plan. She became board president in 2019.

"We feel like we were called to this mission to feed, educate and serve our community in a different way," Williams says. "In that calling, we knew there was a better way to feed people."

About this issue: Christie Melby-Gibbons' Tricklebee Café is connected to One World Everybody Eats, a nonprofit founded in 2005.

OWEE supports individually operated cafes across the country. Courtesy of Tricklebee Café. Article by Vanessa Infanzon.

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