

# If I Was the Mayor of Waukee, Iowa

By Kate Han

Being a mayor is a pretty heady thing. When I was younger, one of my friends' moms was the mayor, and I remember always thinking they were so cool. "Your mom's the mayor? Wow. Oh my gosh, do you live in the White House or something?" Now that I'm older though, I recognize that being a mayor isn't about the glory of it. Because you're not mayor. The people of Waukee are still the mayor. They just elected you because they trust you to make the right decisions for them. So, what do I want to do? What would my impact be? If I were mayor of Waukee, Iowa, I would encourage my citizens to speak up, focus on children's health and education, and help regulate water contamination. And I wouldn't do this because I'm mayor. I would do it because the people are.

I believe that working with my citizens, other towns, and other states to reach goals and solutions is what makes a community thrive. My town is filled with people from all different backgrounds, religions, and ethnicities. We all have different goals, but what we don't realize is that we all are trying to accomplish one thing: good lives for the people we love. I would encourage people to speak up and I would create an efficient system so my people can be heard. A community can't fix itself if nobody knows what to fix in the first place.

I believe that children are—quite literally—our future. However, many children don't have what they need to be healthy and happy. According to The Daily Iowan, roughly 15 percent of children in Iowa—about 111,000 kids—were said to be food insecure. I would create volunteer events every early out and Saturday at churches, schools, and parks where people can come and receive a free meal. But what about the problems that aren't related to health? A lot of kids grow up healthy yet aren't being seen in school. In my school, lots of kids who need extra help with math or reading are embarrassed because some teachers don't protect their privacy well enough, and sometimes they will unintentionally call them out. To fix this, I would personally visit each school in Waukee to meet with teachers, parents, and students to find a solution that supports their child's needs without making them embarrassed in class. Students will also get to pick 3 electives of their choice to explore to focus on special skills they would like to pursue, like graphic design or statistical analysis, starting from 7th grade. Children getting the help they need is essential to having a flourishing future.

I would also focus on water contamination. Iowa's lakes and rivers are extremely contaminated from too much nitrogen, excess soil, bacteria, and runoff from farms. The Iowa Cancer Registry's 2023 report found that Iowa has the second-most cancer cases in the country, and shocking new research raises a question: could this be because of the high levels of nitrate in water? One report estimated that Iowans would spend up to 333 million dollars on nitrogen removal in drinking water systems the next five years. So what's the solution? I propose encouraging the people of Waukee to drink bottled water most through posters, ads, and more.

Being the mayor of Waukee isn't like being the president. You can help only your people. So, in the sea of mayors and senators and governors, you're just a tiny little dot. But that doesn't mean you can't achieve wonderful things. Like making people's voices heard. Like fixing essential problems in health and academics. Like making the very water you drink safe. That's what it means to be mayor, and that's exactly what I, as mayor, would work to achieve.