

a magazine for friends of the GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION

GREATER together



GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION

*is how Milwaukee
works together*



Greater Milwaukee
FOUNDATION
greater together

Volume 8 Issue 2 Fall 2023

GREATER together

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE
GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION
VOLUME 8 :: ISSUE 2 :: FALL 2023

VISION Greater Milwaukee becomes a vibrant, economically thriving region comprised of welcoming and inclusive communities that provide opportunity, prosperity and a high quality of life for all.

PRESIDENT & CEO

Ellen M. Gilligan

VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Laura Porfilio Glawe

EDITOR & WRITER

Becca Mader

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Paula J. Perez, Topside Design

PHOTOGRAPHER

Jim Moy

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Carolyn Kott Washburne,
Jeremy Podolski

ON THE COVER:



"Growing Gateways to Unity," a mural created by artist Tia Richardson and friends and residents of Milwaukee's Muskego Way neighborhood. It is located on the exterior wall of El Rey Foodmart, 1320 W. Burnham St.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Greater Together is published biannually by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Marketing and Communications Department. Please send your comments or address changes to Becca Mader at Greater Milwaukee Foundation, 101 W. Pleasant St., Suite 210, Milwaukee, WI 53212 or send an e-mail to bmader@greatermilwaukeefoundation.org.

greatermilwaukeefoundation.org
414.272.5805



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For much of our existence, community foundations such as the Greater Milwaukee Foundation had quiet reputations as hidden gems that worked behind the scenes to facilitate charitable giving. Our role has evolved to one that features civic leadership, advocacy and deep strategic investment. As such, we have excelled in bringing together the best of both worlds – uniting our legacy of stewardship with innovative philanthropic tools and authentic community insights for maximum impact where our region needs it most.

Over the last several years, our Greater Together Campaign has provided us with the opportunity to honor donor intent and address community priorities like never before. We set a bold goal of \$700 million because only through generational investment can we build a Milwaukee for all together.

It's no surprise that our generous community has responded in force, with many donors giving at unprecedented levels to enhance the vitality of the region in accordance with their interests, and to increase access to the building blocks of a better life.

As a result, the funding we have committed to the community year after year is on the rise. Last year alone, the Foundation, with our donors, provided more than \$81.2 million in grants supporting a vast range of community organizations and corresponding needs.

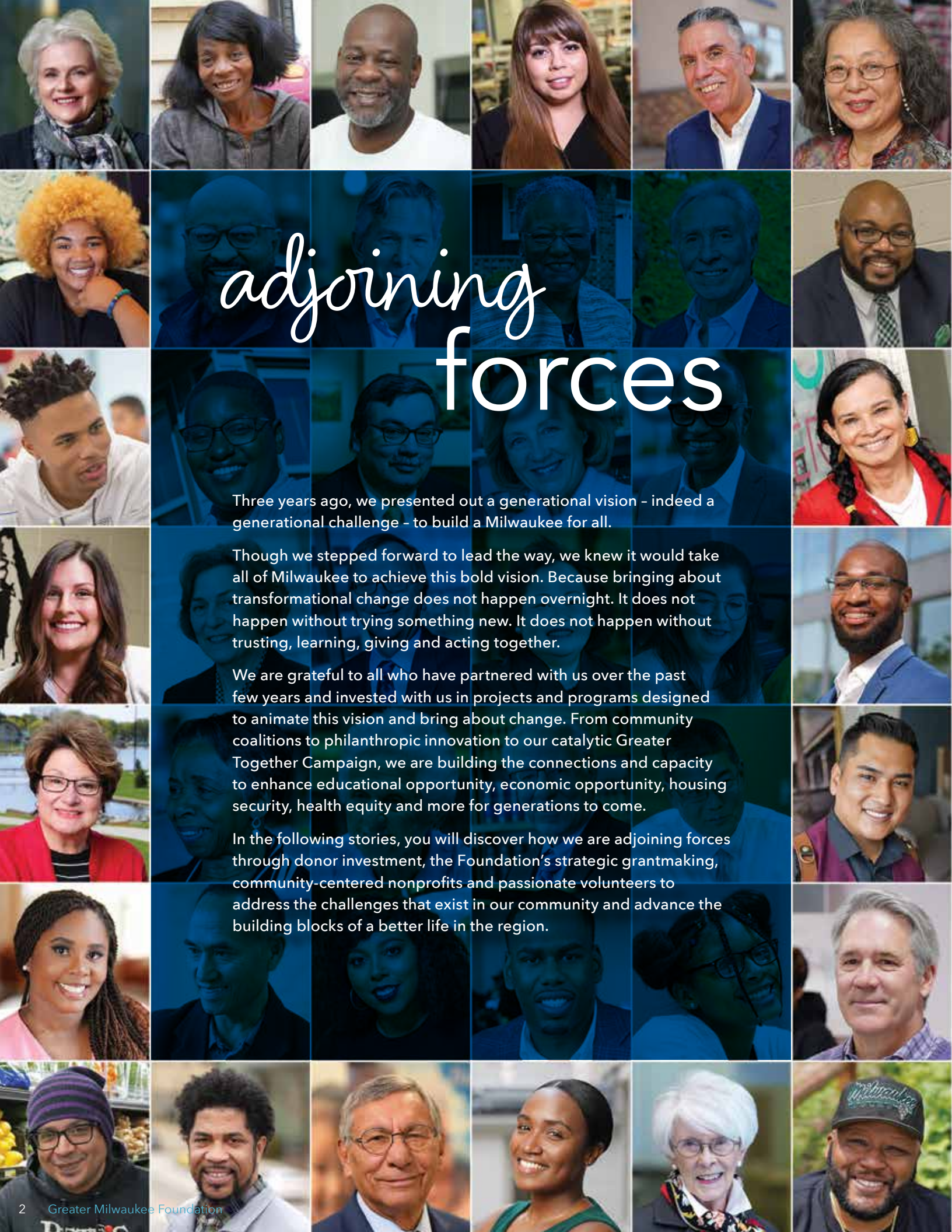
I am incredibly grateful for every donor whose partnership has brought us within reach of our comprehensive goal. Many aligned their giving with our campaign priorities – ThriveOn Collaboration, early childhood education, housing, impact investing and flexible funds. By adjoining forces in strategic ways, the Foundation, donors, nonprofits, small businesses, public agencies, professional advisers, community ambassadors and more are contributing to improved outcomes in health equity, educational opportunity, housing security and economic opportunity. Our cover feature offers some excellent examples of this synergy.

As the end of this year brings an end to our historic campaign, I am inviting your partnership once again. We may be on the threshold of our comprehensive goal, but our community priorities continue to need your support. Our team stands ready to hear your ideas for building a better Milwaukee together, and I hope you will consider sharing your time, talent, treasure and ties to ensure that our region thrives.

Ellen M. Gilligan
President & CEO
Greater Milwaukee Foundation

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adjoining forces

Three years ago, we presented out a generational vision - indeed a generational challenge - to build a Milwaukee for all.

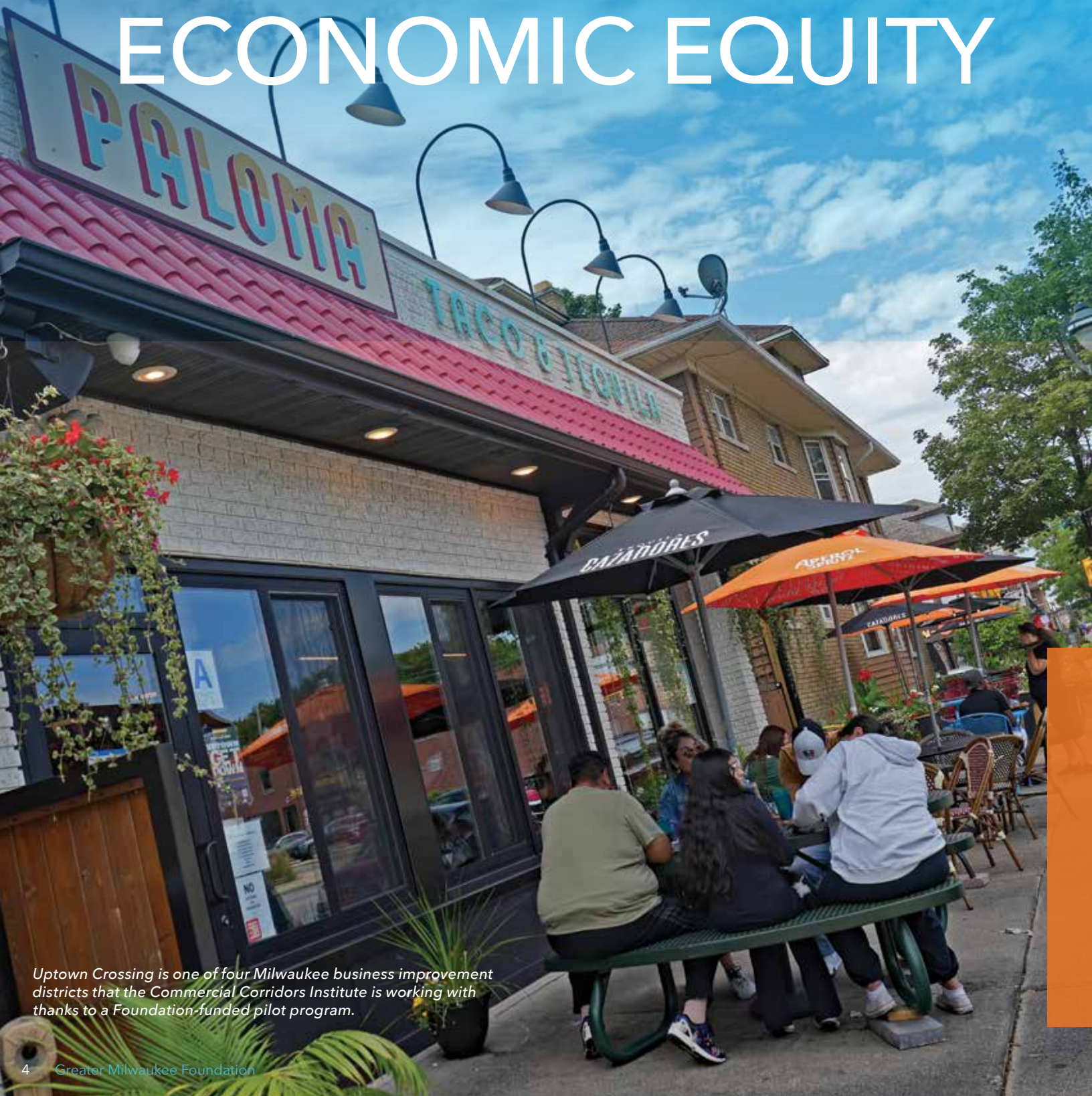
Though we stepped forward to lead the way, we knew it would take all of Milwaukee to achieve this bold vision. Because bringing about transformational change does not happen overnight. It does not happen without trying something new. It does not happen without trusting, learning, giving and acting together.

We are grateful to all who have partnered with us over the past few years and invested with us in projects and programs designed to animate this vision and bring about change. From community coalitions to philanthropic innovation to our catalytic Greater Together Campaign, we are building the connections and capacity to enhance educational opportunity, economic opportunity, housing security, health equity and more for generations to come.

In the following stories, you will discover how we are adjoining forces through donor investment, the Foundation's strategic grantmaking, community-centered nonprofits and passionate volunteers to address the challenges that exist in our community and advance the building blocks of a better life in the region.



Philanthropy helps fuel SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH AND ECONOMIC EQUITY



Uptown Crossing is one of four Milwaukee business improvement districts that the Commercial Corridors Institute is working with thanks to a Foundation-funded pilot program.



When it comes to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's work to strengthen economic opportunity through Milwaukee's small business ecosystem, it all revolves around providing access.

Access to capital. Access to information. Access to resources. Access to opportunity.

The Foundation over the past few years has created or invested in programs and projects that remove those barriers to access, recognizing that small businesses are the lifeblood in most cities, particularly in communities of color.

The experience and expertise of leaders such as Jon Gaines help the Foundation to make an impact. Gaines has volunteered as a member of the Foundation's Impact Investing Committee for the past five years, dedicating his time to reviewing project proposals for the loans and equity investments the Foundation makes. By virtue of sharing his time and talent, Gaines is one of many area philanthropists helping the Foundation reimagine philanthropy. The Foundation views impact investing as another way – beyond

grantmaking – that community foundations can strengthen communities.

Gaines knows how small businesses can create economic opportunity and uplift neighborhoods through the 13 years he has spent in the role of vice president of business services and finance at Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation, a nonprofit that provides training, technical assistance, education and loans to small businesses statewide.

"The impact you can have with putting shovels in ground, meeting with folks in community, listening to their needs and responding to those needs and helping with those needs ... that is how you change community," Gaines said. "I want to bring the best of me, my skills and folks I have as resources to ensure that individuals, families, communities and projects have their best chances of success."

Gaines has helped the Foundation deploy more than \$18 million in impact investments since 2017, and he appreciates the diversity of projects it supports in areas such as housing, early childhood education and equitable economic opportunity.

“ Small business is Main Street America, and we need those businesses. They are really important to making sure that the community stays stable and grows in the direction it needs to grow. Every day I'm in the business of how do we make sure we have the proper tools and resources to support individuals.”

*Jon Gaines
WWBIC vice president of business
services and finance*





368 jobs have been created or retained through the Foundation's impact investing program.



Outreach Community Health Center's new Capitol Drive clinic under construction in 2023. JCP, one of the Foundation's impact investing loan recipients, was the general contractor on the project.

In 2022, for example, the Foundation provided a \$2 million loan to the Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy toward its new high school in Halyard Park and a \$1.54 million loan to JCP Construction, a Black-owned construction firm. To date, 368 jobs have been created or retained through the Foundation's impact investing program.

"Small business is Main Street America, and we need those businesses," Gaines said. "They are really important to making sure that the community stays stable and grows in the direction it needs to grow. Every day I'm in the business of how do we make sure we have the proper tools and resources to support individuals."

The Foundation supports entrepreneurs today by investing in them directly through its impact investing program. And for years, it has supported intermediary organizations such as WWBIC and the Commercial Corridors Institute, which in turn provide small businesses with the access to resources and capital they need to create jobs and build wealth. With generous financial support from donors, these partners together work to support jobs and increase economic mobility in Milwaukee.



“Our biggest hope is that by working with the BIDs, it will strengthen the area, improve outcomes of the neighborhoods they are serving, help businesses to grow and thrive, and better serve the residents in those communities with services that are needed that they don’t have now.”

*Stephen Adams
Founder of the Commercial
Corridors Institute*

The Commercial Corridors Institute is working with the Historic Mitchell Street BIDs as part of a pilot program supported by the Foundation.

“I am proud of the steps the Foundation is taking to address the issue of access to capital to underserved and underrepresented communities,” said Jacqueline Ward, a Foundation Board member and consultant who has worked with small businesses and entrepreneurs for nearly 20 years. “Though we have a way to go, and we must stay the course, the Foundation is doing its part and hopefully setting an example of what organizations and governmental programs alike can strive to do.”

The Commercial Corridors Institute works with business improvement districts in underserved communities to bolster their efforts in developing and growing small businesses. BIDs are funded through assessments of the properties in a particular geographic area and are governed by local property and business owners. Ultimately, they can help create strong commercial corridors by promoting and supporting small businesses. But many are run by volunteers and may not have the structure in place for long-term viability.

Through a pilot program funded by the Foundation in 2022, the Commercial Corridors Institute is providing business and economic-related technical assistance to

the Historic Mitchell Street, Uptown Crossing, Historic North Avenue Gateway and North Avenue Marketplace BIDs. The BIDs are in low- to moderate-income, distressed commercial corridors and areas of Milwaukee.

“There are resources out there, but BIDs don’t know how to access them,” said Stephen Adams, the nonprofit’s founder. “We’re trying to connect the dots. Our goal is to try to help these communities focus on commercial economic development.”

The nonprofit is helping the BIDs with board training, organizational support and developing partnerships so the groups can bring in more resources. Two, for example, are pursuing nonprofit status, which will help them leverage more public and private dollars.

“Our biggest hope is that by working with the BIDs, it will strengthen the area, improve outcomes of the neighborhoods they are serving, help businesses grow and thrive, and better serve the residents in those communities with services that are needed that they don’t have now,” said Adams.

Leading the charge for quality EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION *in Milwaukee*

Sue Ela, a retired executive with Aurora Health Care, remembers fondly the quality education and experience her son and two daughters received while attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Children’s Learning Center as young children. In fact, they are still in touch with their teachers decades later.



Sue Ela

Lenisa Lee feels fortunate her two daughters have been able to attend Next Door, a 5-star-rated child care center where she worked for seven years.



Lenisa Lee

Both women want every child to have access to the high-quality education that their children have benefited from. Through their involvement with the Foundation, they are channeling their passion and devoting their time and talent to make that happen. Ela is a Foundation Board member and a donor. Lee is a member of the early childhood education parent ambassadorship program led by Milwaukee Succeeds, a communitywide educational partnership powered by the Foundation.

Through her participation on the Foundation’s Board since 2018, Ela has deepened her understanding of the challenges facing the sector and of the Foundation’s efforts to strengthen it. Since 2020, the Foundation and its donors have invested nearly \$8.5 million, ranging from research to capital improvements to facilities to workforce training programs for educators. The investments were geared toward increasing access to quality affordable care for Black and Brown families and addressing staffing and compensation among educators.

Early childhood education is a foundational issue for a child’s ability to succeed. It was for my kids,” Ela said. “If we all contributed (to the sector), it would address many of the issues we are trying to address for kids later in life.”

“Milwaukee Succeeds and the Foundation have really become the convening place where we can understand the facts and bring a coalition of people together to solve and address the issues facing ECE,” Ela said. “Through that, we can fund solutions while coming up with real-time resources needed now.”



Through the donor advised fund she created in 2019, for example, Ela made a gift to the Foundation's Early Childhood Education Fund in honor of her four grandchildren. A total of \$2 million to date has been raised for the fund. She also named the Foundation as a beneficiary of her IRA, which will be used to create a fund partially dedicated to supporting early childhood education.

Early childhood education has a tremendous impact on a child's development and future success. The sector is a critical economic driver, as it enables parents of young children to participate in the workforce. But the challenges have only intensified since Ela's children were in child care. Child care providers still operate on razor-thin margins. Educators are not earning sustainable wages or benefits. Many people view educators as babysitters and do not fully respect the role they have in a child's development.

If anyone knows those issues first hand, it is Lee. She has worked in the field for 17 years, first as a teacher and most recently as an instructional coach. When her oldest daughter, now age 7, was in child care, Lee was a single mom. She remembers struggling to pay the bills because the cost of care was more than half her rent.

"Our children deserve good education, regardless of where you live and how much money you make," Lee said. "They are the future, and if we don't give them what they need to be successful, what is that going to look like in 15 to 20 years?"

Her experience prompted her to join the Milwaukee Succeeds parent ambassador program this past February. The program educates individuals about the sector and

trains them in how to advocate for more resources and support. Nineteen women from across Milwaukee – 79 percent of whom have worked in the sector – signed up for a one-year commitment of at least 20 hours a month. Each ambassador is paid a stipend.

"They are a force to be reckoned with," said Anna Smerchek, the Milwaukee Succeeds community engagement fellow who oversees the program. "In their own experiences, and together as a group, they have gained so much confidence in who they are. They found their voice, and now they are realizing how to use it."

Ambassadors went before Wisconsin's Joint Finance Committee in April to share their firsthand experiences and call for continued investment in Child Care Counts, a federally funded program created during COVID to stabilize the sector. Gov. Tony Evers in October directed \$170 million in emergency funding to continue the program through June 2025. They also attend community outreach events and are involved in co-designing strategies to help Milwaukee Succeeds engage with more families and providers.

"I want what is best for my community," Lee said. "This is one way I'm able to be a part of my community and connect with other people to enhance the community regarding early childhood. The most rewarding part is just knowing that we are making a difference, even though that difference is small right now."



BUILDING HEALTH EQUITY

from the ground up

The first wealth is health.

Ralph Waldo Emerson famously penned that saying more than 160 years ago. But far too many people in our community still face systemic barriers and uneven access to opportunity for better health and well-being.

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is bringing resources and partners together to address health equity at both a systems level and grassroots level, so it is more fair and just for everyone.

Through a place-based, community-driven approach called the ThriveOn Collaboration, a partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin and Royal Capital, the Foundation is investing in the health, educational and economic well-being of people in the neighborhoods adjacent to the collaboration's home, ThriveOn King. The majority of area residents are Black, a population disproportionately affected by health disparities due to systemic racism. Among its interrelated priorities, the collaboration aims to invest in access to health and

wellness programs, healthy food options and health research to help residents overcome those barriers to their overall wellness.

Several tenants at ThriveOn King – where the Foundation will move to in early 2024 – will address health disparities head on. Versiti Blood Center of Wisconsin will provide education, job skill training and a blood donation center. Several MCW programs will have dedicated space in the building as well, including the Center for Advancing Population Science. The department is led by Leonard Egede, a nationally renowned researcher who is MCW's inaugural endowed chair in health equity research. Several Black philanthropists in greater Milwaukee, many of them Foundation donors, raised \$2 million to support his work, which focuses on developing and testing innovative interventions to reduce and/or eliminate health disparities related to race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geographic location for chronic medical and mental health conditions.

Unprecedented approach garners support

With its innovative model, the collaboration has attracted investments from Foundation donors and community members. Its focus on helping the underserved aligned well with Badger Meter Foundation's vision. Over the years, the private foundation has supported education, health care and organizations that help people with special needs. In 2022, for example, it made grants to Versiti, Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement and Hunger Task Force.

"ThriveOn Collaboration is right up our alley in the things we like to do," said Ron Dix, the foundation's president. "It's a collaboration of a lot of groups working together on different aspects of the community to make this a better place to live and work."

The private foundation made a gift to the Foundation's Greater Together Campaign in support of the ThriveOn Collaboration Fund and in 2022 turned its assets over to the Foundation to become a donor advised fund. The Foundation was a good fit because of its history in the community and its familiarity among board members, Dix said. Several Badger Meter leaders were part of the Foundation Board or knew its leaders. For example, the late James Wright, who led Badger Meter and its foundation, served 14 years on the Foundation's Board.

"They've got the expertise to see the big picture," said Dix about the Foundation.

Following community voice for greater impact

Having an impact on the big picture includes addressing health equity

at a grassroots level by listening to and supporting the needs of organizations such as the Hmong American Friendship Association. Southeast Asian refugees who fled to Wisconsin from places such as Laos, Myanmar and Thailand have turned to the nonprofit since 1983 to bridge language and cultural barriers so they can access housing, education and employment.

Accessing and understanding the health care system has been just as critical. Refugees with limited to no English proficiency cannot communicate well with doctors and nurses. While some might have family members who speak English, oftentimes they may not accurately interpret the medical information or cannot translate or interpret the language the patients speak.

The Foundation has provided a couple of grants in recent years to support HAFA's medical interpretation program.

"If you don't speak the language, if you don't understand the health care system, it's very hard to navigate," said Pang Kou Yang, a project coordinator with HAFA.

That is where people such as Lang Xiong come in. Xiong speaks five

languages and is one of HAFA's interpreters. He vividly remembers the need for interpretation and translation services when he first came to Milwaukee 40-plus years ago. There were only 50 Hmong families at the time, and HAFA was one of only two organizations that served refugees.

Though everyone on HAFA's 10-member staff is bilingual, they cannot keep up with the need. Also, Lang has found over the years that some Southeast Asian women do not feel comfortable with a male interpreter. In those instances, he has either had to stay behind a curtain or door or leave.

A recent Foundation grant helped HAFA hire a female interpreter to help women better access health care services. Of the roughly 500 clients HAFA serves each year through medical interpretation, 60 percent are women. The grant also is funding the training of seven Hmong women to become community health organizers. They will plan regular health education and screening events such as a women's health fair.

From individual access to systems change, the Foundation's cohesive approach to health equity is one even Emerson might have appreciated.



Artist rendering of Veriti's first floor space in ThriveOn King.

DONORS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS OPEN THE DOOR TO LONG-TERM HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN MKE

Forever affordable.

That idea might seem elusive for many when it comes to housing, particularly for members of Milwaukee's Black and Brown communities. Milwaukee is the second worst metro area in the nation for Black homeownership, and Latino homeownership is nearly 20 percent lower than that of whites.

But a growing number of community organizations, funders, donors and housing advocates – many with ties to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation – are committed to making that dream a reality through a new model that preserves housing and creates opportunities for more low-income residents to benefit from the wealth generation that can occur through homeownership.

"When you make between \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year, your options are limited," said Lamont Davis, Milwaukee Community Land Trust executive director. "Our focus is on working with individuals and families who have been excluded from homeownership opportunities."

Through the land trust model, the nonprofit purchases land and either rehabs or builds homes in neighborhoods where residents are at risk of displacement – Lindsay Heights and Amani on the north side, Harambee near downtown and Muskego Way and Clarke Square on the south side. A buyer purchases the house below market value and leases the land from the trust. Buyers can live in the home for as long as they want but agree to sell for a below-market price to the next eligible buyer. Meanwhile, they accumulate equity.

Davis said the average selling price will be between \$70,000 and \$90,000. The first home MCLT sold, for example, was to a buyer who makes \$32,000 a year. With downpayment and closing cost assistance, the buyer reduced the original selling price from \$80,000 to \$63,000 and will pay a \$600 monthly mortgage. He had rented a property 10 blocks away for the past 10 years.

continued on page 14



One of the homes sold by the land trust in Milwaukee's Lindsay Heights neighborhood.



“ The benefits of people having a stake in the community through homeownership or investment in some manner will turn our neighborhoods around. We need more people invested.”

Lamont Davis, Milwaukee Community Land Trust executive director



Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity is a Foundation grantee and one of many partners in the Community Development Alliance working toward creating more affordable housing in Milwaukee.

continued from page 12

Just as important as connecting low-income homebuyers to affordable homes is providing them with support needed to remain living in them. MCLT, like other housing agencies such as Acts Housing and Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity, guides buyers through the process and the responsibilities involved with homeownership.

“We are the developer that doesn’t go away. It is our mission to steward them to success,” Davis said.

HOLISTIC APPROACH ALIGNING WITH DONORS’ PRIORITIES

The deeper involvement that those housing agencies provide sets individuals and families up for long-term success and is attractive to investors such as Foundation donors Eileen and Howard Dubner.

“In both kinds of environments, you are contributing to a knowledge base as well as providing a place for the individuals to live,” Howard said.

The Shorewood couple’s interest in housing stems from hands-on experiences with organizations such as Acts Housing and Milwaukee Habitat for Humanity, both of which have received Foundation funding over the years. Howard once participated in building a Habitat home. More than four years ago, through their temple, Congregation Shalom in Fox Point, the couple took a bus tour of Acts Housing’s investments in Milwaukee and were greatly influenced by the impact it had on homeowners and the physical transformation it had on neighborhoods.

Donors have contributed \$1 million to the Greater Together Campaign housing priority area.

Davis knows how powerful homeownership can be from personal experience as well as through his MCLT role. He moved a lot while growing up, and his mother is a lifelong renter. As an adult, however, Davis has owned a home for 20 years.

“The benefits of people having a stake in the community through homeownership or investment in some manner will turn our neighborhoods around,” Davis said. “We need more people invested.”

To date, the Foundation has invested \$110,000 in MCLT’s work, from general operating support to capital funds to renovate more tax-foreclosed homes.

“Those grants have been life changing as far as our ability to bring on more units into our portfolio,” said Davis, who noted MCLT aims to sell 33 homes by 2025.

COORDINATING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The program is one of the strategies that the Community Development Alliance is undertaking as part of its citywide housing plan. The Foundation is a funder and founding member of the CDA, a 70-member cross-sector partnership, and supports



its efforts to catalyze systemic transformation in housing affordability across Milwaukee. To date, the Foundation's Housing Fund has raised more than \$1 million through the Greater Together Campaign.

The Dubners contributed to the fund in 2022 by making a gift from a qualified charitable distribution from Howard's IRA, enabling the Foundation to invest in such collective, systemic housing solutions as the MCLT. The couple started a Foundation donor advised fund in 2021, initially impressed by the Foundation's research, analysis and knowledge of the community. Eileen has a true appreciation for in-depth evaluation as her father, the late Norman Gill, led the Citizens' Governmental Research Bureau, a statewide nonpartisan, independent policy research organization now known as the Wisconsin Policy Forum, for nearly 40 years.

The Dubners are looking forward to further growing their knowledge base of nonprofits in need of investment and the impact their support can have on housing or other interest areas.

"We are both curious learners," Eileen said. "Whether it is a site visit or reading about a program or meeting an actual recipient, the process (of philanthropy) is stimulating. Working with the Foundation is really key to the process."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

By adjoining forces and resources, we can make major, lasting changes in Milwaukee.

Join us by contributing to one of these Greater Together Campaign priority funds! We are deeply grateful to all who have contributed to our shared vision and impact.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FUND

This fund fuels the work of the MKE ECE Coalition – comprised of the Foundation, Milwaukee Succeeds and dozens of local experts, practitioners and parents – as we advocate for increased public investment, equity-advancing policy and systems change for all of Milwaukee.

HOUSING FUND

This fund supports the full range of strategies that contribute to the Community Development Alliance's unified housing plan – with the goal of catalyzing citywide, systemic transformation.

IMPACT INVESTING FUND

This fund invests in promising and underrecognized opportunities throughout Milwaukee to create social and financial returns through loans and equity investments.

THRIVE ON COLLABORATION FUND

This fund supports the ThriveOn Collaboration as a whole, helping to implement and scale interrelated strategies centered on place, program and neighborhood, bringing this transformative, community-centered project roaring to life.

**GREATER
TOGETHER**
THE CAMPAIGN TO BUILD A MILWAUKEE FOR ALL

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SAFEGUARDING OUR SHARED SPACES:

Philanthropy breathes new life into regional recreational areas

If the past few years taught us anything, it was how vital the outdoors are to our overall physical and mental health. Three projects in the surrounding Milwaukee area — each supported by one of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation’s partner foundations — have added new vitality and opportunity for community residents to enjoy the wonder of the outdoors.

ALL CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND

All children – no matter their age or abilities – deserve the right to play, and a renovated playground in Cedarburg is allowing them to do just that.

The All Children’s Playground, located in Centennial Park next to the community pool, replaces a playground originally built 30 years ago. At that time, it was the only fully ADA-compliant park in the area. Over time, it had fallen into disrepair, leading it to be less accessible than it once was.

The Cedarburg Friends of Parks & Recreation spearheaded the \$400,000 renovation project. Due to the generosity of the community, including \$10,000 from the Greater Cedarburg Foundation, money was raised ahead of schedule, allowing the project to be completed sooner than anticipated. Its soft opening was Memorial Day weekend.

New features include a roller slide for children with sensory processing issues, a swing that promotes intergenerational play and a climbing area for children of all abilities.





REGNER PARK BEACH HOUSE

Regner Park has long been considered the crown jewel of West Bend. And its beach house, located in the heart of the park immediately outside of the swimming area, has been a community destination for nearly 90 years.

Generations of memories have been made in the building – whether from family gatherings, trips to the concession stand to get ice cream after an afternoon of swimming or warming up in winter after an ice-skating lap around the pond. After decades of use, however, the building needed a little TLC.

With \$1.4 million in support from the community, including more than \$600,000 from the West Bend Community Foundation, the project was completed in spring 2022.

Renovations to the building enlarged it by 50 percent, made it more accessible and added amenities such as a community room, family changing rooms, outdoor pavilion and patio area, ensuring it can remain a destination for generations to come.

“The giving back that Benders do to help preserve and improve the quality of life in West Bend is unbelievable,” said Mike Jentsch, the city director of parks, recreation and forestry.

ROCKWELL PARK

Imagine more than an acre of green space along the shoreline of two inland lakes, open and accessible to all in perpetuity.

In summer 2020, a small group of Oconomowoc residents banded together to raise the money necessary to help bring that dream to fruition by purchasing a sought-after property from a condominium developer. The group raised \$1.35 million in five months from more than 1,000 people. Gifts ranged from \$5.17 pooled from three local kids to \$100,000 from the Oconomowoc Area Foundation.

That parcel plus an adjacent property was combined to form John & Lavinia Rockwell Park. Situated between Fowler Lake and Lac La Belle, the park is named after early settlers in the area. John was known as the “father of Oconomowoc,” having created the city’s first fire department and library.

The first phase opened in July 2023. The group is still fundraising for additional amenities, including a terraced shade garden, restrooms and an accessible walking route.

“I hope it makes people realize that a lot of people can come together and make an awesome difference,” said Jane Herro, a member of the fundraising group whose grandmother donated the adjacent property.



Lifeline program unleashes wave of support, resources for furry friends

Christal West calls herself the “proud pet parent” of Karma, a pit bull mix, and Parbellum, a cat. But without the support of Pets for Life, a program of the Wisconsin Humane Society, she might not have either of her beloved companion animals.

Pets for Life is a nationally recognized program model that provides animal services, care and resources to underserved communities in Milwaukee by building relationships and engaging the community door-to-door. PFL focuses on the 53206 ZIP code and surrounding neighborhoods, all of which are affected deeply by poverty.

West inherited Karma from her son, who had to leave the rescue dog behind when he left town for the Job Corps. West worried that she could not afford to keep Karma, due to the rising costs of pet food, care products and veterinary expenses. Fortunately, about that time, Lisa Michel-Weis of PFL was knocking on doors in West’s neighborhood near 21st and Meinecke, telling residents about the program.

“She just wanted to make sure these pets were cared for,” West recalled.

Says Michel-Weis, senior director of community impact at WHS, “I consider myself a fairly shy person, but I got over it ‘doing doors.’ You never know who you are going to meet, and I enjoy the stories people share with me.”

Michel-Weis explained to West that PFL provides free spay/neuter services, free or low-cost vaccines as well as support with basic pet supplies, such as food, leashes, collars and brushes. PFL also has a relationship with the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine’s Shelter Medicine Program, which provides minor medical services in people’s homes twice a month. PFL also provides transportation to WHS’ Spay/Neuter Clinic.

Pets for Life began in 2012 with one part-time staff person, Michel-Weis. Said Jill Kline, WHS vice president of culture and community impact, “Animal welfare in general has recognized that to be effective in our mission, we need to support folks in our community. We have found that the longer we are in a community, the more relationships we build, and the more the community spreads the word for us.”

“I let all of my neighbors know that pets allow you to live longer. Not only is your pet your best friend, but it’s healing your community, too.”

West is one of PFL’s biggest boosters.

PFL’s growth – from one part-time staff to three full-time, and to an expanded service area that now includes 53205 – is due in part to support from the Foundation, which has given a total of \$110,000 since 2018 to the program. This has enabled it to serve 19,400 pets and 9,803 families.

“Our approach is innovative within animal welfare,” Kline said. “We are grateful that the Foundation recognizes that this nontraditional giving area is worthwhile. They see that animal and human welfare are inextricably linked.”



Christal West, a proud pet parent, received resources and support from the Wisconsin Human Society's Pets for Life program to help care for her dog, Karma.



Prior to connecting with the Pets for Life program:

72%

of clients had never been able to access vet care for their animal

70%

had never connected with animal sheltering system (WHS or Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission)

Only 11%

of animals were spayed/neutered at the initial meeting; now the rate is about 60%

Awards celebrate attorneys leading the way in **BUILDING A MORE EQUITABLE**

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation is grateful for its ongoing partnerships with local professional advisers and community ambassadors who are ardent champions of our mission to build a Milwaukee for all. Through their time, talent, treasure and ties, they are helping expand philanthropy throughout our region. At a special celebration this fall, we honored two individuals for partnering with us to make philanthropy more inclusive, collaborative and impactful.

Maureen O'Leary-Guth

2023 Herbert J. Mueller Society Outstanding Professional Adviser of the Year Award

Celebrates professional advisers committed to championing the Foundation's partnership for charitable giving, advancing equity and convening leaders.

Maureen O'Leary-Guth, a HJM Society member and owner of an estate planning practice in Mequon, says the Foundation has been a stable force in the community.

“ I love seeing how it is helping the community and is involved in the community.”



Much of the same can be said about O'Leary-Guth and the role of her firm, O'Leary-Guth Law Office, S.C., in the North Shore. For 15 years, they have helped clients secure their legacies through estate planning, business law and other legal services. While problem-solving drives her in her day-to-day interactions with clients, O'Leary-Guth is also dedicated to strengthening the field and giving back to the community. She serves as president of the Milwaukee Estate Planning Forum, a multi-disciplinary organization of estate planning professionals in greater Milwaukee, and is a fellow of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, an esteemed, peer-elected group of the best trust and estate attorneys in the world. Community outreach is very much woven into her firm's culture, and she and her employees are actively engaged in a number of area nonprofits, whether through contributions or board service.

MILWAUKEE



Kristen Hardy

2023 Jackie Herd-Barber Award

Recognizes Community Adviser & Ambassador Network and former Young Professional Adviser members who use their time, talent, treasure, and ties to build and deepen relationships with the Foundation and champion its strategic vision of building a Milwaukee for all, centering racial equity and inclusion.

Rising star. Young power broker. Influential Black leader. Those are just a few of the accolades Kristen Hardy has received to date over the course of her career. Whether honoring her influence in the legal profession or her engagement in the community, the awards all celebrate the impact and example she has set for others.

The Detroit native has made quite an impact since moving to Milwaukee in 2011 to attend Marquette University Law School. Over the past decade or so, she has shared her time, talent, treasure and ties with a variety of legal groups and nonprofits, including the Wisconsin Association of African American Lawyers, Bronzeville Center for the Arts and the Foundation.

She participated in the Foundation's CAAN program in 2020 and said her continued relationship with it has helped her grow as a community leader. She has since encouraged other young professionals to become involved.

Helping impact the community she lives in motivates Hardy.

“ I need to be of the community. If you are not of the community, you cannot impact the community.”

Learn more about the 2023 award recipients on our website.

GreaterMilwaukeeFoundation.org

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INVESTING IN JOY, GROWTH AND OUTDOOR PLAY

At Ebenezer Child Care Center, play is the way.

Educators know the importance of play in a child's growth, so whether inside or outside, staff make sure children's creativity and curiosity are engaged through different play opportunities.

At its Oak Creek location, play areas surround three sides of the building, and each classroom has easy access to them. And oh, have the play areas been loved over the years! But they have not been updated in nearly 20 years.

With a \$50,000 Greater Milwaukee Foundation grant, the center repaired, replaced or reworked areas to make them more accessible and easier to maintain. Ebenezer removed wood chips and uneven tiles, installed new artificial turf and spongier rubber surfacing and added natural elements such as large logs and boulders. Renovations were completed in October 2022.

"We really want that outside area to be an extension of the classroom," said Mikayla Chmielewski, curriculum specialist, who noted that because of the enhancements, educators changed lesson plans to put a greater emphasis on the outdoors.

