

a magazine for friends of the GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION

# GREATER together

**ThriveOn  
Collaboration**  
Community leads  
generational change



Greater Milwaukee  
**FOUNDATION**  
*greater together*

Volume 8 Issue 1 Winter 2023

# GREATER together

A MAGAZINE FOR FRIENDS OF THE  
GREATER MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION  
VOLUME 8 :: ISSUE 1 :: WINTER 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.

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Yasmine Rashaed, Mohammed Rashaed and their daughter, Moemi, at the ThriveOn Collaboration block party in 2022.

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Ellen Gilligan at the ThriveOn Collaboration block party in June, along with Timothy Scott, a member of the Foundation's Thriving Communities Community Advisory Council and Theresa Scott, a Foundation program officer.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When a longtime vision starts to take physical form and offer a glimpse of the seismic impact to come, it can feel like magic. As I walked down Vel R. Phillips Avenue this summer – through crowds of children with painted faces dancing with life-size balloon animals to the happy beats of a DJ – that collective energy seemed larger than life.

The mood matched the milestone as we celebrated with residents of Halyard Park, Harambee and Brewers Hill that construction on our historic ThriveOn King development was fully underway.

While this block party was symbolic of the rebirth of the iconic building that will become the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's offices and so much more, the project's soul lies beyond the bricks and mortar – in the ideas, commitment and togetherness of people with an abundant love of community. Residents, donors, business owners, civic leaders and so many from the Foundation, Medical College of Wisconsin and Royal Capital teams that form the ThriveOn Collaboration are involved in restoring what Bronzeville deserves and reimagining what its future can be.

As you'll read in the stories that follow, the origins, the approaches and the partnerships of the ThriveOn Collaboration are uncommon, and that is exactly why they are opening new paths to generational impact. If you, too, are inspired by the opportunity to invest in an equitable, thriving Milwaukee for all, join us, because your time, talent, treasure and ties could make all the difference.

Ellen M. Gilligan  
President & CEO  
Greater Milwaukee Foundation

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# ThriveOn

COLLABORATION

## BUILDING ON A VISION

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation has been woven into the fabric of the region for the past 107 years. We are putting down roots for the next era through a project that is perhaps the most ambitious undertaking in our history: The ThriveOn Collaboration.

A joint venture between the Foundation, Medical College of Wisconsin and Royal Capital, the collaboration is based in place and centered in community to advance racial, health and economic equity. As a new model for the community and the nation, it builds on the enduring strengths of what a community foundation is all about – innovation, collaboration, commitment to community and catalytic change.

This issue's cover stories go into detail about how the collaboration has come to life over the past four years and how residents' power and priorities are creating a model for change in our community. Find out about its comprehensive focus on program and place and learn more about our future home, ThriveOn King, the physical heart of the collaboration.



*From the beginning, the community has played an integral role in the ThriveOn Collaboration. Through visioning sessions over the past four years, residents have shared their perspectives and priorities for the collaboration's work.*



*Vibrant hub will bring investment, resources to revitalize*

# MLK DRIVE

The area around Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive once was a commercial and cultural destination for Milwaukee's Black community. But racially motivated practices such as redlining, a freeway expansion that severed the neighborhood's arteries and other systemic failures stripped the community of its investment and vibrancy over time.

Nearly six years ago, when the former executive director of the Historic King Drive BID was first heading efforts to revitalize the corridor, he would often hear people say, "Who wants a King Drive address?"

Now the vice chair of the Bronzeville Advisory Committee, Deshae Agee says that narrative is changing, thanks in part to catalytic developments such as ThriveOn King, a more than \$100 million project of the ThriveOn Collaboration (which is comprised of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Medical College of Wisconsin and Royal Capital). The building, 2153 N. MLK Jr. Drive, will house the Foundation's headquarters, MCW community engagement programs, mixed-income housing and other components designed to advance the health and growth of the area. The Foundation invested \$10 million from its endowment in the building.

Milwaukee's Martin Luther King Jr. Drive was not often seen as a destination. In recent years though, thanks to a number of developments on the street including ThriveOn King, that narrative is changing.



"This is our Foundation leaning in a way that we've never done before," said Ken Robertson, Foundation executive vice president, COO and CFO of the comprehensive project, which initially began out of a need for more office space.

Conversations began in 2018 as the clock was winding down with the Foundation's current lease at Schlitz Park, which it has called home since 2009. Foundation leaders conducted research around what type of space it needed to accommodate growth. At the same time, it explored what other foundations nationally and locally had done with place-based initiatives.

From the beginning, the Board was overwhelmingly in favor of more than just new office space, Robertson said. Stakeholders such as Patti Brash McKeithan were calling for the Foundation to make a deeper investment in community. McKeithan, a former Foundation Board member and longtime donor, was part of a focus group comprised of donors, Board members and community members the Foundation convened when exploring options for a new space.

"We wanted to see more involvement from the Foundation in these communities," said McKeithan, who has given generously to the collaboration through the Patti and Jack McKeithan Northwoods Fund. "I think to better understand the community and its priorities, you need to be there and become involved with those who live, work and play there."

At the same time, MCW had been looking to better address lingering health disparities through community engagement and research.

"We knew there were certain communities within Milwaukee that did not and were not going to be able to attract capital investment without philanthropic support," Robertson said. "How could you be a community foundation and not have a true community presence? That is a big reason why we landed on MLK."

The location was historically significant to both partners. From 1898 to 1932, one of MCW's predecessor institutions was located just blocks on the southeast corner of Fourth Street and Reservoir

"I think to better understand the community and its priorities, you need to be there and become involved with those who live, work and play there."

Patti Brash McKeithan, Foundation donor and former Board member



Avenue. Specifically in Halyard Park, Harambee and along King Drive, the Foundation and its donors have invested more than \$5 million in the last five years alone.

The building was the flagship store for Gimbels-Schuster's Department Store until 1970. Since then, its decorative terracotta and expansive windows have been enveloped in metal cladding. CH Coakley & Co. had used the building since 1992 for storage.

### Guiding stars and gut checks

The partners saw the potential for the historic building, especially with its 18-foot-high ceilings, granite floors and other architectural details. But they didn't have preconceived notions for what would go inside, other than office space for the Foundation and

MCW's community engagement programs and community space on the first floor.

"We knew the first floor needed to have space to convene community because across the board, the partners were committed to wanting to invite community into the building," said Terrell Walter, executive vice president of Royal Capital.

Community visioning sessions became "guiding stars" for the first-floor space, said Tom Joy, architectural designer with Engberg Anderson Architects. Elements such as a demonstration kitchen, community gathering spaces and even the concept of child care emerged in that first meeting as ideas of how to address the

social determinants of health. A \$1 million gift from an anonymous Foundation donor is helping advance construction on the first floor.

Equally important to residents was the desire to have the history and culture of the once-vibrant Bronzeville area reflected. Joy said that will be incorporated throughout the first-floor design and carry over to the parking structure, which will be covered in a fabric panel printed with local artists' art. Traffic calming and other safety investments also emerged from resident feedback.

"Without that kind of personal input, in my mind, we don't have a project," said Joy, who noted that lilac bushes were incorporated in the landscape plan based off the detail one long-





### MAJOR TENANTS

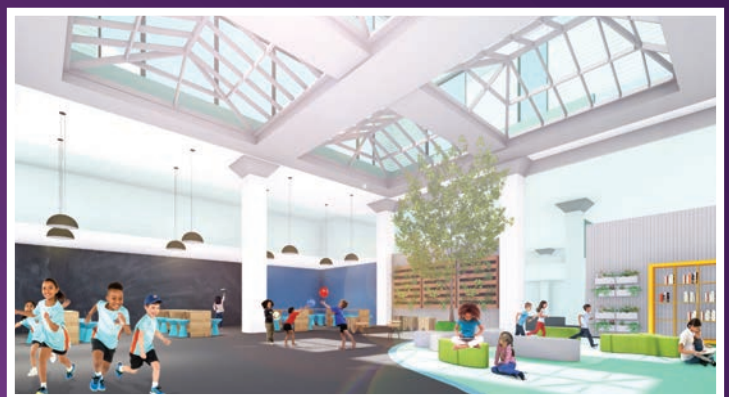
- Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- JobsWork MKE
- Malaika Early Learning Center
- Medical College of Wisconsin
- Versiti Blood Center of Wisconsin
- More than 80 units of mixed-income housing

time resident provided about how they were once plentiful along streets in the area and how their fragrance would permeate the area as they bloomed.

### Housing, learning and health

Subsequent community engagement provided partners with a gut check to make sure they were on the right track. For example, 77 apartments were originally envisioned for the building. An additional floor of units for adults 55 and older was added based on resident input. Now 27 of the more than 80 units are for seniors.

“Seniors are our treasures here and our gems of the community,” said Tosha Freeman, a second-generation Halyard Park resident who became involved with the collaboration to advocate for her neighbors. “They still should have a voice in what’s happening in their community.”



Artist renderings of the different spaces within ThriveOn King’s first floor, including a community gathering area, special event space and Malaika Early Learning Center.

For first-floor anchor tenants – Malaika Early Learning Center and Versiti – the location provides an opportunity to advance their missions and further address existing disparities for communities of color. The 14,000-square-foot space is Malaika’s second location. The 5-star child care provider has another less than 2 miles away. Executive Director Tamara Johnson is excited to serve more area families at a younger age in a building that offers services for all ages. The new location will serve up to 78 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.

“It’s an opportunity for early childhood education to be seen as part of the ecosystem and how we function as a community,” Johnson said. “It’s about taking care of the entire community.”

Versiti has nine locations around Wisconsin, but its 3,500-square-foot ThriveOn King space will allow it to connect with a more diverse community on a deeper level. It not

only will collect blood donations, but also provide access to job skill training, employment opportunities and education as to why diverse blood matters.

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**“It can really change what segregation looks like in the city. ThriveOn King can model what we want the city to be.”**

*Bregetta Wilson, Harambee resident*

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“Wouldn’t it be great to say we’re collecting blood in a neighborhood that then is serving people that live right in the neighborhood,” said Chris Miskel, Versiti’s president and CEO, who said they also hope to staff the site with people from the community.

JobWorks MKE, an additional first floor tenant, also found its mission aligned with the ThriveOn Collaboration’s new

hub. The nonprofit helps community residents achieve sustainable employment while strengthening neighborhood economies.

“So much of what we do is made possible and strengthened by partnership, so we are very excited to be connecting with community and doing this work from an epicenter of collaboration in ThriveOn King,” said Bill Krugler, JobsWork MKE president.

The ThriveOn Collaboration is MCW’s community engagement priority, and when ThriveOn King is completed, it will become the new home for many of MCW’s community engagement efforts, including the Center for AIDS Intervention Research and 414LIFE violence interruption program.

According to Staci Young, MCW’s interim senior associate dean for community engagement, “It is exciting to reimagine this space with committed partners where many of MCW’s

“Community visioning sessions became guiding stars for the first-floor space.”

Tom Joy, architectural designer with Engberg Anderson Architects



*In early fall, ThriveOn Collaboration hosted several community visioning sessions to discuss how to incorporate art into ThriveOn King.*

community engagement efforts can be more proximal to Milwaukee neighborhoods, and where we can align MCW's priorities with the health equity plans of the ThriveOn Collaboration."

### Changing the culture of Milwaukee

Partners, tenants and residents look forward to the much-needed foot traffic – and related investment – ThriveOn King will bring. That in turn will create buzz and a boost for Bronzeville, said Freeman, who also serves on the Historic King Drive BID board.

With public areas such as a food hall, business center and special event gathering space, the building will be activated in a way it hasn't been for more than 40 years, bringing together people of different backgrounds throughout the day.

"It can really change what segregation looks like in the city," said Harambee resident Bregetta Wilson. "ThriveOn King can model what we want the city to be."



Harambee resident Bregetta Wilson and Engberg Anderson lead architect Tom Joy at the ThriveOn King block party in June 2022.



Kevin Newell, Ken Robertson and Greg Wesley

## VISIONARY BLACK LEADERSHIP

Strong Black leadership is both intentional and fundamental to the vision of the ThriveOn Collaboration. Co-chairs representing the three lead partners are Kevin Newell, Ken Robertson and Greg Wesley. They have guided this work from the start, together.

"We hope to inspire the next generation. So being able to say we're investing over \$100 million on MLK Drive, and it's being led by Black leadership, that says a lot."

*Kevin Newell, founder and CEO, Royal Capital*

"What inspires me the most is that the collaboration is addressing issues that affect Black and Brown people in this community, and it's focused primary on residents and particularly the African American community and the needs of the African American community in Milwaukee."

*Greg Wesley, senior vice president of strategic alliances and business development, Medical College of Wisconsin*

"We are unapologetically leaning in, recognizing that there are some structural changes that need to be made, structural changes that are directly connected to race and our history in that space."

*Ken Robertson, executive vice president, COO and CFO, Greater Milwaukee Foundation*

# BEYOND THE BRICKS AND MORTAR

With lead role in ThriveOn Collaboration, Foundation makes generational investment in historically Black neighborhoods



**"It's really about building a strong community for everyone."**

Ken Robertson, Foundation executive vice president, COO and CFO

*Students on their way to St. Marcus Lutheran School, one of the many assets within the ThriveOn Collaboration neighborhoods.*

When the Greater Milwaukee Foundation decided to make its future home on King Drive, its leaders knew its commitment to and connection with the neighborhood could not stop there.

“It’s really about building a strong community for everyone,” said Ken Robertson, Foundation executive vice president, COO and CFO. “These inequities have created structural barriers and prevented Black folks from creating wealth. The Foundation is unapologetically leaning into that, recognizing there are structural changes that need to be made.”

As part of the ThriveOn Collaboration, the Foundation is investing in priority areas identified by community – providing grants and impact investments to address inequities in the areas of housing, early childhood education, economic opportunities and health and wellness.

“[ThriveOn] is changing the way we work,” Robertson said. “We’re used to spreading resources like peanut butter. Everyone got a little piece. This is forcing us to make harder choices and focus our dollars. We believe that focus will lead to real outcomes and real results.”

### **Making housing access more equitable and affordable**

One of the major ways the Foundation has evolved is by centering community voice, Robertson said. This importance became evident in the first visioning session in 2019 when displacement and gentrification dominated the conversation.

“It was important for us to have empathy and be there with people to feel what they were feeling,” said Darlene Russell, the Foundation’s director of community engagement. “We had to be uncomfortable, be open and listen.”

While it could not single-handedly solve the issue, the Foundation’s role in cross-sector leadership helped create the MKE United Anti-Displacement Fund, which provides grants to ensure long-time, low- and moderate-income homeowners living in some near-downtown neighborhoods are not displaced by rising taxes caused by accelerated economic development. More than \$208,000 has been distributed. Seventy-five percent of recipients have been people of color.



*The Foundation is committed to ensuring that area residents – such as Jennifer and Derek Jerek in Harambee – are not displaced due to rising taxes caused by area economic development.*

The Foundation also is committed to increasing homeownership and supporting local developers – particularly people of color. This fall it provided \$500,000 in capital to seed a program that will rehab 150 homes in Milwaukee. The program is spearheaded by a Black-led community development financial institution and will work exclusively with developers who graduated from the Associates in Commercial Real Estate program, which recruits people of color to the real estate profession.

### **Ensuring access to high quality early childhood education**

While ThriveOn King will include a flagship early childhood education center, the Foundation was intent on ensuring that the other 38 neighborhood providers had the financial resources, technical assistance and support needed to provide high-quality care to area families. It is mobilizing \$5 million over the next five years toward that end.

“Our goal is that every family in that neighborhood should have high-quality options, regardless of where their children go,” said Kathryn Dunn, the Foundation’s senior vice president and chief strategy officer.

The Foundation provided funding to 4C for Children to create a resource room that provides a curriculum library and access to supplies providers need, such as laminators and paint.

Through its Thriving Spaces program, the Foundation will provide grant support over the next year to eight to 10



Jalin, James and Clifton Phelps of JCP Construction. Their construction firm received a \$1.54 million loan as part of the Foundation's impact investing program.

home and family-based providers to enhance outdoor play areas, improve air quality and expand storage or other aspects of their facilities to achieve a higher quality rating.

By providing access to such resources, what the Foundation is saying to providers is “we believe in you; we support you and we value you,” said Tanya Johnson, an education consultant who is working with the Foundation on Thriving Spaces.

### **Increasing the stability of the small business community**

The Foundation believes in creating more equitable economic opportunities for small businesses in other sectors as well. In 2021, through its ThriveOn Small Business Loan program, it rapidly deployed \$780,000 in low-interest loans to help 17 businesses reopen after the pandemic, hire or sustain employees or improve operations. Eighty percent of them were in the surrounding neighborhoods. All were owned by people of color.

A \$1.54 million Foundation loan to JCP Construction helped the Black-

led firm, located on King Drive, add to its workforce and capital resources. Those were two crucial areas as JCP adds to its book of business with projects such as ThriveOn King.

The Foundation is working with The Business Council to help seven restaurants and five retailers along the corridor to get the technical assistance they need over the next year to grow and sustain their businesses.

“We invest in people that have a hard time finding the capital needed to do what they want to do and in areas that don’t normally get traditional funding,” said Kermiath McClendon, the Foundation’s impact investing manager. “We’re changing the narrative in these areas of inequality.”

### **Eliminating health disparities in communities of color**

Through the work of the Medical College of Wisconsin and Versiti, the collaboration will invest in access to health and wellness facilities, healthy food options and preventive health services in the area. The long-term goal is to reduce rates of chronic disease.

### **Strengthening social cohesion**

Overall, as its name suggests, the collaboration is focused on creating a thriving community. Partners can do just that through relationship building, something community has called for from the beginning, said David Nelson, an associate professor at MCW and co-lead of the collaboration’s food access work group.

The main part of doing so is by being present in community and building trust, said Bregetta Wilson, a Harambee resident who helped lead the collaboration’s community engagement efforts for 1-1/2 years.

“You can’t say you want to be in a space where people are living and not show up,” said Wilson, who remains engaged on several workgroups and is helping co-lead a new Harambee Neighborhood Association.

Twenty-two-year Harambeeresident Dalvery Blackwell appreciates the work Wilson and others have done to develop trust and engage the community.

"I like the intentionality of making sure that those helping with the development are people who look like and reflect the community," said Blackwell, noting the powerful message that is sent by having three Black men – Robertson of the Foundation, Greg Wesley of MCW and Kevin Newell of Royal Capital – serving as the collaboration's leaders. "That shows commitment, and it shows investment."

Blackwell, Travis Landry and others serve on the ThriveOn Collaboration Community Advisory Council. They regularly contribute to decision-making related to ThriveOn King and help lead the collaboration's grantmaking in the adjacent neighborhoods, which distributed \$90,000 to grassroots groups to date.

Over the past four years, collaboration partners have participated in community cleanups and neighborhood celebrations. They have supported neighborhood entrepreneurs by hosting visioning sessions and office hours at local businesses. In July, after two long years dominated by virtual meetings, collaboration members reunited with residents in person at a block party, celebrating the strength of their ongoing relationships.

"They let the community speak for what they want to do," said Landry, who works for WestCare Wisconsin, a nonprofit in Harambee. "They've proven that they want to do work in the community."



*Zipporah Turnbull, the Foundation's community engagement fellow, spends several hours each week connecting with community at various neighborhood locations such as Pete's Fruit Market.*

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE INVESTMENT

The ThriveOn Collaboration is among the priorities of the Foundation's comprehensive \$700 million philanthropic campaign. For individuals interested in supporting the ThriveOn Collaboration, we offer several unique immediate funding opportunities. These funds support the first-floor space, programming in the building and the surrounding neighborhood.

### THRIVE ON COLLABORATION FUND

Your gift will provide critical, long-term and flexible funding to fuel and scale interrelated strategies centered on place, program and neighborhood.

### THRIVE ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FUND

Your gift will support the collaboration's approach to putting residents at the center of our work.

### THRIVE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FUND

Your gift will help build out a leading-edge early childhood center in ThriveOn King and support existing area providers.

### THRIVE ON SMALL BUSINESS LOANS

Your gift will support a catalytic program that creates economic opportunity in the historic neighborhoods surrounding the ThriveOn Collaboration.

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THE CAMPAIGN TO BUILD A MILWAUKEE FOR ALL

# 'BECAUSE THE KIDS DESERVE IT'

Foundation's \$3M investment helps Black-led college prep school advance plans in Bronzeville



Dr. Howard Fuller has dedicated his life's work to ensuring that Black students have the choice to go to college and the education they need to thrive in life. And now, with the anticipated opening in fall 2023 of the new Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy building, increasing numbers of Milwaukee students will benefit from Fuller's passion.

HFCA, a Black-led, public charter, college prep school on Milwaukee's north side, is embarking upon a \$25 million capital campaign to help support a new, 80,000-square-foot high school in the Bronzeville neighborhood. It will be located across from ThriveOn King, a catalytic development co-founded by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the Medical College of Wisconsin and Royal Capital.

"Our current facility has never been optimal, but it came to a point where it was no longer workable, either programmatically or financially," said Fuller, HFCA's founder, former Milwaukee Public Schools superintendent and longtime education reformer. "We want to build

a state-of-the-art facility because the kids deserve it."

The Foundation recently announced a \$3 million investment in the future of HFCA and the scholars it serves.

**"We were very intentional about this location because we think we bring a lot of value to the community, but we know that the community brings a lot of value to our school."**

*Cory Nettles, Foundation Board member, HFCA campaign co-chair*

"We are bringing a high-quality charter school that is Black-led, Black-governed and Black-serving to a storied community," said Cory Nettles, a Foundation Board member and one of the chairs of the campaign. "We were very intentional about this location because we think we bring a lot of value to the community, but we know that the community brings a lot of value to our school."

School principal Judith Parker noted that the new building will help HFCA

grow its enrollment from 325 students to a more financially sustainable 500 students. The building will have maker spaces where students can practice hands-on technology, such as 3D printing, robotics and building modeling. Other enhancements include a state-of-the-art library, classrooms, study areas, conference space, gymnasium and auditorium. The existing HFCA building, at 29th Street and Capitol Drive, will become a middle school enrolling 325 students.

"The new school will also be closer to community businesses and nonprofits, which means our kids will have shorter distances to travel to internships, job shadows and mentoring by corporate volunteers," Parker said.

HFCA is open to all students in Milwaukee and serves those with academic and special needs. The student body is primarily Black; 96 percent of its students are considered economically disadvantaged. Every student has an adult mentor and a personalized learning plan.

"We want to make sure our students are academically prepared for the rigors of college and to enter the workplace





*Dr. Howard Fuller, longtime education reformer and founder of the Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy with students visiting America's Black Holocaust Museum. HFCA's new building will be located down the street from the museum and across the street from ThriveOn King.*



*Artist rendering of HFCA's new building in Bronzeville.*

and be successful," Parker said. "We want them to have that dream, that fire in the belly."

HFCA's emphasis on readiness for higher education, whether that be a four-year college, two-year school or trade school, was invaluable for Zipporah Turnbull, a 2015 graduate.

"I'm glad I had an education that was college focused," said Turnbull, who

graduated in 2020 from University of Wisconsin-Stout and works as a community engagement fellow at the Foundation. "We had a lot of help with college applications, the ACT test and FAFSA [the federal financial aid form]. We spent time at Carroll University to get the feel of being on campus."

The Foundation has had a longstanding commitment to youth and to bringing greater equity to the education sector.

"We have focused on trying to address disparities, such as through Milwaukee Succeeds and our investments in early childhood education," said Janel Hines, vice president of community impact. "Our funding of HFCA is part of that continuum."

The Foundation's generational commitment supports HFCA in three ways: A \$2 million impact investment, structured as a bridge loan, will help cover construction costs now, because capital campaign gifts do not come in all at one time. A \$600,000 grant supports the capital campaign, and \$400,000 over five years will be invested in scholarships for HFCA graduates. Individual Foundation donors have also contributed toward its campaign.

Fuller said the Foundation's support – both financial and in terms of community connections – is invaluable.

"Every single dollar we get is precious," he said. "When the Greater Milwaukee Foundation makes a grant to you, that's a powerful signal to other people and organizations."

# Leading by Example



**"It's never too early to start thinking about setting up a charitable foundation. Take that first step."**

*Jon Sacks, West Bend Community Foundation donor*

*Amanda and Jon Sacks*

West Bend is a community with a strong legacy of giving back. And according to residents Amanda and Jon Sacks, you do not have to wait to create a legacy of your own.

As West Bend Community Foundation's youngest legacy donors to date, they should know.

"West Bend is a community with such a big heart," Amanda said. "Being a part of that speaks to our core values."

Their passion for West Bend motivated them to partner with the foundation to ensure that their community continues to grow and thrive. Both Amanda, 35, and Jon, 36, urge those considering becoming donors not to wait.

"It's never too early to start thinking about setting up a charitable fund," said Jon who, along with Amanda, became legacy donors in 2019. "Take that first step.



*Amanda and Jon Sacks are committed to the West Bend community, and each one volunteers at multiple nonprofits in West Bend. Jon Sacks serves on the board of the Tower Heritage Center. (pictured above)*

Having met at Lawrence University, they attended Rutgers University Law School together and are both attorneys. In 2015, they moved to West Bend, Amanda's hometown, after living on the East Coast.

Amanda practices corporate and business law, estate planning and real estate at the Schloemer Law Firm in West Bend. Jon is in the Wisconsin office of Kopka Pinkus Dolin, representing employers in workplace law matters and other civil litigation.

Amanda said her work in estate planning prompted the couple to create their fund.

"Unexpected things can happen," she said. "If you have any goals – financial or whatever – start working toward them tomorrow, not when you're retired."

The couple created a lifetime fund in 2021 and have been adding to it regularly to reach the grantmaking threshold of \$25,000. They want to fund organizations that support parks, recreation, nature and education – all interests that are reflected in their volunteer and recreation activities.

"We enjoy hiking and running on the Ice Age Trail, trekking around the West Bend Rolfs Dog Park, sharing a cup of coffee with friends at the Hub – all things that wouldn't be possible without the support of nonprofits and donors in our community, so we feel it's our obligation to contribute to this legacy," explained Jon.

Amanda serves on the boards of the Albrecht Free Clinic, Lac Lawrann Conservancy, the Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial & Education Center and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at Washington County Foundation and was past president of the West Bend Noon Rotary Club. "They need a lawyer on every board," she joked.

Jon is on the board of the West Bend Sunrise Rotary, of which he was president in 2020-21. He is also on the boards of the Tower Heritage Center, National Alliance of Mental Illness of Washington County and the Volunteer Center of Washington County.

"We often volunteer at each other's organizations, so they're getting both of us," he said.

Deciding to use the West Bend Community Foundation for their philanthropic interests was a natural for the couple because of its partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. Both have participated in the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Community Adviser and Ambassador Network (formerly Young Professional Advisers Council) and are members of the Herbert J. Mueller Society.

The Foundation's affiliation with the West Bend Community Foundation was a draw because, as Amanda said, "It allows you to be part of something bigger in your own community."

They both noted that they chose to work with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation because of its deep roots within the community: "Their proven track record of support and collaboration with local nonprofits gives us confidence in how our contributions will be reinvested within our community."

# 2022 greater together AWARDS



## DOUG JANSSON LEADERSHIP AWARD **LAUREN FEASTER**

*Honors passionate and inspirational nonprofit leaders in greater Milwaukee.*

As CEO of Professional Dimensions, a leading women's professional association in southeastern Wisconsin, Lauren Feaster works to activate, support and amplify the voices of its 350 members, who range in age from 20 to 80, represent more than 30 industries and come from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. As the nation has wrestled with two ongoing public health crises - COVID-19 and racism - Feaster has grown the organization and strengthened the quality and inclusivity of its programming to help its members not only become stronger leaders but also help advance racial equity in their spheres of influence.



## FRANK KIRKPATRICK AWARD **KEITH STANLEY**

*Honors individuals whose efforts helped change Milwaukee's built environment*

For nearly a decade, Keith Stanley brought dollars, resources and renewed energy to Milwaukee's near west side. His desire to see his hometown - and everyone in it - thrive fueled his work as executive director of the Near West Side Partners. In this role, Stanley collaborated with residents, businesses and major anchor institutions such as Harley-Davidson and Marquette University to reduce crime, advance health and wellness, increase affordable housing and strengthen development of the commercial corridors in seven Milwaukee neighborhoods.

# GREATER TOGETHER AWARDS CELEBRATE WORK OF LOCAL LEADERS ADVANCING EQUITY

There are countless examples of leaders stepping forward to help set Milwaukee and our region on a path toward equity and inclusion. This year's four recipients of our Greater Together Awards have demonstrated a commitment – through their professional as well as their personal lives – toward advancing racial equity and social justice. Through their dedication, passion and leadership, they are helping transform the lives of thousands in our community.



## WILLIAM C. FRYE AWARD RALPH HOLLMON

*Recognizes individuals who have contributed their time, efforts or talents to make Milwaukee a better community.*


A commitment to improving the quality of life for others, particularly people of color, has led Ralph Hollmon to contribute his time and talent to numerous organizations over the years, organizations that work to give individuals the skills and resources needed to become self-sufficient and build wealth. He raised more than \$20 million as Milwaukee Urban League president and led efforts that empowered thousands of African American students, residents and small businesses. As board chair of America's Black Holocaust Museum, Hollmon helped reinvigorate the museum's physical presence in Bronzeville and set the stage for long-term sustainability. His passion for community and commitment to service continues in his retirement.



## PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP IN RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION AWARD JOSÉ OLIVIERI

*Honoring those who have worked to make our region welcoming and inclusive for all*

José Olivieri loves building relationships and resolving problems. Over several decades through his work as managing partner at Michael Best & Friedrich and throughout his community service, he has done so for the betterment of Milwaukee's Latinx community. Olivieri has helped advance issues affecting the Latinx community and aided in the professional development of individuals in the legal field by helping found the Wisconsin Hispanic Lawyers Association. In addition to his work leading his law firm's higher education industry group, he provides pro bono legal services to immigrants and people living in poverty. With more than a quarter century of service to the United Community Center, 15 of which were spent as its board president, Olivieri was instrumental in the growth of what has become a comprehensive social service agency serving Milwaukee's Latinx community.

A portrait of Blaine Gibson, a middle-aged African American man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a patterned tie. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred office setting with a window showing a cityscape.

As an African American, Blaine Gibson is keenly aware of the lack of diversity in the financial industry and how that impacts communities of color and building generational wealth and economic stability.

# CONVERSATION STARTER

Blaine Gibson

Gibson is quick to point out that financial literacy and growing financial wealth is not a typical conversation in the African American community.

"I've seen very intelligent people make mistakes with money because they did not have access to the right information, so this has become a mission for me," said Gibson, vice president-financial advisor with RBC Wealth Management in Mequon. "I want to teach people how to build wealth as opposed to just getting paid, just living paycheck to paycheck."

Gibson has been a thought partner, referral source and mentor in helping diversify the philanthropic sector, including alongside the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. For the impact he has made, the Foundation honored Gibson with its 2022 Herbert J. Mueller Outstanding Professional Adviser of the Year Award. The award recognizes professional advisers who build and deepen relationships with the Foundation.

Gibson has been a longtime member of the Foundation's Impact Investing Technical Subcommittee, is a member of the Development and Philanthropic Services Committee and played a key role in encouraging the Cedarburg Art Museum, of which he is a past president, to establish an agency endowment with the Foundation. He has been a strong supporter of the Foundation's Community Adviser and Ambassador Network (formerly Young Professional Adviser

Council), referring a number of financial and investment advisers of color.

"I like the Foundation because I've always felt that if you are going to set up a donor advised fund, you want it to be focused on the community you live in. The Foundation excels at this," said Gibson, who, along with his wife, Maureen, intends to create their own fund next year. "Plus, the resources the Foundation offers help me help my clients make informed decisions."

His many other community involvements include MKE Fellows, which supports academically talented African American young men through mentoring, training and internships with local businesses, and the Association of African American Financial Advisors, a leading networking organization. He also teaches financial literacy classes at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Concordia University.

"I've been mentored by many people in life, beginning with my father," Gibson said, "so working with people through these organizations is my way of giving back."

Addressing his future colleagues, Gibson added, "One thing I want to get across to African Americans trying to break into this business is that it can be intimidating, but it doesn't need to be. I've just got to get that message out to people earlier in their lives."

# RICARDO AND MEG DIAZ:

## *Devoted to expanding children's access to education and opportunity*

As parents – and now grandparents – Meg and Ricardo Diaz know firsthand how formative a child's early years are.

"It starts with those first few years and getting the right education," said Ricardo Diaz. "It's like building a house and creating a solid foundation."

Improving access to high-quality education and opportunities for Milwaukee's youth has been a focal point of the Diazes' careers. Meg was executive director of the Milwaukee Public Library Foundation and worked at Milwaukee Area Technical College. Ricardo, as the longtime executive of the United Community Center, led a successful campaign to build a new early learning academy that today serves more than 300 children.

While the couple is now retired, their dedication to building a Milwaukee for all remains. They chose to establish a family fund at the Greater Milwaukee Foundation through which they support causes and organizations related to education and Latinx youth, among other areas of interest.

The Diazes specifically wanted to partner with a community foundation for its enduring impact in the community, and, as nonprofit leaders, they had personal knowledge of the Foundation's capacity as a trusted philanthropic partner.

"We've both worked on the other side, so we know that everything is in good hands," Meg said. "We know that there are solid conversations about where resources are going. And we know that there is trust for the Foundation in the greater community."

The couple is well-versed in advocating for the causes and organizations in which they believe. Beyond their words, however, they hope their actions will inspire a new generation of philanthropists to share their time, talent, treasure and ties.

"To sit down with someone and ask them to invest was never hard," Ricardo said. "But the action comes first, the words second. Whatever you say, I want to see what you do."

Following in the Diazes' philanthropic footsteps is their daughter, now married with children of her own. The Diazes feel confident about entrusting their fund to her and her family someday because of the lessons they shared with her from an early age.

"We would have discussions at the dinner table, but she would also volunteer at the UCC in the summers, and we would serve dinner at the Salvation Army Christmas feast," Meg said.


The Diazes have also sought to empower their daughter, and all whom they encounter, with the knowledge that they, too, can have a positive impact on the world.

**"Philanthropy takes so many different forms and levels for different people, it doesn't have to be enormous. It just has to make somebody's life better."**



*Meg and Ricardo Diaz*

[GreaterMilwaukeeFoundation.org](http://GreaterMilwaukeeFoundation.org)

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 [twitter.com/GrMkeFdn](https://twitter.com/GrMkeFdn)

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## POINTS OF PRIDE

Who are some of Milwaukee's LGBTQ history makers? What sites in Brew City are of historical significance as it relates to the LGBTQ movement? A new free walking tour app called *Igbt milWALKee* answers both those questions. Supported by the Foundation's Eldon E. Murray Foundation Fund and donors Dr. Robert Starshak and Ross Draegert, the mobile app debuted at Milwaukee's PrideFest in June. The site, which tells the history of local people, organizations and events, offers an inclusive look at LGBTQ history in Milwaukee. According to creator Brice Smith, it is designed to combat LGBTQ erasure in the historical record and Milwaukee's cityscape. Twenty-five sites of historic significance are featured along with their own mini documentary.

*Featured locations on the Igbt milWALKee tour include the BESTD Clinic (left) and Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum (right). The app was made possible through the generosity of Foundation donors Dr. Robert Starshak and Ross Draegert (middle) and other supporters in the community.*

