

To: Commission on Aging

Re: Philanthropic Support for Aging Services in Milwaukee County

Date: September 10, 2025

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The Commission on Aging has the responsibility under the Older Americans Act and County Ordinance to:

*The commission shall be the lead county agency responsible for developing, administering and/or implementing a comprehensive, coordinated human service system for community based services for county residents age sixty (60) years and older, for assessing the major issues and needs of the over sixty (60) population, for providing technical assistance to agencies and organizations within the county that are involved with aging issues, for reviewing the planning and service efforts of organizations and institutions in the county and its aging network, and for making recommendations thereof.*

The Aging Network in Milwaukee County extends beyond the particular programs and agencies funded by the Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging. Funding to support and sustain the Aging Network is provided through government, private fees, and philanthropic support. As government resources are scarce and under threat, it is incumbent upon the Commission to ensure that both funding and services are coordinated to best meet the needs of the older adult population and the goals of the Area Aging Plan.

Nationally, specific philanthropic support for aging services is much less prevalent than for other sectors of the population. Recently, several long-term philanthropic funders of services for older adults in Milwaukee County have begun to shift their focus away from this support or have broadened their focus and thus diluted the funding available to support the Aging Network. At the same time, the number of older adults continues to grow and we need new ways to support a population living longer to live well.

### **Bader Philanthropies**

Robin Mayrl was the last director of the Milwaukee County Office on Aging and the first director of the Milwaukee County Department on Aging. Robin went on to become a long term Program Officer at the Helen Bader Foundation, which became Bader Philanthropies.

The Foundation honors the legacy of Helen Daniels Bader, one of Milwaukee's most beloved and magnanimous benefactors, who embarked later in life on a career as a licensed social worker. Specializing in the care of the elderly, she was an early advocate for those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, and ahead of her time when it came to envisioning and promoting effective strategies related to their care.

Bader's legacy is significant. The \$100 million Helen Bader Foundation was established in 1992; over the next 24 years, it awarded \$250 million in grants, \$67 million of which were focused on healthy aging. Since 2015, Bader Philanthropies expanded its base and widened the scope of areas for which it provided grant funding. Alzheimer's and Healthy Aging remain one of the core grant areas. Helen Ramon is the Senior Grants Director.

*Our partners are committed to helping older adults remain safe in order to age in place; to creating opportunities for older adults to learn and use technology in order to stay connected with family and friends; and to providing caregivers, professionals and students with educational opportunities. Our current Alzheimer's & Healthy Aging strategies include:*

- *Services & Support for Alzheimer's & Other Dementias*
- *Critical & Basic Needs for Older Adults*
- *Programming for Healthy Aging*
- *Education, Training, & Awareness*
- *Retirement & Older Adult Employment*

During 2025, Bader Philanthropies supported the following programs in Milwaukee County focused on Alzheimer's and Healthy Aging including those funded by the AAA:

**Melanin Minded Foundation - \$40,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's Bridge Youth program to empower adolescent caregivers of color who are caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's and Related Dementias.

**Life Navigators, Inc. -\$50,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's expansion and enhancement of services for aging individuals with disabilities and their families.

**The UWM Foundation, Inc. - \$45,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's development and testing of a digital self-care platform to enhance self-efficacy in dementia patients and reduce caregiver stress.

**Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Inc. - \$100,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's expansion of direct services and community education for households affected by the Hoarding Disorder with a focus on older adults.

**Vision Forward Association, Incorporated - \$40,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's expansion of low vision services, including clinic growth, therapist hours, transportation, and technical assistance for older adults with age-related

eye diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy.

**Indian Council of the Elderly Inc.** - \$37,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's efforts to enhance the All Nations Senior and Cultural Center's services and community impact by providing nutritional, social, and cultural services.

**Kathy's House, Inc.** - \$30,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's Older Adult Support for Patients and Caregivers program, ensuring access to healthcare and family unity during medical crises.

**Milwaukee County War Memorial, Inc.** - \$10,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's efforts to increase awareness and access to mental health resources for veterans and their families.

**Horizon Home Care & Hospice, Inc.** - \$20,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's innovative program to mitigate caregiver burnout and improve the well-being for Alzheimer's caregivers by providing a mobile app that offers tools and resources for the effective management of caregiving duties.

**St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care, Inc.** - \$4,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's annual event, which will raise funds for the provision of essential health and educational services to children, frail seniors, and adults with disabilities.

\$50,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's replacement of aging bathing tubs to enhance care for vulnerable clients which includes older adults.

**Eastside Senior Services Inc.** - \$1,600.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's annual event at Sprecher Brewery in Milwaukee, to raise funds for their programs supporting older adults.

**Legacy Home and Respite Care Foundation Inc.** - \$6,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's development of personalized self-care plans and wellness activities for caregivers of individuals with dementia living in underserved Milwaukee communities.

**Center for Deaf-Blind Persons, Inc. - \$10,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's expansion of services and outreach for older adults with hearing and vision loss.

**Pets Helping People, Inc. - \$20,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's expansion of animal-assisted interventions to enhance the mental health and wellness of older adults with Alzheimer's and dementia living in southeastern Wisconsin.

**Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association, Inc. - Wisconsin Chapter**  
\$5,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's annual event on March 13, 2025, at Discovery World in Milwaukee, which aims to unite business leaders, philanthropists, and community advocates to combat Alzheimer's disease.

**Milwaukee Community Crossroads, Inc. - \$50,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's provision of health and social services to underserved older adults, particularly Southeast Asian resettled refugees living in Milwaukee County.

\$5,000.00

This Grant supports the Grantee's annual event, A Celebration of Strong Neighborhoods, on August 7, 2025 which highlights the organization's programs that help create safe, strong, and vibrant neighborhoods for older adults and the community as a whole.

**Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin, Inc. - \$55,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's programs and services to enhance health, well-being, and independence for underserved older adults in five senior centers.

**Paralyzed Veterans of America – Wisconsin Chapter Inc. - \$10,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's comprehensive care initiative for aging paralyzed veterans and their caregivers in Wisconsin.

**L'Chaim Chaverut Northshore, Inc. - \$10,000.00**

This Grant supports the Grantee's coordination of monthly social events for older adults, which include lunch, education programming/entertainment, and opportunities for friendship and socialization.

## **Greater Milwaukee Foundation**

The Greater Milwaukee Foundation founded in the early 20th century. Local citizens pooled together their assets in a local foundation, allowing them to maximize their ability to address pressing local needs and plan for future challenges. The Foundation is Wisconsin's oldest & largest community foundation – managing more than \$1.1 billion in assets. It has awarded more than \$1.2 billion in grants over the past century to support a wide variety of nonprofits and initiatives that enhance the quality of life in greater Milwaukee and beyond.

### Community Wellness

Through investments in mental health, physical health, basic needs and medical research, among other areas, the Foundation is working to advance the well-being of the entire community. This includes the priority to support Aging and Older Adults.

### Challenge

Certain populations face systemic barriers and inequities when it comes to accessing health care and basic needs. These disparities can be based on factors such as race, ethnicity, income, gender and geographical location. By actively working to eliminate these disparities, we can create a system that is fair and just.

### Goals

Convene and follow community voice: The just and equitable inclusion of all Black, Indigenous and people of color in creating their individual and communal well-being.

Catalyze systems change: Build authentic power and representation in communities enduring racial disparities and facilitate new approaches to producing fair and just health outcomes.

Reimagine philanthropy: Efficient, community focused distribution of available grant dollars to meet immediate community needs while addressing root causes of inequality

Build inclusive culture: Provide accountability, transparency, and community-led collaboration. Foster healing and belonging.

Aging and older adults grants made in the past year include:

### **ABCD: After Breast Cancer Diagnosis - \$25,000**

To provide peer-to-peer emotional support services for individuals diagnosed with breast cancer ages 55+. The project aims to improve participants' mental health, addressing the loneliness and isolation often associated with a breast cancer diagnosis. ABCD services

improve survivorship by supporting treatment completion, reducing recurrence risk, and enhancing quality of life. To augment the 2024 cycle 3 project support - \$25,000

**Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement - \$50,000**

To fund ABLE's efforts to provide accessible audiobooks and braille materials for individuals with print disabilities, including those who are visually impaired, physically disabled or have learning disabilities. ABLE will increase audiobook production for the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library, enhancing access to high-quality, inclusive reading materials, particularly for older, visually impaired patrons. The grant will also help ABLE pursue its goal of recording more books by diverse authors, promoting equity and inclusion in its offerings.

**Center for Leadership of Afrikan Women's Wellness - \$65,000**

To support its "Health Equity for Aging Black Women" programming, which provides aging Black women with support to age healthily and to avoid the health disparities typically endured in this population through education, assistance with health care navigation and self-advocacy, and support for individual and communal healing. Programming is provided at partner organizations that share high levels of community trust and engagement, including Milwaukee County senior centers and Rooted and Rising.

**CommonBond Communities - \$25,000**

To support its "Advantage Services" at Brewery Point and Franklin Senior affordable housing communities, which provide comprehensive on-site support to help older adults maintain stability and independence. Services include assistance with income, coordination of basic needs, access to health and wellness programs, as well as community-building activities to reduce isolation.

**Compel Them to Come - \$42,000**

To fund the Community Arts Programming project, which aims to improve the well-being of senior adults by offering therapeutic art activities through a partnership between Compel Them to Come-Adult Day Activity Center and Mount Mary University. This project addresses the isolation, depression, and cognitive decline often experienced by seniors, leveraging art therapy to enhance mental health, cognitive function, and overall quality of life. By integrating creative expression into daily routines and fostering intergenerational relationships, the project seeks to build community and support participant health.

**Donovan Hines Foundation of Exuberance Co - \$25,000**

To provide general operating support. The organization works to enhance resilience, healing and long-term stability for those served by integrating nutrition, mental health support, and grief counseling, especially in communities with limited resources. Services for older adults are designed to provide material support as well as emotional connection, and to foster intergenerational community.

**Greater Galilee Community Development Corporation - \$40,000**

To fund health and wellness services for older adults. The project aims to expand part-time staffing to enhance medical screenings and care for older adults, with primary and specialty care. The project will provide primary care to 150 patients, offer specialty care to 50 patients, and conduct outreach screenings for 75 individuals. While training 40 diverse interns and students, the project will expand behavioral health counseling services for seniors and offer a monthly Memory Café. Additionally, Greater Galilee CDC will restart its partnership with Feeding America to distribute groceries.

**Independence First - \$20,500**

To fund the Aging In Place program, which aims to prevent institutionalization of older adults and people with disabilities by improving access to services during hospital discharge and post-hospitalization periods in Milwaukee County. The project will address disparities in health care access for aging people of color by providing assistive technology, home accessibility assessments and Medicare/Medicaid education. Additionally, the program will offer peer support and community engagement through workshops and events.

**Jewish Family Services - \$25,000**

To support Woodale Crossing, its new 56-unit project to address the challenges faced by Milwaukee's growing population of older adults, including issues related to limited income, chronic health conditions, and social isolation. The project will support at least 400 older adults, ensuring their living space is physically safe and that they feel connected to others. Through a focus on safety and social connectedness, the project mitigates risks associated with aging, such as declines in mental health and increased vulnerability to self-neglect, to help older adults age well and in place.

Jewish Family Services - \$25,000 To augment the \$25,000 project award from cycle 3 2024

**Mercy Housing Lakefront - \$30,000**

To fund its support services for older adult residents at the Johnston Center, a permanent supportive housing community in Milwaukee. Resident services include physical and

mental health referrals, onsite counseling, fitness programs, and health education workshops to prevent chronic diseases and support residents' overall well-being.

**Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin** - \$25,000

To provide general operating support for its efforts to enhance the health and well-being of older adults by providing equitable access to health and wellness programming across five community centers.

Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin - This grant will augment the cycle 3 2024 general operating award. \$25,000

**Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging** - \$92,300

To fund the expansion of the **Living Well with Chronic Conditions** program within Milwaukee's Black faith communities, aiming to improve chronic health management and reduce health disparities. The initiative seeks to provide ongoing education, peer support and expert guidance to help individuals manage conditions like arthritis, diabetes, and heart disease. Four additional six-week workshops will be offered in 2025, targeting 10-15 participants per session, alongside monthly two-hour support sessions for past participants.

**United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County**

The United Way envisions a united community where people come together to invest in significant and measurable solutions that foster wellness and opportunity for all. As a longstanding annual fund based on corporate and workplace giving campaigns, the United Way has moved from funding approved nonprofit health and human service agency partners with general operating support, to outcomes-based program funding, to issue group funding and now to selective impact-based funding. Donors can select whether to donate to the United Way generally or to designate funding to one of several impact areas. In addition, donors can designate part or all their gift directly to any eligible 501c3 through the United Way, although nonprofits will no longer be listed on the donor card.

**VALUES**

**Collaboration:** We believe in the power of working together with businesses, nonprofits, government, and community members to achieve meaningful and lasting impact.

**Integrity:** We are committed to transparency, accountability, and ethical practices in all that we do, building trust with our partners, donors, and community.

**Compassion:** We approach our work with empathy, understanding, and a commitment to supporting those in our community who face challenges.

Inclusion: We are not succeeding unless our success impacts our entire community. Every person in our community deserves support and all have something to give.

Beginning in 2025, United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County is rolling out an updated funding model called Impact Based Funding. By investing greater dollars for impact, we hope to solve important issues faster.

## LOOKING BACK

At United Way, we know the importance of stepping back and reflecting on the history of our organization. We are proud of the support we've provided to our four-county footprint over the past many years. We are especially proud where our support has effectively addressed needs in the community leading to big solutions to big problems.

Two examples of this include the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program that reduced the teen birth rate by 65%, and our Safe & Stable Homes Initiative, where we met the criteria of ending family homelessness in Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties a year ago and are pacing to do the same in Washington and Waukesha counties this year.

These are big solutions that we accomplished together as a community.

## LOOKING FORWARD

In order to ensure that our United Way is maximizing the impact that our donors and volunteers are making, we have assessed how to best meet our community's current needs. Beginning in 2025, we are rolling out some updated strategies for our work.

Over an extended period of time, we've had a chance to meet and discuss our funding model with over 200 individuals and organizations, as well as the United Way Board of Directors. All these conversations helped us shape our plans to transition to an Impact Based Funding model.

### Why Impact Based Funding?

The Impact Based Funding model is better aligned with current community needs, donor desires, and will allow United Way and our donors to deepen our collective impact in our community.

United Way's Traditional Funding supported a broad range of programs. Funding occurred annually to local nonprofits without application, and dollars were distributed based on the previous campaign results. The resulting level of investment and engagement lacks the depth needed to maximize meaningful long-term impact in our community.

Our donors have told us they want more comprehensive and effective solutions in partnership with business, nonprofit, government, and community members. This shift is designed to allow us to collectively solve more of our community's biggest issues with less duplication, fewer silos and more coordination and impact.

We know that the Impact Based Funding model and support for Key Initiatives is more effective than traditional funding. Here are four reasons why:

They allow for:

A prioritization of resources. Key initiatives allow us to concentrate funding, staff, and partnerships on specific areas where we can make the greatest difference.

They offer a clarity of purpose. They allow us to articulate a clear vision and mission, helping all of our stakeholders understand our why—and what people can accomplish when they join in.

They address root causes. Initiatives targeting systemic issues, such as family homelessness or teen mental wellness help create long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes, something we know our community is hungry for.

Key Initiatives allow deeper and clearer metrics and benchmarks to assess progress. This funding model provides concrete evidence of change, which is essential for maintaining donor and community trust.

## 2025 Opportunities

United Way offers competitive grants in the following areas:

- Mental Health Improvement Fund
- Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement
- Safe and Stable Homes: Ending Family Homelessness
- Teen Mental Wellness: Empowering Minds

Current funded agencies that serve older adults include:

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Inc.

Curative Care Network, Inc.

Employ Milwaukee, Inc.

Eras Senior Network, Inc.

Goodwill Greater Milwaukee and Chicago

Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center of Milwaukee, Inc.

Healthy MKE (A Social Impact Initiative of Inpower Solutions, llc)

IndependenceFirst

Jewish Family Services

Legal Action of Wisconsin

Milwaukee Christian Center, Inc.

Milwaukee LGBT Community Center

Riverworks Development Corporation

Salvation Army - Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, The

United Community Center, Inc.

YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee, Inc.

Several of these agencies have indicated that general funding, or funding that specifically funded programming for older adults would no longer be granted. Beginning in 2026, applications for funding from member agencies will only be honored if they fit one of the four/five specific impact areas. None of these areas focus upon or include older adults.

### **Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin – MCW**

Wisconsin Blue Cross was chartered in 1939 as a “charitable and benevolent corporation” to cover hospitalization costs, later adding coverage for physician services and growing to become the state’s largest health insurer as Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin in the decades that followed. In 1994, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association voted to allow its nonprofit members to become for-profit corporations. Blue Cross & Blue Shield plans interested in converting to for-profit entities would have to divest their assets.

In Wisconsin, Blue Cross & Blue Shield United’s transformation resulted in a \$618 million gift made in 1999 to the people of Wisconsin, split evenly between the state’s two medical schools—the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and the Medical College of Wisconsin. The MCW formed the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment Fund.

AHW advances health and health equity in Wisconsin by investing in promising biomedical research, supporting community health initiatives, and building the health workforce. Through its Public and Community Health Improvement Focus Area ACH strives to:

- Deepen our understanding of the drivers of public health in Wisconsin

- Affect measurable improvement in targeted public health markers
- Innovate through system-level change and social impact investing strategies

Among the grants provided in this area, some are specifically focused on older adults. In 2025 for example, the following projects were funded:

### **Empowering Wisconsin Faith-Based Groups to Combat Elderly Isolation and Depression**

Primary Community Organization: Health Equity Leadership Partnership Global

Primary Academic Partner: Jamila Kwarteng, PhD, MS, Institute for Health and Equity

Award Amount: \$68,628

Project Summary:

Project HOPE plans to build partnerships with church-based organizations in Milwaukee to develop strategies for reducing social isolation and depression among vulnerable elderly persons, specifically those aged 65 and above from racial and ethnic minority communities. Through a series of workshops with church leaders and mental health experts, the project will explore perspectives on service provision and identify evidence-based strategies for supporting elderly mental health within faith communities.

### **Health and Housing Insecurity among Milwaukee County's Older Adults**

Primary Community Organization: Community Advocates, Inc.

Award Amount: \$73,104

Project Summary:

Community Advocates, Inc. will explore the health issues and lived experiences of individuals aged 50 and over who are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in Milwaukee County. This project will survey the affected population to identify health equity gaps among vulnerable populations—who are often Black—who have faced disinvestment and discrimination, including people with inadequate income, and those living with disabilities.

Their research findings will inform a detailed report providing a roadmap for future initiatives, with the potential to scale beyond Milwaukee County. This community-led effort will produce evidence-based recommendations for programs and services that can improve health outcomes and housing stability for older adults, ultimately working to prevent homelessness and promote dignity among vulnerable older adults in Wisconsin.