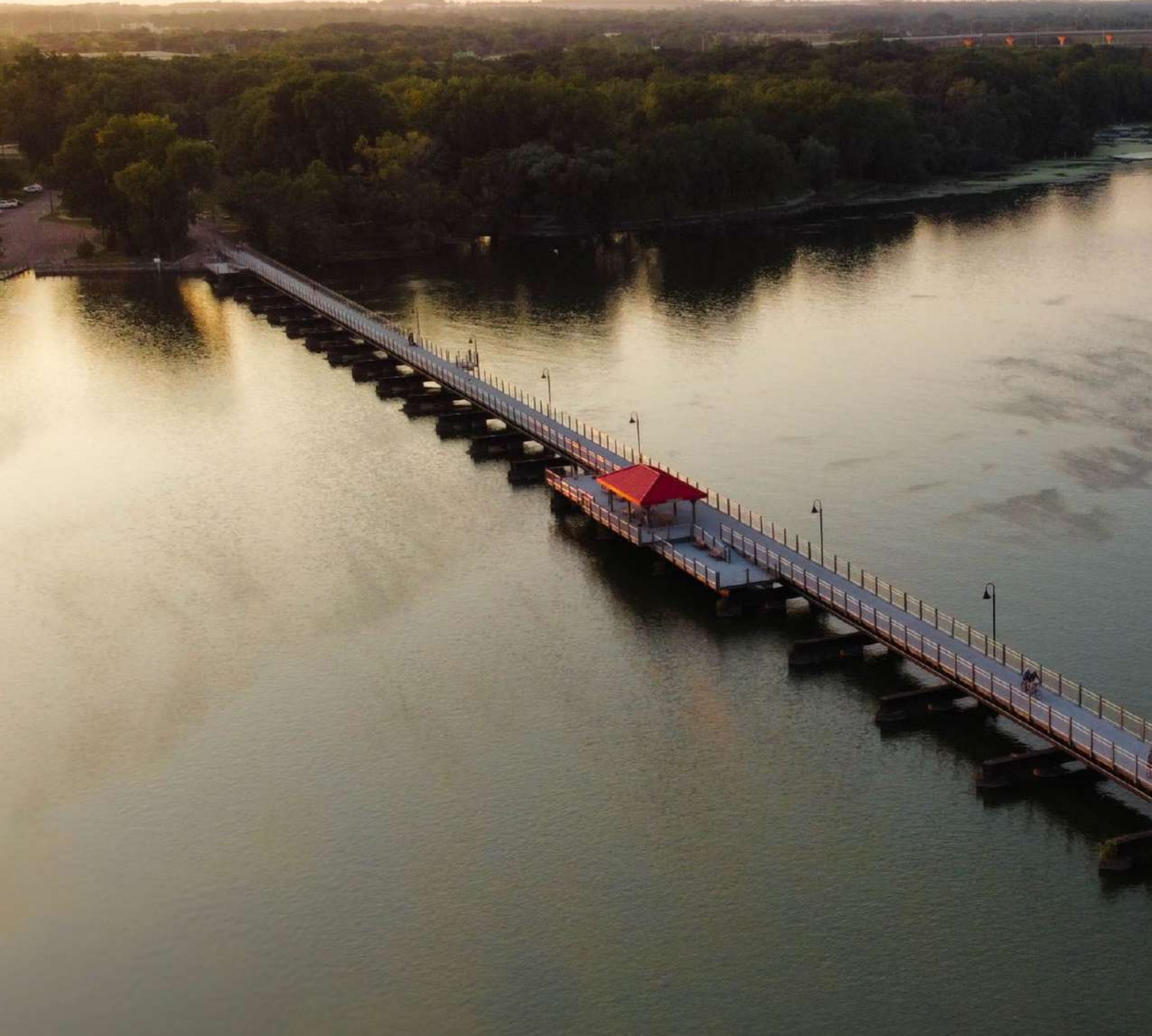


Building Community • Sharing Hope • Standing for Justice

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2022

Faith Communities United for Justice



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micah.
six: eight. DO JUSTICE
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Our Saviour's
Prince of Peace
Trinity
Zion

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Sherwood:

Christ the King

Winchester:

Grace

Winneconne:

Lord of the Lakes

Zittau:

Immanuel

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2021-2022 Yearbook

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*ESTHER is an affiliate of the WISDOM network

An Interview with Pardeep Kaleka: Bridging our Divisions



Pardeep Kaleka, Executive Director for the Interfaith Conference

By Kayla Nessmann

In today's world, our differences divide us rather than bring us together. Pardeep Kaleka has worked to change this. Kaleka is the Executive Director for the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee and the Founder of Serve 2 Unite. Both organizations have brought people together from many backgrounds and identities.

We are looking forward to hearing more from him as he will be the keynote speaker at our ESTHER banquet in February.

There is a saying in the Sikh religion that states, "In God's will, we shall remain relentlessly optimistic in our commitment towards the betterment of all mankind." How have you applied this phrase to the work that you do?

This is said before we leave the temple every single day... Serve 2 Unite was formed after the Sikh temple shooting in August and the call to be relentlessly optimistic, meaning the call of defiance against a hate crime committed. To say, we will not lose our happiness, our joy, and our sacred connection that we have to one another because of hate and division... I think as a country, it is our sacred calling to not fight against white supremacists as a person, but a spiritual context of what this country was founded upon. This sense of nationalism, vision, judgement, and hatred that really dooms us to not seeing one another... The language of serving became one that was very important because we often speak different languages... As an organization and as a calling, we wanted to make sure that we are serving each other's humanity.

What is the Interfaith Conference? Are there any parallels with the work at ESTHER?

The work that I do today is with the InterFaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee. Over the past few years, I have worked with the Interfaith Conference to bring together different faith groups. Our organization represents 22 judiciaries, including mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc... We founded in 1970 really to address housing, fair employment, and some of the civil rights issues, such as voting rights. Our hope at that time, and it continues to be, is to be engaged in

Continued on next page.

Pardeep Kaleka's Interview, continued

matters outside of our sanctuaries. One of the things that we are going to be taking on is, what does COVID education and vaccine hesitancy look like? Why are we so divided during these times? How can we create a more loving and inclusive place for all of our faith communities where they can feel like they belong.

How would you compare extremism in the Midwest at the time of the attack on the Oak Creek temple with extremism now?

Extremism and white nationalism are on the rise. Recently, we have heard about the role that social media algorithms play in siloing somebody's information. We are at a very dangerous place with people being divided along identity-motivated reasoning. Identity-motivated reasoning means that whatever you have claimed your identity on is what you will ingest. If you are very left-leaning, you will have a whole algorithm of social media friends who will say that you are right.... We are seeing a siloing of information intake and people of all persuasions moving to the extremes and the fringes. We are seeing a disappearance of people who are moderate and in the middle. All in all, there is a lot of work to be done. Whenever there is progress around anything, a lot of times there is backlash.

How would you recommend bridging today's divisions?

I think there has to be trust that humanity has a shared faith... That it is not just this

side or that side—it is all of us. A tale as old as time—do you preserve what you have or do you invest in something outside of yourself? Do you do for your family or for the society? I will go into suburban neighborhoods and the driveways will be plowed and salted but the road is not. What we have to understand is that at some point, you have to pull out of your driveway and be part of the world, as much as you might want to silo yourself off into this sense of safety. A way to get rid of some of that polarization and those silos is to understand that if we do not invest in all places, that we are all at a disadvantage. People do not want to be vulnerable, but vulnerability is what creates growth. We can't compartmentalize that violence is only going to happen in certain areas; violence can happen everywhere. There is a certain healthiness that we have a shared faith.

What are some ways that ESTHER can help build community here despite our divisions?

ESTHER plays an important role in bridging one of the deepest divides, which can sometimes be faith. I think that is a huge challenge. When we think about what divides us, historically we have looked at religion for bringing lots of people together in love. We also have to understand the flip side, in that it has kept people from seeing the humanity of one another. We have lost sight of what matters. What matters is our faith bringing us closer to one another and knowing that this is God's creation. I think that the role that ESTHER plays in that, is to really bridge those people and their faiths.

"Behold, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men; and He forbids all that is shameful and that runs counter to reason, as well as envy; and He exhorts you repeatedly so that you might bear all this, in mind."

(Qur'an 90:16)

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Appleton, WI 54911 920-731-3288

First United Methodist Church Appleton

325 E. Franklin St. www.appfumc.org
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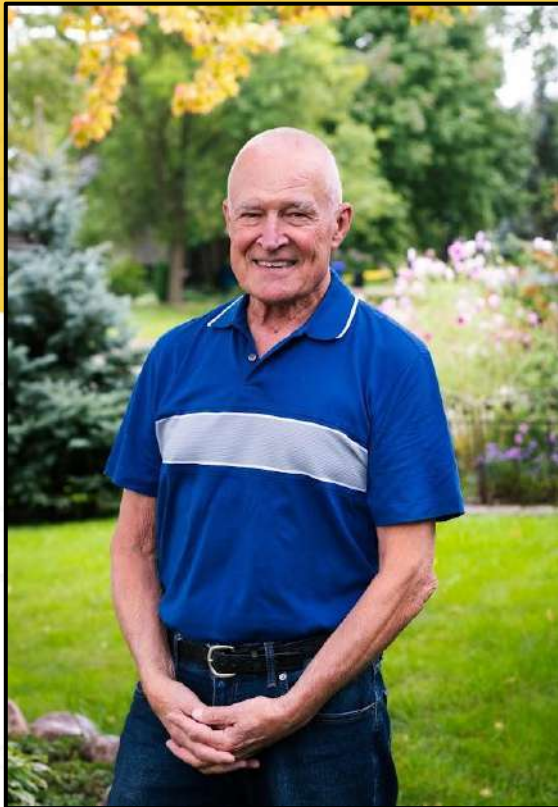
First United Methodist Church Neenah-Menasha

108 W. Doty Ave. www.fumcnm.org
Neenah, WI 54956 920-725-0166

*open hearts
open minds
open doors*



The people of The United Methodist Church*



Gary Crevier, ESTHER President

Letter from the President, Gary Crevier

A Latin American bishop once wrote that to be a true ally for the powerless you can't be in the driver's seat. For us to steer down paths in directions we think they ought to go for their own good rather than taking our place in the trunk of the car as the spare tire, is a mistake. That may seem counterintuitive but to truly Empower the powerless we need to give up our position of power to be in Solidarity with them ready to help when called upon. Truth and Hope for Equity embraces Reform. The road of genuine justice work we are asked to take may at times seem foreign and chaotic but a necessary road to help bridge the gap between two worlds of the haves and have nots. Albert Einstein challenges us to rid ourselves of the greatest optical delusion we humans have, that is, thinking we are not all one. This is the work of ESTHER. Come join us!

Gary Crevier ESTHER President



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Our Mission Statement:

Develop leaders, engage people, and build collective power in the Fox Valley to address systemic economic and social injustices and work for more equitable communities that embrace diversity.

We are not alone.

ESTHER is a part of the network of WISDOM, a statewide organization, and of The GAMALIEL Network, an international organization. We are strengthened by the strength of our associates in the struggle for justice. We know that our work will continue beyond our lifetimes, and we remember the rabbinic saying, “You are not obligated to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

“Who we Are” A Commitment to Justice

By David Haas

“Justice, justice shall you pursue.” (Deuteronomy 16:20). These words from the Bible express the basis of our commitment. We are people of faith who believe that our various faiths demand of us a commitment to work for social justice. We believe that we must work toward a society that treats all of its members as equally valuable, human beings. A society that assigns less value to people of color is wrong. A society that assigns less value to women is wrong. A society in which most of the wealth is concentrated in only a few hands is wrong because it was produced by all of us.

So, we work for institutional change. We work for an equitable society in which all of our people really have a fair chance to live a healthy, prosperous and happy life. We work for the just treatment of immigrants because it is wrong for us to benefit from the contribution that immigrants have made to our society and then to give them no legitimate place in our country. We work to end mass incarceration because imprisoning millions of black people cannot be a just solution to the problems created by centuries of racism. We work for environmental justice because a society in which powerless people bear the brunt of the environmental degradation that enriches the few cannot be just.

In the words of the prophet, “It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: Only to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”





Bill Van Lopik, ESTHER Organizer

Letter from the Organizer, Bill Van Lopik

ESTHER has existed in the Fox Valley for an incredible 18 years. That is a long-time for an organization that relies almost exclusively on the work and dedication of volunteers with a yearly budget just over \$100,000. During that time, we have seen our “power” grow in the community. In organizing terms that means our “ability to act” on issues of social injustice has increased throughout the community. Each of our six task forces can talk about the positive change they are making in our community. This past year it has been especially gratifying to see people most affected by the issues take up leadership roles to find solutions to their own issues.

In 2021, we added 40 new people to our membership list. Our actions have been highlighted on the local news media 12 times. We even had the Governor and Lt. Governor attend an ESTHER sponsored event in October. I hear time and again that “ESTHER leaders seem to be everywhere” in the Fox Valley and that gives me great pride because I can see that we are growing as an organized group rather than a collection of individual activists. Please join our movement, there is always a place at the table for you.

Bill Van Lopik, ESTHER Community Organizer

World Relief

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worldrelieffoxvalley.org

An Interview with David and Chintana Haas: Their take on equity

By Jill Smith

Our present time in American and world history is unprecedented. Misunderstandings flow like massive rivers on the internet. They put a kibosh on communication and they can create rifts among various groups of people.

ESTHER members believe that answers to basic questions can create a deeper understanding which can then help bridge differences among various groups of people. I am here to pose three simple questions: What does equality mean, what does equity mean, and why should we care what the difference is?

I asked my friends David and Chintana Haas to answer these questions because they are a thoughtful couple who have experienced these issues first-hand. They believe that their 55 year marriage has deepened their understanding of one another. This understanding has lifted each of them to be their best selves together with equity.

David, how many years have you and Chintana been a part of ESTHER?

I'm not sure, probably close to ten years or so. I initially joined the Immigration Task Force because I was interested in the Spanish culture and I speak Spanish. I thought I could be helpful.

Chintana has been a part of ESTHER but in a different way. She has donated many pieces of pottery to the ESTHER auction over the years. Her work is gracefully simple and is



easy to live with in a home. Many people respond to her work and Chintana loves to share it.

Thank you both for sharing your skills and knowledge with ESTHER. I come to both of you today because many of us who work for social justice need to understand the difference between equality and equity. First off, what does equality mean?

(David's response) The only way I can get my head around it is to look at it in a historical context. When the notion of equality was established as a legal concept, it meant that if everybody were given equal legal status, then all people would have equal chances. If people came out unequal, then that would be ok because everyone would have been given the same opportunity.

Then what does equity mean?

(He continues.) The way equity has been

(Continued on next page)

David and Chintana's Interview, continued

used in equality conversations is, even if people are considered equal before the law, they don't necessarily start at the same place. Take my own biography as an example. I came from a well to do family. I went to college. For me, I followed the path of least resistance because going to college is what was expected of me.

When I taught at UW-Oshkosh, I had students who were the first in their families to ever attend college. So, even though we all were considered equal before the law, we really didn't start at the same place.

Furthermore, my college education in California was free. Today, students take on huge debts trying to achieve what I was able to accomplish at almost no cost.

David and Chintana, many people read about equality and equity and think, "potAto, potOto. Who cares?" Please explain why this differentiation is critical?

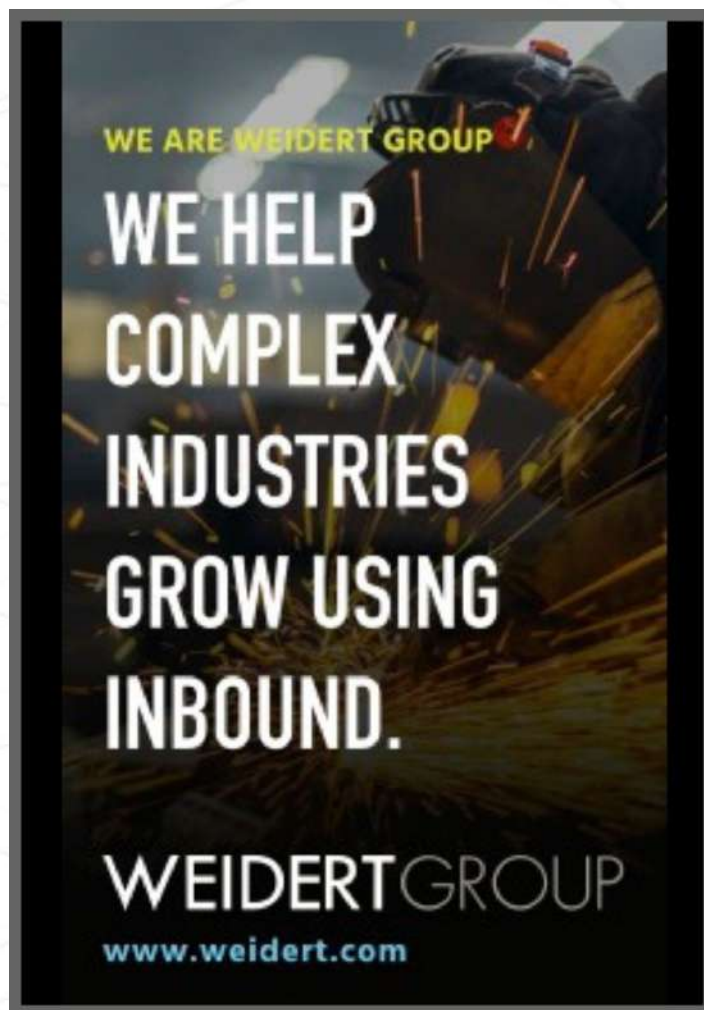
We believe that it is important to care about equity because it is a way of taking account of the fact that legal equality does not really confer equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is a basic American value. We believe that it is ok for some people to be much richer than others as long as we all have the same opportunity to become rich or to be our best selves.. If we want equality of opportunity to be real in our society, we have to make our various starting points as equitable as possible.

So, what do you think ESTHER brings to our community?

ESTHER brings people together who understand that legal equality is not

everywhere. We focus on specific issues of concern that are meaningful to our members. We can't do everything, but we work on issues that bring equity to our community.

To find David's independent blog, go to <http://foxcitiesprogressive.blogspot.com>



Faith communities, nonprofits and agencies that have partnered with ESTHER in the past year....

- ACLU of Wisconsin
- Appleton Public Library
- The Avenue 91.1
- B'nai Israel Congregation, Oshkosh
- Casa Esther Catholic Worker House, Omro
- Circles of Support
- Citizen Action of Wisconsin
- Celebrate Diversity Fox Cities
- Charter for Compassion
- Coalition for More Responsible Transportation
- Common Talks
- East Central Regional Planning Commission
- Emmanuel United Methodist, Appleton
- Emmaus Ecumenical Catholic Community of Oshkosh
- The Equity Network
- EXPO (Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing), Fox Valley
- First Congregational UCC, Appleton,
- First English Lutheran Church, Appleton
- First United Methodist Church, Neenah-Menasha
- Forward Labs
- Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Association, Appleton
- Fox Valley Islamic Society
- League of Women Voters, Appleton
- Memorial Presbyterian Church, Appleton
- Menasha Public Library
- Menikānaehkem
- Menominee Tribal Enterprises
- Native Justice Coalition
- Outagamie County Public Health Department
- Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Appleton
- Religious Society of Friends, Oshkosh
- St. Bernard Catholic Church, Appleton
- St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Neenah
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, Neenah
- Voces de la Frontera
- Waking Women Healing Institute
- Winnebago County Health Department
- Weidert Group, Inc.
- Winnebago Worship Group, Neenah
- Wisconsin Conservation Voters





Mary Bissing-Olson, ESTHER Treasurer

Mary's Story

By Jill Smith

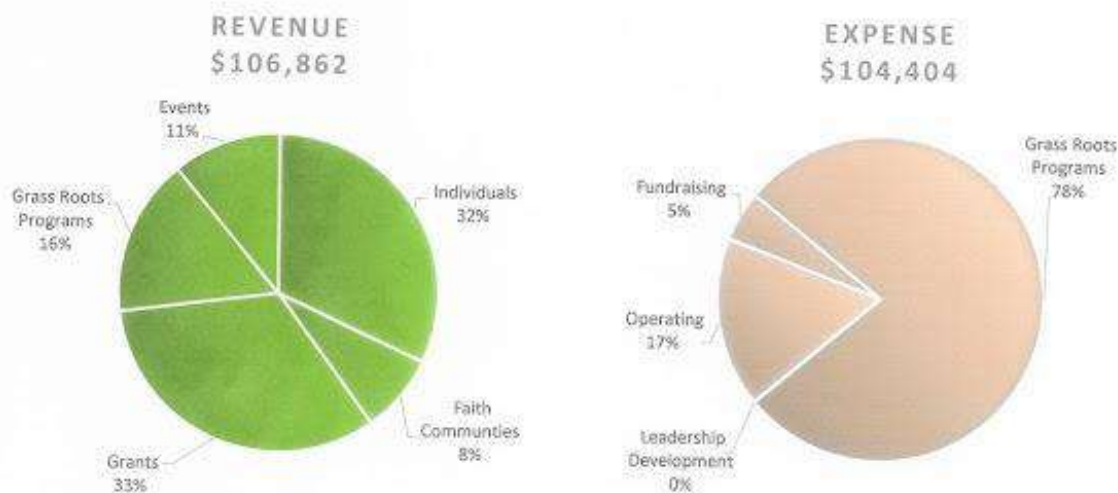
ESTHER would like to introduce the newest member of our Executive Committee, Mary Bissing-Olson. She is a grandmother of seven and after working for 37 years, has recently retired from Affinity Health System as the Manager of Decision Support.

Gary Crevier, ESTHER President, describes Mary's role in ESTHER the best. He states, "Mary's willingness to take on the position of Treasurer of ESTHER is truly a gift. She brings to us her years of professional experience in finance and accounting with a unique ability to help us see clearly our exact financial position. With her insightful questions, she helps clarify for us our financial sustainability for the present and for the future."

Thank you, Mary!
from the ESTHER team

ESTHER Revenue and Expenses

September 2020 - August 2021



To review a detailed financial statement, please contact the ESTHER office at 920-843-8083 or office@estherfoxvalley.org.

Come join us!

Want to be More Involved in ESTHER's work? Come and See:

All who are interested in the issues we focus on are welcome to participate in or observe these task force and committee meetings, most of which currently meet via Zoom teleconference.

If you have a heart for justice or if any of the issues we address have affected your life or a loved one's, we invite you to join us! All are welcome. Contact us or request a Zoom invitation using the contact links below:

Prison Reform

1st Mondays, 6:00 PM, St. Mark's Lutheran Church,
140 S. Green Bay Rd, Neenah
Contact us: esther-foxvalley.org/prtf

Oshkosh ESTHER

1st Tuesdays, 4:30 PM, in person at Congregation
B'nai Israel, 1129 Algoma Blvd, Oshkosh
Contact us: at esther-foxvalley.org/oetf

Mental Health

2nd Mondays, 6:00 PM, Zoom invite/contact at
esther-foxvalley.org/mhtf

Immigration

2nd Tuesdays, 6:30 PM, Zoom invite/contact at
esther-foxvalley.org/itf

Transportation

3rd Tuesdays, 6:30 PM, Zoom invite/contact at
esther-foxvalley.org/pttf

Equity & Racial Justice Committee

3rd Thursdays, 9:00 AM, Zoom invite/contact at
esther-foxvalley.org/erjc

Environmental Justice

4th Tuesdays, 7:00 PM, Zoom invite/contact at
esther-foxvalley.org/ejtf

Prison Reform Task Force Collaborates to Better Our Community

By Lisa Hanneman and Rob Zeegers

The **ESTHER Prison Reform Task Force** seeks to reform the Wisconsin correctional system so that: a) fewer individuals are incarcerated, b) those incarcerated are treated humanely and offered appropriate services, and c) returning citizens are given opportunities to successfully reintegrate into the community.

The task force meets monthly and is composed of people who are directly impacted by the prison system, their family members, former Department of Corrections employees, concerned citizens, and faith leaders. Together, they have organized to take on the difficult work of prison reform, which disproportionately impacts people of color. Wisconsin leads the nation in the number of African-Americans incarcerated per capita.

Our work is done by working collaboratively with other organizations such as WISDOM, EXPO, FREE, ACLU Smart Justice Campaign, and the League of Women Voters. Lisa Hanneman, co-chairperson, states, "We want to work with other organizations to end crimeless revocations and to correct the 'injustice system' for the benefit of all citizens in our community."

This year, task force members who regularly attend the monthly Outagamie County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council meetings suggested restorative justice measures to the board. Criminal Justice Treatment Services listened and actually took it on. A trial run will start in the spring.

Restorative justice measures offer people who have committed offenses to meet with the person that was offended and a mediator that determines a resolution. Historically, restorative justice measures, when used correctly, can compassionately redefine a justice system and reduce recidivism.



Co-Counselors: Lisa Hanneman and Rob Zeegers

Task Force members hit the streets weekly and held signs for the *Restore our Communities Prison Reform Campaign* at Houdini Plaza in Appleton. They engaged in meaningful conversations with all types of people who stopped to chat. Rob Zeegers, Co-chairperson, states, "One of our goals is to recruit more people to become involved in prison reform in Wisconsin. The good news is that more students from local colleges are starting to attend our meetings this year."

ESTHER continues as fiscal sponsor of a Circles of Support chapter in the Fox Valley. These are groups of dedicated volunteers (including many ESTHER members) supporting individuals who are reentering society from prison through programs of leadership, advocacy and community.

Lisa Hanneman took another tour of the Outagamie County jail and learned that the final walk-through for the accreditation with the National Commission on Correctional Health Care will take place in December 2021. This means that Outagamie County jail will soon be recognized to offer the safest and the most adequate services available for people who are incarcerated.

One of our goals for the upcoming year is to have a stable EXPO (ex-incarcerated people organizing) chapter functioning in the Fox Valley. We believe it is vital to have impacted people guiding the decisions of the task force.





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www.warmingshelter.com

Oshkosh ESTHER Task Force Report 2021

By Jen Considine

In 2021, the Oshkosh ESTHER task force came together to share community and advocate for transportation and housing justice in Oshkosh. We begin with celebration.

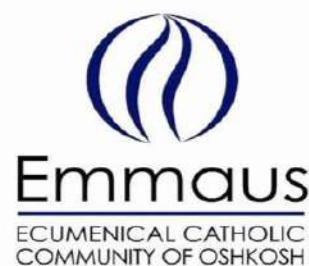
This year, through generous contributions from the City of Oshkosh, the Oshkosh Area School District and community donors, Go Transit provided more than 50,000 bus rides to K-12 students at no cost to riders. This year, we welcomed new members. We are also able to hold hybrid meetings that allow folks to join online or come together in person.

In the next year, we will be focusing on housing justice in Oshkosh. Affordable housing is hard to come by in Oshkosh, and eviction and homelessness are increasing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a Wisconsin household needs to an annual income of nearly \$36,000 — about \$17 an hour for one full-time job — to afford a two-bedroom rental home at the federal government's fair market rate. Many families in Oshkosh can't afford this fair market rent and those who can, can't find any rental units available. In the next year, we will advocate for housing first policies that allow everyone to have a safe and affordable place to live. Please join us online or at Congregation B'Nai Israel on the first Tuesday of every month at 4:30.



Oshkosh ESTHER task force at work.

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Gathering Sundays @ 11 AM
At St. Paul United Church of Christ
1250 Leonard Point Rd., Oshkosh, WI 54904
Rev. Mike Bober, 920-410-5877

www.emmausoshkosh.org

Mental Health Task Force: A Year of Lighting Bridges and Creating Awareness

By Bev Kelley-Miller

This past year, EMHTF's main focus was raising awareness on the MMIWG2S (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2 Spirits) epidemic across the country. On Valentine's Day we held a vigil at icy Houdini Plaza where 50 people from all over the Midwest gathered to remember those sisters, daughters, aunties and mothers we have lost to violence and for whom justice has yet to be realized.

May 5th signified another day of MMIW2GS awareness. Cities across the country lit up their bridges and buildings in red to honor the memory of victims. ESTHER Mental Health and Oshkosh ESTHER task forces worked together to create a bridge lighting ceremony in Oshkosh where Mayor Lori Palmeri read a city proclamation of support. Alysse Arce courageously spoke about the loss of her mother, Rae Elaine Turtillott, who was found murdered over 30 years ago and whose killer was never found.

This summer, funds were collected from ESTHER, Emmaus Ecumenical Catholic Church, First Congregational UCC and the Native Justice Coalition to pay for a large MMIW billboard that was posted for 6 weeks on College Avenue. Urban



Bev Kelley-Miller, Chairperson

helped host a billboard unveiling event on June 12 in their parking lot where approximately 60 people came to hear Kristin Welch and Andrea Lemke-Rochon speak.

Currently, the task force is working with Winnebago Public Health in distributing life-saving Narcan kits to communities in need who have been impacted by overdose deaths. We also continue to collaborate with Native Justice Coalition and Waking Women Healing Institute in supporting their MMIWG2S initiatives.



Creating a New Vision for Transportation

By Connie Kanitz

We focus on goals of ease and effectiveness, equity, affordability, safety, sustainability, lighter impact on the environment and on the people living in communities along our roads. We weave together diverse options so we each have a way of getting where we need to go when we need to get there. As more options become available within cities, throughout rural areas and between cities, we can begin to have less reliance on a personal car.

ESTHER shared our budget priorities with our state legislators and the joint finance committee through Madison Action Day and comments on the 2021-23 budget.

“Fix at Six,” a new proposal for I-94 East-West Corridor in Milwaukee, authored by transportation planner Mark Stout and supported by the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation was introduced on September 14. The plan offers road repairs in the current six lane footprint, a new rapid transit bus line, and more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly avenues instead of an expansion to eight lanes. “Fix at Six” meets our goals outlined above.

Exploring personal stories remains the best way to demonstrate what people need and helps guide us to a new vision. ESTHER transportation task force meets the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 – 8:00, currently using zoom.



Connie Kanitz - Transit Task Force Chair



L'Shanah Tovah UMetukah
May You Have a
Good and Sweet New Year

*Moses Montefiore Congregation
Congratulates ESTHER on Completing
14 Years of Struggle for Social Justice
and Hopes that this Will Be
Another Successful Year*





Terry Dawson, Chairperson

Environmental Justice Task Force

By Terry Dawson

It has been a busy year for Environmental Justice. Members continue regular meetings, working to learn about justice issues associated with climate and extractive industries. We seek to collaborate and support other groups, attending rallies and events in Appleton, Menasha, Green Bay and Marinette. These events were to protest or explore concern for justice issues, such as impacts on Indigenous people -- particularly MMIWG2S, the effects of climate on youth, the potentially disastrous proposed mine on the Menominee River, and Enbridge pipelines Line 3 and Line 5. Members spoke or presented at the Earth Day rally in Appleton, a Citizen Action Climate Solutions Roundtable in Menasha, and the Green New Deal Fest in Appleton.

We continue to work with other WISDOM affiliates and state legislators to empower communities to regulate plastic waste. In October, we assisted with the planting and dedication of the Peace Tree, a gift from the Menominee, dedicated to MMIWG2S.

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ESTHER's Billboard Unveiling Event was held on June 12th at Urban Evolutions in Appleton.



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Hop on to Voices RandomISH



Eldridge, a UW-Milwaukee Graduate/Lecturer, is currently the Director of Cultural Transformation for Guardian Life. In 2020, she also launched SLNTPNRS DEI Consulting.

Voices RandomISH premiered in June 2019. It was created to tell the stories of the good in our Fox Cities communities.

On the show, Eldridge interviews guests to discuss popular culture topics relevant to the community at large.

In 2020, Eldridge launched the online purpose driven clothing store **YourGeer.com**.

This clothing site showcases original designs based upon popular culture. Shirt prices range from \$21.00 - \$35.00. For every *Voices RandomISH* and First Responders shirt sold, \$5.00 is donated to charity.



Eldridge's Purpose:
To use my voice to serve humanity by encouraging engagement in dialogue that is Enlightening, Inspiring and Uplifting.

Voices RandomISH YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQ-CZXXwzPvHmuxm2ZHPm1Q>





Below: Kristin Welch makes the Call to Action at the MMIW Bridge Lighting Event in Oshkosh on May 5th.



Above: ESTHER Immigration members rally in Milwaukee for “A Day without Latinx and Immigrants,” October 2021:

Right: ESTHER participants gathered in Green Bay to speak up for immigration reform and essential workers last summer.

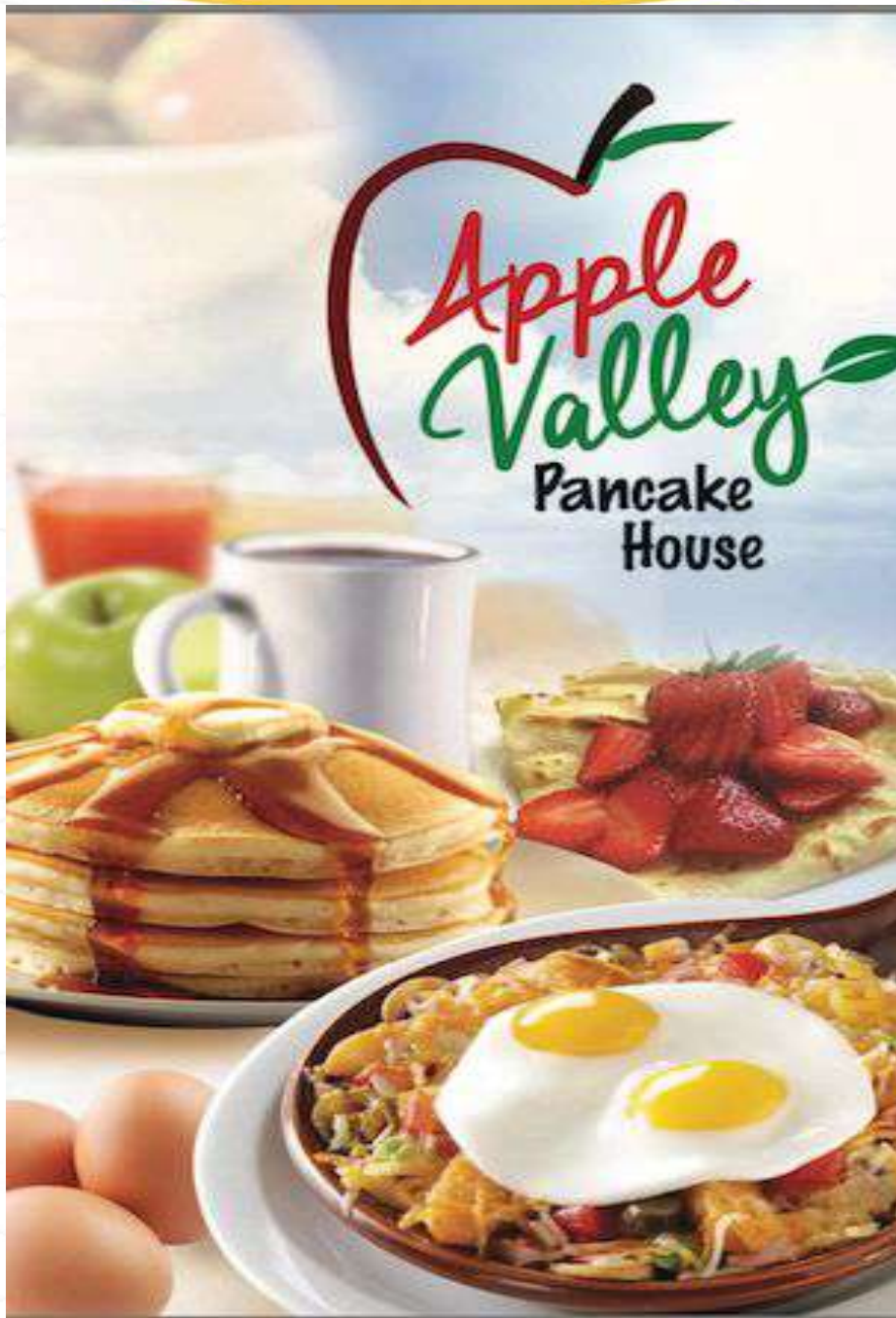




Above: Environmental Justice Rally in Green Bay informed the public to protect our waters of Wisconsin.
Below: Community members waved banners at the Water Celebration on the banks of the Menominee River this summer.

Below: David Grington, Director of the Menominee Historic Preservation, spoke to Oshkosh constituents about the necessity to clarify Chief Oshkosh's biography on his statue located in Menominee Park.





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Immigration Task Force is not Deterred

By Connie Raether

The ESTHER Immigration Task Force continues in spite of our frustration with the lack of movement in the U.S. Congress for comprehensive immigration reform. The Wisconsin legislature has been equally intransigent with its' lack of movement around driver's licenses for undocumented residents. However, our work persists with a 'si, se puede' attitude. We have expanded beyond advocacy for legislative changes. Here is a list of some of our efforts during the past year.

- We have focused around learning more about barriers that people with limited English face in the court system.
- We are working with a local Hispanic family experiencing harassment from their neighbors.
- We encouraged people to donate to a local group raising money to help immigrants who have lost jobs and income due to COVID.
- We did research on whether local schools are communicating effectively with Spanish speakers.
- We work with other WISDOM affiliates around the state through participation in monthly calls and educating ourselves about national issues through the Gamaliel immigration calls.
- We have interacted with Menasha Police Chief Styka about hate crimes and ways we can work with his department.



Co-Chairs: Melissa Gaudin-Hughes and Yolanda Bedolla

- We continue to collaborate with Voces de la Frontera. Several of us joined Voces in Green Bay in April for an event to promote citizenship for all!
- We also supported 3 of our task force members who went to Washington D.C. to support immigrant rights for essential workers.
- We were effective in getting a number of local businesses to shut their doors on October 11 to honor the "Day Without Latinx." Our efforts were highlighted in the local news media.

Our task force membership continues to grow with directly impacted immigrants assuming more and more of the leadership within the group. Please join us in this expanding work!



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Voices of Hope

By Kris Klothier

“Voices of Hope” is a reader’s theatre presentation that brings to life the stories of our Fox Cities community of Latinex immigrants, DACA recipients, and children at the border through prose, poetry and music. The presentation helps the community identify with immigrants and understand the reasons why many endure traumatic journeys to come to America. This experience shares the moral and legal issues associated with immigration and forces us to take a stand.

d. Due to the limitation of presenting in person, our presentation is on video for Zoom meetings. Following the video, your organization has the opportunity to ask questions of the readers and discuss a call to action. Contact the ESTHER office to learn more about how you can host Voices of Hope and view our video clip on the ESTHER webpage.

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Equity and Racial Justice Committee

By Gwendolyn Gibson and Penny Robinson

With the mission of becoming an antiracist organization, ESTHER continued educating ourselves and the community, collaborating with other organizations, and working on local issues, including:

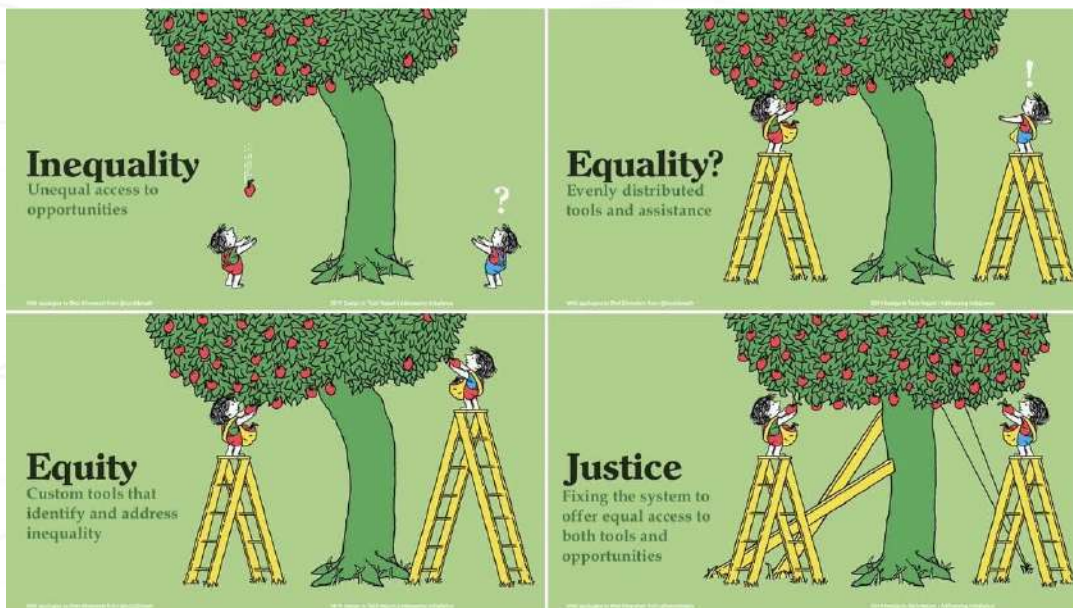
- Ibram X Kendi's book, *How to be an Antiracist*
- *Taking a Faithful Stand for Equity* pledge*
- Learning that **Critical Race Theory** is a framework examining how systems, policy and the law perpetuate systemic racism and is only taught in law and graduate schools
- Engaging Marijke Van Roojen and Shavana Talbert of COMMON TALKS for training on antiracism/ race justice and goal-setting using an equity lens
- Recruiting a person who is African American for the Grand Chute Police and Fire Commission



Co-Chairs: Penny Robinson and Gwendolyn Gibson

- Growing our relationship with the Menominee Tribe through film (*Dawnland*), supporting a billboard for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, collaborating on dedication of a Peace Tree on Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Discussing local, state, and national issues.

*<https://www.wichurches.org/2021/07/17/taking-a-faithful-stand-for-equity-making-a-commitment-to-civic-engagement/>



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Equity Network

A new local collaboration - An opportunity for you

By Nancy Jones


2020 brought the pervasive disparities in our country into sharp relief, leaving many of us searching for ways to deepen our commitment to equity and racial justice work. Like ESTHER, many area organizations have been on their own journeys--learning and having conversations about systemic issues and implicit biases. The idea of the Equity Network began with such a conversation among Stronger Together Fox Valley members, facilitated by Rachel Peller of Wisconsin Partners and coupled with an awareness of the myriad of potential partnering organizations. **How might we collaborate to take action to address or avoid disparities in Fox Valley communities?**

The basic goal of this new collaboration is the creation a regional network of organizations committed to monitoring local decision-making using a [civil rights strategy](#) that holds network members and policymakers accountable in our community. Inequities and disparities stem from a wide range of policies and practices implemented at a local level. Ensuring decisions are made in ways that promote the common good takes active monitoring by local residents.

A legal framework exists within the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including expectations for planning and community input to assist local policymakers so their decisions are nondiscriminatory. The Equity Network aims to help provide a vital and often missing link between the intention of the law and realizing equitable outcomes locally.

Stronger Together Fox Valley quickly found partners in **ESTHER, the League of Women Voter of Appleton, and People of Progression** and network participants continue to reach out to potential partners for equity work. The Equity Network is still in its early stages, so **this is a great time to match your commitment to justice to serving as a monitor for a local policymaking board or committee that has impact on the issues you care about the most.**

Please be part of ensuring equity is our communities' decision-making. The Equity Network meets the first Thursday of every month. [Read more here](#) or contact [Nancy Jones](#), ESTHER member.



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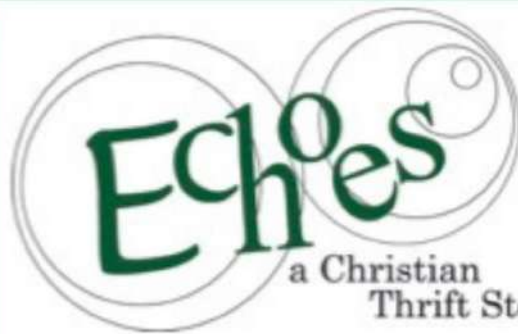
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Community Leadership award



Pictured from left to right: Mandy Davenport, Dartania Winters, Cainan Davenport, William Green, Kristen Gondek, Meakil Bell Sr., Rick Kitchen, Kempton Freeman, Eldridge Alexander, Chaddrian West Sr.

By Jill Smith

ESTHER has chosen **People of Progression** to receive this year's Community Leadership Award. After the death of George Floyd, this budding organization was formed out of a need to offer people of color a place to be heard and a place to talk about difficult issues. What started as a Sunday afternoon talking circle at a local barbershop developed into an organization.

Currently, the group is a board that meets monthly. Cainan Davenport, President of P.O.P., states, "Our mission is to build equitable inclusion for BIPOC by empowering our children, supporting our businesses and protecting our community." Look for information about the group on their Facebook page.

When asked about how the group feels about receiving this award, Cainan responded, "We feel honored. We are just doing what we are trying to do. The recognition is huge. We are in the beginning stages of this organization and it is encouraging to know that our work is being noticed."



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Individual Leadership Award

By Joan Jensen



Sara Companik

ESTHER members are proud to announce Sara Companik as our Individual Leadership Award winner. We have been so fortunate to have her involvement since the organization's inception 18 years ago.

Sara has guided ESTHER's breadth of influence in all areas of social justice and taken a supportive role in all the issues it represents.

Sara is a person who has a tireless passion for justice and wherever she experiences injustice believes in action. She is literally unable to accept injustice without speaking or acting out with some means of power.

Our whole community has benefitted from her service and study, but ESTHER has always been especially important to her. The core values ESTHER represents seem to match her faith and tenacity to act. This is linked with a compassionate heart for anyone in need.

Sara is reluctant to accept acclaim, so we are honored to express our thanks with this award. She represents our best efforts.



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Cecelia LaPointe, Executive Director of the NJC

By Kayla Nessmann

ESTHER has joined in a recent partnership with the Native Justice Coalition (NJC) to help elevate Native voices and learn from those on the frontlines of the racial, gender, and environmental justice movements.

Cecelia LaPointe is the Founder and Executive Director of the NJC. We look forward to learning more from them as we work with their organization.

Could you please explain what the Native Justice Coalition is?

The NJC was formed in 2016 with the intent of being a platform for Native-led social and racial justice. We work across our rural and remote Native communities in Michigan but we have also grown to work in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and we are also looking to expand in our First Nations Métis and Inuit communities in Ontario. We have an annual Anishinabe Racial Justice Conference. We also have programs that include Anishinabe healing stories on

An Interview with Cecelia LaPointe

racial justice, a two spirit program, and a MMIWG2S program which stands for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirits. We also have an Anishinabe Racial Justice Coalition highlighting our community partnerships

What are you most proud of with the Native Justice Coalition?

Being the founder and Executive Director, I work tirelessly to build the coalition. I feel like I'm in it so much that I don't get to really see. I'm most proud of the exponential growth we have been experiencing- even during the pandemic. Increased grants, increased donations, and increased community support is really exciting. Working to strengthen our reach and our work is what we are all about at the coalition.

It looks like the people who work for/ with the NJC come from many different backgrounds/ cultures. How have those different representations helped build your organization?

As a Native led organization, we want to emphasize and center our people in our work. However, the work is expansive and has ripple effects across other cultures and communities, not just in the Great Lakes. So we're inclusive to building solidarity with other organizations.

We work predominantly with Tribal governments, Tribal colleges, and other Native led organizations. We also partner with universities and organizations like

Continued on next page.

Continued from previous page.

ESTHER. We want to be inclusive and expansive in how we work, and as a result, building solidarity with other groups and populations.

What are the ways in which the NJC and ESTHER can work together to elevate Native voices in our local community?

We worked before on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls initiative and we had the billboard in the community. It's important to have that support and awareness. It's people and communities. really exciting to have that support but I think that other ways to support are amplifying Native voices, supporting our work, and helping us continue to grow and strengthen this work for our

How can non-Native folks continue to be allies and deconstruct colonialism?

We have a lot of support now more than ever. There is more awareness on racist monuments and mascots. I just got an email today that one

of the schools in Michigan voted to get rid of their racist mascot, so we are seeing this progress. I know Elders in Michigan who have been doing mascot work for decades. We do the heavy lifting daily, so it's important for others to support us and to contribute to the organization. Whether it's a donation or attending our events. It's just generally amplifying Indigenous voices. We are the smallest percent of the world's population. Right now, it's about 6%. There's so much racism, there's still so much erasure. I looked at a news article that talks about erasure, even in COVID reporting. It's important to know that we are not just "the other." Even if we are mixed with other heritage, we should not be erased. Because of the way the United States has its racist classifications with classifying someone's race. Many of us, like myself, are multi-racial. I don't fit into those boxes. We need to move beyond that. Supporting that is really important and critical.



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Meet Francisca Hiscocks and Kayla Nessmann

By Jill Smith

ESTHER's social justice work continues to grow. We are proud to introduce our employees, Kayla Nessmann (left) and Francisca Hiscocks (Right).



Left: Kayla Nessmann, Right: Francisca Hiscocks

Kayla has been working for ESTHER for almost a year. She is a recent graduate of St. Cloud State University in Minnesota and works as our Communications Coordinator. Look for her blog posts on our website.

Francisca has worked for ESTHER for six years as our Administration Assistant and Sponsorship Manager. She is an immigrant from Spain who is invaluable to our work. Both Kayla and Francisca work diligently behind the scenes. They each touch every aspect of our social justice work and for that we are very grateful.



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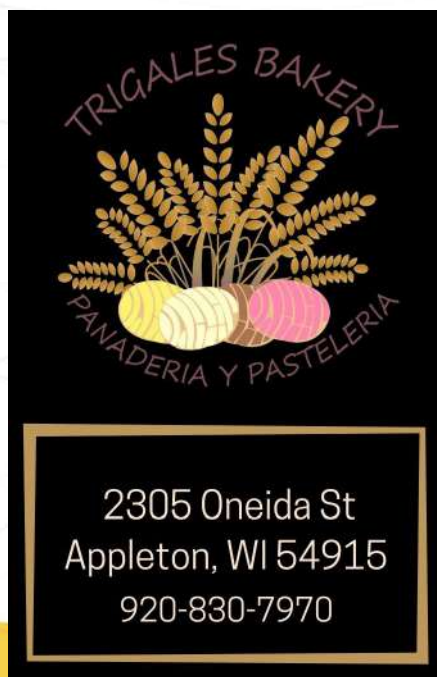
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