

Building Community · Sharing Hope · Standing for Justice

2023-2024



ESTHER

Faith Communities United for Justice





Evangelical
Lutheran
Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

micah
six-eight
DO JUSTICE
love mercy
walk humbly

Appleton Conference East Central Synod of Wisconsin

Appleton:

First English
Grace
Our Saviour's
Prince of Peace
Trinity
Zion

Combined Locks:

Christ the King

Greenville:

Christus

Neenah:

Gloria Dei
Our Savior's
St Mark's
St. Paul

New London:

Trinity

Menasha:

St. Timothy

Sherwood:

Christ the King

Winchester:

Grace

Winneconne:

Lord of the Lakes

Zittau:

Immanuel

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2023-2024 Yearbook ESTHER*

PO Box 784 Neenah
 Wisconsin, 54957
 920-843-8083

office@esther-foxvalley.org <https://esther-foxvalley.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/esther.foxvalley>

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*ESTHER is an affiliate of the WISDOM network



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ESTHER

faith

dignity



community

equality



**CITIZEN ACTION OF WISCONSIN
A PROUD PARTNER OF ESTHER**



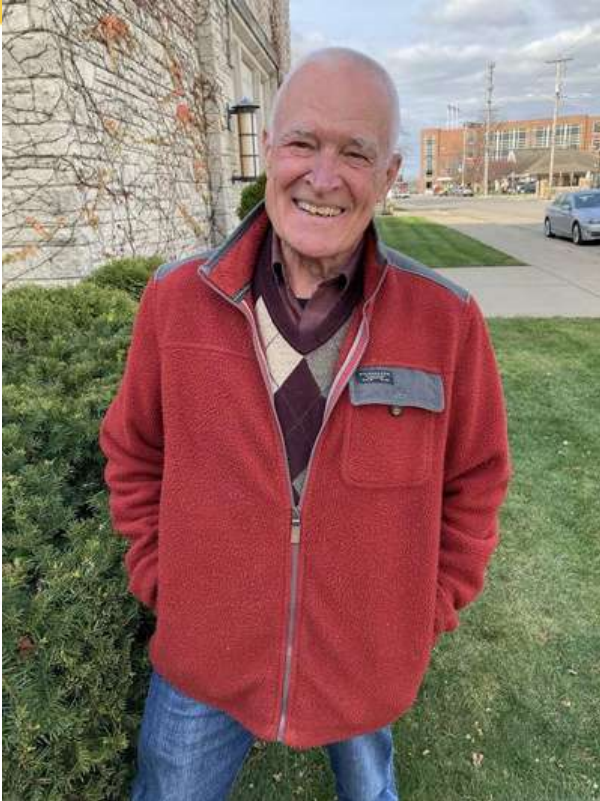
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Letter from the President, Gary Crevier



**Gary Crevier, ESTHER
President**

Do we understand that asking difficult questions is part of justice work? Are we willing to befriend someone who is marginalized in our community such as a person of color, an individual in the LGBTQ community, someone living in poverty struggling to find affordable housing or families impacted by incarceration? Do we understand the fears of the undocumented? Do we ever wonder about the wisdom to wander outside of our comfort zone by sharing time with folks as they celebrate their own religious or cultural heritages? Am I willing to take the time to ask these individuals to share their life stories and to really listen to them? Whenever the dignity of anyone or any part of creation is being abused, threatened or disrespected so is our own dignity, the good of the community. The truth of the matter is, there is no other. We are all one. Do you see that connection? I am grateful for all who do and continue to work for justice with like minded passionate folks along with ESTHER.

Gary Crevier, ESTHER President

Green Apple Folk Music Society
- making and sharing live acoustic music in
the Fox Valley for over 30 years -

is proud to support ESTHER's work to build a
just and equitable community.



greenapplefolkmusic.org
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Learn about WAVE's work and Equity Commitment
waveedfund.org

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www.cheveuxneenah.com



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Worship at 9:30 a.m.
Sunday mornings
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ESTHER stands for Empowerment Solidarity Truth Hope Equity Reform



ESTHER's Mission Statement

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

ESTHER aims to bring together people of faith and communities of faith to build community and to identify and act on issues of injustice.



ESTHER is an affiliate of WISDOM, the Wisconsin affiliate of GAMALIEL.



<https://esther-foxvalley.org/>

Biography of Ana Garcia-Ashley, Executive Director of Gamaliel

Ana Garcia-Ashley's family moved from the Dominican Republic to New York City during the 1960s, fleeing the chaos that followed the murder of three activists who opposed dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Her family's safe passage was, to Garcia-Ashley, a miracle—the first sign that she had a divine mission to fulfill. Garcia-Ashley attended Catholic and public schools in the South Bronx, then moved to New Mexico to study at Highlands University. Longing for a welcoming environment among Latinos, she was shocked when her first experience was getting hit by an egg and called “nigger” in Spanish.



Ana graduated from the University of Colorado in Denver, and began her career in Denver in 1981, where she organized The Concerned Citizens of Westwood. She affiliated with the Metropolitan Organization for People in 1982 and went on to work on local and state campaigns, including enforcement of the Community Reinvestment Act and affordable public services. Intensely interested in the intersection of politics and faith, Ana attended the Iliff School of Theology in Denver to develop a foundation for organizing congregations. During her theological studies and organizing, Ana's conviction deepened that organizing was a divine calling for her—the purpose of the miracle that allowed her and her family to safely emigrate from the Dominican Republic to the United States.

Ana began her work in Gamaliel in the early 1990s, as Lead Organizer of MICA (Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope). During her tenure there, the organization won a \$500 million reinvestment commitment from the city's banks. Ana was also the founding organizer for WISDOM, the Gamaliel-affiliated Wisconsin state organization. She has been a member of the Gamaliel central staff for nearly two decades, serving as senior trainer at Gamaliel's National Leadership Training and co-director of the Civil Rights for Immigrants campaign.

In 2009, Ana was named Associate Director, becoming Executive Director in 2012. Under her leadership the organization's Fire of Faith campaign is on track to save or create nearly 1 million jobs over 3 years, while also rekindling the 1,000 interfaith congregations that belong to Gamaliel's affiliate organizations through community organizing.

Ana's deep sense of organizing as a ministry, her interest in the relationship between faith and politics, and her status as a naturalized immigrant dovetail perfectly with the goal of Gamaliel to be “a community of people living out our faith and values to collectively transform our communities and bring about justice locally, nationally and globally.”

She splits her home life between Franklin, Wisconsin and Atlanta, Georgia. She is married and has two daughters. She is a member of St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Milwaukee.

5401 S. Cornell Ave. Suite 301, Chicago, IL
 60615 312.357.2639 Fax 312.357.6735
www.gamaliel.org

ESTHER's Staff



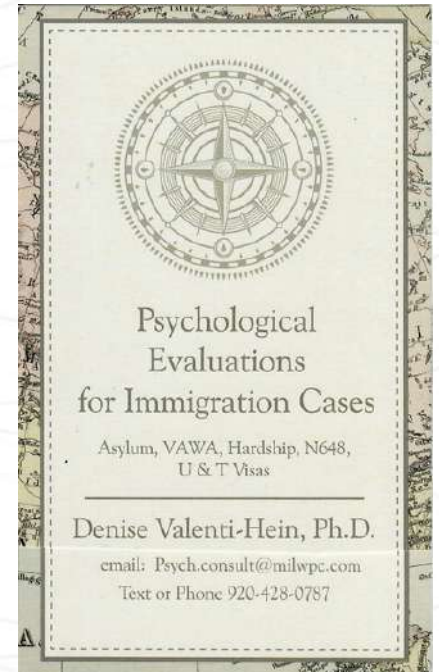
Contact Katie

**Hello ESTHER Friends,
It is an honor and a
pleasure to serve as
ESTHER's Organizer.**

2023 has been a very busy year for me as I've been learning the ropes of ESTHER. Now I feel like I truly belong here. Our organization is made of so many passionate people, there is no stopping us. I am so proud that we formalized our stance as aspiring allies to the LGBTQIA+ community.

We live out our values daily in the justice we fight for. ESTHER is dedicated to making real change locally to the big, wicked problems faced by the world. We work with community members and organizations to raise awareness about important issues, and advocate for change.

I have been meeting regularly with our housing advocates to ensure that our organization takes the time to uplift directly impacted voices.



Hello everyone!

My name is Acienda Yang and I am ESTHER's new Office Administrator.

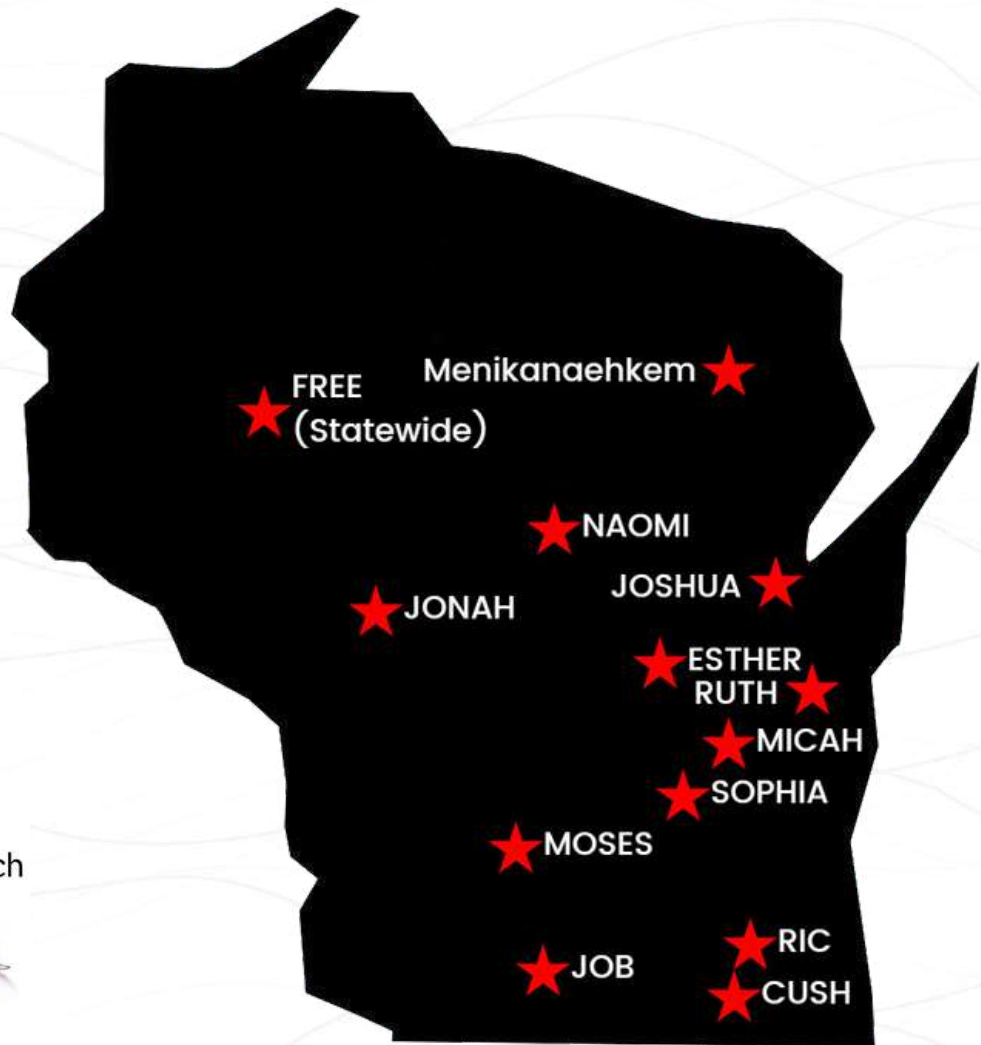
I love to hike, travel, cook, karaoke, and spend time with my family. In addition, I also have a pet turtle named 'Autumn' whom I love very much. One of my goal is to travel out of the country once a year to learn different cultures and to try new things! If you have any recommendation for places to visit, let me know!

I am excited to be part of ESTHER and cannot wait to learn and be part of the change that is truly needed.





Affiliate Map of Wisconsin



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

We are a family of
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growing in faith &
reaching out in love...



...as an engaged and
inclusive congregation
of disciples,
transforming lives in
our community
through the Gospel of
Jesus Christ.

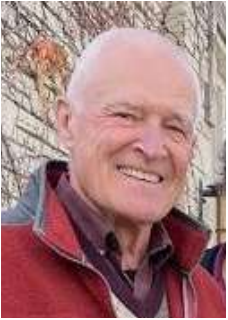
2330 E. Calumet St.
Appleton, WI 54915
(920) 739-5255



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

- ACLU of Wisconsin
- African Heritage Inc
- The Avenue 91.1
- Basic Needs Giving Partnership
- B'nai Israel Congregation, Oshkosh
- Brothertown Indian Nation
- Casa Esther Catholic Worker House, Omro
- Casa Hispana
- Circles of Support
- Citizen Action
- Citizen Climate Lobby Appleton-Fox Cities
- Celebrate Diversity Fox Cities
- Coalition for More Responsible Transportation
- Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region
- Correctional Education Association
- East Central Regional Planning Commission
- Ebb and Flow Connections Cooperative
- Emmanuel United Methodist, Appleton
- The Equity Network
- EXPO (Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing), Fox Valley
- First Congregational UCC, Appleton
- First Congregational UCC, Oshkosh
- First English Lutheran Church, Appleton
- First United Methodist Church, Neenah-Menasha
- Fox City Flix
- Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Appleton
- Fox Valley Islamic Society
- FREE
- Gamaliel
- JOSHUA
- Lawrence University
- League of Women Voters, Appleton-Fox Cities
- League of Women Voters, Winnebago County
- Megan Kelley Foundation
- Memorial Presbyterian Church, Appleton
- Menasha Public Library
- Menikānaehkem
- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
- Multi Cultural Coalition Inc
- Native Justice Coalition
- Oshkosh Area Food Pantry
- Our Wisconsin Revolution
- Outagamie County Public Health Department
- People of Progression
- Pop Earth
- Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Appleton
- Racial Equity Advocacy and Leadership in Oshkosh (REAL Oshkosh)
- Rainbow Alliance Advocacy
- Religious Society of Friends, Oshkosh
- Sierra Club
- St. Bernard Catholic Church, Appleton
- St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Neenah
- St. Paul Lutheran Church, Neenah
- Solutions Recovery Inc
- Trinity Episcopal Church, Oshkosh
- Unity of Appleton
- Voces de la Frontera
- Waking Women Healing Institute
- Wild Ones Fox Valley Region
- Winnebago County Health Department
- Wisconsin Anti Violence Effort
- Wisconsin Interfaith Voter Engagement Campaign
- Winnebago Worship Group, Neenah
- WISDOM
- Wisconsin Conservation Voters

ESTHER Executive Board



President: Gary Crevier

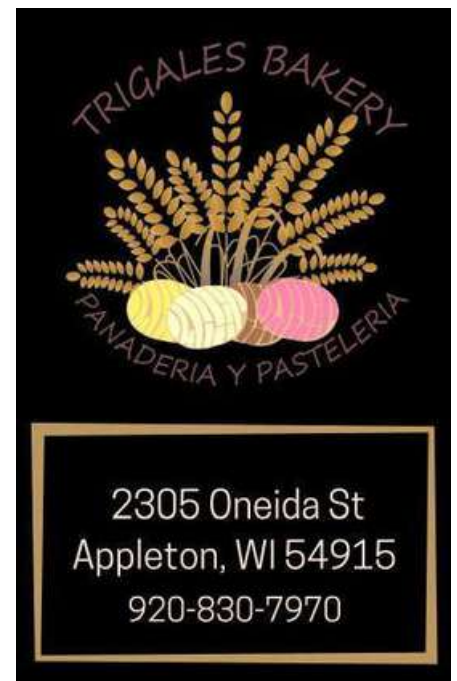


Vice President: David Fink

**"It has been a real pleasure serving on the ESTHER Executive Committee this past year. Each of the members brings very specific talents, life experience, wisdom, and a passion for equity and justice. Our desire to work on behalf of under-represented people of the Fox Cities is both humbling and motivating. I'm grateful for the chance to be a part of this team."
-Dave Fink**



Secretary: Mary Bechle



Advisor: Steve Hirby

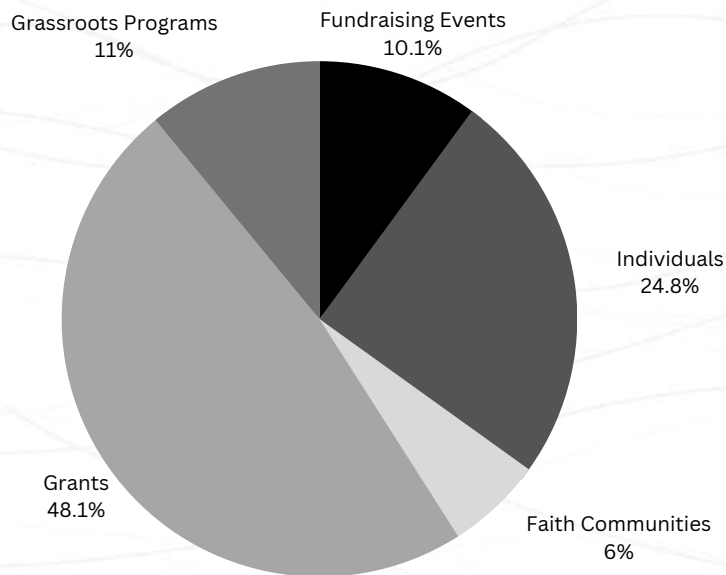


Treasurer: Mark Standaert

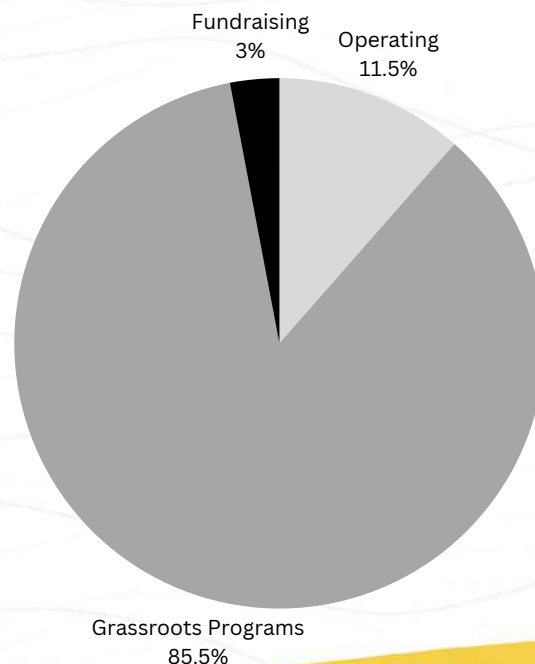
Revenue Report

01/01/2022 - 12/31/2022

Revenue \$119,274



Expenses \$123,613



Come Join Us!

**Listen to our new Podcast,
ESTHER Talks**

**[https://podcasters.spotify.com/
pod/show/esther-fox-valley](https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/esther-fox-valley)**

Join our Work:

Transformational Justice Task Force

Place: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 140 S. Green Bay Rd., Neenah; or via Zoom

Leave us a message at esther-foxvalley.org/prtf for login information.

Time: 6:00 PM on the First Monday of each month

Oshkosh ESTHER Task Force

Place: 311 Division St, Oshkosh, WI 54901; and via Zoom. Leave us a message at esther-foxvalley.org/oetf for login information.

Time: 2:30 PM on the Second Thursday of each month

Mental Health Task Force

Place: Online via Zoom. Leave us a message at esther-foxvalley.org/mhtf for login information.

Time: 6:00 PM on the fourth Monday of each month

Immigration Task Force

Place: Online via Zoom. Leave us a message at esther-foxvalley.org/itf for login information.

Time: 6:30 PM on the first Wednesday of each month

Transportation Task Force

Place: Online via Zoom. Leave us a message at esther-foxvalley.org/pttf for login information.

Time: 10:00 AM on the first Wednesday of each month

Environmental Justice Task Force

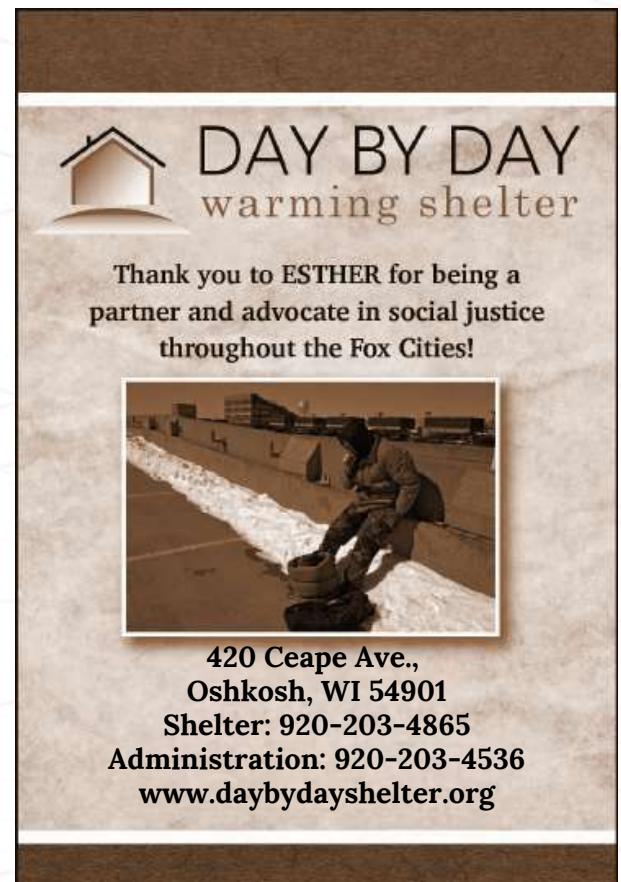
Place: Online meeting via Zoom. Leave us a message at esther-foxvalley.org/ejtf for Zoom link or questions

Time: 7:00 PM on the fourth Tuesday of each month

Equity and Racial Justice Committee

Place: Online via Zoom. Leave us a message at office@esther-foxvalley.org for login information.

Time: 11:00 AM on the second Monday of each month



Transformational Justice

Court Watch

ESTHER has created our very own Court Watch program. We are following examples from across the country. We observe bail hearings in Outagamie County District Court to document our county's policies in action and to hold judicial actors accountable for injustice in the court system. The purpose of Court Watch is to spark a transparency movement that inspires people around the country to build upon the fight for police accountability by scrutinizing the "assembly line of injustice" playing out in America's courtrooms.

Solitary Confinement is Torture



We hosted an event in Appleton:
A Stop on the Wisconsin Solitary Confinement Tour

After much success in Milwaukee and Madison, Talib Akbar brought his solitary confinement cell to Appleton too. The event lasted two days, and was successful in raising awareness of the inhumanity of solitary confinement. The Post Crescent ran an article highlighting the issue to help call attention to harm caused by this practice.

Distributing Books to Correctional Facilities

by: Fran Nelson and Mary Bechle

With the help of the Redgranite Correctional Librarian, Kristin Stumpner, and a local volunteer Kris Gerhardt, we have provided books to many prisons since March of 2022. At first, we collected books at rummage sales and from friends. Later our local Half-Price Books store supplied us with wonderful books in very good condition.

We have contributed over 2000 books to 9 correctional facilities and have made repeat donations to Green Bay, Oshkosh, Waupun, and Taycheedah. Others receiving books include facilities in Chippewa Falls, Black River Falls (2 Sites), Stanley, Oshkosh, Redgranite, Lincoln Hills/Copper Falls, and Madison. We also delivered 150 books to the Outagamie County Jail. Waupun was happy to accept 10 boxes (350 books) in September to help with the crisis of a 7 month total lockdown.

We sort books to avoid restricted content, inventory each title and author, and send to any interested prison librarian for approval and delivery. The books collected and donated are valuable for their diversity and quality. Many are fiction accounts of mystery, family, relationships, work life and other situations for improving reading, education, vicarious experience, and entertainment. Others are memoirs, non-fiction history, politics, education, psychology, travel, and many others. We would like more occupational, trade, and practical manuals for post release opportunities.



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Transit Task Force

Our Transportation Task Force is working to address issues that have an impact on the transit systems serving the greater Fox Valley region. Public transit connects people to jobs, education, training, and medical services. An accessible transit system also connects residents with family and friends, and allows riders to remain engaged and active in their community. We are working with other groups to help bring passenger rail to the Fox River Valley.

On Transit Equity Day, we took time to thank our public transportation workers.



MEGAN KELLEY
FOUNDATION

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Bev Kelley-Miller
President

920-428-2564
bev@megankelleyfoundation.org

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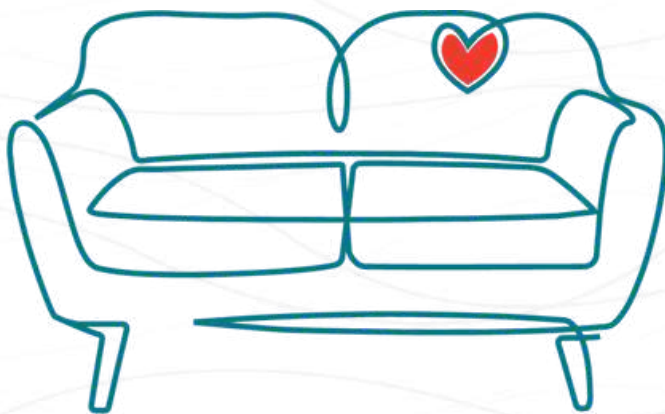


Mental Health Task Force

Working for change related to mental health services, criminal legal system, child welfare, and related topics. We have been hosting a series of Community Living Rooms to offer mental health support for our community. These provide a space for real human connection without the barriers that exist around mental health care.

The Community Living Room is grounded in the present, offering a healing space for people to be seen, heard, and valued just as they are.

The Community Living Room is focused on present-moment connection and support.



Community Living Room

Sikh Temple of Fox Valley

Open to Everybody!



Services

- **Sukhmani Sahib Path every Sunday from 10am - 11:15am**
- **Kirtan every Sunday from 11:30am - 1:15pm, followed by Guru Ka Langar at 1:30pm**
- **Kirtan every Wednesday evening, followed by Guru Ka Langar**

1304 Midway Rd. Menasha, WI 54952

Meet our Banquet Emcee

Eldridge Alexander is a fierce advocate for people of color in the Fox Valley and beyond. She spends her days as the Ambassador of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) for Guardian Life. She also serves as a freelance DEI consultant and coach through her business SLNTPTNRS.

Eldridge is also the award-winning host of the YouTube and TikTok show “V.O.I.C.E.S. RandomISH.”



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 SLNTPTNRS 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.

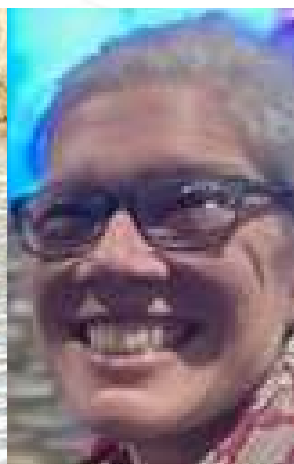
[www.youtube.com/
@voicesrandomish](https://www.youtube.com/@voicesrandomish)

This Book is Dedicated to Jill Smith

artwork on the cover was created by Jill

Jill Smith devoted many hours to create our ESTHER Yearbook for the past few years.

Jill had a fire in her belly that drove her to fight for justice. She used her passion to assist ESTHER in allying with Indigenous People to stand up for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and to fight against the Back Forty Mine. Jill was active in our Transformational Justice Task Force and was instrumental in creating our Mental Health Task Force. Sadly, died by suicide, but her memory is a blessing that will remain with us forever.





**If you or someone you is in crisis.
Call or Text 988 anytime, 24/7**

Housing Advocacy



**Why do we need to advocate for affordable housing?
Consider these statistics:**

- 42% of Oshkosh renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing.
- An individual would need to make at least \$17/hour to afford fair market rent in Oshkosh.
- It would take 99 hours/week working at minimum wage to afford a two bedroom apartment in Oshkosh.
- There are no transitional housing facilities in Oshkosh for those who are formerly incarcerated.
- Less than 2% of rental units are currently available and there is a major shortage of housing for those earning less than \$25,000 per year.

ESTHER has brought together some emerging leaders around the housing crisis. They are individuals who are formerly incarcerated, struggling with housing insecurity, young adults, immigrants, individuals from the recovery community and the formerly evicted.

They are compensated for their work, which is basically talking with their peers about housing insecurity issues, and then meeting regularly as a team for debriefing and training. Members of the team have spoken publicly about their personal experiences and have written articles for the Oshkosh Herald.

They have organized themselves into a Housing Advocate Team and have taken on the issue of homelessness because it directly impacts them. They want to see public policies that directly benefit them and those whom they care about.

Our housing advocate team has collected over 100 stories from local people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.



A Reflection by Joyce Frohn, Oshkosh ESTHER Task Force member

I attended "The Poor People's Congress, A Moral Call for Revival" in Washington, D.C. from June 19th to the 23rd . What was it like?

It was Buddhists, Baptists and all other types of people, all races, sexes, sexualities. We learned history, like why this is called the "Third Moral Reconstruction" and what happened to the first two. The kickback is always worst when poor people are united, not divided by race.

"Lift from the bottom. Leave no one behind." Bishop Barber said, "If you aren't willing for everyone to be helped. You aren't part of this movement."

The economics lesson was clear. Poverty is the fourth leading cause of death in the US. No other democracy has a poverty rate like this, especially the childhood poverty rate. The US has a poverty rate higher than Costa Rica's.

The biggest thing we learned was the chant. "Forward Together. Not One Step Back". If the poor people of America and those that are one minor accident from becoming poor stuck together; they would be one third of voting Americans.

We assembled in front of the Supreme Court to hear testimony. We heard from one woman from Nebraska who ate on alternating days with her husband eating on the days she didn't. Food stamps gave her more money in her last trimester of pregnancy. At the hospital, doctors scolded her for not taking care of herself and the baby.

A woman was a successful teacher, owned her own house; until she got cancer, ran out of sick days, was fired and lost her insurance. She went into the hospital for a mastectomy and was discharged to a homeless shelter.

Each story was clear, poverty is systemic. Poverty is unjust. Poverty is not a personal issue.

It is a policy choice.



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Immigration Task Force

This task force works to address issues related to immigration, specifically those affecting the Latino population in the Valley. In addition to national comprehensive immigration reform, our task force is working locally in two areas: the allowance for Wisconsin state driver's certificates for resident undocumented workers, and in-state tuition rates for all residents of Wisconsin meeting the academic guidelines for acceptance into our state's public universities, colleges and technical schools.

For many years, drivers licenses for all have been on the hearts and minds of our immigration task force. With our neighbor state, Minnesota, recently passing legislation allowing undocumented immigrants the ability to get drivers licenses we are fighting for this to happen here in Wisconsin too. ESTHER's immigration task force is working with the WISDOM statewide immigration task force to make this happen.

"A lack of access to driver's licenses is not limited to undocumented individuals, however. Low-income US citizens, especially people of color, have also been affected by stringent laws that limit access to affordable driver's education and penalize those who do not have the funds to pay their traffic and parking tickets. In 2016, 60% of license suspensions were due to unpaid fines rather than infractions related to unsafe driving. These harsh practices have disproportionately criminalized Black, Brown and low income working class drivers, fueling mass incarceration, voter disenfranchisement, and creating barriers for people to access healthcare, school and other vital services that require an ID.

Winning drivers licenses for all would not just benefit immigrants, it would have a major impact on all Wisconsinites. The Wisconsin Budget Project, an initiative of Kids Forward, noted in their [Widen the Roads report](#) the benefits of providing driver licenses to undocumented individuals, such as lower insurance costs for all drivers, greater access to gainful employment, and safer roads overall."

(Voce De La Frontera: <https://vdlf.org/driver-licenses-for-all/>)



READY.

Since 1949, McCarty Law has worked in collaboration with its community partners based on shared values to enrich our community **for a hopeful future for all of us.**

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Walk in Our Shoes



After a long pause due to COVID, José Lozano (pictured on left above) has reintroduced the community to “Walk In Our Shoes.” José has put in many hours to update our program and make it available once again.



Equity and Racial Justice Committee

The Beloved Community Starts with Anti-Racism

The end goal of social justice must be more than just equity. If we define equity as the condition in which everyone has all the resources they need to develop their potential and thrive, this condition may lack “community” and the reality that values and affirms the dignity and well-being of everyone.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “beloved community philosophy centered on the belief that racism, bigotry and prejudices will one day be replaced ‘by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood’ and that poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it.”¹ The King Center in Atlanta Georgia describes the Beloved Community as a “global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth.”²

Focusing on racism, Ibram X Kendi writes that for anti-racist outcomes, rather than trying to change millions of individuals, we need to change racist policies, many of which are deeply imbedded in our institutions and government. To do this work, we believe we have to start with transforming ourselves:

our education, our understanding, our values, our relationships, etc. This includes stopping book banning and the distortion of our national history.

In addition, our Indigenous friends teach that all the entities of creation are related, and that we need to reconnect, honor the Rights of Nature, and be constant stewards, not exploiting masters.

ESTHER has been focusing on becoming an anti-racist organization since the board voted to do so in 2017. Self-education has included several book studies, films, guest speakers, work within task forces and committees, IDI, specialized training, and 20 minutes of discussion at every monthly board meeting.

To work toward the Beloved Community, The Equity and Racial Justice Committee recommends four goals/strategies:

- Partner/build relationships with organizations representing those who are oppressed, especially People of Color, and deepen relationships with current partners. Listen to those who are impacted; become co-conspirators.³ The board recently committed to engage with LGBTQIA+2S individuals and issues. Currently working with Ex-incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO), FREE (formerly incarcerated women), Native Justice Coalition, Waking Women Healing Institute, Menominee Indian Tribe, Voces de la Frontera, Unitarian Universalist Gender Justice Ministry.
- Continue Task Force work but identify other pressing local issues.
- Identify strengths and challenges within our local court system- Training and organizing a court watch system.
- Continue our self-education.

¹ [https://www.scu.edu/ethics/the-power-of-our-voices/the-beloved-community-the-beautiful-and-the-ugly-/](https://www.scu.edu/ethics/the-power-of-our-voices/the-beloved-community-the-beautiful-and-the-ugly/)

² <http://belovedcommunityproject.org/index.html>

³ “Alicia Garza, activist and co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement, described that ‘co-conspirators are people who are actively fighting against the system of white supremacy and in particular the benefits they receive

Equity Network

Civic Engagement To Reduce Disparities

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. **How might our local organizations collaborate to take action to address or avoid disparities in Fox Valley communities?**

In December 2020, four local organizations launched the Equity Network. The Equity Network's mission is to develop trust, cooperation, and communication between local organizations committed to improving equity and racial justice in the Fox Valley. We hold ourselves accountable to our stated values through shared civic engagement based in a civil rights strategy.

Participating organizations are working together to urge consideration of the needs of *all* residents and decision making that intentionally builds greater equity. We work together to foster more effective monitoring of area policy-making boards with the goal of providing a vital and often missing link between the intention of the civil rights laws and realizing equitable outcomes locally.

During 2021, the Equity Network continued to develop, offered workshop on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 2021, and ran a pilot of the project. During the pilot phase, local observers were recruited and oriented to the collaborative communication system. During the summer, several statewide faith-based organizations including, Wisconsin Council of Churches and WISDOM invited Wisconsinites to **Take a Faithful Stance for Equity** and sign on the Equity Pledge. The pledge asks people of faith to be civically engaged in exactly the ways our local Equity Network is set up to facilitate.

During 2022, the Equity Network has become firmly established. 2022 highlights included:

- Deepening of relationships and collaboration between participating organizations
- Involvement of a UWO student intern during spring semester
- A Health Equity & Civic Engagement Workshop on the Social Determinants of Health, led by two Community Health Strategists from Winnebago Public Health
- The addition of two new participating organizations
- Refinement of our network communications
- Ongoing tracking of local use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the Tri-county area
- Increased monitoring of county, municipal, and school district issues and opportunities for public input
- Development of helpful references for observers and observer orientation.
- Development of a logo for use across participating organizations

Please participate in the network to take a faithful stance for equity.

Participating Organizations

ESTHER
First 5 Fox Valley
League of Women Voters, Appleton-Fox Cities
League of Women Voters of Winnebago County
People of Progression
Stronger Together Fox Valley

Contact Nancy Jones at newiequitynetwork@gmail.com for more information or to be added to the contact list for meeting notifications and action opportunities for your school district/municipality/county.

Environmental Justice Task Force

A group of concerned citizens dedicated to reversing the environmental decline of our planet and committed to addressing issues of injustice arising from climate change. We closely follow the restoration practices of local Indigenous folx. This Task Force is building an allyship with the Brothertown Indian Nation, to help them regain their status of being a federally recognized tribe.



Community Leadership Award



**Menikānaehkem
(Menominee Rebuilders)**

Our Purpose: To rebuild and reconnect our sacred relationships with our people, plants, places and animals.

Our Mission: Work together to enhance and promote our lifeways and build a healthier Menominee community.

Our Vision: Rebuild our sacred connections so our lives are whole and bring opportunity to our people.

Our relationship with nature and all living beings dates back to the creation of our people. We have a special relationship with Mother Earth, all animals and nature. We are entrusted to be stewards of this world and to be a voice and advocate for those that don't have one. We are using this voice to advocate for the Rights of Nature Campaign.

Community Leadership Award



Founded in 1920 by women suffragist leaders, the League of Women Voters has grown to over 500,000 members and 750 local Leagues in all 50 states. We have a proud history of working toward a more inclusive democracy at all three levels of government.

The dedicated volunteer members of The League of Women Voters of Appleton Fox Cities work hard to fulfill the League's mission to empower voters and defend democracy all around the Fox Cities. This takes many forms including our tabling at most major events where we provide information to help engage voters and provide reliable nonpartisan information on upcoming elections. Our newly redesigned, professionally managed website, lwwappletonfoxcities.org, attracts increasing numbers of viewers who can find recorded candidate forums and interviews as well as candidate questionnaires that help them cast an informed vote.

We recently completed a two-year study on health care in the Fox Cities which resulted in a strong position statement that will enable us to advocate for more equitable health care delivery in our community. The practical use of our wide-ranging local positions provides the foundation for our advocacy with local governments. Our League observers regularly attend local government meetings to keep our fingers on the pulse of important issues. You will often see League leaders making statements at these meetings, both to hold our elected officials accountable and also to commend them when they make decisions that positively impact our citizens.

We also sponsor informative meetings for the public. This past year, our meeting topics included uncovering discrimination in the Fox Cities, updates on voting procedures, affordable housing, Wisconsin Courts, immigration in the Fox Valley, and local journalism. In addition, we regularly sponsor virtual town halls with Fox Cities legislators.

We are proud to partner with Esther and other dedicated community organizations to make life better for everyone in our community!

Individual Leadership Award



Connie Kanitz

“Participating in ESTHER helps me feel hopeful, especially in difficult times.”

- Connie Kanitz

Connie Kanitz puts community into all her organizing. As a member of the Communications Committee, Connie publishes some of the stories on ESTHER’s website, writes blogs, and creates some of our famous eblasts. She also submits ESTHER events in the Justice HUB, a section of the weekly newsletter of the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Believing that public transportation is related to so many justice and equity issues, and it connects some individuals to major functions of their lives, such as work, education, healthcare, shopping, friends and community gatherings, she served the Transportation Task Force as a member and then chair, over six years. In addition to testifying for budget money, the group published and helped distribute a small booklet highlighting stories of bus riders. Understanding that transit can be the number one factor in lifting people out of poverty, she participated in three other transportation-focused groups: Coalition for More Responsible Transportation in WI (CMRT), Fox Valley Thrives, and East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC). She’s also passionate about how trains could impact all of our lives.

After completing Gamaliel Training, she served as secretary of the ESTHER board and a member of the executive committee for four years. Co-chairing with Sara Companik, she helped organize and “spreadsheet” three Madison Action Days. Because of COVID, 2021 involved coordinating teams of people to zoom with their state senator and representative. Connie is also a frequent participant in actions and educational events in Madison.

In 2022 she helped organize ESTHER’s ambitious plan for voter engagement. Although not achieving the hoped-for outcome, it did include some fun and successful postcard campaigns.

ESTHER and the community are clearly better because of Connie Kanitz.

“I am grateful for the opportunities to hear people’s stories. I am convinced the more we help people tell their stories and get the right people to hear those stories, we can make some phenomenal changes.”

-Connie Kanitz

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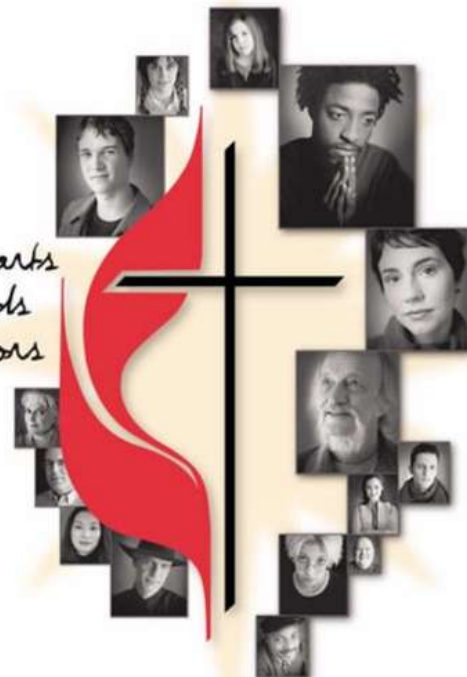
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Eeyamquittoowauconnuck



Brothertown or Brotherton - the name has been used interchangeably for over two hundred years, are unique from many other tribes in that they are an amalgamated group composed of the remnants of several Algonquin speaking tribes that banded together under the leadership of a small group of native ministers, including Joseph Johnson and Samson Occom, both Mohegan Indians. As a result of The Great Awakening, a religious movement in the 1740's, many Indian people in southern New England converted to Christianity including members of the Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett, Montuck, Tunix,, Wangunk and Niantic tribes. These tribes are the parent tribes of the present day Brothertown Indian Nation. The Nation's Community Center is located at 311 Winnebago Drive in Fond du Lac Wisconsin.

Despite having become Christians, the never ending pressure for Indian land forced the Brothertown Indians to move six (6) times throughout the Nation's history ultimately moving to Wisconsin in 1832 along with their relatives, the Oneida and the Stockbridge Indians, known collectively as the New York Indians. The United States formally recognized the Brothertown Indians and provided a reservation for them in the Treaty of 1832 which set aside 23,040 acres in what is now Calumet County Wisconsin. However, shortly after arriving in Wisconsin, the U.S. Government sought to remove them again, this time to Kansas. The Brothertown leadership requested a Congressional Act to give them individual ownership of their land and U.S. Citizenship in an effort to prevent removal to Kansas. The United States granted their request but also terminated their status as a federally recognized Indian tribe. The Brothertown Indian Nation has been formally seeking to reverse termination and to be restored since 1980.

Congress terminated the Brothertown Indians and only Congress can restore the Brothertown Indians to their former status as a federally recognized Indian Tribe with all the rights and privileges that all other recognized tribes possess. We ask for your support and help to reverse termination. You can learn more about the Brothertown Indians at www.brothertownindians.org or by visiting the Nation's Community Center in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



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*"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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