What Does “Community” Mean to You?

Last October, we participated in the Greater Milwaukee Foundation’s On The Table Initiative. 140 Rotarians and 80 guests were randomly assigned to 30 tables at our Rotary luncheon.

We synthesized the notes from the conversations and boiled it down to one statement:

We should foster stronger, connected communities and neighborhoods.

So, let’s pick up where we left off—let’s explore the concept of fostering stronger, connected communities and neighborhoods, in particular in the Johnsons Park area. Let’s model, Connecting People and Resources Together for Common Good by participating in On the Table again on Tuesday, October 9th, 2018.

How will our luncheon on October 9th work? There will be no formal podium speaker; everyone will have the chance to participate in thought-provoking discussions about the Johnsons Park neighborhood. We have invited community members from the Johnsons Park neighborhood to join in on the important conversations.

A Look Into the Johnsons Park Neighborhood by Adam Carr

Start at the swings and walk south, across Brown Street onto 18th. Stepping from the park to its neighborhood, you’ll find a stretch of blocks unlike any in Milwaukee. There’s a scattering of classic, 100-year old Milwaukee houses, but a majority of the homes are of a style that would be more familiar to a suburban subdivision. And still, a few vacant lots dot each block, spots where structures once stood with nothing taking its place. This is Johnsons Park.

I had the great privilege of producing a video highlighting the Johnsons Park neighborhood, as well as major and longstanding investments in the community made by the Rotary Club of Milwaukee. Along with my collaborator Wes Tank, we spent time with residents and stakeholders, exploring many facets of the community and documenting what we found.

The video speaks for itself — and we recommend you watch it — but because Johnsons Park is deserving of a full-length documentary, we had to leave out a great deal of the neighborhood’s backstory. I offer a little of what we could not include.
ROTARY’S MILWAUKEE FILM FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIP

Rotary’s Board of Directors agreed to sponsor the Milwaukee Film Festival at the $5,000 level for the second year in a row assuming we were offered the chance to sponsor a film that aligned with Rotary values. And they did!

We will be the Silver Sponsor of an education focused documentary, PERSONAL STATEMENT (Directed by Juliane Dressner). You can read a description of the film below:

“Follow Karoline, Enoch, and Christine - three college-bound Brooklyn-based high school seniors who want to bring all of their classmates along with them. Recognizing the lack of college guidance support in their classrooms (much the same across the country), they become the change they seek, counseling their peers through the college entrance process. An inspiring look at social justice in action, PERSONAL STATEMENT reminds us of the immense change we are all capable of creating around us.”

The film will screen once at three different locations and times.

- 5:30pm on Saturday, 10/27 at Oriental Theatre-Side House
- 6:30pm on Monday, 10/29 at Times Cinema
- 1:00pm on Thursday, 11/1 at Avalon Theater

We have 25 pairs of tickets to the October 27th screening which we will give to members on a first come first serve basis. Call or email the Rotary office to reserve your tickets.

SCHOLAR CORNER - NHIA VANG

Nhia Vang is a senior at The University of Wisconsin – Madison as a personal finance major in the School of Human Ecology. Nhia is mentored by Rotarians Bill Coleman and Leslie Hauser.

Throughout his college career Nhia has been active on campus. He is a member of the Multicultural Business Student Association and the Hmong Student Association. He also previously served as an Academic Support Services intern and a Hmong Translator for UW-Madison’s Cultural and Linguistic Services.

Nhia’s biggest challenge in his sophomore year was finding a summer internship in Milwaukee.

Luckily, thanks to his mentor Leslie Hauser, Nhia learned about the Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC). Nhia went for an interview and was offered a personal finance internship. This internship experience allowed him to review small business applications and business plans with WWBIC’s loan officers. He also created personal finance educational materials and participated in personal finance education classes. The power of Rotary’s connections allowed Nhia to learn more about what he can do with his major after graduation.

Overall, Nhia is very grateful for the financial and emotional support from his mentors and the Rotary Club of Milwaukee.
Hiking for a Great Cause at HKE MKE

Nearly 50 Rotarians and friends had a blast hiking through the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum at the 2018 HKE MKE on September 9th to support the Urban Ecology Center.

We were proud to be the title sponsor for the third year in a row to help connect youth and adults to the beautiful green spaces in Milwaukee. 😊

SPEAKER SCHEDULE

**OCTOBER 2nd - Leah Vukmir**
Join us for a joint program with the Milwaukee Press Club to hear from U.S. Senate Candidate Leah Vukmir. The Rotary office continues to reach out to Tammy Baldwin’s campaign to try to schedule her to speak at Rotary. However, as the U.S. Senate will be in session until the end of October, we may not be able to find a Tuesday that fits her schedule.

**OCTOBER 9th - On The Table**
Rotary will host an On The Table luncheon in partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to explore the concept of fostering stronger, connected communities and neighborhoods, in particular in the Johnsons Park area. Learn more about it on page one.

**OCTOBER 16th - Attorney General Forum**
Join us for a joint program with the Milwaukee Press Club for a forum featuring Attorney General Candidates Brad Schimel and Josh Kaul. Steve Walters, Senior Producer of WisconsinEye, will lead the discussion.

**OCTOBER 23rd - Sheba Crocker**
Sheba Crocker is CARE USA’s Vice President for Humanitarian Programs & Policy. Sheba provides overall leadership and strategic guidance for CARE USA’s emergency and humanitarian operations, programs, and policy. She will discuss the United Nations’ enduring relevance in a time of global shifts.

**OCTOBER 30th - Joe Cirincione**
Joe Cirincione, author, MSNBC contributor and president of the global security foundation Ploughshares Fund, is one of the country’s foremost experts on nuclear threats and nuclear policy. He will discuss the risk of nuclear war today, focused on three interrelated regional issues: war in the Middle East given mounting tensions between the US and Iran; war with North Korea should nascent negotiations fail; and nuclear war triggered by miscalculation or intent as nations rebuild their arsenals and create nuclear weapons they believe will be more usable in conflicts.
Deep roots & profound upheaval

In the mid-1800s, Deacon Samuel Brown's farmstead occupied the land of Johnsons Park. The Brown family residence, located roughly where Feeding America stands today, was a crucial stop on the Underground Railroad. They harbored an untold number of African-Americans escaping slavery on their way to freedom in Canada, including both Joshua Glover and Caroline Quarrls.

In the early and mid-1900s, the Great Migration brought an influx of black families from the South, seeking opportunity in the “Machine Shop of the World” and a better life in Milwaukee. Just up the road from Walnut Street, Johnsons Park was a key part of Milwaukee’s Bronzeville. Thousands of families laid down roots in the neighborhood and built a tight-knit community that promised a bright future.

In the late 60s, the I-43 interstate highway was connected from north to south, requiring thousands of homes to be torn down and tens of thousands of families to be displaced — the majority of them African-American. On the heels of I-43, in the early 70s, another freeway called the “Park West” was planned. Its route would cut along Fond Du Lac Avenue, bending westward on North Avenue, continuing on to Wauwatosa. To prepare for the Park West, thousands more homes were taken and razed through imminent domain. This time, the highway was never completed due to a series of coordinated community demonstrations, but left behind a massive scar of vacant land and disrupted lives.

In the subsequent decades, deindustrialization took hold in Milwaukee, causing nearly 100,000 industrial jobs to leave Milwaukee’s urban core. This left a fraction of the opportunity that attracted families and workers to Milwaukee in previous decades.

Digging in & building up

With so many holes in the fabric of the community, in the 80s, some described the neighborhood as “a smile missing most of its teeth.” But in Johnsons Park, it was darkest before the dawn.

While a preponderance of vacant land can be seen as a challenge, it presents an unlikely opportunity in the core of a dense urban city — the chance to build.

Sparked by urban redevelopment programs, a wave of predominantly African-American professionals began to build new homes in the 90s and 00s.

While each family had the means to live anywhere in the city or surrounding suburbs, they chose to create a new neighborhood in Johnsons Park. Named for Cleopatra and Clarence Johnson — important African-American professional and community leaders in the first half of the 1900s — the neighborhood embodies one of the most breathtaking turnarounds anywhere in Milwaukee.

The park that shares the Johnsons Park name followed a similar trajectory. In 2002, the Public Policy Forum ranked Johnsons Park as the most neglected of the 52 parks in their study. But with major support from the Rotary Club and other supporters, a series of coordinated investments has authored a new story over the last 16 years. One of the most major green spaces on Milwaukee’s near North Side, Johnsons Park has gone from being a magnet for nuisance activity to a place frequented by families from the adjacent community.

Across 20th St. from the park, Alice’s Garden is a 2.2 acre urban farm where a block of homes once stood. With garden plots tended by over 100 families and organizations, the space has become an critical hub for community events. Milwaukeeans from all walks of life gather there for potlucks, critical dialogues, yoga, labyrinth walks and much more.

This “green energy” has spilled over into the neighboring Brown Street Academy, an anchor of the neighborhood for generations. With major support from the Rotary Club and design by Center for Resilient City, the concrete playground has been augmented with outdoor classrooms and green spaces inspired by Milwaukee’s native prairie habitat. These improvements have created a brand new experience for students, offering a slice of nature in their backyard.

From the founding of Feeding America to investments in the neighborhood's current momentum, Rotary has been an essential part of Johnsons Park’s renaissance. And through the process of filming the video, we got the sense that Johnsons Park is just getting started. Neighbors are eager to keep moving forward, but also recognize that progress is not inevitable without a good deal of work and continued investment.
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Jordan Curnes is a serial entrepreneur who recently moved to Whitefish Bay. He is the founder and President of MicroTransponder, a neuroscience-based company that has developed an implantable device to rewire the brain, so stroke patients can regain use of their limbs. Jordan also founded Rent Like A Champion, which provides weekend lodging at 28 college campuses, 15+ PGA tour events, and even a few NASCAR races. Jordan has a BA from Notre Dame and an MBA from Duke. He has two children, ages 7 and 5, and enjoys tennis, golf, SCUBA, and hunting. As a Texan, he seeks good BBQ in Milwaukee.

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Dr. Phyllis King is the Vice Provost at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a Professor in Occupational Therapy. Phyllis is a UWM partner to the University of Wisconsin System, City of Milwaukee and state of Wisconsin for initiatives related to educational reform, STEM, health, advanced manufacturing, and economic development. She is a steering committee member of the world-class Data Science Institute led by Northwestern Mutual and a member in planning the Connected Systems Institute, MKE Tech Hub, and Higher Education Regional Alliance. Phyllis is passionate about her community, serving as a foster parent and on boards addressing issues related to children, education, finance, health, and technology.

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Cindy Krahenbuhl is the Executive Director for the Guest House of Milwaukee, an organization serving men, women, and families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Cindy has worked in the Milwaukee nonprofit sector for more than 30 years, holding management positions with other organizations such as Curative Care Network and the Milwaukee Center for Independence. She has a master’s degree in Community Health Education and a MBA. She has been Executive Director at the Guest House for the past 11 years, where she has overseen the overall growth of the agency’s brand of “More Than Shelter” from $2.2 million in 2007 to $6.5 million in 2018. Cindy and her husband Walt have three adult children.

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James Scoptur is an attorney at Aiken & Scoptur, S.C. He is a graduate of UW-Madison and Marquette Law School. Before being admitted to the State Bar of Wisconsin, James worked for many years at Aiken & Scoptur (a firm his dad co-founded) performing a variety of jobs. James is on the board of the Wisconsin Association for Justice, performs pro bono work for the American Bar Association, and contributes to many causes in the community, including a favorite – the Bike Fed of Wisconsin. James is a life-long resident of Wauwatosa, where he lives with his wife and three children.
CELEBRATING 13 YEARS OF THE A.D. ROBERTSON FUND FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

Thirteen years ago, the family of past president A.D. “Robbie” Robertson created a fund in his honor within the RCM Community Trust - the A.D. Robertson Fund for the United Nations. This fund supports educational programming for Rotarians and the community about the humanitarian and peace building work of the United Nations.

Each October to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the A.D. Robertson Fund underwrites a U.N. Day Program during a Rotary Club of Milwaukee luncheon. In recent years, our U.N. Day speakers have included:

• Steve Radelet, professor at Georgetown University
• Carl Gershman, president of the National Endowment for Democracy
• Joe Cirincione of Ploughshares Fund
• Ellen Laipson, president and CEO of the Stimson Center
• Ambassador David Scheffer
• Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Partnerships
• Ambassador Peter W. Galbraith
• Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
• John Prendergast, co-founder of ENOUGH—an international effort to stop genocide

This year we will have two programs in October sponsored by the A.D. Robertson Fund featuring Sheba Crocker and Joe Cirincione.

On Tuesday, October 23rd Sheba Crocker of CARE USA will discuss the U.N.’s enduring relevance in a time of global shifts. Sheba Crocker is CARE USA’s Vice President for Humanitarian Programs & Policy. Sheba provides overall leadership and strategic guidance for CARE USA’s emergency and humanitarian operations, programs, and policy.

Then on Tuesday, October 30th we will welcome back Joe Cirincione, President of the Ploughshares Fund to discuss how the U.S. is at risk for nuclear war.

In addition to Tuesday luncheons, the A.D. Robertson Fund has underwritten the participation of Rotaract members to attend Rotary Day at the United Nations in New York. The A.D. Robertson fund has also provided funding for an RCM Scholar to attend many U.N. focused conferences in Washington D.C.

Special thank you to Joan Robertson, wife of the late Robbie Robertson, as she continues to be very active in Rotary’s United Nations programs. We are grateful for her support.