

PEOPLE OF ACTION

Grady Crosby

VP Public Affairs & Chief Diversity Officer, Johnson Controls

President, Johnson Controls Foundation

(Member since 2016)



Grady Crosby identifies himself as a “recovering attorney,” and a member of the Johnson Controls (JCI) “Department of Cool,” because as Grady says, “JCI’s public affairs, diversity and the Foundation staff do so many cool things for organizations, employees and the communities where JCI has a presence to contribute to JCI’s success and to the success of the communities where we have a presence.”

Grady’s JCI group emphasis centers everything around sustainability; sustaining leadership, community involvement and engagement. The

company’s commitment to diversity includes its workforce as well as its supply chain. JCI maintains a standard of inclusion keeping a watchful eye on its commitment to utilizing women and minority owned businesses whenever possible.

“Our group is very conscious of the company’s role as a corporate citizen. Within this department, and throughout the company, we are committed to living out JCI’s values. Those values cement all of JCI as one team that goes out into the world to help make our communities safe, smart and sustainable.”

JCI’s corporate headquarters are now in Cork, Ireland. However, JCI’s roots run deep in Wisconsin. In 1885, long before anyone talked about carbon footprints or climate change, Whitewater, WI native Warren Johnson launched a company to explore new ways to harness and conserve precious energy resources. Even before he founded the company, Johnson was the quintessential inventor. He patented the “electric tele-thermoscope,” a building temperature control device. His pneumatic tower clocks, electric storage batteries, wireless telegraph, steam-powered luxury cars and postal service trucks anticipated and helped shaped the future.

Grady came to his current position after serving as JCI’s general counsel for the Power Solutions Battery Division. Nearly 11 years ago he came to Milwaukee and through current roles he genuinely enjoys the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people and an impact on the community. “It is far more fun and gratifying than I ever anticipated.”

Grady hails from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He and his wife, Monique were high school sweethearts. This September they will celebrate 30 years of marriage. Their son, Grady Crosby, III, who goes by the name Trey is also a lawyer. He specializes in employment and labor law at Ogletree Deakins, headquartered in Kohler, WI.

Grady and his son share much more than their name and education. Grady was an offensive guard for the Howard University Football team. In 1987, his team went onto win the North Eastern Athletic Conference (NEAC) championship as well as being named the Black College National Champions. They also played for Howard University but as his dad proudly says – “not on a championship team.”

While his undergraduate education took him to Washington, D.C., prior to moving to Wisconsin Grady stayed close to home. He earned his law degree from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem and prior to joining JCI, Grady worked for Haines Brands, headquartered in his hometown. Both Grady and Monique miss their hometown as both their mothers still live there, and, of course, the weather is much more predictable. But they have adapted well to Wisconsin.

For leisure activities, the Crosbys enjoy travel and the family are huge Carolina Panther fans, they make a point of getting to Charlotte for the kickoff of the NFL season each year. They are also Milwaukee Bucks Fans and traveled to Paris to watch the Bucks play the Charlotte Hornets.

Grady and Monique were able to travel to Israel two years in a row and were planning a blow-out 30th Anniversary celebration in Hawaii this year; given the pandemic those plans are on hold.

As Milwaukee and the world demonstrate the frustration and disappointment with policing and racial inequities as well as mourn the very public murder of George Floyd, Grady offered some thoughts.

“It’s bad and it’s sad that we as a country have witnessed injustice so many times and ignored those injustices for so long people felt like the only course of action is to take to the streets. As a family we feel for our people and for our community. Working with my church and independently I am trying to focus on the individual. There is so much trauma individuals have experienced.’



‘I’m trying to take the ideology out of the focus, for the truth is if we get caught up in fighting differing ideology some minds are never going to change and we end up not being effective for anyone. People are people. They want to be happy. They want to be healthy.’

‘When people are hurting, they need a voice and someone to stand with them and connect them to resources to help. That’s what I try to concentrate on. It is not a us or them proposition; this is one humanity God put in place and it is up to us to find the solution.’

‘We need to look critically at ourselves and what’s our part to make this a better place. It’s easy to point fingers at systemic

symptoms, i.e. – since I don't do that, I must be pretty good, etc. But what is it that I can do to expand my circle of friends to include people who don't think or look like me? Do I ever make biased judgements? Have I been active in reconciliation, rather than pointing fingers? I try to focus on these individual actions for change.”

Rotary has been a part of his family for decades, but it took Milwaukee to bring Grady to join. His brother is a former High School Principal and was very involved in Rotary in North Carolina. When Grady came to Milwaukee, he met Rotarian Maureen Bradley who introduced him to Rotary. Grady found it a perfect introduction to the community and to meeting Milwaukee leaders. “I was immediately impressed with the dynamic group of Milwaukee leaders assembled without political or racial divides who together search for truth and engage in the dialog of what will move our community forward. I want to reside in that space. I regret that time doesn't allow me to be more involved in RCM initiatives, but I am grateful to be associated with this wonderful group of leaders.”



Editor's Note: We feature the popular Rotary People of Action series bi-monthly. However, this writer will be traveling the next few weeks. We will resume this feature on July 10th with a profile of Frank Gimbel. Rotary People of Action is written by RCM Board Member (and its Sargent at Arms) Barbara Velez.

