

## Jeramey Jannene

President, Urban Milwaukee  
Member since 2021

Jeramey Jannene seemed slightly taken aback by the comparison: Him and Apple founder Steve Wozniak. UC-Berkley student Steve founding Apple in his garage. MSOE student Jeramey founding Urban Milwaukee in a college apartment. Well, it was an ice breaker.

There was an easy chuckle from Jeramey, a Management Information Systems major at MSOE destined for the web technical work but now an urban journalist who's totally comfortable in his skin and totally committed to the city he covers.



As Urban Milwaukee president, Jeramey directs a staff of five to cover a city with imperfections but also great potential. And it's obvious that he's in his zone.

"We produce about 15 articles a day," Jeramey explains, "and we are aiming for 100 percent staff generated content in the future."



The Urban Milwaukee business model gives it a basis to be a "strong ethnical publication that puts the news first," he explains. The membership model generates minimal revenue from advertising, which Jeramey says gives him freedom in coverage and content.

What makes Urban Milwaukee unique is a focus on an ad-free experience and auxiliary officers like free tickets, tours, and events for members.

The path from a college apartment in 2008 with a tech partner who wanted to generate sporadic content about the city, to a smoothly running business in 2022 was not straight line, Jeramey admits.

First there was the detour into IT consulting to pay the bills while doing Urban Milwaukee on a shoestring. Then big change came in 2012 when Bruce Murphy left Milwaukee Magazine for Urban Milwaukee. His arrival meant "game on" for scaling.

The growth, which continues even with the pandemic, means Jeramey has a continuing viable outlet to share thoughts not just about his passion -- Milwaukee -- but urban centers in general.

"I see cities as labs of democracy and places where people want to lead full lives," he explained, calling himself a fan of Jane Jacobs and today's urbanists like Richard Florida.

Applying place-making to Milwaukee, he continued, means more than the mega improvements such as Fiserv and the Deer District. Small but important improvements in bike lanes and small parks help improve the quality of life at neighborhood levels. “It’s not just the glamor” of the downtown that counts, he adds.

That said, Jeramey has a business interest in the tourist. As a partial owner of Urban Milwaukee-The Store at 755 N. Milwaukee Street, he gets to meet visitors who want to buy things Milwaukee and proud Milwaukeeans who want gifts to take on their travels.

“I find out a lot about the city and how people feel about it when I hang out at the store,” he explains. A June 2020 fire hit the office of Urban Milwaukee and store, but both have recovered well, Jeramey says. Sale revenue at the store has doubled.

“You can get all things Milwaukee there,” he says in his inviting pitch.

As a business president and journalist, Jeramey admits his days are full and long. Nevertheless, he says he makes family time for his wife Alison Peterson and 18-month-old daughter Aubrey at their Bayview residence. He’s a supporter of Humboldt Park, one of six parks created when the city established its parks commission in 1890. As a park fan and journalist, Jeremy would like to see more good things happen for the parks and is worried about the funding crisis they face.

As an urbanist, Jeramey knows the importance of transportation and so served on Milwaukee County’s Transportation Services Advisory Committee.

He also lent his energy to Transit Now for both the KRM line (Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee) and the simultaneous attempt to create a regional transit authority to fund the whole region’s transit needs.

He joined the Board of Directors of Transit Now and then was part of its renaming to Metro Go! and now Mobilise giving him a ten-year record of service to regional transportation. Mobilise advocates “a stronger southeastern Wisconsin through better connectivity.”

Jeramey is a member of the Rotary Program Committee and enjoys the networking at each meeting.



**Editor’s Note:** *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Jeff Smoller.