2025 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

The Dignity of Hope

Building Foundations for the Future

50 YEARS OF SERVICE

1976 2026

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

Where Meeting Basic Needs Inspires Hope

MILWAUKEE WOMEN'S CENTER

Where Abuse Ends and Hope Begins

A Division of Community Advocates

Our Mission: To provide individuals and families with advocacy and services to meet their basic needs so they may live in dignity.

Letter from Leadership

Dear Community Members,

In 2025, we embraced The Dignity of Hope as a guiding theme, affirming that even in the most uncertain times, every individual deserves stability and the opportunity to build a future with support, dignity, and hope. For our staff and community members, these values are not abstract—they translate into actions that guide daily decisions and resilience.

Board members, staff, and partners gathered to tour Community Advocates' offices and service sites.

Hope and dignity come alive when people build supportive relationships and face challenges together. That spirit was evident in 1980, when advocates launched the Milwaukee Women's Center at a time when supporting survivors of domestic violence was rare and controversial. Today, 45 years later, the Milwaukee Women's Center—a division of Community Advocates—is a trusted resource, helping thousands of survivors each year take brave steps toward safer, more stable futures.

This same commitment shaped the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (RHRC), which marked its fifth year of service in 2025. A long-envisioned collaboration, the RHRC became a reality during the global pandemic and now serves more than 10,000 tenants and property owners annually with assessment, rental assistance, mediation, legal support, and education to prevent evictions and promote housing stability. We are proud to host the RHRC in our downtown offices, open Monday through Friday on a walk-in basis.

In 2026, Community Advocates will celebrate our 50th anniversary—a milestone rooted in founder Ramon Wagner's vision of hope and dignity for all. For five decades, our dedicated team and volunteers have been the foundation of this work, ensuring that those facing homelessness, domestic violence, and other crises receive compassionate, life-changing support and comprehensive services.

We are deeply grateful to our partners and community members whose belief in our mission amplifies our impact. As you will see in this report, together we have shown that meaningful change is possible—and that hope thrives when everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity.

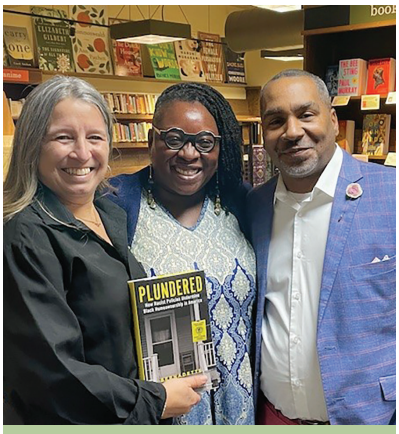
With hope,

Andi Elliott
CEO, Community Advocates

Sharon R. Jordan
Board President, 2025

Our team provided resources and information at the annual Juneteenth Day celebration.

"Hope thrives when everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity."



Community Advocates cosponsored Professor Bernadette Atuahene's Milwaukee book launch of *Plundered*.

Our Impact

Behavioral Health

101

Milwaukee County residents experiencing chronic homelessness and living with a disability received immediate access to safe and affordable supportive housing through the Autumn West Permanent Housing Program

22

individuals experiencing street homelessness received critical outreach through the Homeless Outreach Program

36 individuals experiencing homelessness and mental illness received stable shelter and supportive services through the Autumn West Safe Haven while working to secure permanent housing

860 unstably housed individuals were assisted with assessment, case management, advocacy, and flexible housing-related financial assistance through the Homelessness Prevention Program

Basic Needs

27,145

households received financial support and help making payment plans to maintain their utilities through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

442

individuals obtained employment through the FoodShare and Employment Training Program (FSET)

13,664

individuals sought resources, assessments, and support for basic needs challenges during daily walk-in hours at Community Advocates' Lovell Street Building

4,161

landlords and tenants received support resolving issues related to rental housing through the Housing Department

79

adults received temporary financial support while their disability benefits were being processed

523

adults and children received intensive case management services and support to enhance housing stability, school attendance, and financial well-being through the Siemer Program

25

Milwaukee homeowners avoided losing their homes due to unpaid property tax bills

3,356

residents accessed resources through the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center to prevent or divert eviction

73

individuals with disabling conditions received protective payee and financial management services

212 adults and kids experiencing homelessness received safe shelter and assistance through the Family Support Center Emergency Shelter

Milwaukee Women's Center

181 men participated in the Nevermore Batterer's Prevention and Intervention Program to break the cycle of intergenerational violence

130

adults and children received emergency transportation, safe housing, and comprehensive domestic violence services through the Milwaukee Women's Center Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter

71

individuals striving to overcome substance use disorders received in-home, outpatient, or day treatment

22

older adults facing abuse received safe shelter and assistance through the Older Abused Women's Program

109

fathers enrolled in the Milwaukee Fatherhood FIRE Program to become more effective and engaged partners

437

people seeking new employment opportunities received free career-appropriate clothing through the Bottomless Closet

1,016

callers received telephone crisis intervention services for domestic abuse

Milwaukee Women's Center Emergency Shelter:

Where Safety Begins–and Cycles of Violence End

For survivors of domestic violence and families facing homelessness, the Milwaukee Women's Center (MWC) is often the first place where fear gives way to safety—and crisis gives way to possibility. It is where dignity is restored, strength is reclaimed, and hope begins to take root.

Founded in 1980, MWC emerged when few services existed for survivors and even fewer addressed the long-term cycle of abuse. Milwaukee advocates stepped forward to create emergency shelter and support grounded in listening, trust, and survivor leadership. That commitment changed lives then—and continues to do so today.

Now operating as a division of Community Advocates, MWC remains a critical lifeline in moments of crisis. Each year, MWC supports **more than 2,000 women, men, and children**, helping them move from immediate danger toward safety, stability, and independence. As one of only **two emergency domestic violence shelters in Milwaukee County—and the only shelter serving both domestic violence survivors and families experiencing homelessness—MWC anchors the community's safety net**, providing **75 beds every night**, three nourishing meals a day, and individualized case planning that helps families rebuild their lives.

Nevermore:

Accountability Creates Safer Futures

Ending domestic violence demands more than emergency response, it requires accountability and lasting change. Survivors may return to abusive partners, people with a history of abuse may form new relationships, and children are often affected. Without intervention, cycles of harm persist.

The **Nevermore Batterer's Intervention Program** at the Milwaukee Women's Center, founded in 1982, meets this challenge by working directly with men who have caused harm. Over **23 weeks**, participants reflect on their actions, recognize abusive patterns, and learn nonviolent, respectful alternatives. The program's measurable goal: **reduce future harm, boost survivor safety, and strengthen families**.

Martin's experience in 2025 reflects what is possible. Court-ordered to attend, he initially disengaged, leaving the program twice before returning voluntarily, motivated to change. "**You all always walked with me**," Martin shared with facilitators. "**I came back because I knew you could help me become a better man for myself, my children, and my fiancée**."

Martin completed the full program in 2025, took accountability for his actions, and gained tools to build healthy relationships—demonstrating how focused intervention can interrupt cycles of violence and create lasting change.

MILWAUKEE WOMEN'S CENTER
Where Abuse Ends and Hope Begins
A Division of Community Advocates

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF SERVICE

Milwaukee Women's Center Celebrates 45 Years of Service

On July 10, 2025, Community Advocates celebrated the Milwaukee Women's Center's 45th anniversary, highlighting how the community supports families through tough times. Emcee Alexandria Mack led guests through moving reflections, including a spoken word performance by Miss Dia and uplifting remarks from CEO Andi Elliott, Board President Sharon Jordan, and former Board President Bryan House.

The MWC celebrated past and present survivors, leaders, and advocates who honor the hope and dignity of people impacted by domestic violence and homelessness.

A video from former shelter guest Liceal shared how the center helped her and her son find peace and resilience after a painful period in their lives. With staff support, she felt safe to be vulnerable and began working toward her goals. "I gained strength I didn't know I had," she said.

Recognition came from Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley and Karin Tyler of the City of Milwaukee's Office of Community Wellness and Safety, who both presented official proclamations to our leaders.

Generous guests raised over $50,000 during the Raise Hope and Fund-A-Need appeal, ensuring the essential work continues. Special thanks to our incredible sponsors who made the event possible, our event co-chairs Kate Venne and Sandy Samse, and to Direct Supply for hosting us at their Innovation & Technology Center.

Dignity and Hope:

Ensuring Housing Stability Through a Continuum of Housing Services

Housing stability is central to Community Advocates' mission. What distinguishes our work is a continuum of housing services that meets people wherever they are, whether they are in immediate crisis, facing instability, or striving for long-term security and independence.

When individuals face street homelessness, need emergency shelter, or must escape unsafe situations due to domestic violence or family crisis, Community Advocates delivers safety and urgent support. As people move from homelessness or shelter toward stability, we remain by their side, offering supportive housing, case management, and wraparound services that foster health, wellness, and independence. For families and individuals threatened by eviction, job loss, or utility shutoffs, we act early to prevent short-term setbacks from becoming lasting crises.

In 2025, Community Advocates provided shelter and supportive housing to **255 adults and children per day**, totaling **93,075 bed-nights** across our programs. Through the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center, **3,500 Milwaukee households** facing financial hardship or eviction risk received assessment for short-term rental assistance and **comprehensive tenant and landlord supports**, preventing housing loss and encouraging stability. Additionally, **27,145 Milwaukee County residents** were assisted through the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** at Community Advocates, helping to reduce utility-related instability and ensure safe, heated homes during the coldest months.

These numbers represent far more than services. They are adults regaining stability and hope, children remaining in school, families staying together, and neighborhoods strengthened by housing security. Above all, they reveal a community that honors dignity and believes everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

CRISIS RESPONSE & SAFETY

Homeless Outreach:
Connects people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to shelter and housing resources.

Milwaukee Women's Center Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter:
Provides safe, confidential housing and support for survivors of domestic violence and their children.

Family Support Center:
Emergency shelter for families experiencing homelessness.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING & STABILIZATION

Autumn West Safe Haven:
Non-congregate, low-barrier shelter alternative for individuals living with a serious mental illness.

Community Advocates & The Asha Project Domestic Violence Stability Program:
Short-term rental assistance and supportive services to help quickly stabilize individuals and families leaving emergency shelter after experiencing domestic violence.

BRIDGE HOUSING & RESOLUTION

Autumn West Permanent Housing:
Community-based, long-term supportive housing paired with wraparound services and sponsor-based leasing.

My Home Housing & Case Management:
Housing vouchers with case management support to secure safe, affordable housing.

PREVENTION & SUPPORT

Eviction & Homelessness Prevention Programs:
Financial and case management support to help households remain housed.

Rental Housing Resource Center:
Central hub connecting tenants and landlords to resources, mediation and services.

Energy Assistance, Disability Services & Protective Payee:
Practical support that helps households maintain stability and independence.

FoodShare Employment and Training Program:
Helps individuals build job skills and secure employment.

Jonathan's Story: A Life with Dignity

Jonathan deserved better. At 64, Jonathan faced homelessness in a downtown Milwaukee bus shelter, struggling with serious mental illness and complex medical challenges. He deserved safety, dignity, and hope.

In 2025, Jonathan was referred to Community Advocates' **Autumn West Safe Haven**, where individuals with disabling conditions receive furnished guest suites, case management, and wraparound support in a caring environment.

Arriving bedridden and mistrustful, Jonathan slowly regained trust thanks to the patience and consistency of the Autumn West staff. With coordinated services, he secured Social Security benefits, reconnected with his family, and found permanent supportive housing.

Today, Jonathan has a stable home and foundation for recovery, his dignity restored, his hope renewed.

The Transformative Power of Art:

Uniting Creativity and Community Action at Feed Your Soul

Community Advocates was honored to be the featured nonprofit at the 22nd Annual Feed Your Soul event at the House of Rad on November 7, 2025. This celebrated arts-centered philanthropic gathering brought together generous artists, performers, musicians, and community members from Milwaukee.

Feed Your Soul powerfully showcased how art can unite creativity and community action for a cause, addressing the needs of individuals and families rebuilding their lives after homelessness or domestic violence. With the support of 80 local artists, over 500 attendees, and dedicated sponsors, the event generated $120,000—enough to provide about 2,500 safe nights of emergency shelter, meals, and wraparound services at the Milwaukee Women's Center and Autumn West Safe Haven.

Andi Elliott, Community Advocates CEO, expressed her gratitude for the outpouring of support for our community members. "This is urgent, life-changing impact," she said.

The Milwaukee Rental Housing Center Turns Five

In 2025, the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (RHRC) marked five years of service by convening partners and stakeholders to reflect on changes in Milwaukee's rental housing landscape since 2020. Launched virtually during the pandemic, RHRC has grown into a permanent, walk-in resource at Community Advocates' downtown offices, serving tenants and property owners.

RHRC's mission is to prevent evictions and promote stability, made possible through strong partnerships with the City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Mediate Wisconsin, Milwaukee County Housing Division, the Rental Property Association of Wisconsin, and the Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin—working together to strengthen Milwaukee's rental housing system and create a safer, more stable Milwaukee.

2025 RHRC BY THE NUMBERS:

20,000+ TRIAGE & ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED = **10,195** IN-PERSON, **10,030** VIRTUAL

$6.8 MILLION EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE DISBURSED

3,500 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE ASSESSMENT

Public Policy Institute Advances Well-Being Through Upstream Solutions

Our Public Policy Institute (PPI) brings together community stakeholders to improve health, wellness, and self-sufficiency by addressing "upstream" factors that cause poor health and instability. Through PPI's Child Welfare, Community Engagement, and Training/TA teams, staff provides strategic, strengths-based, and effective strategies that produce long-term results.

SNAPSHOT OF PPI'S 2025 ACTIVITIES:

157
TOBACCO RETAILERS COMPLIANCE CHECKS CONDUCTED IN MILWAUKEE

174
ALCOHOL AGE COMPLIANCE CHECKS AT LOCAL RETAILERS

1,326
PARTICIPANTS OF 89 MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WORKSHOPS

1,127
ESCUCHA TUS EMOCIONES MENTAL WELLNESS GATHERING ATTENDEES

75
CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN ENGAGING IN GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE MILWAUKEE FAMILY INTERVENTION SERVICES PROGRAM

216
INDIVIDUALS IN THE STRONGER FAMILIES MILWAUKEE PROGRAM RECEIVING RESOURCES AND CASE MANAGEMENT TO FOSTER HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

745
YOUTH RECEIVING POSITIVE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMMING THROUGH MILWAUKEE BRIGHTER FUTURES INITIATIVE

2.8 million
IMPRESSIONS GENERATED BY RISE DRUG FREE MKE'S HOLIDAY SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Building Foundations for the Future Together

Alexia's Story: Building a Brighter Future

Alexia, mom of two sweet kids, was having trouble keeping everything together. During an especially difficult time, Alexia was referred to Community Advocates' Stronger Families Milwaukee program, which provides case management and wraparound assistance for parents who want help stabilizing their household. A Family Engagement Specialist worked with Alexia so she could identify her goals and how to reach them. Topping the list was finding a better place to live. "Going through what I went through... I was happy to get out of it." Even though it was tough at times and she got discouraged, Alexia found a new place, one that provided a stable foundation for her family. "I found something way better," she said.

"Because of you and your [Mental Health Awareness] course I can better relate to the two most meaningful people in my life and better serve my community as an EMT."

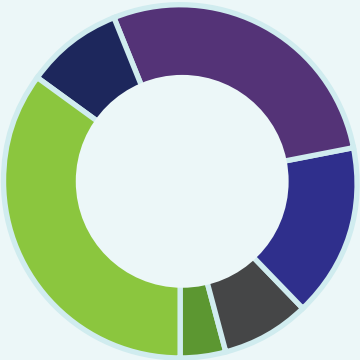
Taylor's Story: A Journey to Safe Housing

Taylor and her family were struggling to cope after their apartment building had structural failure and no water supply, leading the City of Milwaukee to declare it to be unfit for human habitation. Community Advocates' Housing Assistance Program team stepped in with resources. With the team's guidance, Taylor's family was able to get a new place to live, which was safe and secure. Community Advocates also covered her first month's rent and a part of her security deposit to cover her move-in cost. Now, the family happily lives in a unit that is safe, suitable, and affordable.

"I wore my Bottomless Closet clothes to a second interview and I rocked it!"

Top Funding Sources

- City of Milwaukee..... 35%
- Milwaukee County..... 9%
- State of Wisconsin 28%
- Federal Agencies 16%
- United Way, Foundations and Individual Giving 8%
- Other..... 4%



Thankful for Our Volunteers

We are so thankful to every individual who gave their time and energy in 2025 to volunteer!

Whether it was helping to organize the Milwaukee Women's Center's clothing bank, assisting registration at Feed Your Soul, or cooking dinners for our Emergency Shelter guests over the holidays, our volunteers' presence and dedication mean so much. In 2025, 398 individuals donated their time for a total of 2,690 volunteer hours! Thank you!

Save the Date

You're Invited!

For 50 years, Community Advocates has been a cornerstone in our community, providing individuals and families in need with essential support and advocacy to help them overcome challenges and live with dignity.

Join us as we celebrate 50 years of nurturing hope in our community.

September 18, 2026

Baird Center | 405 W. Kilbourn Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53203

For information on sponsorships, contact Deborah Heffner, Chief Advancement Officer, at dheffner@communityadvocates.net.

50 YEARS OF SERVICE 1976 2026
COMMUNITY ADVOCATES
Where Meeting Basic Needs Inspires Hope

Leadership

Chief Executive Officer
Andi Elliott

Chief Operating Officer
Maudwella Kirkendoll

Chief Financial Officer
William Koch

Chief Advancement Officer
Deborah Heffner

Human Resources Director
Jennifer Patrick

Supportive Housing Program Director
Matt Raymond

Public Policy Institute Deputy Director
Kari Southern

Grants Administration and Compliance Director
Steve Schultz

Grants and Communications Director
Lisa Kaiser

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Sharon R. Jordan | Direct Supply

Vice President
Natasha Dotson
Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative

Treasurer
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United Performing Arts Fund

Anne DeLeo
Community Volunteer

Valerie Gabriel
Community Volunteer

Bryan House
Foley & Lardner, LLP

Gary Ingram
Igary Events

Pamela Klein
Community Volunteer

Jim Liedtke
Community Volunteer

Jodi Wire
Community Volunteer

Community Partners

For a complete list of Community Advocates' supporters, go to communityadvocates.net.

Direct Supply
Brady
American Family Insurance — Dreams Foundation —
Greater Milwaukee Foundation — greater together
Bader Philanthropies — Upholding Dignity
CDBG Milwaukee
Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human Services
United Way
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
Zilber Family Foundation

DONATE

Scan the QR code or go to communityadvocates.net.

CONNECT

Visit communityadvocates.net to sign up for our newsletter.

JOIN US

To become a volunteer, contact Jeri Kavanaugh, **jkavanaugh@communityadvocates.net** or call (414) 270-2984.

For a link to the online version of this Community Impact Report with additional information about the organization and our Impact in 2025, please go to **communityadvocates.net** or scan the QR code above.

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