



# PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

Policy. Prevention. Innovation.

## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ADVOCATES PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

The Public Policy Institute works to promote and implement evidence-based policies that will prevent and reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for individuals and families in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin.

The Public Policy Institute, a division of Community Advocates, was founded in 2008 to prevent and end the poverty that so often brings people through our doors at Community Advocates seeking help.

The Public Policy Institute analyzes and advocates for policy changes; we convene and coordinate coalitions; and we distribute funds to community-based programs while offering them training and technical assistance to increase impact.

[ppi.communityadvocates.net](http://ppi.communityadvocates.net)

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 CAPublicPolicyInstitute

## 2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

Community Advocates formed the Public Policy Institute (PPI) in 2008 to address the root causes of poverty so that we could prevent clients from ever needing our services. For the past decade, we've focused on reducing poverty by improving economic and employment opportunities; aiding access to health care; and preventing violence, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and tobacco use among Milwaukee's youth, families, and adults.

### PPI Policy Research & Advocacy

Led by Deputy Director Kari Lerch, along with Senior Fellow David Reimer and our policy team of Mike Bare, Julie Kerksick, and Conor Williams, PPI continued to have impact at both the state and federal levels throughout 2017.

**The Transitional Jobs Project** supports the creation of subsidized, wage-paying jobs that enable low-income, unemployed men and women to better support themselves and their families. We are proud that Community Advocates' facilitation of the Milwaukee Transitional Jobs Collaborative has helped to support expanded state funding for Transitional Jobs in the last three state budget cycles. As an exciting expansion this year, we developed **Healthy Workers, Healthy Wisconsin** to combine employment programs with health and trauma services so that individuals can go on to thrive. This five-year project has enrolled its first 25 participants and is working to connect them with comprehensive health and trauma-informed care in addition to employment services. Additionally, State Reps. Cody Horlacher (R-Mukwonago) and Daniel Riemer (D-Milwaukee) introduced 2017 Assembly Bill 422, which will provide Transitional Jobs for veterans. It passed 93-0 and is now awaiting a vote in the Wisconsin Senate.

**PPI's Working Our Way Out of Poverty** includes nonpartisan policies that raise and stabilize wages, reduce obstacles to work, and protect seniors and adults with disabilities. In 2017, we strategically promoted its individual policies by advocating for the expansion of transitional jobs programs and the Earned Income Tax Credit. An exciting accomplishment was the re-introduction of **The Stronger Way Act** in the U.S. Senate by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Cory Booker (D-NJ), which is based on Working Our Way Out of Poverty. We were honored to host

both Senators Baldwin and Booker at Community Advocates for a press event announcing the legislation on October 6.

**The Effective ACA Implementation Project** seeks to harness the Affordable Care Act's potential to expand health coverage and improve public health. Throughout 2017, PPI was at the forefront of organizing advocates and Wisconsinites to oppose four Congressional efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act entirely or in part. The Institute helped to found, organize, and lead the Wisconsin Health Matters Coalition.

The Institute was also a leader in opposing an unprecedented proposed waiver the state submitted to the federal government to change BadgerCare, Wisconsin's Medicaid program. We educated fellow advocates and the community on this waiver via several briefings and meetings. PPI also submitted comments on the waiver, testified against it at public hearings, and organized a number of allies to join us. As a result of this advocacy, a number of substantively positive changes were made to the final submission. While our preference would have been for the waiver to be withdrawn, we are proud to have contributed to these improvements.

PPI is part of the **SMART Reentry Program**, which combines employment and trauma-informed care for high-risk offenders returning from imprisonment. In 2017, as part of our coordination role for the Milwaukee Reentry Council, we helped organize the first Wisconsin Reentry Summit, "Instilling



PPI Senior Fellow David Riemer, Senator Cory Booker, Community Advocates CEO Andi Elliott, and Senator Tammy Baldwin unveil the PPI-influenced *The Stronger Way Act* at Community Advocates in October.

Hope, Enhancing Partnerships,” held November 7 and 8 in Milwaukee. Nearly 500 individuals attended representing corrections, previously incarcerated, law enforcement, civic, and faith communities. There were 20 breakout sessions highlighting initiatives that are working well to reduce recidivism in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the country. One follow-up to the summit is the decision to host an exposition for employers that will showcase organizations working with job seekers. It is planned for May 2018.

2017 also brought the re-launch of our **Community Conversation Series**, a convening of elected officials, policymakers, community leaders, content experts, and others interested in lively public policy discussion. We welcomed:

- » Professor Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School Poll, on what polling revealed about the 2016 election
- » *Washington Post* reporter Amy Goldstein, author of “Janesville,” at Boswell Book Co.
- » Rachel Schneider, author of “The Financial Diaries,” who headlined a panel on income volatility with Community Advocates COO Maudwella Kirkendoll and Earned Income Tax Credit expert Steve Holt
- » Georgetown Law School Professor Peter Edelman, author of “Not a Crime to Be Poor,” at Boswell Book Co.



PPI's Julie Kerssick (right) moderates an expert panel on income volatility with (L-R) Rachel Schneider, Steve Holt, and Maudwella Kirkendoll.

Finally, in 2017, our policy team worked with Grants Manager Deb Heffner to develop our **Healthy Housing Initiative**. Beginning January 1, 2018, the Healthy Housing Initiative will build a community-driven advisory council, conduct a health impact assessment of housing policy, and recruit and train teams of advocates from the community to push policymakers at all levels to increase housing affordability, quality, and stability. We are especially excited about this project because it allows our policy experts to partner with experts in housing and public health at the University of Wisconsin, and with Community Advocates' housing team, which works directly with clients experiencing housing instability and potential homelessness.



PPI sponsored the training of local prevention workers to lead the Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention (QPR) course. From left to right: Natalie Cooper, Heallistry LLC; DeShanda Williams, Pathfinders Milwaukee; De'Shawn Ewing, The Parenting Network; Syd Robinson, MKE LGBT Community Center; Elysse Chay, PPI Prevention Services Manager; PPI's Jeremy Triblett, ReCAST MKE Resource Coordinator; PPI's Jazzmyne Adams, AWY Prevention Coordinator.

### PPI's Year of Prevention Work

Community Advocates Public Policy Institute's prevention team, led by Prevention Services Manager Elysse Chay, has been working hard to promote protective factors among young people in Milwaukee that can prevent unplanned teen pregnancies, substance use disorders, violence, and unemployment. Although our community is facing many challenges, we're encouraged by how warmly this message is received.

Some highlights of our year:

### APRIL 29 DRUG TAKE-BACK EVENT IN WEST ALLIS

The Milwaukee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (MCSAP), coordinated by PPI's Kasaundra Brown, has been educating Milwaukeeans about the importance of getting rid of unwanted and unused medications at home. MCSAP partnered with Children's Community Health Plan, West Allis-West Milwaukee Community Coalition, and the West Allis Police Department on an April 29 "Drug Take-Back Event," which provided the opportunity for community members to safely dispose prescription drugs no longer needed. The event collected an astounding 101.7 pounds of pills and 61.3 pounds of cream and liquid medications, undoubtedly making our community and environment safer!

### "LET'S BE BLUNT" CAMPAIGN PROMOTES #WEEDFREE LIVING AMONG YOUTH

The second phase of MCSAP's "Let's Be Blunt" campaign launched with a youth summit that provided education on youth substance use and abuse to more than 80 attendees. Participants also brainstormed marijuana prevention messaging for their peers, which resulted in the #WeedFree campaign on

Milwaukee County Transit System buses, social media, and local media. The messages generated more than 2 million impressions and counting! The campaign continues to distribute yard signs to MCSAP partners, schools, businesses, and more.

### MCSAP HOLIDAY PSA

As substance abuse and depression can color the holiday season, MCSAP created a holiday-themed public service announcement that got picked up by local media. With the message "sometimes the season is the reason," the PSA encouraged viewers to safely store their medications to prevent them from being misused, and to reach out for help if they are feeling vulnerable. PPI's Partnership for Success Coordinator Deavon Collins worked with MCSAP leaders Rachael Cooper and Shea Halula and community partners to craft and distribute the PSA.

### PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS OFFERED

PPI consistently offers trainings for colleagues within the policy and prevention field to ensure that Milwaukee's social services workers and fellow advocates are using best, most up-to-date practices available. Our 2017 training menu topics included: Motivational Interviewing; Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention (QPR) trainings; Substance Abuse Prevention Skills Training (SAPST); Drug Identification Training for Education Professionals; and Youth Mental Health First Aid. We



Milwaukee Fire Department Captain Stephanie Hampton and Deputy Chief Aaron Lipski hold a sign from the latest phase of MCSAP's youth-led Let's Be Blunt campaign.



The City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance honored Jazz Nance (Lady J) as LGBTQ Advocate of the Year for tirelessly working to encourage smokers to quit.

also facilitated policy analysis and advocacy trainings to increase engagement and leadership.

### 53206 DRUG-FREE COMMUNITIES PROJECT EXPANDS REACH

The 53206 Drug-Free Communities Project aims to reduce youth substance abuse as a strategic way to promote safety. In collaboration with other partners in the Amani neighborhood, the project sponsored Pulling Together for Peace and Solutions 2017, which provided information and resources to residents focused on health care, employment, housing, and safety in the 53206 neighborhoods. In September, PPI's John Eshun became the Project's new coordinator.

### ADVOCATES FOR TOBACCO-FREE LIVES

Throughout the year the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance, coordinated by PPI's Anneke Mohr, has been raising awareness of how the tobacco industry has been targeting LGBTQ consumers. The Alliance worked with the UW-Milwaukee Drag Show, which was attended by more than 2,000 people, who were treated to a viewing of Lady J's PSA, "Smoking is Such a Drag."

As part of the coalition's work reaching out to young people harmed by tobacco, Neu-Life Community Development FACT Movement youth created a video to raise awareness of the easy access to tobacco products, especially candy- and fruit-flavored products that appeal to Milwaukee youth. In addition, PPI intern Brittany Goodridge conducted

30 assessments at gas stations and convenience stores to better understand how local retailers are selling and marketing tobacco products. Findings will help inform local policy solutions to reduce youth access to tobacco.

### PROMOTING HEALING FOR MILWAUKEE YOUTH AND FAMILIES

PPI is proud to partner with the City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention on its efforts to address and alleviate trauma throughout our community. The city was awarded a five-year, \$5 million Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma (ReCAST) grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration to create responses to trauma among youth and families in Milwaukee. PPI hired Jeremy Triblett as ReCAST MKE's Resource Coordinator to implement key strategies throughout 2018.

### MILWAUKEE BRIGHTER FUTURES INITIATIVE

As the administrator of the Milwaukee Brighter Futures Initiative, a network of organizations in Milwaukee that are committed to prevention and positive youth development strategies, we continue to build capacity among local organizations who receive grant funds to implement prevention programming. Youth participating in Milwaukee Brighter Futures Initiative Projects:

- » Learned how to set goals
  - » Gained new skills valuable in the workplace
  - » Learned to build relationships and manage emotions
  - » Entered a new mentoring relationship
  - » Got back on track to graduate high school on time
  - » Developed coping mechanisms to address trauma
- The Initiative's Contract Monitor Jan Buchler and



In April, members of MCSAP attended an AWY Youth Summit in East Troy to learn more about the importance of preventing drug, tobacco, and alcohol use among youth.

Benchmark Coordinator Jeffery Roman facilitated focus groups again in 2017, with promising responses. Participants' responses when asked "What positive changes they made in their lives as a result of the program?" included:

- "I had a problem with a friend and because of a role-play, I was able to resolve the problem."
- "I talk to my parents more."
- "It's changed the relationships in my life."
- "I take things more seriously, like my decisions."
- "I stopped being a bully. They told me the effect I was having on the younger kids. I don't want to hurt them, so I stopped that."
- "It helped me understand how to conduct myself. How I act says something about me."
- "I am doing better in school and have someone to believe I can do it."

### ALLIANCE FOR WISCONSIN YOUTH GROWS

The Southeast Region of the Alliance for Wisconsin Youth, which promotes drug-, alcohol- and tobacco-free youth leadership, has added three coalitions: the West Allis-West Milwaukee Heroin/Opioid Task Force, Healthiest Greenfield Coalition, and Walworth County Drug & Alcohol Coalition. Former PPI intern Jazzmyne Adams joined PPI as a full-time Prevention Coordinator and will provide leadership and technical assistance to the Alliance members moving forward.

### PPI in the News!

The addition of Communications Specialist Lisa Kaiser to our team in 2017 brought increased opportunities to provide information through social media, press releases, blog posts, and our bi-weekly Prevention Journal E-Newsletter. Previously, Lisa covered local and national politics as the assistant editor of the *Shepherd Express*, and is now responsible for communicating the work of Community Advocates and the Public Policy Institute. If you are interested in subscribing to the Milwaukee Prevention Journal to stay updated on prevention work within and outside of the Public Policy Institute, please contact Lisa at [lkaiser@communityadvocates.net](mailto:lkaiser@communityadvocates.net). You'll receive regular updates on news related to prevention work, including relevant articles, jobs, grants, and resources.

### Looking Ahead...to 2018!

2018 will be milestone year for PPI as we will celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To help us launch our Healthy Housing Initiative, shine a light on the root causes of Milwaukee's housing crisis, and put a capstone on our first decade, on April 26, 2018, PPI will host a special night at the Milwaukee Public Museum featuring keynote speaker Richard Rothstein, author of *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, a finalist for the National Book Award for nonfiction. Milwaukee historian Reggie Jackson, Head Griot of America's Black Holocaust Museum, will provide a local perspective on housing segregation in Milwaukee.

Please see our website for additional information and registration. You are an important part of our history, and we look forward to celebrating with you! Thank you!

**We are deeply appreciative to our 2017 funders who make our work possible.**

### 2017 Major Revenue Sources

#### FEDERAL

- » Department of Health & Human Services, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

#### STATE OF WISCONSIN

- » Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
- » Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- » Wisconsin Department of Justice

#### MILWAUKEE COUNTY

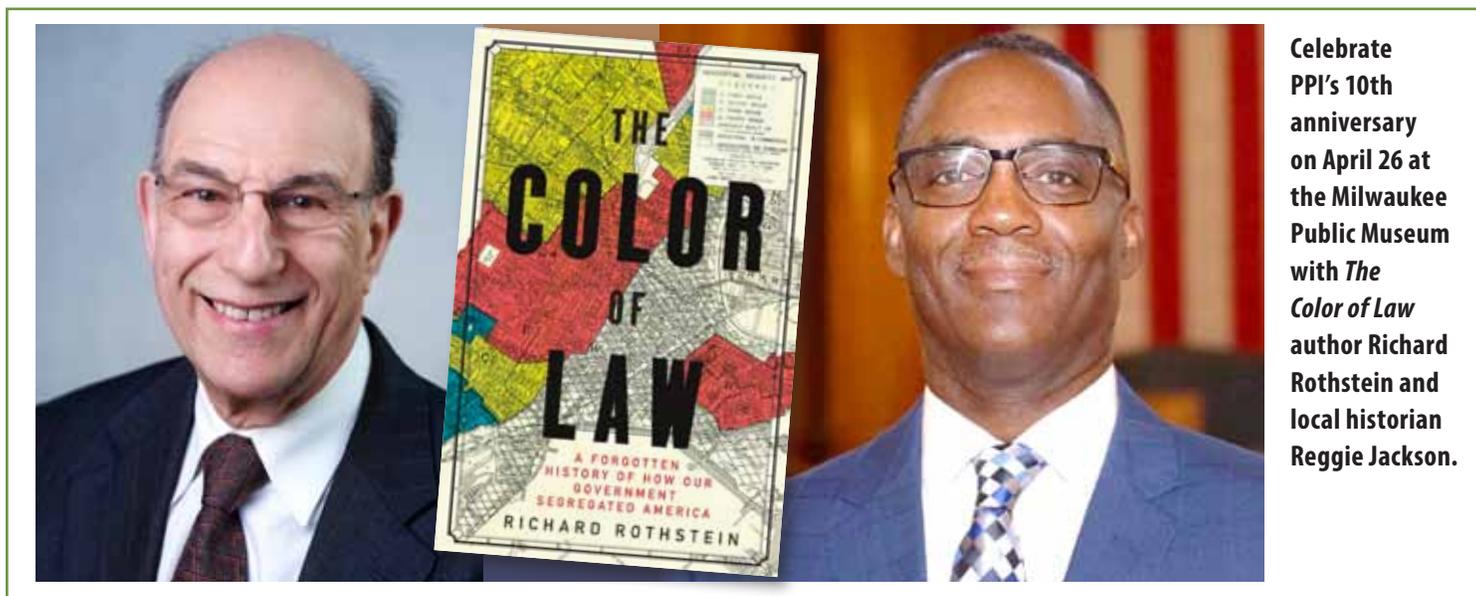
- » Department of Health & Human Services – Behavioral Health Division & Delinquency and Court Services

#### CITY OF MILWAUKEE

- » City of Milwaukee Health Department

#### PUBLIC, PRIVATE & CORPORATE CONTRACTS

- » Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
- » Argosy Foundation
- » Joseph and Vera Zilber Charitable Foundation, Inc.
- » Charles R. O'Malley Charitable Trust



**Celebrate PPI's 10th anniversary on April 26 at the Milwaukee Public Museum with *The Color of Law* author Richard Rothstein and local historian Reggie Jackson.**

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