

Madison Gives

Fall 2025



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Is Changing Lives**

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Madison
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Mission

MCF will engage Greater Madison in philanthropy to advance a more vibrant and equitable community.

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Every Gift Tells a Story

Working at the community's foundation means I get to hear a lot of stories. Stories about the work nonprofit organizations are doing in our community. Stories about what inspires donors to give. Stories that highlight the difference people can make in our community, because they care.



In this issue, we share a story that started 25 years ago with a gift from Professor Roberto Sánchez, which created an endowment. Thanks to that gift, and Professor Sánchez's vision, the Sánchez Scholars program has supported 83 scholars through high school graduation and beyond.

You'll also read about longtime fundholders, Martha Taylor and Gary Antoniewicz, who turned the unexpected sale of closely held stock into an opportunity to give more generously than ever before. You'll meet the Dreyfuss family, who found a way to honor their daughter's life by creating a fund to support programs that celebrate creativity, foster kindness and support families facing serious illness. You'll learn how tax law changes in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act could shift giving patterns — and provide more capacity for giving by those with more modest means. And you'll read about how MCF is learning to better measure its impact with the gifts donors entrust to us.

These stories remind us that each of us is inspired to give for different reasons. We think about creating impact in different ways. But we share a common bond in this community and a common value in generosity.

In October, you will receive our annual appeal. This will be an opportunity for you to reflect on what inspires you, meet this moment in ways that are meaningful to you, and respond with generosity.

Thank you for embracing our community — and for being the good you wish to see in the world.

Warmly,

Bob Sorge
President and CEO
Madison Community Foundation

From Surprise to Strategy

Couple Partners With MCF to Advance Their Philanthropy

Martha Taylor and Gary Antoniewicz had owned a few shares of stock in a privately held company for many years. When they received notice that the company was entertaining a purchase offer, they had no idea it would set off such a whirlwind of decisions.

Fast Moving Deal Triggered the Need to Shift Plans

The transaction moved quickly — just six weeks from letter to sale. That speed left little time for preparation. “We suddenly had to figure out how to minimize what could be a big tax bill and revise our financial plans,” Gary said.

The couple saw the potential for this sale to expand their philanthropy. Their accountant advised an immediate charitable gift to help offset the sale’s tax impact and suggested an optimal amount.

So they turned to Madison Community Foundation. As fundholders, they already had a strong connection, and Martha served on MCF’s Board of Governors. They knew MCF could provide both giving strategies and local insight.

“From my development career at the University of Wisconsin Foundation,” Martha said, “I know tax deductions aren’t why people give, but they do help determine timing and the amount of the gift in any given year.” Martha continued, “We needed time to decide which organizations those gifts would go to and wanted flexibility in the timing of making those gifts.”

Working With MCF Provided Time and Insight

Working with MCF allowed Gary and Martha to make their gift right away, capturing tax benefits, while giving them the breathing room to develop a thoughtful plan.

“One of the reasons MCF is great for donors,” Gary said, “is that if you have a good idea of your philanthropic priorities, you can determine what organizations to give to, how much, and when in response to the challenges facing them and your objectives.”

Martha added, “MCF’s Community Impact Fund is also great for donors who want their gifts to help the community as a whole.”



Martha and Gary have different priorities for their giving. “It’s important to have equality of giving in a marriage,” Martha explained. “In many cases this becomes an ‘our, her and his’ approach. Some gifts we make together, some support my interests, and some support his.”

Martha’s experience informs their giving. “Research has shown the effectiveness of focusing giving into a few meaningful areas. Many find that limiting major giving to three core areas results in greater impact and meaning. For us, our top two are church and university.”

Advice for Others Facing a Sudden Financial Gain

Martha and Gary offer this advice to others facing unexpected income: slow down. “See your advisors first and don’t make rash decisions,” Gary said. “You can give to Madison Community Foundation now and take your time to decide how best to use that gift.”

Martha added, “We were lucky to know about MCF’s services. Others might not realize how helpful working with MCF can be, which is why we were willing to share our story.”

Gary added, “Philanthropy takes work and thought to do it well. And we each have somewhat different approaches and focus. Working with MCF gives us the time and guidance to develop a plan that reflects our goals.”



One Man's Vision Sparks a Life-Changing Program

The Sánchez Scholars Program

"When I was selected to be part of the Sánchez Scholars Program in eighth grade, I had no idea the great impact and importance the program would have in my life," said Evelyn M. Cuellar Domínguez. "It was the first time Mr. Rodriguez, one of my teachers, told me he believed in me and my future."

That was enough to shift Evelyn's vision of her future.

"I had never really looked ahead or thought about what high school, and even less what college, could look like for me," she shared. "It became my motivation to believe in myself and to know that I had a community committed to supporting and raising me."

One Man's Vision to Uplift Others

Professor Roberto García Sánchez was the only child of Mexican immigrants who settled in Corpus Christi, Texas. He maintained close ties with his family across the border and grew up fully bilingual. His parents' unwavering belief in the power of education led to his earning a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and becoming a tenured professor there.

"Professor Sánchez never forgot his humble beginnings, and was a tireless advocate for leveling the educational playing field," said Lesli Vásquez Vargas, Sánchez Scholars Program Coordinator.

When he reached retirement, he established the Roberto G. Sánchez Educational Opportunity Fund with Madison Community Foundation to help other fully bilingual first-generation students replicate his successful trajectory from community college to four-year university. And the Sánchez Scholars Program was born.

Building a Village of Support

Being a first-generation college student is challenging. Pursuing higher education involves navigating many new systems, and doing that without an experienced family member to guide you can be daunting for both students and their parents.



"Sánchez Scholars not only supported me, but also my parents who were navigating the school system in a foreign country," Evelyn said. "It takes a village to help a student be successful, and it starts with the parents."

This holistic approach to support helps build a strong community among the program's participants. "A valuable lesson I learned was that to be successful is more than being book smart," Evelyn explained. "It's important to give back to your community and build and foster relationships within it."

Staff are committed to developing and sustaining relationships between and among staff and scholars. These relationships are a crucial part of the Sánchez Scholars Program's identity, developing over the years into a "Sánchez Family."

Helping Students Explore Options

For Evelyn, choosing a post-high school path was clear. "I always knew I wanted to be a teacher because I remember many people around me, including myself, wishing they had teachers who looked like them or could relate to their experiences," she said. "I have always been a strong believer that in order to see change, you must become the change."

Incoming Sánchez Scholars, like most eighth-grade students, don't always enter the program with such clear career goals, and many may not have even considered the possibility of college.

"Scholars are in continuous contact with program staff, who monitor curriculum choices, grades and attendance," explained Vásquez Vargas.

"Depending on individual needs and interests, we coordinate career exploration, academic enrichment opportunities, community volunteer experiences and part-time employment."

Success Beyond Imagination

When Professor Sánchez created his fund, he did so hoping to help young students find a pathway to success through education, like he was able to do. And his vision has been, and continues to be, realized for students throughout the Madison Metropolitan Public Schools.

"I was a student who, according to statistics, had a high likelihood of dropping out," Evelyn said, reflecting on the program's impact on her life. "Thanks to this program, I could envision a future for myself, and it helped my parents see that there were people who cared for their daughter just as much as they did. I often wonder what my life would have looked like without the Sánchez Scholars Program."

Pathway to Success

Professor Sánchez was able to see some of the early Scholars successfully navigate the pathway he created from eighth grade to four-year degree before his death in 2016. Since its inception, the Sánchez Scholars Program has seen 83 Scholars graduate from high school (a 100% graduation rate), and currently has 22 Scholars participating.

This year the Program is welcoming the **Class of 2029** to the Sánchez Family:

- **Allan Sarantes**, from Black Hawk Middle School, will be attending East High School
- **Karla Tamayo**, from Wright Middle School, will be attending Vel Phillips Memorial High School
- **Dulce Álvarez**, from Gillespie Middle School, will be attending Vel Phillips Memorial High School
- **Edwin Torres**, from O'Keefe Middle School, will be attending East High School
- **Isaiah Vielmas**, from Sherman Middle School, will be attending East High School





Wisconsin Youth Company received a \$180,000 grant from the Community Impact Fund to create a grassroots advocacy movement for state funding of out-of-school-time organizations across Wisconsin.

Beyond Grants: Building Lasting Impact Together

Creating real change requires more than writing checks. To build lasting impact, we need to embrace a broader approach.

MCF is embracing a strategy that takes a “more than grants” approach. To increase the impact of our grantmaking, we are pairing funding with other tools, including: nonprofit capacity building through the Goodman Nonprofit Center, impact investing, advocacy and research. Together, these efforts strengthen the organizations that serve Dane County and increase our shared ability to make a lasting difference.

Building Organizational Strength to Meet Complex Challenges

The challenges facing our community today are complex. Nonprofits are asked to do more than ever, from supporting families and neighborhoods to addressing systemic inequities.

Communities thrive when funders not only provide financial resources, but also invest in leadership, evaluation and collaboration. MCF is embracing this broader approach and working to help organizations build the knowledge, skills and resilience they need to create long-term solutions.

Building a Better Evaluation Process

Nonprofits are often asked to prove that they’re having an impact, and MCF is applying this to its own work in the community. MCF is tapping into the experience and expertise of the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to design a process to track our own impact.

The issues facing Greater Madison are dynamic and interconnected, creating complex systems and making tracking success more complicated. Through our two-year partnership with WCER, we hope to pair their knowledge of evaluations and outcomes of complex

systems with MCF’s knowledge of the community to build a process that will help MCF better understand and gather insight into what is working, where gaps remain, and how the community can improve together.

We began this process in early 2025 with WCER making a comprehensive review of MCF’s historical grantmaking processes, decisions and outcomes. This fall and winter, the process will continue with formal and informal listening sessions with nonprofit organizations, community leaders, members of nonprofit boards of directors and our philanthropic colleagues.

The information and insights gained through these sessions will provide MCF with a rich source of data, which MCF will use to adjust how it engages in Community Impact work starting in 2027.

Reaching the Goal of a Stronger, More Equitable Community

Our goal for this work is simple: to ensure that every dollar, every partnership and every idea we embrace moves us closer to a stronger, more equitable community. By combining grantmaking with learning, collaboration and innovation, MCF is not just funding programs — we are building a foundation for lasting impact in Dane County.

Camille's Light Shines On

From an early age, Camille Dreyfuss had a way of putting people at ease. She noticed those who often went unnoticed and invited them in with her warmth. "Camille was especially adept at drawing people in who otherwise would float under the radar and not be seen," recalled her father, Tony. "But it was because she had a genuine interest in them."

Her mom, Karen, added, "She would ask questions with genuine curiosity, often leading with a compliment. And people responded to that. She just made others feel comfortable."

A Journey of Courage

When Camille was six, she was diagnosed with an untreatable arteriovenous malformation (AVM) — a tangle of blood vessels deep in her brain. For much of her childhood, the AVM didn't affect her daily life. But as she grew older, it began to cause physical challenges that eventually limited her mobility and speech.

Even as her health declined, Camille's connection with people remained constant. "At the end of her life, when she couldn't walk or talk anymore, her two nurses still wanted to be with her," Karen shared.

Supporting Others and Seeing the Unseen

After Camille's passing in December 2024, her family began searching for ways to keep her spirit present. They found comfort in simple weekly rituals, spending Sundays doing something she would have loved. But they also wanted to create something lasting, something that could extend Camille's gift of connection to others.

That's how the Camille Fund was born at Madison Community Foundation.

"When we were going through this, we really benefitted from all the support we got as a family," Tony said. "But we also discovered the gaps. Camille's illness was so unique to her that there wasn't really peer support — not for her, and not for us. We all could have benefitted from connections with others going through something similar."

Through their donor advised fund, the Dreyfuss family hopes to help others facing similar gaps, supporting programs that will help ease the journey through a difficult medical diagnosis for other families.



They also plan to support programs that foster kindness, and uplift children through the arts — the things that mattered deeply to Camille.

"Raising money for the fund will give us opportunities to bring people together," Tony said. "Giving the money away lets us carry forward the things Camille valued."

A Legacy of Caring

The Camille Fund is more than a memorial. It's a way to keep her spirit of curiosity and connection alive for the benefit of others. For her family, it also transforms grief into action, ensuring that Camille's life continues to spark kindness and creativity.

Her best friend, Leigh, reflected, "Camille's loss is one felt throughout the community, but the community's gain by having her for as long as we did was even greater."

Through the fund, that gain continues — a lasting reminder of Camille's light and a permanent source of support for others.

About the Cover: Space to Increase Impact

In January 2024, the new Oregon Public Library opened. This new building nearly tripled the library's size, which allows the library to offer more programming to serve the growing community in Oregon. Programs include Tinker Lab for Kids, Tween STEM Lab, Adult Arts Classes, Chess Club, Lego Robotics and more. This has increased library visits by 65% since its opening. MCF provided a \$40,000 grant from the Community Impact Fund in 2021 to support the fundraising for the new library.

MCF currently is working with the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research to better understand and track its own impact.



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Tax Law Changes' Impact on Philanthropy

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed into law by President Trump on July 4, 2025, includes several provisions that affect philanthropy. These three are of particular importance to anyone planning their charitable giving.

1. OBBBA increases the standard deduction and further limits charitable deductions for those who itemize.

The new law makes permanent the higher standard deductions from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, increasing the standard deduction for 2025 to \$15,750 for single filers and \$31,500 to taxpayers who are married and filing jointly.

Beginning in 2026, people who itemize can only deduct charitable gifts that exceed 0.5% of their adjusted gross income, and taxpayers in the top bracket can only claim a 35% tax deduction for charitable gifts.

2. OBBBA introduces a charitable deduction for nonitemizers.

Starting in 2026, single taxpayers who don't itemize can take a charitable deduction of \$1,000 (\$2,000 for taxpayers who are married and filing jointly). As has been the case in the past, gifts to donor advised funds are not eligible. This new deduction for nonitemizers has the potential to increase charitable giving among a significant number of households.

3. The higher estate tax exemption will not sunset.

OBBBA makes permanent the increased estate tax exemption, ending the uncertainty for taxpayers updating financial and estate plans. The new law also makes permanent the increase in the unified credit and generation-skipping transfer tax exemption threshold.

The 2025 exemption is \$13.99 million for single filers and \$27.98 million married taxpayers filing jointly. In 2026, these numbers increase to \$15 million and \$30 million respectively.

The Need for Philanthropy Remains

These changes to tax law decrease the tax benefit of giving for most people, but the need for philanthropy remains. If you regularly support nonprofit organizations, it's important to continue to do so even if you're not benefiting from a tax deduction. Our community needs you, now more than ever.