



ANNUAL REPORT

EMPOWERING HOPE AND RECOVERY

WCS provides services to children, youth, adults and families in the areas of behavioral health, court services, training and employment, community alternatives, reintegration and monitoring.

MISSION STATEMENT

Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. advocates for justice and community safety, providing innovative opportunities for individuals to overcome adversity.

ON THE FRONT COVER: A new resident is welcomed by WCS staff to Sankofa House, a transitional living center serving adults who are beginning the process of substance use recovery.

ON THIS PAGE: This one-of-a-kind mural was created in three weeks by artist Ras Ammar Nsoroma working with the youth attending the WCS Project Excel site. It represents their vision of Positive Youth Justice (PYJ), a form of optimistic youth development, and is a vivid reminder each day as the youth pursue a good future for themselves.

WISCONSIN COMMUNITY SERVICES 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

Dear Friends and Supporters of WCS,



What a year it has been! Though the COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges, I am proud to say that the creativity of WCS staff and the support of our funders ensured that we were able to keep providing services to those with the greatest needs in our communities. WCS is a provider of essential services – and we took that responsibility very seriously during this unprecedented time.

I invite you to read through these pages to gain a sneak preview of the bold commitment WCS is making to the community in 2021, and to read about the life-changing, day-by-day, person-to-person support provided to hundreds of WCS participants by Peer Specialists.

WCS continues to expand its commitment to serving our communities. The program growth experienced at WCS in the past few years has necessitated the purchase of another large building to accommodate programming. You can read more about this in the “Sneak Preview” news on page 9.

WCS has embraced the highly successful, certified peer support specialist model and has become a leader in this area. WCS is committed to the use of Peer Specialists as it has seen firsthand the power of peer support and the effectiveness of the Specialists. You can learn more in our feature article on pages 4-5.

It has been another exciting year of individual and community impact achieved through the services delivered by WCS. I am proud of the work that WCS has accomplished that is positively impacting the lives of so many in each of our communities every day. Many thanks for your continued support!

Sincerely,
Lynn Menefee
WCS Board President

Staff in WCS programs give hands-on assistance to participants with everyday activities like educational programs.



Photo courtesy of WCS November 2019

PEER SPECIALISTS FOSTER HOPE FOR RECOVERY

“Lived Experiences” Empower and Support



Last summer, James H. was experiencing mental health needs, and was also in danger of losing his apartment when he could not pay the rent. He reached out for help and was referred to a Peer Specialist in the WCS Office of Consumer Affairs Program. Cassie Krystosek, his assigned Peer Specialist, was able to advocate on his behalf, connecting him with the services necessary to renegotiate his lease payment, and providing the empathy and support he needed during a difficult time. According to James, “Cassie has gone out of her way to help me gain the confidence I need and offer great resources I could not otherwise find myself.”

The story James shares is only one of hundreds of success stories that define the Peer Support services at WCS. Peer Specialists have been trained to support individuals with mental health needs, trauma or substance use by using their own “lived experiences.” Through their own recovery from similar needs, Peer Specialists work together with those they serve to assist with creating goals for recovery, to learn and practice new skills, to model effective coping techniques and strategies, and to identify and advocate for needed services. Their own recovery and life needs set them apart, and their unique experiences and expertise cannot be duplicated with professional training.

WCS has strongly embraced the Peer Specialist model. The work being done by WCS Peer Specialists is amazing – and they truly inspire the people they are serving to reach their life goals and continue on their journey to recovery. WCS is committed to the use of Peer Specialists in many of its programs, as it has seen firsthand the power of peer support and the effectiveness of the Specialists.

As those who have traveled a similar path, Peer Specialists foster hope for recovery and are role models for the peers they serve. Chyra Trost, Strategic Planning and Program Implementation Manager at WCS, explains: “Peers are phenomenal in working with others, especially with engagement and passion for supporting those they serve achieve recovery. Peers provide invaluable services and their commitment is never ending.”

What Do Peer Specialists Do?

Peer Specialists support their peers both individually and in small groups, and use in-home visits or phone calls to regularly communicate with those they serve. Specifically, they can:

- Help their peers identify and build on their strengths.
- Help peers create individual service plans based on recovery goals and steps to achieve those goals.
- Use recovery-oriented tools to help their peers address challenges.
- Assist others to build their own self-directed wellness plans.
- Cultivate their peer’s ability to make informed, independent choices.
- Assist their peers in gaining information and support from the community to make their goals a reality.

Peer Specialists can help address basic needs like food and shelter, or cope with mental health crises. They are present as a sounding board and a shoulder to lean on. Utilizing peers with shared experiences to deliver services is empowering, and research demonstrates its effectiveness.

Chad Meinholdt, Administrator of Specialized Services for WCS, further explains the Peer Specialist role. “Peer Specialists bring a new energy to the team through their passion for serving and going above and beyond to connect with people on a personal level,” he says. “The work being done by WCS Peer Specialists is impressive – and WCS is committed to expanding the use of Peer Specialists to further meet the needs of the community.”

Heather Mroch, a Certified Peer Specialist since 2012, describes her supervisory role as a program

Every day conversations with participants are an easy way for Peer Specialists to show support.

coordinator. “I offer support, guidance and feedback to the WCS peer staff providing direct services. I focus on making suggestions, as well as conveying creative ideas, to support our participants in discovering answers to the most difficult questions in their lives,” she explains. “Through my other role as a Parent Peer Specialist, and mother of children with disabilities, my own struggles have been given meaning and purpose – and are provisions of hope for others. Giving space for self-determination through witnessing is a peer super power!” she adds. “Presence, space and relationships are healing gifts we offer in peer services.”

Peer Specialists undergo a rigorous training program to become certified. They must complete 40 hours of training, pass a State exam for certification, and take at least 20 hours of ongoing training every two years to maintain their certification.

Many WCS programs benefit from employing Peer Specialists. They work as part of a team in the following areas:

- **TCM** (Targeted Case Management): Ongoing case management for people with severe and persistent mental health needs.
- **CSP** (Community Support Program): For participants with co-occurring severe and persistent mental health needs and substance use needs.
- **RSC** (Recovery Support Coordination): For those receiving substance use treatment and other services from Milwaukee County.
- **CORE** (Coordinated Opportunities for Recovery and Empowerment): Supporting youth and young adults who have experienced their first episode of psychosis (FEP).
- **CLASP** (Community Linkages and Stabilization Program): Serving individuals discharged from inpatient care or at risk of hospitalization.
- **ED2R** (Emergency Department to Recovery): Addressing needs of those suffering a drug overdose who visit emergency departments.
- **Keys to Independence**: A supported

housing program to maintain living independently.

- **CCS** (Comprehensive Community Services Youth and Adult): Supporting youth, young adults and adults enrolled in CCS.
- **OCA** (Office of Community Affairs): A peer-only team working with people at the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division.
- **Drug Treatment Court-Waukesha County** Peers work with people as an alternative to prosecution for drug and alcohol charges.

Peer Specialist services are available for people who are referred from the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division and through various youth and adult programs. Some are direct referrals from ER departments or other social service agencies. Peer Specialist Cassie Krystosek shares her passion for the work this way: “Let me stand with you while we work through this together.” Peer Specialists stand ready with a dedicated commitment to their roles – and their services are critical to those in need, while they continue with their own personal recoveries.

According to WCS Executive Director Clarence Johnson, “One of the most incredible discoveries that WCS has made during the past several years is the value that Peer Support brings to the work of the organization. Utilizing the lived experiences of individuals who are actively engaged in recovery offers so many benefits. Thanks to the dedication and passion of key leaders at WCS, we have seen tremendous growth and utilization of Peer Specialists.”

Although many social service agencies have Peer Specialists, WCS has by far the most – and they have taken Peer Specialists to the next level of service. Johnson sums it up by saying, “I am truly inspired by the work of our Peers. I admire their desire and willingness to share their life experiences, and to help others on the road to recovery. The gifts they bring are the gifts of hope in recovery and wellness.”



What Is a Peer Specialist?

Peer Specialists are trained professionals who bring “lived experiences” to their role of supporting those who struggle with mental health needs, trauma or substance use. Relying on their own personal experiences, Peer Specialists can directly relate to those they serve to facilitate recovery. Wisconsin is a leader in Peer Specialist Services, with more than 1,400 Certified Peer Specialists who are making a difference every single day.

History of Peer Support

The beginnings of peer support can be traced back to the late 18th century in a psychiatric hospital in France, where recovered patients were employed as hospital staff. They were praised for being “gentle, honest and humane.” However, the mental health profession was slow to implement the role of peer support, though there were examples in the 1960s. Then, with the closing of public mental health hospitals in the 1970s, individuals were discharged into the community without services/support. They began forming their own peer and mutual support groups to assist their continued recovery, and became empowered. This led to an increase of peer services in the 1980s. WCS implemented peer services in 2016, and since then, the program has grown rapidly. Currently, WCS has more than 40 Peer Specialists.

As result of a national focus on recovery services, and the documented success of peer specialist services, the use of peers in Wisconsin continues to grow – and peer specialists are in high demand. There are currently more than 550 Certified Peer Specialists in Wisconsin, with 125 in Milwaukee County (2018 report).



IN MEMORY OF JOHN PAWASARAT

In early 2020, Milwaukee lost a true leader with the passing of John Pawasarat. John was known for his research about employment barriers, and the challenges faced by low-income drivers who have suspended or revoked driver's licenses. Through his research, the Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability (CDLRE) was established. His ongoing research and policy recommendations illuminated, and ultimately helped to reduce, the struggles of thousands of Milwaukee residents without a valid driver's license. Through the years, John's research, along with that of his wife, Lois Quinn, has influenced funders and policymakers alike, which in turn has contributed to CDLRE's success in obtaining significant legislative changes, crucial funding and national recognition.

Many people honored John's life and memory by making a gift to WCS. They include:

Margo Anderson
Jane Berg
Mary Bills
Karen Borresen
Michael & Erica Brown
Paige Brown
Thomas Callan
John & Jan Carroll
Charles Clark
Candece Cycling
Jean Day
Marianne Di Ulio
Christine Dobbe
Howard Ellis & Geri Miller
Jane Fojtik
Regina Frank
David Giles
Robert & Patricia Graf
Jill Haas
Kathleen Hart
Stephen Holt
Allen Jacobson
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Daniel Kaemmerer &
Patricia Holland
Elizabeth Kelley
Julie Kerkisick
Joanne Kim
Herb & Joette Koene
Jane & Kristen LeCapitain
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Lisa Morrow
Cynthia Oblatz
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John Sundquist
Robert Tatalovich
Elizabeth Thiel
Michael & Paula Thoms
Holly Van Hecke
Kathleen Van Hecke
Dennis & Barbara Wagner



Through case management and hands-on legal services, the Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability (CDLRE) has helped more than 4,000 people obtain a valid driver's license since 2007.

Photo courtesy of WCS November 2018





THE WCS COMMITMENT

As we work in the community, WCS is committed to providing children, youth, adults and families with quality services that are effective and welcoming. Our approach to service delivery is very person-centered, culturally competent, strengths-based and responsive. WCS is dedicated to promoting services and approaches in the broader community that provide hope and opportunity for people with substance use, mental health or co-occurring needs. WCS promotes a culture of accountability that empowers individuals to meet their own goals and contribute to a strong and healthy community – and focuses services, partnerships and advocacy on the underlying causes of involvement in the child welfare, justice and behavioral health systems. WCS ensures that development of its programs and services is based on quality data, evidence of effectiveness, research and the voices of the people we serve.

2019-2020

The past year has seen many changes, and the world has evolved with each one. We, at WCS, are proud to say that through it all we have continued to remain strong. Many of the services we provide are not only essential, but often times critical in supporting the individuals we serve, and maintaining and improving community safety. WCS staff members have worked tirelessly to deliver program services with sensitivity and care as they carry out vital responsibilities. During these unprecedented times, the efforts that we make daily have created a positive impact for those we serve. As we look toward the future, WCS will stay strong and steadfast in creating every opportunity possible for people to overcome adversity.

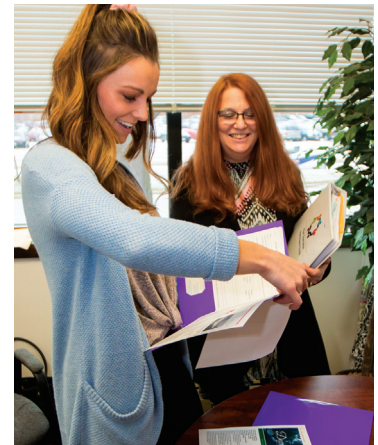


Photo courtesy of WCS August 2017

Peer Specialists complete the required 40 hours of training and pass the State exam for certification. WCS has the capacity to provide this internally.

WCS RECEIVES MUTUAL OF AMERICA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD



Photo courtesy of WCS November 2019

In November 2019, the WCS Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability (CDLRE) was honored to be one of three programs across the country that was recognized by Mutual of America (MOA) with a Community Partnership Award. A delegation from Milwaukee representing the partners of the CDLRE (Legal Action of Wisconsin, the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Technical College, and WCS) ventured to New York City to accept the award that recognizes excellent partnerships between non-profit organizations and public, private and other social-sector organizations. As part of the award, WCS received a program grant of \$25,000.

Above: Accepting the award on behalf of WCS were (top row) Artis Landon-WCS CRS Administrator and Dee Dee Peterson-Executive Director of Legal Action of Wisconsin. Front: Susan Lund-Attorney at Legal Action of Wisconsin, Janice Falkenberg-MATC VP and General Counsel, Clarence Johnson-WCS Executive Director, Taffie Foster Toney-WCS CDLRE Lead Case Manager, and Jay Tucker-WCS Director of Workforce Initiatives & Supportive Services.



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Keith Stanley - Near West Side Partners/BID #10

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Helen Bader School of Social Welfare

Staci Young - Medical College of Wisconsin

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Clarence Johnson

Associate Executive Director

Sara Carpenter

Chief Financial Officer

Kristine Radeztsky

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2019-2020 VOLUNTEERS

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Ramona Larson

Natasha Lindenstruth

Rhonda Litschauer

Jim Murray

Don Myles

Kim Olson

Jessica Poetch

Cassie Rivers

Mike Schlaman

Denny Selby

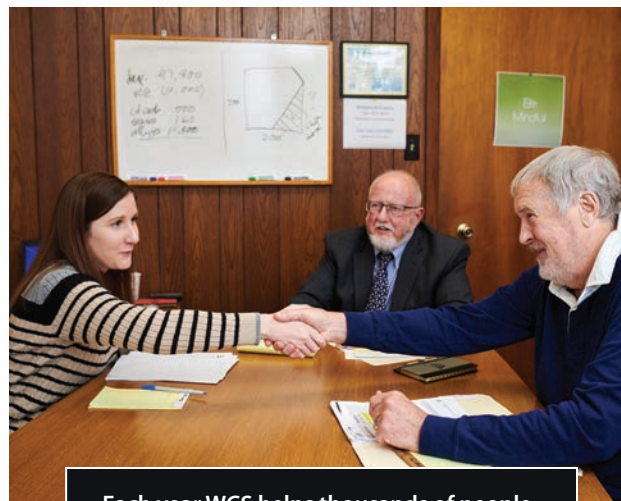
Allen Sells

Jared Siglan

Nancy Tavares

Elizabeth Torez

Wendy Weinfurter



Each year WCS helps thousands of people involved in the justice system. Some of these individuals receive assistance from the WCS Mediation and Restorative Justice Center to help resolve a conflict.

Photo courtesy of WCS November 2018

EXCITING NEWS ON THE HORIZON

Sneak
Preview:
NEW
in 2021!

The commitment of Wisconsin Community Services to actualize its mission of working with individuals to overcome adversity will be more evident in the years to come. WCS is close to finalizing a purchase of the Employ Milwaukee building located in the City of Milwaukee at 27th and North Avenue. For the past several years, WCS has leased space in the building to accommodate staff and the growth of WCS programs. The building location, in the heart of the City of Milwaukee, is an excellent venue to provide programs and services to meet the emerging needs of our community. Employ Milwaukee will remain in the building, and we are delighted with the prospect of working more closely with them as a key partner to improve the life and employment prospects of Milwaukee County residents. WCS will continue to own its building at 37th Street and Wisconsin Avenue, where key programs will remain.



Addressing the Need for Safe and Affordable Housing for those Served by WCS

Part of our vision for the future includes a partnership with CommonBond Communities and TEAM Management to create an attractive Gateway Community to Milwaukee's Near West Side. These organizations have complimentary missions and have made significant investments in the Near West Side. They will be collaborating to create a community with supportive services that will serve a diverse population in a physically attractive setting. A proposed mixed-use housing development will be constructed on the north side of Wisconsin Avenue, west of 37th Street and just to the east of the Menomonee River Valley.

The project will feature:

- 1 A range of housing options including supportive housing, affordable and market rate in a variety of unit sizes.
- 2 Enhanced services provided by WCS and CommonBond to the residents of the Gateway community, and through WCS to a broader set of Milwaukee-area residents.
- 3 Access to services and amenities like a community center and an on-site pharmacy.

Watch for more information about this project in 2021.

HELP TO ENCOURAGE AND EMPOWER

Are you looking to be a part of the change for a better tomorrow?



Why not make a simple donation to WCS and help us further our mission in creating opportunities for others to overcome adversity? Every day our participants experience difficulties in their lives and look for assistance in defeating them. A gift from you can help WCS provide the necessary support to encourage and empower these individuals during these challenging times.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION, please visit wiscs.org or mail your donation to WCS, Development Department, 3732 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 320, Milwaukee, WI 53208. A list of needed items is also available on the WCS website (wiscs.org) if you prefer to shop or to donate specific items.

HEART OF CANAL FUNDING

We won! We won! WCS was honored and grateful to be one of the 20 randomly selected organizations chosen as a 2019 Heart of Canal Street charity in the

Potawatomi Hotel & Casino 2019 Heart of Canal Street community program. The \$36,532 donation provided youth with supportive services through Project Excel, a collection of community-based, youth-serving programs that WCS established in 1987.

Project Excel works with youth who are involved in the legal system and their families. The money from the Heart of Canal Street program helped Project Excel provide youth with unique, strength-based opportunities to build skills through the Positive Youth Justice (PYJ) model, using positive youth development to address challenges facing today's youth. Youth develop resilience in the areas of health, education, employment/work, relationships, community, and creativity – six of the PYJ domains.

It was Potawatomi's most successful year of this 26-year contest to date, raising \$1,195,964 to help improve the lives of children in Southeastern Wisconsin!



2019-2020 DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

INDIVIDUALS

Dr. Robert & Carol Bartos
Marge Bell
Steve Brachman
Barbara Caprile
Sara Carpenter
Jacob Corr & Melissa Karls
Catherine D'Alessio
Honorable Mac Davis
Frederic & Anne Dunn
John & Tamara Dunn
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Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece
Carol Talatzko
Donnie Tolbert
James Dimitri Topitzes
Mary Waas

BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

160 Driving Academy
Athena Communications
Barricade Flasher Services, Inc.
Benedict Center
BestEd Business
Cedar Lake Improvement Association
Chocolate Sommelier
Colectivo Coffee
Community Insurance Information Center
Fess Properties LLC
Financial Solutions

Flossy Trucking LLC
Heller Consulting, Inc.
Historic Concordia Neighbors
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Infinity
Infinity Benefit Solutions
James Imaging Systems
K & KB Inc., DBA Culver's
Koch Charitable Trust
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M3 Insurance Solutions
Mersberger Financial Group
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Mortle Trucking, Inc
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Potawatomi Hotel & Casino
Quorum Architects, Inc.
Saving Others for Archie
Saz's State House
SCRAM Systems
Scrub 'n Shine
Town of Genesee
Variety the Children's Charity of Wisconsin
Vistelar
Voya Financial
Wipfli, LLP
Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation
WRTP/Big Step

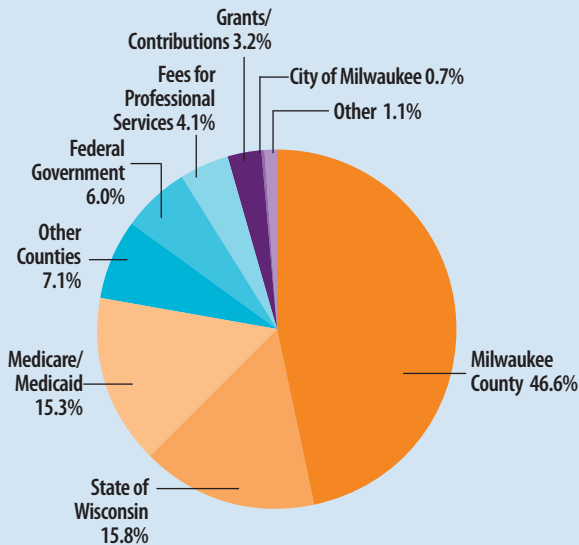
2019 FINANCIAL REPORT

Year ending December 31, 2019

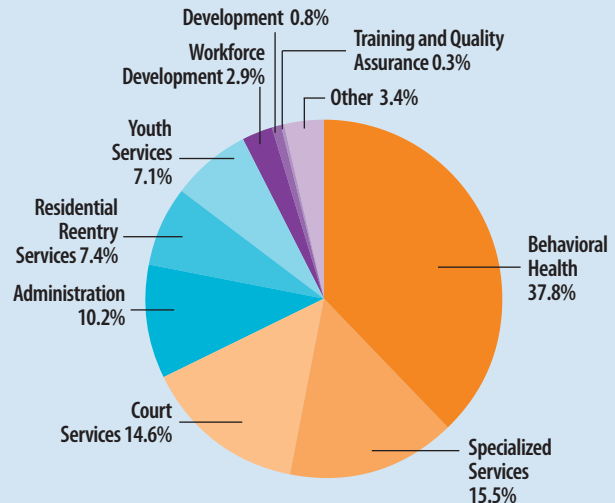
TOTAL INCOME \$32,138,153

TOTAL EXPENSES \$31,539,957

WHERE FUNDS COME FROM



WHAT FUNDS PAY FOR



2019-2020 FUNDING SOURCES

Behavioral Consultants, Inc.
 Brewers Community Foundation
 City of Milwaukee: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
 Employ Milwaukee
 Greater Delafied Community Fund, Inc.
 Greater Milwaukee Foundation
 Jefferson County
 Kenosha County Sheriff's Department
 Manitowoc County
 Maximus
 Medicaid/Medicare
 Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC)
 Milwaukee County Combined Court-Related Operations
 Milwaukee County: Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)
 Milwaukee County: DHHS - Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS)
 Milwaukee County: DHHS - Behavioral Health Division (BHD)
 Milwaukee County: DHHS - Housing Division
 Milwaukee County: DHHS - Wraparound
 Milwaukee County: House of Correction (HOC)
 Mutual of America Foundation

ResCare, Inc.
 State of Wisconsin: Department of Children & Families (DCF)
 State of Wisconsin: Department of Corrections (DOC)
 State of Wisconsin: DHS - Division of Health Care and Treatment Services
 State of Wisconsin: DHS - Division of Mental Health Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS)
 U.S. Courts: Probation and Pretrial Services
 U.S. Department of Justice: Bureau of Prisons (BOP)
 United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County (UWGMWC)
 Washington County
 Waukesha County: Criminal Justice Collaborating Council (CJCC)
 Waukesha County: Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
 Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ)
 Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (W RTP)
 Wisconsin Voices for Recovery (WIVFR)
 Women & Girls Fund of Waukesha
 Word of Hope Ministries



ON THE BACK COVER: Powerful community connection sessions, focused on life and recovery, are led daily by the dedicated staff at Sankofa House.



PROUDLY SERVING
THE COMMUNITY WITH
JUSTICE, RESPECT, INTEGRITY AND
THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE



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