



The ripple effect
COMMON GROUND 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Building momentum to create change



It all starts with a single action.
A single hand raised.
A single conversation.
A single step forward.

And every action causes a reaction — a ripple effect that grows, spreading the spirit of cooperation and collective power.

We make waves, raising issues to the surface, disrupting the status quo. We gain momentum, inspiring others to join in, growing progressively louder. We create movements that influence attitudes and improve the landscape. We transform our community and our lives — together.

Todo comienza con una sola acción.
Una sola mano levantada.
Una sola conversación.
Un solo paso adelante.

Y cada acción provoca una reacción: un efecto dominó que crece, difundiendo el espíritu de solidaridad, determinación y poder colectivo.

Generamos olas, sacando asuntos a la superficie, interrumpiendo el orden establecido. Ganamos impulso, inspirando a otros a unirse, creciendo más fuertes. Creamos movimientos que influyen las actitudes y mejoran el paisaje. Transformamos nuestra comunidad y nuestras vidas — juntos.

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

It began as a ripple

This campaign began nearly a decade ago as we were working to recover foreclosed homes in the Sherman Park neighborhood. We saw that Washington High School's practice field was in rough shape. The football team had to worry about potholes and flooding, and track teams had to go to another school just to practice outdoors.

Then we heard that the Milwaukee Bucks wanted public money for a new arena. We said, "Sweet! We love the Bucks. What about the kids in our community? We love them, too. Where is their public money? Where do they get to play?" So Common Ground pushed for playgrounds and athletic fields to be included in the package of public dollars that helped fund the Fiserv Forum.

We began organizing in 2015 to revitalize the practice field and track, which is so central to the lives of the students and neighborhood residents. After seven long years of relentless dedication and no small amount of collaboration, the new field opened in July — in time for the 2023 high school football season. The kids are thrilled. The community is excited.

This new field represents hope, renewal and is a celebration of Washington High School and the Sherman Park Neighborhood.

We did it.



"This field represents hope, renewal, a celebration of our school and our neighborhood."

Alexander Hardy, Sherman Park resident, member of Community Baptist and the Common Ground Strategy Team



"Common Ground, thank you so very much for getting the job done. Sherman Park residents deserve and need more investment to ensure our community thrives."

Mabel Lamb, Executive Director, Sherman Park Neighborhood Association



"It's a major jump. The sky's the limit. Get your popcorn ready."

Carlos Rattler, Washington High School Football Coach

Esta campaña comenzó hace casi una década mientras que trabajábamos para recuperar viviendas embargadas en el vecindario de Sherman Park. Vimos que el campo de práctica de la Escuela Secundaria Washington estaba en mala condición. El equipo de fútbol americano tenían que preocuparse por los agujeros y las inundaciones, y los equipos de atletismo tenían que ir a otra escuela sólo para practicar al aire libre.

Luego nos enteramos que los Milwaukee Bucks querían dinero público para un nuevo estadio. Dijimos: "¡Bueno! Amamos a los Bucks. ¿Qué pasa con los niños de nuestra comunidad? Nosotros también los amamos. ¿Dónde está su dinero público? ¿Dónde pueden jugar? Así que Common Ground presionó para que se incluyeran parques infantiles y campos deportivos en el paquete de dólares públicos que ayudaron a financiar el Foro Fiserv.

En el 2015 comenzamos a organizar para revitalizar el campo de práctica y la pista, que son fundamentales para la vida de los estudiantes y residentes del vecindario. Después de siete largos años de dedicación incesante y colaboración, el nuevo campo se inauguró en julio, a tiempo para la temporada de fútbol americano de la escuela secundaria del 2023. Los niños están emocionados. La comunidad está emocionada.

Este nuevo campo representa esperanza, renovación y es una celebración de la Escuela Secundaria Washington y el Vecindario Sherman Park.

¡Lo logramos!



FORWARD SCHOLARS

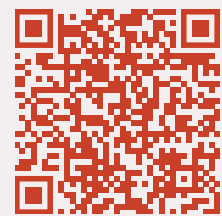
Expanding possibilities

Imagine how small your world would be if you struggled to read. Think of the paths lost to you, all the doors that would never have opened. Studies show that students who cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to not graduate high school.

Our kids are too important for us to sit by and let them struggle, so we started this unique tutoring program. Community-focused and volunteer-driven, this program reaches K5-3 students in select MPS schools who are not yet reading at grade level. Paired with a caring adult, these children receive individualized, one-on-one instruction at school during the school day.

When kids learn to read, especially those who have struggled, they learn resilience and determination. They become confident in their ability to overcome obstacles. Most importantly, kids learn they can influence the direction of their own lives.

Learn More



“Reading is the basis of everything — math, science, history. It’s the essence of being able to succeed in school and thrive as an adult.”

Sharon Spencer, Forward Scholars Board Treasurer, volunteer tutor and member of Lamb of God Missionary Baptist Church



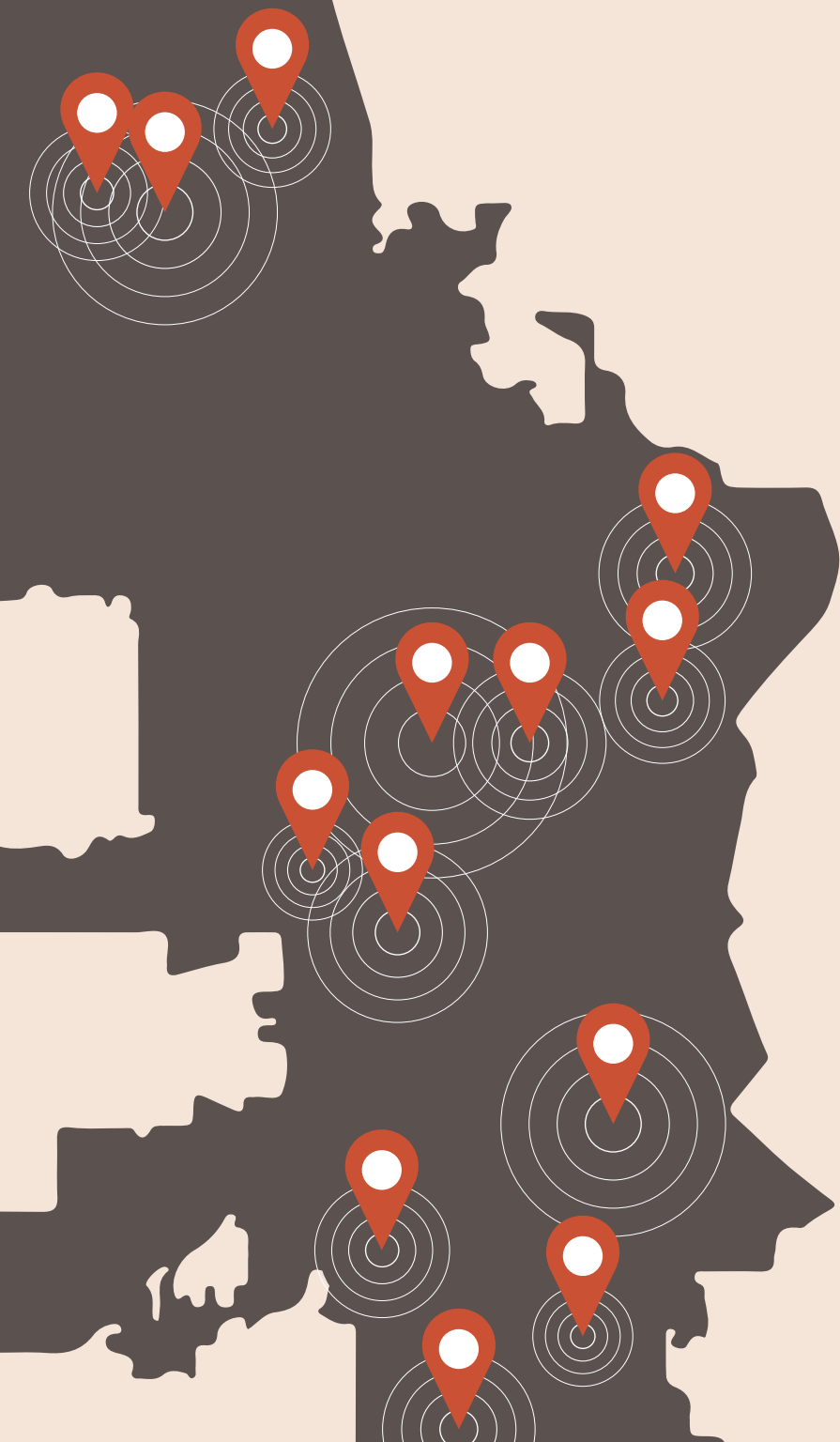
“From day one, Common Ground made it clear what we’re going to do together. All they wanted to hear was, yes, we will do this. And I want to say thank you for that pushing. Thank you for that pride, making sure our community and our schools have what they need.”

Dr. Keith Posley, Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools

Imagínese lo pequeño que sería su mundo si tuviera dificultades para leer. Piense en los caminos perdidos, en todas las puertas que nunca se abrieron. Los estudios muestran que estudiantes que no pueden leer con soltura al final del tercer grado tienen cuatro veces más probabilidad de no graduarse de la escuela secundaria.

Nuestros hijos son demasiado importantes para que nos quedemos sentados y dejarlos tener dificultad, por eso comenzamos este programa de tutoría único. Centrado en la comunidad e impulsado por voluntarios, este programa es para estudiantes de K5 a 3er grado que aún no están leyendo al nivel de su grado en ciertas escuelas de MPS. Junto con un adulto cariñoso, estos niños reciben instrucción 1-1 e individualizada en la escuela durante el día escolar.

Cuando los niños aprenden a leer, especialmente aquellos que han tenido dificultades, aprenden resiliencia y determinación. Desarrollan confianza en su capacidad para superar obstáculos. Lo más importante es que los niños aprenden que pueden influir en la dirección de sus propias vidas.



TENANTS UNITED

Amplifying voices

The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee has one job — provide safe, quality housing for people and families with lower incomes. HACM consistently fails at this in almost every way imaginable. Rats and bed bugs. Roaches. Mold. Heat that doesn't work — has never worked. Spurious late fees. Intimidation. Drugs and prostitution. The list goes on, and the same concerns echo throughout all of HACM's properties. It's a disgrace. Residents deserve better. Taxpayers deserve better. This has to change.

In March 2023, we launched our Tenants United campaign, working with HACM residents to build collective power, bring issues to the surface and hold HACM accountable.

So far residents have seen some improvements. However, HACM continues to fall short, to hide and hope that Common Ground and Tenants United will simply go away. They must not know us very well. We will continue to stand with residents and keep the pressure on HACM to give tenants a great place to live.



“Once we got together with Common Ground, we got things done. HACM realized that the tenants weren't being intimidated anymore.”

Roye "Chris" Logan, Mitchell Court resident and founding member of Tenants United

“I've learned that 10 voices are better than one. We're seeing action because we're a group. I love it.”

Florence Riley, Westlawn resident



La Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Milwaukee (“HACM”) tiene una tarea: proporcionar viviendas seguras y de calidad para personas y familias con ingresos bajos. HACM falla constantemente en casi todos los sentidos imaginables. Ratas y chinches. Cucarachas. Moho. Calefacción que no funciona. Recargos falsos. Intimidación. Drogas y prostitución. La lista sigue y las mismas preocupaciones existen en todas las propiedades de HACM. Es una vergüenza. Los residentes merecen algo mejor. Los contribuyentes de impuestos merecen algo mejor. Esto tiene que cambiar.

En marzo del 2023, lanzamos nuestra campaña Tenants United (Inquilinos Unidos), trabajando con los residentes de HACM para construir poder colectivo, identificar problemas, y responsabilizar a HACM.

Hasta ahora los residentes han visto algunas mejoras. Sin embargo, HACM sigue fallando, ocultándose y esperando que Common Ground y Inquilinos Unidos simplemente desaparezcan. Obviamente, no nos conocen bien. Seguiremos luchando con los residentes y manteniendo la presión sobre HACM para proveer a los inquilinos excelentes lugares para vivir.



“I hope that we can get every HACM property united together as one and really be a strong coalition of our own as part of Common Ground. We're taking charge and making HACM accountable.”

Patrick Murphy, Lincoln Court resident

RECKLESS DRIVING

Making inroads



“I’m 18. With Universal Driver’s Ed, I would have a car by now. I would have the freedom to drive to all the things I need to do and want to do, instead of relying so much on others.”

Jahmoris Torres Currin,
Pathways High School student



“Common Ground is very focused and very committed to their programs, and they’re open to others’ input. They’re willing to work with people to solve problems together.”

Andrew Franken, President of Wisconsin
Insurance Alliance.



We definitely jump-started this engine. In listening session after listening session, Milwaukee residents told us they were scared sick and overwhelmingly tired of reckless driving. One part of the problem? Many kids in Milwaukee don’t have access to affordable driver’s education because they don’t know the rules of the road.

That’s why Common Ground has been campaigning to make driver’s education affordable for all Milwaukee students, efforts that have had a ripple effect across the state. When the Wisconsin Insurance Alliance heard what we were doing they wanted to collaborate. They urged legislators to use part of the \$26 million it pays in industry fees to fund driver education programs, not just in Milwaukee but across the state. And where’d the WIA get that idea? Not to toot our own horn, but it was from us.

As momentum continues, we are close to getting this passed in the state legislature. Once approved, \$6 million annually will go toward driver’s education for all Wisconsin kids who are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

We know this is one piece of the puzzle and won’t completely solve Milwaukee’s reckless driving problem. Common Ground will continue to bring solutions, collaborating for the common good to create powerful and positive change.

Definitivamente pusimos en marcha este motor. En muchas sesiones de escucha, residentes de Milwaukee nos dijeron que estaban terriblemente asustados y cansados de los conductores imprudentes. ¿Será esta una parte del problema? Muchos jóvenes de Milwaukee no conocen las reglas de tránsito porque no tienen acceso a educación vial accesible.

Es por eso que Common Ground ha estado luchando para que la educación vial sea accesible para todos los estudiantes de Milwaukee, esfuerzos que han tenido un efecto dominó en todo el estado. Cuando la Alianza de Seguro de Wisconsin (“WIA”) se enteró de lo que estábamos haciendo, quisieron colaborar. Instaron a los legisladores a dedicar parte de los \$26 millones que paga en tarifas de la industria para financiar programas de educación vial, no sólo en Milwaukee sino en todo el estado. ¿Y de dónde sacó la WIA esa idea? De nosotros.

A medida que sigue el impulso, estamos cerca de lograr que esto se apruebe en la legislatura estatal. Una vez aprobado, se destinarán \$6 millones anuales a la educación vial para todos los jóvenes de Wisconsin que sean elegibles para almuerzo gratis o a precio reducido.

Sabemos que esta es sólo una pieza del rompecabezas y no resolverá por completo el problema de conductores imprudentes en Milwaukee. Common Ground seguirá aportando soluciones, colaborando por el bien común para crear un cambio poderoso y positivo.

COMMON GROUND WORKS

Expanding our impact

How do we break the relentless and systemic cycle of poverty and all the trauma that comes with it? What will it take to uplift Milwaukee's neglected communities?

This year we are launching Common Ground Works, a comprehensive and compassionate workforce development organization inspired by Cara Collective in Chicago. After years of planning, our vision is about to become reality.

In 2023 we established a board of directors, raised over \$1.5M in seed money and secured contributions from employer-partners. CGW is in the process of hiring our first executive director who will work with the board to hire staff and bring this initiative to life.

The program will help traditionally overlooked talent find stable employment, help them overcome personal and systemic obstacles, and guide them towards careers in manufacturing, the trades and health care.

The ripple effect of this program means stronger families, healthy communities, and, ultimately, an economically vibrant and racially just Milwaukee we can be proud of.

“*The only way that people can change their economic status is to have a job where they can grow and take care of their families.*”

*Dorothy Walker-Cooper,
CGW Board Member,
member of Community
Baptist and former Dean
of MATC's School
of Technology &
Applied Sciences*



¿Cómo rompemos el ciclo implacable y sistémico de la pobreza y todo el trauma que conlleva? ¿Qué se necesitará para mejorar las comunidades descuidadas de Milwaukee?

Este año lanzamos Common Ground Works (“CGW”), una organización de desarrollo laboral integral y compasiva inspirada del Colectivo Cara en Chicago. Después de años de planificación, nuestra visión está a punto de hacerse realidad.

En el 2023, establecimos una junta directiva, recaudamos más de \$1.5M en capital inicial y aseguramos contribuciones de socios empleadores. CGW está en el proceso de contratar al primer director ejecutivo, quien trabajará con la junta para contratar personal y darle vida a esta iniciativa.

“*One of the major impacts of Common Ground Works will be multi-generational wealth through employment, home ownership and stable communities.*”

*Al Washko,
Member of Saint Francis
of Assisi Parish*



El programa ayudará a los talentos tradicionalmente ignorados a encontrar un empleo estable, ayudarlos a superar obstáculos personales y sistémicos, y guiarlos hacia carreras en la manufactura, los oficios y servicios de salud.

El efecto dominó de este programa será familias más fuertes, comunidades saludables y, fundamentalmente, un Milwaukee económicamente vibrante y racialmente justo del que podamos estar orgullosos.



Finances

What's uncommon about Common Ground? We're 87% self funded, which means we're not beholden to public officials or special interest groups.

¿Qué es diferente de Common Ground? Somos autofinanciados en un 87%, lo que significa que no estamos en deuda con funcionarios públicos ni grupos de intereses especiales.

REVENUE

Member Unit Dues	\$110,000
Friends Donors	\$135,000
Annual Report/Website Sponsors	\$20,000
Grants	\$45,000
Assembly Sponsors	\$30,000
Investment and earned income	\$6,000
TOTAL	\$346,000

EXPENSES

Total Personnel	\$257,462
Travel	\$10,000
Training Contract	\$48,000
Staff/Leadership Development	\$4,000
Action/Events	\$5,000
Social Media	\$3,000
Supplies, Printing	\$10,000
Audit	\$4,000
Insurance	\$3,500
Miscellaneous	\$1,000
TOTAL	\$345,962

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 Good Life At Home
 Delta Dental
 Self-Help Federal Credit Union

Invisible Reality Ministries
 The James Company
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 Green Homeowners United
 Educators Credit Union
 Employ Milwaukee

