



BUILDING ON COMMON GROUND

TRANSFORMING LIVES. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- Bethel-Bethany United Church of Christ
- Capitol Drive Lutheran (ELCA)
- Common Ground Healthcare Cooperative
- Community Baptist Church
- Congregation Beth Jehudah
- Congregation Emanu-El B'Ne Jeshurun
- CORE El Centro/United Voices
- East Siders for Common Ground
- First Congregational Church (UCC)
- First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee
- Flyda Travel
- Gesu Parish
- Hanson Dodge Creative
- Heritage Presbyterian Church
- Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church
- Immanuel Presbyterian Church
- Inhabit
- Invisible Reality Ministry
- Islamic Society of Milwaukee
- JAM Community Builders
- Liga Juvenil Garcia
- Lloyd Barbee Montessori School
- Marquette University for Common Ground
- Mercy Housing Lakefront
- Mt Calvary Lutheran Church (LCMS)
- Mount Mary University
- Mt Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church
- Neighborhood Children's Sports League
- New Life Baptist Church
- OK Group
- Pilgrim United Church of Christ
- Praise Temple
- Project Concern
- St Anthony on the Lake
- St Catherine's Parish
- St Luke's Lutheran Church (ELCA)
- St Mark's Episcopal Church
- St Martin of Tours Parish
- St Paul's Episcopal Church
- South Side Caucus
- The James Company
- Tipppecanoe Presbyterian Church
- Unitarian Universalist Church West
- Unity Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Village Church (ELCA)
- Washington County for Common Ground
- Wauwatosa Presbyterian

SPRING ELECTION PLAN:

GRASSROOTS PLATFORM MAYORAL FORUM NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS



Common Ground will not endorse or oppose any candidates for the Milwaukee spring municipal elections. Instead, our leaders will be learning where the candidates stand on our platform. This platform is based on grassroots DIG sessions with more than 600 city residents and thousands of conversations with potential voters.

We will hold a city-wide mayoral forum (March 15) and a number of smaller aldermanic forums across the city. At all of these meetings we will ask candidates where they stand on capital improvements in city neighborhoods. We call this campaign Milwaukee Neighborhoods Now (MNN).

As part of the campaign we will be going door-to-door in six city wards to hear residents' ideas for neighborhood improvements, to explain why turning out to vote builds power, and to inform voters about the new Wisconsin voting

procedures. We will invite people to the Mayoral Forum, and, of course, encourage them to vote. Our purpose is to convince sometimes reluctant voters that there is power in numbers.

"In some ways it doesn't matter who they vote for," Lead Organizer Keisha Krumm says. "We will work with the winners to get our platform items into the 2017 budget."

"If our efforts this spring increase turnout like we expect, we will be demonstrating the power of people who vote with neighborhood improvement on their minds."

The MNN campaign is rooted in Common Ground's dismay, some say anger, that the City Council found a way to give the Bucks \$80 million of public money for their new arena.

At our Jan. 26 Platform Convention, CG leader Bob Connolly put it this way: "The Bucks got their \$80 million—it's time that the neighborhoods get a new \$80 million."

Con't on p. 3

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
Mayoral Forum: March 15, 7-8:30
Spring Election: April 5

WHO IS COMMON GROUND?

Common Ground is an organization of organizations that work toward igniting positive change within the greater Milwaukee area. With the power of the collective voice, we have a strong history of facilitating significant and meaningful improvements within our community. If you're interested in supporting or joining Common Ground, please contact us at 414.751.0755.



COMMON GROUND WELCOMES NEW INTERNS IN SHERMAN PARK AND SOUTH SIDE

The two young men you may have noticed standing tall on the sidelines at our Jan. 26 Platform Convention, or hurrying about to help with multiple errands, were Common Ground's two new interns, Fidel Luna of Milwaukee and John Eshun of Madison. They are with us for six months, January through June, thanks to the Ed Chambers Organizing Scholarship program, funded by Chambers' estate. John (22) is a senior in criminal justice at UWM; Fidel (27) graduated from Riverside High School and had been combining jobs that require manual labor (e.g., auto body repair and woodworking) with volunteer youth work at churches. He's also been earning a few credits at a time at Milwaukee Area Technical College.

The two chatted last month with *BOCG* editor Virginia Chappell over lunch at the Public Market.

Q: How did you get connected with Common Ground?

John: "At the beginning of my senior year, I was starting to wonder what I really would do with my major. My brother is a friend of Allie's, and he urged me to talk with her. I shadowed her for a couple of days, went to a couple meetings, and decided to get involved."

Q: And you, Fidel?

Fidel: "Kathleen Patrón."

The answer was almost a given. As many Common Grounders know, Kathleen spent most of 2014 and 2015 in hundreds of individual relational meetings on the South Side, part of her work to organize there.

What are the Chambers Scholarships?

Ed Chambers, the Executive Director of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) for over 40 years, left a bequest that supports an internship program for the training of new organizers.

Like John, Fidel had been searching for what might be the next step in his career. "I'd taken seminars about leadership, and I was interested in being a difference. I had learned about liberation theology. I'd done lots of volunteer work for different groups and churches. But I wanted to see them work together."

Someone suggested that he and Kathleen talk. It was a good match. Fidel went to New York for Metro IAF training, where he learned a lot about power and cold anger v. hot anger. He became one of CG's leaders on the South Side.

Q: I remember talking to you at the South Side action at Kosciusko Park last summer, Aug. 2, when we launched the campaign for school bus safety.



CG interns Fidel Luna and John Eshun comparing notes at the Milwaukee Public Market

Fidel: "Yes! I did some translating. It was my first action, the first South Side action."

Q: What was your first action, John?

John: "The Sherman Park house where we went in and cleared out all the rubbish and sent it to the Bucks."

Q: What are your current responsibilities?

John: "I'm working in Sherman Park with Keisha as my supervisor. A typical week for me is 20 to 25 hours doing 8 to 12 relational meetings, attending staff meeting, and doing research on how the city works. I still have classes at UWM, too, so I can graduate."

Fidel: "For me, it's a 32-hour week plus sitting in on Bob's class at Marquette [about community organizing]. I report to Bob. My goal for these six months is to develop a core team of leaders within Liga Garcia."

John: "We're both on the Milwaukee Neighborhoods Now planning team, and we'll be meeting with [Common Council] candidates."

Q: What do you like best about the work you're doing with Common Ground?

John: "Relational meetings. You get down to the basics. You can't get a more humble approach than that—what they [conversation partner] do, what they think, what things do they need—then helping them. It just makes sense."

Cont'd on p. 4

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InDesign Production: Lily Stanicek

Editor/Writer: Virginia Chappell

info@commongroundwi.org



GRASSROOTS PLATFORM: WE DIG TO BUILD IDEAS

from p. 1



To come up with the \$80 million for the arena, city officials employed a great deal of creativity and innovation. Common Ground believes that Milwaukee neighborhoods deserve an equal investment of energy and dollars. Ensuring that this investment happens is the focus of the MMN campaign.

“We have to remind Milwaukee politicians who they work for and who they represent,” MNN campaign co-chair Maria Barker told the crowd.

The specifics of the MNN platform are being crafted from suggestions at small group “DIG” (Discovery in Groups) sessions held across the city in January by member organizations. Total participation was about 600 people. At these sessions, one question was discussed: “If we had \$100 million in Capital Improvement Funds for Milwaukee and your neighborhood, how should these funds be spent?” The focus on capital investment (as opposed to programs) was stressed to keep ideas parallel to the capital investment in the basketball arena.

When Common Ground analyzed the many, many suggestions from the DIG sessions, they found major recurring themes. Milwaukeeans want the deteriorating infrastructure of their neighborhoods rebuilt and investments made to improve and strengthen their community.

Needs expressed for **rebuilding and repairing** included better places for children to play, more home repair grants, demolition of blighted properties, better street and alley lighting, as well as street and sidewalk repairs.

Items listed for **investment and improvement** included an indoor South Side soccer facility, revitalization of the Center Street business district, and follow up on the Fair Play designs for athletic fields at Lloyd Barbee, Rufus King and Washington High School.

In the DIG sessions we listened to neighborhood people like you and me, *gente como nosotros*.

—Southside leader Maria Barker
Co-Chair, MKE Neighborhoods Now

Coming Up: Candidate Forums

Mayoral Candidates: Tues., Mar. 15, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Tripoli Shrine Center
3000 W. Wisconsin Ave, MKE

Aldermanic Contests: Watch for emails about forums in Districts 3, 4, 7, 8, 12 and 15

We will ask candidates where they stand on on three Common Ground campaigns: MKE Neighborhoods Now, Do Not Stand Idly By (gun issues), and Watershed.

Neighborhood Walks to Empower Neighborhoods

Between Feb. 20 and the April 5 election, Common Ground will conduct a door-to-door voter education campaign designed to increase potential voters’ engagement with local issues and thus increase election turnout.

From 600 Conversations to 4,000. At the platform convention, more than 260 Common Ground leaders voted to commit themselves to canvassing in two-hour shifts on six weekends between Feb. 20 and the election. If 20 volunteers talk with 20 voters during each of those shifts, they will multiply the 600 DIG conversations to over 4,000 conversations.

We will focus on six wards in three aldermanic districts where voting is typically much lower in municipal elections than in presidential elections: Districts 7 (open seat), 8 (Ald. Donovan), and 13 (Ald. Witkowski). In those wards typical voter turnout may be 300 to 500 voters; winning margins may be less than 100 votes. We know that for every 10 people we talk to and follow up, four will vote. That’s a lot!

John Eshun and Jennifer O’Hear present a skit at the Jan. 26 Platform Convention to model how the doorstep conversations will work.





Update: School Bus Stop Sign Ordinance

Hopes that the Common Council would vote on the ordinance in late January were dashed after the City Attorney ruled that the language in the ordinance made it impossible to enforce. Common Ground

leaders plan to work with the attorney's office and Alderman José Pérez to figure out what changes need to be made. South Side leaders may explore other options beyond the city level.

2015 Urban Ministry Award Presented to Common Ground

The prestigious Rev. Herbert Huebschmann Urban Ministry Award was presented to Common Ground at the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee's annual luncheon, Dec 3, 2015. The Rev. Michelle P. Mooney and Frank Finch III accepted the award for CG. The citation reads:

For highly effective grassroots organizing of congregations and other groups in the metro area in efforts ranging from creating a health care cooperative to getting banks, property management and mortgage firms to provide millions of dollars addressing housing issues.

The award is given annually to a congregation (or organization) whose involvement typifies projects and outreach that are making significant contributions to the quality of life in the greater Milwaukee area. Recent winners include CORE/El Centro (2014); the Milwaukee Christian Center (2013); Tikkun Ha-Ir, which integrates service actions with study of Jewish texts (2012); and our own member organization Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church (2011).

Rev. Huebschmann was the activist pastor from 1960 to 1978 of the former Friedens United Church of Christ at 13th and Juneau in Milwaukee. He was especially known for his advocacy of social justice, including marching for open housing with Father Groppi here in Milwaukee and for voting rights in Selma, Alabama.

The acrylic block with the award citation will be on rotating display at various CG member organizations.

Interns, from p. 2

Fidel: "Having the mentoring [is great]. The focus is on developing us as organizers and leaders. We don't want to just scream at someone to solve problems. CG has a structure for how to do this. Transform your anger and change it into cold anger. Be reasonable. Create relationships. Discover who you are and what you want to build."

Q: What's the hardest part?

John: "The structure and process—it doesn't necessarily come easily. You do the work and understand what you're doing and why. That makes it more meaningful."

Fidel: "The hardest part has been learning how to do the relational meetings. You want to learn how to do relationships, how to learn what concerns [the other person]."

John: "Planning actions, listening. You do it. But it takes a long time to get used to it. Training takes a long time."

Fidel: "There's an analogy to learning in a body shop. It's good to get paid to learn!"

John: "Or like when I was working for a tent and awning company. From setup to driving, it's better knowing **why** you do it that way."

Fidel: "As they say, 'No one's born knowing.'" He translates back to Spanish: *'Nadie nace sabiendo.'*"

Q: What are your long range goals?

John: "Work for Common Ground."

Fidel: "Become a full-time organizer, here or in Chicago."

COMMON GROUND ON THE ISSUES



At Marquette Law School on Jan. 27, from left: Mike Gousha, Jennifer O'Hear, Keisha Krumm.

