



**Nonprofit Center**

OF MILWAUKEE, INC.

# Urban Connection

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Celebrating 40 years of helping you help others

## The Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee, 1967-2007 **Born in a Time of Change**

By Christopher Miller

Our communal memories of the 1960s are dominated by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy assassinations, the “summer of love,” anti-war protests, violence, racial tension, and a wide variety of liberation movements. Such images of violence and struggle obscure another side of the 1960s. This other side -- a time when idealism led individuals to work for social change -- was sparked by the generation that came of age in the period after World War II. In Milwaukee history, the year 1967 neatly captures these twin themes of tumult and transformation. Milwaukee was struck by its local version of civil unrest taking place across the country, giving clear evidence of the tumult. But this year also saw Milwaukee spiritual leaders come together in response to these events, bearing witness to the idealism -- and social change -- that also flourished. One result of these changing times was the formation of a group that took the name Milwaukee Associates in Urban Ministry (MAUM).

The founding members of MAUM came together in an informal roundtable format starting in 1965 to discuss issues faced by each of their congregations. Their goal was to develop common responses to common problems -- a brave approach to take as other figures were leading the fight to overcome racial and geographic segregation throughout the city in housing, education, and public services. Milwaukee had seen tremendous demographic change and social upheaval since the end of World War II. The city's African-American population was about 8,000 in 1940, and had grown to over 62,000 by 1960. The growth of the black population and white resistance to black residential expansion created a wide variety of social conditions that contributed to the perception of the 1960s as violent, and also inspired the idealism of those who, instead of crises, saw opportunities to serve. In 1967, this group took the next step and developed a formal organization so that it could serve as a placement group for the federally funded VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) program.

Groups such as MAUM recognized the specifically urban dimension of what came to be known as the “urban crisis,” but they also harnessed the idealism of the Community-Based Organization movement that began to flower in the wake of such federally-based programs as the interstate highway system and urban renewal. Such large-scale projects had ignored individuals and communities, and in many places had exacerbated the social problems that they were designed to combat.

MAUM and other groups proposed to deal with the problems of poverty and the city in an entirely new way, by harnessing the power of individual idealism to create social change, as demonstrated through the VISTA program. Born in a time of change, MAUM's history is also one of constant change as it worked to remain relevant in a constantly shifting social, political, and bureaucratic environment.

### MAUM Transformed to MAUD (1970-75)

The growing demands of the VISTA program forced MAUM to rethink its structure as well as its central purpose. It had originally been formed by clergy who sponsored VISTA volunteers at projects that were primarily church-based. The group's stated purpose was “to promote and secure the active participation of clergy and lay people in coordinating and enlarging services to the inner-city through the churches.” Over time, however, the dimensions of urban problems, as well as the demands of the VISTA program pushed for the creation of an organization that existed separate

*continued on page 2*

save the date

#### Wednesday, October 3, 2007

The Accountability Imperative: Next Steps  
“Accountable Finance: Ensuring Integrity”  
Dottie Johnson, CPA, Lumity, a merger of the Chicago  
Nonprofit Finance Center and IT Resource Center  
8:30 a.m. – Noon

#### Friday October 12, 2007

Leaders Luncheon with Milwaukee County Executive  
Scott Walker  
Noon-1:30 p.m., Milwaukee Center for Independence

#### Saturday, November 3, 2007

“Make A Difference Day”  
8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Washington Park Senior Center

#### Thursday, December 6, 2007

14th Annual “Spirit of the Nonprofit Sector: A Holiday  
Celebration of Diversity”  
5:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m., Italian Community Center

# a history of helping others



Left to right: 40th Anniversary & Urban Picnic on July 20 at the Lakefront Terrace of the Transit Center, George Loxton, Vice President of the Board, Steve Adams (former board member) and Barbara Markoff (Collaborative Change Consulting), and Rolunda Dixon, President of the Board.

*continued from page 1*

from the churches. Prodded by local reality and organizational imperatives, the spiritually-focused MAUM was gradually transformed into the more secular Milwaukee Associates in Urban Development (MAUD), taking that name in 1972. MAUD also took a new mission that echoed the old: “to coordinate and enlarge social, cultural, and education services, including the placement of volunteer workers, in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Area.” With a budget of \$75,000 by 1975, MAUD’s leadership set out to do just that.

VISTA became the primary way in which MAUM/MAUD strove to carry out its mission, and the Milwaukee VISTA program was nationally known for its size and success. At its height, more than 70 volunteers per year were placed in Milwaukee. These individuals worked in a wide variety of projects, including community organizing, medical clinics, senior centers, transportation, and others. What quickly became clear was that VISTA and MAUD were self-perpetuating. Volunteers didn’t simply drift away after their time in the program; they developed life-long commitments to public service.

Linda Sunde, who became the executive director of MAUD and then Wisconsin state director for the Corporation for National and Community Service, began her service career as a VISTA volunteer in Milwaukee under MAUD. Other “alumni” of the MAUD/VISTA collaboration who have maintained strong ties to the Nonprofit Center include Congresswoman Gwen Moore, Milwaukee County Treasurer Dan Diliberti, former Milwaukee County Treasurer and current Board Member of the Milwaukee County League of Women Voters Dorothy Dean, former Wisconsin Representative and current Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of the Milwaukee Shepherd-Express Louis Fortis, MPS teacher Paula Holman, and Executive Director of the Marcus Center for the Performing

Arts Paul Mathews. These are just a few of the more than 450 individuals who spent time as VISTA volunteers placed by MAUD.

The result of this first era was a MAUD that was heavily involved in the VISTA program. A budget challenge during the Carter years gave warning that VISTA might not continue forever, but was resolved successfully. However, MAUD began to develop non-federal funding sources and to offer additional services to the nonprofit community, such as the emerging Resource Center. These efforts produced one of MAUD’s great strengths over the years—its corps of devoted member organizations, supportive local politicians, and increased public awareness of both MAUD and the nonprofit sector in general. In addition, the steady creation of experienced former VISTA participants created a pool of socially active individuals with whom ongoing collaboration would be possible.

## The Great VISTA Debate (1975-88)

The early VISTA challenge sent a clear message that MAUD had to develop other programs that leveraged its greatest strength. With this need in mind, the Resource Center was opened in 1977. The purpose of this center was to share MAUD’s fund of expertise with the burgeoning number of nonprofit organizations in the Milwaukee area. Placing VISTA volunteers continued to be a major activity, but the Resource Center let MAUD assist other agencies more directly, while providing additional benefits to members.

By the late 1970s, nonprofits had begun to encounter the problems characteristic of maturing volunteer organizations. Many had manpower, but lacked the expertise to comply with financial, fundraising, and tax-exempt reporting guidelines. Others sought expertise in recruitment and marketing, and some organizations wanted assistance running job searches as they hired their first full-time employees. The acquisition of local United Way funding for this project made the shift in strategy clear.

While the 1970s were a time of significant growth for the nonprofit sector, they were also characterized by a resurgent conservatism, which culminated in Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election as president. Reagan’s supporters brought with them a vision of a drastically reduced federal government. As a result, social welfare programs such as VISTA became a significant battleground in national politics. Due to continued budget

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struggles in the House and Senate, VISTA volunteers sometimes did not know if or when they would receive the stipend checks that paid their rent and utility bills. This atmosphere of uncertainty characterized the early 1980s and catalyzed a nationwide drive in support of the program.

MAUD featured prominently in this battle. At least in part due to the efforts of MAUD supporters, VISTA was reauthorized in 1983 for three more years through 1987. From MAUD's perspective, this success was a mixed blessing, as the national VISTA organization began to challenge MAUD's role as a sponsor. An extensive political battle followed that had the side effect of rallying significant community and political support for MAUD but also required tremendous expenditure of time and resources.

After much internal discussion, MAUD's directors decided to step aside as a VISTA sponsor and focus these resources on a new mission--providing assistance and training to organizations that applied on their own for VISTA volunteers. This significant change suggested a new role for MAUD that drew on already existing connections between MAUD and other institutions in the Milwaukee area. Collaborative efforts such as the Technical Assistance Fair further developed these links, and the decline of VISTA made such joint projects ever more important.

## MAUD becomes the Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee (1988-1995)

After the conclusion of the VISTA program, MAUD engaged in a strategic planning process to map out a new direction. That process identified certain legacies of the long-term involvement with the VISTA program, and it was on these competencies that the re-visioned MAUD hoped to capitalize. The new MAUD had a new mission to promote "the organizational effectiveness of nonprofit groups dealing with the broad scope of urban issues" and was "committed to the empowerment of nonprofit organizations through community-based decision-making, leadership development, effective management, resource sharing, and other collaborative efforts." In other words, MAUD was now determined to share the expertise it had developed over 20 years of service with the legion of smaller nonprofits who otherwise might not have had access to technical, leadership, or management training.

The new focus was followed by a new location at 750 N. 18th St. and the introduction of several new programs and the concept of a "center for nonprofits." In 1990, the School for Leaders was created, with the explicit goal of training community leaders and neighborhood residents in techniques of community organizing and resident empowerment—in many ways a continuation of the early VISTA legacy. The next step was the creation of the Neighborhood Data Center in 1991, which leveraged the

expertise of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee faculty and students to create a unique information source about the state of Milwaukee neighborhoods. The new services provided a significant incentive to membership, which had fluctuated between 75-100 members in the early 1990s. By 1995, more than 230 local agencies were part of MAUD, indicating the success of cultivating this membership-based alternative. Many different kinds of organizations, from social welfare agencies to artistic, found in MAUD the "ultimate resource" for their particular, yet diverse, needs as nonprofit organizations in the Milwaukee area.

As part of its new position as a provider to the nonprofit community, MAUD held the first annual "Celebration of Diversity: the Spirit of the Nonprofit Sector" event in 1994 as a way of raising morale in the wake of a series of national nonprofit scandals. As the nonprofit sector grew, MAUD sought ways to make both Milwaukee and the sector itself aware of this growth, and to provide assistance to this wide variety of organizations. In this regard, 1995 was an important year. MAUD convened a signature event entitled "Milwaukee Nonprofits: At the Crossroads" that examined the directions that nonprofits would have to take as the sector prepared for the 21st century, and MAUD prepared for a third decade of service. A major theme of the conference was the ability to adapt to change – a skill MAUD had already demonstrated several times throughout its past.

## Mergers and Acquisitions, the Growth of the Sector, and Buying a Home (1996-present)

In 1996, as part of a second round of strategic planning, MAUD changed its name to the now-familiar Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee. This decision was made as the organization fully embraced the role set out for it in the previous round of planning. The newly christened Nonprofit Center undertook significant surveys of its membership to determine what services were most needed by Milwaukee's nonprofits. These surveys laid out a program of expansion, movement, and program development that have carried the Nonprofit Center into the new millennium and resulted directly in the current lineup of services. MAUD's tradition of collaboration across sector lines was perpetuated by a number of projects during this period, most notably in its participation in the Neighborhood Strategic Planning program, which brought together city officials, planning experts, and community organization leaders at a series of conferences hosted by the Nonprofit Center, driven by a real devotion to maximum community participation in the planning process.

In the late 1990s, the Nonprofit Center began to look for a new home that would allow it to continue to provide affordable office space to nonprofit

*continued on page 4*



Left to right: Nick Patrinos receives the Volunteer of the Decade Award from Leigh Kunde ( Executive Director) and Rolunda Dixon, President of the Board. Todd Clausen (Data Center Coordinator) enjoys the celebration with Sheila Payton (from Congresswoman's Gwen Moore's office), and Peter Goldberg (Alliance for Children and Families). Peter Goldberg inspires with a keynote, "The Changing Landscape for the Nonprofit Sector". Gerry Coon (St. Francis Children's Center) interacts with fellow attendees.

# celebrating 40 years

continued from page 3

organizations as well as hosting the services that had become its staple. This goal was met with the move to the present facility at 2819 West Highland Boulevard. A stable financial future was ensured when this building was purchased outright and the Nonprofit Center could finally claim a permanent home for Milwaukee's nonprofit community.

Since 2002, new programs have been introduced regularly, including an organization merger with the Volunteer Center of Greater Milwaukee, the creation of the Jobs That Serve website in 2005, and the opening of the Finance Center in 2007. Each of these has become a major program area working alongside the Consulting and Training, Data Center, and MAP programs that MAUD/NPC had been offering since the late 1970s. The combined services have resulted in an operating budget of over \$1,000,000, more than thirteen times the 1975 budget of \$75,000.

Today's Nonprofit Center counts more than 350 organizations as members in 17 mission categories, a truly diverse array of groups that has helped to create a membership association that offers a wider variety of services than ever. Such success demonstrates the Nonprofit Center's continuing ability to adapt to the evolving challenges of Milwaukee's urban issues and to assist the people and organizations who are inspired to help others.

[www.nonprofitcentermilwaukee.org](http://www.nonprofitcentermilwaukee.org)

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The Nonprofit Center of Milwaukee promotes the interests and effectiveness of the nonprofit sector

## M I S S I O N ▼

through strengthening organizational capacity, expanding volunteerism and encouraging collaboration.

URBAN CONNECTION LAYOUT BY DESIGN PLUS GRAPHICS. PHOTOS BY NICK PATRINOS.

*It's the 40th Anniversary today  
Celebrating with an Urban Picnic they say  
We are in a fine happy mood  
With this jazz and food  
For the Nonprofit Center - "Hurray!"*

URBAN PICNIC LIMERICK FROM HARRY FRANKE



Harry Franke ( Dorothy Inbusch Foundation) shares a special limerick written for the occasion with Angela McCullough, Secretary of the Board, looking on, and The Dixie Barons, a performing group from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, entertain with Dixieland Jazz.

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