



# CENTRO DE LA COMUNIDAD UNIDA UNITED COMMUNITY CENTER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **CELEBRATING 45 YEARS OF SERVICE & BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES BY CREATING A COLLEGE CULTURE**

*Anniversary Celebration will honor Friends of the Hispanic Community & Badger Mutual Wall of Fame Awardees and Commemorate Expanded Partnerships to Benefit Students*

**MILWAUKEE — April 15, 2015** – In the United Community Center's (UCC) 45<sup>th</sup> year, the organization is enhancing its dedication to creating a college culture in conjunction with the students and families of Bruce-Guadalupe Community School (BGCS). While most students make decisions about which college they will attend in their senior years of high school, select BGCS eighth graders are making that pledge before they even graduate middle school through unique collaborations with **Alverno College**, **Carroll University**, and **Marquette University**. This kind of leg up on the college application process would be a great advantage to any student pursuing next steps in academia, but since many BGCS students are the first in their families to pursue a college education, this level of hands-on connection holds an even greater importance.

**Alverno College** will offer the opportunity for young women graduating from Bruce-Guadalupe to gain early enrollment to their undergraduate programs beginning with the BGCS Class of 2016. BGCS and Alverno share the mission of aiding students' personal and professional development.

UCC announced a partnership with **Carroll University** last fall that will give select BGCS students guaranteed acceptance to the university's health science programs following students' eighth grade graduation (contingent on students' academic success in high school) through a program called Preparing and Advancing Students for Opportunities in Science (PASOS). This program is specifically intended to identify and meet the need for bilingual and bicultural healthcare providers in the community, and the first sixteen students participating in the program received certificates at a meet and greet with Carroll faculty and staff on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>.

A new partnership with **Marquette University's Opus College of Engineering** will offer similar opportunities for students beginning with the BGCS Class of 2016, allowing for select qualified students to gain early admission to Marquette's Engineering program. Participants will receive support from the university via professional advising, career exploration, financial assistance, the opportunity to shadow engineering students and professionals, and access to academic and career fairs.

UCC has focused on the community's needs since it was founded as "The Spot" in 1970, as its growing and vast programming continued to expand each decade. With the acquisition and development of BGCS beginning in the early 1990's, UCC took on the opportunity to bolster educational opportunities for residents of Milwaukee's south side. From the growth of BGCS to include middle school grades in 2001, to the addition of UCC's Teen Center in 2002, to the development of the Early Childhood Education Center in 2007, through the development of the Pre-College Program and Abriendo Puertas, which pairs college students with professional mentors to aide in the development of soft skills necessary for the workforce, UCC pushed the importance of education in creating the next wave of Milwaukee's leaders.

With continued support from organizations like Schools That Can, Milwaukee Succeeds, the Leadership Academy for Character Education, Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation, Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, and so many more, and with new and expanding partnerships with outstanding institutions of higher learning including Carroll University and Marquette University, UCC continues to build a college culture for students from their first steps onto its campus.

## **45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration & Awards**

At each year's Anniversary Celebration, the United Community Center proudly announces the recipients of the **Friends of the Hispanic Community Awards**, which recognize individuals that have made immeasurable contributions to the development and well-being of the community at large, and the **Badger Mutual Wall of Fame**, honoring outstanding achievements of the community's youth by selecting five exceptional students in collaboration with Badger Mutual Insurance Company. Honorees will be celebrated at UCC's 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on **Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>** in Bruce-Guadalupe Community School's Ted Friedlander Gymnasium.

### **Friends of the Hispanic Community Awards**

#### **L.B. (Buzz) & Joan Hardy, Philanthropists**

The contributions of Buzz & Joanie are well documented, with an advised fund at the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and as "Leave a Legacy" award winners from the Association of Fundraising Professionals Milwaukee chapter. Their commitment to the Hispanic community dates back to the 1940's. As he acquired properties for manufacturers in the area, he saw the need for a community center to support the growing families entering the region, many of them Hispanic. First sharing their passion with La Casa de Esperanza while Walter Sava led the agency, they became friends of UCC when he took the job here in 1989. They have continued their philanthropy with UCC over many years, most recently supporting the technology classroom renovation as part of our "Building on Success" campaign to expand Bruce-Guadalupe Community School. Buzz was the president and fourth generation leader in his family's general insurance, title and real estate business in Waukesha County. During this time he developed commercial and industrial real estate in the area and volunteered his expertise to help La Casa acquire properties for expansion over many years. Buzz & Joanie continue their philanthropy with a number of human service, education and environmental causes in Milwaukee and Waukesha.

#### **Douglas Hastad, D.Ed., President, Carroll University**

While UCC has a long history with Carroll University with many alumni amongst our ranks, the partnerships established under Doug's leadership will have an impact for years to come. Carroll's tradition of educating first-generation and minority students, especially Hispanic, is reflected in their commitment to a number of initiatives, including the Latin American Student Organization, the Hispanic Health and Human Services Minor, and precollege programs for underrepresented student groups. In recent years, Carroll's presence on the UCC campus has blossomed to include students from Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant and Exercise Science disciplines gaining training as they work with UCC elderly and substance abuse treatment clients. In the past year we have collaboratively launched the PASOS (Preparing and Advancing Students for Opportunities in Science) Program with a select group of 8<sup>th</sup> grade Bruce-Guadalupe Community School students. The PASOS Program will offer students the opportunity to learn, and potentially study, the nursing, physical therapy and physician assistant fields at Carroll. Later this year the collaboration will be further enhanced as Carroll will provide student training and clinical experiences through operation of the school's health center. The pipeline of educational experiences from preschool through college is being realized with Doug's guidance and support.

#### **Gary & Judy Jorgensen, Philanthropists & VJS Construction Services**

UCC's relationship with Gary & Judy Jorgensen dates back nearly 25 years to the first expansion of Bruce-Guadalupe Community School. With the construction advice of the team at VJS, led by Gary, we have grown our campus from a small converted church to 12 square blocks of energy efficient and modern facilities reflective of the Hispanic culture. Along the way, Gary and Judy have introduced a number of friends to UCC resulting in new ambassadors and contributors to our success. Through personal and company contributions of financial and volunteer resources, Gary and Judy have helped to grow the footprint of UCC, both literally and figuratively. Generations to come will be housed, served and educated in culturally recognizable spaces. Judy's contributions as a volunteer with a number of Milwaukee and Waukesha human service and arts organizations earned her the Todd Wehr Volunteer award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals Milwaukee chapter. She has brought that enthusiasm and passion to UCC, helping us to meet programmatic and capital fundraising goals.

#### **Paul Purcell, Chairman & CEO, Robert W. Baird & Co., Incorporated**

A long-time champion of education in Milwaukee, Paul has contributed greatly to increasing access to high quality schools for low-income students. In addition to his duties at Baird, Paul shares his time serving on various Boards and Committees including Alverno College, Teach for America-Milwaukee, Cristo Rey Network, Greater Milwaukee Committee, Discovery World, United Performing Arts Fund, and United Way of Milwaukee & Waukesha County. Under Paul's leadership, the Baird Foundation has provided scholarships for low-income students to attend high school and college, internships for first-generation college students, and supplied mentors to help students chart their educational path and navigate a complex system. As Paul

looks to transition the CEO responsibilities at Baird to his successor next year, he plans to spend half of his time on education matters. We look forward to his leadership and contributions to educational success in Milwaukee.

### **Badger Mutual Wall of Fame**

The young achievers will be acknowledged on stage at UCC's 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner, and their pictures, as well as brief overviews of the students' accomplishments, are framed to be hung on the walls of the UCC's Community Learning Center. UCC is proud to recognize the following students:

**Ana Isabel Cortes** dedicates her time mentoring youth, working with an impressive list of Milwaukee organizations including the UCC, Milwaukee Art Museum, Casa Romero, Medical College of Wisconsin, St. Alexander Parish, Stein Scholars, MPS Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, and the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. Ana's strong work ethic, self-motivation, determination, and desire to make a difference in the world propel her to seek ways to help urban youth discover their potential to become productive community members. She will graduate this June from Carmen High School of Science and Technology with honors and pursue art therapy/art education and community leadership as a means to empower youth to discover their self-worth and voice.

**Dalahi E. Luna-Martinez** is always willing to help others and strives to achieve her best academically choosing a rigorous class schedule at Carmen High School of Science and Technology. Dalahi is a dedicated Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC) member volunteering her past three summers mentoring youth. She is also an intern at First Stage and is a member of the Steins Scholars Boys and Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee as well as the Alverno Girls Advanced Academy in Science and Mathematics. She is an excellent example of a Bruce-Guadalupe graduate willing to mentor and share her ambition and positive attitude with younger students.

**Natalia Perez** will graduate from BGCS this June with a near-perfect cumulative GPA of 3.9 and attend Divine Savior Holy Angels High School, where she plans to continue her rigorous education. She is a community leader and role model, acting as point guard for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls' basketball team, occupying second chair of the alto saxophone section of the BGMS Jazz Band, and recently having attended a mission trip to El Salvador. Her teachers remark on her incredible work ethic as well as her selflessness to help others.

**Chris Rojo** is role model to youth in the community, working with the Drug and Alcohol Prevention Program and the Crime Strategy Initiative at UCC, tutoring high school students to pursue a college education, and leading by example. Chris is currently an intern at the District Attorney's Office and will soon commence her internship at the Wisconsin Department of Justice in the Narcotics Unit where she will be working alongside federal agents reviewing crime cases. Chris plans to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and pursue a career as a federal agent at the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

**Mileena Anahi Sanchez-Luna** will attend Brookfield Academy on a full scholarship this fall. While at BGCS, she enjoyed participating as a member of the girls' basketball team and BGMS Jazz Band. Mileena is very involved in the community, volunteering at a warming shelter for the homeless and attending various outreach events sponsored by her church. She captivates her peers and mentors with her positivity and the consistency with which she excels in her studies and activities.

The United Community Center's annual anniversary dinner is an event at which the agency takes the time to thank our supporters, acknowledge our successes, and lay out the roadmap for the future, ensuring programs will continue to benefit the community. This year, UCC will celebrate 45 years of service on **Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**, with a reception beginning at 5:00 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:00 p.m. and a program at 7:00 p.m. The sold-out event will feature performances by the Latino Arts Strings Program and Bruce-Guadalupe Community School Jazz Band.

### **About United Community Center:**

*The United Community Center (UCC) provides programs to Hispanics and near South side residents of all races and ages in education, cultural arts, recreation, community development and health and human services in an effort to help individuals achieve their potential by focusing on cultural heritage as a means of personal development.*

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