

Live Forward Award Nominees 2023

Ben Austin	<p>Ben Austin is the Sustainability Lead at J.H. Findorff & Son, Inc, a commercial general contractor headquartered in Madison, WI. In his role, Ben works across Findorff projects with owners, design teams, and construction partners to define and deliver on project sustainability goals. Internal to Findorff, he also leads efforts to drive sustainability efforts within Findorff-owned buildings and within their culture. Ben has degrees in Civil Engineering and Sustainability Leadership, in addition to being a LEED and WELL Accredited Professional. In October 2022, Ben co-founded the Carbon Leadership Forum Hub of WI, a regional hub of the Carbon Leadership Forum. The mission of the CLF is to eliminate embodied carbon in buildings and infrastructure by inspiring innovation through collective action to create a just and thriving future. The CLF WI Hub brings those conversations to Wisconsin and provides education and workshops for practitioners to deepen their impact.</p>
Pradyut Kumar Bhattacharya	<p>Pradyut got an honorary PhD for significant contribution towards the society for world peace institute of United Nations commission and California Public University.</p> <p>She has attended many international meetings, workshops, conferences, and webinars for the United Nations international experts committee. She has worked with the office of outer space affairs research globally and received a Nobel Peace Prize nomination for significantly contributing to society in socio-economic growth and development projects. She has managed sustainable development goals and research on world health organization transformation in Africa. Her research also included precision and mechanization agriculture, along with global navigation satellite systems. She trained onsite in Nepal and online in Azerbaijan and France.</p>
Cristina Carvajal	<p>Cristina Carvajal is the founder and Executive director of Wisconsin EcoLatinos, a non-profit organization that strives to assist the Latino community in Wisconsin in combatting environmental hazards and advocates for a just and sustainable environment. Cristina's Petroleum and Environmental Engineering background has provided her with a distinctive outlook on environmental preservation. She is a member of several committees, including the Sustainable Madison Committee, the Lake Monona Waterfront Ad-hoc Committee, and the UW Public Health Institute Advisory Committee.</p>
DCYEC	<p>DCYEC is an organization of students across Dane Co dedicated to climate action. They're an important part of the multigenerational planning and organizational efforts for the annual Dane County Youth Climate Conference. They're particularly vital in doing promotion and inviting other students to attend. The conference (currently in planning for its third year) brings together high schoolers from around the county to learn about and be inspired to take action about climate change. Members of DCYEC are also helping decide on relevant conference topics to help students use their voices to make a difference.</p>
Penny DePaola/Monona Public Library	<p>Eco-Action Tuesdays' original goal was to inform attendees in the Monona area about general sustainability issues. Beginning in 2022, the primary work of Eco-Action Tuesdays is to raise awareness of the causes and effects of climate change and to empower area residents to affect changes at the local level that are necessary for a sustainable future. This is achieved through 8 monthly programs per year designed and implemented by the Eco-Action team which include presentations, demonstrations, hands-on projects, and off-site tours. The intention is that attendees will pass information on to others through example and discussion with family members, friends and neighbors thereby creating a ripple-effect.</p>
Brandi Grayson	<p>Brandi Grayson is the proud mother of 3 daughters, 28, 27, 22, and a 5-year-old son. She's worn many hats over the last 20 years. From a treatment foster parent to an adoptive parent. To a community organizer, a comedian, and a radio talk show host to an assistant social worker. A list of her roles includes a Director of Programming, a Program Manager, a Business Manager, a Program Analyst, and a Realtor. And it doesn't stop there. She served as a Claims Adjuster, Field Inspector, and Field Manager for a construction company. Currently, she is the Founder, CEO, and President of Urban Triage, Inc, and Grayson Consulting, LLC. She takes pride in empowering, inspiring breakthroughs and transformation in Black people and Black communities. Her work reflects the attributes of Blackness that are rarely centered---Black excellence through healing, Black resilience, Black creativity, Black compassion, Black economic development, and most importantly, Black love.</p>
Ruthanna Hutton-Okpalaeke & Cooper Talbot	<p>Ruthanna graduated from the University of Wisconsin River Falls with a BA in Bio-Medical Science in 2017. After completing her undergraduate work, she joined the Peace Corps where she worked as an Agriculture extension agent for more than 2 years. Ruthanna has worked in various laboratory and Animal Care settings since her graduation. As Agriculture Program Manager, Ruthanna handles all aspects of the agricultural programming at Urban Triage.</p> <p>Cooper hails from New Jersey and has been an eminent part of the Madison community for 10 years as Madison's Favorite Local Radio Personality. Her heart is based on community service and result-oriented motivation. She joined Urban Triage in 2022 as a Bilingual Rental support and Outreach Specialist. She now joins the Agriculture Team as a Lead and is ready to GROW.</p>

<p>Alexandra Klabacka & Green Team</p>	<p>My Name is Alexandra (Alex) Klabacka, I work at Boardman & Clark, LLP as an Office Assistant/File Tech. I am also a member of the Sustainability Committee at Boardman & Clark.</p> <p>Thanks to the help of Sustain Dane, we have been able to jumpstart the committee after the pandemic and in doing so they have helped us to start many sustainable projects firm wide. One project we have started this year has been our Composting Program for the office through a company called Earth Stew. We have been able to collect around 50 pounds of compost each month. We are excited for many new projects to come, and I am excited to learn more about sustainability and look forward to doing many more projects.</p>
<p>Tim Lindstrom</p>	<p>Tim Lindstrom serves as the Student Intern Program Manager at the Office of Sustainability and an Instructor at the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. As the intern manager, Tim works alongside undergraduates to foster a culture of sustainability at UW—Madison. This work engages students, staff, and faculty through sustainability initiatives ranging from the campus’s natural and built environment to student life and wellness. As an instructor, Tim’s teaching uses the UW—Madison campus as a living laboratory for environmental and sustainability education. Put simply, Tim works with students in both academic and professional contexts to help the UW—Madison community aspire toward the ideals of sustainability. He lives in Madison with his wife Johanna and their cat Bae.</p>
<p>Susan Millar</p>	<p>Susan is a tireless champion for climate activism, green buildings, coalition building, and all sustainability. She makes a positive impact on every organization, community, initiative, and area that she focuses on. She’s very active with 350 WI and serves on multiple working groups, but also is a member and advocate of Sustain Dane. She promotes the Recycle Better course and has committed to the low-waste lifestyle along with her grandkids. She always encourages sustainability and intentional action and works hard to promote the success of sustainability efforts. She has also worked to electrify her whole home and takes to heart the personal, behavioral changes that individual members can make.</p>
<p>Devine Nzegwu</p>	<p>Devine Nzegwu, an MBA holder, is a financial professional and DEI advocate at John Deere Financial. Passionate about community betterment, she leads as the Community Service Co-Chair and Treasurer Elect for 2024 at the Urban League of Greater Madison Young Professionals (ULGMYP). ULGMYP gained national recognition for its impactful partnerships in the Madison community this year. Devine’s dedication extends to volunteering with Make-A-Wish, Goodman Community Center, Habitat for Humanity, and more. She’s also a trailblazer, being the first Black and female Student Body Vice President of UW-Platteville. In her leisure, Devine cherishes moments with her daughter, Niyiah, and family, enjoys reading, partakes in church activities, indulges in movies, and explores the world through travel and food.</p>
<p>Martha Pfaff</p>	<p>Children’s Community School, a non-profit Montessori preschool in Mount Horeb since 1976, has incorporated the tenets of sustainability into its facility. The school’s design takes advantage of solar and electric heat pump technology, and hopes to achieve net zero carbon production status. With thoughtful siting of the school, the facility equates to burning nearly 50,000 fewer pounds of coal yearly! Their passion for earth-friendly design is inspired by Montessori philosophy and includes sustainable landscape designs for the facility. Native plantings, rain gardens, and permaculture gardening serve as teaching tools to instill environmental ethos in those who are enrolled in the school.</p>
<p>Carol Phelps</p>	<p>Carol is an educator turned climate activist. The climate challenge will take all of us – we can’t be bystanders. We all need to do our part to net-zero our own carbon footprint, and then help our community do the same. When the future of our children is at stake, failure to act is not an option. Carol is a co-founder of Wisconsin Creation Care Ambassadors, which brings together faith communities to learn from each other and inspire their congregations to care for the planet. She has also partnered with schools, libraries, botanical gardens, museums, local governments, and non-profits (local and international) to work on climate action – including raising awareness, education, advocacy, clean energy, clean transportation, and more.</p>
<p>Matt & Marie Raboin</p>	<p>In less than 5 years since opening, Brix Cider has emerged as a vibrant, welcoming space that builds community over local food and drink in the Mount Horeb area. Matt and Marie Raboin are committed to supporting local farmers and producers through their farm-to-table restaurant, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient community food system. Through innovative storytelling and highlighting their farmers, Brix builds more community awareness and connections around healthy living. Brix is also committed to paying their employees a living wage, contributing to a more just local economy.</p>
<p>Red Caboose Child Care Leadership Team</p>	<p>To address the U.S. affordable and inclusive childcare crisis, the Red Caboose Leadership Team is working tirelessly to keep enrollment rates steady, offer assistance programs on a sliding scale, and offer competitive wages and benefits to its invaluable teachers and staff. The ambitious leadership team is also preparing to smoothly transition staff and families to its new facility in September. A project years in the making. Red Caboose’s Leadership Team designed this new facility with the future in mind, making sure it can serve three times more children, be accessible and inclusive to all, and offer the same traditions of play-based learning and encouragement of exploration.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Xanthe Saalman</p>	<p>Xanthe is an 11th grader at Madison Country Day School. She has many leadership roles in her school and is a leader on the Dane County Youth Environmental Committee. She also volunteers with Citizens Climate Lobby (lobbying Mark Pocan and running the Instagram account), Sierra Club, Midwest Environmental Advocates, and Action for the Climate Emergency. She is very passionate about solving the climate crisis and increasing sustainability, and hopes to pursue it as a career!</p> <p>Xanthe has been an SMC member for almost 6 months, and although she is new to the team she is having a wonderful time learning about city operations and getting to know everyone. She joined SMC to explore a climate action at the local government level and deepen her engagement with sustainability efforts. She is also proud to be a youth voice on the team and can't wait to see how Madison continues to push towards its net zero goals.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Kyla Smith</p>	<p>Kyla Smith (she/they) combines her passions for community and the environment through multiple endeavors. Namely, she works with Urban Triage on environmental justice initiatives including community input on environmental problems, outdoor recreation experiences, and in the future through energy education and awareness. She also has worked with Sustain Dane to do community outreach for the efficiency navigator program and created user friendly flyers on how to use air source heat pumps. Kyla recently started her master's degree in environment and resources at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she will focus her research on equity implications of electrification through a mixed methods approach, most importantly through community engagement and input.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sasha Stone</p>	<p>Sasha opened Green Life Trading Co. in 2018. She aims to provide friendly and accessible resources for thinking big and shopping small. Whether in-store or online, Green Life Trading Co. brings a sense of eco-friendly ease into shopping for everyday essentials and inspired items.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Stoughton Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>The Stoughton Sustainability Committee is made up of volunteers who are dedicating their time to ensure a sustainable future. We believe a sustainable community requires a new ethic of living on our planet, considering the long term impact of actions and policies on our community's environmental, social, and economic health. We have engaged in an inclusive public engagement process and will publish a Sustainability Plan to guide the policies and efforts of city government while also engaging holistically with businesses, industry, the school district, and individuals to take action. We are already collaborating with many local and regional partners. One example connects Green Box, Innovation Center Stoughton, and downtown businesses to pilot a food-waste composting program in which the school district is also a potential partner.</p> <p>Committee members are Katelyn Geleynse, Alder Ben Heili, Heath Massey, Adrienne Nienow, Alder Lisa Reeves, Donelle Scaffidi, Sienna Scott, Mayor Tim Swadley, Scott Taylor, and Rachel Venegas.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Izzie Tobin & McFarland Green Team</p>	<p>Izzie and the other members of the Eco Club, applied for and received a KEEP Green Team Mini-Grant to swap out nearly two dozen of their school's older power strips for newer models of smart power strips that would save energy when used in classrooms. When teachers turn off their computers, the power strip also turns off other electronics. They also completed a range of other energy-saving activities, enough to be the Spring 2023 Cohort 1 winner of the Renew Our Schools competition. The school is now considering expanding its efforts by adding motion sensor switches. Izzie also shared the club's efforts with a group of WI and MI teachers at a conference to inspire them to support their students' efforts.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Brenda Vetter</p>	<p>Brenda converted her small family farm to SoL Criations Farm Sanctuary, where she now dedicates her life to rescuing and offering sanctuary to farmed animals in need and inspiring others to lead a more kind lifestyle. Her mission is to educate, help make connections, and inspire non-violence, peace, and reverence for all life. Brenda also serves as a board member for Compassion for Farm Animals, another local animal welfare nonprofit. Compassion for Farm Animals seeks to educate consumers about the exploitation and cruelty in industrialized animal agriculture, as well as to the impact of factory farming on the environment. Their mission is to inspire consumers to seek alternatives to animal products raised on factory farms.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Cait & Lindsey</p>	<p>Cait is the director of conservation programs for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, where she leads the organization's funding programs and initiatives for conservation and environmental education. She works closely with partners across the state to ensure that NRF has the most significant impact possible on Wisconsin's lands, waters, and wildlife through strategic, science-based investments, while leading diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the organization and with Wisconsin's conservation community.</p> <p>Cait has more than ten years of experience in the environmental conservation field, with expertise in conservation science and planning, program development, and partnership building. She earned a M.Sc. in Environmental Conservation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and a B.A. in Biology and Environmental Studies from Lawrence University. Lindsey is the conservation programs coordinator at the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, where she supports the Foundation's conservation programs by administering our grant programs; coordinating diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives for Wisconsin conservation; and building partnerships that benefit Wisconsin's lands, waters, and wildlife.</p> <p>Lindsey has five years of experience in the field of conservation and environmental education. She earned a M.Sc. in Environmental Conservation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and a B.A. in Biology from Gustavus Adolphus College. In her free time, she loves to write, craft, kayak, and ski.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Andrea White</p>	<p>Andrea White is a housing case manager, Artist, and Social Justice activist with an extensive background addressing issues of discrimination, equity, and social justice. Andrea is currently the housing case manager for the Steps to Stability program at YWCA Madison, a program that offers a tenant education course and short term case management helping participants obtain/maintain housing. Andrea is also Community Service Co- Chair for the Urban League of Greater Madison Young Professional. She was also recently elected Vice President of the Urban League Young Professionals for 2023-2025 . Andrea is also a member of the Homeless services consortium(HSC).She serves as a member of the doubled up committee at the HSC. Andrea is an Alumn of the University of Wisconsin Odyssey program, and is working towards her bachelors degree in social work at UW Madison. She has been involved in anti-oppression/anti-discrimination work Since 2020, collaborating with many nonprofits in the Madison area.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Willy Street Co-op Executive Team and Staff</p>	<p>The Willy Street Co-op Executive Team and Staff sought out, designed and implemented the Inclusive Trade program in all three stores this spring. The program highlights products from companies at least 51% owned, controlled, and operated by individuals from underrepresented groups. The team surveyed 300 local and direct vendors, gathered information their national and international vendors, designed local and Inclusive Trade icons and placed them onto qualifying products' price tags and signage. The team also made a webpage resource (willystreet.coop/inclusive-trade) where owners and customers can learn more information about the Inclusive Trade vendors. During certain recognition months, such as Pride Month and Black Business month, the co-op highlighted corresponding Inclusive Trade items and vendors.</p>