

Sustain Dane 2025 Live Forward Award Nominees

Huda Alkaff	<p>For 20 years (in 2025), through ongoing educational workshops, trainings, presentations, and service consultations, Huda Alkaff and Wisconsin Green Muslims connect faith, environmental justice, sustainability, and healing. Huda is an ecologist, environmental educator, and the founder and director of Wisconsin Green Muslims, a grassroots state-wide environmental justice group that addresses environmental justice issues related to climate change, clean air and pure water, healthy food, energy democracy, waste reduction and transportation equity. In Madison and beyond, they educate about the plants in Islam, and mapping plants to educate and connect with the Muslim community's culture and relationship with Earth. Their Green Ramadan campaign inspires local Mosques to reduce their ecological footprints.</p>
Dr. Teri Allendorf	<p>Dr. Teri Allendorf is the Executive Director of Community Conservation, which has had more than 30 projects in 18 countries since 1989 working directly with communities to conserve biodiversity. Its mission is to shift the paradigm of community conservation from communities as recipients of benefits to communities as active agents driving biodiversity conservation, with knowledge, tools, and skills to conserve biodiversity. She has a PhD in Conservation Biology from the University of Minnesota and was a member of USAID's Biodiversity Team, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal, and a Fulbright Senior Specialist. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and taught courses at the University of Minnesota, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Future Generations University. She is also an honorary fellow with the Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.</p>
Jessica and Erika Jones	<p>Giant Jones Brewing brews big beers for everyone! They are a women and queer owned and operated, certified organic brewery in Madison. They opened in 2018 with the goal of making organic beers that taste good! They focus on flavorful, strong, classic beer styles that start around 7% ABV and higher. Focusing on strong beer styles highlights the unique flavors in our organic, local ingredients, including grain sourced from Meadowlark Organics farm in Ridgeway, WI, and hops, sumac, and spruce tips sourced from Harmony Valley Farm in Viroqua, WI. Giant Jones Brewing aims to make our beer good for everyone, regardless of whether you drink it. They partner with the Artisan Grain Collaborative to build the infrastructure and relationships connecting small grain farmers to processors, creating a sustainable, local and regional grain shed. They are part of the Madison Shared Solar and Green Power Tomorrow programs. They package in glass bottles, which are returnable at the brewery. They wash and reuse the bottles: about 20% of the bottles we use are second use! The team of four women is small, but mighty - running all aspects of the brewery. Jessica is the brewer, lead plumber, machinist, supply chain expert, packaging manager, and queen of flavor. Mari is our communication and social butterfly, tasting room manager, cellar master, and packaging team. Kate is our artist liaison, tasting room bartender, packaging team, and returnable bottle manager. Erika is our administrative director, event coordinator, brewing assistant, sales and distribution manager, packaging team, and designated taster.</p>

Sarah Karlson	<p>Sarah Carlson is Rooted's Director of Urban Agriculture Education-Madison South. She has 20 years of experience in food justice and urban agriculture working with youth and community of all ages and has been with Rooted for nearly a decade. She manages the Badger Rock Urban Farm and Community Garden to provide farm and culinary-based education for Lori Mann Carey Elementary and Badger Rock Middle School students, in-person and virtual workshops for adults and families, one-on-one mentoring for community gardeners and fresh, affordable culturally appropriate produce for the community through our youth-run farmstand and food pantry. She also manages Rooted's year-round high school youth employment program to provide a pathway for future food system leaders. She regularly invites youth and the community to share their expertise and approaches her work from a lens of recognizing that in our community we are all teachers and learners. Sarah is passionate about gardens as a tool for education, food access, joy, connection, and building community resilience at the intersection of food, racial, environmental, and educational justice.</p>
Zoe Lea (Fess)	<p>Zoe Lea is an agroecologist, environmentalist and an advocate for traditional and sustainable food systems. Zoe is also a founding board member for Wild Bearies, a nonprofit that's mission focus is bringing ancestral foods to communities in a nurturing and nourishing way through mentorship. Zoe is currently pursuing her Master's in Agroecology from the University of Wisconsin- Madison, focusing on traditional ecological knowledge and culturally relevant food systems.</p>
David Lonsdorf	<p>David Lonsdorf is a retired physician (Family Medicine – worked at UW Health) who wants to continue to lead an active life and contribute to my community. His two current interests are Sustainability, Land Protection and Habitat Restoration. Two years ago, David started Sustain Verona to encourage our community to adopt more sustainable practices. They helped re-start the City's Sustainability Task Force which is now putting solar panels on two city buildings. And they are working with the Verona School District to put a 500-panel solar array on the high school. David is also on Dane County's EV Charger Advisory Commission. He has worked with the Ice Age Trail Alliance for 20 years to restore many properties and served on their board as president. Working with Operation Fresh Start participants, they have completed several Dane County Parks' restorations. David has also helped start two Dane County Parks Friends groups in Verona to do restoration. He is also on Groundswell's Stewardship Committee. David has been happily married to Marilyn Chohaney for 45 years with 3 adult children and two grandchildren.</p>
Christy McKenzie	<p>Christy McKenzie is a passionate leader in the local food system. She is the owner of Pasture and Plenty is a James Beard nominated specialty market and restaurant with a demonstration kitchen, catering and events space, and meal kit pick-up and delivery service. Christy and her team give the Madison community access to healthy, locally sourced meals and food products. In 2021, she launched the P&P Makeshop, a food incubator kitchen for the BIPOC community and women-owned food businesses. The focus of all her work is to create a sustainable and resilient local food system, and connect community around issues of food equity, access and agency.</p>

Meghan Mietchen	<p>Meghan Mietchen serves as Executive Director of Community Action Coalition, leading with a vision of communities where every household is empowered with the tools to succeed and flourish. With a professional background spanning from child welfare in California to affordable housing in Utah, Meghan brings a deep understanding of how resilient communities are built. She believes in the power of community, takes pride in the places where she has lived and worked, and is especially proud to now call Wisconsin home. Guided by a philosophy of collaboration and equity, Meghan has championed initiatives that strengthen local food systems, expand access to affordable housing, and create pathways for financial empowerment. Her leadership has driven innovative partnerships such as the Wisconsin Foodshed Partnership, which reduces waste, supports small farmers, and ensures healthy food reaches underserved neighborhoods. Rooted in inclusivity, healing, and shared prosperity, she is committed to advancing equity-driven solutions for all.</p>
Burke O'Neal	<p>Burke O'Neal is managing partner of Full Spectrum Solar. He opened the solar energy contractor in 2002 with Mark O'Neal, his brother and fellow UW-Madison mechanical engineering alumni. Under Burke's leadership, Full Spectrum Solar has expanded to a team of forty-one, completing hundreds of solar energy installations per year. Burke has incorporated his passion for sustainability into all aspects of the company's operations. This includes building a solar-powered office and shop on E. Washington Ave. with an ENERGY STAR rating of 100/100, providing a bicycling/walking commuter incentive and free bus passes, installing a rain garden, and electrifying their work fleet. Burke is active in our community, with his support of local music festivals including providing master electrician services, and his participation in public forums regarding sustainability such as WI Public Radio, Civic Media, and UW-Madison discussion panels. He rides a cargo bike to take his children to school on his commute to work, and his family grows a significant portion of their own food at their solar-powered urban farm on the east side, with a front yard they converted to native prairie.</p>
Diana de Pierola	<p>Diana C. De Pierola del Aguila is a multilingual professional with expertise in project coordination, education, law, and environmental policy. With experience across the U.S. and Peru, she has led initiatives that expand access for Spanish-speaking communities, streamline customer journeys, and strengthen community partnerships. Her career spans roles as a bilingual project coordinator, educator, legal assistant, and business owner, equipping her with strong skills in cross-cultural communication, workflow optimization, and community engagement. Diana holds three master's degrees in law, Environmental Conservation, and Environmental and Natural Resources Law along with a Teaching Certification. She is passionate about advancing equity, sustainability, and renewable energy access, and seeks to drive impact through program management and policy advising.</p>
Jerod Reuter	<p>Jerod Reuter is deeply committed to creating a healthier planet through better soil. At Purple Cow Organics, he leads efforts to turn tens of thousands of tons of yard waste away from landfills—reducing harmful emissions and giving back to the earth. Jerod champions partnerships like Dane County's Food Scrap Stop program and works closely with schools, gardens, and nonprofits to make</p>

	compost and sustainable growing practices accessible. His work connects people to the soil and fosters a stronger, greener community.
Paul Schechter	Paul Schechter is an environmental justice entrepreneur driven by a belief that affordable housing and climate solutions must go hand in hand. He received a bachelor's in engineering at UW-Madison and a Masters in Sustainable Energy Systems from the University of Edinburgh. In 2018, he founded Sunny Side Development, a nonprofit dedicated to creating affordable, sustainable housing. So far Sunny Side has installed 845kW of solar across 144 units in southcentral Wisconsin. Environmental impacts were further reduced by installing heat pumps, air sealing, EV chargers, and innovative resource-sharing. The projects serve extremely low-income seniors, the disabled, homeless youth, and immigrant populations. They also center resident empowerment, with three communities structured as self-governing housing cooperatives. Its flagship, Greenspire Apartments in Stoughton, became Wisconsin's first 100% net-zero tax credit development, setting a model for others to follow. Paul's work reflects a lifelong dedication to community resilience, environmental justice, and a sustainable future.
Nik Swartz	Nik is an associate principal landscape architect and project manager with Saiki Design. He embraces sustainable and resilient site planning and design and acknowledges the significant role his work as a landscape architect plays in shaping environments where people live, work, and connect with nature. He is a LEED green associate and has led or contributed to numerous sustainable projects, most recently managing the landscape architecture scope of the UW-Platteville Sesquicentennial Hall project which received LEED gold certification in the spring of 2024. Nik values a collaborative design process and finds that working holistically is essential to understanding the unique challenges and opportunities associated with each project. He looks for opportunities to integrate green infrastructure practices into projects that benefit the environment, enhance user experience, and offer long term value to clients.
Lori Whitman	Lori Whitman moved to McFarland in 2017 and retired in 2024. Retirement allowed her to become more actively involved in the community. She saw an opportunity to provide an important, environmentally beneficial service when she realized there were no Village-provided options to dispose of Styrofoam. Styrofoam cannot go into recycling bins, and it should not go into trash bins (it takes 500 years to decompose in landfills). In October 2024, under the name RecycleWisc, Lori started a free Styrofoam pickup service for McFarland residents. In the first 10 months, Lori alone collected the equivalent of approximately 65% of a 53' semi-trailer. Styrofoam is taken to Reynolds Urethane Recycling, Inc., the only Styrofoam recycler in the area. Reynolds has provided invaluable support for this project, as has Sustain Dane. Many thanks to both!