



# Elevating Our Impact

2022 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT





WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER to build dreams, people grow. When we amplify each other's efforts, communities flourish. When we work with a common purpose, we elevate our region. That is how Midwest BankCentre fulfills its mission as a community bank: to help our region thrive.

It's why 95 cents from every dollar deposited with us stays in our local community. It is why we work together with our employees, our clients, and regional leaders to ensure that we can all RISE TOGETHER.

# Together, we help build dreams, amplify efforts, and elevate our impact.

## FROM OUR CHAIRMAN & CEO

A year ago, I asked each of us as individuals, as workers, and as business owners to explore our purpose. Why do we invest energy in the things we do? What problems are we trying to solve? Where do we find meaning?

*On the other side of purpose is impact. At Midwest BankCentre, our purpose is to help our regional communities thrive. Our impact is found in the lives and stories of our clients.*

In our **2022 Community Impact Report**, we share the stories of customers who have chosen to **Bank Their Values**. They know that where you bank matters. Their energy and effort and optimism are palpable.

There is a compound nature to our investments in people, in businesses, and in communities. Our engagement in people's lives matters. To impact people at scale, we start with one person, one name, and one story at time.

Michael, Kim, Arrey, and the many others we celebrate in this report believe as we do: when everyone has the chance to DREAM BIG, we all RISE TOGETHER.



Orvin T. Kimbrough  
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## IN THIS REPORT

- 2 Building Dreams
- 6 Amplifying Efforts
- 14 Elevating Impact
- 16 Impact Banking
- 18 Community Service
- 20 Network for Good
- 21 Awards & Recognition



# Building dreams

SINCE 1995, THE BLUE OWL has partnered with Midwest BankCentre. Through astonishing growth, navigating the pandemic and PPP loans, and guiding a multi-generational succession plan facilitated by an SBA loan, Kim's trusted advisor, Tim Walsh, has helped her through all the ups and downs.

Kimmswick

## THE BLUE OWL RESTAURANT & BAKERY



### Serving Up Success by the Slice

For as long she can remember, **Kim Hostetter** was surrounded by the delicious aroma of cookies baking in the kitchen. Years later, when her mother bought **The Blue Owl Restaurant and Bakery** in Kimmswick, MO, Kim remembers playing waitress. But Kim did not dream of a life centered around cookie sheets. She was far more interested in spreadsheets and accounting. She did not dream of running a bakery. She dreamt of a corporate career in business and finance.

Two years into her Business Management degree, she needed a job, so she worked weekends as a pie slicer at her mother's restaurant and bakery. "That's what I did every day. I had really never touched a cookie before, but one day they needed help and I hopped in. I picked it all up like I had been doing it my whole life. I could fold all the butter horns and nut crescents—all those cookies are so complicated."

The truth be told, baking was in her genes. Kim later discovered that her paternal great-great-grandfather was the president of the Bakers' Union in Galveston, Texas. On her mother's side, her great-great-grandfather opened a competing bakery in Galveston.

By the time Kim graduated college, she had fallen in love with the baking business and decided to join her mother. She became the bakery manager and soon used her business acumen to expand the offerings. They added wedding cakes and started a wholesale business, supplying desserts to other restaurants. In addition, Kim took over paying the bills so that her mother could finally have a day off. Over time, the mother-daughter team divided and conquered—**Mary Hostetter** ran the restaurant, and Kim took over the bakery operations.

With growth comes challenges. Kim found a building in House Springs that had been a donut shop for 20 years. It had everything she needed—an oven, a table, some pans. She thought she was all set when this happened:

On November 7th, 2011, exactly one week after she

had made the move to her new location with her one Sunbeam mixer and a beloved oven, Oprah announced that the Blue Owl's Levee High Apple Pie would appear in *O Magazine* as one of Oprah's "Favorite Things." Hundreds of orders flooded in. "Everything went crazy. I had to hire 100 people to come bake 24/7 around-the-clock. They peeled, cored, and sliced 500 cases of apples by hand, assembled and baked the pies. Friends, relatives, and neighbors in House Springs showed up to help."

On top of that, everything that could go wrong did. "Every single thing in the whole place broke. The sinks fell off the wall. The hot water heater went out. The sewer backed up. We just had to keep going, because we had to have the pies shipped by Thanksgiving."

Soon after, the *Today Show* called. Al Roker was also going to feature The Blue Owl. Within 24 hours they had orders for 1,500 additional pies. While the frenetic pace has slowed down, Kim's bakery products are sold around the country through her website, TheBlueOwlBakery.com, and Goldbelly, a gourmet food marketplace. Her online sales jumped from 2,000 to 18,000 pie orders in two years. In 2022, Kim purchased the business from her mother who, after 37 years, is enjoying leisure time.

Needless to say, this kind of astonishing growth doesn't come without investment. Since 1995, The Blue Owl has partnered with Midwest BankCentre to work through the ups and downs of the business. **Tim Walsh**, Kim's trusted advisor and relationship manager at Midwest BankCentre, helped Kim navigate the pandemic with a PPP loan. He also offered advice on the best way to finance the purchase of the business and guided her through an SBA 504 loan. The SBA loan allowed Kim to fulfill her dream of buying the entire 4,960-square-foot building that houses the bakery business.

Kim's sweet dreams now encompass both cookie sheets and spreadsheets, sprinkled with an exciting future.



## In Great Spirits

As the saying goes, “When one door closes, another one opens.” **Michael Valenti** would agree.

He had just walked away from a career in the beer industry with the goal of restoring a more family-friendly work-life balance when he ran into a former co-worker and friend. “I could use a guy like you.”

Mike worked with a venture team to research then write a business plan to scale up a small, alcohol-branded desserts company. At the time, **The Great Spirits Baking Company** had a license to make Jack Daniel’s® gift boxes that were sold primarily in gift shops. It was a small-scale operation with a huge upside. “We believed that we could commercialize the product and scale it to include other brands and formats,” Mike explains.

In 2018, a group of private equity investors bought The Great Spirits Baking Company, and in 2019, named Mike the president and CEO. Today they have license agreements with Jack Daniel’s, Baileys®, Pallini® Limoncello, and Guinness® and are sold everywhere from Walmart to convenience stores to grocery stores. Revenue has grown

tenfold. “Our dynamic team of just four people is the reason behind this success.”

That dramatic growth includes a major bump in the road as COVID-19 hijacked the economy. They were just beginning to pick up some momentum when the pandemic shut down their business for nine months.

“We were using cash while trying to keep the business viable,” Mike says. A line of credit they had secured from Midwest BankCentre that was intended to be used to grow the business became a lifeline. Their relationship manager, **Kurt Evans**, also helped them secure a federally funded PPP loan to help cover payroll.

Mike will tell you that he works hard and at times it is stressful. But the new door that opened means that he no longer travels 20 days a month. It means he can be home in the morning to get his three children ready and off to school. He can go to practices and coach a team, all the while bringing delicious, innovative products to the marketplace.

Webster Groves



## A Bumpy Road to a Smooth Future

**Seid Rahmanovic**’s dream was simple enough—live a good life, raise a family. But for this Bosnian refugee, it wasn’t always easy. His family moved to Germany when Seid was nine. Life for refugees was uncertain there. When refugees went to renew their visas, they might be told to pack their stuff and leave the next day. That was no way to plan a future for a family with two young sons. His parents had heard that St. Louis was a welcoming community, so the Rahmanovics moved their family here.

Seid had little trouble adjusting to life in St. Louis. He graduated high school and headed to Meramec Community College to sign up for classes. As luck would have it, the enrollment office was closed that day. Seid never went back. Instead, he took a job as a dispatcher. “I had no knowledge of dispatching trucks whatsoever. But I thought, ‘why not, I’ll give it a shot.’ The owner was such a great guy, and he took the time to teach me the ins and outs of the business.” Seid then followed a friend to his new trucking company and ran the office, furthering his hands-on business education.

After 5 years, Seid was ready to venture out on his own. He wanted more in life.

With his parents’ encouragement and support, he started his own trucking company, **R&S Express**, in their basement. On December 31, 2010, R&S Express picked up its first load. Today Seid has a fleet of 57 trucks and operates out of an office building he owns in Mehlville, MO. R&S Express operates in 48 states with a focus on the Midwest. This allows his drivers to be home during the week so they have more time to spend with their families.

It is a heavy lift to start a venture like this, which makes trusted partners vital to success. Seid has banked with Midwest BankCentre since day one. He and **Ajla Zigic**, his relationship manager, talk weekly. At times they may talk several times a day. They are both guided by a focus on customer service. Ask anyone who has worked with Seid and they will tell you R&S Express gets the job done on time, every time.

Seid’s dream was simple: to live a good life and raise a family. He is doing both.

Mehlville



## A Career That is Music to His Ears

**Doug Rasmussen** loves music. On a whim he decided to put on a benefit concert to raise money for the Old North Restoration Group. On another whim he invited his favorite indie-rock group, Five Eight of Athens, Georgia, to perform. That was in 2013 and this was his passion project.

Today, Doug is the founder and CEO of **Steadfast City Economic & Community Partners**, an innovative, multidisciplinary economic development consulting firm. So, what does a benefit concert have to do with this? Everything.

The concert was a big success, drawing a crowd of 300 people and so much admiration from the band that they asked, “Have you ever thought about being the manager of a rock band?” Doug said “yes” and left behind a successful career at the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership.

What he learned in the process changed the course of his life and in many ways changed the lives of those most impacted by economic and community development. “I did not enjoy the business side of the music industry. As for economic development, I always enjoyed it, but I felt it could do more.”

Doug decided to build a better model. “Steadfast exists because there were gaps in the traditional approach. Government, real estate, and the business, social and philanthropic sectors were all talking about the same civic issues, the bigger economic development issues, but none of those groups were talking together or really working together.”

Steadfast City is a carefully curated team of 17 people with a shared passion and higher purpose beyond profit.

Cherokee Street

DOUG RASMUSSEN



Steadfast city

Doug brought together fresh thinkers, experts in economic development, urban planning, financial analysis, communications, and social work. “It isn’t just about a building or real estate. It’s about a neighborhood and the people who live there. Our purpose is rooted in elevating businesses that create jobs, real estate developers who rebuild neighborhoods, cities that need revitalization, organizations that effectuate positive change, and people who benefit from all of these working together.”

**Sarah Scribner** is a project manager with a Master of Social Work. She looks at the grassroots individualized impact of community and economic development at every level from community to neighborhood to family to individual.

**Brianna Tobias** is a social impact coordinator at Steadfast and echoes those thoughts. “Once you start talking to people, you gain insight into what they do and don’t want to see in their community.”

With offices in St. Louis, MO, Rochester, NY, New York City, Mobile, AL, and Northeast Ohio, Doug could have chosen a national bank as his business partner. Instead, he chose Midwest BankCentre. “For our growing company we really need a partner who understands who we are and what we do and shares our values.”

**Wes Burns** gave him his first line of credit on a proverbial handshake. Doug never needed to use the line of credit, but he will not forget the vote of confidence as he set out to develop better.

“OUR PURPOSE is rooted in elevating businesses that create jobs, real estate developers who rebuild neighborhoods, cities that need revitalization, organizations that effectuate positive change, and people who benefit from all of these WORKING TOGETHER.”

## MIDWEST BANKCENTRE ADVISORY BOARDS

Our Advisory Board members reflect the economic, ethnic, and geographic diversity of our region, reaching far into Jefferson and St. Charles counties and throughout the metro area. The insights gleaned from such diversity is invaluable and has opened doors to new business opportunities. It has stimulated community building among our customers, which benefits the entire St. Louis region.

At Midwest BankCentre, we have built long-lasting bonds with our Advisory Board members that now span up to four generations. We want local businesses to be successful just as much as they want us to be successful. Our Advisory Board members are our eyes and ears in the community, advising us on current industry trends, and keeping us abreast of how we can best serve our clients and our region.



TIM WALSH, President, Jefferson County Commercial  
JAN ORLANDO, Orlando's Banquets & Catering  
CHRIS GRAFLAGE, VP, Commercial Services



# Amplifying efforts

EASTERSEALS EMBRACES AN INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE CULTURE, a core value they share with Midwest BankCentre.

Greater St. Louis Area

## EASTERSEALS MIDWEST

### Leading the Way

Easterseals is a story of what's possible. It is a story of inclusion, diversity, advocacy, empowerment, and of shared values that make all things possible for people of all abilities.

**Easterseals Midwest** is part of a 100-year-old network of disability service providers. "Our mission is to help people with disabilities be fully included in the community," says CEO **Wendy Sullivan**. In this region, which includes nine locations throughout the state, they serve nearly 6,000 children and adults each year. Autism is one of their support areas where they have a hallmark program based on parent training. Its impact on families is profound.

**Joya Brooks** is a mother of three living children and an infant son who died at two days old. The names they chose for their children — **BeLov'ed**, Fearless, Noble, and Courageous — are rooted in faith, but also foreshadowed challenges ahead. Joya first came to Easterseals when her youngest, Courageous, was diagnosed with autism at age three. Joya participated in a parent-child training program that, in her words, "changed the trajectory of what life looked like, not just for Courageous, but years later for his older sister, BeLov'ed, who was not diagnosed until she was 19."

The program gave Joya an understanding of what autism looked like through the eyes of her son. "It is one thing to live with a person with autism, but to really understand what life looked like for him was so crucial and so important." What she learned and the skills she was given helped her understand and communicate with him.

It took a bit longer to fully understand BeLov'ed. "With BeLov'ed, I knew she was different. I started noticing social awkwardness with her. BeLov'ed still loved playing with dolls and wore her hair in ponytails." Joya could see how others

were treating BeLov'ed.

From the time she was 16, BeLov'ed wanted to work. She landed a part-time job at a sub shop. Her parents were supportive, but what seemed like a good idea turned out to be a traumatic experience. "Her co-workers didn't understand her. A lot of them didn't like her, didn't get along with her, and bullied her; it was like an extension of high school." One day she had enough. She locked herself in the bathroom and called her mom. "BeLov'ed was in hysterics. I could hear people outside the door beating on it and yelling at her." Joya and the local police department came to her rescue.

Her parents wondered if she would ever be employable. She would need extra support and training. Fast forward several years. Easterseals offers a pre-employment job training program for post-high school students. It takes an individualized approach to develop the skills, confidence, and real-world experience necessary to find and keep a job. You could say BeLov'ed passed the program with flying colors.

Her Easterseals coach found the perfect fit—interning at a locally owned boutique toy store with a sizable doll collection. She was offered a part-time job and recently earned a raise and a bonus as she takes on broader responsibilities. Throughout her employment, **Ann Schad**, an autism specialist in the employment department, meets with BeLov'ed regularly to give her the support she needs to grow in her responsibilities. "I tell people to think about what they love, their hobbies and interests, then figure out a way to get paid for it. That is totally BeLov'ed."

Easterseals embraces an inclusive and diverse culture. It is a core value they share with Midwest BankCentre.

"The Bank is so engaged with our business," Wendy says. "They worked with us to purchase our building in Maryland Heights, which was a very complicated transaction. And during COVID, they helped us through the PPP loan process, which was almost \$10 million of relief funding."

"The issues facing people with disabilities have become increasingly complex in the 21st century. But together we can work to seek a society in which everyone is included and valued for who they are, free to strive for what they want, educated to pursue the career they want, and encouraged to follow their dreams. We are certain that living out our values every day will change the world," says Wendy.

Midwest BankCentre couldn't agree more.



BELOV'ED | HAPPY UP, INC., A PARTNER OF EASTERSEALS  
ANN SCHAD | EASTERSEALS MIDWEST



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ST. LOUIS

## Putting Out the Welcome Mat

**T**he International Institute of St. Louis (IISTL) has been serving the immigrant community for more than a century. When **Arrey Obenson** was named President and CEO, he was new to the organization but not to the challenges facing immigrants and refugees.

Arrey emigrated from Cameroon more than 20 years ago and faced many of those obstacles. Beyond IISTL's comprehensive programs for resettlement, social services, education, language access, immigration services, and career development, he sees an equally important goal: to make St. Louis an inclusive, diverse, welcoming, and prosperous region.

"We see ourselves as not only playing a role for the people that we serve, but playing a role for the wider community. We serve these immigrants and refugees because we want to build a community that is welcoming for these people, and one that creates opportunities for all of us to prosper."

The Institute took on the task of creating a strategic plan to fulfill their broader vision. It would take the input of many. This vision for St. Louis is only possible when individuals, civil society, businesses, and government work

together to create pathways for inclusive growth.

The IISTL brought together community stakeholders from banks to nonprofits, from donor organizations to neighbors to faith leaders. Before the ink was even dry, the world changed. Kabul collapsed, bringing an influx of Afghan refugees to St. Louis. The Russian invasion of Ukraine brought many others here.

"We were just coming out of a four-year decline in arrivals of refugees and immigrants, so we lacked the infrastructure to sustain this influx."



When we provide opportunities for the foreign born in our region, WE ALL PROSPER."

Fortunately, through the planning process, a coalition of like-minded organizations was already coming together. They continue to meet weekly behind the common purpose of ensuring that St. Louis is a place where newcomers can grow new roots and where

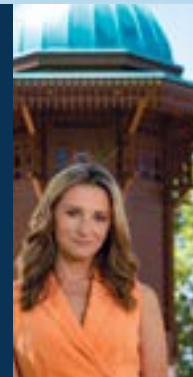
their families can flourish.

"When we provide opportunities for the foreign born in our region, we all prosper. As they rebuild their lives, economic growth takes hold in immigrant communities that spreads throughout the region. They start businesses, they create jobs, they anchor their families here."

who, 20 years ago, arrived in St. Louis as Bosnian refugees. They understand the stresses and strains of being forced out of your country and starting over. They experienced the kindness and helping hands that were extended to them. Today, both **Ajla Zigic** and **Anela Barbanell** are part of the Bank's **Community and Economic Development** team and join others who are also committed to making sure the region is welcoming to all.



ANELA BARBANELL



AJLA ZIGIC

## Bridging Cultures

### Celebrating Our Multicultural Communities

**AS COMMUNITY BANKERS**, we work in partnership with our clients, live in the same neighborhoods, and literally speak their language.

Midwest BankCentre puts an intentional focus on working with multicultural communities — **Hispanic, Bosnian, White, Black, and Asian** are all welcomed. Not only is this the right thing to do, but by embracing diversity in people, geography and products, we spark innovation that allows us to better understand and serve all of our customers and the region as a whole.

Our focus on multiculturalism provides a platform for each group to voice their ideas, concerns, and aspirations.

We host multicultural appreciation events throughout the year, which serve as a clear reminder that all humans need connection, validation, and equitable access to opportunity and capital.

Though every community is different, we are all connected. Midwest BankCentre believes that no one community can truly thrive unless all communities thrive. That's why we are committed to making meaningful, long-term investments that lift everyone up so we can all **RISE TOGETHER**.

### MULTICULTURAL APPRECIATION EVENTS







### Working in Partnership

**THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY** continues to contribute to the richness of this ethnically diverse country. According to the U.S. Census, Hispanics have accounted for nearly 80% of net new businesses created during the last decade. The number of Hispanic-owned businesses in Missouri alone grew by 42%, and that number is even higher in St. Charles County.

**Karlos Ramirez**, formerly President and CEO of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, joined the MBC team as Vice President of Community and Economic Development in 2021. He brings a deep understanding of the barriers Hispanic businesses can face and the tremendous opportunity they offer for regional growth. Hispanics have helped offset population declines in the region and are not only starting businesses, but stabilizing communities through homeownership.

Midwest BankCentre continues to work in partnership and appreciation of the Hispanic community. Where communication could be a barrier, we have eight Spanish-speaking team members, including two mortgage loan officers. We also offer a suite of ITIN products so that hard-working individuals and families have access to capital that will help them build their dreams, whether that is closing on a home loan or opening a business.

**42%** | **GROWTH IN HISPANIC-OWNED BUSINESSES IN MISSOURI**

**8** **SPANISH-SPEAKING TEAM MEMBERS, INCLUDING TWO MORTGAGE LOAN OFFICERS**



KARLOS RAMIREZ   MARC LAIDLEY   JORGE MEDINA

Central West End / Cortex   O'Fallon, MO



GABRIELA RAMÍREZ-ARELLANO & VICTOR ARELLANO

When business owners have a chance to dream big, it creates a place at the table FOR ALL OF US.

### Making a Dream Come True

Seven years ago, the Arellano family decided to relocate to O'Fallon, Missouri, a move considered to be a positive for their family and the St. Louis Region. **Victor Arellano** worked on realizing his dream to open a Mexican restaurant that would share both the food and culture of his beloved Mexico with his new community in O'Fallon. **Gabriela Ramírez-Arellano** continued her dream of helping small business owners as a business counselor for the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Despite those accomplishments, their success as entrepreneurs meant little as they faced the challenge of securing a loan to purchase the first commercial space to house **Don Emiliano's Mexican Restaurant**. For Victor, the dream of owning the building where his restaurant was located was delayed because of the challenge of not having a solid credit history. Victor came to the U.S. with the aspiration and passion of opening a restaurant, but his status as a resident could only accommodate having an ITIN with limited credit history.

"To have the Bank's support throughout the loan process was huge!" says Gabriela. "They helped us as we went through the process and assured us that we were on the right track. As a business owner, you always want to grow and do more, to be more successful, and to leave a legacy for your children."

Gabriela is the Executive Director of the **Center for Emerging Technologies** and the Director of Entrepreneurship for **Cortex Innovation District**. The Center for Emerging Technologies is the oldest and largest innovation center in the state of Missouri. Gabriela's work focuses on helping small business owners develop the skills they need to succeed in life and in their business. Through the Square One program, she supports entrepreneurs from often underrepresented communities and connects them to the knowledge and resources to help them start and grow their business. Trusted relationships can make an enormous difference.

"Midwest BankCentre helped Victor achieve his dream of running and operating Don Emiliano's and owning the building it is housed in — something he had only dreamed about for many years." Since then, Victor has sold the building and has a new restaurant under construction in O'Fallon that will open in 2023. It is delicious proof that when business owners have a chance to dream big, it creates a place at the table for all of us.

### DREAM BUILDERS 4 EQUITY

### A Journey Built on Belief



At the heart of **Dream Builders 4 Equity's** vision and mission is belief. Belief that their unique approach will transform the Hyde Park neighborhood and other under-resourced communities. Belief that youth can have the courage to dream a future and the confidence to know that achieving it is possible. Belief that these seemingly disparate goals can work hand in hand.

Hyde Park is a neighborhood in North City where, at one time, car manufacturing, meat packing, and stone quarries provided meaningful jobs that supported a vibrant community. Those jobs dwindled following WWII and disinvestment followed. Over time, people moved out, leaving vacant buildings and a neighborhood in decay for those who stayed.

**Michael Woods** is a member of the Hyde Park community. He is a published author, investment property owner, and entrepreneur. His close friend, **Neal Richardson**, is a banker who now serves as the President and CEO at St. Louis Development Corporation. Michael had one simple question for Neal: "How can we be a blessing?... We bottled up all of our lived experiences and made it into Dream Builders 4 Equity."

Their approach is this: to tackle the vacant home epidemic plaguing the St. Louis region by employing local minority youth and contractors to do large-scale community-led development projects — putting money and equity back in the pockets of people within the community while creating workforce development and scaling minority-owned contracting businesses.

Youth who self-select to be part of the program rehab abandoned houses side by side with minority contractors. They get paid for their work and have an equity share in the homes. At the sale of the property, the youth receive scholarship dollars. In addition, they journal throughout the entire process. Their writings are compiled into books which they can sell.

In a nutshell, Michael says, "We're putting youth at the center of community development, making sure minority contractors are involved in every rehab, and making sure the dollars go to the minority contractors and the youth. We are also making sure that the current residents in these underserved communities aren't being pushed out. We do free home renovations and landscaping for seniors to keep them in their houses and add equity to their properties."

**Lucy Redd**, the director of operations, explains that Dream Builders is not a job training program. While they get exposure to the trades, "it is really showing them that whatever they want to do is possible." Some youth are gainfully employed in the construction industry but one youth is studying to be a veterinarian and another is pursuing dentistry.

"We are helping them see success on a very tangible, concrete level through working on a house." It provides the experience of working hard on something and showing how things take time. "If you are putting in effort and trusting and believing in yourself, anything is possible no matter what field you choose."

Concurrently, Dream Builders is creating energy and excitement around the Hyde Park neighborhood and what is possible in North City.

Through a property donated by Midwest BankCentre, Dream Builders 4 Equity will transform the site into its headquarters, a community resource hub, and collaboration space for the Hyde Park community.

Belief has guided Michael and his team throughout this journey. "We are immensely grateful to Midwest BankCentre for believing in our mission and backing our efforts in such a transformational way."



MBC donated our N. Broadway branch to Dream Builders 4 Equity, a nonprofit dedicated to community building and revitalization in North St. Louis.

Hyde Park



"We are helping them see success on a very tangible, concrete level through working on a house." LUCY REDD



## SANCTUARY IN THE ORDINARY

## A Place to Call Home

Access to Affordable Capital Makes It Possible



“

There is nothing more foundational to life than having a roof over your head.”

JEFF BUCK

**Jim Roos** has been battling dragons for a lifetime. As the founding director of **Sanctuary in the Ordinary** (SITO), his battle is guided by his passion to provide affordable housing in underserved communities. The dragons are the policies and practices that make it a formidable task.

In March 2022, Jim and SITO's Board of Directors named **Jeff Buck** as the Executive Director to advance SITO's mission to cost-effectively provide affordable housing to low-income people, rescue distressed buildings, and strengthen communities in St. Louis. “There is nothing more foundational to life than having a roof over your head,” Jeff says. Through selective rehab, SITO is able to upgrade rental units with new windows, remodeled kitchens and bathrooms, and ensure everything is in good working order while keeping rent affordable for low-income residents. This keeps neighborhoods intact and creates living conditions that are safe and comfortable.

SITO offers a unique perspective to help repair and stabilize rental housing. Their novel approach is to partner with public and private entities to fund selective rehab projects—identifying buildings that, through selective-but-adequate rehab, can provide comfortable housing for low-income families and individuals. SITO seeks to meet the housing needs of the city's current residents where they are and to conserve sound housing where it exists.

Presently, the dominant approach is to build new construction or gut rehab current structures. While these methods result in top-quality rental units, it comes at a high dollar cost and usually displaces people in the process. Selective rehab identifies distressed but viable buildings that can be rehabbed into decent units with minimal disruption. The rent for one of the renovated two-bedroom units is about \$750 per month.

Selective rehab is one part of the equation. It also requires a novel financing approach. Until recently, substantial and reliable financing for selective rehab of affordable housing was non-existent. The prime impediment is that banks will not loan a nonprofit more than roughly 75% of the amount needed for building purchases and rehab. Under the SITO financing model, public and charitable institutions and individuals fill the gap with 10-year interest-free loans which represent 20% of the cost.

In 2021, SITO announced a pilot project to acquire units in need of selective rehab and assemble bank financing, interest-free loans, and grants to fund the project. Only one bank stepped up to support the pilot. Midwest BankCentre made a \$280,000 loan to the nonprofit to fund the rehabilitation of two multifamily buildings in the Dutchtown neighborhood of south St. Louis. The City of St. Louis' Affordable Housing Commission approved an \$80,000 interest-free loan to the group in January 2022.

With the project now complete, Jeff speaks to its impact. “One long-term tenant was watching the building deteriorate around her.” Recently widowed and caring for a grown, disabled son, she thought she had no choice but to move out. She decided to stay but insisted she stay in her unit. “We worked around her things, doing one room at a time. Her daughter thanked us for our work and patience.” In partnership with the International Institute (see *related story on page 8*), an Afghan family with four small children now has a place to settle and begin to rebuild their lives.

SITO has been battling eminent domain, demolition, and gentrification for decades. With the pilot complete, SITO has shown policy makers and communities what is possible.



## NASH PROPERTIES

## Partners in Affordable Housing



**John Nash** wanted to be an entrepreneur. So, he left his job as a large equipment salesman to become one. Of course, that is not as easy as it sounds. It takes time and resources and above all, the courage to take the leap, especially when you are raising a family.

As a skilled carpenter, John had a natural interest in real estate. Step one was to earn his real estate license and then buy his first property. Step two was to lure his wife into the enterprise. At the time, **Amy Nash** was working for a big five accounting firm, but took on the additional role of bookkeeper for **Nash Properties LLC**. That was in 1997.

Fast forward to today. Nash Properties employs 10 people, owns 15 properties in diverse neighborhoods including DeBaliviere Place/Central West End, Southwest Gardens Neighborhood and South County, and provides affordable housing for 250 families.

“We’re vertically integrated, which means we can buy and sell properties, we have property management, and run a small construction firm that does all of our rehab,” explains Amy.

Life as independent business owners brings huge responsibility, but Amy and John are happy with the direction it has taken them. “It’s great because you get to be in charge. You get to create your day to a certain extent,” Amy says. As parents of four children, that flexibility was important.

“We both had experience working for other companies big and small. But being an entrepreneur has really allowed us to

do things the way we feel is important and really aligns with our values.”

These values were never more evident than during the pandemic. “We were able to help our tenants because Midwest BankCentre was able to help us. Some tenants were really struggling. I think that’s where the ‘Bank your Values’ comes through in the work we do together.”

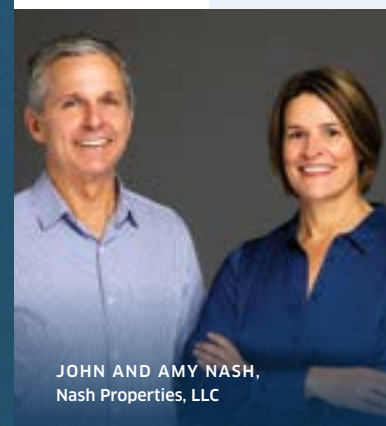
Good communication was essential to working through the issues. Once Nash Properties understood what a tenant was up against, they worked with the Bank to understand the various scenarios. “That gave us the flexibility to know what we were able to do for our tenants.”

**Chris Imming** is their relationship manager at the Bank. He and his team work closely with the Nash team. “Not only does he get the deals done, but he has been a true business partner for over a decade. If he doesn’t know the answer, he will put us in touch with somebody who does, whether it’s within the Bank or a community contact. I wouldn’t be able to run my business without them.”

As John and Amy look at what’s ahead, they see their company playing a larger part in providing stable, affordable housing in working class neighborhoods. “Midwest BankCentre understands these types of projects and how they impact communities.”

“John and I are feeling the nudge to do more.” Nash Properties plans to go into under-resourced neighborhoods and work with the current residences to help stabilize properties. In turn, this will stabilize communities.

“A rising tide lifts all boats. That is the only way our region will thrive.”

JOHN AND AMY NASH,  
Nash Properties, LLCWOMEN  
CONNECT20  
YEARS

## THE POWER OF WOMEN'S NETWORKS

**St. Louis is the fastest growing market for female-led startups**, according to data from PitchBook. Since 2020, St. Louis' female-led startups saw their capital increase by 187% — the most in the country — and more than tech hubs like San Francisco, Phoenix, and Austin. This surge in female entrepreneurship has resulted in a need to meet, share, and learn from fellow businesswomen.

Years ago, Midwest BankCentre saw that women entrepreneurs needed opportunities to discuss and address unique challenges they face, as well as network and acquire real tools to help their businesses succeed.



Women Connect members enjoying a tour of Chicago.

**Women Connect**, Midwest BankCentre's Advisory Board dedicated to women entrepreneurs, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Midwest BankCentre has been ahead of its time in supporting women in business. This kind of support is not only making a difference to the participants, but has contributed to making St. Louis the leader in top female-led startups.



# Elevating impact

**SHARED VALUES** are what brought Mary to Midwest BankCentre. Both are in the business of ecosystem building and community building. Both are huge supporters of the region. And both understand the **POWER OF DIVERSITY**.

● Olivette / 39 North Agtech Innovation District

## SOLIS AGROSCIENCES

### Raising the Bar On Innovation



**M**ary Fernandes, Ph.D. is President and Co-founder of **Solis Agrosiences**, an exciting new agtech company with a mission to make plant science innovation faster and simpler.

Mary is a first-generation female immigrant from India. She is also an accomplished scientist, a visionary, a pollinator, and a community builder.

Mary is driven by curiosity. She is passionate about diversity and confident that by tapping into the intellectual potential of a broad cross section of people, we can tackle global challenges in climate, nutrition, and sustainable ways to feed the growing world population. According to Mary, "there are far too many challenges that one person or one entity can solve, but we can all do our little part to amplify the efforts of each other."

Solis launched in May 2022 with seed money from BioGenerator, the venture arm of BioSTL, in collaboration with startup executives including Mary, **Martha Schlicher, David Smoller**, and BioGenerator Director **Tom Cohen**.

As a plant science services company, Solis accelerates the pace of scientific discovery by lowering the barriers to entry and removing bottlenecks to innovation. Solis is the first to offer the very specialized research and development services that agtech innovators need to bring products to market. Whether it is making nutritionally enriched plants, more climate-resilient crops, or better insect-resistant varieties, there are foundational research and facilities like greenhouses and lab space that are difficult and expensive to set up. Solis offers the tools, talent, and infrastructure needed to enable rapid acceleration from ideation to invention and innovation.

Mary's move to a start-up from a distinguished 25-year career with a leading global agriculture company may seem surprising to some, but to Mary it made perfect sense. "I like bringing diverse people together with the aim of solving a problem, addressing a challenge, or building something new. That's very entrepreneurial and how I have always approached my work, even within a big company."

Shared values are what brought Mary to Midwest BankCentre. Both are in the business of ecosystem

building and community building. Both are huge supporters of the region. And both understand the power of diversity.

"The Bank supports startups through access to capital. Solis wants to support startups through access to scientific resources. Startups can partner with Solis on a wide range of research needs that are not core to their business and get products into the hands of growers more efficiently. Companies are usually competing with each other for scarce resources like skilled talent. We want to drive a more efficient use of capital by eliminating the need to stand up individual platforms and teams and avoiding redundancies across the entire ecosystem."

While Mary's focus is to ensure the success of Solis, she believes that St. Louis has all the ingredients to be a major agtech hub. Like the Bank, Solis wants to see the region thrive. "We are in the center of the heartland. We have great agricultural companies, grower associations, great universities, and the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center. Our 39 North agtech innovation district is really unique. We want to bring recognition to St. Louis for all the great things it offers. Anybody thinking about agtech should have St. Louis as their primary destination."

Mary has an expansive notion of diversity. In India there are 22 recognized languages (she speaks seven). It is a multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic nation. "When you have diversity in backgrounds, perspectives, even in scientific thought, innovation occurs at the interface of those differing points of view." The Bank agrees and considers diversity a core value, with a team that reflects the many different communities we serve.

Mary has spent her career in research and development; the sole inventor on the patent for the first biotech drought-tolerant corn crop. Mary was at the forefront of gene editing that opened the door to new varieties of plants. As a scientist, Mary knows that biodiversity is an environmental imperative. She knows that as the 39 North agtech innovation district grows it will attract researchers and start-ups that will provide jobs and opportunities in the region. Mary understands that innovations in agtech can impact the world. At 5'0" tall, Mary is petite but her vision for regional prosperity is gigantic.



# Making an Impact by Banking Your Values

**WHAT WILL IT TAKE** to transform our region and restore it to national prominence? Midwest BankCentre has long believed that making high-impact investments in underserved communities is essential in returning the region to growth and prosperity. Shared economic prosperity will result in:

- Safer neighborhoods, less crime, more vibrant communities.
- Rigorous economic growth that creates jobs and opportunities for us and our children and our children's children.
- Sustainable growth for our region to enable us to compete with other cities.

What will it take to transform our region? It is directly tied to our ability to foster inclusive growth. One way in which we foster inclusive growth at Midwest BankCentre is through Impact Banking.

**Impact Banking** is based on a virtuous cycle. It starts when individuals and anchor institutions deposit money in local banks that are committed to shared economic prosperity. These banks in turn invest those deposits in underserved areas in the form of loans to create opportunities for people to buy homes, invest in education, and start or scale businesses — all of which build generational wealth.

Impact Banking is about putting your money where your values are. It's a shared risk model. When you deposit money in an Impact Banking Account at Midwest BankCentre, you choose to accept a bit less financial return to allow the bank to take on a bit more risk in extending capital to the most vulnerable. It takes time, community partners, and capital investment, but

the impact is tremendous. It creates the conditions to transform our neighborhoods and ALL people living in them. It creates a functioning non-predatory marketplace for low-to-moderate-income communities like Pagedale (see page 17) so they aren't forced to rely on payday loans and pawn shops. It closes health and wealth gaps so we can all succeed.

At Midwest BankCentre, we have an intentional focus on helping multicultural communities and Main Street Business thrive. Small and minority-owned businesses — and those with the ambition to start businesses — are particularly untapped resources in our region. Only 18.7% of U.S. businesses are minority-owned, despite ethnic and racial minorities making up over 40% of the population. Small businesses are the backbone of the economy, creating nearly two-thirds of new jobs and generating tax revenues for essential services like schools and police. Investing in them is investing in the entire community.

Currently, there are over \$120 billion in deposits held in St. Louis area banks. Less than a third of them are held at locally owned banks.\* Imagine the impact of redirecting even a portion of those deposits to community banks that have a laser-like focus on our regional well-being. Think of the ripple effect those deposits would have as they put more people on the path to prosperity.

Our Community Impact Report is a glimpse into the impact that your dollars have, every day. It is just a small taste of the great work that we are empowered to do in the communities we serve because our clients choose to do business with us. By banking locally, by **Banking Your Values**, you are choosing to make an impact.

## DEPOSITS IN ST. LOUIS AREA



ONLY 1/3 OF \$120B IN DEPOSITS IN ST. LOUIS ARE HELD IN LOCALLY OWNED BANKS

When you deposit money in an Impact Banking Account at Midwest BankCentre, you choose to accept a bit less financial return to allow the Bank to take on a bit more risk in extending capital to the most vulnerable. It takes time, community partners, and capital investment, but the **IMPACT IS TREMENDOUS.**

## FOCUS ON SMALL BUSINESSES

18.7%

of U.S. businesses are minority-owned, despite ethnic and racial minorities making up over 40% of the population.

2/3 OF NEW JOBS

are created by small businesses, generating tax revenues for essential services.

WANT TO LEARN MORE about Impact Banking Accounts at Midwest BankCentre? Reach out to [HeyOrvSTL@MidwestBankCentre.com](mailto:HeyOrvSTL@MidwestBankCentre.com)

\*S&P Capital IQ Pro. Data as of December 31, 2021



Community Leaders and Midwest BankCentre team members celebrate the financing of R&R Marketplace in Dellwood, MO

# Proof of Impact

**IMPACT IS HARD TO MEASURE.** Problems that have existed for decades don't magically go away. Meaningful change requires time, intentionality, and reasonably priced capital.

Investments in North City and County provide positive proof of the cumulative impact of intentional investment as part of Midwest BankCentre's **Community and Economic Development** efforts.

Ten years ago, **Chris Krehmeyer**, President and CEO of the nonprofit **Beyond Housing** came to Midwest BankCentre with a request to open a full-service branch in Pagedale. It would be the first bank in the community's 63-year history.

The Midwest BankCentre **Pagedale** branch opened in November 2012. It represented a unique partnership between a nonprofit and a community bank.

The ripple effect of this partnership is evident throughout the community, which includes 23 municipalities that make up the Normandy School District. Some families have purchased or rehabbed a home. The community now has a grocery store, doctor's offices, and a health facility. Community members enjoy safe playgrounds, a three-screen movie theater, and newly opened Carter Commons that brings people together. Pagedale Town Center, a major economic development project, provides space for offices for local businesses and retail shops.

Five years later, the Bank partnered with **Friendly Temple**

**Church**, a 12,000-member church based in North St. Louis City's **Wells-Goodfellow** neighborhood, to open a branch on the church's campus. The full-service facility was the first bank to open in the area since 2009. It is a strategic complement to the more than \$100 million Friendly Temple has invested to revitalize adjacent areas.

As a third spoke in its commitment to invest in marginalized communities and working families, Midwest BankCentre recently announced that it is financing a transformational project in the Dellwood community: the **R&R Marketplace**. Owned and operated by the nonprofit **Refuge and Restoration**, the Marketplace is a former strip mall that is being converted into a community resource hub, providing essential services that the area now lacks, like an early childhood learning center and a career development center. The Bank will also open an Innovation Centre to help facilitate connections to financial education and services. The project is scheduled to be complete in the summer of 2023.

The Pagedale, Friendly Temple, and Dellwood developments are prime examples of what is possible when mission-aligned people and institutions come together for a common purpose: to plant the seeds of change and help more people thrive.

Progress comes in pieces. Opportunity can change a family's trajectory. Access to reasonably priced capital can transform communities. This is how we will all **RISE TOGETHER.**



## CELEBRATING LONGEVITY

Our Friendly Temple Branch (left) is celebrating its 5th Anniversary and the Pagedale Branch (right) is celebrating 10 Years of service to the community.



THIS IS OUR HOME.  
MADE UP OF MANY NEIGHBORHOODS,  
COUNTLESS DREAMS,  
AND ONE COMMUNITY,  
RISING TOGETHER.

HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES

# thrive through service

### Give Joy!

The Give Joy program is a pillar of our **Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Engagement (DICE)** initiative. Throughout the year, the Bank provides cash for team members to go out into the many communities we serve and perform random acts of kindness. In return, they receive big smiles and a personal connection to the people they serve.



APPROXIMATELY  
**600**  
GIFTS OF KINDNESS  
DISTRIBUTED IN 2022

### Old Newsboys Day



APPROX.  
**300**  
PAPERS  
SOLD

### Fiesta Cardenales

Midwest BankCentre proudly participated in **Fiesta Cardenales**, a Ballpark Village event celebrating the Hispanic community and its culture. It is a further display of our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.




### Annie Malone May Day Parade


Midwest BankCentre continues to be the premier sponsor of the **Annie Malone Children & Family Services'** May Day Parade. It is the oldest and second-largest African American parade in the country.



OUR TEAM LOGGED NEARLY  
**3,500** VOLUNTEER  
HOURS IN 2022



**80%+**  
EMPLOYEE  
PARTICIPATION IN  
THE 2022 UNITED WAY  
GIVING CAMPAIGN



### Foodbank Takeover

In an all-in effort, Bank colleagues, families, and partners “took over” the **St. Louis Area Foodbank** for a day, supporting the nonprofit’s mission to reduce food insecurity in the St. Louis region.

**16,065**  
MEALS PROVIDED FOR  
THE HUNGRY

**100+**  
MBC TEAM MEMBERS,  
CUSTOMERS, AND  
PARTNERS ATTENDED







MAKING CONNECTIONS — IT'S AT THE HEART OF OUR

# network for good

**NONPROFIT EXECUTIVES** saw a problem. They were seeking advice on how to diversify their board membership. Roughly 78% of nonprofit boards are White and do not reflect the populations they serve.

Midwest BankCentre offered some advice. If you want to drive different results to change the statistics, you need to change your patterns. In short: fish from a different pond.

The Bank provided that “pond” by hosting a **nonprofit connector event** where nonprofits could meet and connect with highly qualified diverse individuals looking to serve. More than 50 people attended the second annual event held this fall that allowed the guests to build relationships in new ways.

78%

OF NONPROFIT  
BOARDS LACK  
DIVERSITY

## NONPROFIT CONNECTOR EVENT



## 2022 AWARDS & RECOGNITION

# thanks for the accolades



ST. LOUIS  
BUSINESS JOURNAL

CHAMPIONS OF DIVERSITY

“When it comes to diversity and inclusion efforts, Midwest BankCentre puts its actions and money—including funds from business partners—where its mouth is.” — *St. Louis Business Journal*



Employees enjoy  
Casino Night, June 25



TOP WORKPLACE AWARD FOR  
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

For the second consecutive year, Midwest BankCentre has been awarded Energage's National **Top Workplace Award** for our DE&I practices. The award recognizes that our firmly held belief in diversity, equity, and inclusion is not only the right thing to do, but adds purpose and meaning to the work of our team.

## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS



*St. Louis Business Journal*

40 UNDER 40

**Pete Zeiser**

President, Chesterfield Commercial



*St. Louis American*

SALUTE TO  
YOUNG LEADERS

**Jonathan Plump**

Senior Auditor



*Five Star Professional*

FIVE STAR  
MORTGAGE  
PROFESSIONAL

**Kellie Streeper**

Mortgage Lender



*BankBeat*

OUTSTANDING  
WOMEN IN  
BANKING

**Ashley O'Neal**

SVP, Retail Market  
Manager



*Small Business  
Monthly*

WONDER  
WOMEN

**Alexis Hershey**

Chief Digital Officer



*Small Business  
Monthly*

BEST BANKERS  
IN ST. LOUIS

**Chris Graflage**

Vice President,  
Commercial Services



Small  
Business  
Monthly

BEST SMALL BANK

For two of the last three years, Midwest BankCentre has been named as the **Best Small Bank** in the region by *Small Business Monthly*. Our goal isn't to be the biggest bank. Our goal is to be the best bank with the biggest positive impact on the region. Mission accomplished.



FOCUS ST. LOUIS®  
ENHANCING REGIONAL  
PROSPERITY AWARD

The Bank was honored to be recognized by **FOCUS St. Louis**, the region's premier leadership organization. The award celebrates individuals, organizations, and initiatives that are impacting our community.

WANT TO JOIN OUR AWARD-WINNING TEAM? VISIT [BESTJOBSINSTL.COM](https://bestjobsinstl.com)





MidwestBankCentre.com  
(314) 631-5500 | (800) 894-1350



ELEVATE YOUR IMPACT. BANK YOUR VALUES.



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