

Future Milwaukee turns 30

City leadership development group looks forward to extending its reach

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Thirty years ago, Milwaukee's civic leaders decided the city needed to bring together a group of more diverse leaders. On the basis of this need, the Future Milwaukee program was founded.

Future Milwaukee is a nonprofit program housed in, but independent of, Marquette University's College of Professional Studies. Robert Deahl, dean of the College of Professional Studies, said the program attempts to bring together emerging leaders, diverse in race, gender, profession and background. Future Milwaukee cultivates discussion among that group, helps engage the group in community projects and introduces it to work being done in the nonprofit sector, Deahl said.

Ron Kuramoto, interim director for Future Milwaukee's class of 2007-2008, said he wants participants to examine quality of life issues in the city and discuss how to fix them. Future Milwaukee has graduated around 1,300 students since its inception in 1977. In 2005, Future Milwaukee joined with Marquette to further the program's mission.

Deahl called the partnership "a natural fit." According to him, the missions of the college and the program coincide.

"Both are to develop diverse, ethically based leaders," Deahl said.

Kuramoto said the university allows Future Milwaukee to make use of its accounting and public relations offices. Marquette also provides office space and connects Future Milwaukee to a vast university alumni network.

"Marquette is a key education institution in Milwaukee. It's a big business in



Ron Kuramoto . . . "Everybody has a stake in where they live, work or play."

Scott Paulus

Milwaukee. It is a citizen and it's also an investor in the Milwaukee community," Kuramoto said.

This is the crux of the idea behind Future Milwaukee: All people have an investment in the community in which they live.

Kuramoto has lived in Milwaukee for only four years and will officially be the interim director for the class of 2007-2008 while the permanent director, Cheryl Coan, takes a leave of absence in order to complete her dissertation. Kuramoto ran a similar program in his home state of California called Leadership Southern California and sits on the Future Milwaukee at Marquette University Advisory Council.

PROGRAM'S FUTURE

As Future Milwaukee marks its 30th year this year, Kuramoto said he wants graduates to look at Milwaukee not only for what it is, but what it should be.

Tracy Johnson is one such graduate. Now the executive director of Tempo Milwaukee, a networking group for businesswomen, and a spring 2007 graduate of Fu-

FUTURE MILWAUKEE

FOUNDED: 1977; came under Marquette's umbrella in 2005

FUNDING: Tuition payments; private donations and gifts

FEES: \$1,800 for a nine-month program

NUMBER OF GRADUATES: 1,300

ture Milwaukee, Johnson said the program helped her see Milwaukee in a new way.

As a Milwaukee native and a 1999 graduate of Marquette, Johnson said she thought she knew the city. She started the nine-month Future Milwaukee program after hearing about it from a friend. She said being a part of a diverse program allowed her to gain from the experiences of others.

Future Milwaukee classes, made up of about 30 adult professionals, meet every week to work on group projects or visit various Milwaukee sites, such as the Milwaukee County Jail, the Bronzeville neighborhood or the Basilica of St. Josaphat. Johnson said learning about

FUTURE MILWAUKEE: Training links emerging leaders to issues

the city's history helped participants better understand the history in which Milwaukee's poverty and crime problems are rooted.

Johnson said her class — people of different ages, races, gender and professions — drew on their differences and experiences to come up with possible solutions to the community's problems.

"It's a big-picture type of appreciation for what the community is doing, the issues we face and the solutions in front of us," Johnson said.

Kuramoto said Future Milwaukee sees the importance of gender and racial diversity, but also professional and experiential diversity.

"Future Milwaukee is unique, I believe,

because it's the one program that brings together different sectors — business, nonprofit, public service, education," Kuramoto said. "The participants and the alumni reflect that."

Of Future Milwaukee's nearly 1,300 alumni, about half are in the private sector, a little less than half are in nonprofit work and around 10 percent are in public service.

As Future Milwaukee moves forward, Kuramoto believes the program can help the city expand its nonprofit sector and help city leaders see the kind of community outreach this sector does.

Kuramoto said he'd also like to see a regional program similar to the one he headed in southern California developed with

the Milwaukee 7. He said the idea has been talked about among the Future Milwaukee advisory council and that a regional program makes sense.

"Some issues just don't stop at county borders," Kuramoto said.

Deahl said he hopes Future Milwaukee's 30th anniversary will help bring program alumni together and engage them in new ideas for the program. Deahl said that while celebrating the past, he wants the organization's advisory council to network with alumni.

"Everybody has a stake in where they live, work or play," Kuramoto said. "It's a sense of obligation to the communities we live in — not just to maintain them, but to make them better."