

November, 16, 2016

Carl Nilssen: My personal, civic, and work life!

My parents moved to Shorewood from Ohio when I was in the 5th grade. I advanced through the Shorewood public schools, then on to UWM, where I met my wife of 31 years while living in the same Sandberg Towers dormitory house. Together we have three daughters. The oldest, Molly and Audrey matriculated all the way through MPS, graduating from Rufus King High School. Our youngest daughter, Greta, is currently a full IB candidate and junior at Rufus King.

Our family lives in the Washington Heights neighborhood on the west side of Milwaukee, we worship and find comfort in Milwaukee's Mother of Good Counsel parish; a community we have been a part of for 25 years.

After some brief stints as a young man in sales and marketing positions I took on the challenge of starting my own direct mail marketing business. The business did not survive, but it did expand my skill set enough to secure a position as Vice President of Sales for FMS/Magnacraft, an industry leading, nationally prominent service supplier to the direct mail industry.

After a number of years employed in that capacity I started BIGMPG Design/Marketing. Originally a provider of printing and mailing services, the company transitioned into providing creative and strategic planning services. BIGMPG is 21 years old this year and our client list has included Harley-Davidson Motor Company, Volvo Trucks North America, Polaris Industries, Sea Ray Boats, Chris*Craft Boats, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Riverworks, and many more.

In 2001 my wife and I purchased the building located at 811 East Vienna Avenue, in the Riverworks Business Improvement District. At the time of our purchase the district was neglected and heading in the wrong direction.

We set about developing the property into a multi tenant facility that sought businesses relating to creative output. The building, known as The Bricks, has been home to a number of small businesses involved in a wide variety of creative entrepreneurship.

Wanting to protect our investment and to add value to a neighborhood that I saw as a rich Milwaukee asset, I approached then RDC ED George Christensen about joining the BID board of directors.

Not long after, Darryl Johnson replaced George as Executive Director. Darryl and I have proven to be creative and collaborative as we have worked together to transform Riverworks into Milwaukee's Creative District. Property values are stable, the work environment in the district is safe, and we increasingly welcome dynamic, entrepreneur-led businesses, and pro-development property owners every year.

In addition to serving as President of the Riverworks Business Improvement District, I am also the Vice Chair on the Riverworks Development Corporation board. I currently serve on Lutheran Social Services development council, over the years I have dedicated myself to various committees and councils relating to Milwaukee Public Schools, I served my parish in a number of oversight capacities and I have coached basketball and soccer.

I live in Milwaukee, am invested and work in Milwaukee, worship, and play in Milwaukee. Most importantly, our children were born, raised, and educated in Milwaukee. There is no greater testament to believing in a community than trusting your children to that community.