



America's Black Holocaust Museum  
ABHM Enhanced Visitor Experience Initiative  
<https://www.abhmuseum.org/>



**The Organization:** America's Black Holocaust Museum (ABHM) was founded in 1988 in Milwaukee by Dr. James Cameron, one of few known survivors of a lynching in American history, to educate the world about the history of African Americans from pre-captivity to the present. ABHM now operates two complementary spaces: a robust website and a new approximately 4,000 square foot physical space in Milwaukee's historic Bronzeville neighborhood, on the footprint of its predecessor. Over 300,000 people worldwide visit the virtual museum each year, and 11,000+ annually visit ABHM in person. ABHM also serves as a trusted gathering place for community dialogues, healing-centered conversations, and civic learning. They partner with neighborhood groups, faith communities, and social justice organizations to host discussions that foster reconciliation, empathy, and action. ABHM provides guided tours, classroom resources, internship opportunities, and the Junior Griot program, which trains youth to interpret history, lead conversations, and build confidence as public storytellers. They regularly welcome K-12 school groups, university classes, and educators seeking culturally grounded curriculum. ABHM's exhibitions and scholar-curated digital content help learners connect past injustices to present realities, cultivating critical thinking and civic awareness. Through their combined physical and virtual assets, ABHM inspires transformative learning experiences for visitors from near and far.

**The Project:** ABHM was intentionally designed to facilitate ongoing expansion and enhancement of its exhibits. The Impact100 Greater Milwaukee grant would help launch the Enhanced Technology & Visitor Experience Initiative, aimed at broadening accessibility and increasing impact through three main components:

- Reflection Room: Integration of interactive technology will allow visitors to share reflections and oral histories, with an option for inclusion in ABHM's digital archive.
- Enhanced Visitor Experience: Improvements will be made in lighting, sound, accessibility tools, audio tours, QR codes, and vision accommodations, resulting in a more immersive and accessible environment.
- Cradle of Life Exhibit: The modernization of technology and creation of new content for this core exhibit will elevate digital engagement, with a particular emphasis on enhancing experiences for youth.

The project prioritizes the incorporation of interactive and accessible technology within the Cradle of Life exhibit and the implementation of upgraded sound and lighting throughout the museum, requiring minimal maintenance. Additionally, museum staff will develop a diaspora-focused curriculum designed for instruction in schools prior to group visits to the museum's physical exhibits.

**The Need:** Currently, the exhibits at ABHM are reliant on minimal and outdated technology. Exhibit components, including sound and lighting, are not up to accessibility standards and can prevent visitors from fully engaging with this incredibly important subject matter. In addition, the 'Cradle of Life' exhibit currently only has one iPad that links to over 3,800 pages of material on ABHM's website. Interactive technology is critical to engaging people with different learning styles, life experiences, and ability levels. This project directly responds to the growing need for more immersive, accessible, and interactive visitor experiences.

**Future Expectations / Sustainability:** This project requires an initial investment for significant improvements to existing exhibit space. However, the ABHM will be able to readily fund and support any routine or ongoing maintenance after the upgrades are installed.

**From the Grants Committee:** *"America's Black Holocaust Museum is a true community anchor in the Bronzeville neighborhood. For over 30 years, it has played a vital role in telling the stories that have all too often been overlooked. So many of these stories aren't taught in schools! Investing in these upgrades at ABHM is necessary so that the museum can continue the critical legacy of Dr. Cameron and ensure that these voices are preserved and shared."*



FRIENDS, Inc.  
Safety Expansion Project  
[www.friendswi.org](http://www.friendswi.org)



**The Organization:** Founded in 1978, FRIENDS, Inc. is the sole provider of domestic & sexual violence support in Washington County. This multi-faceted organization provides **free** trauma-informed services of shelter, support, advocacy, and education to those experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault. Their services include a 24/7 crisis line, emergency shelter, adult and children's advocacy, support groups, legal and community advocacy, and community prevention education. In 2025, FRIENDS provided shelter to 171 survivors (82 adults and 89 children) offering 4,158 nights of safety. Staff answered 2,074 hotline calls, providing 645 hours of support. They provided 248 community outreach and prevention presentations, reaching 6,583 individuals. Even though they are in West Bend, they accept shelter clients from all counties in southeast Wisconsin, so their client geographic data changes from year to year. (In 2025, 61% came from Washington County, 29% from Milwaukee County, 1% from Waukesha County. While in 2024, 37% came from Washington County, 45% from Milwaukee County, 6% from Ozaukee County, 3% from Waukesha County.)

**The Project:** The Safety Expansion Project focuses on the renovation of a two-story garage and storage building that will provide safer client parking and open the door to future safety expansion opportunities. Currently, the entire building is structurally unsafe and unusable due to mold, rot, and inadequate and improper framing and structural support. It is missing house wrap and a moisture barrier. The thermal panes of the windows have failed, and the door and window flashing is not properly installed leading to water intrusion. The stairs to the second floor are outside and rotted. Through careful financial analysis and contractor research, FRIENDS determined renovating this existing building is their best option. They received multiple quotes for the project and selected a local contractor who is confident in the success of this renovation. The budget is \$104,500 so an Impact100 grant would fund nearly the entire project. The project could begin this fall once heavy frost sets in and mold is safer to remediate, and it should be completed within 3 months. Once completed, the two enclosed garage spaces are projected to provide access to secure, hidden parking for 54-56 individuals per year. Besides parking, parts of the first floor and the entire second floor will provide expanded storage enabling FRIENDS to convert two rooms in their main building currently used for storage into adjoining, flexible shelter rooms that could safely house individuals, two small families, or one large family. Furthermore, this increased storage capacity will allow FRIENDS to accept more community donations of needed items used by survivors in their shelter such as personal hygiene items, paper goods and diapers, cleaning products, and non-perishable food items.

**The Need:** A big barrier for leaving a domestic or sexual violence situation is whether the survivor will feel safe and hidden from their perpetrator. This applies to the shelter residents as well as those coming to FRIENDS for other services. 50-60% of survivors report being stalked by their partner, while 90% of survivors experience ongoing abuse even after leaving, including stalking, harassment, and attempts to locate them. FRIENDS location is highly visible along a busy roadway and is also positioned beneath a highway overpass for I-45, so their parking lot is easily seen. Being a small, connected community, vehicles are easily recognizable. They also experience increased demand for shelter space. In 2025, FRIENDS sadly denied 237 callers' shelter requests. Having the opportunity to expand their shelter from 7 rooms with 22 beds to 9 rooms with 28 beds will annually provide an additional 48 individuals (adults & children) with safe shelter support. (The average length of stay is 27.4 days.) The ripple effect of this renovation project is tremendous!

**Future Expectations / Sustainability:** This project requires a one-time financial outlay to renovate the garage/storage building. The building materials such as LP Smartside, vinyl sliding replacement windows, treated lumber for the exterior staircase, insulation, and finishes were selected for their low maintenance requirements and longevity. FRIENDS, Inc. will sustain this project by incorporating regular maintenance and minor repairs into their annual budgets as needed.

**From the Grants Committee:** *"We are so excited to support FRIENDS, Inc in this project, as our finalist! The organization aids and shelters survivors of domestic and sexual abuse in our 4-county Greater Milwaukee area. We were impressed by FRIENDS' well-researched, professional, data-driven proposal, as well as their dedication and compassion towards those they serve. For survivors, their previous home was a place of fear, so the enhanced safety of survivors this project will provide is tantamount. True healing can only begin once someone knows that they are no longer in danger."*



Grand Avenue Club  
Digital Learning & Employment Center  
[www.grandavenueclub.org](http://www.grandavenueclub.org)



**The Organization:** The mission of the Grand Avenue Club (GAC) is to provide adults from Greater Milwaukee who experience mental illness with employment, educational, and enrichment programming. They are a welcoming and non-clinical community that focuses on providing meaningful opportunities for its 450 active members. GAC operates within a Clubhouse model in that it is a collaborative environment where members and staff work side by side to manage all aspects of daily operations. On the site visit, for example, GAC members presented this project directly to the Impact 100 grant committee and provided personal insights into its benefits as well as showing great enthusiasm for GAC. Members can also participate in various enrichment programming like social events, art, and music. This type of Clubhouse model and the programming GAC offers complement clinical care, without duplicating it, and broadens Milwaukee's mental health continuum.

**The Project:** GAC hopes to transform its outdated third-floor office for their Membership Education & Employment Unit (MEE) into Milwaukee's first Digital Learning & Employment Center (DLEC) specifically designed to support people living with mental illness. This innovative, open-concept space will fill a critical gap in accessibility by providing equitable access to technology, digital literacy, and workforce training. Modeled on national best practices from Community Technology Centers, the project will combine a reconfiguration and remodel of an existing office space with up-to-date equipment, modern software, and hands-on instruction to better prepare members for employment and long-term participation in today's digital economy.

**The Need:** Many employment initiatives serve the general population, but GAC's program is unique because it is specifically designed for adults living with serious mental illness. Adults living with mental illness experience significantly lower rates of employment and educational attainment than the general population. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, only about 20% of individuals receiving public mental health services are employed, despite the majority expressing a desire to work. Additionally, serious mental illness is associated with higher rates of poverty, social isolation, and disrupted education. Many of GAC's members face barriers including gaps in work history, low digital literacy, lack of access to technology, and stigma in hiring. Unlike traditional workforce models that prioritize rapid placement, GAC integrates employment, education, peer support, and daily community engagement in one cohesive environment. Members are not simply job seekers; they are part of a supportive community that understands the realities of managing mental illness while pursuing work and education goals. While GAC's mission is to alleviate isolation, the work area dedicated to employment and educational goals is arranged with bulky, donated cubicles that make collaborative work and peer support almost impossible. The MEE Unit is staffed by experienced professionals who work side by side with members developing deep knowledge of individual strengths, goals, and barriers. GAC maintains longstanding partnerships with local employers and educational institutions. GAC's MEE Unit workspace and aging equipment limits their ability to properly support members. This support includes four tiers of employment training and placement that range from low commitment, shift-by-shift work to help gain confidence in a work setting, to a long term commitment with a partnership business alongside high levels of support from Clubhouse staff and members, to a fully independent job where the Clubhouse provides support on an as needed basis. This kind of workforce development program doesn't exist anywhere else and has given hundreds of participants meaningful and sustainable employment.

**Future Expectations / Sustainability:** GAC is uniquely qualified to implement the plans for the DLEC because employment and educational services are already central tenets of their mission and the work, they do daily. There will be no further costs associated with this project in the future outside of typical maintenance which GAC will supply.

**From the Grants Committee:** *"Grand Avenue Club's principles and space is undeniably collaborative and conveys a sense of equality and accountability amongst members and staff. They're all accountable to personal goals of employment, education, and enrichment. Their space and use of up-to-date technologies are critical in allowing them to work together and gain success."*



KINSHIP COMMUNITY FOOD CENTER  
Kinship Catering Pilot Launch  
[www.kinshipmke.org](http://www.kinshipmke.org)



**The Organization:** Kinship Community Food Center is working to end hunger, isolation, and poverty by putting neighbors—and the community around them—at the center of the solution. Kinship pairs immediate support with pathways to long-term stability, belonging, and economic mobility. In 2025 alone: Over 19,000 neighbors received 456,000 lbs. of food at **Shop**, their fresh food pantry. Their urban farm, **Grow**, harvested over 20,000 lbs. of organic produce. Nearly 700 individuals were served throughout the year at the weekly community meal called **Feast**. In addition to food support, Kinship also helped families navigate crises and remove barriers to stability through 510 referrals to 82 partner agencies for legal, medical, housing, and other services through its **Stride** program. **Form** built purpose and connection through service-learning—nearly 3,000 people participated and 1 in 3 volunteers at Shop also shopped. **Workforce** utilized a “heal on the clock” model, through paid training opportunities that let individuals focus on their mental well-being, social connection and personal development with the goal of creating family-sustaining career options.

**The Project:** The Kinship Café (5-star rated on Google, Yelp and Facebook) located in the ThriveOn King Building on Martin Luther King Drive in Milwaukee is run by Workforce program participants who serve healthy breakfast and lunch to roughly 3,000 customers per month. The 18-month program trains 10 participants in culinary production, customer service, and catering operations. Participants will earn wages while building technical skills, professional confidence, and workplace stability—all while being supported by a trauma-informed approach including mentorship and wraparound services. Recently, to create more paid training opportunities, Kinship hired a Workforce program graduate who led the launch of a part-time catering program out of the Cafe called **Kinship Catering**. It operates on limited basis 2 days/week, serving up to 3 orders/week for up to 40 people/order. Demand has been strong and the response overwhelmingly positive. Impact100’s award would allow Kinship Catering to launch on a full-time basis to the Workforce program to 20 participants annually by creating additional sustainable paid training. With the award, Kinship Catering would fund trainee wages, additional supplies and equipment, insurance, and general costs to expand and refine its operating model. The plan is to thoughtfully scale operations using a phased approach: Phase 1 - equipment purchases, expanded marketing, and onboarding additional trainees; Phase 2 - increase catering frequency to daily service aligned with Café hours; and Phase 3 - expand event capacity and implementing delivery and revenue-tracking systems.

**The Need:** Kinship is in the 53212-zip code (Riverwest and Harambee) but also serves households from the 53211, 53217, 53202 and 53203 zip codes. While 80% of Kinship’s shoppers aged 18-55 are employed, household incomes in these neighborhoods fall significantly short of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s Self-Sufficiency Standard. Many residents struggle with the pathway to family-sustaining employment because of intergenerational trauma that has led to justice system involvement, substance abuse, and single parenthood. Recruiting to the Workforce program happens through the Stride program and the volunteer network to create a transition from community engagement to healing and paid workforce training.

**Expectations / Sustainability:** The success of the pilot program demonstrates clear market interest and validates the potential for expansion. As volume and customer relationships grow, earned income will cover an increasing share of direct program costs while philanthropic support will continue to be available for wraparound services and trainee support. Kinship is well-positioned to scale this proven model into a sustainable catering enterprise.

**From the Grant Committee:** *“Kinship isn’t a one-size-fits-all program. It meets each person where they are, creates a healing environment where trust can grow, and helps break the cycle of generational poverty. Truly impressive.”*



MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary  
MBHS' Commercial Kitchen  
MBsanctuary.org



**The Organization:** MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary (MBHS) was started in 2014 in a parking lot with volunteers distributing meals from their cars with Sister MacCanon Brown. Today MBHS is turning an abandoned 5-story warehouse into a beacon of hope in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods and extreme food deserts in Milwaukee. MBHS has evolved into a major organization with a clear vision: to create a daytime sanctuary for homeless and at-risk individuals. The organization is a beacon of hope in the community, offering many support services, but it all starts with the food and nutrition. Each week over 120 people come to MBHS for a week's supply of food. On Fridays, a hot meal is provided 9 blocks away at a local church. Last year, based on sign-in sheets, 4600 people participated in the two weekly distributions of food and essentials at the MBHS main facility. MBHS also has a welcome center where residents can find resources for employment, tutoring programs, and psychological support. MBHS has a nurse on staff, a pharmacy, and showers. MBHS also provides donated clothing, bedding, shoes and supplies to local residents. MBHS has a vivid goal to be an economically and racially non-partisan organization, offering many levels and layers to transform people's lives.

**The Project:** For 11 years, MBHS have cooked only one hot meal per week in a borrowed church basement kitchen, nine blocks away, because the Sanctuary has no kitchen. This can no longer meet rising needs. MBHS is asking for this grant to support a transformational project: MBHS commercial kitchen, which will finally bring daily meals on-site and strengthen community health, including for children harmed by lead poisoning. If MBHS receives the \$100,000 grant, the kitchen project can begin and will be completed in 2026. MBHS has incredible subcontractors that offer them discounted rates, MBHS plans to hire kitchen staff, secure volunteers, and include community members to help run the new kitchen. It will be open FIVE days a week, versus the current schedule of one day a week. MBHS plans to add programs to educate participants about nutrition, food storage, food preparation and kitchen skills.

**The Need:** MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary is located at 2461 W. Center Street. This area is recognized on a NATIONAL level as one of the worst food deserts in the country. The 53206-zip code, where MBHS is located, has the lowest income level and the highest concentration of hunger in the county. The average life expectancy in this neighborhood is 13 years less than that of the Milwaukee suburbs. This neighborhood has the highest incarceration rate of African American males in the entire country. Sister MacCanon Brown strongly believes it all comes down to FOOD. People need to have food to improve their circumstances, and people in this area are hungry. Sister MacCanon Brown likes to say that "food is our middle name".

**Future Expectations / Sustainability:** MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary carries no debt. They rely on donations, grants, and community partners, and they start projects only after they have the funds. The Impact100 grant would be the final piece in funding kitchen appliances and final construction. Any further maintenance will be provided through donations, grants or community partners when needed in the future. MBHS has a staff member who oversees all food management and distribution. The kitchen will be complete with the Impact100 grant and we have no concerns regarding sustainability.

**From the Grants Committee:** *"Our grant committee was extremely moved by the good work being done at MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary. We were sad to realize our neighbors, just blocks away in the 53206 neighborhoods, are suffering to such an extreme extent. Without transportation, 53206 residents must rely on gas stations, dollar stores, and over-priced corner stores with limited offerings for food. This leads to food scarcity and poor nutrition. MBHS provides fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for their guests. We are THRILLED to imagine what can be done with an on-site kitchen at MacCanon Brown Homeless Sanctuary. "*