

# UW-Madison: Menard family gift supports UW's Center for the Study of Liberal Democracy

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The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for the Study of Liberal Democracy (CSLD) announces a gift of \$880,000 from the Menard family, in support of the Center's stated mission to probe the nature and prospects of liberal democracy and its core principles, practices, and institutions.

"This gift enables the CSLD to continue its effort to promote the critical understanding of the cardinal principles and institutions of liberal democracy, including constitutionalism and the rule of law, individual rights, and the meaning of freedom and free markets in a flourishing liberal democracy," says CSLD director and professor of political science Richard Avramenko. "It also will allow the CSLD to continue to be a unifying presence on campus by ensuring intellectual diversity and encouraging wide-ranging civil discourse."

The Menard family's gift to the CSLD will establish the Menard Family Postdoctoral Fellows program and will be deployed to continue hosting public lectures, sponsoring faculty research, and promoting the development of graduate and undergraduate students with programming and fellowships.

"We appreciate the Menard family's generosity and its intent to enhance opportunity through education," says Eric M. Wilcots, Dean of the College of Letters & Science. "Giving back to Wisconsin's institutions and its people is a hallmark of the Wisconsin Idea."

John Menard is a 1963 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and is one of Wisconsin's most successful business leaders. The first Menards store was

located in Eau Claire, and the massive home supply chain is still headquartered there. Today, Menards has 325 stores and 41 manufacturing facilities located in 14 Midwestern states.

In addition to this gift to UW-Madison, the Menard family has donated to other UW System campuses recently: the family gave \$3 million to UW-Eau Claire this fall, \$2.36 million to the University of Wisconsin-Stout in December, and \$2.1 million to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse last fall.

As part of its stated goal to invest in the future of local communities, the Menard family focuses its support in the Midwestern states where its employees, customers and business partners live, learn and work. Gifts to colleges and universities underscore the family's belief in the power of education to unlock "extraordinary human potential."

"To stay relevant, all of us need to embrace learning and new ideas so that we can create an America where nobody gets left behind," said the Menard family in an open letter to the University of Wisconsin community. "We hope our support of the University of Wisconsin will enhance the educational experiences of students, preparing them for future success and inspiring generational prosperity throughout communities across the Midwest to lead the way."

Click here to read the Menard family's open letter: <https://csld.wisc.edu/menard-family-open-letter/>