

UW-Madison: Community Chats Series Highlights How Campus Partners Are Tackling Pressing Issues in Madison and Beyond

Posted on Thursday, Feb 25, 2021

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Strong community partnerships are essential to the Wisconsin Idea and a key part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Community Relations office. To further uplift these relationships, Community Relations is launching Community Chats, a new monthly discussion series that explores the many ways members of the Madison community and UW-Madison are coming together to address pressing public issues.

The chats will be posted on the Community Relations website at communityrelations.wisc.edu/community-chats.

Developed in the spirit of the LaMarr Billups Community-University Engagement Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to campus community partnerships, Community Chats will feature leaders at the forefront of social change. Each month, they will discuss how their work is directly connecting and uplifting people in Madison and the surrounding region.

"The Community Chats series reminds us to 'never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world,' and this group of leaders has

indeed changed our world, our community here in Madison,” says Brenda González, director of community relations at UW-Madison. “I am honored to have the opportunity to interview the amazing leaders that are part of the LaMarr Billups legacy that helps the university think how to better partner and co-create with community through a strong commitment to social justice and equity.”

In the first episode, González talks with Emily Auerbach, co-director and co-founder of the UW Odyssey Project, about her work with the program and asks her to share stories of Odyssey students.

The UW Odyssey Project offers life-changing UW-Madison humanities classes for adult students facing economic barriers to college. Odyssey students report transformative outcomes, and some have even moved from homelessness to bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

“I love bringing the university’s riches to a wider audience,” Auerbach says in the Community Chats episode. “I think we underestimate the power of the humanities, the power of human conversations, the power of exploring things together to change lives in meaningful ways.”