

# Transformations



Alumna Maggie Fernandes pivots to tech future

Froedtert announces record-setting gift for scholarships

Inspiring alumnus who is deaf earns automotive tech and audio engineer diplomas

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**Dr. Vicki J. Martin is the 10th president of MATC.** She has served in higher education for four decades, at MATC for three decades and has led the college since 2014. In 2015, Dr. Martin launched the MATC Promise, a public-private partnership that provides free tuition for eligible new high school graduates, and in 2018, she announced the MATC Promise for Adults, which provides free tuition for eligible students to finish their degree. Dr. Martin has attracted growing private-sector and foundation support to the MATC Foundation, serves as vice chair of the Higher Education Regional Alliance, is the chairperson of the Bradley Tech High School Commission and is a founding leader of the M<sup>3</sup> (pronounced M-cubed) initiative, which brings together MATC, Milwaukee Public Schools and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to transform the future of Milwaukee through education. Leading the college with a focus on success for all students, Dr. Martin has guided MATC's implementation of the nationally recognized Guided Pathways framework and participation in the nation's first regional launch of the Moon Shot for Equity, which is aimed at eliminating higher education equity gaps by 2030.

## MATC FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-22

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Erica L. Case - *Director of Field Human Resources - Product Development & Wisconsin Operations, Harley-Davidson Motor Company*

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The MATC Foundation Inc. is a nonprofit organization founded in 1979 to raise funds for student scholarships and emergency grants. The Foundation also engages donors in supporting MATC educational programs that address the workforce development needs of the community.

Our mission is to support student success and enhance learning by engaging those who are passionate about the college and the community it benefits.

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**MILWAUKEE AREA *Technical College***  
*Transforming Lives, Industry & Community*

**MISSION** Education that transforms lives, industry and community

**VISION** The best choice in education, where everyone can succeed

**VALUES** Empowerment, Inclusion, Innovation, Integrity, Respect



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# Letter From the President

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**WHEN WE TALK TO PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY,** we find that everyone knows MATC but people are often surprised by all that MATC does. We are excited to share the college's full breadth and depth of offerings for in-demand careers in our communities, transfer programs, the contributions our graduates make in our local economy and more.

MATC is a comprehensive two-year technical college in our community offering state-of-the-art curriculum, and labs and equipment that our students will find in their future workplace. Nearly 1,000 Advisory Committee members representing local businesses and other partners ensure our curriculum is current.

And MATC is a trusted partner in building the diverse workforce pipeline for our region: 57% of our students are students of color and 71% of our graduates stay and work here in the MATC District (Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties and small portions of Washington and Waukesha counties).

In addition to our career-focused programs, we partner with more than 40 university partners to make transferring to earn a four-year degree seamless. Our two-year liberal arts transfer degrees are among our five most popular programs. We have guaranteed transfer agreements with Marquette University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and University of Wisconsin-Parkside, and our free-tuition Promise students can continue at UW-Madison or Lakeland University through their Promise programs.

In this edition of Transformations, we celebrate the impact our alumni have in a wide array of industries, including business, community and human services, creative arts, health, manufacturing, STEM and IT. We are the place where diverse professionals grow and where entrepreneurs develop.

These graduates are the faces of the statistics we proudly share. Our associate degree alumni will earn an extra \$400,000 in their lifetimes compared to someone with a high school diploma alone, according to the respected labor market firm Emsi. And every \$1 of public investment brings back \$2.70.



*Dr. Vicki J. Martin, MATC President*

**“MATC lifts up individuals as they pursue careers and brings equity, skills and employability to the area’s workforce pipeline.”**

As we grapple with the paradox of high unemployment in some neighborhoods and worker shortages in nearly every industry, MATC offers proactive solutions at a critical time. MATC lifts up individuals as they pursue careers and brings equity, skills and employability to the area’s workforce pipeline.

As always, we stand ready to partner with employers, community members, and of course, our students and alumni. Contact me directly if these stories inspire more innovative solutions to diverse workforce and talent development challenges and opportunities.

Sincerely,

Vicki J. Martin, Ph.D.  
MATC President

# Highlights 2021

## New Leaders Will Shape Enhanced Student and Employee Experiences

**MATC HAS HIRED** two new leaders whose work will help strengthen MATC's position as an educational leader in our community.



**Laquitha "Elle" Bonds** was named vice president of human resources. Among her responsibilities are positioning the college as a preferred place to work and serving as a change agent for diversity, equity, inclusion and multiculturalism. Prior to coming to MATC, Bonds was director of talent operations at Waukesha County Technical College.



**Eva Martinez Powless** was appointed the college's first chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer. She has served as Marquette University's assistant dean of admissions/multicultural outreach, director of intercultural engagement and most recently as director of diversity and inclusion.

## MATC, UWM Join Project to Foster Equity in Transfer

**A NEW INITIATIVE** between MATC and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee will make credit transfers easier especially for Black, Hispanic/Latino/a, adult and first-generation learners. Sponsored by ECMC Foundation and Ascendium Education Group, the initiative is awarding up to \$27,500 to support partnerships between community and four-year colleges to align transfer pathways to increase transfer and completion rates for underrepresented student populations.



## Virtual Commencement Celebrates 1,200 Graduates

**IN MAY**, MATC held a virtual ceremony for the Spring semester graduates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dasha Kelly Hamilton, poet laureate for both the City of Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin, gave the keynote address. The student speaker was Keshia Herrington, pictured, who graduated with an associate degree in human service and ultimately plans to earn a doctorate in psychology.



## Pocket Park Anchors Corner of Downtown Milwaukee Campus

**THIS SUMMER**, a half-acre pocket park was completed at the corner of Juneau Avenue and 10th Street, where a one-story building was demolished. The green space features a rain garden and connects the campus to the revitalized Brewery and Deer districts. The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District will provide a \$30,302 grant as well as educational signage on the benefits of stormwater retention. The Fund for Lake Michigan will contribute \$50,000.





## Students Showcase Work in Online Portfolios

MATC CREATIVE ARTS, DESIGN AND MEDIA students have showcased their work at [studentportfolios.matc.edu](http://studentportfolios.matc.edu) for employers and the public to view. Animation, computer simulation and gaming, graphic design, interior design, photography, television and video production, and web and digital media projects are featured.

## College Adds Juneteenth Day as Annual Holiday

2021 MARKED THE FIRST TIME the college and its campuses closed to commemorate Juneteenth Day. The closure coincided with the 50th anniversary of the local Juneteenth Day celebration, which was one of the first organized in the northern U.S. Student recruiters represented the college at Milwaukee's Juneteenth Day parade and celebration.



## Uniquely Abled Academy Trains Individuals With High-Functioning Autism

### THE UNIQUELY ABLED ACADEMY

at MATC, designed to train individuals with high-functioning autism to become computer numerical control (CNC) machine operators, launched this Fall semester at the Downtown Milwaukee



Campus. Local donors contributed seed funds to support the pilot launch of the program, which is based upon a national model started in California. The MATC Foundation is currently seeking \$565,000 to fund activities over four years, which will include UAA student scholarships and the expansion of the college's overall services for students on the autism spectrum.

## Four Individuals Appointed to District Board

ON JULY 1, the following individuals began new terms in their volunteer positions on the MATC District Board, with terms expiring June 30, 2024:



**Lauren Baker**, retired executive director, Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association; Baker previously served on the board from 1995-2015



**Erica L. Case**, director, field human resources – product development and Wisconsin operations, Harley-Davidson Motor Company; she was first appointed to the board in 2018



**Mark F. Foley**, attorney, von Briesen & Roper s.c.; he was first appointed to the board in 2015



Also, **Antonio Diaz**, general manager of Van Horn Latino LLC, was appointed to fill a vacancy on the board and his term ends June 30, 2023; this is his first appointment to the board.

Each member of the District Board has the responsibility to ensure that MATC is meeting its commitment to increase the potential and productivity of the people in the district through the development and delivery of high-quality educational programs consistent with current and emerging educational and labor market needs.

Summer 2021 STEM Camps  
free online!

Register now, space is limited!



## Free Teen Summer Camps Focus on STEM

MATC HOSTED FOUR weeklong summer camps for teens focusing on cybersecurity, robotics/coding, Lean process improvement and electronics. Participants experimented

with hands-on labs and used interactive resources to learn concepts through fun, engaging activities.

## 'Pandemic in the Heartland'

MILWAUKEE PBS, in conjunction with PBS' "FRONTLINE" and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, produced a thought-provoking documentary this past year titled "Pandemic in the Heartland," explaining how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Wisconsin's dairy farms. The documentary focused on Loyal, Wisconsin, and how the next generation of dairy farmers is approaching farming and technology.



# READY TO Repair

MATC Appliance Technician grads are in demand

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*Jim Rehm,  
MATC Appliance  
Technician program  
lead instructor*

If you think you spend a lot of time in your kitchen, you haven't met instructor Jim Rehm. He has six kitchens and spends countless hours in them guiding students through hands-on learning in appliance installation, service and repair.

Rehm, an MATC alumnus who has 35 years of experience in the consumer repair business, is the lead instructor of MATC's Appliance Technician program. He teaches most of the courses and explains how to work with major appliances such as automatic washers, dryers, ranges, refrigerators and dishwashers.

**One of the only programs of its kind in the U.S.**

MATC has one of the few appliance technician programs nationwide. Students learn to truly analyze and understand a situation — and not simply change parts until an appliance returns to working order. They gain a fundamental understanding of

electricity to help them troubleshoot. Students also work on soft skills because they will spend significant time on the job interacting with customers.

"I spend about 90% of my time on house calls," explained 2018 graduate Jason Manske. "We try to come in as friendly as possible and always respect their property. It's important to keep your area clean and clean up after yourself."

Manske originally started in the parts department at Akrit Appliance Service and enrolled in MATC's Appliance Technician program when he expressed an interest in advancement.





*Jim Rehm (left) and Jason Manske in the Appliance Technician Lab at the MATC Education Center at Walker's Square*

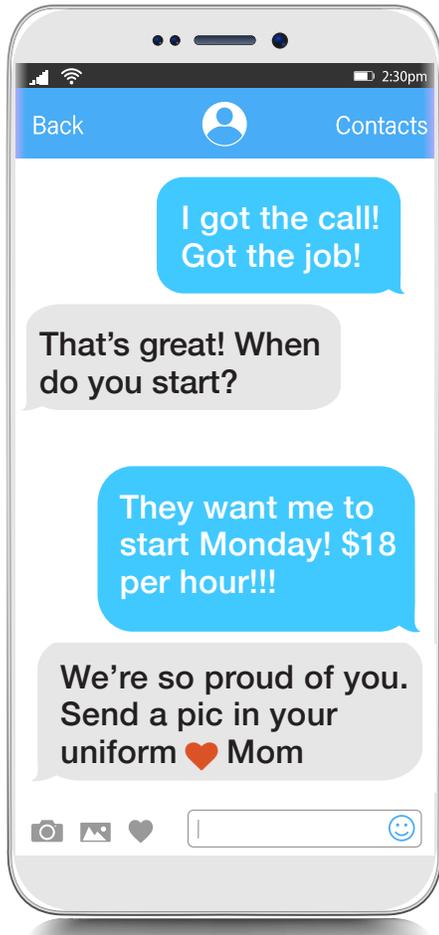
CAREER



2

FULL-TIME SEMESTERS

to a new, in-demand career



Jason Manske,  
MATC Appliance  
Technician program  
alumnus

He enjoys the fairly consistent weekday hours and lack of repetition. “You make good money immediately. It’s a mix of working with your hands and solving problems,” Manske said. “It’s never the same thing every day. It’s something new thrown at you all the time. It keeps everything interesting and fresh.”

**Great opportunity for high school graduates or career changers**

Full-time students can complete MATC’s technical diploma program in two semesters and graduates earn \$16 to \$19 per hour, according to Rehm. Those working on high-end appliances can earn significantly more hourly and qualify for bonuses, making their yearly income above \$60,000.

MATC helps strengthen the diverse talent pipeline for local employers.

“I get calls all the time from employers looking for technicians,” said Rehm. New appliances have a “life expectancy” of five to 10 years; Rehm sees more appliance failures than in the past.

Kevin Cokain is a vice president at Akrit Appliance Service, which provides technicians for both high-end residential and commercial needs. He supervises several MATC graduates and agrees that demand is really high for skilled technicians.

“It’s a great opportunity for prospective students or people looking to make a career change,” he noted. “This is a trade that can give you a stable and very good income. We’re not as susceptible to trends in the economy as some other trades that are tied to construction

and building. In a good economy, new appliances are being sold and we get a lot of warranty work. In a down economy, a lot of repairs are needed.”

Before becoming an instructor in 2013, Rehm worked for two different companies: a small independent TV repair shop in Milwaukee and American TV and Appliance. This work experience helps ensure his classroom instruction is practical. He volunteered as an advisor to MATC’s appliance repair program while working full time in the field. This feedback helped ensure the curriculum evolved to meet employer needs.

The work has changed over the decades. “It used to be mechanical – this part touches that part – but we’ve moved into electronics, and now everything is a computer asking the machine to do different functions,” explained Rehm. In some instances, technicians use a kit that looks more like a briefcase than a traditional toolbox and often start a repair by connecting a laptop or tablet for diagnostic details.

Throughout the program, he focuses on instruction and advice from the perspective of a career veteran. “Keep working your way up, keep applying what you know and keep going,” recommended Rehm. And, of course, read your appliance manual!

To learn more about MATC’s Appliance Technician program, visit [matc.edu/course-catalog](http://matc.edu/course-catalog) and search “appliance”

**“Keep working your way up,  
keep applying what you know  
and keep going.”**

MATC alumnus Jim Rehm,  
MATC appliance repair instructor

### Appliance Technicians:

- Invest nine months for an in-demand career with great pay
- Enjoy meeting new people and solving their problems
- Work in a different setting every day
- Have some independence while getting assistance from the main office
- Appreciate the career's dynamic nature
- Earn up to \$60,000+ per year with experience



*Appliance Technician student in the lab at the  
MATC Education Center at Walker's Square*

# Think You Know MATC?

## Politics

### ELECTED OFFICIAL SYLVIA ORTIZ-VELEZ INSPIRES OTHERS TO ACHIEVE

**South side pride.** Sylvia Ortiz-Velez has it in spades. Born and raised in the district she now represents — 12th County Supervisory District, one of the most diverse in Milwaukee — Ortiz-Velez was elected on a platform to preserve the Mitchell Park Domes, protect and expand public transit, practice fiscal responsibility while prioritizing vital public services and taking care of Milwaukee County’s most vulnerable citizens.

A lifelong south-side community resident and activist, her path to political office began at MATC. Her mother came to Wisconsin in the 1960s to pick strawberries in Sussex, and eventually had



**“When I attended MATC, I never imagined myself serving the community in this capacity.”**

*Sylvia Ortiz-Velez, Wisconsin State Assembly District 8 and Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors District 12*

eight children. Ortiz-Velez attended Milwaukee Public Schools and she was not sure what she wanted to do or if she was ready for a four-year college when she enrolled at MATC.

“I wanted an environment where I could learn how to be a student and develop best practices,” Ortiz-Velez said. “I also wanted to make sure that I could afford the tuition and transfer many of

the classes toward a four-year degree.”

She transferred the credits she earned at MATC toward a bachelor of arts in political science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She says her experience at MATC prepared her for college life and the four-year college experience.

After years of working as a real estate broker and community activist, Ortiz-Velez ran for and won a seat on the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. In 2020, she was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly.

To anyone who envisions achieving a similar goal, Ortiz-Velez suggests “taking courses in government, volunteering your time and finding an elected official to shadow and learn from.”

And remember, anything is possible. ■



*Sylvia Ortiz-Velez*

Our graduates leave armed with the practical experience, hard skills and soft skills necessary to make a big impact in their fields.

Here are just a few MATC alumni who are enriching the community.

**Growing up,** Leif Erickson was actively involved in Erickson Ambulance, the Racine-based family business founded by his grandfather and carried on by his father. It is no surprise that Erickson wanted to be a firefighter. He decided to study at MATC because of the campus locations and program reputation, and he chose the fire science program due to the “background and experience of fire science instructors,” he said.

But for Erickson, MATC was just the beginning of his education, and his career has evolved from firefighting to leading the team of pilots, mechanics, communication specialists,

nurses, paramedics and administrative staff that is Flight for Life (FFL) in southeastern Wisconsin.

Flight for Life is a nonprofit established in 1984 to provide safe, high quality, customer-oriented and efficient medical transportation, with a commitment to education. FFL transports patients in the most critical emergencies — see [flightforlifestories.org](http://flightforlifestories.org) for inspiring life-saving



*Leif Erickson*

“

**“... I want to be confident that I did the best I could using my education, skills and dedication while providing the best clinical care in every situation.”**

*Leif Erickson, Executive Director, Flight for Life*

success stories. FFL also provides special programs for the general public.

Not that Erickson imagined this when he started at MATC. “At that point in my career I was not a paramedic and was solely focused on firefighting,” explained Erickson, who is now FFL’s executive director.

Like many MATC students, Erickson worked as he continued his education from associate degree to graduate school. And he learned a great deal at MATC: “Course content was in line with my occupation and knowledge gained immediately impacted my abilities as a firefighter.”

He advises those with similar career goals — and work schedules — to “set goals and stay focused.”

At the end of the day, “My goal is to always do the best I could,” Erickson said. “No matter if the results are good or bad, I want to be confident that I did the best I could using my education, skills and dedication while providing the best clinical care in every situation.”

Now that’s heroic. ■

### Community Service

## FROM FIREFIGHTER TO FLIGHT FOR LIFER: LEIF ERICKSON HAS DONE IT ALL

## Transportation

### IF YOU'RE ON THE HIGHWAY, **JON RIEMANN'S** TALKING TO YOU



**“...with my MATC education, at 19 years old I was working as a broadcast engineer, and I graduated debt free.”**

*Jon D. Riemann, Communication Manager, Department of Transportation Traffic Management Center*

#### The sign above the expressway reads:

**DROWSY DRIVERS ARE A NIGHTMARE.**

The person crafting those messages? Jon D. Riemann: MATC graduate, communication guy, wordsmith extraordinaire.

**Q:** You grew up in Sheboygan. What made you choose MATC over other schools?

**A:** All credit must go to my dad. We went on the college tour circuit and he made an 11th hour suggestion to visit MATC. The classroom was a TV studio. The instructors were professionals in the

industry. The assignments in the second semester were working lighting, sound, camera and staging positions for actual TV programs airing on Milwaukee PBS. I was sold.

**Q:** Why did you choose the television engineering program at MATC?



*Jon Riemann*

**A:** From day one, MATC provided hands-on learning. That, along with the price of tuition, were the reasons I chose MATC. The decision paid off because nearly three months before graduating, with my MATC education, at 19 years old I was working as a broadcast engineer, and I graduated debt free.

**Q:** How did your MATC studies best prepare you for further studies and/or the workforce?

**A:** One word: skills! MATC brings out natural skills in people and enhances them with practice. You show me one applicant with a four-year degree and one with an associate degree from MATC coupled with two years of work, and I know which one I want. MATC also set me up to easily continue my education. I believe every credit was accepted for transfer to where I completed a bachelor's in two years.

**Q:** Did you ever imagine doing what you're doing now when you were a student?

**A:** No. I found the opportunity with the Department of Transportation at the Traffic Management Center. As communication manager, I promote the new 511 Wisconsin traveler information system; help to communicate to drivers during inclement weather and roadway incidents; and I am the program manager for the creative traffic safety messages on highway message boards. It's the smallest part of the job, but certainly the most fun.

**Q:** Was it your idea to do the safety messages?

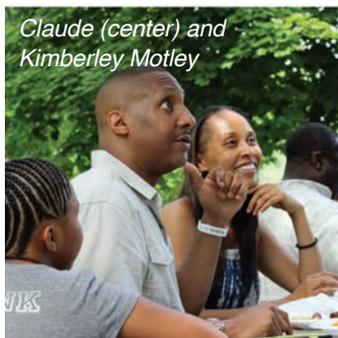
**A:** It was not my idea to start the creative traffic safety messages, however I did expand on the idea. I'm honored that Governor Evers took notice and personally called to thank me for this important work.

**Q:** Where can someone send an idea for a message?

**A:** If someone has a suggestion, I recommend they use the "contact us" on the 511WI.gov website. ■

## Documentary

### **KIMBERLEY MOTLEY GETS PERSONAL IN 'WHEN CLAUDE GOT SHOT'**



*Claude (center) and Kimberley Motley*

**MATC graduate** Kimberley Motley and her husband, Claude, are central characters in the 2021 documentary "When Claude Got Shot," the true story of the unexpected impact of violence and the path to healing. The film was featured at the 2021 Milwaukee Film Festival and the South by Southwest 2021 Film Festival.

Kimberley Motley is a 1997 graduate of the Legal Studies/Paralegal associate degree program, 2014 MATC commencement speaker and a 2015 Outstanding Alumni Award recipient by the American Association of Community Colleges. She received the latter for her work as an international human rights attorney working in



Dennis Felber

**Thirteen Wisconsin artists** created works that were installed this fall for permanent display throughout the Downtown Milwaukee Campus. The painters, printmakers and sculptors represent a variety of backgrounds and outlooks. We caught up with two who also happen to be MATC alumni.

**Dennis Felber** lives the artist’s life. Associate degree from MATC in Visual Communications? Check. Additional classes at MATC in welding once he began working in sculpture? Check. Happily self-employed for 40+ years? Check.

“Surprisingly, I didn’t think about what I would end up doing,” Felber said. “But I did know what I enjoyed doing, which was photography and creating art and if I continued to find opportunities to keep doing that, and get paid, then I knew I was on the right path.”

Felber spent years as a professional photographer

before he began working in sculpture.

“I noticed a metal sculpture that I was just mesmerized by. I then decided to learn welding,” Felber recalled. “Surprisingly it took off and most of what I made sold faster than I could make them. The idea of being able to come up with a concept in your mind and create it using the basic materials of steel and/or copper and stone is extremely satisfying.”

Felber’s steel and copper piece, “Three Rivers,” is among the new installations.

His advice to students? “To have your own business, be aware that the creative side is about half of what you will be spending your time on. The other half is promotion, finances, client communication, organization and time utilization.”

**Eric Stenzel** is also a sculpture artist. He grew up in West Allis, near the Allis Chalmers complex. Perhaps it is no surprise that he, too, ended up making art from metal.

“The education I received from MATC has helped me in my work today in the areas

of metalworking and design,” he said.

Stenzel enjoys studying Old World architecture and ornamentation crafted through traditional artisan methods. In the Cultural Village at German Fest 2019, Stenzel demonstrated traditional forging techniques.

His steel sculpture installation, “Realm Antenna,” measures 6 feet, 6 inches from its base.

Like many students, he worked his way through school as well. “A good game plan and a supportive spouse were the key to making it all work for me.” ■

“The education I received from MATC has helped me in my work today in the areas of metalworking and design.”

Eric Stenzel, Sculpture Artist

Art

A PORTRAIT OF MATC GRADS AS ARTISTS



Eric Stenzel

To hear more alumni stories, visit [matc.edu/alumni](http://matc.edu/alumni) and click “Alumni Voices”

Afghanistan, Cuba and the U.S., among other countries.

Directed by Milwaukeean Brad Lichtenstein of 371 Productions — and executive produced by hip-hop icon Snoop Dogg — the film follows Claude Motley, a law student who returns to his hometown of Milwaukee for a high school reunion, and is shot in the face during an attempted carjacking.

Two days later, his assailant attempts to rob a woman who shoots him during the struggle; the assailant is paralyzed from the waist down. In a single weekend, three families’ lives are changed by gun violence.

Lichtenstein and Claude Motley have been friends for years. The film follows the people involved through the long processes of mental and physical recovery, progress through the criminal justice system, ongoing medical and insurance issues and the long-term effects on the families involved.

The film has been optioned by the PBS series Independent Lens, and will be shown on Milwaukee PBS in 2022. The Motleys live in Charlotte, North Carolina, and they continue to work for human rights and restorative justice. ■

# CAREER MAKEOVER

With Adult Promise, entrepreneur earns tuition-free degree

**S**INCE 2005, THE SNIP OF SCISSORS, whir of blow dryers and chatter of clients have filled the day for cosmetologist Andrea Kazmierski. She enjoyed the work, but looking to her future, she wanted to explore careers with less physical demands.

“Unfortunately, I did not have the money to go back to school,” she said. Then in summer 2018, she heard MATC offered a tuition-free opportunity for eligible adults who

MATC PROMISE  
SCHOLARSHIPS



**\$3,096,422**

donated for MATC  
Promise scholarships  
since program inception

had earned college credits but did not have a degree.

MATC was the first in the state to launch a Promise program. She quickly checked into it, learned she met the qualifications and began taking business courses that August.

“I felt I was given a gift with the Promise program and I was going to give it my all,” she recalled. The degree would provide the educational foundation to operate

## Five Impacts of an MATC Education

**Andrea Kazmierski, co-owner of HairVanna Studio in Hales Corners, qualified for MATC’s Adult Promise program in 2018, which covered the tuition for her Business Management associate degree. She shared five ways the degree helps her every day to be a cut above as a business owner.**

### **1/Modern Marketing**

Kazmierski had been in the hair biz for 16 years but advertising and social media were not part of her working world. MATC’s business courses taught her the importance of connecting online with clients. “We are living in a time that having a social media footprint is essential to any and every business,” she noted.

### **2/Leader of All Ages**

“I have been in management roles at work since I was 19,” said Kazmierski. Working with people of all ages, she learned that there are several ways of managing people and her coursework revealed why that is. She explained that baby boomers and elder Gen Xers tend to follow a chain of command and the highest leader makes final decisions; younger Gen Xers and millennials prefer to meet a goal as a group. “I adopted a more collaborative style of management years ago,” she said. “It created loyalty and trust. I would never ask employees to do something I wouldn’t do, and they appreciated it.”

Join the hundreds of donors that support MATC's Promise scholarships to make college tuition-free for eligible students. Give at [matc.edu/donate](https://matc.edu/donate)

a salon and also prepare her for new opportunities.

A year later, she and a friend opened HairVanna Studio in Hales Corners “to become our own bosses,” she said. Kazmierski continued her studies too.

“But COVID-19 hit. I had to suddenly do online courses, which scared me because I’m an in-person, visual learner. Then all salons were ordered to close,” she added. “I found myself without an income, only seven months

after we opened. I was scared about my future.”

Without a job, she focused even harder on her coursework. May 2020 brought good news – the salon could reopen, “and I finished the semester with flying colors,” she said. Currently she plans to “finish this year behind the chair. Then I’ll begin my journey using my degree, and continue doing hair part time while I’m able.” ■

**“I felt I was given a gift with the Promise program and I was going to give it my all.”**

MATC alumna  
Andrea Kazmierski,  
co-owner of  
HairVanna Studio

### 3/Learning Software

Kazmierski never worked in an office setting, and she attended high school before advanced software tools became the norm. Noting the importance of current technology to do business administrative tasks, she added, “I am extremely thankful for the Microsoft Office course at MATC!”

### 4/Big Picture

MATC's Business Management degree covers key principles including human resources, business law, business analysis, risk management and accounting. “I developed a strong understanding of business as a whole and I have the knowledge necessary to make decisions and handle every operation function smoothly,” Kazmierski said.

### 5/Powerful Promise

Continuing one's education is vital for running a successful business. “I could not have done this without MATC's Promise for Adults program. I am lucky to have been part of something so special,” she said. “Whenever someone mentions going back to school, I tell them to apply for it.”

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To learn more about MATC's Promise for Adults, visit [matc.edu/promise](https://matc.edu/promise)

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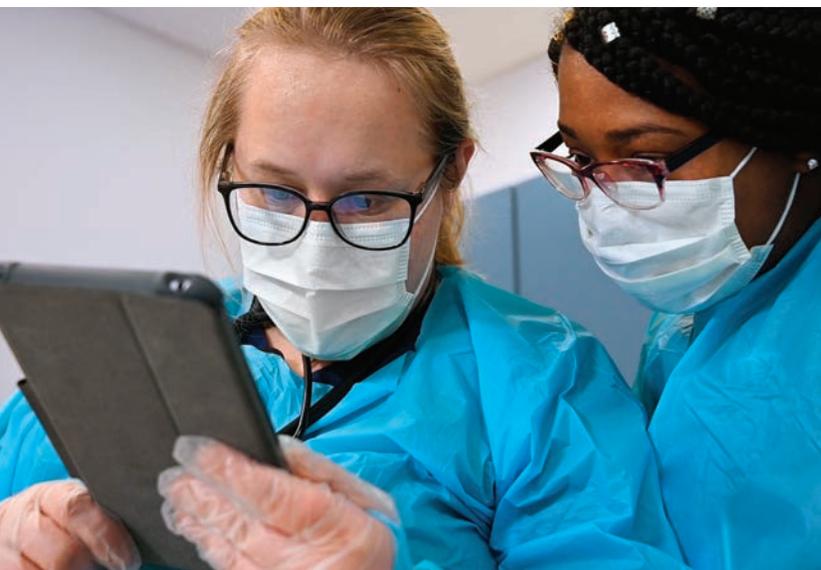
**MATC**  
**PROMISE**

# RECORD-SETTING GIFT

Froedtert Scholarship will grow diverse healthcare pipeline



*Surgical Technology classroom at Downtown Milwaukee Campus*



*Nursing students at Downtown Milwaukee Campus*



*Physical Therapist Assistant program offered at Mequon Campus*

SCHOLARSHIPS



# \$5.75M GIFT

the largest in MATC history

In what will be the largest gift in the college's history, Froedtert Hospital is set to donate \$5.75 million to the Milwaukee Area Technical College Foundation — along with an equal amount to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee — to create the new Froedtert Hospital Scholarship Program.

The 20-year program will fund scholarships for students to pursue healthcare careers. Portions of the scholarship funds also will be allocated to graduates of Milwaukee Public Schools and will include a need-based component.

“This donation represents the opportunity to transform hundreds of lives in our community,” said Dr. Vicki J. Martin, MATC president. “We are grateful for this meaningful gift from Froedtert Hospital and together we will prepare Milwaukee’s diverse future healthcare workforce, reduce skills gaps and workforce shortages, and continue to break down the barriers that stand between students and an education that connects to a career with a family-supporting income. The support Froedtert Hospital is providing to our partners at UWM and the inclusion of opportunities specifically for MPS students will further strengthen the work of M<sup>3</sup> to transform the future of Milwaukee through education.”

The scholarship program will be used toward full- and part-time certificate,



**“We are grateful for this meaningful gift from Froedtert Hospital and together we will prepare Milwaukee’s diverse future healthcare workforce ...”**

*Dr. Vicki J. Martin, MATC president*

undergraduate and postgraduate courses of study in health-related fields at MATC and UWM. Froedtert Health developed the program to address multiple needs such as expanding the pool of highly skilled and well-trained healthcare workers in southeast Wisconsin and meeting the needs of the ever-changing and increasingly sophisticated medical field.

“The Milwaukee Area Technical College and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee were chosen for their strong local presence and steadfast commitment to providing educational opportunities to those who live and work in the community,” said Eric Conley, executive vice president, Froedtert Health, and president, Froedtert Hospital. “Equally important was the opportunity each institution offers students who traditionally might not have access to postsecondary education, fundamental to the scholarship program. Foundationally, this gift also continues to honor our commitment to health equity across the region by helping eliminate healthcare disparities and addressing social determinants of health like education and employment.”

This program will provide student scholarships to further strengthen the efforts of M<sup>3</sup> (pronounced M-cubed), a collaboration between Milwaukee’s three urban public education institutions: MPS, MATC and UWM. One major emphasis of this effort is actively working to eliminate equity gaps in education. The collaboration has already helped to increase MPS

high school graduation rates, helped get more students prepared for college by completing federal financial aid forms and started a dual enrollment program to help MPS students earn college credit prior to high school graduation.

“We are extremely grateful to Froedtert Hospital for this gift, which will provide educational opportunities for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of students from Milwaukee and southeastern Wisconsin,” said Mark Mone, UWM chancellor. “It will support and enhance the work that UWM, MATC and the Milwaukee Public Schools are already doing through our M<sup>3</sup> partnership to support families, improve graduation rates and better prepare students for college. Working together, we can support students in healthcare at all stages of their college career.”

The Froedtert Hospital Scholarship Program will be funded through a charitable grant from the Kurtis Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital Trust and is pursuant to a Community Partnership Initiative Funding Agreement between Froedtert Hospital, the Kurtis Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital Trust and the Wisconsin Attorney General. That agreement is subject to approval by the Milwaukee County Circuit Court. Additional details on the scholarships will be provided when the agreement is finalized. ■

To learn more about the work of the MATC Foundation Inc. to support students and the college, visit [matc.edu/foundation](http://matc.edu/foundation)



# ALUMNA PIVOTS TO TECH FUTURE



**Maggie  
Fernandes** helps  
develop spaces  
for women,  
people of color



**IN A WORLD OF RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT,** women still hold only about 25% of computer-related jobs, while women of color hold only about 10% of those jobs, according to the National Center for Women and Information Technology.

When MATC graduate Margarida “Maggie” Fernandes decided to leave her 10-year career in retail in her mid-30s for software engineering, there was never a promise that she would succeed.

But Fernandes, now a software engineer at MacGregor Partners, has never lived life according to entitlements promised under the guise of the American Dream. At the age of 8, her family immigrated to Boston from the Cape Verde Islands with hopes of a better life, and hard work was the baseline.

As Fernandes recalled, the transition was difficult, primarily due to her lack of English proficiency and the overall culture shift.

#### **Community cultivated**

What got Fernandes through the transition was her family and community. Perhaps a foreshadowing of her future, she was the only girl in the house with her five older brothers.

Her siblings were competitive, each always striving for excellence — and the bragging rights that came with winning.

“We can take anything and make it a competition and challenge each other,” Fernandes said. “What was fantastic about it was that we would always sit down at the dinner table together and have these very in-depth conversations where your opinion was heard.”

Despite the sibling rivalries, her family always looked out for each other. Fernandes remembers her brothers helping her with homework assignments. “We were truly like our own little community,” she said.

Little did Fernandes know that the sense of community cultivated in her home growing up would lead her to form a ground-breaking community here in Milwaukee.

#### **MATC courses lead to new career**

At the age of 34, and thousands of miles away from her family, Fernandes was a well-established retail management professional in Milwaukee with 10 years of experience. However, the job lacked the flexibility she desired to spend time with her loved ones. She knew a career switch was necessary, and a return to school was imminent.

“I was always intrigued by the huge course list MATC had and how affordable and accessible it was,” Fernandes recalled. “There were night classes and virtual classes, which was a good mix for me. It was something I could explore on the side while still working.”

After enrolling, she was patient in her exploration of a new career.

“I was originally planning on going through the nursing program, which didn’t work out too well since I apparently have a fear of blood,” she said.

Reevaluating her interests and drawing on prior experience in merchandising, Fernandes took graphic design courses. The mix of analytics and design correlated with the things she enjoyed

*Maggie Fernandes, software engineer and co-founder of We Pivot*

and ultimately led her to pursue a degree in mobile design and software development.

Fernandes credits MATC for her success because of the personalized instruction she experienced.

“I loved MATC because the class sizes were perfect, and I received a higher level of interaction with the instructors. As an older student and career transitioner, there was a different type of appreciation,” Fernandes said. “The conversations that you would have with instructors at MATC and the opportunities they would bring to you were all just fantastic.”

As she progressed toward her degree, Fernandes excelled. She earned MATC’s Lamp of Knowledge Award based on her academic achievements and involvement in campus activities.

## **“I loved MATC because the class sizes were perfect, and I received a higher level of interaction with the instructors.”**

MATC alumna Maggie Fernandes, software engineer and co-founder of We Pivot

After graduation, Fernandes was confident with the knowledge she gained yet also realized that work was needed to bridge the gaps of equity in her profession.

### **Connects with Girl Develop It**

As a woman and person of color, she remembers feeling like an outsider when she started her tech career.

Longing for the sense of family and community that fueled her childhood,

Fernandes scoured the Milwaukee scene to fill that void. The search led her to Girl Develop It (GDI), a nonprofit organization that gives a platform to women in the software development industry.

“This was great for me because it was a space that you could go into, and it was OK if you didn’t understand things. Everything was so intentional to the point that we didn’t speak using acronyms,” Fernandes said. “You want to talk about barriers of entry for women and people of color? When you’re in a room and someone is throwing acronyms at you, it’s a way of making you feel unwelcome. If you don’t know them, then you’re like, I really can’t make it here.”

Fernandes’ experience with GDI reaffirmed her career change. Before leaving to start her own organization, Fernandes served as GDI’s chapter president. She also served on an MATC advisory committee to share her professional insights with the team that guides the college’s curriculum.

### **We Pivot focuses on equity and inclusion**

In 2018, Fernandes co-founded the nonprofit We Pivot to further conversations and conditions where the most marginalized individuals are included, fulfilled and empowered, resulting in a more diverse tech industry.

“Our core values are based on learning, justice, trust, authenticity and collaboration,” Fernandes said. “We truly look to create a space where



MATC alumna  
Maggie Fernandes



We Pivot Milwaukee event, July 2021

we prioritize the most vulnerable communities in tech. We feel that if we prioritize those who are vulnerable, then everybody benefits from it.”

Reflecting on where she is today, Fernandes is grateful for her upbringing. It helped her overcome the many obstacles she faced as a woman of color entering the technology field.

“Because of my background with my competitive brothers, I never felt like, oh, I can’t do this because I am a girl. It’s more like, I’m going to do this to prove that I can,” Fernandes said. “Proving something wasn’t what drew me to this career, but the beauty of it was that I could see the gender gap more clearly.”

At the same time, Fernandes understands that for the equity gap to shrink, she must do her part in recruiting others to the field. As program director for We Pivot’s Milwaukee chapter, Fernandes co-facilitates for FOR-M, Milwaukee’s first community-based tech incubator. In this role, she can connect the community with tech founders and mentors.

“For me, it’s the most enjoyable thing about the community work that I do. I truly enjoy being able to help somebody and make that connection, especially now having the ability with the FOR-M founders,” Fernandes said. “For anyone looking to get into tech, I would say that you belong anywhere that you choose to be. The best advice that I was given is to pursue your passion through the fear. Sometimes it’s hard, but on the other side of that, it’s always worth it. I started at 34 years old. If I can do it, so can you.”

In her current role at MacGregor Partners, Fernandes considers herself an ambassador for individuals underrepresented in the tech industry, such as women and people of color. “There’s a community that wants to help you. I want to be a part of that change, of marginalized individuals entering the tech space. That’s what excites me, and that’s what drives me.” ■

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#### EMPLOYMENT RATE



# 100%

Employment rate for MATC software developer grads six months after graduation

*Source: Graduate Career Report, 2020*

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To learn more about MATC’s IT programs, visit [matc.edu/course-catalog/stem](https://matc.edu/course-catalog/stem) or call the Recruitment department at 414-297-6228



*Camara "Cam" Hutchinson, MATC alumna and Milwaukee Police Department officer, at District Seven on West Fond du Lac Avenue*



Beat cop  
balances  
night shift,  
motherhood

# RAISED BY THE COMMUNITY TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY

The Milwaukee community recognizes Camara “Cam” Hutchinson as an officer for the Milwaukee Police Department — and as one of its own.

The MATC alumna has worked for MPD for about three years, but her familiarity extends beyond her most recent role in the Cream City. She was born and raised on the very streets that she patrols daily. Through all of Hutchinson’s training and hard work, she remains true to her upbringing and who she is, bringing clarity to her motivation and goals as a cop.

That motivation starts with the 7-year-old daughter Hutchinson is raising primarily by herself with the help of family members. Being a relatively new officer on the force, Hutchinson doesn’t have much flexibility to change from her night shift that starts at 7 p.m., meaning there are evenings when she doesn’t get to tuck her daughter in for bed before returning home at 3 a.m.

“It’s hard, even with family support,” Hutchinson said. “I’m her hero, and that keeps me going.”

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## JOBS

 **800 JOB OPENINGS** related to criminal justice studies projected for southeast Wisconsin

Source: Graduate Career Report, 2020

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*Criminal Justice Studies associate degree students at Oak Creek Campus*

The consistent reminder of her daughter keeps her grounded in a world where every shift brings a different task or assignment.

Community is also a tremendous driving force behind Hutchinson’s police work. She understands the attention she garners as a Black woman officer — especially considering the sometimes contentious feelings toward police in America. The gravity of the spotlight doesn’t deter her. Hutchinson views her position as a woman of color in a White-male dominant profession as an opportunity to change perceptions.

“I’m motivated to be here, and I love my community. I like the fact that when I show up on scene, people say, ‘I’ve never seen anyone that looks like you. You’ve got the braids in, or you’ve got your eyelashes in,’” Hutchinson said. “I like showing people that policing isn’t just the standard of what you think it looks like. It looks like all different kinds of shades and races.”

While Hutchinson accepts that her position can help shift the narrative, she doesn’t let it burden her and relies on her faith to help guide her.

“I don’t feel like I should do anything special or that I am where I am

because I’m a Black cop,” Hutchinson explained. “So I don’t feel like I should respond a certain way because of who I am.”

Hutchinson’s desire to make a difference also influences her goal to become a detective. In that role, she would have the opportunity to conduct the all-so-necessary follow-up work that can be overlooked in a case.

“Being a cop is very rewarding, but sometimes there’s not a lot of time to investigate,” Hutchinson said. “So I would say in the next three to five years, my goal is to make detective.”

**“I had nothing but a great experience at MATC. I actually recommend MATC to all of my friends, family and even co-workers.”**

MATC alumna Cam Hutchinson, officer,  
Milwaukee Police Department



## MATC's Deescalation Training

The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) requires law enforcement officers to undergo deescalation tactic training. MATC administers this training at its Oak Creek Campus police training facility. All police training conducted at MATC mirrors the standards set in place by the DOJ.

Each of MATC's instructors has years of experience and helps guide prospective officers and those already in the field.

"I am an ambassador for the Department of Justice and law enforcement standards and I can say that every instructor that teaches at MATC is invested in their course and in their students' success," said Eugene Reyes, MATC Police Academy director.

During the training, students must learn deescalation tactics in a classroom environment. The students get in-depth training on performing verbal deescalation, using and interpreting body language, understanding personal space and demonstrating active listening techniques.

Afterward, officers must take what they have learned and apply it to various simulated exercises, both virtually with a video simulation and in person with a trainer.

When the course is successfully completed, officers have the skills to integrate deescalation and situational awareness techniques into their daily encounters.



In order to become a detective, officers go through the process of passing a written exam and interview. Hutchinson just reached the three-year time requirement for officers to seek promotion. Her goal is within grasp.

### **MATC provides quality training for officers**

Hutchinson is no stranger to achieving the goals she sets for herself. She enrolled at MATC in 2020, transferring many of her credits earned at a university and applying them toward an associate degree in criminal justice.

While simultaneously working with MPD, she had enough flexibility in her coursework to fulfill a 60-degree credit requirement that increased her salary.

"I had nothing but a great experience at MATC," Hutchinson said. "I actually recommend MATC to all of my friends, family and even co-workers."

As part of her studies, Hutchinson took MATC's deescalation course; instructors taught her various deescalation tactics and how to shift her mindset when handling stressed or pressured situations — skills that she uses in her profession daily.

"Almost every other call, there is some opportunity to deescalate," Hutchinson said. "You always have to rely on your training experience. The deescalation training that I received from MATC and their other classes has prepared me for

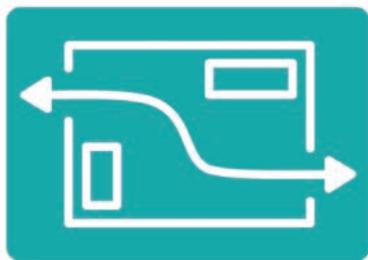
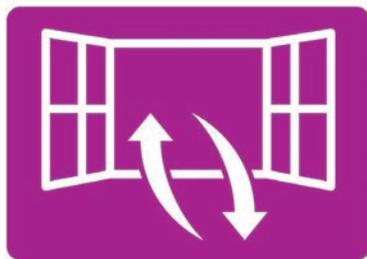
what I experience when I am out in the field."

Though early in her career, Hutchinson has a clear vision for the impact she would like to make as a police officer.

"I would hope that the community would feel a sense of 'me too' or motivation, thinking that barriers can be knocked down," Hutchinson said. "Hopefully, I can motivate someone to do something different." ■

To learn more about MATC's Criminal Justice Studies program, visit [matc.edu/course-catalog](https://matc.edu/course-catalog) and search "criminal justice"

# GRADUATES KEEP YOU COMFY



Hot job market for alumni of MATC's heating/cooling/refrigeration programs

**T**HE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC made people and business owners think more critically about air purity, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Industry experts recognize MATC as one of the top schools in the U.S. for training the workforce to install and service air conditioning, refrigeration and heating equipment.

When Roberto Cisneros' employer laid him off after the coronavirus pandemic hit, he didn't waste any time in pursuing

a new career with stronger opportunities. He enrolled in the Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating Service Technician technical diploma program at the Oak Creek Campus. After graduating in May 2021, he immediately began working in the industry and is now with Burant Heating and Air Conditioning LLC in Franklin.

"When I started the job, they said I was a lot more informed than other new people. They were impressed that I already knew some technical things," Cisneros said.

The college offers a 30-credit technical diploma and a related 64-credit associate in applied science degree; the associate degree credits transfer to partnering four-year colleges. Graduates of both programs are prepared for a career with steady demand.

"The trades are always looking for people, and this is a vast industry that's

**"When I started the job, they said I was a lot more informed than other new people. They were impressed that I already knew some technical things."**

MATC alumnus Roberto Cisneros

AWARDS



MATC was named one of the **TOP 15 AC TECHNICIAN SCHOOLS** by HVACclasses.org

# MATC SPOTLIGHT

## Partnership Gets Students Started Early

Through a unique community collaboration, 20 sophomores at Milwaukee Public Schools' Barack Obama School of Career and Technical Education learn about heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) at their high school from an MATC instructor. They receive credit for both high school and college, which is known as "dual credit." At the end of the school year, students will already have college credit on their transcripts.

The HVAC Dual Enrollment Academy classroom is decked out in new equipment donated primarily by Johnson Controls, which makes heating and air conditioning products along with fire protection, security systems and other equipment for large buildings. The company's North American headquarters in Glendale is not far from the school's location on Sherman Boulevard. Donations also came from Auer Steel, a local HVAC supply company, and the Plumbing

Mechanical Sheet Metal Contractors' Alliance for tools and materials. A related Johnson Controls four-year renewable financial gift to the MATC Foundation will fund a dedicated HVAC retention coach and on-site learning opportunities at both Obama and MATC campuses.

Future plans include adding courses for juniors and seniors — and even adults via evening classes.



*Automated Building Systems program student at MATC Oak Creek Campus*

paying really well," said David Polk, MATC's director of apprenticeship programs.

### Technical training can lead to a 'clean' job

Students who excel at assembling puzzles are likely to be a good match for the career because they can envision the finished project before it is installed. They will gain a background in mathematics, drafting, electricity and thermodynamics at MATC.

"There are a lot of 'clean' jobs like building automation that deal more with technology and computer programming rather than hanging ductwork and installing a furnace," said Polk. Some graduates such as Cisneros work in homes while others work on the largest buildings in the region.

Polk also pointed out that Wisconsin's "temperature swings from very hot to very low make the heating and air conditioning industry all the more important."

## Students should check out the career if they:



Are talented at assembling puzzles and have good spatial visualization



Possess high mechanical aptitude and manual dexterity



Work effectively with others and have good communication skills

The college was named one of the top Air Conditioning (AC) Technician Schools nationwide by the HVACclasses.org blog. The recognition acknowledges the diligent work of college instructors to ensure that MATC's courses meet industry needs.

Cisneros enjoyed his MATC experience. He noted that his instructors had different styles of teaching, which kept the classes

interesting and engaging. Instructor Andy Lewis, for example, "would chat with us and give scenarios that happened to him in the field. They used real-life stories during their lectures," Cisneros said. ■

To learn more about these programs, visit [matc.edu/course-catalog](http://matc.edu/course-catalog) and search "heating" or call the Recruitment department at 414-297-6228



MATC alumnus Chucky Humphrey (left) and MATC automotive instructor Scott Fisler at Oak Creek Campus

# ‘Don’t Give Up’

Alumnus who is deaf won’t let anything stand in the way of his dreams

**SCREECH. CLANK. SCRAPE. GRIND.** A car might make all sorts of noises that indicate there is something wrong with its machinery. Automotive technicians listen for those sounds to efficiently diagnose the problem.

**THUMP. SCRATCH. DROP. REVERB.** A DJ incorporates all kinds of sound effects into a set. Playing music, mixing songs — a DJ’s entire focus is to create a stimulating auditory environment.

**BUT WHAT IF YOU CANNOT HEAR?** MATC alumnus Chucky Humphrey, deaf since he was a toddler, shares the communication barriers he overcame to earn technical diplomas in both automotive maintenance and audio engineering.

**HE DIDN’T DREAM BIG** when he was a kid. “There’s this mentality among the deaf community that deaf people can do everything that hearing people can do. But growing up, I did not feel that way. I attended a traditional public school and for the first several years, I did not have a sign language interpreter. I was left to my own devices and read the teacher’s lips as best I could. I just mimicked what the other kids did. I definitely felt left out.”

**HUMPHREY FINALLY** got an interpreter in middle school. He described it as a culture shock. Suddenly, he could communicate much more easily with his teachers and peers.

**IN HIGH SCHOOL,** he participated in a future work program that exposed him to careers in a variety of environments,



*“Chuck’s confidence on the first day of class stood out to me. I explained that I didn’t have a lot of experience working with students who are deaf and I needed him to coach me and be honest with me. He assured me that he would and then asked, ‘Will I be getting paid to teach you like you’re teaching us?’ Right then, I knew we would have a great semester.”*

—KELLY MULVENNA, MATC COMMUNITY EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR

such as retail and healthcare. “There were a couple of other deaf individuals in that training program, so it wasn’t just me. We had an interpreter for some activities, but not always.”

**THAT TAUGHT HIM** to work with hearing managers and establish alternative means of communicating because he has not had interpreters in his professional work. “My managers tend to gesture and enunciate their words. Sometimes I read lips, sometimes we write notes back and forth. But those early experiences in the work training program were valuable because now, finding those communication work-arounds is not frustrating for me.”

**HE FIRST ENROLLED** at MATC in 1994, straight out of high school, to pursue a general liberal arts degree but the courses were not the right fit for him at the time. He then moved to Washington, D.C., where he spent



*“Working with Chuck was a unique experience for me, and I would think for him, too. Automotive technology is such a sensory occupation. My main focus was communicating safety information and ensuring that he felt comfortable asking clarifying questions. It’s not often that someone has to retake a class three times but Chuck doesn’t give up, which is an important skill in the car repair business.”*

—SCOTT FISLER, MATC AUTOMOTIVE INSTRUCTOR

some time at Gallaudet University, a federally chartered private university for the education of the deaf and hard of hearing.

**TWO DECADES LATER**, he returned to Milwaukee and MATC. “At that point in my life, it felt like I had been trying different things and nothing was working. I wanted to show my kids that their own father has something that’s different from nothing. That was a big motivator for me.”

**THE FIRST TIME** he felt a connection with the coursework was during the automotive technology class. Although he found the work interesting, he barely passed the class.

**IT WAS DIFFICULT** to take courses in a sensory-dependent occupation when he

## “If I’m the first one to break down this barrier and accomplish something, I can pave the way for other students who come after me.”

MATC alumnus Chucky Humphrey

could not hear. His hearing peers were hesitant to team up with him for class projects. During a class lab one day, Humphrey alerted his teacher about a broken gas line. He smelled it, then looked for the damage. “My classmates were in disbelief that the deaf guy was the one who noticed. It was a simple fix and no one else noticed but me. So that felt pretty good.”

**THEN HE FAILED** his engine performance course. Twice. “I felt completely lost. I talked with the teacher, Scott Fisler, to learn about

**HIS INTEREST IN AUDIO** tied back to the time he spent at Gallaudet where he attended a Vanilla Ice concert. “They used a really huge sound system so that everyone could feel the vibrations of the music in their feet and in their chests. It floored me to experience that for the first time. The feeling of music vibrating through your entire body is something else.”

**HE HAS ASPIRATIONS** to become a professional DJ. “I’ve done some DJ work with my nephew already. But DJ equipment is expensive.

additional resources. I took a year off. When I returned, I told myself I’m really going to buckle down and do the best I can.”

**THE THIRD TIME** around, he managed to pass with the highest grade in the class. “That was when I finally earned my diploma. I was very excited, but it was a very long trek to get there.” He’s been able to pick up work at a friend’s auto shop and also makes money washing cars.

**BUT HE WASN’T DONE YET.** He decided to pursue coursework in audio engineering at MATC. “I definitely got some strange looks coming back to campus for an audio engineering technical diploma as a deaf individual. But I just didn’t let it bother me. I said I’m going to do this, and I went for it.”

I’ve been thinking about, down the road, fixing cars to be able to fund my DJ business.”

**HIS ADVICE TO OTHERS:** “Don’t give up. I know it’s hard, but you can get past those barriers. You just have to fight for where you want to be.” ■

STUDENT BODY



60.9%

of U.S. college students who are deaf are first-generation students

Source: National Deaf Center, 2019

MATC is committed to offering a variety of services to meet the needs of students with disabilities – contact **Student Accommodation Services** at [accommodationservices@matc.edu](mailto:accommodationservices@matc.edu)



**“JobUp  
Milwaukee is an  
amazing program  
that accelerates  
your talent,  
experience and  
life in general.”**

MATC student  
Cyle Kraft, JobUp  
Milwaukee participant  
at Hentzen Coatings



**Havenwoods**  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



JobUp Milwaukee  
Meets Workforce  
Needs Now

Employers and students interested  
in JobUp Milwaukee can find out  
more at [matc.edu/jobup](http://matc.edu/jobup)

*Cyle Kraft is enrolled in MATC's Chemical  
Technician associate degree program*

# Q + A

## **P**ICTURE THIS:

You're an MATC student with family obligations and working a job not connected to your career aspirations. You love what you're studying in school, but it will be at least a year before you can get a job or internship. "Wouldn't it be great," you think as you wait for the bus, "if I could work somewhere in my field, if I could earn the money I need, earn academic credit and be working toward my degree, all at the same time?"

No need to wish upon a star. JobUp Milwaukee is here, and — like a good employee — it is multitasking to meet the needs of employers, students and the community.

**As a cooperative work-education program, JobUp Milwaukee combines college courses with paid on-the-job work experience.**

Thanks to three forward-thinking funders — Bader Philanthropies, Greater Milwaukee Foundation and JPMorgan Chase Foundation — this program is already reaping rewards for everyone involved. Two Milwaukee neighborhoods were selected for a pilot program launch.

If you live near or want to work in Milwaukee's Havenwoods Neighborhood Partnership or Menomonee Valley Partners Business Improvement Districts, this program is for you. If you are an employer with a location in these neighborhoods, your company could be a part of the pilot.

Cyle Kraft, who is enrolled in MATC's Chemical Technician associate degree program, is one of JobUp Milwaukee's first participants.

## **Q** What is your job through the JobUp Milwaukee program, and what are some of your duties?

**A** **Cyle Kraft:** My current job title is lab technician-liquid quality control (QC) with Hentzen Coatings, which is a company that makes paint for a variety of customers, including the U.S. government. My duties include obtaining the weight per gallon, running viscosity readings, obtaining solids reading, testing pH and running other tests to ensure that the paint batch that I am working on is up to the quality standard of the Hentzen name.

## **Q** How did you hear about JobUp Milwaukee? What made you decide to apply?

**A** Within my first year in the Chemical Technician program, there was a meeting with the students and JobUp Milwaukee. As I listened to the opportunities, one jumped out at me: the rate of pay Hentzen offered, which was \$18 per hour. The job I had at the time paid only \$9.50 per hour. I sent my résumé in, not thinking that it would amount to anything. I was used to hearing, "We require more experience." Before I knew it, I was contacted for an interview. This was a life-changing decision, the best decision I could have made.

## **Q** How is your job helping your studies?

**A** The current position I hold with Hentzen Coatings is the type of position that I would be working at after I graduate. I am gaining the experience that other employers require.

## **Q** How are your studies helping your job?

**A** My position with Hentzen Coatings requires a lot of training. The training has included running the wet tests as well as knowledge of the chemical combinations to create paint. A lot of the equipment I use at work is the same or very similar to the equipment that I used in coursework at MATC.

## **Q** What advice would you give to fellow students interested in this program?

**A** If you have an opportunity to gain experience in the field you are studying, you have to grab it. There are so many resources within JobUp Milwaukee that range from transportation to mental health. JobUp Milwaukee is an amazing program that accelerates your talent, experience and life in general.

## **Q** Is there anything you'd like to say to the people who are funding and/or helped set up this program?

**A** To those that are behind this project, you are nothing short of amazing. To go from hearing that I lack experience, to actually working in the field before I graduate has been an amazing, life-changing opportunity. I am a woman in a male-dominated industry, which is empowering. No matter what obstacle I have to face, I have all of these resources from JobUp Milwaukee to help me achieve success and just knowing that gives me a sense of job security. ■

# A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE, CAREER

Nursing student's midlife career change motivated by desire to pay it forward

**K**RIS KAVELARIS INSISTS HE'S DONE NOTHING HEROIC.

The MATC nursing student and 2020

inductee in the Fresenius Kabi Donation Hall of Fame — recognizing individuals nationwide who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to blood donation — credits the team of nurses who exhibited kindness, support and motivation as he spent four months recovering at Froedtert Hospital from a horrific auto accident in 1998.

They are the heroes, he says.

“It’s somewhat embarrassing to be recognized,” said Kavelaris, who’s been routinely donating blood for about 25 years. His blood type is O-negative, found in only 7% of the population and known as the “universal donor,” meaning any patient can receive the blood.

“It was just providence that gave it to me, so I figure I have a responsibility to donate. It’s not that hard,” he said.

## Inspired for mission-focused career change

That can-do attitude motivated a recent career change for Kavelaris. At an age when many people are planning for retirement, he decided to switch gears and enroll in nursing school. A certified public accountant by license and training, Kavelaris looked into buying and operating a senior care facility in the mid-2000s. At that time, he became a certified nursing assistant, picking up shifts on evenings and weekends while working full time during the week as a business consultant. With his years of

management and business development experience, it might seem as though hospital administration would be a natural progression — but not for Kavelaris.

“I didn’t want to be a ‘suit,’” he said. “Much of my previous work focused on business process improvement, evaluating processes and making them significantly better. Healthcare systems are big. I’ve learned I need to exercise patience with processes that I wish were more efficient. My job right now is to learn everything I can about nursing. I prefer to recast this as mission-focused rather than a career change. I’ve retired from business to move on to a mission effort. I need to be working on the floor, patient-side. It’s my happy place.”

Initially, Kavelaris planned to attend a four-year nursing program, but found when he inquired about enrollment, he wasn’t taken seriously despite already holding a bachelor’s degree. He felt disrespected in the process and gave up the idea of nursing school for a few years.

Then he attended an open house where he met MATC nursing instructors Julie Rock and Lori Guenther, whose enthusiasm for the profession signaled to Kavelaris that MATC was the right path to his degree.

## Greeted with passionate instructors, hands-on learning at MATC

“They were just bubbling over with a passion for nursing with big smiles on their faces,” Kavelaris said. “There was such joy as they spoke about how much they loved teaching nursing students. Not only did I pick the school, I picked the campus. The

MATC culture is loaded with nurse educators passionate about teaching but those two, they drew me in.”

Now that he’s a year into the program, he’s discovered that all the MATC instructors are equally invested in their students and dedicated to their profession. Kavelaris also appreciates how quickly he started working on the floor and all the hands-on experience he is gaining. He’s on track to graduate and sit for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) in 2022 and has aspirations to become a nurse practitioner.

Right now, he’s taking it one day, one chapter, one quiz at a time to internalize the language and science of nursing. And he continues to donate blood at Versiti Blood Center of Wisconsin.

After surviving that crash nearly 25 years ago, Kavelaris says he was given a second chance at life. During those four months at Froedtert, he endured four surgeries, received multiple blood transfusions and had to learn to walk again. He understands the importance of blood donation and hopes his story inspires others to give.

“It feels so satisfying,” he said. “Ask yourself, ‘If not me and you, then who? If not today, then when?’ And when you go, bring a friend.” To find a blood donation center near you, visit [versiti.org](http://versiti.org). ■

To learn more about MATC’s Registered Nursing program, visit [matc.edu/course-catalog](http://matc.edu/course-catalog) and search “nursing”



**“The MATC culture is loaded with nurse educators passionate about teaching ... they drew me in.”**

Kris Kavelaris,  
MATC Registered  
Nursing student

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STARTING WAGE



**\$59,899**

Average starting wage  
for MATC Registered  
Nursing grads

Source: Fall 2020 Graduate  
Career Report

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MILWAUKEE AREA Technical College  
Nursing

# ALUMNI NEWS

It is our privilege to recognize our talented MATC alumni and their inspirational accomplishments. These updates are gathered from news outlets and from notes sent by graduates themselves. You can be proud that tens of thousands of MATC alumni are transforming our region, state and world.

## We'd love to hear your stories!

Contact MATC Donor and Alumni Relations Coordinator Bob Holland at [hollanrj@matc.edu](mailto:hollanrj@matc.edu) or 414-297-6825.

### BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

**Willie Alexander and Bryce Killibrew**, Entrepreneurship, formed NewWay Innovation in Milwaukee in 2018 and released their first electric bike, the GENZ-1, in 2020.

**Danielle Bergner** was honored by BizTimes as a Notable Alumna of MATC, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Marquette University.

**Nigel Harvey**, Entrepreneurship, founder of Cream Skills, a Milwaukee basketball league that also teaches entrepreneurship, was featured in a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel story about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected youth sports in the city.

**Viola Hawkins**, Business Administration, received a Positively Milwaukee Award from TMJ4 News with a \$1,000 grant from Scripps Howard Foundation to support the Vi Hawkins Grassroots Scholarship Fund at the MATC Foundation.

**Anthony D. Smith**, Marketing, director of community engagement and inclusion for the Marcus Performing Arts Center, was honored by BizTimes as a Notable Alumnus of MATC. He volunteers on several boards in the Milwaukee area, including Bronzeville, Hmong American Chamber of Commerce and the Salvation Army. In 2021, he completed a term of board service for the MATC Foundation Inc., which provides MATC students with scholarships, emergency funding and program support.

**Marie Summers**, GED and Management Development, was elected as councilwoman of the Oneida Business Committee in Oneida, Wisconsin, in 2020. With a background in human resources, she is currently pursuing her master's degree in Indigenous law studies.

### COMMUNITY & HUMAN SERVICES

**Joshua Abelt**, Criminal

Justice, was hired as second-shift production supervisor for Tranzonic Companies in West Knoxville, Tennessee. It is the national firm's largest manufacturing and distribution facility.

**Bria Burris**, Human Services, was featured in

a story in the Washington Post about how she persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic as a college student and mother of school-age children. After completing her degree in July 2020, she was hired by the Wisconsin Rental Assistance program in Milwaukee.

**Leif Erickson**, Fire Science, has been named executive director of Flight for Life Wisconsin, which is part of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center. See related story on page 15.

**Kimberley Motley**, Legal Studies/Paralegal, and her husband, Claude, are central figures in the 2021 documentary "When Claude Got Shot,"



Welcome all new alumni from the Class of 2021! Join the MATC Alumni Network. It's free!

Email [MATCalumni@matc.edu](mailto:MATCalumni@matc.edu) to update your contact information or sign up at [matc.edu/alumni](http://matc.edu/alumni)

- Special alumni-only discounts
- Unlimited access to MATC's CareerHub to post your job opportunities and to find interns
- Unlimited job-seeking services – résumé review, interview tips and more
- Social and invitation-only alumni opportunities
- Monthly MATC alumni newsletter emailed to you

featured at several film festivals. See related story on page 16.

**Gerald Poltrock**, Police Academy, announced his plan to retire as Weyauwega police chief in December 2021 after a more than 25-year career in law enforcement.

### CREATIVE ARTS, DESIGN & MEDIA

**Robert Bell**, Visual Communications, was profiled on the television program “Positively Milwaukee With Carole Meekins,” featuring his passion for photography.

**Allison Collard**, Culinary and Pastry Arts, will head The Bake Sale in West Allis, which had its grand opening in June 2021.

**Michel Cros**, Television and Video Production, was recognized with a Wisconsin Broadcasters Association’s Award for Excellence, earning third place for Best Morning Newscast with WYTU Telemundo Wisconsin.

**Becky Heck**, Graphic Design, makes one-of-a-kind creations that are available on her Etsy site and include paintings, jewelry, clothing and customized dolls sold through her brand, Hex Designs. A Milwaukee resident, she also has a band, The Quilz.

**Sarah Jonas**, Culinary Management, chef/owner of Cafe Lulu in Bay View, celebrated 20 years in business, in partnership with co-owner Cameryne Roberts, in April 2021.

**Titi Lagundoye**, Hospitality Management, owner of Taste of Africa catering, was featured in a story about UpStart Kitchen, Milwaukee’s first 24/7 commercial kitchen and business incubator, in OnMilwaukee.com in September 2020.

**Luka**, TV and Video Production, a Milwaukee entertainer, was profiled by the Shepherd Express in April 2021, highlighting his career as a “deception artist.”

**Joe McSorley**, TV and Video Production, has joined the WISN-TV engineering team in Milwaukee as a part-time engineer.

**Joe Piscitello**, Culinary, has opened Chef in Da House, a personal chef service for parties and events in southeastern Wisconsin.

**Malina Schweinert**, Culinary Management, was interviewed for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel’s “Fork. Spoon. Life.” feature, profiling her journey to return to school to gain her degree and become a culinary educator.

**Ramon “Swift” Sloan**, TV and Video Production, was interviewed for the music podcast “Po Politikin” about his book series “Motivation – Mastering the Game” and his film “Circumstances,” which is executive produced by his Milwaukee film production company, Swift Motion Pictures.

**Phil Zieseemer**, Photography, and his wife, Mary, have retired as owners of Phil Zieseemer Photography in Merrill, Wisconsin. They operated the business full time from 1985 through 2020. “After 35 years of serving Lincoln and northern Marathon Counties, we have decided to retire from living the dream of owning a business in the photography industry,” Phil said.

### GENERAL EDUCATION

**Joseph Spence Sr.**, Teacher Education, published his 10th inspirational poetry book, “Sincerely Speaking Spiritually.”

**Jose Trejo**, Education, South Division High School principal, was honored with an inaugural Unity Award by Milwaukee Magazine in February 2021.

### HEALTHCARE

**Nou Thao**, Respiratory Therapist, was interviewed by WUWM, a Milwaukee National Public Radio station, about her work with COVID-19 patients in New Jersey at the beginning of the pandemic.

### STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS)

**Michael Emem**, Architectural Technology, has founded Emem Group, a Milwaukee design-build firm featured in urbanmilwaukee.com in August 2020.

## In Memoriam

**Susan Mary King** (Hennen), age 63, passed away October 14, 2020. A graduate of Pius XI high school in Milwaukee and later earning an associate degree at MATC, she was a lifelong learner. In 2007, she won the Unsung Hero Award from the Wisconsin Law Journal.

**Olga S. Lozinsky**, Accounting, age 59, passed away in Florida on March 4, 2021. She was originally from Ukraine and was an avid gardener and an excellent baker.

**Donna Marx**, age 89, passed away December 31, 2020 in Stoughton, Wisconsin. She worked as a library aide, photographer, retail salesperson and secretary throughout her career, and enjoyed sewing clothes and quilts.

**David S. Plombon**, Mortuary Science, age 59, passed away January 4, 2021 in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. He worked for Max Sass and Sons Funeral Service for 11 years, moving back to the Chippewa Valley to continue in the funeral profession.

**Karolyn Margaret Raasch**, age 63, passed away August 22, 2020 in Shawano, Wisconsin. She worked for more than 28 years as an administrative assistant at North Star Casino.

**Mary E. Sharp**, Cosmetology, age 52, passed away August 22, 2020. A talented cosmetologist with more than 30 years of experience, she owned her own salon for 17 years in Wautoma, Wisconsin.

To learn more about creating a memorial scholarship, contact Development Director **Monika Walloch** at [wallocms@matc.edu](mailto:wallocms@matc.edu)



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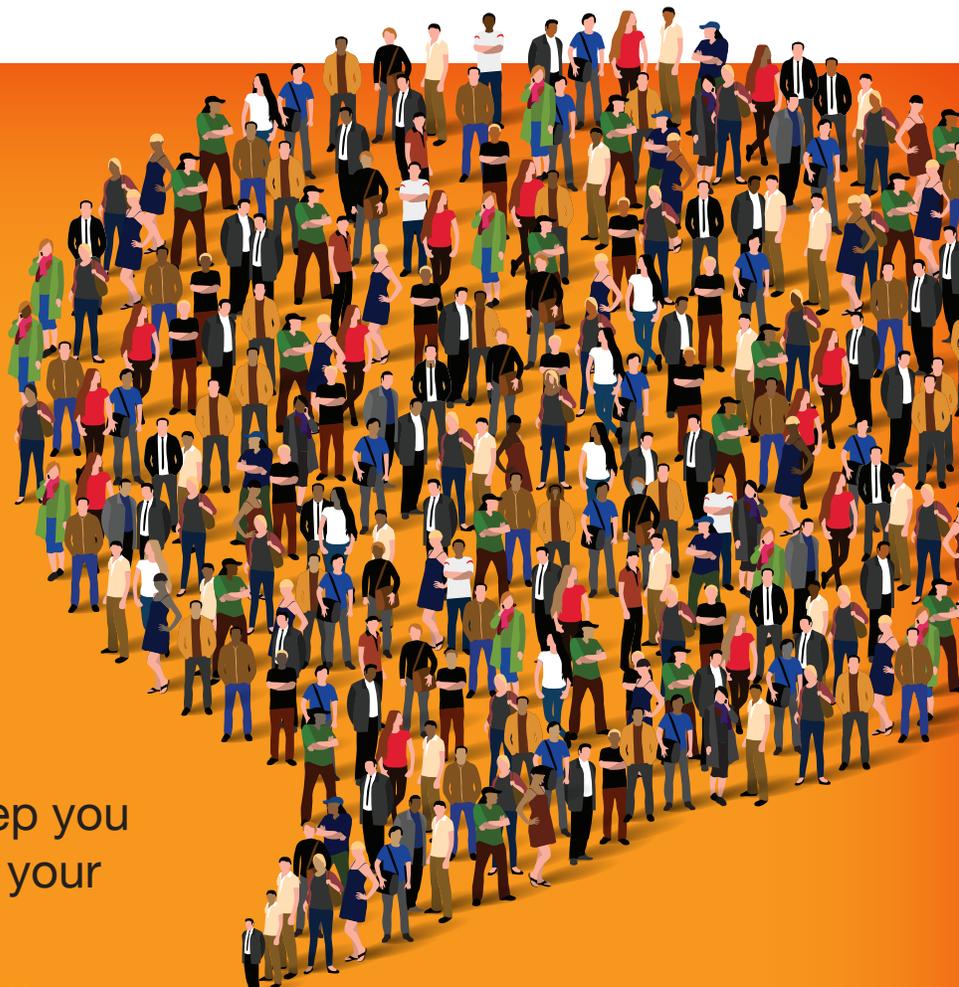
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