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NEWS EDITORIALS

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## Bringing programs that work to Milwaukee

Milwaukee

Posted: July 8, 2006

Waukesha



Milwaukee's open sores - the high poverty rate, the black-white chasm, the cruising fracas, the uptick in crime, the towering high school dropout rate, the Frank Jude Jr. verdict - vex Alan Curtis, local lad turned federal official turned foundation chief.

Washington

**Gregory Stanford**

[E-MAIL](#)

"It just hurts my heart," he says.

Ozaukee

Racine

His Eisenhower Foundation may dispatch help to the city - in the form of funds for programs with proven effectiveness. Grass-roots groups would run the programs.

Wisconsin

State Politics

Curtis grew up on the south side. Laverne and Shirley and the Fonz could have been his neighbors. Curtis recalls the strict separation of the races back then. Black people could live only in an area north of the Menomonee River Valley, sometimes dubbed the Mason-Dixon Line.

Election 2006

Editorials

"I love the city," this 1961 Pulaski High School grad says via telephone. "My whole family is in the city."

Crossroads

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Traffic

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But he rues what he regards as a lack of local leadership to overcome Milwaukee's lowly status, as indicated by an online magazine's ranking of Beer Town as the nation's worst place for African-Americans.

Education

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Packers/NFL

**Packer Insider**

The D.C.-based Eisenhower Foundation is continuing the work of two 1960s presidential task forces: the National Commission on Civil Disorders and the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. Big city riots led to the former commission. The assassinations of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy led to the latter.

Bucks/NBA

The Kerner Commission warned that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white - separate and unequal." Perhaps no other area fulfilled that ominous prediction better than did metropolitan Milwaukee, where the racial gaps on a wide range of indicators of well-being (unemployment, poverty and high school

Brewers/MLB

Badgers dropout rates, to name a few) tend to be the widest or almost the widest in the nation.

» Football The foundation pushes replicating programs that we know work. "It's not a question of knowledge," says Curtis. "It's a question of political will."

» Basketball As it happens, Johnnie Gage, the foundation's chief operating officer, scouted Milwaukee recently. He was seeking out strong grass-roots organizations that could, with the foundation's financial backing, replicate programs that have succeeded elsewhere. He found three such groups: the United Community Center, 1028 S. 9th St., the Dr. Howard Fuller Education Foundation, 3628 W. Wright St., and the Daniels-Mardak Boys & Girls Club, 3500 W. Mother Daniels Way.

Golden Eagles

Panthers

Preps Gage stresses that no deals have been clinched. Still, he confesses he found particularly impressive the Howard Fuller center. He notes that the Rev. Harold Moore, who heads the center, runs into needs, sets up programs and then worries about getting money to support the programs. The usual practice is to obtain the money and then set up the program. In reversing that order, the staff constantly finds itself overextended.

Golf

Outdoors

Wave/Soccer "That's all heart he's working with," Gage says. "Now we've got to give him some of our resources."

Admirals/Hockey (Some self-disclosure: I once ran a writers' workshop at the center as a volunteer. Also, in response to its query to me, I tipped off the Eisenhower Foundation to the center.)

Racing

## BUSINESS

The center runs an after-school program, and another arm operates the nearby 3rd District Community Justice Center, which offers a variety of services.

Main Page The foundation may target the Quantum Opportunities Program for UCC and the Fuller center, says Gage.

News The program takes about 30 academically struggling ninth-graders and helps them make it to graduation, with remedial education, mentoring and other services. The Fuller center may also get a safe haven program for younger children - which would strengthen the center's after-school effort.

Economy

Health care

Investing Alan Curtis hopes that such grass-roots activity will "bubble up" and lead to further changes.

Workplace "Often you get a momentum going," he says.

More... Curtis worked on President Lyndon Johnson's violence commission and later joined the administration of Jimmy Carter as an urban policy wonk.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Main Page He's well-degreed, with a bachelor's in economics from Harvard, a master's in economics from the University of London and a PhD in urban studies and criminology from the University of Pennsylvania.

Dining Milwaukee's race problems go way back, he says, noting he was aware of just one black student at Pulaski High School.

Movies

Music "Now at least there's more open discussion," he adds.

Arts And, now, the Eisenhower Foundation will join the struggle to push Milwaukee toward one society.

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