

THE MOUTHPIECE

Sam Van Hallgren

PROGRAM DIRECTOR/PRODUCTION MANAGER, RADIO MILWAUKEE

LAUNCHED IN 2007, Radio Milwaukee (WYMS, 88Nine), has all the funk, rock, hip-hop and indie music a Milwaukeean could want. But what makes this not-for-profit project special is its community focus: Local viewpoints, volunteer opportunities and local happenings get much-needed exposure.

Sam Van Hallgren—who began his broadcasting career at Chicago Public Radio's "This American Life"—is instrumental in finding those community

voices. "When I started," he says, "my job was really to find the best people in the city, those who are hopeful, and to bring those voices to the air."

And it's working: After a two-month on-air promotion, a local women's shelter had so many volunteers that they had to turn some away. "With everything we do," Van Hallgren says, "we're asking, 'How can we make Milwaukee a better place to live?'" —Manya Kaczkowski

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACLYN HUTCHINS

THE DEVELOPER

Laura Bray

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MEMONEE VALLEY
PARTNERS

WHERE OTHERS SEE Wisconsin's largest brownfield site, Laura Bray sees a forest in the city. A 10-block stretch of undevelopable land in Menomonee Valley is being transformed into a pedestrian-friendly greenspace with river access, with a large portion of the Hank Aaron State Trail winding through it. The Sierra Club has even recognized the area, naming it one of the top 10 developments nationwide.

Through various projects, Menomonee Valley Partners has brought in 4,200 jobs and 880,000 square feet of sustainable development to the area, and Bray's group has also fostered the Menomonee River Valley as an outdoor science lab. To this end, they've helped bring in a branch of the Urban Ecology Center and hope to work with schools within a two-mile radius.

"Frogs, fish and heron are returning. It's a healthier place," Bray says. "In 100 years, 20 years even, kids are going to sit there and ask, 'This used to be a railyard?'"

—Kristine Kierzek



PHOTOGRAPH BY JACLYN HUTCHINS

THE PIONEER

Julilly Kohler

IT'S HARD TO define Julilly Kohler's role in spurring progress in the city she loves—but one could say she is **nothing short of a dynamo, translating that love into one action plan after another, sparking businesses and regular folks alike to beautify, improve and celebrate the city.** The community networks Kohler has helped build from Milwaukee's raw materials—people, ideas, talent and sheer will—have blossomed.

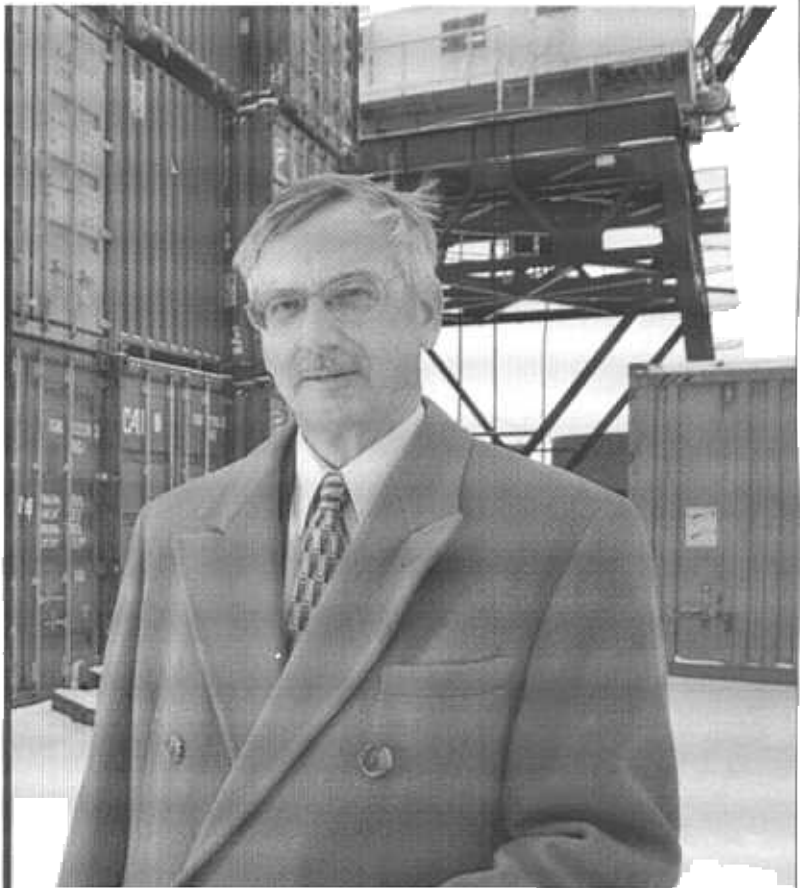
Brady Street was the first target: It morphed, under Kohler's tutelage, from a run-down neighborhood into a destination for shoppers, diners, and music and art lovers. Kohler started buying up properties and rehabbing them, developing a business improvement district. **"You could start seeing the effects pretty quickly,"** she says. **"Most of all, we had a good group of neighbors."**

The work continued: Kohler was instrumental in the creation of RiverPulse, a public science project that doubles as a striking work of art, installed on the bridge linking Brady Street to the Beerline B neighborhood. Other projects have included Kane Commons, an energy-efficient residential complex, and the Milwaukee Urban Agriculture Network.

Kohler feels good about progress in Milwaukee. **"There's a cohesive group of leaders trying to do good things for the community,"** she says. **"[For a long time] there was this gap between them and what the people really want, but I think that it's starting to close now."** —Manya Kaczkowski



PHOTOGRAPH BY LAUREN PETROVIC



THE GATEKEEPER

Eric Reinelt

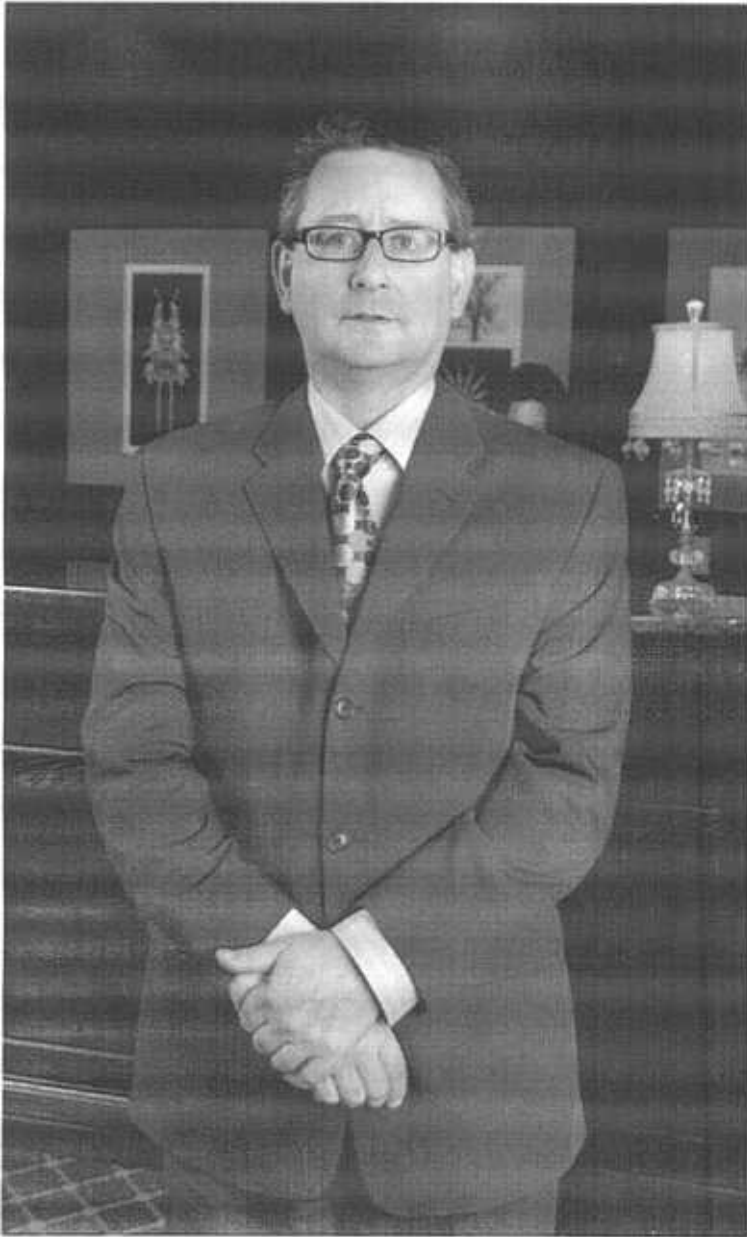
PORT DIRECTOR, PORT OF MILWAUKEE

THE PORT OF MILWAUKEE is the city's gateway to the growing global economy, which undoubtedly is critical to Milwaukee's economic health. But many are not aware of the dizzying quantity of imports and exports that go through its intricate intermodal system that includes ships, barges, trucks and railcars.

The person in the center of all this activity is Eric Reinelt. **He is helping to turn the port into a more profitable business for the city by responding to emerging trends such as the alternative renewable energy niche. He facilitated the import of 132-foot wind turbines and negotiated a lease with an East Coast company that will build the first biodiesel plant located at a port in the U.S. The plant will use the port's existing infrastructure, including unused oil tanks and a pipeline.**

The son of a port director, Reinelt is impressed by maritime culture. **"Ships are always exciting. They give you the best connection with different cultures,"** he says. **"You go on board and they're speaking different languages, and you get to eat unusual foods you never see or hear about. You can be right in your hometown, at the waterfront, and you feel like you could be at any port in the world."** —Leah Dobkin

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUSIS



THE CATALYST

Andy Ruggeri

OWNER, CLARKE HOTEL
AND BLACK TRUMPET RESTAURANT

ANDY RUGGERI CONSIDERS himself Waukesha's biggest cheerleader.

Over the past decade, the chef and hotelier honed his skills developing the Milwaukee area's first boutique hotels (Hotel Metro, Delafield Hotel), but always kept an eye out for opportunities in Waukesha, his hometown.

With the opening of the \$5 million Clarke Hotel and Black Trumpet Restaurant, "He's taken the worst building in our downtown and transformed it into one of the most beautiful anywhere," Mayor Larry Nelson says. "He's playing such a crucial role here."

Steps from the riverwalk, the dilapidated five-building property was gutted and rebuilt from the basement up. Intimate and luxurious, there are 20 rooms and suites featuring king-size beds.

Mattresses, pillows and Italian linens were personally selected by Ruggeri, who hotel manager Rebecca Ortega laughingly calls "a bed snob." His favorite space is the Wine View Room, a unique meeting area with glimpses of the cellar.

This snobbery seems to be paying off: Art galleries and funky shops are gaining ground in Waukesha, and several new restaurants have opened in response to the hotel's arrival. "Our goal was to come here and be a catalyst," he says. Mission accomplished.

—Kristine Kierzek

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUSIS



THE SALESMAN

Dean Amhaus

PRESIDENT,
SPIRIT OF MILWAUKEE

DEAN AMHAUS KNOWS that once people visit Milwaukee, they're sold on its value. His role as president of Spirit of Milwaukee, a private non-profit corporation, is to convince them to come.

What gets you excited about Milwaukee's future? "There are more than 120 businesses in the region related to water and more than 100 scientists and researchers working with water here.

We've also gotten involved with music. I really think that Milwaukee

is on the verge of becoming recognized as one of the hotbeds of new music—there's a lot of talent here. We were one of the first to get behind the new Radio Milwaukee. We knew that through a radio station promoting Milwaukee, we could spread our message. And so now we have WYMS and WMSE and others, and all the music going on at the Pabst, the Riverside and Turners—it's creating this magnet for young people." —Manya Kaczowski ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAUREN PETROVIC