UWM sponsors ‘Unique Lives’

As title sponsor for the 2001 season of Unique Lives and Experiences, UWM and The Milwaukee idea are taking a bow along with several notable women who are featured in this lively lecture series. UWM is sponsoring the series in partnership with The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Chancellor Nancy Zimpher hosts it.

The schedule for the series includes Jehan Sadat widow of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, April 16; activist Erin Brockovich, May 8 and actress Candice Bergen, June 11.

Lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. in Uihlein Hall of the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 N. Water St. Single tickets are available at the Marcus Center Box Office, 272-7206. For more information visit www.unique-lives.com.

Urban initiatives conference to explore citizenship, leadership, and the university

Paul Loeb, a nationally known scholar and writer on citizen responsibility and empowerment, will kick off UWM’s fourth annual urban initiatives conference set for June 7 at the UWM Union. “Making Our Lives Count: Citizenship, Leadership and the University” will bring students, faculty, staff and members of the community together for a provocative look at how we can make our voices heard and our actions count.

In his widely praised book, Soul of A Citizen, Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time, Loeb explores what leads citizens – and students in particular – to get involved in our communities. He discusses what it takes to maintain commitment for the long haul and how community involvement can give us a sense of connection and purpose.

Open for business: Milwaukee Idea program nurtures entrepreneurs

For Theretha King, The Milwaukee Idea has already made a difference. It has meant an opportunity to participate in a certificate program for entrepreneurs offered by UWM’s Small Business Development Center. The owner of a small business called Express Drug Screen, King was looking for better grounding in such administrative areas as accounting, marketing and personnel management.

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This is just the beginning of a long list of partnerships and projects growing from The Milwaukee Idea – UWM’s commitment to sharing its resources and expertise with the community to achieve a better quality of life for all.
“I felt like I hadn’t tapped into the market like I knew I could,” she said. “The problem I had was marketing my services and fine tuning the technical work - like accounting. I was doing in the business.” King is a former City of Milwaukee police officer who started her business four years ago. It offers DNA paternity screening as well as drug screening for the state and private employers.

She says the certificate program gave her the information and the skills she’ll need to help grow her business. “The information I received was invaluable. I got new ideas and new strategies on how to market my business at a low cost.”

The course is intended to give participants like King a chance to learn not only the basics, but to complete the program with a business plan in hand. Says business counselor Russ Roberts, “We teach all aspects of starting and operating a successful business. We provide one-to-one technical assistance and we can help from development of the idea, to finding financing, to finding a location. Once they’ve opened, we can help with the issues and challenges they face in going forward. It’s kind of a turnkey program.”

The 10-week Entrepreneurial Certificate Program was launched last fall for the first time, and in November graduates 17 new entrepreneurs eager to launch or expand their businesses. Participants represented a variety of ventures, among them daycare, construction and retailing.

The course is offered in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Commerce and the UW-Milwaukee Minority Entrepreneurship Program. It is just one of several services provided by the Consortium for Economic Opportunity. The consortium is a Milwaukee Idea initiative that provides business counseling, educational programs and technical assistance in support of economic development in Milwaukee.

The next Entrepreneurial Certificate Program begins June 5 and runs for 11 weeks. For information or a catalog, please call the Small Business Development Center, 227-3140.

Walnut Way Homes

Milwaukee Idea forges partnership with Walnut Way community

The stories, memories and hopes of a community will soon find voice in a new UWM course that will bring students together with the residents of one of the city’s oldest African American neighborhoods.

The fall 2001 freshman scholars course in oral traditions is one element of a mini-grant project funded by The Milwaukee Idea’s Cultures and Communities initiative. The course will give students a chance to learn the art and science of oral history while it helps raise pride and awareness in Milwaukee’s Walnut St. neighborhood.

“Students will be exposed to the community in a way they might never be otherwise,” says Sharon Adams, president of the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation, a new neighborhood association representing the area from Walnut St. to Fond du Lac, and 20th St. to North Avenue to 12th St. “We hope to create an exchange, a dialogue about perceptions. What did the students think they would find? For the residents, it’s a way to tell their stories, to go forward and identify the strengths of the neighborhood. We expect that the interactions will form an appreciation for diversity within the city of Milwaukee.”

Cheryl Ajisotutu, an anthropology professor who connected UWM with the Walnut Way community and will teach the course, says the students will uncover more than just neighborhood history. “They’ll learn and gain insights into the social history of this neighborhood as a mirror reflection of who they are and how culture in every neighborhood can shape a sense of community.”

In fact, that is the essence of the new Cultures and Communities curriculum. This alternative set of undergraduate courses blends academic work from a variety of disciplines with community experiences to stimulate appreciation of diversity and multi-cultural understanding.

Walnut Way’s collaboration with UWM comes at an auspicious time. The organization is spearheading a bold redevelopment effort that also draws on partnerships with the state, the city and the WAICO YMCA. The effort aims to help homeowners rehabilitate existing properties, reduce absentee ownership, encourage compatible new construction on vacant lots and to bolster the pride of place and sense of community that is now re-emerging in the neighborhood.

In addition to the oral history class, the Walnut Way mini-grant supports publication of a booklet featuring the homes and history of the neighborhood. Also in the works is a trip to Boston that will give members of the Walnut Way board of directors a look at the impact of a similar university-community partnership, this one between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Boston’s Dudley St. neighborhood.

Adams says she is hopeful that the relationship her organization is building with UWM will continue to grow. “It contributes to the well being of our community. It creates a bridge to a community that’s been very isolated. There’s this synergism that’s forming and people are making the connection. ‘We need to keep it going.’

Theretha King, owner, Express Drug Screen

Sharon Adams, President, Walnut Way Conservation Corporation

City of Milwaukee police officer started her business four years ago. It offers DNA paternity screening as well as drug screening for the state and private employers.
Loeb is also the author of several other books, including *Generation at the Crossroads: Apathy and Action on the American Campus* and *Apathy and Action on the American Campus*. He has been involved in grass roots peace activism. Loeb is an Assoicated Scholar at Seattle's Center for Ethical Leadership.

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