

Celebrating Heroes



Thursday May 11, 2023





Brave Hearts Honorary Chairs



Please join us in welcoming special guests

Peggy Williams-Smith, President and CEO of Visit Milwaukee and

Mark Kass, Editor-In-Chief of the Milwaukee Business Journal

as our 2023 Brave Hearts Honorary Chairs!



Peggy Williams-Smith

Peggy Williams-Smith is a Milwaukee native and veteran of the hospitality industry who joined VISIT Milwaukee as the company's first female president and CEO in 2019. Under her direction, the company has launched exciting, dynamic marketing campaigns to increase economic impact to the community and elevate the

city's reputation. From promoting the city to the nation during the Milwaukee Bucks' championship run to leading the city's bid to secure the 2024 Republican National Convention, Williams-Smith's strategic leadership will ultimately result in economic gains for Milwaukee for years to come. Prior to her work at VISIT Milwaukee, she worked for Marcus Hotels & Resorts for over 22 years and held leadership positions at varying levels throughout the division. Williams-Smith is a proud mentor of other women in business and uses her free time to support numerous charitable causes. She resides in Milwaukee with her husband, Tim Smith, their niece, Jocelyn and their Boston Terrier, Tito Fenway.



Mark Kass

Mark Kass is editor-in-chief of the Milwaukee Business Journal, an award-winning southeastern Wisconsin business newspaper and web site. He has been editor since 2003 and previously was a reporter and managing editor at the paper. He also worked at the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and has written

for the New York Times, Chicago Sun Times, Crain's Chicago and Milwaukee Magazine.

He lives in downtown Milwaukee with his wife Kaye. The couple has a daughter Abby, who lives in Chicago and works for Buzzfeed. Mark and Kaye are very active in the community, previously co-chairing fundraising events for the Wisconsin Humane Society, Harry & Rose Samson Jewish Community Center and the Sojourner Family Peace Center.



2023 Brave Hearts Ivent Chair





Christopher Kuranz
National Account Director, CSE powered by Halo

Chris is the Director, National Accounts for HALO Branded Solutions—a company he's been with for more than twenty-four years. This role has created many strategic business partnerships and led to wonderful personal relationships with clients. A graduate of UW-Stout with a degree in Hotel Restaurant Management, Chris has been passionate about food since he had his first fresh-squeezed lemonade business. He's worked in many kitchens and with culinary favorites Wolfgang Puck, John Sedlar, Mark Miller and more. He was a founding partner in Public Table, a West Allis establishment that redefined street food and served modern bar food and also owns the multi-use building that housed Public Table. His two passions—food and real estate—serve him well with HALO as many of his accounts are in these fields.

"I believe the most important aspect at this point in my career is to give back to my family, team and the community each day," says Chris, and give back he does. He's a member of the Hunger Task Force advisory board and the American Red Cross Wisconsin Region board of directors. He happily directs his time, talent and treasure to these organizations. Chris has been a Wauwatosa resident 19 years and is a proud dad to two boys (one at Wauwatosa East and one entering UW-Milwaukee).



Utelcome from Our OEO





Hello and welcome to the 2023 Brave Hearts Gala!

Thank you for being here today to celebrate the American Red Cross and our 2023 Brave Hearts Gala. The Heroes we are honoring today are incredible, and we are delighted to learn more about their selfless acts of heroism and kindness.

Whether these heroes are stepping up during a medical emergency to provide assistance, donating lifesaving blood or devoting their lives to helping others through volunteerism, their actions reflect what is best about Southeast Wisconsin.

In 2023, the Red Cross of Southeast Wisconsin collected nearly 35,000 units of blood. We responded to 82 local disasters and assisted over 300 individuals in those responses. We installed over 700 smoke alarms, making nearly 300 homes safer. We provided preparedness training to over 200 adults and students, supported local military members, Veterans and their families. All of this was within our 8-county Chapter footprint. Red Cross makes an impact, and I am proud to be a part of our mission to prevent and alleviate human suffering—down the street, across the country and around the globe.

Multiply those numbers throughout the year, across our Region and throughout the nation. All the volunteerism and giving really add up, especially for those facing their darkest hour. By joining our event, please know that you're making our mission possible. The every-day compassion and dedication of the Red Cross have never been more necessary.

And because you—each and every one of you—the generosity and fun behind this whole evening will once again power the American Red Cross humanitarian mission in our communities.

Thank you again for supporting and bidding, shedding a tear and sharing a laugh as part of this year's Brave Hearts Gala.

Sincerely,

Mark Thomas
Regional CEO & Southeast Wisconsin Executive Director
American Red Cross of Wisconsin



Support Our Mission Moment



Raise your bidder number high during our Mission Moment or go right on our event site at **BraveHearts.givesmart.com** to support Red Cross programs and services.

Donations will be matched by William Murgas.



Scan to donate

\$5,000 Provides emergency communications and critical services to 192 military families.

\$2,500 Provides installation of **10 smoke alarms** for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

\$1,000 Provides 500 measles and rubella vaccinations to protect children living in the most vulnerable parts of the globe.

\$500 Provides comfort and hygiene essentials for **20 families of four**.

\$250 Provides travel, meals, and shelter for one day, along with training, for a shelter worker.

\$100 Provides **20 blankets** to be given out after a home fire or disaster.

Match Sponsor | William "Bill" Murgas

William "Bill" Murgas has dedicated more than six decades of his life in service to the American Red Cross. A lifetime board member at the Southeast Wisconsin Chapter, Murgas began his Red Cross journey in 1956 as a member and Explorers unit advisor after returning home from military service in Europe. His dedication grew across the years, including CPR and First Aid training in the 1970s, and disaster volunteerism into the 1990s. In fact, the mantle at his suburban Milwaukee home is made from a beam of a barn destroyed by a tornado in rural Wisconsin—a gift from the barn owner to Murgas for the relief and clean-up efforts the Red Cross performed after that disaster.

Murgas, now 92, lives by the axiom that "service is the price you pay for the space you occupy," a quote that is splashed across the walls of the Red Cross office in Milwaukee. Every day, those involved with the mission of the American Red Cross—in blood donations, disaster relief, life-saving training, military service, volunteering—are in some way guided by Murgas's credo.



Honoring the Heroes Among Us



Melcome

John Griffith

Old National Bank Chair, American Red Cross — Wisconsin Region Board of Directors

Program

Emcee Portia Young

Director of Corporate Communications Sargento Foods, Inc

Menu



Spring Sugar Snaps Salad

Belgium endive, arugula, cucumber mint, poppyseed dressing

Manhattan Steak & Gulf Shrimp Combo

seared Manhattan steak topped with grilled gulf shrimp finished with a red wine sauce, glazed baby carrots and fingerling potatoes

Braised Lentil De Puy

roasted baby carrots, baby turnips, micro pea shoot salad

Lemon Crumb Cake

blackberry balsamic coulis, lemon curd, fresh blackberries, mint



Adult Good Samaritan Hero

Nancy Piscina, Milwaukee County
Sponsored by



Community, Safety, Security and Resiliency Hero

Gaulien Smith, Milwaukee County
Sponsored by

KOHĽS

Imergency Response Hero

Rebekah McAleese, Milwaukee County Sponsored by



From the Heart Hero

Charlotte Yourell and Family, Waukesha County
Sponsored by

Johnson Controls

Military Hero

Chris Kolenda, Milwaukee County
Sponsored by

MOLSON COORS beverage

Youth Good Samaritan Hero

Essence Collier, Racine County
Sponsored by



Hero of the Year

Det. Andrew Wilkiewicz, Milwaukee County
Sponsored by





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Reception Sponsor



Hero Award Sponsors













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MILWAUKEE Business Journal



Our Generous Sponsors



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The American Red Cross would like to thank the following organizations for their distinctive professional services and contributions, helping to make Brave Hearts an empowering evening:

Brigette's Bargain Balloons
Front Room Photography
Impulse Jazz Band
Tim Lavin
Majic Productions
Matilda Bakehouse LLC
Sendik's Floral
The Team at Kohl's



With Utmost Gratitude



Panel of Judges

Aubrey Dodd, Northwestern Mutual
Tara Geiter, Kohl's

Dr. Kenneth Harris, Concordia University Wisconsin
Sangeetha Rai, Northwestern Mutual
John Semrad, Generac

Brave Hearts Planning Committee

Christopher Kuranz, Chair Halo Branded Solutions

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American Red Cross Wisconsin Region

Jackie Cvikota Red Cross Volunteer

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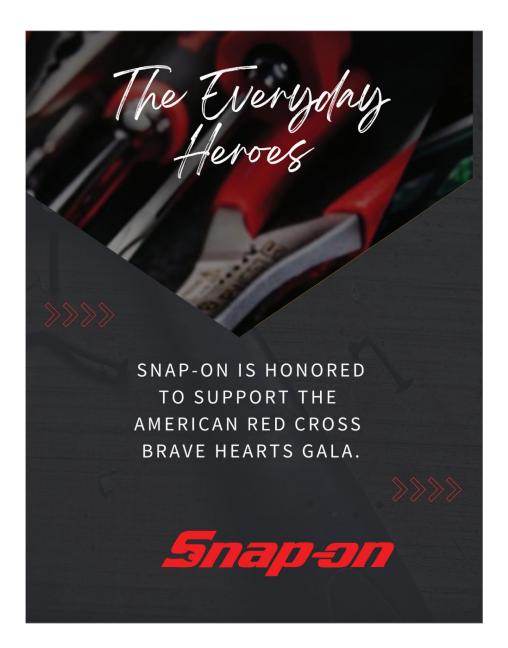
Steve Zamansky Kohl's

Thank You

to all of the staff and volunteers who have helped to make the 2023 Brave Hearts event an incredibly special evening. We appreciate your support and are so grateful for your efforts!













Adult Good Samaritan Hero

Nancy Piscina

On a Wednesday afternoon in September, Nancy Piscina was driving in Milwaukee, not realizing that in a few moments she would be springing into action to help someone in need.

"I'm in the area of 16th and Lincoln, and as I'm driving by, I see a lady laying on the ground as I turn to my right. So, I pull right up, put my emergency lights on, and ran to her and made sure she was o.k. She was screaming, 'Help me! Help me! They hit me!'"

Piscina said she quickly rushed back to her car to call 911 and then tried to comfort the victim. "I waited until the ambulance got there. I asked her if she was fine to stay with them, and she stated yes," she said.

Two others stopped by to help the victim, but most people continued driving.

"We should help each other. There's too much crime going around for nobody to watch one another and just stop by and see. I'm no different than anyone else. Anybody could stop and help," Piscina said. She wishes the victim well and hopes she has a speedy recovery.

Red Cross is honored to recognize Nancy as a Good Samaritan who actively engaged when the situation arose, and someone was in need. Red Cross has a wealth of training and classes available, many online. In March we launched, in collaboration with the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), an online course Until Help Arrives for any community resident to be more prepared to step in and help someone until help arrives. Find out more here.









CHEERS!

Congratulations to Nancy Piscina, the Adult Good Samaritan Hero.

A proud sponsor of the American Red Cross Brave Hearts Gala.

A toast to the heroes among us... Congratulations to this evening's honorees.

KOHLS°
A Proud Partner of the American Red Cross

Brave Hearts Gala I 19







Community, Safety, Security and Resiliency Hero Gaulien Smith

When Gaulien Smith or "Gee" as he is known, opened Gee's Clippers on Milwaukee's north side in 1995, he had a vision of what he wanted it to be, but wasn't sure how things would go. He knew one thing though, "Men have a better relationship with their barbers, than with their doctors," said Smith. What began as a gathering place, a place for some self-care and camaraderie, is now the largest Black-owned barbershop in the Midwest and has cemented itself as a staple in Milwaukee's Black community.

And now it's become even more with the innovative addition of a wellness clinic in 2022, providing free health screenings to the public. Gee's MKE Wellness Clinic is part of the whole Gee's Clippers experience where patrons can get health updates such as blood pressure checks, and the clinic is equipped with all the tools you would find at your traditional doctor's office. "So many men, like my father, could have used something like this. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer and passed away. To honor him and help others in the community, this has become a multi-generational health care stop. We see fathers, great-grandfathers, the son, the nephew, "said the entrepreneur.

Smith took an extra step last fall and partnered with the Red Cross Wisconsin to host a sickle cell blood donation drive. Sickle cell disease is the most common genetic blood disorder in the U.S., affecting about 100,000 people primarily of African descent. To help ensure patients have the blood products they need, the American Red Cross is working with partners in the Black community through the Sickle Cell Initiative, which runs enterprise-wide through December 2027, to increase the number of blood donors who are Black. One in 3 African American blood donors are a match for people with sickle cell disease, many of whom rely on regular blood transfusions to manage extreme pain and life-threatening complications.

We are proud to honor Gee's Clippers and Gee's MKE Wellness Clinic and look forward to partnering again this fall to host a blood donation drive.

Presented by **KOHLS**







Imergency Response Hero

Rebekah McAleese

"A calm voice in the chaos."

That is what Rebekah McAleese, a Milwaukee Fire Department dispatcher, strives to be every time a call comes in for help. Over her 27-year career she has encountered a wide variety of situations when responding to people in an emergency. Rebekah knows it's critical that she remain calm and to try and minimize any additional stress.

Two nights before Christmas Eve 2022, Rebekah got a call she won't soon forget. A car traveling on I94 eastbound at American Family Field interchange veered off the highway across from the ballpark, landing in the middle of a retention pond.

The driver was frantic over the phone, telling Rebekah she feared she was going to die.

"She just kept telling me she was going to die. She truly thought she was going to die, and I had to just keep reassuring her, just stay with me, talk with me," said McAleese. She told the driver to remain as still as possible so water would flow in at a slower pace.

Within minutes of the 911 call, icy water was already up to the drivers' chest, but then the dive team pulled up. "So just knowing that, hearing that on the radio channels that they've made the rescue and that she's still alive, it's a sense of satisfaction that I did what I needed to do. It's definitely something I've learned over my years of being a dispatcher, to be the calm voice in the chaos," said McAleese.

Rebekah and her husband Kris are also former volunteers for American Red Cross Wisconsin, and were active Disaster Action Team (DAT's) members, responding to lifealtering events. Says Rebekah, "it's just how we like to help, to be there for someone in need—as we would want someone to be there for us."

Presented by CLARIOS







From the Heart Hero

Charlotte Yourell & Family

It was November 21, 2021, and the Yourell family was excited to be participating in the annual Waukesha Christmas parade. Charlotte 16, Alice 11, Grayson 9, and Vivian 7 were on Main Street in downtown Waukesha with their mom and dad, preparing for their parts with the Xtreme Dance Team. Two of them would be dancing and the other two giving out candy when an unimaginable event occurred. Hit by the driver of an SUV, all four kids experienced injuries ranging from cuts, bruises, head, and spine injuries as well as broken bones requiring surgery and blood transfusions.

It all happened so fast, many of the injured, including several of the Yourell children, didn't even realize what had happened and were told at the hospital what had occurred. "All I remember was it was my first time being in a parade. We handed out about three buckets full of candy," Grayson said.

Faced with a long road ahead medically and psychologically, the Yourell family, and in particular Charlotte, decided that they wanted to give back to those in need after what they had experienced. Grateful they all survived the ordeal and were on the way to recovery, Charlotte thought of organizing a blood drive. She is grateful to see her brother back on his feet after a long recovery.

"I think that my whole family has taken this very well, I think we've all healed in a way that's very positive," Charlotte said.

Thanks to the Yourell family's' initiative, a Red Cross blood drive was held in Brookfield in August of 2022, with an amazing 90 donors stepping up to donate 75 units of blood. "This is an avenue where we can thank the community and ensure that there's blood available like when Grayson needed it," mom Kathy Yourell said.









Military Hero

Retired Col. Chris Kolenda | "Never Forget"

Retired Col. Chris Kolenda spent Memorial Day 2022 riding one hundred miles on his bicycle. The ride was in preparation for something much bigger... honoring six paratroopers in his unit that were killed in action in Afghanistan during the summer and fall of 2007. "Memorial Day for me means six names. It means Chris Pfeifer, Adrian Hike, Jacob Lowell, Ryan Fristsche, David Boris, and Tom Bostick," Kolenda said.

In the fall of 2022, Kolenda embarked on a 1,700-mile bike ride from Spalding, Nebraska to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Along the way, he stopped at each fallen soldier's grave site. "It was really about honoring them and their service and sacrifice," he said. Kolenda, who has since retired as a full U.S. Army colonel, led a unit of some eight hundred paratroopers, including Lowell, in what was then among Afghanistan's most lethal regions.

His primary focus was on honoring the dead—never forget—and the living, the families that grieve yet. But Kolenda wanted his effort to have a larger impact. The varied mental health and substance abuse issues that await service members who make it home are a heartbreaking reality. Kolenda often speaks about the vulnerabilities of veterans, including himself, to post-traumatic stress, feelings of aimlessness, and a lack of a sense of belonging.

Each year, American Red Cross Wisconsin is honored to serve thousands of veterans and their families, helping them with emergency care services in case of a disaster, behavioral health referrals and programs, as well as comfort care items and offering volunteer opportunities.

Presented by

MOLSON COORS beverage company







A Legacy of Supporting Those Who Serve

Molson Coors proudly supports the American Red Cross and its legacy of proudly providing comfort and support to members of the United States military, veterans and their families.

Thank you to all service members joining us tonight and congratulations to the 2023 Military Hero, Chris Kolenda.













Youth Good Samaritan Hero

Essence Collier

When a classmate was in need, Essence stepped up. In the fourth grade at Fratt Elementary School in Racine, 9-year-old Essence was having lunch with the rest of her classmates when she noticed her friend was choking on a chip.

"She was trying to breathe but she couldn't, because there was chip stuck in her throat," said Collier. Essence sprang into action, wrapped her arms around her friend, and performed the Heimlich maneuver, a lifesaving move she saw while watching TV.

"I remember that I watched a video. I rushed over there fast," said Collier. "I rushed so fast I couldn't stop for nothing," said Collier.

Samantha Bradshaw, the achievement gap reduction coach, was in the cafeteria at the time of the incident. She said Collier's actions were wise beyond her years. "I saw Essence get up from her seat on one side of the room and just dart across," said Bradshaw.

And while the grown-ups know the true meaning of Collier's actions, the moment is not lost on the young fourth grader, knowing she saved a life. "I was happy she got her life back," said Collier.

Showing true courage, Collier said she would do the lifesaving move all over again, for anyone in need. The Red Cross is proud to recognize Essence for her quick thinking, action, and bravery. The definition of a Hero!

Presented by











Hero of the Year

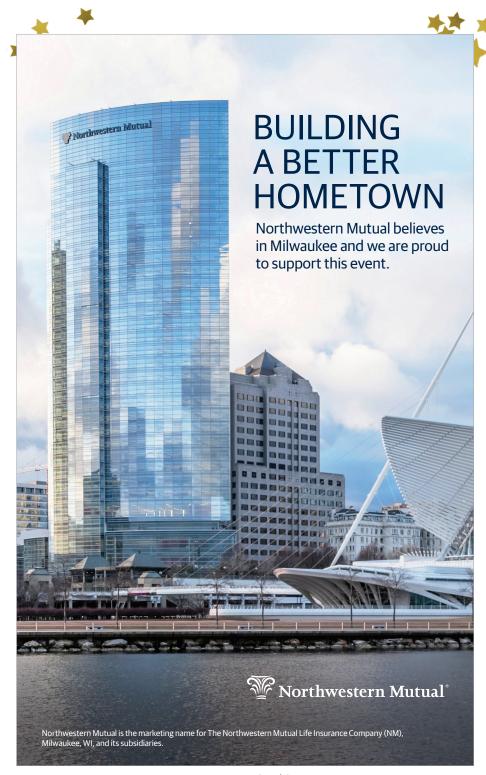
Detective Andrew Wilkiewicz

Being a police officer, you never really get a day off. Detective Andy Wilkiewicz knows that dedication and commitment as he lives it every day along with his fellow Milwaukee Police Department officers. On a day in January 2022, he was "off duty" but his training kicked in in a big way in while grabbing something to eat in Milwaukee's Third Ward.

A mother and food delivery driver had pulled up to the same restaurant with her three daughters. As she left her car, she noticed employees pointing and waving at her. She says another car pulled up next to her, someone hopped out of it and jumped into hers. When the suspect realized there were three others in the car, he jumped back out. The mom, trying to get back to her daughters, realized he dropped his phone. "I went and grabbed the phone and then went...told the restaurant to call 911," she said. "'Call them, please. I have his phone.'"

The suspect heard her and rushed towards her to tackle her to get his phone back. That is when off-duty detective Wilkiewicz jumped into action. "You heard two shots, followed by more shots," she said. "The police officer was shot and while that was happening, the restaurant employees were pulling me to the back, and I was trying to get to my kids." The woman said despite being shot, the officer kept repeating the suspect's license plate number. The mother of three eventually made it back to her car and thanks to the quick reactions of Det. Wilkiewicz, she and her daughters were ok. She considers the detective a hero and is also grateful for the restaurant employees who helped. The detective sustained life-threatening injuries but has since recovered and we are proud to honor Detective Andy Wilkiewicz tonight as our Hero of the Year.

Presented by Northwestern Mutual*









Live Auction 1

Central Standard Distillery Experience

Private tour of Central Standard Crafthouse & Kitchen by Co-Founder, Evan Hughes. Included in the tour is a short discussion of the spirits-making process and how our Still operates, a Bourbon or Brandy flight, guided tasting in the Founders Room, charcuterie and snacks and all guests to receive a bottle of our sold-out Toppling Goliath Collaboration Brandy. Date and time to be mutually agreed upon. Limit 10 people.

Courtesy of Evan Hughes and Central Standard Distillery

Live Auction 2

Donald Driver Celebrity Softball Game Experience

There will be softball under the lights on Sunday, June 4, 2023! Donald Driver, Jordy Nelson, Aaron Jones, A.J. Dillon and more will come together for the Donald Driver Charity Softball Game at Neuroscience Group Field at Fox Cities Stadium. And YOU CAN BE THERE! We're offering two VIP tickets which include the opportunity to play in the sponsor game before the celebrity game, a meet and greet, photos and an autograph with Driver, Nelson, Jones and Dillon and of course, tickets to the celebrity game!

The schedule for the softball event is as follows:

Parking Lot Opens: 4:30 p.m.

Stadium Gates Open: 5:15 p.m.

Sponsor Softball Game: 5:30 p.m.

Home Run Derby: 6:15 p.m.

Softball Game Starts: 7:05 p.m.

Courtesy of Team Lammi, Donald Driver Foundation







Live Auction 3

Northwestern Mutual Fireworks Celebration

A unique opportunity offers the winning bidder the chance to experience the July 3rd fireworks on the 32nd floor of the Northwestern Mutual Tower on Monday, July 3, 2023 from 6:00 p.m. to approximately 10:30 p.m.. Package includes:

- Amazing views of the lake, the city and the sunset from the "Top of the Tower"
- Reserved covered parking across the street from the Northwestern Mutual Tower & Commons
- Exclusive indoor seating and an outdoor balcony for fireworks viewing plus private restroom facilities
- An upscale picnic supper buffet and fireworks snacks, plus adult and nonalcoholic beverages, catered by Shully's Cuisine

Please note that if the fireworks are cancelled due to inclement weather/public health emergency/lack of fireworks sponsorship, best efforts will be made to reschedule this event. Refunds will not be offered.

Courtesy of Northwestern Mutual

Live Auction 4

MFD Firehouse Dinner for 6 people

Spend an evening among some of Milwaukee's finest first responders! You and five guests will enjoy a traditional firehouse meal at a mutually agreeable Milwaukee Fire House with the heroic men and women of the Milwaukee Fire Department.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Fire Department and Chief Aaron Lipski







Summerfest Concerts

If you're the high bidder, you'll receive a pair of tickets in a preferred location to a mutually agreeable Summerfest headliner concert at American Family Amphitheater! This package includes a parking pass and hospitality access at the Jeffer's Lounge.

Winner can choose from the following concerts (Summerfest concerts only)

Eric Church (June 22, 7:30 p.m.)

Zac Brown Band (June 23, 7:30 p.m.)

James Taylor (June 24, 7:00 p.m.)

Dave Matthews Band (June 29, 7:30 p.m.)

Odesza with Bonobo (DJ Set), Drama, Ortr & Olan (June 30, 7:30 p.m.)

A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie & Trippie Redd (July 1, 7:30 p.m.)

Zach Bryan (July 7, 7:30 p.m.)

Imagine Dragons (July 8, 7:00 p.m.)

Courtesy of Matt and Sarah Smith Pancheri







Live Auction 6

Brewers Suite with First Pitch Opportunity

Do your best Corbin Burnes or Brandon Woodruff impression as you take the mound to toss a ceremonial First Pitch at American Family Field. Included are four Field Level tickets to a mutually agreed upon 2023 season Brewers home game. Blackout dates may apply, subject to availability. No Home Opener or Cub Games. Certificate valid for 2023 season only, expires September 30, 2023.

But wait! There's more! Start planning for next season because you'll have the use of a Brewers Suite at a mutually agreed-upon 2024 regular season home game. Included are 14 Game Tickets, 6 Parking Passes, and a standard Food & Beverage Package. Blackout dates may apply, subject to availability. No Home Opener or Cub Games. Certificate valid for 2024 season only, expires September 30, 2024.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Brewers Community Foundation

Live Auction 7

Taylor Swift Tickets

The lucky winner here will receive two (2) tickets to the sold-out Taylor Swift Eras Tour concert on June 4 at Soldier Field in Chicago!

Also included is roundtrip transportation from Milwaukee to Soldier Field from THINKLimo.

Tickets will be available after May 22; they are non-transferrable, non-refundable and cannot be resold.

Transportation is limited to pick up in the Greater Milwaukee area and does not include gratuity.

Courtesy of Capital One and THINKLimo



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Mission

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

> American Red Cross 2600 W. Wisconsin Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53233

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