

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**operation
fresh
start**





"Operation Fresh Start is tons of opportunities. I think I matured a lot. I used to lose motivation. Now I try to think of ways I can better myself and better the situation."

**JAEDAN, OFS LEGACY
GRADUATE**

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

To: Fresh Start Community

From:
Gregory Markle, Executive Director

Current mood:
Grateful, Hopeful, Optimistic

I'm writing this while COVID cases have reached a new high in our community and throughout Wisconsin. You likely wonder how I can be grateful, hopeful or optimistic right now. (And I will admit there are times when I am not.) All I can say is Fresh Start helps me move forward just as it does for the youth we serve. It provides reasons for each of us to have gratitude, hope and optimism.



gratitude

Fresh Start programming is continuing with masks and social distancing and many more youth that need us. We couldn't be doing this if wasn't for all of the wonderful gifts that made our new home possible. We have the room to spread out and be safe. If you were part of this building, I am so grateful that you made this possible.

hope

One benefit of working with youth is their hopefulness is contagious. A young woman who walks in, struggling with food or housing, who may be coming out of an abusive home is met with support, respect and opportunity here. It kindles a ray of hope which can grow into a beaming smile as she awakens to a different future. This hope is contagious no matter what else we face as a community.

optimism

As we work to adjust and maintain programming in today's world, Operation Fresh Start has also been working on our Strategic Plan for the next five years. COVID won't last forever, but the effects have disproportionately been felt by older youth. Youth unemployment has been higher than at any time since the Great Depression. Youth that aren't able to succeed when schools go virtual are left with few other options. We have in place a long track record of high-quality programming on which we can expand to serve these needs and provide every older youth in Dane County a path to self-sufficiency.

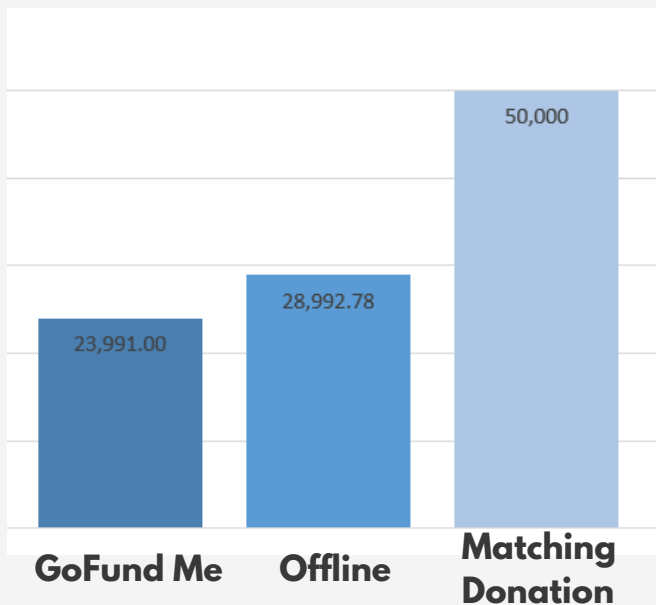
So if you are feeling down, check out a [Fresh Start video online](#) and realize that you are part of something bigger. You are part of a community institution that for 50 years has made an impact. You can be part of the gratitude to the community as a whole for making this happen. You can feel the hope that each youth feels. You can be optimistic about our future together.

greg markle

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

50TH ANNIVERSARY KICKOFF

\$102,984
Total Raised



95
New donors

Operation Fresh Start is celebrating 50 years of serving opportunity youth ages 16-24 in Dane County and guiding them on their path to self-sufficiency!

We celebrated the start of our anniversary virtually, due to COVID-19, and held a socially-distanced outdoor event at Warner Park in September.

We set a fundraising goal of \$50,000 to kick off our 50th year and exceeded that goal, raising \$52,983.78 through GoFundMe, online and mail donations. Thanks to a matching donation of \$50,000 from 2nd Market Capital Economic Opportunity Foundation, our grand total raised is \$102,983.78!

By the end of our 50th year, our goal is to raise \$1 million to expand programming and increase the number of youth served.

BY THE NUMBERS ALL PROGRAMMING

Oct. 1, 2019 - Sept. 30, 2020



189
42
13

participants served

Ages 16-24 in Dane County

**pre-apprenticeship
certifications earned**

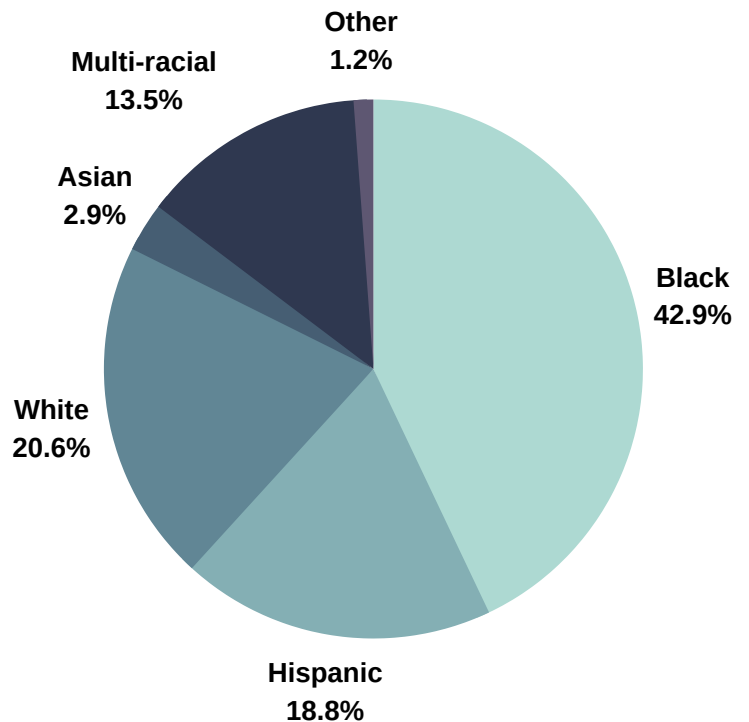
In construction and / or conservation

driver licenses earned

A high school diploma & driver license
are the top two most-required
qualifications for employment

race/ethnicity of participants

OFS serves 79% youth of color



LEGACY PROGRAM

This year, 98 participants were enrolled in the Legacy program, an increase from 80 last year. Despite challenges from the pandemic, our successful completion rate is holding steady. Of the 51 participants who left OFS during the Oct. 1, 2019 – Sept. 30, 2020 time frame, 35 completed programming (68%), compared to 67% last year. 34 participants (67%) earned their high school diploma, compared to 67% last year.

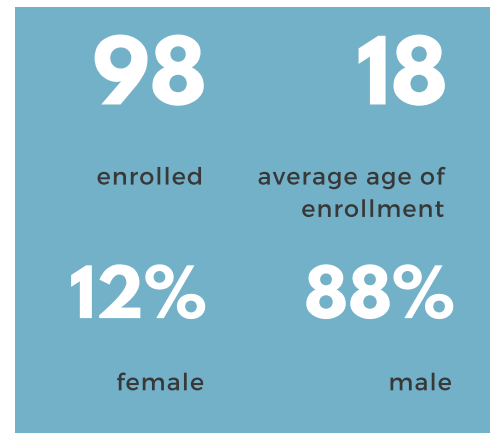
When the pandemic hit, OFS paused construction and conservation work but continued to keep participants engaged in school work.

Crews returned to in-person construction and conservation work on June 15. OFS implemented a plan to keep staff and participants safe, including staggering work hours to limit the number of people inside the building at once and requiring a temperature check and health screening at the start of each day.

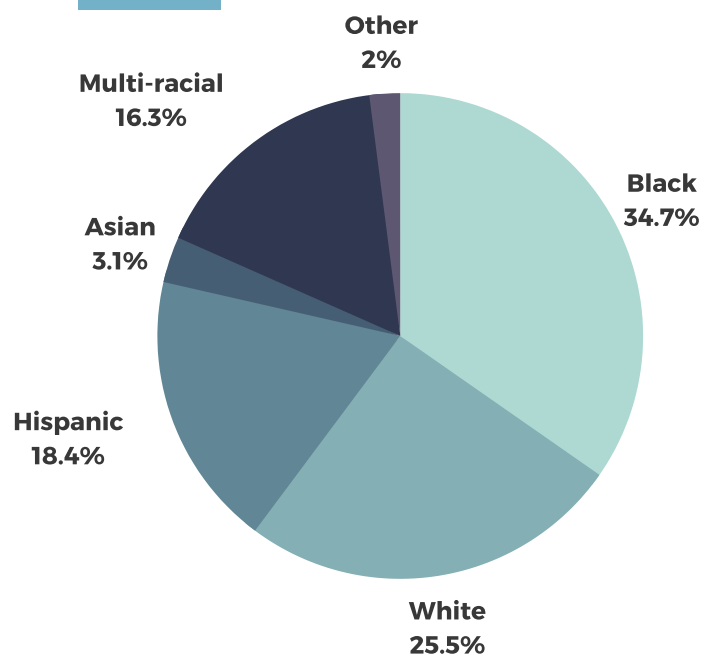
"OFS gave me a second chance. The combination of classroom work with hands-on conservation work was a good mix for me. I enjoyed being up and moving instead of sitting at a desk."



- SABINE, OFS GRADUATE



Race / Ethnicity of Legacy Participants



452

total acres improved

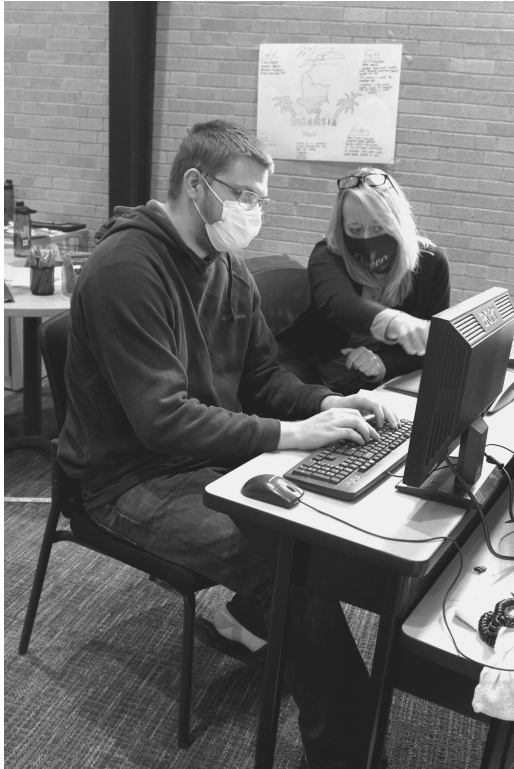
3

affordable homes worked on

26.25

total miles improved

EDUCATION & TRANSITIONS



When the pandemic hit, our education team used Google Classroom technology to post assignments and keep participants on-track to earn their diploma. Staff also started using an instant messaging app called Discord to communicate with their crew members, making sure young people had the support they needed during the uncertainty. Staff shared information on accessing COVID-19 relief resources, including mental health support and information on food and housing assistance programs.

The Transitions team helps participants identify goals for personal growth and develop a plan for their transition to a career or college.

Of the 51 Legacy participants who left OFS during the Oct. 1, 2019 – Sept. 30, 2020 time frame, 22 participants (43%) found a job within 30 days.

Upon completion of the Legacy program, participants continue to be supported for at least one year as they transition to independent work, post-secondary education and training.



STRIVE PROGRAM

The Strive program is an opportunity for young people to learn new skills, gain experience and prepare for higher-paying work. Participants (high school graduates ages 17-24) get hands-on training in construction or nursing.

Even in the midst of a pandemic, Strive Construction and Strive Healthcare enrolled 16 young people. Strive Program Coordinator Jasmine Banks said the 50% completion rate was higher than anticipated. "What that number says to me is young people were willing to overcome challenges with our guidance to reach their goals," said Banks.

As Strive switched to a hybrid of virtual and in-person learning, participants rose to the challenge of learning to use technology as a means of professional communication.

Over the course of seven weeks, participants prepared for a career fair. Our community partners rose to the occasion, coming into a virtual space to talk about the opportunities they provide.

From Strive Program Coordinator Jasmine Banks:

"Not everyone, even with guidance, was able to complete their goal -- but not due to a lack of trying. Virtual learning is no different when it comes to putting a spotlight on disparities that already exist in our community. Not having access to resources such as computers, stable internet connections or knowing how to use accessible technology (like a smartphone) to the fullest, were huge barriers. Other barriers included being homeless or losing access to childcare due to COVID-19.

For those that these obstacles were make-or-break, we will continue to find resources in our community so they may obtain their goals."

Oct. 2018 - Sept. 2019

27

enrolled

89%

completion rate

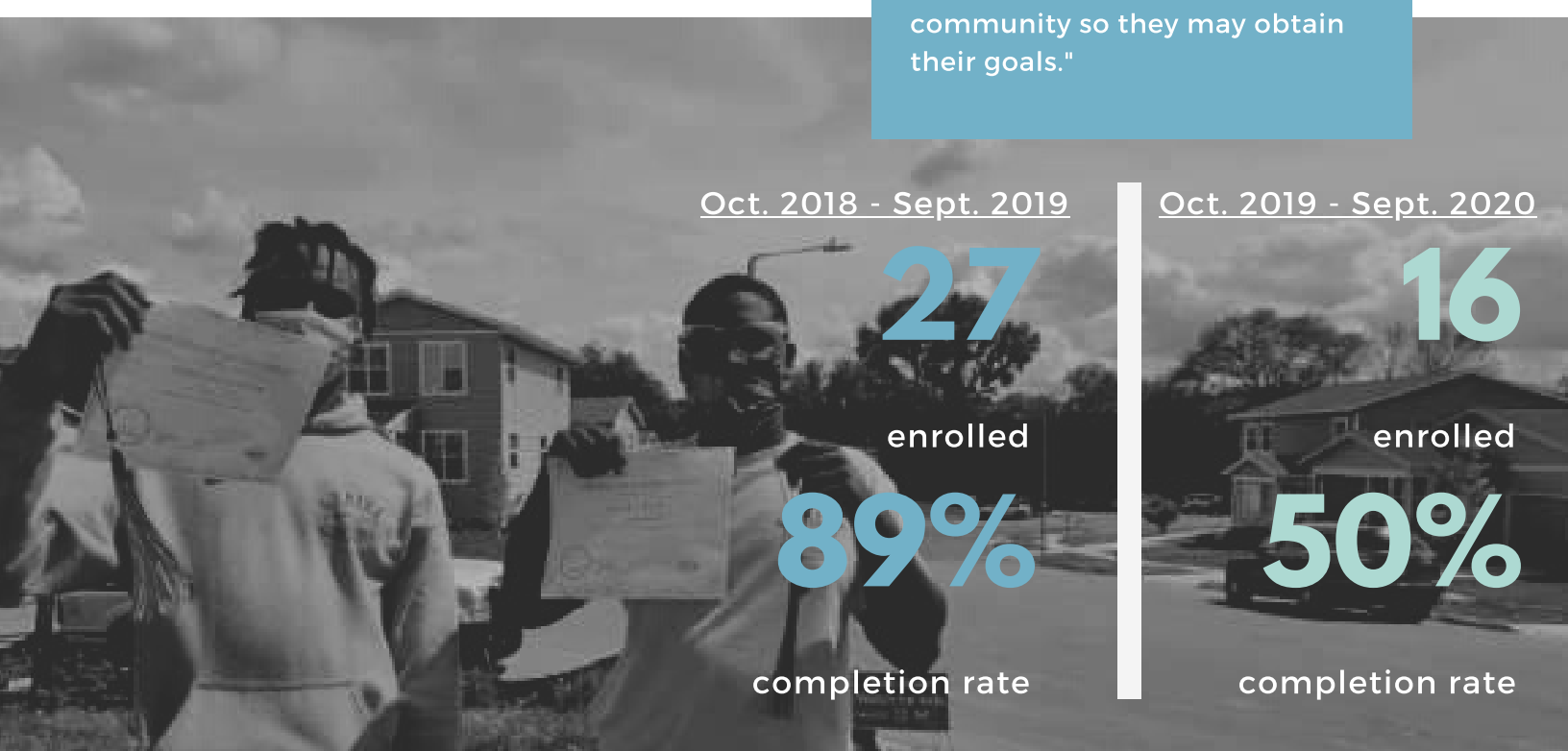
Oct. 2019 - Sept. 2020

16

enrolled

50%

completion rate

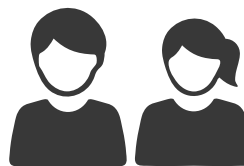


DRIVE PROGRAM

After a successful pilot program in 2019, the Drive program continues on the path of success! Drive is a free driver license preparation program, offering participants ages 18-24 a chance to earn their license and receive support in career exploration. 20 young people enrolled in Drive's virtual format. The program has added two safe drivers on the road and nine young people with permits.

We will continue inviting community partners into this space to make Drive a life experience in addition to getting a driver license. Topics covered in Drive classes include: resume and interview skills, driver safety (4 Lakes Driver Training School), financial literacy skills (UW Credit Union), how to apply for a car loan (Zimbrick Hyundai East) and what rights you have when interacting with a police officer (Madison Police Department).

After their behind-the-wheel training sessions with 4 Lakes Driver Training School, Drive participants have their DMV permit and license fees paid.



20

enrolled



2

licenses earned



9

permits earned

OPTIONS & DRIVE TO SUCCEED

The Options program assists young adults ages 18-24 with finding ways to complete their high school diploma. Staff members help participants identify their options, assist with enrollment in high school completion programs and continue to provide support throughout the process.

From October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020, Options made contact with 390 young people. Of 32 total participants, 9 were engaged in programming to complete their high school education and 2 earned their diploma or GED.

New program!

Drive to Succeed is a collaborative partnership between Operation Fresh Start, JustDane, United Way of Dane County and the City of Madison. The program recognizes that driving without a license is a common entry point into the criminal justice system. Court-involved youth ages 16-21 who haven't completed high school or obtained their driver license are eligible. Participants work with the Drive to Succeed Program Manager to identify and connect with a high school completion program that is a good fit for them. They attend sessions every two weeks with a mentor from JustDane, who can help them overcome barriers to success when reentering the community after being in jail or prison. Participants also work towards earning their driver license through 4 Lakes Driver Training School, with all fees paid.



GRADUATE CREW

The Graduate Crew is a professional construction crew made up of young adults at the beginning of their career in the construction trades.

Of the 7 participants who completed Graduate Crew, 100% are placed in jobs. The average rate of pay upon completing Graduate Crew is \$16.72/hour.



100%

placement rate of completers



\$16.72/hr

placement rate of completers



43%

retention rate in apprenticeship



"Now I have a strong desire to wake up in the morning knowing I turned my life around. Overcoming my past mistakes has led me to where I am now and will help me with my future."

- FERNANDO,
OFS GRADUATE



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



SEED HARVESTING

One of the conservation activities OFS crews engage in is harvesting seeds from Dane County parks. Participants collect natural prairie seeds and dry them out in a storage unit. The seeds are kept in containers until the spring, when they're ready to be spread in other parks that aren't flourishing as well as they could be.

From October 2019 to the end of September 2020, OFS crews, community volunteers and Dane County Parks staff collected and processed over **1,700 pounds** native plant seed, from **220 species** across nearly every Dane County park. The seeds will help restore more than **143 acres** of land. Harvesting and replanting the seeds also saves Dane County a substantial amount of money each year.



(top left) Pulling Japanese hedge parsley at Donald Park
(top right) Spreading wood betony seeds at Indian Lake County Park



Processing seeds: June grass & Joe-Pye weed

\$537,000

value of seed harvesting work
(the cost to purchase seeds)

FINANCE REPORT

Budget October 2019 to September 2020		
Income		
Grants & Contracts		\$ 2,222,582
Donations		\$ 470,000
Total Revenue		\$ 2,692,582
Expenses		
Program Services		\$ 2,365,933
Management & General		\$ 320,658
Total Expenses		\$ 2,686,591
Excess (Deficit)		\$ 5,991
Assets		
Current Assets		\$ 928,402
Property & Equipment		\$ 4,538,020
Total Assets		\$ 5,466,422
Liabilities		
Liabilities		\$ 262,721
Unrestricted		\$ 5,203,701
Total Liabilities		\$ 5,466,422

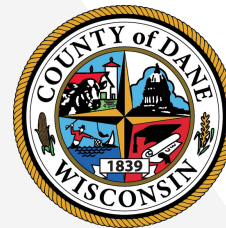
PARTNERS & FUNDERS



AmeriCorps



Proud Member of
The Corps Network
Strengthening America through
service and conservation



United Way
of Dane County



RESOURCES PROVIDED



9,170
meals provided
for breakfast & lunch

[without COVID or
closures, this number
would have been
around 16,320]



385
referrals made to external agencies
by the OFS Resource Specialist

The Resource Specialist has offered a variety of resources during the pandemic. Some of them include: information on grants offered by the city for housing and help with bill payments, access to safe and affordable food, as well as providing social and emotional support to participants.

The Resource Specialist is continually building on relationships with entities such as the Dane County Job Center, Madison College, Briarpatch Youth Services, YWCA, Journey Mental Health and Dane County Public Health.

VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to all of our volunteers! Board members and storytellers help Operation Fresh Start function at a higher level, adding voices from the community with diverse perspectives to improve our planning, decision making and marketing efforts.

We miss having our tutors in the building, who provide one-on-one educational support, as well as advice and mentorship to OFS participants. We couldn't do what we do without you!



57
volunteers

1,522
hours of volunteer service
& program support

FRESH START SOCIETY

Gifts of \$1,000 or above dated between 10/1/2019 - 9/30/2020

100 Men of Dane County
2nd Market Capital Economic Opportunity
Foundation
Advanced Fastening Supply Inc.
Alliant Energy Foundation
American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation
American Transmission Co.
August Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Foundation
Bernice (Bunny) Owen
Brian and Julie Hornung
Construction Financial Management
Association Madison Chapter
Corporate Business Systems, LLC
Courtier Foundation, Inc.
Cremer Foundation
Cummings Christensen Family Foundation
Dave and Terri Beck-Engel
David and Sharon Lehrer
David Lonsdorf and Marilyn Chohaney
Diane Ballweg
Didion Milling*
Donald and Janaan Sampson
Donald & Marilyn Anderson Foundation
Doug and Sherry Caves
Epic
Eppstein Uhen Foundation
Fernando and Carla Alvarado
First Business Bank
Gannon Construction / Gannon
Company Realtor
Gerald Ring
Gregory Markle and Sor Kuan Goh
Gwen and Dave Fuhrmann
Helen and Jeffrey Mattox
Ideal Builders
Irwin A. & Robert D. Goodman Foundation, Inc.
J.H. Findorff & Son Inc.
Jay and Janet Loewi
Jay and Katie Sekelsky
John Thompson and Jane Bartell Charitable Foundation
Joseph Krupp and Diana Grove
Julie Genovese
Karen Ball
Lands' End*
Lau and Bea Christensen
Louis Root-Robbins and Ken Robbins
Madison Community Foundation
Madison Investments Foundation, Inc.
Mark and Lori Schneider
Mary Burke
Meicher Family Charitable Foundation
Mike and Lee Ann Dillis
Monona Bank
Morgan Stanley Foundation
Patrick and Darcy Kelly
Paul Hoffmann
Phil and Melissa Lindemann
Philip Thomas
Richard Arnesen
Richard Friday
Richard Rehm Charitable Giving Fund
Russell Bogue
Samantha Weston
Schlecht Family Foundation
Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation
Sub-Zero Wolf Foundation
Summit Credit Union
Terry Family Foundation
The DeAtley Family Foundation
The Evjue Foundation, Inc.
The QTI Group
Thomas and Karen Ragatz
Tim and Pat Size
Tim and Nancy Hausmann
Topitzes Family Foundation
Trish and Mick Howen
United Way of Dane County
UW Health

*INKIND SUPPORT

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- Pictured above; Chairman, Christensen Associates (Lau) & Retired (Bea)

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- Director of Accounting & Payroll, QTI Group

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- UW-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health

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