

# KENOSHA NEWS

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## Unified commits to Building Our Futures

BY BILL GUIDA

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The Kenosha Unified School Board was unanimous Tuesday night in voting to approve \$50,000 annually to fund “cradle to career” support for all Kenosha County students.

Superintendent Sue Savaglio-Jarvis had high praise for Jean Moran bringing the Building Our Futures partnership to her attention within StriveTogether, a national network connecting more than 9,600 organizations working with 8.2 million students to achieve success.

Moran is executive director of Building Our Futures and the owner of LMI Packaging in Pleasant Prairie.

Board member Gary Kunich called the district’s \$50,000 annual funding commitment — for each of the next five years — “a drop in the bucket.”

“It’s not just to make the kids in kindergarten ready; it’s all across,” Kunich said. “It’s phenomenal. I’m excited about

this.”

### Formed last year

Kenosha County created the partnership last year using the StriveTogether framework. The county provided \$50,000 to the partnership in 2016 and is doubling its funding to \$100,000 this year.

So far, local foundations have kicked in \$107,500 and local businesses some \$40,000, with another \$5,000 contributed by individuals, for a total of \$202,500 on top of the funding from Unified.

Tarik Hamdan, the district’s chief financial officer, told the board that Unified’s financial commitment would not affect the tax levy because the dollars are coming from savings realized elsewhere in the district’s community services fund.

He said the program is non-instructional in nature, and because it takes place outside Unified’s traditional school boundaries, it will benefit “all our community stakeholders.”

### ‘Together we rise’

“Building Our Future is committed to working jointly with schools and across local sectors to ensure all students are achieving their personal potential from cradle to career,” Savaglio-Jarvis said. “Schools can’t do it alone, and they don’t have to. Together we rise.

“This program will support all children and families residing in our communities regardless of attendance at a KUSD school. The partnership will encourage a collective impact approach to be adopted by the community to address structural inequities that are detrimental to students’ success.”

Board member Rebecca Stevens called the partnership “a long-haul project.”

“I’m really looking forward to the results,” Stevens said. She echoed Savaglio-Jarvis in saying, “Schools can’t do it alone.”

Board president Tamara Coleman said she participated in a roundtable on the partnership and came away impressed.

“Thank you so much for this,” Coleman told Moran, adding it was nice to see businesses and others coming together in the community to support children meaningfully.

“I can totally support this. This is awesome,” Coleman said.

### ‘This works’

Moran said Kenosha County is the fourth Wisconsin community — after the city of Milwaukee and Racine and Brown counties — to adopt such a program under the StriveTogether model.

“StriveTogether has consulted with us to get this off the ground,” Moran said. “They operate in 65 cities. They have data that shows this works.”

While organizations within the national network follow the same StriveTogether model, each adopts its own name, which reflects on the local communities tailoring the model to their needs.

“It’s very specific to your community and what it values,” Moran said.