

## Improving workplace diversity is a work in progress

Leaders say there's work to do, but Madison companies are headed in right direction

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Photos below from top to bottom: Paul Jadin, Angela Russell and Ruben L. Anthony Jr.

There might be more questions than answers when it comes to improving diversity and inclusion in Madison-area employers' hiring practices, but many leaders are raising awareness of the topic.

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Ruben L. Anthony Jr.'s passion to get more people of color in the Madison area working on private boards is noticeable. Along with his staff, the CEO and president of the Urban League of Greater Madison mentor men and women on a regular basis, working with them on finding job opportunities and preparing for interviews.

Anthony rattles off a list of companies and decision makers making a difference in diversity hiring practices. Utility companies Alliant Energy and Madison Gas and Electric are making strides, he says, along with American Family Insurance and Dean Health Plan.

Local leaders who Anthony considers impactful include Renee Moe, president and CEO of United Way of Dane County; Michael Johnson, president and CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County; Jack E. Daniels III, president of Madison College; Malika Evanco, director of human resources for the Sun Prairie School District; Brenda Gonzalez, diversity manager at Agrace; Madison Mayor Paul Soglin; Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and Vanessa McDowell, chief programs officer at YWCA Madison.

But, he says, work still needs to be done in awareness and action. Getting people beyond entry level and that "bottom rung" is still a challenge.

"A lot of companies understand the need for diversification, but are they walking it? And are they doing it?" Anthony says. "We've got to get companies to follow through on that deal."

The Urban League collaborated with the Madison Region Economic Partnership, or MadREP, for the third straight year on a Workplace Diversity and Leadership Summit. In conjunction with

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the summit, MadREP has released a survey the last two years. The 2014-15 survey showed that out of 349 employer respondents, 81 percent do not have workforce demographic goals.

Paul Jadin, president of MadREP, says demographic goal-setting is an easy issue to tackle. He says companies don't need to spend thousands of dollars on consultants to assist them. They can start by recognizing best practices and creating a diversity statement to suit the company's purpose.

Jadin says many employers have good intentions and are working diligently on diversity, but successes are "still hard to come by."

"It's not for lack of effort. There are still a variety of reasons that workforces aren't being diversified and that's what we have to work on in our community in general," he says.

Anthony and Jadin both mention CUNA Mutual Group as one of the companies making progress with best practices. Shortly after Robert N. Trunzo became president and CEO of CUNA Mutual in 2014, Trunzo added inclusion as a corporate value, and in 2015, Angela Russell came on board as CUNA Mutual's diversity and inclusion manager.



Russell says the company is still in the early stages of its diversity and inclusion efforts. CUNA Mutual has about 695 managers, and each manager has a performance goal to attend one diversity and inclusion training event each year. Managers must then discuss topics related to diversity and inclusion twice a year with their employees.

"We know that the population demographics of our country are changing rapidly," Russell says "It's about making sure that we are better able to connect with and innovate on behalf of our customers."

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**John Butala**

Hey, here's a novel ideal....why don't companies simply hire the best people available regardless of ethnicity? That's what pro sports teams do. Yeah, I know...that sounds really strange.

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