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**FAST** Fund



2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

# Believe in Students FAST Fund BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## BOARD OFFICERS

President: Barbara Toles, State Representative District 17 (retired), SDC Board of Directors  
Vice President: Main Masri, Business Consultant  
Treasurer: Trent Muller, Financial Consultant, Morgan Stanley  
Secretary: Ann Perry, MATC Student

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Lisa Conley, PhD, Natural Science faculty; AFT Local 212 President  
Kate Cunningham, MA, LPC, Counselor, MATC  
David Espinoza, Early Childhood Education faculty, MATC  
Pat Garrity, Health Science faculty, MATC (retired)  
Eileen Marotte, ESL faculty  
Jack Misorski, Economics faculty, MATC (retired)  
Sandy Pasch, Psychiatric Nurse (retired); State Representative District 10 (retired)  
Michael Rosen, PhD, Director, Local 212/MATC FAST Fund; Economics faculty MATC; AFT Local 212 Past President  
Eileen Stone, MS, MATC faculty  
George Stone, PhD, Natural Science faculty, MATC (retired); Wisconsin Institute for Torah Study (retired)  
Latoya Sykes, CEO, Our Next Generation  
Ann Wilson, MATC District Board; Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission; Manager Hillside Family Resource Center

\*Organizations listed for identification purposes only

## FAST FUND STAFF

Ann Burbach, Coordinator (Volunteer), PhD, LPC, Counselor, MATC (retired)  
Bria Burris, Coordinator (Volunteer), MATC Graduate, AAS Human Service  
Linda Baehr, Coordinator (Volunteer), MS Adult Education; MA Reading, Adult Basic Education faculty, MATC (retired)  
Liz Franczyk, Director of Finance (Volunteer), MA Spanish Literature, Foreign Language faculty, MATC  
Michael Rosen, Director (Volunteer)



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Faculty and Students Together



**BARBARA TOLES**  
FAST Fund Board Chair

## Message from FAST Fund Board President **BARBARA TOLES**

The 2019-2020 academic year proved to be like no other given the challenges the students at Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) faced. Under normal circumstances, our students' lives are an ongoing daily struggle. They are constantly juggling and jumping hurdles as they try to improve the quality of their lives. Many are single parents who are working low wage jobs while going to school. Financially, they live on shoestring budgets just barely making ends meet.

If something happens, such as...they don't have enough money to pay their rent, their car breaks down, their utility or grocery bills are higher than expected, or they don't have the funds to cover their tuition, books and school supplies, it places them in a quandary. For too many, the only resolution they can think of is to drop out of school, to work more hours, or an additional job, even when they are literally months away from graduation. This is where the Local 212 MATC FAST Fund comes into play providing immediate emergency financial assistance to MATC students who often learn about the program from their instructors, a friend, or other students. The FAST Fund's primary goal is to assist students financially to help them stay enrolled in school so they can achieve their educational goals.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in the middle of March, 2020 causing schools and workplaces to shut down, it absolutely devastated many of our students. They were unable to work which created a tremendous amount of anxiety for them as they wondered how they were going to meet their basic needs. The lockdown caused MATC to transition from in person instruction to online instruction which exacerbated their financial situation by requiring additional school supplies...chrome books and internet service.

The FAST Fund's volunteer staff responded immediately with funding and counseling during this time of upheaval which allowed our students to remain in school and complete the semester.

As Chair of the FAST Fund Board of Directors, I want to thank our hardworking staff, and everyone who has donated to the FAST Fund since its inception. Your donations have truly been instrumental in the transformation of the lives of MATC's students. We appreciate and are humbled by your generosity which allowed us to aid 344 students during the 2019-2020 academic year.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Toles*  
Barbara Toles  
FAST Fund Board Chair

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## **NOU THAO** Help on the Front Lines

On her sixth consecutive twelve-hour-per-day shift in Covid-19-ravaged New Jersey, Respiratory Therapist Nou Thao collapsed.

The recent MATC graduate had volunteered for a 13-week position on the front lines as soon as the call for help went out from New York and New Jersey in April, 2020.

Friends and family had argued for her to stay in Milwaukee where it was safer, but she felt a calling to help where she was most needed.

When she started running a fever and losing her senses of taste and smell, Nou was quarantined for 14 days. Her fever finally broke on her eighth day of isolation. On Day 15 Nou resumed her twelve-hour shifts.

She would never have been in position to save lives during a pandemic if it weren't for the Local 212 MATC FAST Fund.

"During my first semester of college I learned that I had used up my financial aid and had to pay my tuition out of pocket," Nou explains. "Being a single, working mother I struggled to make ends meet. I almost dropped out of college because I couldn't afford to keep going. But my MATC instructor told me to reach out to the FAST Fund for assistance."

"Not just once, but twice, the Fast Fund helped me reach my goals. I would not have graduated if it wasn't for the FAST Fund!"

Nou completed two thirteen-week contracts in New Jersey and has since worked in hospitals in Texas, Miami and Chicago before returning home to Milwaukee. "It has been an honor to serve our country," she says.

"I couldn't have done it without the Fast Fund. They have made such a huge impact in my life and my success."

When Nou returned to Milwaukee, she sent a thank-you note to the FAST Fund with a \$500 contribution, what she called, "my first big girl donation."

What an example of paying it forward.

(Link to WISN TV's report on Nou Thao's experience and commitment to her patients: <https://www.wisn.com/article/person-of-the-week-nou-thao/32435375#>)





## BRIA BURRIS

*FAST Fund Help Unleashes Dynamo*

**BRIA BURRIS** has never stood still or let obstacles stand in her way.

Long stints in foster care as a youth, pregnant at 17, single mom of two girls, stuck with a marijuana felony conviction for possession at 19, Bria has always used hard work and community involvement to jump over barriers.

As a student in MATC's Human Services Department, a mom and job-holder, Bria somehow found time to volunteer to register fellow students to vote in 2018. The program was run by the MATC faculty union, AFT Local 212. During a social conversation in the 212 office, she mentioned that she and her two daughters were homeless.

She was told immediately about the *FAST Fund*. She revealed that due to her teenage marijuana conviction, no landlord would rent to her, and she was ineligible for student aid,

resulting in her only taking a few classes since she was paying full tuition out-of-pocket.

She had pleaded guilty to the charge only because the judge promised he would later expunge the record. However, the judge misfiled Bria's case and retired, so court clerks claimed she was stuck with the conviction and its consequences.

The *FAST Fund* immediately contacted retired judge Jim Grambling who was able to get her conviction expunged. This enabled her to receive financial aid and attend MATC full-time. She also interned with the *FAST Fund*, where she helped professionalize the organization, setting up an email system and a financial management system.

After graduating, Bria was hired at a local anti-poverty agency and quickly promoted to a management position in the same office

where she used to meet with her mother for supervised visits when Bria was in Foster Care!

Even having acquired a degree, a home for her kids, and a professional salary, Bria didn't kick back. She continues to volunteer for the *FAST Fund*.

Local 212's emergency fund has made a profound difference in Bria's life while this human dynamo has generated an equally profound influence on the *FAST Fund* office and its staff.

(To learn more about Bria Burris, see these two articles that profile her: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/the-lily/post-grad-in-2020/> and <https://www.milwaukeeemag.com/hidden-homeless-five-people-share-their-story/>)

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## JULBERTHE PIERRE

### *Pursuing the American Dream*

**JULBERTHE PIERRE** immigrated to the United States from Haiti in June 2015. When she arrived in Milwaukee, she was unemployed, homeless, and did not speak English.

Upon obtaining temporary housing at the Journey House, Julberthe enrolled in MATC's English as a Second Language program, a program with students from 50 different countries. To accelerate her acquisition of English she signed up for a full class load that required her to be on campus all day. As a result, she was unable to return to Journey House for lunch. Like more than 50% of MATC students, Ms. Pierre was food insecure.

Temple University's HOPE Center for College, Community and Justice national study of college students reports that food insecurity is a major impediment to students' success.

When Julberthe's instructors learned that she was food insecure, they contacted the *FAST Fund*. ESL students, DACA students and students who have exhausted their financial aid eligibility, are not eligible for MATC's emergency aid program, *Dreamkeepers*.

The *FAST Fund* added funds to Julberthe's MATC ID, enabling her to purchase lunch while on campus. When the original allocation ran out, the *FAST Fund* provided additional funding. Unlike *Dreamkeepers* which limits support to unanticipated emergencies once a year, the *FAST Fund* recognizes that poverty is an on-going emergency and that students often need

additional assistance.

The *FAST Fund* staff also referred Julberthe to the Hunger Task Force Milwaukee's representative on campus who provided her with additional food.

Ms. Pierre, like many students who have been helped by the *FAST Fund*, would periodically stop by to update the staff on her progress. When she mentioned that she was leaving school early to apply for a job many miles and several bus transfers from campus, Director Rosen suggested she apply at the Hyatt located a block from MATC's downtown campus. She was immediately hired and has been employed there since.

Gainfully employed, Julberthe was able to rent her own apartment. She is continuing to study English in the ESL program and is enjoying more stability and security in her life. As she wrote, "The *FAST Fund* helped me to buy lunch at MATC. They put money twice on my MATC ID and Mr. Mike connected me to Jennifer who gave me a bag of food twice. He showed me the Hyatt Hotel where I got a job so that I could take care of myself. I am very grateful to the *FAST Fund* for their help."

In the spring of 2020, the *FAST Fund* established a program with MATC's ESL department to assist ESL students who often lack financial resources with registration fees. To facilitate the partnership, the ESL faculty organized a drive to help finance the partnership which is ongoing.

# In Loving Memory



Mary Anne Suetholz Gross  
1931 - 2019

**MARY ANNE SUETHOLZ GROSS**, a MATC retiree, who succumbed to breast cancer on December 5, 2019 after a two-year battle, had a life-long commitment to MATC's students.

For thirty-five years she worked as an editor at MATC, and served as an advisor to the International Student Organization. After retiring Mary Anne edited the MATC retiree newsletter, Off Campus. She was working on its latest issue just a week before she passed.

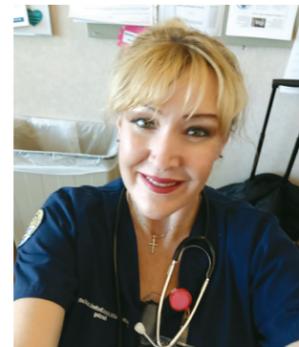
Ann Burbach, a retired MATC counselor and FAST Fund coordinator wrote, "I will remember her most for her work as an advisor with the International Students Organization and their celebration of the diverse culture of not only the international students who attended MATC, but also the immigrants who came to MATC to learn or improve their English skills and advance their education. I was one of many who benefited from her skills when she assisted me in editing my dissertation. She was a joy to work with."

Mary Anne was a MATC graduate who never forgot where she came from. She understood that economic deprivation stymied many students from their pursuit of a degree and middle-class employment. As a result, she became an early and consistent supporter of the FAST Fund contributing to the Fund's first silent auction in 2018.

She continued that support through her last days requesting we send information about the organization to a friend. Two days after her death the FAST Fund received that \$1000 contribution.

"I will always remember Mary Anne for her dedication to MATC and its students," said Barbara Toles, the FAST Fund's Board President and a MATC retiree. "She not only contributed to the FAST Fund while she was living, but while making her final arrangements, she requested that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the FAST Fund." In response, the FAST Fund received more than \$15,000 in contributions.

Mary Anne Gross, represented by her three children, Anne Gregg Makepeace, Mary Chris Bassman and Phillip Thomas Gross, was honored posthumously at the FAST Fund's 2019 gala. She made a difference. She will be missed. Mary Anne's commitment to MATC students' lives on through the work of the FAST Fund.



"I want to thank Dr. Rosen, everyone at fast fund, and all the donors! I was injured more than half way through my last semester at MATC. I was off of work for over two weeks and financially suffering. My rent was due and I had no money. My pathway advisor Rebecca, who I would also like to thank, sent Dr. Rosen a message about my situation and Dr. Rosen contacted me the same day. I was approved the same day! The check was mailed the same day and received two days later! I cannot thank you enough FAST Fund donors and staff! A million thanks and God bless!"

*Heather McNaughton*



"I cried because this year had been so terrible and I feel like I finally got my breakthrough! I promise I will finish this semester strong pass all my classes and continue on to get my RN. Thank you for all your help and believing in me. Because of you all I feel like I was given a second chance at achieving my goals. I will finish school! I will become a nurse!"

"Thank you."

*Fiesha Parker*



"My name is Erica Swan. I am an adult promise student at MATC. I would like to thank you for securing my books which I received today. My class starts Sunday the 26th. I greatly appreciate you for the help. Without it I couldn't be successful in this up incoming semester. You're a lifesaver. Continue to do great things for students in need so they are able to fulfill their dreams as you helped me with mine. I will become a successful registered nurse."

"Thanks a million!"

*Erica Swan*



"Hello. My name is Ann Perry. I just wanted to express my feelings of gratitude for the FAST Fund project and for my instructor Kathleen Meisinger for helping me in my time of need. My teacher found out that I hadn't eaten in two days so she introduced me to the FAST Fund project. And in return they helped me out "immediately." Sometimes pride keeps us from asking for what we need. To know that there is an organization such as the FAST Fund is truly a blessing. I appreciate the help that was given. Though the program is new I pray for its continued success and ability to help others as they helped me."

*Ann Perry*



"Hello, My name is Rueben and I would like to say thank you to Michael and Linda from the Local 212 FAST Fund and Heidi Peterson from MATC Electrical Apprenticeship Program for referring me to the FAST Fund. I am very humbled and thankful for the assistance you helped me with today. Words can't even express my gratitude. I had my vehicle burglarized and my backpack was taken with all my school books and supplies in it. Not only did they replace my books but they helped me with a few extra gift cards for food and gas to help offset the dollar amount of items taken from myself and family. Thanks, I really appreciate the assistance and God Bless."

*Rueben*

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This has been a year of growth and unexpected challenges for the Local 212 MATC FAST Fund.

I would like to thank everyone who donated to the FAST Fund during the year. Due to your generous support, we provided assistance to three hundred and forty-four students, an increase of more than fifteen percent over the previous year. Without your support the students profiled in this annual report would not have persisted and succeeded. The FAST Fund only works because of your generosity.

You helped homeless students secure housing and others avoid eviction; put food on the tables of MATC students and their children; kept the lights turned on; provided books, supplies including laptops, repaired automobiles, secured eye glasses and much more.

Special thanks to AFT Local 212, MATC's faculty and professional staff union. Not only did AFT 212 initiate the FAST Fund in 2016, but it has been our steadfast partner. MATC's faculty union sponsored our February gala at the highest level possible and provides an office and administrative support to our all-volunteer staff. MATC's faculty, counselors, staff and retirees continue to be amongst our most reliable and generous donors.

Educators Credit Union also deserves recognition as it continues to invest in MATC student success by partnering with the FAST Fund.

When classes began in January the FAST Fund partnered with Pete's Fruit Market to provide food cards to food insecure students. We worked with Bara Omari and MATC's ESL Department to help the college's immigrant and refugee students register for classes and obtain books.

In February we held our Second Annual Gala and Auction at WHSF Flores Hall. It was a resounding success attended by over three hundred people. We listened to music from the Greg and Ollie Davis Duo and honored the recently deceased FAST Fund supporter and long-time MATC editor, Mary Anne Gross.

In March the pandemic created unprecedented academic and economic challenges for the college. As students transitioned to remote learning so did the FAST Fund staff. I am proud to say that the staff quickly and efficiently transitioned to working from their homes and also to accessing community resources to leverage additional assistance for students.

A special thanks to Bria Burris our invaluable intern who is profiled on page six and Liz Franczyk, a part-time Spanish instructor and the FAST Fund's Finance Director. Together with Board member Trent Muller they worked to secure and implement a new financial management system and a new email network that have significantly increased our ability to serve MATC students.

Thank you again for your continued support of MATC students. You are truly a partner in their success.

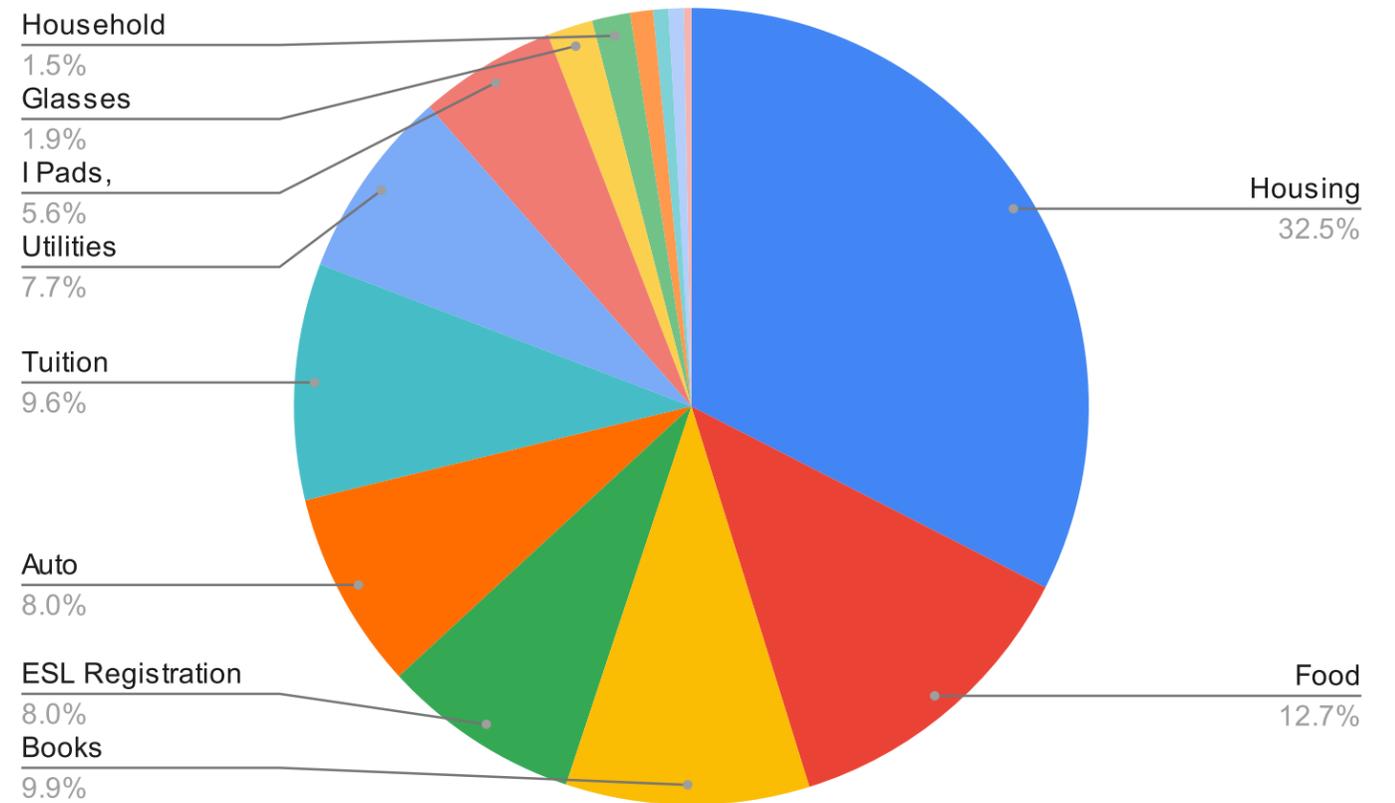
Michael Rosen, PhD  
FAST Fund Director

## MISSION STATEMENT

To provide Milwaukee Area Technical College students experiencing economic emergencies with rapid financial support and to promote public and MATC policies on issues impacting MATC students so they remain enrolled and achieve academic success.

# EXPENDITURES

2019-2020



2019-2020 Results	
Housing	105
Food	41
Books	32
ESL Registration project	26
Auto	26
Tuition	31
Utilities	25
iPads, Chromebooks and laptops	18
Glasses	6
Household	5
Medical	3
Equipment	2
Exams	2
Childcare	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>344</b>



**FASTFund**  
Faculty and Students Together

**LOCAL 212 FAST FUND**

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