



# Sparks

Living Our Values  
Through Strategic,  
Innovative Collaboration

April 2021-March 2022



**Stanley Center**  
FOR PEACE AND SECURITY







## Dear Friends,

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The last few years have brought a global pandemic, social and cultural challenges at home and abroad, and continued strain on our environment. In the midst of all this, in spite of it, and often because of it, the work we are doing at the Stanley Center for Peace and Security has grown and come into even sharper focus. No organization, no individual, has had a simple time of it over the last few years. Each of us has faced hardships large and small. Not one of us has escaped these years without some difficulty. But there have also been triumphs, and even now—especially now—it is important to celebrate those.

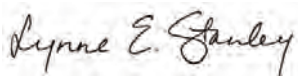
We are proud to take this opportunity to look back on the work that we have undertaken in the last year, from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. At the Stanley Center, our core values are central to every facet of what we do—our policy work on global challenges, our work within our community, and our internal work as an organization. We believe inclusive dialogue and diverse perspectives create better policy solutions, and we consistently build new collaborations to exchange ideas, foster innovation, and take collective action. Common threads of these values can be found throughout this report, reflected in everything from how we set our goals to how we approach each new challenge.

In the last year, we have underlined our commitments, taken on new projects, streamlined processes, and entered into new collaborations. We have strived for transparency. We have prioritized strong relationships and open communication within our organization and with our partners new and returning. We have redoubled our efforts toward equity, inclusion, sustainability—to the things that are important to us as individuals and as an organization that every day strives to do good, better.

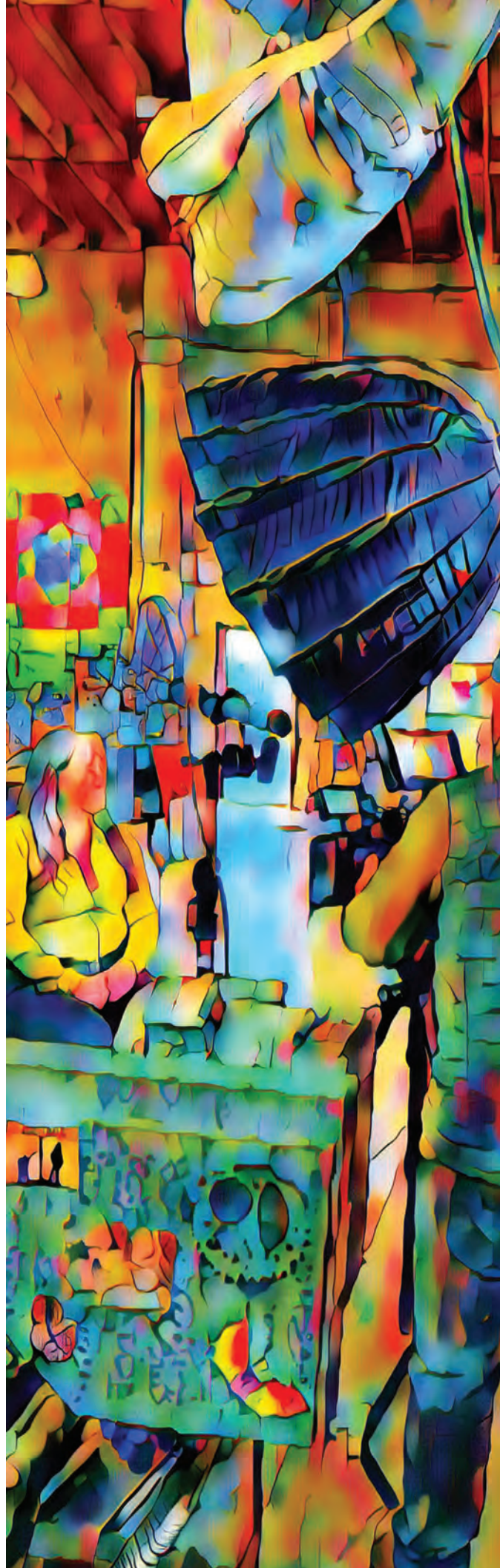
One of the things we admire most about the Stanley Center's staff is that each of us prioritizes the important work we are trying to help push forward. But too often, that focus keeps us from taking the time to step back and examine our team's successes. We would like to shine a light on those successes with this report. We hope you enjoy this reflection on our work over the last year and see yourself within it. Each individual accomplishment, each team achievement, each of our collaborators' victories, helps contribute to our collective vision of helping all people share and sustain a secure and enduring peace with freedom, justice, and dignity.



Keith Porter  
President and CEO



Lynne Stanley  
Chair



## Our Ongoing Commitment to Antiracism

From our work on global challenges to our community involvement to our internal strategy and processes, we strive to live our values in all we do at the Stanley Center. Since our inception, we have worked to create a more just world, but in recent years we have realized we have not been nurturing a core part of that justice work as we should: understanding and disrupting systemic racism and injustice in the United States and beyond. We have been reexamining every aspect of what we do and how we do it in an effort to realign our actions with our values.

We are working together to practice cultural humility, learning “more about how to come into every space without any assumptions about others in that space,” says Kelsey Paul Shantz, mass violence and atrocities program officer. “We are striving to really understand what people value in their lives and what their needs are, and demonstrating honest curiosity about the lives and stories of everyone we meet.”



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“More about how to come into every space without any assumptions about others in that space.”

—Kelsey Paul Shantz, Mass Violence and Atrocities Program Officer

### A Collaborative Effort

We have been able to undertake our antiracist work because we have had not just the support and commitment of our staff, but because we have had the help of impactful, deeply knowledgeable partners to guide us. Wayfinding Partners, led by Maegan Scott, has been integral in helping the Stanley Center define our goals and take steps toward fulfilling them. Specializing in, among many other things, coaching organizations through transformative dialogue, Scott and her team are helping the Stanley Center to gain more awareness of structural oppression, reckon with the part we play in it, and work to dismantle it.

Wayfinding Partners has guided the Stanley Center team through trainings, helping us to prioritize making space for learning and having difficult conversations and helping us to build the tools to encourage each other and ourselves to hold to a much higher standard of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our work toward being antiracist—toward being a more empathetic and inclusive organization, one that not only cares about racial justice, but takes action—is ongoing. There is no quick fix for our badly broken system. But every day we are proud that our staff is doing the work, having the conversations, and learning and processing as much information as they can with each other’s support and Wayfinding Partners’ guidance.

To hold ourselves accountable, the Stanley Center signed a solidarity pledge for collective action through Organizations in Solidarity (OrgsinSolidarity), a group of organizations that have made a commitment to “stand together against the acts of racism and discrimination that are structurally and culturally built into the foundation of this country and manifest in the repeated targeting of Black people and





other people of color.”<sup>1</sup> The pledge defines 12 ways organizations can work toward deconstructing systemic racism, together. The Stanley Center, along with more than 200 other organizations and individuals, took this pledge in 2020, and we continue to hold ourselves to its tenets.

## Renewing Our Strategy for Peace

For most of the past 65 years, the Stanley Center has held our Strategy for Peace Conference. Bringing together policy experts in key global issue areas from the field, the public sector, and the private sector, the conference is a forum for these experts to participate in roundtable discussions with the goal of producing group consensus recommendations on the particular areas of focus of each year’s meeting. The 2022 event, the 61st Strategy for Peace Conference (SPC61), was organized in partnership with Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS) and addressed the history of racism in the peace and security field—of which the Stanley Center has been historically complicit—and how to disrupt it. SPC61 resulted in discussion papers coauthored by WCAPS members on the history of systemic racism in climate change, nuclear weapons, and mass violence and atrocity prevention policy. The papers provide insight into and commentary on how race, justice, and economic inequality come into play in the approach to climate change challenges on the national, international, and global levels; how nuclear weapons production and testing have a disproportionately negative impact on Indigenous communities, disenfranchised communities, and communities of color; and how racism played a part in the formation of, and has been perpetuated within, international bodies from the United Nations to the International Criminal Court.

The conversations that happened during SPC61, the papers that informed them, and the relationships that were forged among their participants are just the beginning of our efforts to dismantle systemic racism in our work and the greater policy community. We know that we cannot achieve our mission or our vision as an organization without massive systemic change, and with continued collaborations with WCAPS and other leaders in the field, we hope and believe we can contribute to antiracist solutions.

As we look to the future of the Stanley Center, we know we will continue to focus on helping to bring about a peaceful,

more just world by facilitating conversations and advancing policy in our primary work streams. But we must also continue to examine ourselves and the impact we have through not just our work but through our organization’s very existence. To fully live out our values, we do and will affirm our commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of our mission and our work. In small ways and large ones, from thoughtful vendor partnerships to collaborations with individuals and organizations whose vision and values align with our own, we will endeavor to dismantle systemic racism in our organization, in the spaces our work touches, and wherever else we might be able to have any kind of impact. We are still learning and have much still to improve, but our commitment is unwavering—and we hope and believe there is a more equitable future to be had.

## A New Home for the Stanley Center

A recent priority for the Stanley Center is to establish a new, permanent office space—a headquarters that supports the many and evolving needs of our global work and the people who do it, and anchors us more firmly within the community of Muscatine, Iowa, that we call our home. The last year has seen extraordinary progress toward that goal.

Our journey to such a headquarters began in August 2019. Having selected Neumann Monson Architects of Iowa City as our partners in this project, our staff came together to participate in a visioning session to collect ideas for the ways a new building would best fit the business needs of our work, provide benefits to our team in an effort to prioritize a healthy work-life balance, and contribute to our greater community. Since our founding in 1956, the Stanley Center has placed deep importance on its location in Muscatine. When it became clear that we needed to find a new office location, we knew we wanted to keep that location in the place that has been so integral to our growth and development over the last 65 years. The Stanley family’s history here, the valuable vantage point it provides, and the warmth the Muscatine community has always shown the Stanley Center made the decision a simple one. And when we learned that in our wish to create a new workspace we could also revitalize one of Muscatine’s beloved buildings—the former Musser Public Library—that decision was even simpler.

1 <https://stanleycenter.org/black-lives-matter> and <https://orgsin solidarity.org>; excerpted from the OrgsinSolidarity commitment statement.







“This project really hits home for me. My wife was born and raised in Muscatine, and spent a ton of time at the library with her brothers and sisters when she was a child. I thought I’d never been there myself, as a kid—but I was talking with my brother recently and learned that we did go! He’s four years older than I am, and has very vivid memories of watching videos in the educational rooms upstairs.”

—Dane Lovell, Facilities  
Maintenance Superintendent

## Restoring a Relic

For more than a century, from 1901 to 2018, the site of our new headquarters on the corner of Iowa Avenue and Third Street had been home to the Musser Public Library. The footprint of the building has seen many changes over the years, and the Stanley Center is energized by the opportunity to bring the current building into the future, because the library itself is special. Its legacy as a gathering place, a place for contemplation and exploration, and a place of community education and lifelong learning is important to us and reflects the goals of the Stanley Center’s work, as well as our goals for the office space we are working to create.

The former library building holds special significance for many members of our community. “This project really hits home for me,” says Dane Lovell, the Stanley Center’s facilities maintenance superintendent and one of our newest members of staff. “My wife was born and raised in Muscatine and spent a ton of time at the library with her brothers and sisters when she was a child. I thought I’d never been there myself, as a kid—but I was talking with my brother recently and learned that we did go! He’s four years older than I am and has very vivid memories of watching videos in the educational rooms upstairs.”

One of our many plans for the future Stanley Center is to carry on the library’s legacy of community education. With local programming geared toward children, the revitalized location will be a resource for continuing global education in our community. Further to our educational programming, we hope the new Stanley Center itself will serve as a teaching tool. With the many sustainable innovations that have been included in the building’s design and construction, we hope to show others what is possible when it comes to engineering and dwelling within environmentally friendly spaces. Lovell is also implementing plans to use the building as a showpiece for high school students who are interested in learning more about the trades that create and maintain spaces like the one we will soon call home. It is our hope that many in Muscatine and beyond are able to enjoy the spaces and programs the Stanley Center offers and that new and happy memories will be made there.

## Marking the Start of a More Sustainable Future

Before beginning the construction phase of our new building, we wanted to take some time to recognize what we were undertaking and why. We wanted to acknowledge the history of the land we would occupy, the significance of the library, the community that welcomes us, the scale of the project, and our plans for the future. On September 17, 2021, we invited members of the Muscatine community and local officials to gather in person and online with Stanley Center staff and our project partners Neumann Monson Architects and Graham Construction to mark the official kick-off of our project—not with a groundbreaking ceremony, but with a groundhealing one.





It was important to us to commemorate the start of this project in a way that reflected the values that are driving it: our commitment to climate change and our pursuit of a more sustainable future, and our dedication to this community and our efforts to be a force for good within it. We toured the building, explored the architects' renderings of our future home, learned more about our goals for being a net positive for our environment as occupants of the space, and also planted a tree for our Third Street neighbors at Clark House.

A few weeks after our groundhealing ceremony, we welcomed construction crews to the site to begin shaping the space that will soon be the new Stanley Center.

## Creating a Living Building

Renovations on the former library building are well underway, and as we prepare to take up residence in our new Stanley Center headquarters in December 2022, we have devoted much of the last year to our pursuit of the Living Building Challenge (LBC). Living Buildings are regenerative buildings that connect occupants to light, air, food, nature, and community; they are self-sufficient, creating and using their own energy and remaining within the resource limits of their site; and they create a positive impact on the human and natural systems that interact with them. Administered by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI), the Living Building certification is today's most comprehensive and rigorous standard for sustainable building design, construction, and occupancy. "It is extremely ambitious," says Keith Porter, Stanley Center President and CEO, "but also extremely important, and the confluence of many aspects of the Stanley Center's mission and goals." Our pursuit of the LBC echoes the broader work of the Stanley Center: all that we do, we do in the hope of having a net positive effective. So too do we hope to have a net positive effect on the environment through the building we occupy and our stewardship of it.

Once complete, the Stanley Center building will be one of the most environmentally sustainable buildings in the world, generating its own energy and distributing what it does not use, diverting waste, and cleaning water. Because full LBC certification is based on actual performance as opposed to expected performance or our stated goals, we will measure and report on our commitments for a year following our occupancy of the building. We have spent the last 12 months planning for the reporting of our performance metrics and developing our plans for reaching our goals under the seven pillars—or petals—of the Living Building Challenge:



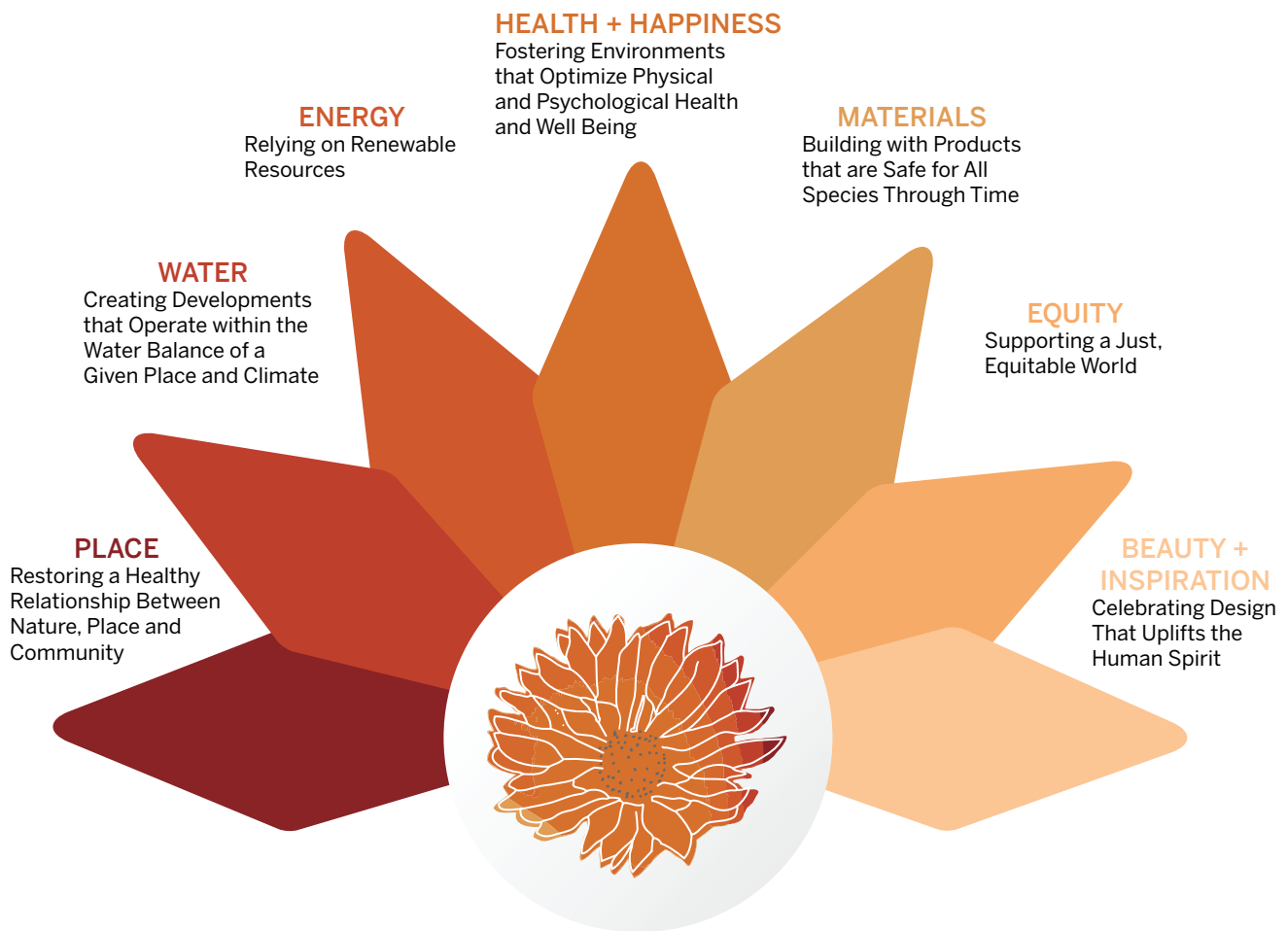
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"It is extremely ambitious, but also extremely important, and the confluence of many aspects of the Stanley Center's mission and goals."

—Keith Porter,  
President and CEO







## Place

Along with Neumann Monson Architects, we are working to restore, maintain, and build on a healthy relationship with nature. We are using natural materials in the Stanley Center's design to create a sense of warmth within our building, bringing in an abundance of plant life, and ensuring each space enjoys natural light, all with the hope that those inside will continue to feel connected with nature even within our walls.

## Water

The new Stanley Center will benefit from a water system that will capture, treat, and make potable almost all rainwater that comes onto our footprint. The water that we cannot use will be routed through a channel onto our grounds until it can be saturated back into the earth; the channel, made to resemble a river, will hearken back to the creek bed that once bisected the site.

## Energy

An integral part of the LBC is that we occupy a regenerative building—that we produce the energy we use. To

achieve this, our new building will host solar panels on the roof, as well as on the canopy that will join our building to our neighbor, the Muscatine Center for Social Action (MCSA). We are particularly happy to have the opportunity to install the canopy between these two spaces, both because it extends the footprint of our solar paneling and energy collection, and because it will provide shade and shelter to people underneath. The energy we are unable to use will be stored and distributed among our broader Muscatine community.

## Materials

Our efforts toward this petal fall into two key areas: using only products that are safe for the environment and reducing our carbon footprint. To achieve this, we are ensuring that all the products we are using during construction are free of red-list chemicals and materials, which are harmful to humans and to the ecosystem. We are also sourcing our building materials from as close to Muscatine as possible and recycling or repurposing as much as we can. To date, we have diverted from landfills 96 percent—or 975 tons—of









the material waste we have produced, including recycling steel, concrete, and glass, reusing furniture, and reclaiming materials for art that will adorn the space.

### **Beauty**

Using a combination of natural forms and elements and materials of historic and cultural significance to our location, we are striving to create comfort and warmth in our revitalized office so its occupants and guests can conduct their work in a space that encourages innovation and collaboration. From our water system and its river cistern trail to incorporating pearl button blanks from our neighbors at the National Pearl Button Museum into our design to the native plant life that will be used in our atrium and outdoor spaces to the artwork that will fill the office, we have been intentional in our design choices. We hope to make a space where staff, visitors, and members of our community feel connected to nature and to each other.

### **Equity**

Central to our values at the Stanley Center, we are striving to shine a light on equity in all its forms through our use and stewardship of our new home. An art installation, the Tree of Accountability, by Nancy Judd and Deana Datt, will greet every person who enters the Stanley Center. Constructed from materials salvaged from the library's renovation, the tree will continue the conversation around the real history of the land on which our home is built and how colonialism continues to have a real impact on real people. Messages of reflection collected from local Native people, Stanley Center staff, collaborators, and other public and private groups during a series of events and workshops will be written on the Tree of Accountability's leaves, made from decommissioned library books. We hope that the installation will provide our staff and our community with the opportunity to experience art, interact with one another, reflect on our history, learn, and feel moved to action. Though acknowledging that the land forms part of the unceded core territory of the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (known as the Meskwaki Nation), the Ogallala Sioux, and Kickapoo, we know that is not enough. The Tree of Accountability provides us with the opportunity as an organization to examine our historical and current roles in systemic colonization and to consider how colonization and genocide of Indigenous people has led to what we work to combat today—climate change, mass atrocities, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We are also prioritizing equity and transparency across our organization and ensuring that our spaces reflect our

commitment. Walls within our office space will be made of clear glass so others know that though a door might be closed, they are welcome to open it. It is our hope that this creates a work environment that is open, inclusive, and warm, where each member of our staff and every visitor feels welcome and can do their best work in spaces that uplift and empower them.

### **Health and Happiness**

We are being intentional about how our staff and community are able to use and interact with our new space, with the hope that the environment we are able to offer optimizes the physical and emotional health and well-being of each person who enters the building or uses its grounds. Through a partnership with the MCSA, we are utilizing our atrium and outdoor spaces as community gardens, complete with a lettuce wall and herb and vegetable gardens. The produce that is grown here will be sent to the MSCA food pantry, and it is our hope that the members of our staff who cultivate these gardens find added calm and enjoyment in their days, having the opportunity to devote a few extra moments to nature and their neighborhood.

We have also ensured that there are spaces in our new home that will suit the working needs of each member of our staff, with open, bright, and airy coworking spaces; quiet spaces for independent work and research; and meeting and conference spaces to fit groups of all sizes. The building will be equipped for hybrid and remote work so our staff and partners can be effective anywhere, with collaborators everywhere. And because good work can only be done when minds also have time and space to rest, recharge, and reset, our new headquarters will also offer staff spaces for exercise and meditation, as well as a café where they will find healthful foods with which to refuel.



## Learning—and Looking Ahead

From our collaborations with our building partners and architects to feedback from the Muscatine community and partnerships with organizations and individuals across the state, pursuit of the LBC has carried with it learnings for every one of us and for the many stakeholders who have touched this project.

Beyond our commitment to climate change and doing as much as we can to help build a sustainable future, one of the most compelling reasons we found for pursuing the LBC is the ripple effect we hoped it could have—an effect we ourselves were caught up in. We have learned more than we could have anticipated during the LBC process so far—and we know we have much yet to learn before moving in and even more as we settle into the space. We have benefitted from the deep knowledge and careful expertise of our partners at Neumann Monson Architects and Graham Construction, and we have been the grateful recipients of the learnings and best practices of the ILFI and the organizations that have come before us in the LBC.

We hope that with these collaborations and the new Stanley Center that will result from them, we can help break the path for others who are interested in adopting ways to work toward a more sustainable future. We are already beginning to see that ripple effect in our community. Neumann Monson staff are using what they have learned in pursuit of the Stanley Center's LBC to earn certifications and accreditations in green building and design, which they will use to help other clients' projects be more sustainable. Graham Construction's contractors and subcontractors have gained expertise in sourcing more sustainable materials and supplies that are free of chemicals that harm our environment. We have all learned how to divert more waste from landfills and how to help find new life for old materials. Taken separately, each of these may seem like a drop in the ocean. But taken together, and implemented widely as we learn from and alongside each other, they will make a profound impact.

We are proud that we will be the first Living Building in Muscatine, and in Iowa, but we are prouder still that we will not be the last. We hope that by sharing what we have learned in this process—what has worked for us and what difficulties we have worked through—we can help others in pursuit of their own Living Building certification, or simply to build more sustainably, to live more sustainably, in large ways and small, just as we learned from those who came before us.

## Walking the Talk—Continued Commitments to Sustainability, Equity, and Transparency

Of the three issue areas on which we focus our work, we believe that mitigating climate change is central to a safer, more just world. Our moral imperative to protect those most at risk of suffering the effects of climate change reaches vulnerable communities around the globe—but we also have a responsibility to examine the impact we have on the environment as an organization and do all we can to mitigate it.

The Stanley Center's pursuit of a more sustainable future does not stop at our headquarters' new building. From March 2021 to April 2022, we worked in a number of other ways to fulfill the objectives of the LBC and also to be better community partners and global citizens who have a net positive on our environment and on each other.

### Investing in Divestment

Among the boldest statements we can make about our commitment to a more sustainable future is where we choose to invest our financial resources. Funded by an endowment, the Stanley Center relies on our assets under management to support all our work and programming. Ensuring those investments are environmentally and socially responsible has become increasingly important to us.

“About five years ago, we started hearing conversations from some of our peer organizations about the DivestInvest movement and about their own plans for pledging to divest,” Climate Change Program Officer Rei Tang notes. “Beginning to think about divestment for the Stanley Center helped us to really have a clarity of mind around transitioning our investments out of fossil fuels.” The DivestInvest pledge is a commitment by organizations to ensure all companies in their portfolio of investments reduce absolute emissions to net zero by 2050, and that the investments they do make are in companies pursuing and upholding climate solutions. As we push forward our programming related to mitigating climate change, the Stanley Center's own divestment has never been more important. By taking on this moral and ethical responsibility, we hope we are underlining both how serious we are about our policy work in this area and our belief in how, if organizations and individuals band together toward a common goal, we can make an impactful change for the better on our environment.









Inspired by and taking the lead from peer and partner organizations, in November 2021, our board of directors voted unanimously to rid the organization's endowment of any investments tied to oil, gas, and coal companies within the next three to five years. With this decision, the Stanley Center is among a group of more than 1,500 institutions that have pledged to divest—a number we are proud to be a part of and one we hope and believe will continue to grow.

## A New Lens for Social Responsibility

We center our work on an ambitious vision: that all people share and sustain a secure and enduring peace with freedom, justice, and dignity. And we do our best to model that vision in the choices we make as an organization. For the last year, the Stanley Center has been taking steps to pursue a Just label, a reporting tool that will shine a light on the health of our organizational approach to equity, transparency, and social responsibility.

Though we focus our work and our actions on living out our values, it is not always clear how exactly we are doing that. Administered by the International Living Future Institute, the same organization that oversees the LBC, the Just label is a voluntary disclosure mechanism about our work that dovetails well with our efforts to be a more sustainable organization.

Tracking our organizational values over 22 indicators, from workplace diversity and pay equity to our employee benefits and charitable giving, the Just label will offer a genuine and authentic look at the Stanley Center and how we put our values into practice. The process of self-reporting on the 22 Just indicators has provided an opportunity to examine our practices and document how they reflect our values. By the time we submit our report on the Just indicators, we will have a completely transparent written policy for how the Stanley Center is accountable to its staff and its values, which we will use not just as a benchmark but as a barometer for how we can continue to improve.

## Creating a Shared and Lasting Peace

Our work at the Stanley Center for Peace and Security centers on helping to make connections and facilitate conversations among the players who can effect real, positive, lasting change on three global challenges: mitigating climate change, avoiding the use of nuclear weapons, and preventing mass violence and atrocities. No community the world over is immune to the disastrous consequences these issues can bring about when left unchecked, or when simply met with apathy. At the Stanley Center, we are united in the belief that if we continue to act, if we come to this work giving it everything we can, if we refuse to accept that things cannot change, we can and will help to make a difference.



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—Rei Tang,  
Climate Change Program Officer





The policy programming team at the Stanley Center has been hard at work over the last year. They have continued to build on learnings from the pandemic to deliver programming in a hybrid environment while slowly returning to in-person events and helped to make connections between our program partners and others who can help to influence policy that can make an impact. In all that we do, we strive to help facilitate inclusive dialogue and bring together diverse perspectives on the issues that we are trying to help solve. These collaborations are integral to our work, and we are proud to be aligned with those already in the throes of change making.

The sections that follow are mere excerpts of larger bodies of work and are intended to offer illustrative examples from the reporting period rather than a full portrait. We are grateful for the partners mentioned here—and the many others we work with around the globe.

## Climate Change

November 2021 found Stanley Center staff from the climate change and journalism and media teams in Glasgow, Scotland, for COP26—the UN Climate Change Conference. This was significant in that attending COP26 marked our return to in-person events of such scale—but it was also significant because a number of the objectives we had been working toward were at the center of the international climate change policy conversations that headlined this year's conference.

For the third time, the Stanley Center collaborated with Internews' Earth Journalism Network (EJN) on the Climate Change Media Partnership (CCMP), coorganizing a reporting fellowship for climate journalists from low- and middle-income countries to cover the UN climate negotiations. We worked with EJN to bring 20 such journalists to Glasgow for COP26, where they had access to events and discussions taking place and whose dispatches, in real time and from on the ground, reached audiences who may have otherwise heard little about the important conversations being had and decisions being made from day to day during the conference. In addition to the journalists simply being able to attend the COP, the Stanley Center and EJN offered support, guidance, and programming activities leading up to and during the conference, helping to ensure that each fellow got the most out of their experience in Glasgow.

The fellows published more than 220 stories as a result of their experiences at COP26. Being able to help open this kind of access and learning to CCMP journalists

underscores so many of our values as an organization; these journalists are having wide-ranging impact by bringing their diverse perspectives to bear to bolster public and policymaker awareness of the need for stronger action to lower emissions. Reaching wider audiences and exerting this type of influence is of crucial importance to the future of our climate and our world.

Over the course of the two weeks at COP, Stanley Center priorities were also the focus of many discussions. In the years since the Paris Agreement in 2015, the Stanley Center joined with nations around the world in a commitment to helping reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 1.5 degrees Celsius. At COP, that target was underlined. Emission reduction has been underway since the Paris Agreement, but experts in attendance and around the world pointed to how much is still left to do to continue the trajectory toward 1.5°C.

While at COP, the Stanley Center and our partner Climate Action Network International held a dinner to bring together experts, advocates, and others to examine how policy has evolved since the Paris Agreement. The dinner, which we called “Orienting Global Climate Change Strategy—A Turning Point to Begin a Decade of Transformation,” was an opportunity for attendees from countries in varying states of familiarity with the initiative to discuss the progress made toward the 1.5°C goal, the challenges ahead for continued reduction, and the steps that can be taken to achieve it. “For climate vulnerable countries, there was an urgent need to be able to deal with climate impacts,” recalls Rei Tang. “For efforts along various pathways, there was recognition of the scale of the initiatives that had formed, while also calling for more accountability and transparency in their implementation—and that this would need to include new kinds of stakeholders and approaches to governance.”

We also saw ripples of our work in a monumental inclusion of a line in the Glasgow Climate Pact regarding phasing out fossil fuels. The line—which was amended from “phase out” fossil fuels in the draft agreement to “phase down” in the final agreement—was one of the principal stories of COP. Negotiated intensely leading up to and on the final day of discussions, and amid calls to keep the firmer draft language from activists on the ground and on social media, direct mention of fossil fuels included in the COP cover text was truly historic.









We came away from COP26 energized by the work that still needs to be done—and with the feeling that nations and organizations are increasingly galvanized around efforts aimed at addressing climate change. We hope we can do our part to help drive that work forward. We are one small part of this effort around the world. We collaborate with many others to try to move the needle and only have success in the work we do thanks to the partners we work alongside. With activists and demonstrators being thrown out of COP26 for their advocacy, for what they believe in so vehemently, it is our responsibility to redouble our efforts to share the tools and resources others might find useful in this mission and advance conversations and activism around this issue.

## Nuclear Weapons

Relentlessly examining where the Stanley Center can have the most impact, where resources and our concerted efforts are most urgently needed, the nuclear weapons team works to make connections that will bring about a world that effectively limits the spread and avoids the further use of nuclear weapons. As we pursue our mission to educate and inform—by helping others develop an understanding of risks, discovering innovative applications, bolstering the work of international institutions, and bringing stakeholders together—the nuclear weapons team at the Stanley Center and our collaborators are creating frameworks for a safer world.

In an ongoing project based on our 2019 partnership with Open Nuclear Network, we have been examining journalists' and analysts' thoughts on using open-source intelligence to inform their work and the ethics that come into play in making decisions about whether and how to use that information. In the last year and previously having forged a partnership with the Ethical Journalism Network, the Stanley Center interviewed analysts and journalists about just that, beginning the conversation around improving, and in some cases defining, ethical practices when using open-source information and geospatial data. The collaboration culminated in a report, *Feeling the Burden: Ethical Challenges and Practices in Open Source Analysis and Journalism*, that explores current ethical decision-making practices undertaken by those using open source information and geospatial data, examines the implications its use has on international security, and proposes next steps. Among those next steps are suggestions for more resources and support to enhance ethical practices, the availability of professional training in this area, and higher education courses that focus on growing skills in open-source

analysis and navigating the ethical dilemmas that may be posed by using it.

Building on ideas explored in *Feeling the Burden*, the nuclear weapons team has also been working on a set of case studies, supporting materials, and educators' guides that further examine the ethical questions raised when using geospatial and open-source information for nonproliferation. Collaborating with a longtime Stanley Center partner, Melissa Hanham, we hope this project will help educate those who use open-source resources in their work on international security and nuclear nonproliferation, and begin a framework for consistent examination of what ethical practices work in the field and whether they could be widely adopted by all who work in it. Having received drafts of the case studies in 2021, the team has been hosting a series of events to present, test, and refine them with analyst audiences, and conducting trainings for analysts and journalists with plans to expand trainings to researchers and academics.

## Mass Violence and Atrocities

The center's work on mass violence and atrocities is structured around the belief that societies can be made more peaceful through inclusive, collective, sustained commitment to prevention-focused policy, and the Stanley Center team pursued this belief in every facet of its work over the last year. From partnerships with the Peace in Our Cities network and the news agency The New Humanitarian (TNH) to analyzing topics from our own strategic priorities to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities vulnerable to atrocities, the team has centered on the goal of helping societies to be more resilient.

After a productive and impactful two-year partnership, our collaboration with TNH on the reporting series *Beyond the Bang-Bang: Reporting from the Front Lines of Peace* and related policy dialogue concluded in March 2022. TNH holds a unique position as an independent newsroom that has been reporting since 1995 from the epicenter of crises the world over. This position, and TNH's many connections with local correspondents and analysts with specialized knowledge of the humanitarian sector, dovetail well with the Stanley Center's ability to draw that type of reporting into policy conversations. In an effort to shine a light on what makes societies more resilient to conflict and mass violence, and what arrests steps toward peace—and offer up that evidence to inform policymaking—our work with TNH helped bring about almost 50 stories and a three-episode podcast that has had and will continue to have an











impact on policy discussions on how to take real steps to prevent atrocities from occurring. Beyond the Bang-Bang examined community-level, national, and international actions that aim to prevent violence or contribute to peace, demonstrating that hyperlocal and locally led peace initiatives are foundational to sustaining peace and building long-term societal resilience.

As the COVID-19 pandemic raged on and its implications grew increasingly impossible to overlook, the mass violence and atrocities team and journalism and media team applied a new lens to the crisis. We asked: With so many different responses to the COVID-19 pandemic developing around the world, are some of those responses increasing the risk of mass violence and atrocities on communities—and are some responses mitigating that risk? These questions formed the basis of the team's *Red Flags or Resilience? COVID-19's Impact on Atrocity Risks* project. A multimedia initiative applying journalistic reporting and commentary to national governments' and advocacy organizations' perspectives on crises caused or exacerbated by the pandemic,

*Red Flags or Resilience* brought together stories from seven countries to track connections between the COVID-19 pandemic and the factors for risk and resilience to mass violence in different societal contexts.

Through reporting, photography, voices from the ground, and specific frameworks for analysis to examine COVID-19's implications for peace, *Red Flags or Resilience* is sparking conversations around what atrocity risks and resilience look like in a pandemic. It is our aim that the project helps decisionmakers understand how factors for risk and resilience can manifest across a variety of geographical and political contexts, and that in understanding those factors they are better equipped to promote response and recovery efforts that build more-peaceful societies.

In the last year, the Stanley Center's mass violence and atrocities team also turned its lens inward, taking stock of priorities and reassessing them to be most helpful in today's world. After careful review, the team identified a new central guiding mission for building resilience and





upstream prevention of violence within societies while also identifying stakeholder groups that we believe will accelerate change. In the immediate future, the stakeholder groups we will work hard to engage in this work are cities, which, through connections to both local and larger networks, can work more nimbly than national governments; the private sector, whose interests could be disrupted if they are operating in environments where there is government-perpetrated violence; the corporate accountability community who already ask for answers from these private sector forces; local media and journalists, whose work in the communities they serve is often the only news outlet those at-risk communities access; and big tech companies, particularly social media ones, whose platforms are used to fuel conflict, spread misinformation and hate, and spur violence.

This introspection provided a springboard to our refined programming: sustained and collective action and inclusive policy processes that prioritize structural prevention of identity-based mass violence and atrocities. Focusing our efforts on this central mission and these stakeholder groups has already pushed forward our values, as evidenced by our ongoing partnerships with Peace in Our Cities. As we look to the future and concentrate our energy in these spheres, we will, with hard work and hope, bring about positive change for vulnerable societies around the world.

## Seeing the World from Muscatine

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Basing our center of operations in Muscatine, Iowa, has helped to shape the Stanley Center and the mission, vision, and values we hold as an organization. We are deeply proud to be part of this area—and the greater Iowa community.

Our Global Education program helps the Stanley Center give back to our local community bringing our work to the people who are geographically closest to it. Uniting our core goals of bringing diverse perspectives together, facilitating dialogue, and helping to drive action on global challenges, we try to offer opportunities to Iowans to learn and grow, embrace the many cultures that knit together the fabric of our society, and engage with us and each other about the role each of us plays as a citizen of the world.

This year we continued to offer our marquee events and programming, but we also took the time to consider how we can better serve our community going forward. As we look ahead to moving into our new headquarters, we are energized by all that we will be able to do and host there. As we grow our Global Education programming, we will continue to help make space in the community for discussions of equity and justice issues that honestly and meaningfully recognize the past; create opportunities for students in Iowa to enhance their global competencies and ignite their curiosity about the many









other peoples and cultures we share this world with; and help bring diverse perspectives and voices to the conversations taking place in our community.

## Intrepid Educators

Awarded for the first time in 2005, the Catherine Miller Explorer Awards are a key part of the Stanley Center Global Education program's efforts to engage with our community and help others experience diverse stories and perspectives. Catherine Miller, for whom the award is named, was a longtime educator, mentor, and activist in Muscatine whose belief in the power of learning through travel was reflected in her teaching and was instilled in her students. The award mirrors that belief. Each year, teachers are invited to apply for the award, proposing a professional development trip and the new perspectives they hope it might provide. Winning teachers work with Stanley Center staff to plan a trip abroad to the region of their choice, paired with activities and events on the ground that provide new experiences for the teachers that might help inform their curriculum. Of the 48 teachers who applied for the most recent awards, this year's winners were a high school choral director and a high school social studies teacher who set off on their travels in summer 2022. We believe that by undertaking these trips and learning from the countries they visit and the communities within them, teachers help to further expand students' understanding of the world and enhance their own ability to support students from diverse backgrounds.

Planning for the Explorer Award winners' trips always takes strategic logistical planning, and this year's awards added a new layer to that. The Stanley Center operations team worked alongside the Global Education program officer this year, lending support and expertise. "Having Cayte [Connell] and our wonderful operations team involved in the logistical planning of our Explorer Award winners' trips added a layer of professionalism to this process, and has made the whole process better for us to approach as a team," says Global Education program officer Krista Regennitter. The teams also began pursuing a partnership this year with the Global Education for Educators Organization (GEEO), a tour company that specializes in tailoring educational trips for teachers that help them better pass on to students their curiosity and excitement for places and people around the world. Next year, the Stanley Center will be partnering exclusively with GEEO to provide the fullest possible professional development experience for the Explorer Award winners.

In addition to the trips, Explorer Award winners join a cohort of other educators committed to continuous learning and broadening their understanding of other cultures. This year's winners, as well as winners from 2020 and 2021 whose participation was disrupted due to the pandemic, were invited to take part in a month-long discussion group centered on the book *Beyond Guilt Trips: Mindful*



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"Having Cayte [Connell] and our wonderful operations team involved in the logistical planning of our Explorer Award winners' trips added a layer of professionalism to this process, and has made the whole process better for us to approach as a team."

—Krista Regennitter,  
Global Education Program Officer





*Travel in an Unequal World* in order to prepare for the immersive experience of their trips and to think deeply about the responsibility each of us bears as a global citizen.

### Listening to—and within—the Community

One of our most far-reaching programs, offered in partnership with Muscatine Community College and the Community Foundation of Greater Muscatine, the Inclusive Dialogue author series gives community members the opportunity to come together in conversation. The series aims to highlight varying life experiences and perspectives in an effort to foster empathy, connections, and deeper understanding among our community, and April 2021's "Confronting Racial Injustice" events did just that.

The series featured two conversations with Jason Reynolds and discussions of his coauthored, award-winning novel *All American Boys*, about police brutality perpetuated on a young Black man. The book, told from the perspective of two American high school students—one Black, one white—made for a remarkable framework for conversations about police violence against people of color happening around the United States. The morning event, facilitated by students and for students, brought together more than 1,000 high schoolers in Muscatine. A second conversation was expanded to include all members of our community, and author Reynolds helped to facilitate an eye-opening, deeply empathetic conversation where participants, including officers from Muscatine's police force, were able to listen, ask questions, learn, and think critically about race relations.

### Lifetime Learning

Another annual offering in our programming repertoire is the Global Education Institute for Teachers, which the Stanley Center organizes in partnership with University of Iowa (UI) International Programs, the UI Stanley Museum of Art, and the UI College of Education. The Global Education Institute for Teachers brings together educators from across Iowa for trainings, workshops, and in-depth discussions that expand participants' global competencies and their ability to bring those competencies back to their classrooms to incorporate into their lessons. The Institute aims to help teachers prepare students to be active, empathetic members of our complex, increasingly interdependent global community.

The 2021 Global Education Institute for Teachers marked a change in our delivery. In previous years, the event has been offered in person over two days, but this year we offered it online over June and July. With 45 attendees across Iowa, 14

of whom represented Muscatine-area schools, the online programming featured a combination of group sessions via four live online Zoom meetings, self-paced learning, and independent readings and assignments, all anchored by the book *Becoming a Globally Competent Teacher*. Participants who completed all the course requirements earned one teacher licensure renewal credit through the Iowa Area Education Association.

### Refining Our Work and Building a Network

Every few years, our policy area teams undergo a strategy consultation to hone their work and define their goals for the months to come. Until now, this type of strategic review had not been applied to our Global Education work stream.

In an effort to reshape and invigorate the goals of our Global Education programming and processes, we asked regional global education experts to join us to examine our work and engage in planning and consultation sessions. Taking place over two days in October 2021, this was also the first in-person event we put on in the wake of the pandemic, and our planning team demonstrated thoughtful, nimble organization throughout. With discussions over dinner, which for safety was served outside, the team welcomed participants with as much careful thought and safety-minded planning as possible. Over the two days we learned from participants what kind of programming is most needed, most sought after, and could have the most impact in our Muscatine community. This visioning project led to one-on-one conversations with local stakeholders on the current work the Global Education team is doing, which in turn led to a decision to reconvene the larger group again to engender continuous communication and opportunities for new and ongoing collaborations within our community.

The consultation not only helped us shape our strategic plan for the years to come, it also reinforced how important it is to connect with others who are leading the way in global education work. We so frequently find that this work is done in silos, and we realized during the consultation that our partners in this work in the greater Muscatine community would value the opportunity to continue meeting—to forge a network. "There is no systematic or statewide approach to global education in Iowa—there is no network," notes Regennitter. "So there is a desire for people who are working in the field, often without the input or experience of others, to have an opportunity to cross paths and think about how to partner."

## Operations and Administration at the Stanley Center

Since our inception more than 65 years ago, the Stanley Center has understood that to stay on the cutting edge of global solutions, we must work efficiently, collaborate effectively, and adapt to new systems and processes proactively. As it did in every organization and household across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic brought some of our processes to a halt and demanded that others shift to fit new challenges the pandemic introduced. In the time that has elapsed since then, and particularly in the last year as we continued to employ and learn from methods we found successful in the earliest days of the pandemic, our operations team has proven itself to be more nimble than we could have imagined and has helped to pull the Stanley Center, our people, and our programs through a challenging and uncertain stage, with new best practices in place to support a dynamic, hybrid workplace and programming.

### Supporting Staff Working from Everywhere

The Stanley Center operations team has always played an instrumental role in ensuring staff could carry on with their work as smoothly and with as few logistical disruptions as possible, and never more so than during the pandemic. When staff began working fully remotely in March 2020, we already relied on a few systems that made for a smoother transition: we were already using the messaging program Slack, and many of our applications were already cloud based. But from onboarding new employees remotely to updating the center's phone system to producing virtual programs of the same high quality as audiences find in our in-person programming, the operations team swiftly and expertly found new ways to bring efficiency and accessibility to our team and our work.

Three new employees joined the Stanley Center at the beginning of and during the pandemic, and our operations team rose to the challenge of onboarding them remotely. By sharing the Stanley Center's organizational culture in Zoom meetings, introducing new staff to programs and processes like Salesforce via screen sharing, and creating bespoke graphics and videos to serve as shareable teaching tools, new staff were welcomed thoroughly and warmly despite not being able to experience the onboarding process in person.

As we settled into a remote workplace, it became clear that the phone system the Stanley Center and its staff had been using did not allow for people to effectively use their desk phones at home. The system was not user friendly, and staff could not receive voice mails easily. In a time where fast and simple communication was increasingly important since we were so seldom face to face with colleagues and constituents, the operations team knew a change needed to happen. The new phone system we have introduced is a completely cloud-based application that allows staff to get transcribed voice mails sent directly to their email in-boxes and text from their business phone lines, and forward voice-mail information to other colleagues in real time. None of this had been possible before, and we have already seen increased efficiency and smoother communication.

In addition to all this, the operations team has been closely involved with the space planning and technology needs for the new Stanley Center headquarters. By engaging staff through surveys and conversations, the operations team has learned what tools and space requirements will be most beneficial to the way we will work within the new building and what we will need to engage with the world beyond those walls. The operations team has taken staff suggestions to our partners at Neumann Monson Architects and is helping find ways to bring those suggestions to fruition as our move-in date gets closer.

From new ideas for our building's technology to how we engage with each other virtually, our operations team hopes and expects that new systems and processes will make the Stanley Center more accessible. The digital functionality that we have been able to achieve and the many features we hope to implement in our new building give the Stanley Center the opportunity to grow upward, ensuring that we are inclusive in our new space and can reach staff and program participants alike from every walk of life.

### Delivering Virtual Programming While Expanding Access

In the midst of the pandemic, it was important to the Stanley Center not just to make sure that staff were able to feel connected to our organization and to each other but that the people our work touches continued to feel a high level of engagement.

Drawing on their knowledge of how the Stanley Center delivers programming to audiences, the operations team excelled in bringing the same high-touch approach they bring to in-person events to new technologies and virtual









programming. “Organizations everywhere have incorporated things like Zoom and screen sharing into their daily operations,” says Cayte Connell, Senior Operations Specialist. “But what we have missed in the pandemic is the human connection—and we can bring humanity and warmth, we can bring a helpful human presence to our interactions, to transcend the digital barrier despite having to be in an otherwise sterile remote setting.”

Because the operations team is so hands-on, responsive, and open to adapting based on feedback from those who engage with the center, there have been many shifts in how we deliver our programming in the last year. The team is always pushing forward and asking themselves internally what more can be done to ensure a great experience for all, but they also take that question directly to our audiences so they might be responsive to specific needs. For example, the team has implemented a procedure of asking people as they register for an event if the Stanley Center can provide any accessibility features that could be helpful to them. Recently, because the team had been talking about and experimenting with how to implement closed captioning into our programming, when a participant asked whether an event would be captioned, the team was able to implement it right away.

The team has also been bringing programming, invitations, and materials to participants in multiple languages. Events feature bilingual or multilingual registration sites, emails are sent to participants in the language they speak, documents are provided in multiple languages, and user support is offered in multiple languages. Looking to the future, the team plans to prioritize expanding access even more. “There are kinks still to work out,” says Eleanore Taft, Operations Specialist. “When we think about how to include others, that extends to those who do not have access to reliable internet or the resources for a phone call. We are trying to anticipate those barriers and address them before they become an issue, all in an effort to include more people.”

The care for each individual that the operations team provides from beginning to end of any experience someone has with the Stanley Center—from a webinar to an international trip—is something that they have worked hard and continue to spend a lot of time on. The team makes sure they have the infrastructure in place so participants can focus on the important conversations and not on logistics, their health and safety, or their comfort. In everything this team does, they represent so well the Stanley Center and all that we stand for as an organization. “It makes me proud to be part of the same team as everyone who is taking such care to make sure that things are high touch and well thought out from beginning to end,” notes Heather Maxwell, Operations Technology Specialist.



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“The transition would have been lost if not for the operations team.”

—Mark Seaman,  
Vice President and  
Director of Communications



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“Caring for the new brand took work with all Stanley Center departments, which underlined and strengthened intentional, successful collaboration across our teams. We were touching base sooner on projects, and not working in a siloed way—I think we were able to work together to compensate for the digital division that can be created when we are unable to have events in person.”

—Cayte Connell,  
Senior Operations Specialist

## Making a New Mark

In all that the operations team does, it is apparent how considerate they are—how invested in each user’s, each participant’s, perspective they are—and how they work hard to put themselves in the shoes of someone who is about to interact in some way with the Stanley Center. This tendency to think so deeply about constituent perception helped to make the Stanley Center’s new brand, which was used only twice at in-person events before everything shuttered due to the pandemic, really stick as a poignant, effective new trademark.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the operations team researched the many technological tools and software available for virtual programming so we could recreate online the kind of customized in-person experiences the Stanley Center policy teams and global education team typically provide. Through the collaboration platform MURAL and livestreaming in nicely branded ways, the team was able to incorporate our new name and identifiers into invitations and every virtual experience, helping galvanize the new Stanley Center brand. “The transition would have been lost if not for the operations team,” notes Mark Seaman, Vice President and Director of Communications.

In the eyes of the operations team, though, the brand transition was a group effort, with input from every team across the organization. “Caring for the new brand took work with all Stanley Center departments, which underlined and strengthened intentional, successful collaboration across our teams,” says Connell. “We were touching base sooner on projects and not working in a siloed way—I think we were able to work together to compensate for the digital division that can be created when we are unable to have events in person.”

## Amplifying Achievement

Because our staff is so important to us and we want each member of our team to feel not just committed to their work but also fulfilled by it, performance evaluations are an essential part of the Stanley Center’s annual process.

The performance evaluation process that the Stanley Center had been using—long-form written reflections that were done once per year on an August 1 to July 31 cadence—felt cumbersome. In an effort to streamline the process and make it feel personal and specific to each member of staff, we have implemented from January 2022 a quarterly performance evaluation process that coincides with the calendar year and focuses on recognizing achievements in almost real time. With help from our diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant Maegan Scott of Wayfinding Partners, as well as from feedback from staff about what was working in the former process and what was not, we identified an overarching goal with this new process: that staff are able to have ongoing, meaningful conversations with





their managers about their professional development goals and career trajectories.

For each quarterly conversation, managers and direct reports focus on a different topic: for Q1, setting annual goals and reviewing the staff member's job description and responsibilities; for Q2, checking in on the progress of the staff member's professional development goals; for Q3, receiving multirater feedback from peers as well as the manager, acknowledging strengths and identifying areas for growth; and for Q4, conducting a summary wrap-up of the year's work. Each conversation also includes time for reflection on successes from the quarter and feedback from staff members to managers about how managers can better support staff professional development goals. After each conversation, managers document the main themes discussed and submit them for the staff member's review via DocuSign, ensuring that everyone is on the same page about new objectives, progress toward goals, and any expectations that might have been discussed.

With our new performance evaluation process, we are trying to shift the emphasis from long-form written reflections and instead place importance on making each exchange more conversational and more approachable, putting supervisors and direct reports on a more equitable plane of conversation.

"Our hope with quarterly check-in conversations instead of annual ones is that as the world changes and staff goals change, they can get an immediate update on performance expectations as well as whether their goals are still in line with their ambitions and their work," say Deb Hughes, Human Resource Generalist. With all this, we are trying to take steps to create less apprehension around professional development at the Stanley Center, and we are committed to continue refining the process to make it as meaningful as possible for each of our staff members.

### Streamlining our Finance System

For the last year, the Stanley Center has benefitted from a new finance system, Concur, a shift that has streamlined our accounting reporting process particularly for members of staff when they are traveling.

"In my experience, when you implement new accounting-type software, it typically makes an accounting department's life easier, but frequently something happens that seems to make the user's life more difficult," says Cassie Batzkiel, Director of Finance. "I think that this shift to Concur is one of the somewhat rare exceptions to that—it has given accounting some real efficiencies, but it is also giving individual staff efficiencies as well. It's a win-win."

With so many Stanley Center staff traveling with such frequency, Concur has indeed increased efficiencies. The system has helped



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Director of Finance





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“Even though COVID made it sporadic for us to need to do expense reports, everyone has picked it up very well. Now that we’re getting back to our normal travel modes, everyone has really settled right into the new process—they’re a great group!”

—Lori Sywassink,  
Accounting Specialist

to automate the expense reporting process: credit card charges are automatically imported into the system, and staff can use electronically-received receipts or a mobile app to take pictures of receipts, which can then be uploaded to the report alongside the appropriate transaction. All this can be done on the go, without staff having to find time during their travels to get back to their computer or store paper copies of each of their receipts and travel documents. The approval process for these transactions has also been streamlined through the new system—it is a “smart” system that can identify what accounts are being used and can route each line item to the appropriate person for authorization, which can also be done on the road, via a mobile device. Relying on this new system also helps with the Stanley Center’s goal to reduce our use of paper files—everything in the Concur system can be managed online.

To ensure that this new system could be adopted swiftly and with ease, the accounting team conducted group trainings before the official go-live of the new system, and subsequent one-on-one trainings and trouble-shooting sessions have also been available. And although a freeze on traveling during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic meant the system has continued to be new for many, staff have embraced it. “Even though COVID made it sporadic for us to need to do expense reports, everyone has picked it up very well,” Lori Sywassink, Accounting Specialist, says. “Now that we’re getting back to our normal travel modes, everyone has really settled right into the new process—they’re a great group!”

## Cultivating our Workplace Culture

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As important as it is to ensure that our systems are running smoothly and that staff have access to the tools they need to do their jobs, it is also important to us that Stanley Center staff feel connected to each other and recognized for their many contributions across our organization and in the broader spaces our work touches. We are fortunate to have some of our staff lending their time and talent to our Workplace Culture Committee, offering staff opportunities for deeper engagement with each other and supporting the Stanley Center’s ongoing efforts to live our values.

With challenges brought on by the pandemic and a move-in date for our new headquarters still on the horizon, our staff has continued to be widely dispersed. In the last year, the Workplace Culture team has come up with creative ways to bridge the digital divide in which we have been operating, helping to facilitate the same kind of connectedness that we experienced when we all worked on site together before the pandemic and setting us up for the same again when we move into our new permanent space.





## The Summer of Justice

During summer 2021, the Workplace Culture Committee set up times for staff to gather on Zoom to have conversations about racial equity and justice, topics of inclusivity, and how we as individuals and as an organization can further our commitments to and actions in support of antiracism. *Lost Buxton*, by Rachelle Chase, was a catalyst for these conversations. The book, a commentary on the history of the town of Buxton, Iowa, that in the early 1900s was racially integrated in a way that was unique for the time, helped us think about our local Iowa history and the history of racial equity writ large.

The Workplace Culture team created a larger project around initial discussions of the book, inviting colleagues to explore more deeply the stories and experiences of racism in other places that hold some significance in their lives, from hometowns to current places of residence. Staff conducted independent research into the local histories of these places and continued to meet weekly to discuss what they learned. “For example,” says Luisa Kenausis, Nuclear Weapons Program Associate, “I looked into the history of housing segregation in Connecticut (where I grew up), which is definitely an ongoing issue, and shared the resources that I’d found with those who joined the conversation.”

Spanning the summer and going into the fall, this project sparked an interesting series of dialogues about a number of cities and regions. Staff who participated in these discussions reported that though the subject matter was often heavy, it is important to hold space to have these conversations, and the participants found them rewarding and thought-provoking.

At a conference recently, one of our partners from Organizations in Solidarity observed to Alex Leites, Digital Communications Specialist, that many groups OrgsinSolidarity works with have fallen off in their commitments to antiracism work, that few in 2022 remain as committed to it as they were in summer 2020 when there was a groundswell of focus on this issue. “Talking to him about that made me appreciative of the fact that we continue to engage with difficult questions and challenging topics,” says Leites. “So many parts of Stanley Center touch this, but the Summer of Justice did help to keep these issues top of mind and at the forefront of our consciousness as an organization.”

## Zooming in on Celebrations

At the Stanley Center, we approach our work every day with a seriousness that matches the importance of our biggest global challenges. And each day we strive to make progress in those areas while knowing that the work we and our partners are doing to create momentum toward positive change is the work of weeks and months—of years, of decades, or even of lifetimes. Because of this, it is important to us as an organization to make the time to celebrate our staff, to recognize



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—Alex Leites,  
Digital Communications Specialist



each other, to mark when new members join us or leave us to explore their next great opportunity.

There have been many reasons to celebrate while we have been working remotely, and the Workplace Culture Committee has helped to ensure those celebrations are as lively as they can be given our geographic distribution—often via a cleverly executed theme.

We have traveled through Europe through our screens, from a London-themed welcome party with tea sent to staff to a Parisian-themed going-away party with an online guided walking tour of Paris. The Workplace Culture team has also organized holiday parties to put us all in the festive spirit. These have included virtual party games and cookies and all their trimmings delivered to staff homes for cookie decorating. Erin Gould, Assistant to the President, even worked with a local florist to send a gift of succulents to each of our colleagues—and she still sends a monthly reminder to everyone to give their festive plants some water. And what better way to mark a year of working remotely due to the pandemic than with a “llama party,” with a surprise Zoom takeover by the keeper of a local alpaca farm who gave us a virtual tour, introduced us to the llamas, and hosted trivia complete with llama-themed prizes.

## Engagement and Recognition

The Workplace Culture Committee has also been working on ways to engage staff more deeply in our meetings by incorporating the liberating structures method. Meant to enhance trust and relationships among colleagues, these inclusive facilitation tools will continue to help foster richer, more-animated participation, whether miles away through Zoom or, eventually, when we are physically back together again.

Beyond engagement, the committee is helping to increase our recognition of each other and our work. From the peer recognition program to our #gratitudeistheattitude Slack channel, they are cementing a culture of acknowledgment and appreciation at the Stanley Center.

## Our Year in Review

We hope this review of our work has provided an opportunity for our staff and colleagues to reflect on their recent achievements. We hope it has also served as an opportunity for our wider community to learn more about what we do and why we do it.

Our work—on our global challenges, in our community, and on ourselves to be an organization that produces a net positive in all that it does—evolves daily. We invite you to follow our progress, learn more about our partnerships, and find ways to get involved with our work by visiting our website, which offers many articles and deep dives into our work; subscribing to our publications; learning more about our events, both in person and online; and engaging with us on our social media platforms.

The staff at the Stanley Center, our partners, and the Muscatine and global communities we serve are committed and resilient. We are tenacious and prepared. Working together, united in the face of obstacles, we are helping drive policy to create a shared and lasting peace, an effort that will only gain more traction in the years to come. Thank you for being a part of that.





## Stanley Center Staff

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