

James Madlom

Chief Executive Officer, Mueller Communications, Inc.
Rotary Member Since January 2012

James Madlom will tell you he has the best job in Milwaukee. As CEO of Mueller Communications, he gets to do what he loves—solve problems alongside people he admires— and call it work.

"We love to tackle complex challenges," James said. "And they don't come to us for the easy ones."

But to understand James, you have to start long before the C-Suite, with a parish priest father and a public health nurse mother who shaped everything about how he moves through the world.

"My parents both lived lives of service to others. Everything they do is rooted in their faith," he said.



Growing up, James and his family would close each day with a fourth-century prayer, one that called on the faithful to tend the sick, comfort the suffering, and, as James came to treasure most, "shield the joyous." He puzzled over that phrase as a kid. In time, he came to see it as a call not just to meet basic human needs, but to help lift people up.

That ethos, instilled early, never left him.

His father also taught him to find joy in even the most mundane tasks.

"Whatever I did as a kid—homework, practicing piano, doing a chore, my dad reminded me to have fun doing it," James said. "There is a deep and abiding joy in doing good work and doing it well. I carry that with me every day."

James grew up in Port Washington and attended Marquette University, where he earned both his undergraduate degree and law degree, magna cum laude. But it was his extracurricular life that foreshadowed his career. He led Marquette's Hunger Clean-Up, the university's largest service project, coordinating more than 2,300 volunteers and 100 community organizations. His path into public relations grew organically from that volunteer work, including early involvement with Al's Run and Walk.

Today, Mueller Communications is one of Milwaukee's most respected communications and marketing firms. James's work has secured public financing for transformational redevelopment projects, guided nonprofits through tough crises, designed internal communications programs that put employees first, and supported neighborhood revitalization efforts like Near West Side Partners.

Outside the office, James is deeply woven into Milwaukee's nonprofit fabric. His service on boards and in volunteer leadership has been notable. He serves as past chair of Wellpoint Care Network's board, and as a director for the Alzheimer's Association of Southeastern Wisconsin, the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families, the Jewish Community Center, and St. Charles Youth & Family Services. He has also served as president of the Shorewood Foundation and as a board member with the Volunteer Center of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Theatre, Everyday Philanthropists, and Non-Profit Center of Milwaukee.

One cause sits especially close to his heart: foster care and adoption. James and his wife, Gina, adopted their three beloved children Elaina, Claire, and Justin and have navigated the foster system firsthand. That personal experience only deepened James's passionate involvement with organizations such as Wellpoint Care Network, the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families, and St. Charles Youth & Family Services.

In 2021, James was named one of United Way's Philanthropic 5, an honor he accepted not for himself, but on behalf of the nonprofit leaders, colleagues, and community partners he credits for what he calls the *real* work.

"I grew up knowing there was always someone in my corner," he said in his speech that evening. "I believe everyone deserves to have that."



James has been a member of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee since 2012. He has chaired the Marketing Committee and brings to the club the same conviction that guides everything else he does: that meaningful work, done with great people, is its own reward.

"What I enjoy most about Rotary is the diversity of people and perspectives," he said. "It's more important now than ever."

James and his family live in Whitefish Bay. They are active members and volunteers at St. Herman's Orthodox Church in West Bend. He keeps a quote from Pericles close: "What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

For James, love is not an emotion. It is an action. And one he makes every effort to take every single day.

