Margaret (Grebe) Lidstone '89





Margaret (Grebe) Lidstone '89 is the first-ever recipient of the Alumni Impact Award, given to individuals whose impactful work and outstanding advancements greatly benefit their local, regional, national, and/or international communities. Margaret's personal and professional contributions, from working to develop a free and democratic media system in Kosovo to her decades-long career in global health, make her an exemplary portrait of a USM graduate and worthy recipient of this award.

Margaret's curiosity and desire to learn about people, cultures, and issues was evident during her time at USM. She enjoyed participating in one of the Upper School's first mock political conventions, and fondly remembers teachers like Tom Bergen, J.S., and Steve Bruemmer who challenged students to think broadly and critically. "I've always been fascinated by learning and understanding others," she said, "and there were so many ways to do that at USM."

After graduating from UW-Madison with a bachelor's in religious studies, Margaret earned her juris doctorate from the University of Michigan. While working at a Washington, D.C. law firm, she was invited to help with pro bono work through the U.S. State Department, which led to a sabbatical working for the United Nations mission in Kosovo. While there, she helped to develop laws and regulations to support a free and democratic media system, including drafting laws on defamation, launching a public broadcasting authority, and developing a broadcast licensing authority.

When her work in Kosovo was complete, she decided to focus her efforts on global health rather than return to the law firm. She was instrumental in the development and early execution of what would become the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the largest commitment by any nation to address a single disease. To date, PEPFAR has invested more than $100 billion in the global HIV/AIDS response, saving 25 million lives, preventing millions of HIV infections, and supporting several countries to achieve HIV epidemic control—all while significantly strengthening global health security.

> **"Amid the good times and the friendly chatter of Upper School, Margaret was always a thinker and a leader, a young woman who would go on to use her knowledge gained studying the non-western world as a political activist working for change for important causes. Even then, it was evident what an outstanding alumna she would become."**
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> *— Roseann Lyons, former head of Upper School and English department chair*

She would later join the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), a nonprofit biotech whose mission is developing biomedical interventions for neglected diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, lassa fever, and ebola. As vice president of global affairs, Margaret was responsible for IAVI's global political advocacy, encouraging support and raising awareness of these neglected diseases of poverty.

After years of traveling and working around the world, she returned to Milwaukee in 2020 as chief philanthropy and engagement officer at Vivent Health. Vivent Health provides care, treatment, and prevention services to people impacted by HIV/AIDS in six states, the second largest provider in the U.S. "Working in global health is also about addressing human rights issues, which is what really drives me," she said. "My work at Vivent tackles the same issues as my previous roles, but domestically. When the opportunity came my way, I thought how fun to take what I've learned globally and do it back at home."

Margaret (Grebe) Lidstone '89 also serves on the board of directors of the Museum of Wisconsin Art. She lives in Mequon, Wisconsin with her husband, Will, and two children, Maisie and Jasper.







