

## A Racinian to Know

Kimberly Payne, Marketing and Fund Development Manager at Racine County Human Services Department

Please introduce yourself (as though we're meeting for the first time at a business networking event).

I am Kimberly Payne and I actually like to be called Kimberly, not Kim, Kimmie or Kimster... unless you are a member of my immediate family. Before anything else, I am a wife and a mother who loves spending time with my husband, siblings, nieces, nephews and our 12 children and 17, soon to be 18, grandchildren. I am also the Marketing and Fund Development Manager at Racine County Human Services Department and I am co-owner of Payne & Frazier Consultants, LLC, a local firm dedicated to engagement, education and empowerment of individuals and organizations.

Where are you from originally?

I was born in Tennessee and we lived there until I was eight. My family moved to Wisconsin to be closer to my aunt and cousins. The move was a culture shock for me – coming from the warm weather and a rural location in the South to Wisconsin weather and a city with more than a few hundred people was a huge transition. My first winter in Wisconsin felt like the coldest winter ever! Also, the Midwestern dialect was just as interesting to me as my Southern accent was to the children in my class. When I think about the transition from Tennessee to Wisconsin, I always think of my third

grade teacher at Mitchell Elementary School, who went out of her way to make me feel welcome and adjust to my new school setting. I actually ran into her while I was shopping a few months ago. She looked exactly the same so I knew it was her right away. I said hello and without hesitation she said hello Kimberly Branch. She called me by my maiden name. I was taken aback that nearly 40 years after having me in her class, she still remembered me... by my first and last name!

How did your life's journey bring you to Racine?

Although I still feel deeply connected to the South, I call Racine home because I have been here for so long – from elementary to high school. After graduating from J.I. Case High School, Go Eagles!!!, I left Racine for 13 years. During that time I went to college at Drake University, where I earned a Bachelor of Arts

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Carl Matson photo

degree in Psychology and Iowa State University where I attained a Master of Science degree in Education. Then I worked at colleges and universities in Illinois, Virginia and Maryland. I came back to this community in 2003 and was pleasantly surprised by all of the new developments. Downtown looked completely different and there were lots of businesses that popped up along Highway 20 and Highway 31. Racine felt and looked more like a big city.

What do you like best about Racine?

What I like best about Racine is the sense of community. When I lived in other places, I definitely felt like a transplant and struggled to make true connections to the communities. Racine is not so big that I feel disconnected and not so small that I feel too connected. I also like the geographic location, situated between Milwaukee and Chicago and surrounded by the splendor of Lake Michigan. Lastly, I like the opportunity to work across the community to make a difference. There is a lot of work to be done to make our community all that it can be and I find it easy to connect with others who are also interested in making a difference.

Please give some examples of how your work has made a positive impact on the community.

My work in Racine spans the education, nonprofit, and government sectors. I have always been blessed to be in professional positions or connect with volunteer opportunities where I could make a difference. In education, I was the first Dean of Students at 21st Century Preparatory School, where I was able to work with children and families every day on their path to academic and life success. I stay connected to education as an adjunct instructor for the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, and a trustee of Gateway Technical College. In the nonprofit world, I volunteered with United Way of Racine County and was then invited to serve as a project consultant and eventually the Vice President of Community Impact, where I was instrumental in the development and implementation of Advancing Family Assets, a family support program, and Community Conversations, a community engagement strategy. I currently work in government and as an entrepreneur. In my role as Marketing and Fund Development Manager for Racine County Human Services Department, I have the awesome opportunity to impact the community by helping community members connect to our programs and services. Lastly, I was bit by the entrepreneurial bug, which resulted in my business partner and I launching Payne & Frazier Consultants, LLC. Our first project, Black Boys: An Endangered Species, launches this fall. The first phase of the project is an awareness-building conference that will shine the light on community conditions of Black boys and men while providing a platform for Black boys and men to tell their stories in their own words. The Nov. 17 conference is free and open to the public.

What's the least understood aspect about what you do?

The least understood aspect of what I do is that there is more to Kimberly Payne than meets the eye. It's common for people to say "I thought you were doing this"... "I didn't know you were also doing that." I like to stay busy and involve myself in ways that I know I can authentically engage and make a difference in the community. I believe that people are placed in my path for a reason and that each interaction matters. In the words of the singer

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