

# PRESS RELEASE



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ##

## **New North names two winners of 2023 Workplace Excellence Award** *CLA and Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry honored for their people and business practices*

NEW NORTH, June 8, 2023 – Two companies with operations within the 18-county New North region – CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP) and Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry – have been named as winners of the 2023 New North Workplace Excellence Award. Selected from nominated companies through a multi-phase evaluation process, representatives of the two firms were presented the award at the New North Summit, held June 8 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay.

The honor recognizes organizations in the region that are improving their competitive advantage through people practices which lead to successful business outcomes. Award submissions were evaluated on two primary criteria: People Practices and Business Practices. The Workplace Excellence Award is a collaboration between New North Inc. and Keystone Partners.

“The innovative people and business practices of CLA and Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry shined through during the evaluations of the judging committee. We are excited to present both with the 2023 New North Workplace Excellence Award,” says Barb LaMue, president and CEO of New North Inc. “Their individual approaches to solving current workforce challenges have resulted in increased business success, along with enhanced diversity and inclusion.”

**CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)** is among the nation’s leading professional services firms, providing industry-focused wealth advisory, digital, audit, tax, consulting, and outsourcing services. It has 130 U.S. locations, including six within the New North, and employs 375 people in the region among its 8,500 total employees. The CLA Promise is to know you and to help you, putting client relationships first to ensure its professionals are connected to the clients and businesses they serve.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new challenges to the workforce and reignited others, at both CLA and other companies. CLA took the opportunity to study its work environment over time, and it heard a sustained theme clearly from its people.

That theme led to the establishment of the “Better Together” philosophy, the fundamental belief of which is that “when we are together, we experience powerful moments that bring meaning and fulfillment to each person within the firm.” The strategy includes flexibility and choice; rather than closing its offices or requiring employees to be in the office on set days, people were able to make choices based on their own level of comfort, safety and preferences. In doing so, CLA elected not to move to a completely remote workforce in a perceived effort of retention, as many companies did.

In concert with its people-first mindset, CLA also is dedicated to a best-in-class wellness experience, offering employees a host of benefits, resources, and referrals to address any personal or medical issues they or their family may be experiencing.

The “Better Together” business perspective has resulted in lower-than-average turnover within the industry; greater recruiting success, including 30% growth in experienced hires; and elevated engagement survey scores in virtually all categories. In 2021, CLA saw a record number of rehires (267) and referrals (500). A recent survey of its Northeast Wisconsin employees showed that 88% said CLA “is a great place to work.”

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts of CLA have included the addition of a recruiter focused on recruiting diverse talent, which saw DEI hiring increase by 5.7% and retention go up by 3%. Engagement with diversity partner organizations, such as the NABA, the leading national association representing Black business leaders in the accounting, finance and related business professions, and the Association of Latino Professionals for America, has been enhanced and strengthened. Internally, employee resource groups have been created to bring those who share a common affinity to come together, share experiences and foster growth. At CLA, these include CelebAsian, Generationally Indigenous and Pride at CLA, as well as six others.

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“We are honored to receive the New North Workplace Excellence Award,” says Brad Frank, managing principal for CLA’s Northeast Wisconsin office. “We believe it is everyone’s responsibility to create a welcoming firm culture in order for our people to bring their authentic selves to work and pursue their inspired careers.”

**Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry (WAF)**, headquartered in Manitowoc and in existence for 114 years, employs 780 people. Its self-described niche within the manufacturing space is to deliver high-quality, complex custom castings on ultra-short lead times.

As part of the company’s growth strategy, Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry developed a dedicated training center, paired with a bilingual curriculum, to ensure consistent orientation, assimilation and training. A trainer whose only focus was new employees removed this role from in-place production workers, allowing them to concentrate on their primary responsibilities, improving both output and morale. The trainer is able to observe trainees, providing direction and evaluation as they complete work tasks.

The training center concept is forward-thinking within the foundry industry. WAF brought in leaders from multiple areas of the company – operations, safety and purchasing – to ensure buy-in. Similarly, it implemented modern technology to its hiring process, utilizing geofencing to recruit and target diverse populations.

The dedicated training center and bilingual curriculum resulted in more effecting training outcomes and a learning environment where employees are taught foundry basics, finishing/production skills, and reading/understanding bilingual customer specifications/process sheets, plus are acclimated to the physically strenuous jobs.

After the first year, WAF’s turnover rate was reduced by 55%. New-hire data showed positive results; company diversity was greatly improved.

The company’s key metrics also showed improved results. On-time delivery increased to 82% due to the resulting increase in the number of finishing laborers. Finishing labor costs meanwhile decreased 27% due to a reduction in overtime costs. The average cost per new hire also was reduced by \$6,000.

“We are deeply honored and grateful to receive this award,” says Sachin Shivaram, CEO of Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry. “The story of our company truly could not have happened anywhere else. The hard-working people of this community, outstanding educational institutions, and the highly collaborative business ecosystem around us are the true reasons behind our success. We hope that by creating a compelling place to work, we can bring new talent to the region that will help all of us achieve continued growth.”

Organizations located within the New North were qualified for the award. Companies did not need to be headquartered in New North for eligibility, but were required to have a division or location within the region.

Recent winners of the New North Workplace Excellence Award include J. F. Ahern Co. (2022); Wipfli (2020-21); Integrity Insurance (2019); Schneider (2018); American Transmission Company, Expera Specialty Solutions and Werner Electric (2017), Foth (2016), Oshkosh Corp. (2015); and U.S. Venture, Inc. (2014).

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#### **About New North, Inc.**

New North, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara. [www.thenewnorth.com](http://www.thenewnorth.com)

**New North media contact:** Jeff Blumb, 920.328.5454 or [media@blumbcc.com](mailto:media@blumbcc.com)

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**About CLA**

CLA exists to create opportunities for our clients, our people and our communities through industry-focused wealth advisory, digital, audit, tax, consulting, and outsourcing services. With more than 8,500 people, nearly 130 U.S. locations and a global vision, we promise to know you and help you.

**CLA media contact:** Cameron Potts, Managing Director of Public Relations and Internal Communications, 651.233.7735 or [cameron.potts@claconnect.com](mailto:cameron.potts@claconnect.com)

**About Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry**

Founded in 1909, Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry is a family-owned company, serving a wide variety of industries by providing high-quality aluminum- and copper-based alloy castings. Its Manitowoc facilities, including its foundry and machine-shop divisions, employ more than 450 team members. For more information, visit [www.wafco.com](http://www.wafco.com).

**Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry media contact:** Michelle Szymik, Vice President-Human Resources, 920.686.2757 or [mszymik@wafco.com](mailto:mszymik@wafco.com)

**About Keystone Partners**

Keystone Partners is a global Leadership Development, Executive Coaching and Career Transition firm. Keystone helps organizations win top talent, deepen critical skills, empower leaders, transform culture and thrive amidst change.

**Keystone Partners media contact:** Lisa Smith, MEd, Senior Partner-Leadership Development, 920.284.8326 or [lsmith@keystonepartners.com](mailto:lsmith@keystonepartners.com)