

Explore our History

The people behind GreenShield — founders, pioneers and leaders whose vision built North America's first prepaid drug plan and a legacy of Better Health for All.

Legacy Profiles

Select 3rd floor meeting rooms honour someone who played an important role in GreenShield's story. Click a name below to learn more about them and their impact in shaping our legacy.

GREENSHIELD FOUNDER

- **William Wilkinson**
Founder & 1st President/CEO
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FOUNDING INVESTORS

- | | |
|---|---|
| → Jack McGaffey
Founding investor | → Thomas Moffat
Founding investor |
| → George Thompson
Founding investor | → Kenneth Wiley
Founding investor |
-

FIRST EMPLOYEES

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| → Edna Stowe
First employee | → Murray Featherston
Second employee |
|---------------------------------------|--|
-

KEY PARTNERS

- | | |
|--|---|
| → Charles Brooks
UAW Local 444 President | → Richard & Geoff Walker
Founding counsel / legal architect |
|--|---|
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PAST LEADERS

- | | |
|---|---|
| → Walter Austen
2nd President & CEO | → Wayne Banwell
3rd President & CEO |
| → David Garner
4th President & CEO | → Steve Bradie
5th President & CEO |
-

GREENSHIELD FOUNDER



William Wilkinson

FOUNDER

1st President (1957–1979) · 1st CEO (1957–1982) · Chairman (1957–1984)

IMPACT

As a Windsor pharmacist, William Wilkinson saw firsthand the impossible choices families faced. When a mother went without her own medication to afford her daughter's, he knew there had to be a better way. At his kitchen table, he envisioned North America's first prepaid drug plan — laying the foundation for what would become GreenShield, established as a non-profit from the start to advance Better Health for All.

INTERESTING FACT

The "GreenShield" name (originally two words) was Bill's idea. He coined it in October 1959 while watching a Royal Parade for Queen Elizabeth from his drug store with the Dean of Pharmacy at Wayne State University. Green for the trim on graduating pharmacy students' robes.

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FOUNDING INVESTORS



Jack McGaffey

Founding investor (1957) · Emeritus Director

IMPACT

One of four founding pharmacists who joined William Wilkinson in early 1956, he contributed \$150 toward the initial \$750 in seed funding that enabled the July 1957 incorporation of Prescription Services Inc. — the original name of GreenShield and North America's first prepaid drug plan, established as a non-profit.

INTERESTING FACT

Jack owned McGaffey Drugs in Windsor. A pharmacy bearing his name still operates on Tecumseh Road East.

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Thomas Moffat

Founding investor (1957) · Emeritus Director

IMPACT

One of four founding pharmacists who joined William Wilkinson in early 1956, he contributed \$150 toward the initial \$750 in seed funding that enabled the July 1957 incorporation of Prescription Services Inc. — the original name of GreenShield and North America's first prepaid drug plan, established as a non-profit.

INTERESTING FACT

He practised pharmacy in Amherstburg, a small Essex County town on the shore of the Detroit River.

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George Thompson

Founding investor (1957) · Emeritus Director

IMPACT

One of four founding pharmacists who joined William Wilkinson in early 1956, he contributed \$150 toward the initial \$750 in seed funding that enabled the July 1957 incorporation of Prescription Services Inc. — the original name of GreenShield and North America's first prepaid drug plan, established as a non-profit.

INTERESTING FACT

George ran Thompson Pharmacy in Windsor's east end. At only 33 in 1956, he was the youngest of the four investing pharmacists.

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Kenneth Wiley

Founding investor (1957) · Emeritus Director

IMPACT

One of four founding pharmacists who joined William Wilkinson in early 1956, he contributed \$150 toward the initial \$750 in seed funding that enabled the July 1957 incorporation of Prescription Services Inc. — the original name of GreenShield and North America's first prepaid drug plan, established as a non-profit.

INTERESTING FACT

Ken ran his own pharmacy in Windsor. Alongside William Wilkinson, he was also a founding director of the Ontario Association for the Control of Accidental Poisoning, helping champion the adoption of child-resistant medicine caps across Canada.

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FIRST EMPLOYEES



Edna Stowe

First employee (hired January 1958)

IMPACT

As William Wilkinson's "Gal Friday," Edna ran the day-to-day operations that kept the new company solvent through its first uncertain years, when many were still skeptical that prepaid drug coverage could ever work.

INTERESTING FACT

Edna had retired from a career as a federal government secretary in Ottawa and moved to Windsor to be near her brother, her sole remaining family. Wilkinson hired her out of retirement to be the company's first staff member.

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Murray Featherston

Second employee (hired 1958)

IMPACT

A former Ford Motor Company employee and United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 240 executive, "Cap" opened doors at union halls across Windsor and Essex County. His connections led to GreenShield's first major union breakthrough in 1959 — signing up UAW Local 444 retirees and their spouses and helping scale prepaid drug coverage across Canada's auto sector.

INTERESTING FACT

Cap found GreenShield through a newspaper ad. After losing his Ford job for organizing fellow office workers into the UAW and seeing a business venture with his son fail, he was down on his luck when he applied.

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KEY PARTNERS



Charles Brooks

President, UAW Local 444 (1956–1977)

IMPACT

Charlie was GreenShield's most influential union partner. After supporting the 1959 enrollment of Local 444 retirees, he negotiated full GreenShield coverage for Chrysler's hourly workers as part of the 1964 strike settlement — extending prescription drug coverage to thousands of autoworkers and their families and accelerating GreenShield's growth.

INTERESTING FACT

Charlie's influence in Windsor extended well beyond labour. He founded Canada's first industrial credit union and led the Cooperative Dwellings Association, helping expand access to fair banking and affordable housing for working families.

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Richard & Geoff Walker

Founding counsel · Chairman (1984–1994) / Legislative architect

IMPACT

Richard "Dick" Walker was a Windsor lawyer, GreenShield's founding counsel in 1957, a board member from the mid-1960s, and Chairman of the Board from 1984 to 1994. His son, Geoff Walker, led the effort to secure federal legislation in 1992 — the Green Shield Canada Act — establishing the legal framework that governed GreenShield for over thirty years.

INTERESTING FACT

In the 1960s, Dick appeared alongside William Wilkinson on *Opinions Unlimited*, a CKLW radio panel where Windsor's civic leaders debated major issues of the day.

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PAST LEADERS



Walter Austen

2nd President (1979–1994) · 2nd CEO (1982–1994)

IMPACT

Walter joined GreenShield as Vice-President in 1972 and led the organization for more than a decade through a period of significant modernization. Under his leadership, GreenShield introduced its first online claims adjudication system — an industry first — shifting from paper-based submissions to real-time processing.

INTERESTING FACT

Before joining GreenShield, Walter spent eight years as Controller at Windsor Medical Services Inc., the doctor-sponsored prepaid medical plan that influenced GreenShield's early model.

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Wayne Banwell

3rd President & CEO (1994–2005)

IMPACT

Wayne joined GreenShield in 1982 and rose through the organization before succeeding Walter Austen as CEO. Under his leadership, GreenShield expanded its white-label claims adjudication business and accelerated the development of the Advantage system — GreenShield's automated, rules-based benefits management platform.

INTERESTING FACT

Before GreenShield, Wayne spent many years at Chrysler Canada. That made his arrival feel full circle: Chrysler workers were GreenShield's first major union breakthrough back in 1959, secured through Charlie Brooks and UAW Local 444.

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David Garner

4th President & CEO (2005–2009)

IMPACT

Dave joined GreenShield in 1990 in a marketing leadership role and, over nearly two decades, rose to lead the organization. As CEO, he guided GreenShield through a period of economic uncertainty, including the onset of the 2008 financial crisis.

INTERESTING FACT

Following his time at GreenShield, Dave served as chair of the board of Hope Air, a Canadian charity that provides flights for patients who need to travel for medical care but cannot afford to do so.

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Steve Bradie

5th President & CEO (2009–2018)

IMPACT

Steve led GreenShield through a period of stability and operational discipline, strengthening its core business and governance foundation following the 2008 financial crisis. During his nine years as President and CEO, the company's revenues doubled and its employee base grew from 550 to more than 900.

INTERESTING FACT

Steve spent 30 years at GreenShield, building his career within the organization and becoming part of a generation of leaders who carried its knowledge, culture and values forward across decades of change.

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