



changing  
*the face of*  
**aging**



# Dear Oasis Friends,

*“Do you mind if I ask your age?”*

It’s a question that reveals one of the most misunderstood aspects of our self-presentation to others: the arbitrary number that reveals when we arrived on the planet. Some embrace it with gusto and enthusiasm, others with wisdom and introspection, but an alarming majority of us often assign shame, self-doubt and dread about chronological age.

Growing older is universally shared. Being authentic and emotionally unburdened about the number that represents our age, while embracing in full measure the opportunities we have before us, is liberating and can affect real change for ourselves and the communities in which we live.

How different might things be if we agree to make a radical shift in the way we describe people? What if instead of labels that reflect how long we’ve been around—*older adult, senior, elder*—we choose to lead with language that captures what we’re doing now and what we want to do in the future—*volunteer, artist, enthusiast, activist, friend and mentor*?

This is what I love about Oasis and the powerful work we do nationwide to celebrate and encourage adults who are learning, growing and changing the narrative about getting older. We’ve been changing the face of aging for over 35 years, and I hope when Oasis is 70 we will look at what we’ve accomplished, be proud of the wisdom we’ve earned and maintain a humble optimism about what we’re going to learn and accomplish as an organization in the years ahead. I’m proud of this journey, and so thankful for the people who support Oasis and the older adults who share it with us.

Warmly,  
**Paul Weiss, PhD**  
President  
The Oasis Institute

There are abundant reasons to go back to school. We can learn a new skill, broaden our knowledge base or add to our resumés.

Research shows that participation in ongoing learning opportunities may help you live longer and better. It is part of a broader approach called “active aging.” The World Health Organization defines this as “the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.” Does that sound familiar?

While technically not a “school,” Rochester Oasis provides opportunities for lifelong learning and healthy living in a comfortable and inviting atmosphere.

We don’t see aging as a number, but as a time of opportunity for continued growth. The shared sense of community through new and renewed friendships can add to the quality of the experience as well.

At Rochester Oasis there is room for it all. Last year, we continued many of the exercise and wellness classes such as **NIA (Non-Impact Aerobics), Yoga, Tai Chi** and **Senior Spunk** that have become an important part of our overall health programming.

We are learning to “Break Up with Sugar” and “Age Well with Buff Bones.” And of course, we are expanding our lifelong learning offerings with new and exciting history, arts and humanities classes.

This coming year, we will continue to learn and grow as we broaden our horizons in an effort to reach out to even more people who are inspired to age actively with Rochester Oasis!

Best,  
**Ann Cunningham**  
Executive Director  
Rochester Oasis





# Inspiring Joy through Dance

It's hard to sit still watching the Oasis Tappers. Inevitably, the audience starts moving their feet and even singing along. There are lots of smiles, too. That's the Tappers working their magic and spreading joy.

"Being in front of people and seeing their reaction is what makes it special," says Kathlyn Greene, who dances with the Oasis Tappers. "My most memorable moment was seeing the faces of adults with dementia light up the minute the music started and watching them swaying and clapping along."

*"They all inspire me and teach me new things every day."*

Instructor Erika Atkinson directs and choreographs the Tappers, and has been with the program for 18 years. She teaches all levels of tap along with other dance classes at Rochester Oasis. "I have many participants who have danced since they were young, as well as students new to dance who have worked hard, persevered through their classes and are now part of Oasis Tappers," she says. "They all inspire me and teach me new things every day."

Rochester Oasis began offering tap dance twenty years ago, starting with a beginner class and the Tappers performance troupe. Tap has grown into a full-fledged program with multiple levels. The Tappers currently have 18 members, ranging in age from 62 to 101. To join requires at least intermediate level tap experience. The group practices and performs year-round at a variety of venues, including senior centers and public events throughout the Rochester area. A highlight for the group was taking the stage at the historic Geva Theatre.

Lois Amato has been dancing since she was five and also taught dance for many years. She says being part of Oasis Tappers is awesome. "It keeps you young," Lois says. "When you're learning the steps, you're doing it mentally as well as physically." Tapper Pat Klein also touts the health benefits and "the friendships and camaraderie. It's wonderful."

"The Tappers exemplify the three primary goals of Oasis: lifelong learning, healthy living and volunteerism," says Ann Cunningham, executive director of Rochester Oasis. "The dancers are always learning and practicing new routines, which requires mental focus. Of course, dance is a great way to keep fit. The mind-body connection is very important. And by going out into the community to share their talents, they are giving back."

Oasis Tapper Marion Fahy has been dancing for nearly nine decades. "It's been the biggest part of my life, since I was 12," she says. "I love it. I just can't give it up."



# Keep Moving for a Better Life

“Nothing makes me happier than helping older adults get moving,” says Nancy Alexander. “We need to keep physically active to have a better life!” As a licensed physical therapist and ACE certified senior fitness specialist, Nancy oversees and teaches classes for the **Buff Bones**® fitness program offered at Rochester Oasis. Designed to help adults achieve lifelong mobility, the program combines Pilates, strength training, functional movement and balance exercises that work together to improve bone and joint strength and longevity.

While it is normal to lose some bone mass as we age, the right exercises can strengthen bones and their supporting muscles, thereby reducing the likelihood of falls and resulting fractures.

Oasis offers introductory and advanced level **Buff Bones**® classes, as well as a chair-based class for those with less mobility. All three are popular and fill up quickly. Class sizes are small to allow for adequate space and personal attention.

“Nancy is great at explaining why we are doing a specific movement and what it is designed to work on,” says Cristine Scherline, who credits the program with making a huge improvement in her range of motion, which had been severely impacted by back pain. Pain, it turns out, is often what prevents many people from working out.

“I’ve had a lot of people in my classes tell me that they did not exercise in the past because it hurt too much,” adds Nancy. “As a physical therapist, I know how to easily modify some of the exercises based on a participant’s health history and current fitness level. Students love these classes because they can finally participate.”

*“I’m working to make my later years be my best [years]...”*

**Buff Bones**® classes have also benefited Jean Schafer, who reports improved strength and balance. “I especially like the variety of exercises we do in class,” adds Jean, who believes that Nancy’s enthusiasm is also what makes the program so popular.

Nancy is especially suited to her role with Oasis, bringing both professional and personal experience with her. In addition to 25 years working with older adults, she spent 18 years caring for her father who had dementia. She’s written a book about her experiences as a caregiver and continues to provide lectures, classes and workshops on topics about health and aging well.

*“I’m working to make my later years be my best, and I love inspiring others to do the same,” she says.*





# How Do You Say “Friend?”

Learning a new language is a great brain exercise at any age. But during foreign language classes offered at Rochester Oasis, something more is happening: communities of friends are formed.

“The majority have been here year after year, so there is a real sense of community,” says Spanish instructor Kristine Hannon. “Some have formed lasting friendships. What I love about teaching my adult students is that they are there because they want to be.”

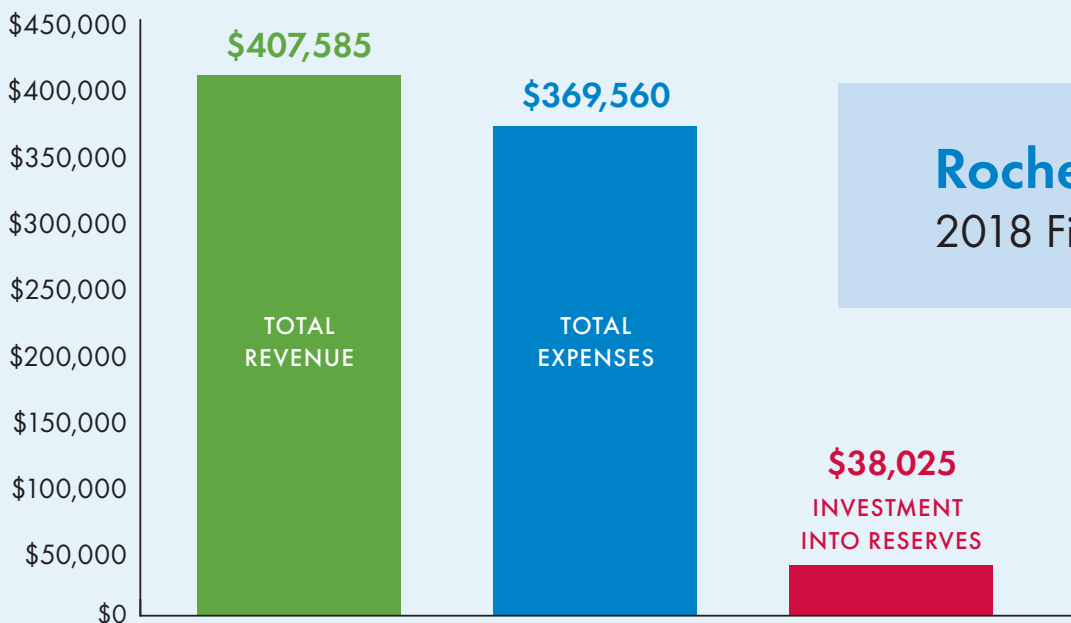
Oasis language students are enthusiastic learners. Some get together outside the classroom to practice, and many have planned trips abroad together to get real world experience. The Spanish and German classes end their semesters by visiting restaurants specializing in cuisine native to their language countries.

“Lessons are a perfect balance between learning grammar and highlighting culture,” says Connie Barrett, who has taken Spanish with her husband at Oasis for four years. “Kristine is an excellent teacher, and we look forward to seeing our classmates each week.”

Ingeborg Oberdörster has been teaching German at Oasis since 1989 and has watched many students advance from beginners to near fluency. “Those with close German relatives are thrilled to finally understand songs sung to them as children, and are spurred to further investigate their ancestry,” says Ingeborg.

Instructor Kevin Finnigan taught French and Latin in public middle and high schools for 40 years before teaching at Oasis. “Learning a new language at Oasis creates a bond among the students and with the instructor,” he says. “Teaching at Oasis keeps my hand in my academic fields and allows me to interact with lots of new folks, which I find enjoyable.”

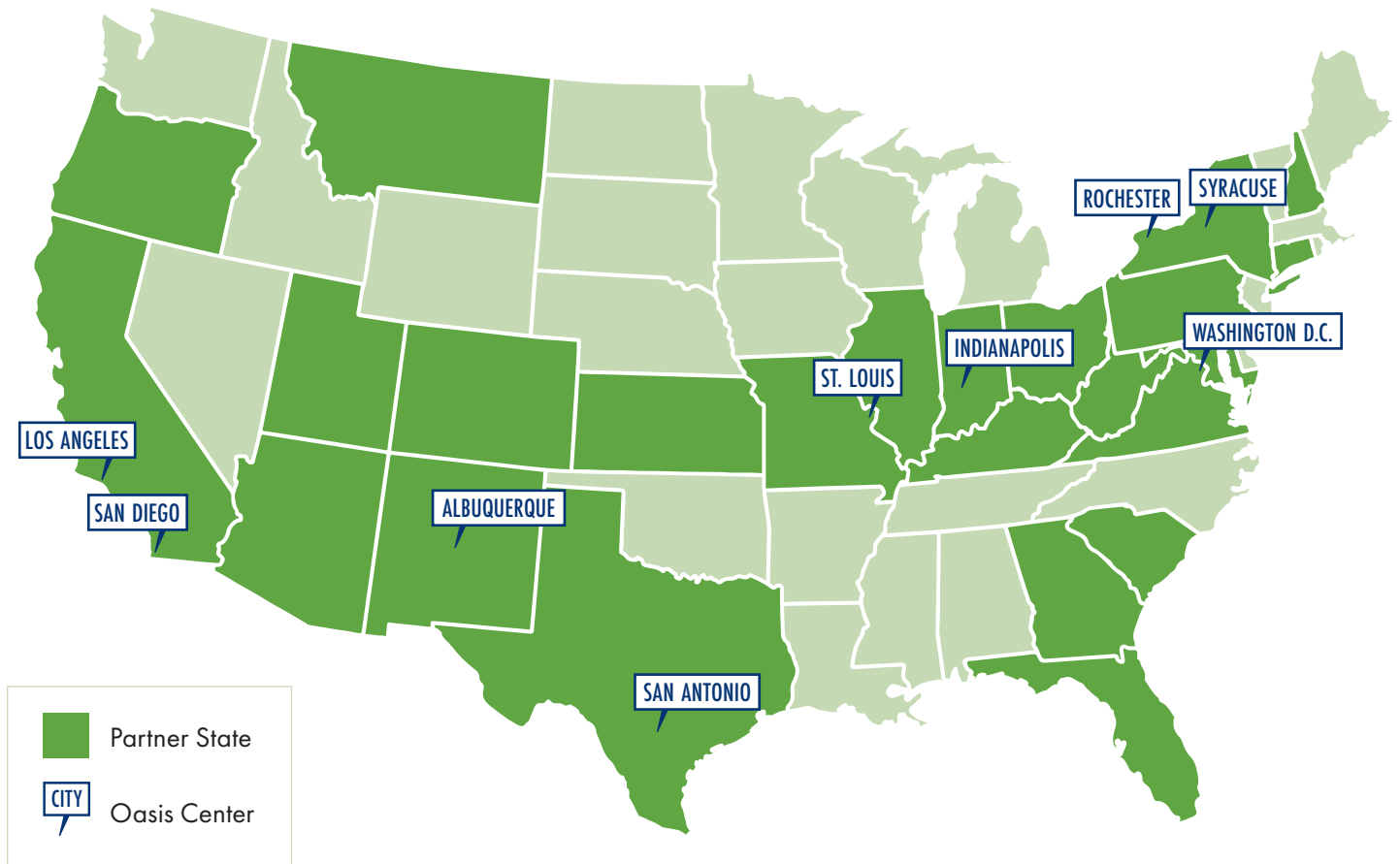
Foreign language classes are part of robust lifelong learning programs offered by Rochester Oasis that include a wide variety of classes in the arts, literature, history and current events.



## Rochester Oasis 2018 Financial Snapshot

# National Impact in 2018

A national education organization, Oasis reaches a broad audience in more than **250 communities** through **nine education centers** and a national network of over **700 partners** in **23 states**. And we're growing!



**4,000**  
tutors



**6,100**  
volunteers



**630**  
schools



**52,000**  
participants



**332,000**  
volunteer hours



**140,000**  
class enrollments

# Growing Population, Growing Opportunity

Americans older than 65 by 2035 will be in good company. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the year represents a turning point: for the first time in U.S. history, people 65+ are projected to outnumber children. While it's critical to address the many challenges that this demographic shift will present, it is just as important to recognize the opportunity that exists when such a large group of people are healthy, active and empowered to be the answer to many of society's most pressing needs.

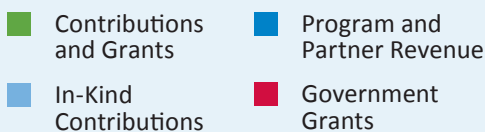
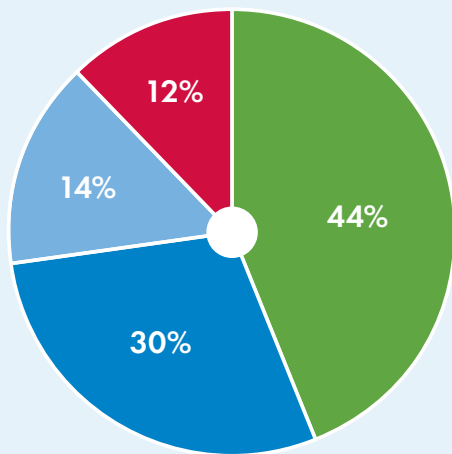
Since 1982, Oasis has inspired thousands of older adults through programs that encourage lifelong learning, active lifestyles and volunteer engagement. In 2018, 95 percent of participants surveyed indicated they recommend Oasis to friends. Here's why:

- > **To learn something new and connect with others.** Oasis lifelong learning classes in the arts and humanities, as well as **Oasis Connections**, an award-winning technology literacy program, attract adults who are still ready to explore and know more.
- > **To stay active and healthy.** Older adults find fitness, stay on their feet and gain the know-how to make healthy choices with a wide variety of Oasis health and wellness programs nationwide.
- > **To give back to our communities.** Through Oasis, adults discover the joy of making an impact volunteering. Whether working one-on-one with children through the **Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring** program or serving as class instructors and peer leaders, Oasis participants make a difference.

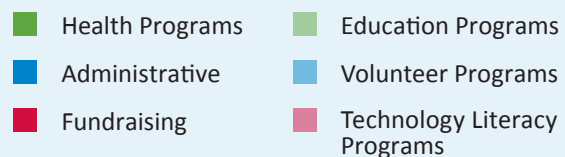
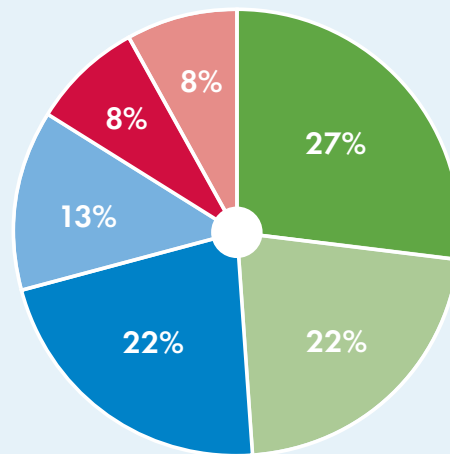
## 2018 Oasis Institute Statement of Activities

(Source: 2018 Consolidated Audit for FY Ended 12/31/18)

Support & Revenue – \$6.13 million



Expenses – \$7.24 million





# A Love of Learning Leads to Legacy Gift

Lizzie Bell was encouraged by a friend to check out Rochester Oasis in 2009. That was more than 150 classes ago and counting. A wide range of topics have piqued her interest, everything from watercolor painting to ballet to Medicare counseling to writing and journaling.

“I love to learn and have met so many lovely people who have traveled along similar life journeys as my own,” says Lizzie. “The varied subjects, the engaging instructors and the supportive people I know at Oasis helped me through some very difficult life challenges.”

She enjoyed taking classes so much, that Lizzie started leading some classes. A retired pastor, she has led classes in Qur’an, the Bible, the Gnostic Gospels and a book club. “There have been so many topics I always wanted to explore when I was younger, but I never had the time. Teaching helps me learn along with my students,” she says.

In 2018, Lizzie named Rochester Oasis in her will. “I am proud that Rochester has wonderful opportunities for growth, socialization, learning and physical activity,” says Lizzie. “I want to make sure these opportunities are here long after I am gone.”

## 2018 Rochester Oasis Sponsors

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Monroe County Office for the Aging

North Coast Radio WJZR

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**Mary Ann Wolfe**  
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**We offer programs throughout the community!**  
**To start your Oasis adventure, stop by, call or check us out online.**

### Rochester Oasis

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