

REIMAGINE



AGING



2019 Annual Report

GREETINGS FROM OASIS

For nearly 30 years, thousands of Hoosiers looking for opportunities to learn, grow and give back to the Indianapolis community have turned to Oasis.

In 2019, Oasis focused on expanding the reach of our programs throughout the Indianapolis metro area. We began offering multiple new lifelong learning classes as well as health, wellness and exercise programs in four new community-based locations. Our expansion has allowed us to broaden the impact and meet the needs of the growing older adult audience.

Our goal is to continue to make Oasis offerings more accessible and convenient for the entire community. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have worked to ensure continued programming for hundreds of older adults. We quickly transitioned Oasis lifelong learning programs to a virtual format and trained our audience on the utilization of new technology. While our method of delivery is much different than we originally envisioned, we quickly evolved to meet the needs of our constituents.

While we all miss the in-person contact, we are working hard to deliver quality programs that continue to enrich the lives of older adults.

As we make this transition together, we appreciate your patience and willingness to adapt. We are so thankful for your ongoing support during this time of uncertainty and for your continued trust in Oasis.



*Your Indy
Oasis Team*

As we look to the future, we reflect on the past. In 2019 every Oasis center experienced expansion in one way or another—class additions, tutoring growth, physical space, new participants, new partnerships, and new opportunities. Entering 2020 with significant momentum, seeds planted in 2019 were turning into green shoots. In March, COVID-19 changed everything, and Oasis swiftly pivoted in response.

When Oasis began shifting programs from in-person to online and via phone, participants quickly made the shift with us. Rather than conforming to stereotypes of older adults being averse to new technologies and change, I saw the exact opposite—Oasis participants embraced it, and we have been inspired by their resilience.

As we navigate the “new normal” in the thick of a global pandemic, we beg the question, “what happens next?” We are compelled to reprioritize and express our mission differently to meet unanticipated needs. Experts paint an altered picture of how life-as-we-know-it will look post-pandemic. How will voluntary social distancing—or lack thereof, affect the lives of older adults? How can we protect the health of aging communities while simultaneously avoiding the adverse effects of social isolation?

Older adults are most at risk of severe complications from COVID-19. But, the dangers of loneliness are not new; our aging family members and neighbors were more likely to experience social isolation before the pandemic and will do so well after.

Let's unite and reimagine aging in a new climate with both new risks and new opportunities. Whether for yourself or an aging loved one, neighbor, friend—Oasis' mission applies to all of us. Aging is inevitable. The choices we make influence HOW we age, and the Oasis community learns, expands, moves, and adapts as we grow older. Although we can't be together in person for the time being, we hope to connect with you through our virtual programs and volunteer opportunities.

Every tomorrow is in the future, and with it a new opportunity to learn, build confidence, and grow. We at Oasis are here for you. Let's reimagine aging together.



Paul Weiss, PhD
President, The Oasis Institute

ALWAYS EXPANDING

Deb Persic is a recent retiree and avid Oasis participant. Her husband, Dave, was a tutor in the Indianapolis Public Schools through Oasis. **“When we first received a course catalog in the mail, I picked it up and thought, ‘wow!’ I had heard of Oasis but was not yet retired.** In the workforce, I took continuing education classes, so after retiring, I wanted more. I take courses all over the city, including YMCA locations. **I made a commitment to myself upon retirement to continue learning. There’s a quote that always resonated with me, ‘When you’re through changing, you’re through.’ by Bruce Barton.”** Deb insists that she is not through changing!

Deb talks about the number of classes she takes at Oasis. **“My shopping basket becomes quite full when the catalog is released each trimester!”** She enjoys taking classes on healthy aging, self-help, cooking, technology and photography. She especially loves classes that take her on interesting trips, and ones presented by notable guest speakers in her community. Deb’s active involvement in a variety of classes and locations led her to join the program committee. **“We have a class wish list from a brainstorm of ideas. We’re always trying to ‘step out of the box’ and acquire new speakers.”** One instructor, Dr. Pierre Atlas from Marian University, is well-educated on the constitution. “He gave a phenomenal presentation on the Second Amendment. I think it’s important to hear views on more than one side of a discussion. I would like to see more programs that challenge us to do so.”

Deb had an idea to approach the owner of a popular, new upscale restaurant in town. “I wanted to see if we could partner with the restaurant to develop an affordable class for seniors.” They agreed! Before the pandemic, they were working

together with the pastry chef on a class called “How to Make the Perfect Cake”. Also, there were plans for a test kitchen session within Fishers, including different chefs, cuisines, and a presentation on how the “Yard” got started, as well as plans for the future.

On the topic of how Oasis has changed and grown, Deb talks about program director, Angela Pellman, and what a wonderful job she’s done transitioning. She says Angela worked with Mary Dorney, the previous director, for quite some time before she retired, allowing her to maintain progress made by her predecessor while incorporating new ideas to make programs even better. **“Indy Oasis has had its fair share of challenges accommodating older adults in an ever-changing world. Angela reaches out to Oasis participants often to keep everyone informed about Zoom classes during the pandemic.”** Deb also praised the team of Oasis volunteers who keep things running.

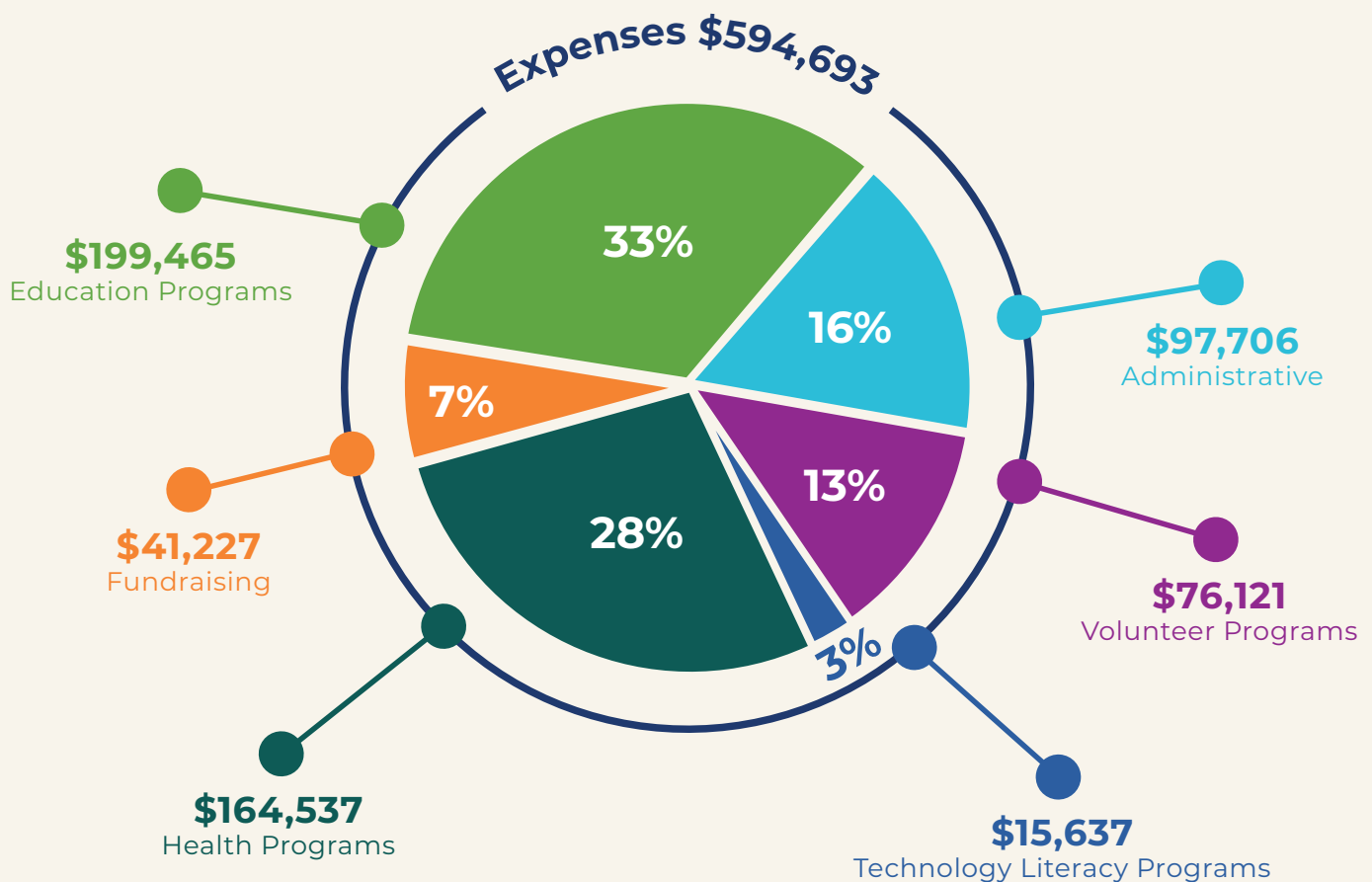
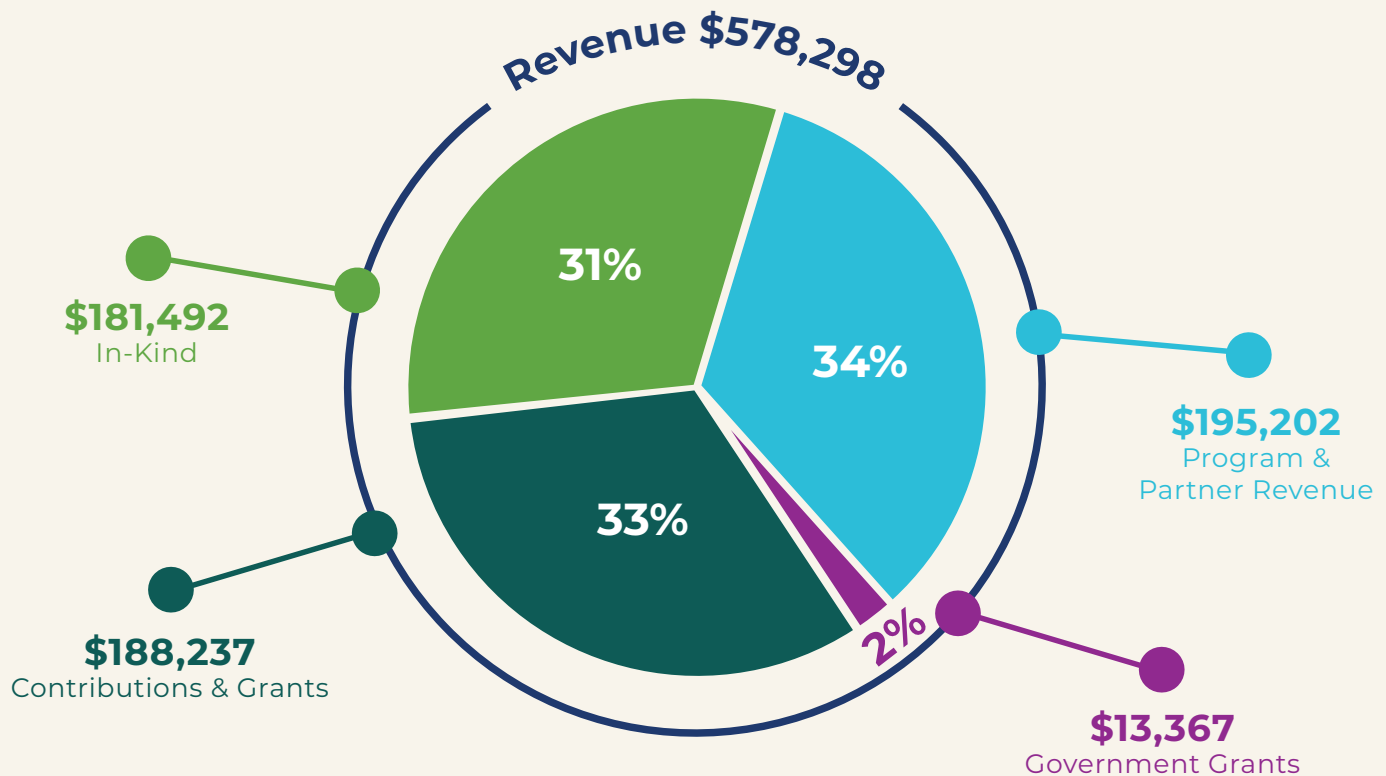
On reimagining aging, Deb believes Oasis helps older adults step away from the “sitting in a rocking chair” stereotype. **“Seniors possess a plethora of knowledge and experience. Data shows if we remain physically and mentally active, we age gracefully. Oasis helps me to see that 65+ is the new 50. We must never stop learning/moving! It’s up to us to figure out how to reimagine aging.”**

Pictured: Deb Persic



INDIANAPOLIS OASIS

2019 Financial Snapshot



Source: 2019 Financial Review

OASIS TUTORING KNOWS NO AGE

Tom Foster is no stranger to working with people. During his time in the Army and throughout his professional career, he collaborated, supervised and provided service to people of all educational backgrounds ranging from those who hadn't finished high school all the way to those with Master's degrees. **Sixteen years ago, Tom learned about the Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring Program and decided to volunteer so that he could get back to doing what he loves—working with people.** Even if they were much younger than he was accustomed to working with in the past. Tom says working with kids is his favorite, because they are the most fun.

Since 2004, Tom estimates that he has worked with about 20 kids at Westwood Elementary School in the Greenwood School District. **“One of the students I worked with several years ago had a lot of learning to do, but he worked hard and was a bulldog when you gave him something to do,”** says Tom.

He shared that **when students learn to read, it opens up a whole new world for them and expands their imagination.** He noted that learning literacy skills is important, but in addition to reading, some of the students he worked with

over the years (and their siblings) just needed someone to tell them they are loved and have people in their lives who care about them.

“Most of the children work pretty well with me, but some have a lot of things going against them. Each has a unique personality and you have to take a different approach with how your work with each individual.”

As Tom approaches his 96th birthday, he says he is glad he found the program. **“I am just a big kid at heart anyway. I enjoy the kids I have worked with and I hope I have helped them in some small way.”** Tom is one of more than 300 tutors in the Indianapolis area.

Pictured: Tom Foster



NATIONAL IMPACT

2019 *Basis Institute*

5,900
Volunteers

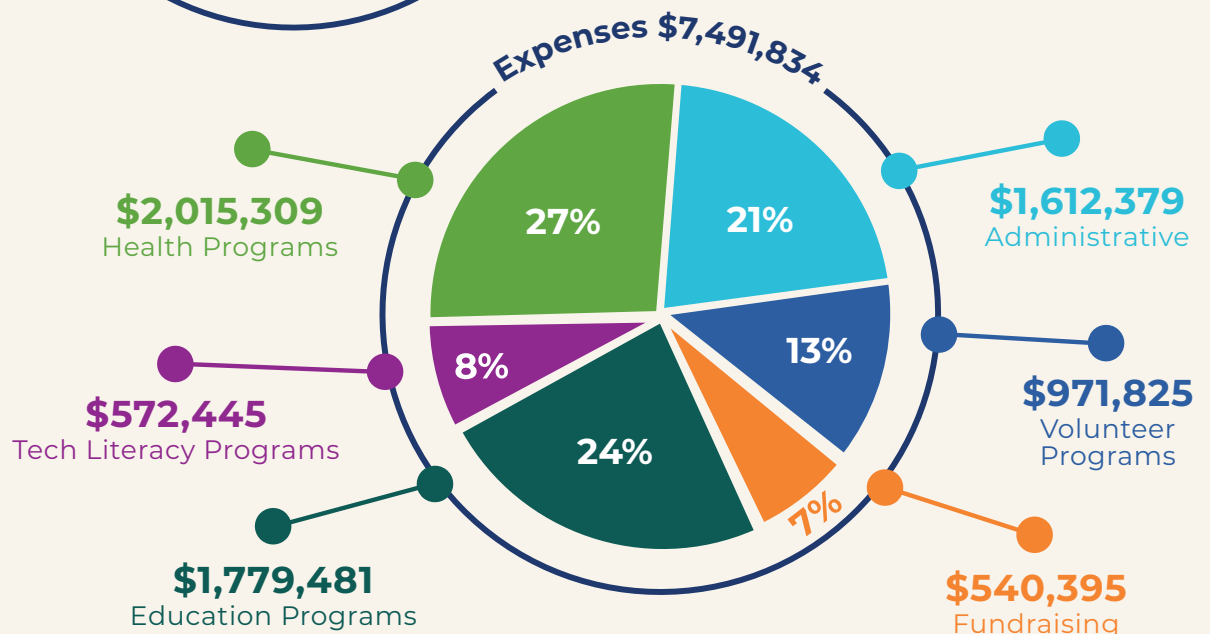
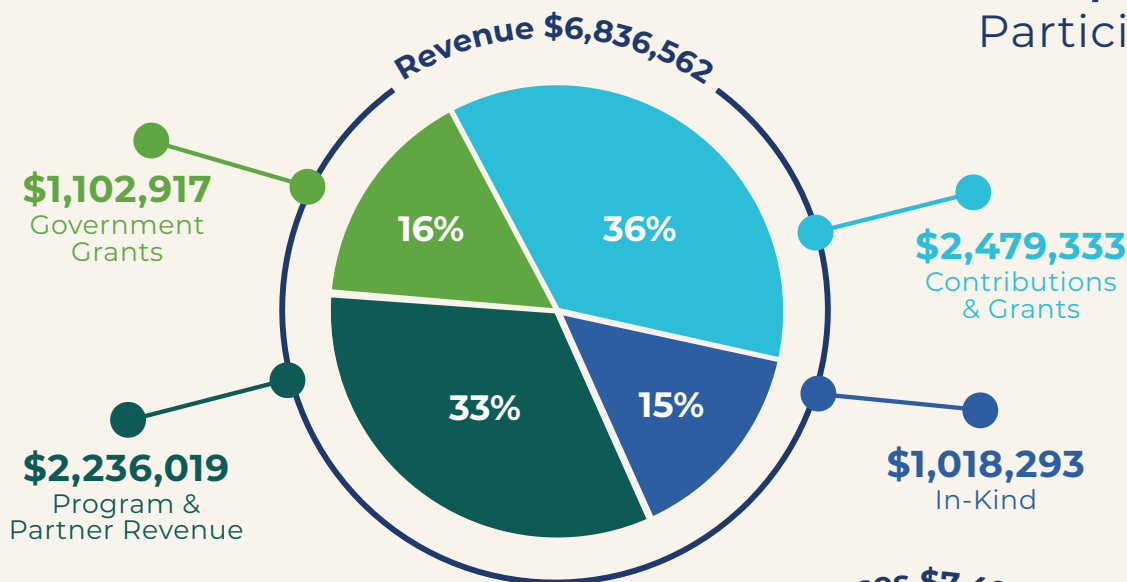
147,500
Class Enrollments

643
Schools

408,000
Volunteer Hours

4,500
Tutors

49,400
Participants



Source: 2019
Consolidated
Financial Audit

MOVING INTO NEW SPACES

In 2019, Indianapolis Oasis experienced growth.

Through new and expanded partnerships with the Healthplex and the YMCA, Indy Oasis began offering classes in several additional locations throughout the city. New locations have led to both program growth and increased participant reach.

“I think it’s great to have more locations throughout the community so people don’t have so far to drive. It’s smart to have the classes spread out,” says Dorothy Suther, who has taken nearly 200 classes with Oasis. Dorothy shared her enthusiasm for combing through Oasis catalogs, marking classes of interest with paperclips and narrowing down from there.

“When you get older, you can feel invisible. It’s very easy to withdraw. Going to Oasis made me realize I can stay involved. It’s gotten me out of my little bubble and keeps me connected to the wider world.” She says a memorable program she attended last fall was held at the new Healthplex location and featured Judge Robert Wilkins. Wilkins is an Indiana native who spoke on his remarkable journey becoming a federal judge and his role in establishing the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (opened in September 2016 on the National Mall).

Judge Wilkins was recruited for the Oasis program by Nancy Busk, Oasis board member and volunteer with the Oasis programming committee. As Indianapolis Oasis expanded throughout the community, it also wanted to expand the types of programs that were being offered to its members. Nancy and several other Oasis participants are part of the programming committee who help plan speakers for Oasis.

“I believe the expansion of Oasis is extremely important because it benefits not only older adults, but also our city, which is full of communities that thrive on arts and humanities, current events, and discussion groups,” says Nancy. She recalls hearing about Oasis in the 90’s and regrets not taking advantage for her mother- and father-in-law when they moved to the area in 2004. She remarks, **“They had a good five or six years of driving and getting themselves around and would have loved Oasis.” Today she regularly encourages her friends to invite their parents to participate.**

Oasis participants and volunteers have enjoyed the recent expansion, but Oasis’ local partners also recognize the benefits. Ellie Schmink, District Vice President for the YMCA says, **“The YMCA has a strong commitment to serve our senior population. In some of our centers it is the safest place seniors have to socialize. Oasis allows the Y to offer a wider range of programming that draws a broader senior base.”** Ellie noted that after the YMCA fully opens again, there are plans to add two more centers for Oasis programming.

Although in-person classes were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, Oasis volunteers handmade more than 500 masks for Y staff. **“Oasis has allowed us to help keep our staff safe while serving our community,”** says Ellie.

Indianapolis Oasis looks forward to its continued expansion throughout the community.

Pictured: Oasis class



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To reimagine aging with Oasis, call or check us out online.

10800 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46229

317.396.3751 | oasisindy.org

