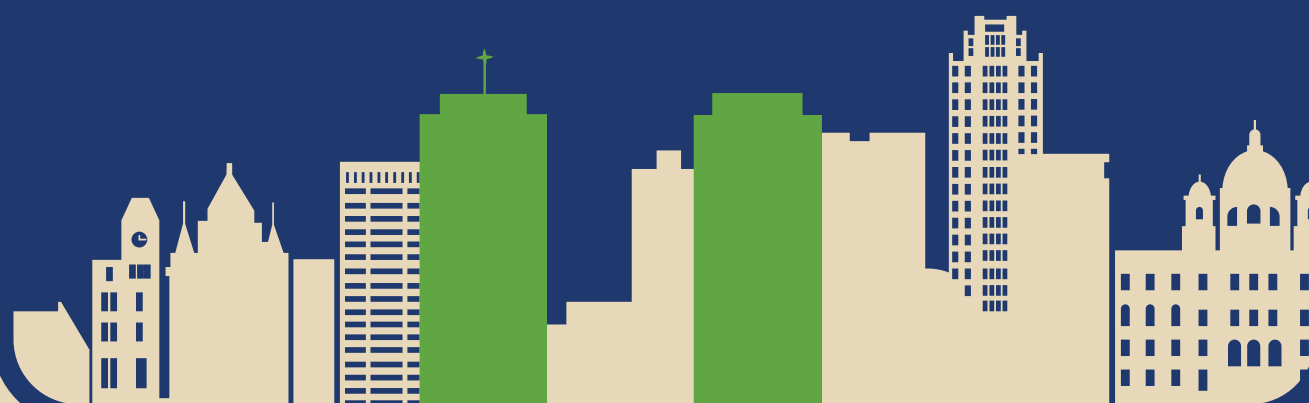


REIMAGINE



AGING



2019 Annual Report

GREETINGS FROM OASIS

As you can see from this report, 2019 was a year of progress and transition for Upstate Oasis. We welcomed another 849 members. We offered 495 classes—17 more than the year prior! We embraced new partnerships in the community adding 4 new program sites. We increased our tutoring outreach as we added another new district; we also increased programming in underserved areas of our community as we partnered with the Salvation Army. More people live their best lives while managing their chronic conditions through our evidence-based health programming, and we welcomed the newest member of our team, Jennifer Michella, our Program and Volunteer Manager. All of this progress has inspired a 13% increase in gifts from our donors in 2019, for which we are grateful.

The work we do at Upstate Oasis is powerful! Its impact is felt locally and nationally as we work toward changing the narrative about getting older. As “social distance” becomes the new descriptor for 2020, we will continue to transition our Upstate Oasis programming in a way that will keep our members—those valued older adults in our community who may be at highest risk for COVID-19 complications—safe as they participate in Oasis classes and continue to remain resilient in their efforts to stay engaged and active.

The future may look different, but Oasis has been changing the face of aging for nearly 40 years, and I’m proud to be on this journey with so many of you. I am thankful for all those who support older adults, and I look forward with humble optimism to all that we can accomplish together.



Cynthia Woods

Executive Director
Upstate Oasis

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

EXPANDING WELLNESS

Retired at age 55 after 31 years working for the state of New York, Linda Fabian Goodrich was looking for something more. Linda had a busy career that included training and working as a loan executive for the United Way. After the first month of retirement spent cleaning closets, she was ready to do more and give back to the community.

Linda received an email from Oasis, advertising a position for an instructor, that aligned with her previous role of training. **"When you retire, you have to remake your identity, and Oasis offered me a wonderful outlet. It is good to be involved again and share knowledge with others."** Linda enjoys her role with Oasis as a facilitator for Tai Chi and Chronic Pain Management. **"Adding Chronic Pain Management classes has proven helpful to many Syracuse participants who may have been impacted in some way by the opioid crisis."**

Linda notes, "Due to public awareness of opioids, there is an interest in new solutions for dealing with pain. Older adults want to remain ambulatory, and actively participate in life."

Charles Anderson, a retired school district truant officer, and now the Health and Wellness Committee Chairman for 100 Black Men of Syracuse, Inc., is a student of Linda's. He collaborates with community organizations to promote health prevention and awareness. He participates with other 100 Black Men of Syracuse, Inc. members in Oasis Tai Chi classes. **Tai Chi was an activity he enjoyed years ago, so when the opportunity presented**

itself, Charles said, "I jumped at it." Charles says, **"Linda encourages us to go at our own pace. She's very patient, making sure each member of the class is comfortable."** He continued, "I enjoy the movements and the exercise. The class challenges me. It makes me concentrate on the steps and the order. Tai Chi's focus on balance helps quite a bit—as you age, balance becomes very important."

Charles says, "Once we moved to Zoom classes, it was a little different. **There is great value to the virtual classes. It comes right into your living room. I was thankful we could continue. There is something about being with your friends in person, but if you cannot, it's helpful to see friends and talk after class—virtually.**"

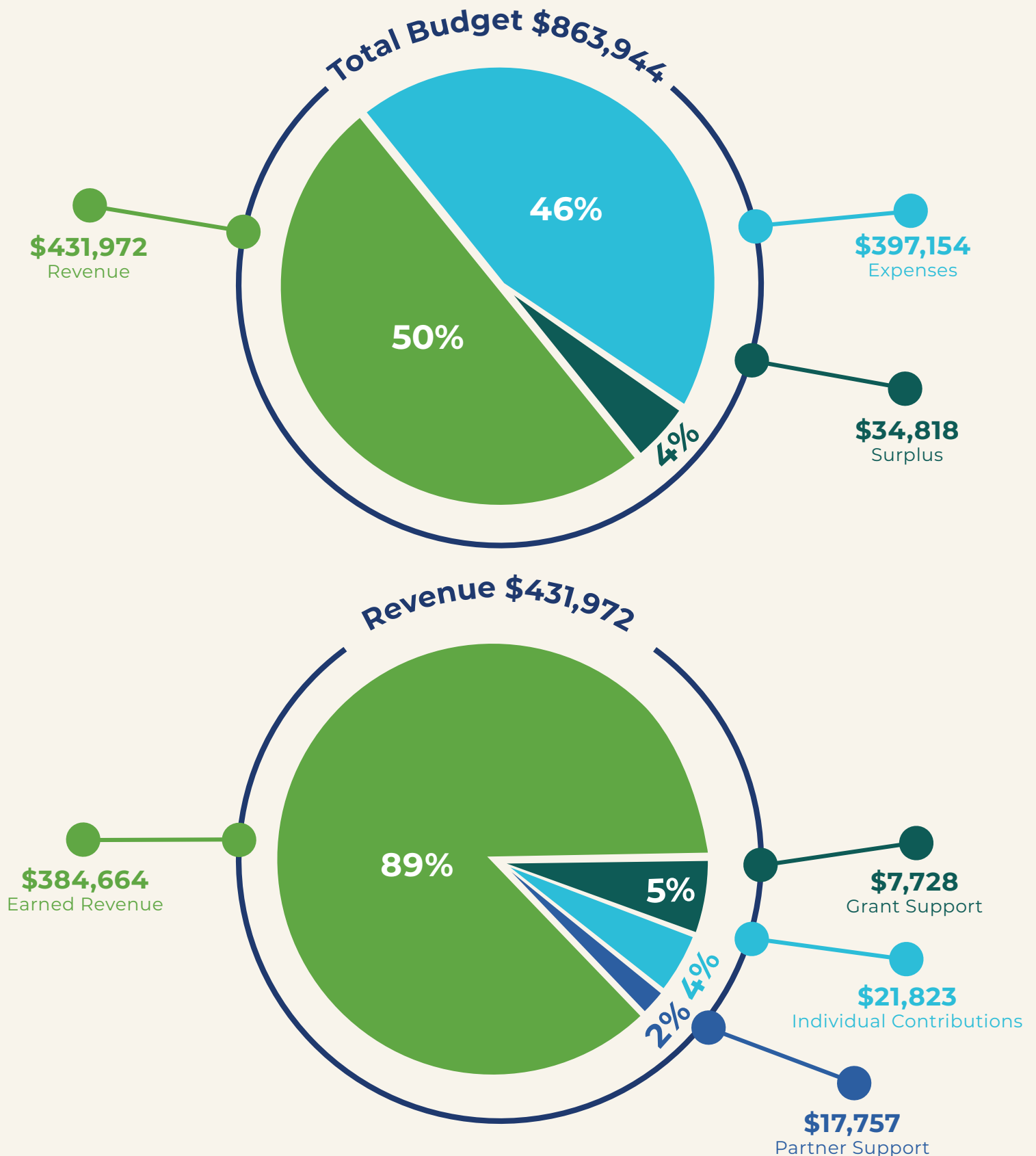
Linda also recognizes benefits of transitioning Tai Chi for Arthritis to a virtual setting. "We had wonderful participation for the in-person class, that transferred seamlessly to virtual. We opened the Zoom calls early and left them open for socializing after the class. The virtual classes are great for fostering a sense of community, which alleviates isolation and depression. **Friendships are forged. In that regard the programs are at times lifesaving,**" explains Linda. Charles and Linda see virtual classes as a new way for Oasis to reach even more of the community.

Pictured: Far Left, Linda Fabian Goodrich; Bottom Right, Charles Anderson



UPSTATE OASIS

2019 Financial Snapshot



Note: Excludes \$404,261 of in-kind support from Upstate Medical University and endowment funds totaling \$246,980

SPEAKING SPANISH

When former high school Spanish teacher Carol Stark joined Upstate Oasis as a Spanish instructor she didn't anticipate she would still be teaching classes brimming with students 18 years later. The popularity of Carol's classes has a lot to do with her teaching style. Whether it's a beginning, intermediate or advanced class, Carol uses creativity to provide solid practical knowledge for her students—all in Spanish. For one beginner class, she prepared her students for travel using mock passports and introduced them to Spanish vocabulary they would need for a trip—including going through customs.

Carol's own extensive travel experience as an exchange student in Callao, Peru, and then graduate school in Spain, set the stage for her love of the language and various cultures. **"Teaching classes brings me great joy and keeps me engaged."** Carol shares that her students are inspiring. **"It's uplifting to see students in class such as a lovely 91-year-old man who is very sharp, loves learning and traveling and brings joy out in others."** My students are very lively, demonstrating that you can continue learning and be active throughout your entire life. I learn as much from the students as they do from me."

Julia Harris has been taking Carol's Oasis Spanish Classes since 2002.

She was always interested in taking Spanish, so when she received an Oasis catalog in the mail, she signed up. She travels often with her husband and wanted to be able to communicate while in South America. Once while in Europe she stopped to speak to another tourist, and discovered their common language was Spanish—despite not being in a Spanish speaking country."

Julia has taken music, world history and world affairs Oasis classes and found all instructors to be "top notch." **But it's Carol's classes that keep her coming back. "Carol is a linchpin. She speaks Spanish like it's her native language. In Carol's class, we walk in with a smile, and leave with a smile. We laugh a lot. Carol makes us feel like we are part of a family. She makes learning easy and fun."**

Carol describes how quickly students bond over their mutual interests—learning another language, culture, and desire to travel. **"I often see participants forge friendships, even vacationing together."** Julia backs that observation saying, "An important part of Oasis programs are the people she has met along the way—many of whom have been part of Carol's Spanish classes for years." She describes her classmates as "bright, wonderful and well-read with diverse backgrounds." "I enjoy meeting people in my class, whom I never would have met outside of Oasis."

"When I reimagine aging, I think it's good for the soul to continue learning as you age. As Oasis offers virtual classes, there will be more opportunities for community outreach. I'm looking forward to serving more diverse communities," says Carol.

Pictured: Carol Stark



NATIONAL IMPACT

2019 *Basis Institute*

5,900
Volunteers

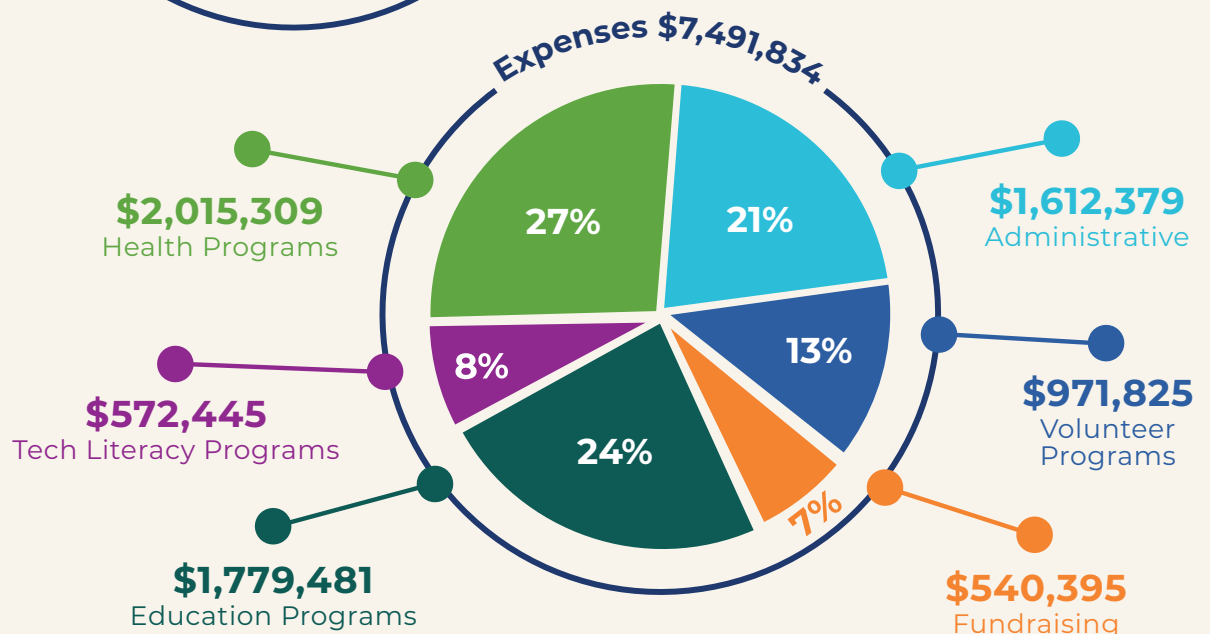
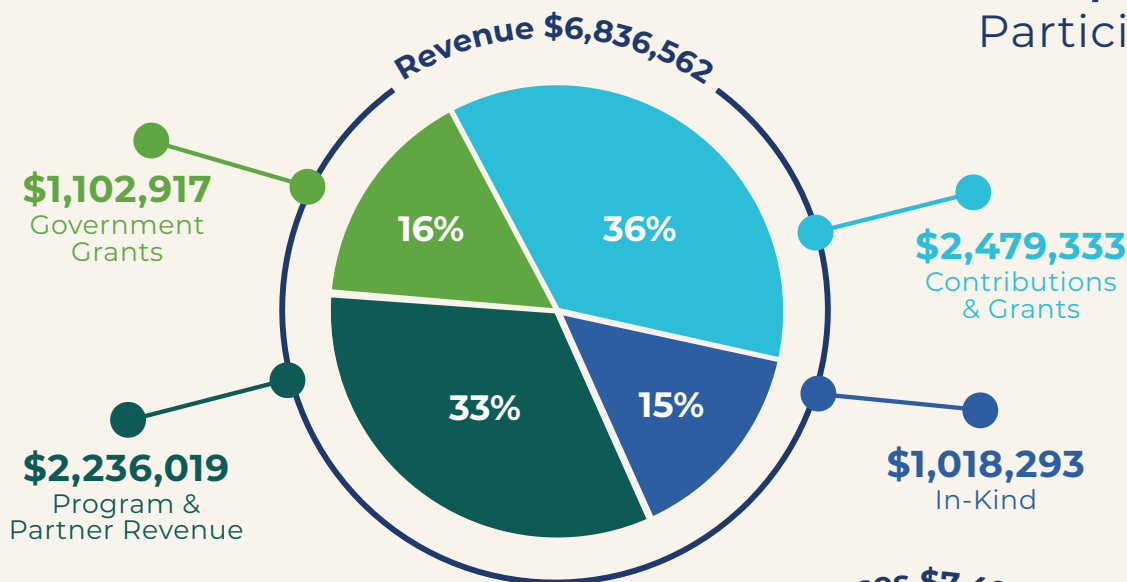
147,500
Class Enrollments

643
Schools

408,000
Volunteer Hours

4,500
Tutors

49,400
Participants



Source: 2019
Consolidated
Financial Audit

SUPPORTING EVERY STUDENT

“Reading is essential—I wanted to help kids read.” That is the reason Pat Fisher, who retired from managing a lab in the research department at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, became involved in the Oasis tutoring program. Six years ago, Pat, aware of issues in the city schools where her own children attended, decided the next step for her was to volunteer in an underserved school.

During her working years, Pat taught at the university level, raised three children, taught Sunday school and welcomed half of the neighborhood into her home. She did not, however, have experience teaching children with learning challenges. **“I realized how lucky my own kids were, when I see children come to school hungry, from homes with ‘family issues.’”** With so many obstacles stacked against them, it’s a struggle for them to focus on reading. “This is why I tutor,” she says. “The students find it very exciting when they learn how to read, and they love the one-on-one attention. They love to see their tutors.”

Pat tutors approximately a dozen students in grade levels first through third. She says each grade level presents different challenges, but notes, **“Oasis provides a great training program. Our tutoring contact is very accessible if we have an issue. There is a lot of connection with the tutors.”** Pat explains that the tutors have meetings once a month where they share and learn from each other’s experiences.

“Oasis does a wonderful job in the Syracuse schools, which is necessary. As tutors we have to be very flexible.

At times, it is not what you expect.” Pat plans to tutor again this year, however, she is unsure of how the COVID-19 issues will affect the tutoring program.

Pat’s interest in education also includes lifelong learning with Oasis exercise classes, computer, history and writing courses. **Her advice on reimagining aging, to “keep older adults learning, reading and active, just like we do with the kids. Oasis tutoring gives me a purpose. It allows me to feel like I am accomplishing something, and helping someone, somewhere, somehow.”**

Pictured: Pat Fisher





THE DONOR TREE

In September 2019, Upstate Oasis installed a Donor Tree to recognize their supporters who had cumulatively given \$1,000 or more, and those who had created an endowed fund. Currently, Upstate Oasis has four endowed funds, supporting infrastructure, music, tutoring and education.

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

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