

2020: A Year of Perseverance



Albuquerque Oasis
2020 Annual Report

Greetings from Oasis

2020 certainly was a year of perseverance—and patience, persistence, purposefulness, and pluck here in Albuquerque! In the early days of the COVID-19 shutdown, we were confident things would return to normal quickly. As infection and death rates increased with each passing day, we gradually and reluctantly came to the realization things would not return to normal anytime soon.

After the initial shock wore off, Oasis staff rallied to create a different model for offering our programs. At first, we were apprehensive about using Zoom video to deliver classes. But over time—not absent of challenges—we became competent! We trained Oasis instructors and participants to use the platform and slowly but surely began offering online classes. We continued producing a catalog—one of our best means to keep in touch with you.

In July of 2020, as public health guidelines loosened, we began offering simulcast (or hybrid) lectures with a few people in the classroom, along with in-home participants on Zoom. All in-person programming adhered to the latest CDC guidelines, including social distancing, mandatory mask-wearing, and stringent sanitizing procedures. We were determined to continue operating our tutoring program to aid elementary school kids who, at the time, needed the extra help more than ever. In the Fall of 2020, 110 volunteer Oasis tutors adopted an entirely new method to facilitate working with students—virtually—using online apps like Whiteboard and Google Classroom to read to and with their students. While living through a pandemic presented a multitude of unforeseen challenges, there were some silver linings in that we all learned new things that will sustain us beyond the pandemic. In the end, we got through 2020, and things look very bright for 2021.



Kathleen Raskob

Executive Director
Albuquerque Oasis

Locally, nationally, and globally 2020 was a year like no other. The social and economic impacts of a pandemic were most acutely felt by lower-income communities, families with children at home due to school closures, and those most vulnerable to symptoms of the disease—older adults. Oasis centers across the country were forced to suspend all in-person operations. Exercise, lifelong learning, and social events, classes, and programs were canceled. Tutors were abruptly cut off from the students they were mentoring with our nearly 700 elementary school partners across the country. By the end of March, we faced the immense challenge of sustaining our mission when everything about the way we connected with participants and communities was no longer possible.

Local and national Oasis leaders and teams quickly shifted focus to a contact-free form of engagement, launching virtual classes through national and regional platforms. In June of 2020, our virtual national Oasis center, oasiseverywhere.org, was born, and within months over 1,000 people were enrolling in live interactive classes. Local Oasis network centers quickly pivoted in sync, offering virtual courses to their Oasis communities, and simulcasting their best content on Oasis Everywhere. The virtual programs allowed participants to continue lifelong learning while following stay-at-home orders, protecting their health and community. Oasis quickly attracted current Oasis participants, as well as new participants discovering us for the first time as a virtual education resource.

As a leader in technology education, we are committed to teaching new digital adopters the basics of safe internet use and building confidence in navigating a digital world. Conversely, the pandemic revealed the reality of living without home internet. The “digital divide” is very real for hundreds of thousands of American families and seniors. Barriers to technology exist across a range of demographic boundaries. As a result, our virtually engaged audience is less diverse. We recognize the need to span these gaps of disproportion to reach ALL older adults. As we emerge from the pandemic and begin operating as dual-venue centers, offering the option of in-person and online classes, we are addressing disparities between our participants. Through new and renewed partnerships, resource communication, presence in community events, and programs not dependent on technology we are continuing our mission to serve seniors across the country in every economical circumstance. Perseverance got us

through 2020 making us stronger and expanding our mission. We will emerge resilient and look forward to being together again.



Paul Weiss, PhD

President
Oasis Institute

Opening New Worlds to Children

As a retired pediatrician, Fred Gambort knows a thing or two about children. Over his 35-year career, he saw many children who struggled with learning difficulties. So once he retired six years ago, Fred switched gears from stethoscopes to books to try to make a difference as a tutor through Albuquerque Oasis.

“Some children haven’t had as much experience with reading and I felt I could instill an interest in reading and act as sort of a grandfather to them,” Fred says.

Yet his tutoring impact has been much more than quiet reading sessions with students.

His experience as a pediatrician prepared him well as a tutor. “Knowing how kids develop and learn is helpful,” he says. “I’m patient with kids, and I’m tolerant of them having less interest in reading some days than I’d hoped. I give them the one-on-one time they need, and I try to introduce other educational pieces into what we’re reading.”

One example is a book Fred reads to children about a red balloon. The story is set in France. To expand children’s worlds, Fred then talks about France as he reads the book. “Reading is a channel to reach them and share new experiences,” he says. “Yet I have no expectations of children appreciating what we’re doing. I enjoy being around them, and I hope that comes across to them.”

The soft-spoken pediatrician-turned-tutor says it’s rewarding to see children’s improved confidence as he tutors them. “Children demonstrate their resilience by being willing to try more in the classroom as their confidence increases. And some mothers have told me their child is more interested in reading since we worked together. If kids enjoy it, that’s enough for me.”



“Some children haven’t had as much experience with reading and I felt I could instill an interest in reading and act as sort of a grandfather to them. ”

A Virtual Opportunity for More Connections

The Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring Program was virtual during the 2020–21 school year. Instead of a barrier, that became an opportunity for Lew Wallace Elementary School, says Principal Anne Marie Strangio.

“Our urban school is in the heart of Albuquerque with very little parking,” she says. “It’s hard to get into so that has made it challenging for tutors to come to our school in the past. But the pandemic brought us 28 new virtual Oasis tutors.”

Principal Strangio and others ran workshops to teach the tutors how to run Google Meet and Google Classroom and provided other virtual instruction tips.

“It was so cool,” she says enthusiastically. “I was impressed with the tutors. They had to shift content and learn how to adjust when it was challenging to hold a student’s attention online. Fred was one of the first who was willing to dive in. He committed to sticking with it, even though it was hard.”

She says in-person connections between students and tutors usually takes about 20 minutes. But virtually, it often took four weeks and then another four weeks to develop a real relationship.

“Fred is so patient. One of his students was a boy who had a hard time connecting at school and felt like an outsider. Fred was masterful in asking questions to guide the sessions without being intrusive.”

Fred admits virtual tutoring was challenging and he misses in-person time with students. Yet he perseveres to build confidence, open doors and make connections with children one book at a time.

While in-person Oasis tutoring is often focused on children who are struggling with reading, this year the school team identified students who were not engaged or thriving during the pandemic. Some children were lost in the large group setting of a Google Meet virtual classroom.

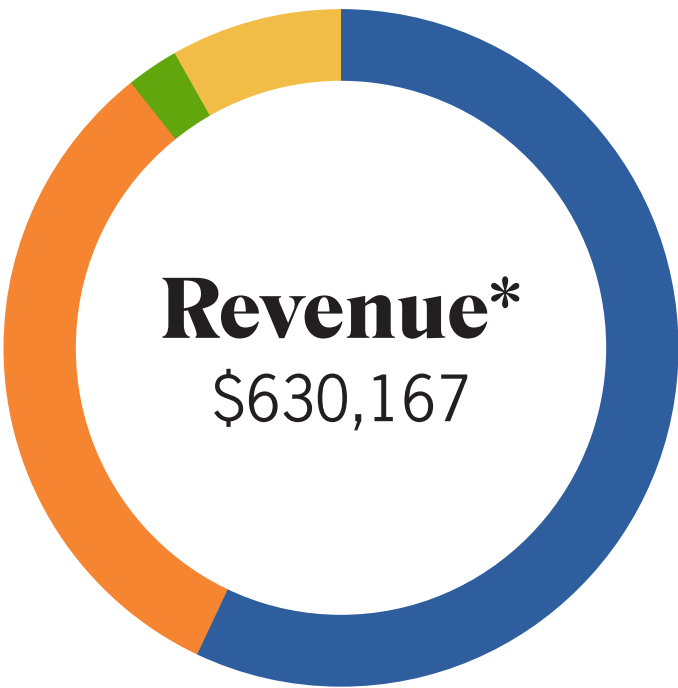
“It was not as much about reading as pairing students with an adult who cared about their academics and made an individual connection,” Principal Strangio says. “Both children and older adults needed a social-emotional connection to thrive during the pandemic.



Oasis gave us an amazing opportunity to put kids and older adults together and let them talk, write, and read. And the connections they made will take them far beyond this year.”

She continues: “I’m so grateful for the 28 seniors who tutored our students this year. I hope they see the difference they made.”

Local Impact



\$51,500
Other

\$359,507
Contributions & Grants

\$202,960
Program Revenue

\$16,200
In-Kind



\$30,567
Fundraising

\$517,400
Program Services

\$106,051
General & Administrative

* Source: 2020 Consolidated Financial Audit

National Impact

657

Schools

4,500

Volunteers

1,362

Communities Served

4,015

Tutors

82,675

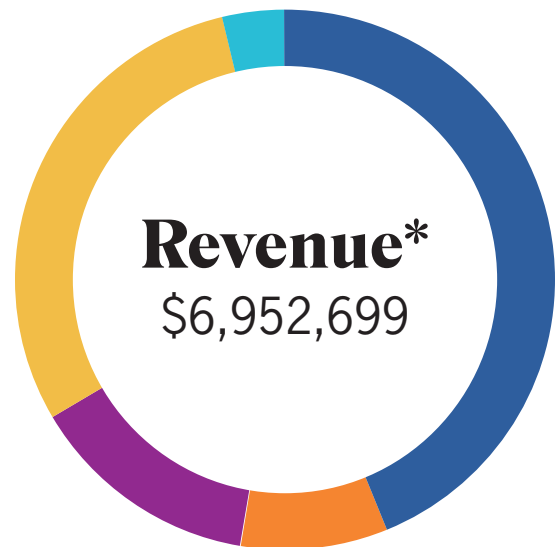
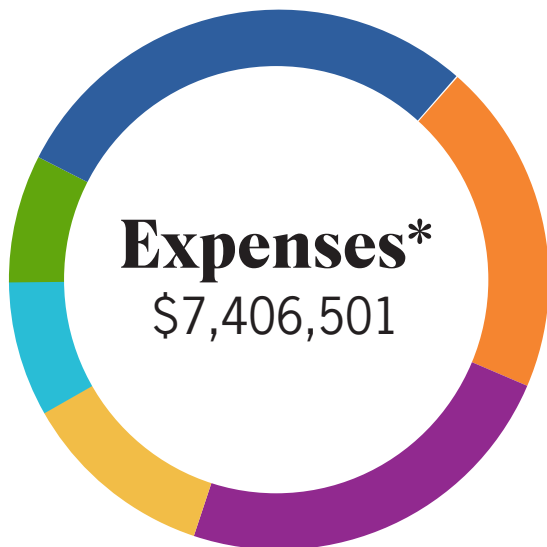
Class Enrollments

115,000

Volunteer Hours

27,250

Participants



\$2,139,445
Health Programs

\$561,469
Technology Literacy

\$1,488,532
Education Programs

\$1,750,172
General & Administrative

\$862,741
Volunteer Programs

\$604,142
Fundraising

\$3,049,109
Contributions & Grants

\$609,670
In-Kind

\$2,074,862
Government Grants

\$257,121
Other

\$961,937
Program & Partner Revenue

*Source: 2020 Consolidated Financial Audit

Spreading Music & Harmony for Miles

As a self-described “starving composer,” Jane Ellen began teaching music appreciation at Albuquerque Oasis 25 years ago. Today students flock to her classes for repeat performances no matter where she lives.

“I’ve stayed so long because Oasis offers a tremendous educational value for lifelong learners,” Jane says. “It also has given me the opportunity to explore all kinds of topics that interest me and in turn I share with students.”

Jane recently moved to Florida but will continue to teach remotely from there. The pandemic has already transitioned Oasis classes to Zoom so Jane’s class presentations from Florida will be seamless.

“The possibilities through technology are one of the silver linings of COVID-19,” Jane says. “I’m thrilled at the opportunity to continue teaching from Florida.”

She says once people adapted to technology, she saw a huge rise in attendance in her classes from around the country. “Oasis opened doors to more people. This is the teaching model going forward and can reach people who are thirsty to learn but can’t attend in person.”

The talented musician wears many hats in the music world, from publishing music, writing the theme songs for television documentaries and international movies, composing music for jazz trios and chamber orchestras, and serving on international commissions.

She also has her own website, janellen.com, that includes samples of her beautiful music.

Yet despite her successes, teaching has been the feather in her cap. “It has been most fulfilling to reach so many people about a topic I love,” she says. “I think the most important thing people can do is keep learning through their lives, and I admire older adults who are hungry to continue learning. I’m in awe of them. They could have their choice to do anything else, and they choose my class.”

Many of Jane’s classes focus on a combination of history and music appreciation. “People are very interested in music of wars,” Jane says. In fact, Jane composed music for a documentary called “The Man Who Lost the Civil War.”

Over the years, she has covered 2,000 years of music history, from ancient music of the Romans and Greeks to pop genres. She also covers biographies of iconic



musicians and explores the contributions and influences of various cultures on music.

“It’s fun to do these things because we’re hoping to expand people’s horizons and help them look at familiar music in a different way,” she says.

She admits she spends significant time reading and researching for her classes. Her secret to success to make classes interesting are a flare for storytelling and a good sense of humor. “Those go a long way to communicate what could be dull, dry history. My favorite comments are when someone tells me they thought they knew the subject well but they still learned something different and new from me. I find that amazing.”

In addition to teaching, Jane spent the past 12 years as director of Oasis Entertainers, which is a 100-voice volunteer choir group. During COVID-19, the group was silenced.

“We were hoping to get out to perform one last time before I moved but it didn’t happen,” Jane says. “Last year was the group’s 30-year anniversary, and we had a special performance planned that we couldn’t do because of the pandemic. But I’m confident I’m leaving the group in good hands, and they will continue well into their fourth decade.”

After 25 years, Jane is grateful to Oasis. “They believed in my abilities and gave me the opportunity to continue teaching to reach so many people. The students and organization have changed and enriched my life. Now I’m excited about what the future holds for all of us.”

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