

# 2020: A Year of Perseverance



Washington Metro Oasis  
2020 Annual Report

# Greetings from Oasis

In 2020, our lives and lifestyles changed dramatically as we sheltered for safety from the COVID-19 pandemic. While I have missed seeing you, I am proud of how you and the rest of our community adapted to the evolving science and public health edicts. Your Oasis may have closed its physical doors, but our passion and dedication to delivering quality and meaningful programming to you during a time of isolation has never been more necessary.

Yes, our world has changed, and our future will include a hybrid of virtual and in-person lifelong learning. Our reopening plans will incorporate your safety and the feedback received after surveying you. We look forward to seeing you in-person and online this fall and winter. Stay tuned as we plan for our newest normal and remain Oasis strong.

The Washington Metro Oasis Team wants to acknowledge the dedicated community of Oasis volunteers who supported our operations throughout the pandemic. We are forever grateful to you, and most of all we are relieved you remained safe. Special gratitude goes out to our volunteer tutors, who braved venturing out to be fingerprinted during a pandemic to be certified for mentoring students. Thank you to Sue Moser, our program coordinator, for her resilience in transitioning tutoring to a much-needed virtual format.

I cannot wait to see you in person in 2021. Until then, please keep love in your hearts and in your mind the joy of learning and aging together.

Peace and good health to you and yours,



**Anna Stokes,**

Executive Director  
Washington Metro 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](https://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



# Finding a Class That Sticks for Life

After Pam Gates tried numerous times to find a yoga class where she felt comfortable as a novice, she finally found it through Washington Metro Oasis. For the past six years, Pam has been a loyal participant in the Gentle Yoga class, taught by instructor Kim Brooks.

“After many false starts in classes where people twist themselves into pretzels, this is the yoga class I’ve been looking for,” Pam explains. “Kim is a great instructor and a relatable, real woman. This class has stuck.”

She recognizes how beneficial yoga has been for her balance, flexibility and even fine motor skills. “Kim really gets our minds and bodies working, but we also laugh a lot,” Pam adds. “When I first started this yoga class, I couldn’t get up off the floor easily. Now I can.”

The former runner and athlete already had a knee replacement in 2009 before she ever took yoga. Then she had her other knee replaced a couple of years into her Oasis yoga class. “I credit Kim with getting me back to full function,” Pam says. “She worked closely with me on modifying exercises and positions to improve my strength, flexibility and balance. She plants ideas in your mind such as standing on one foot in the grocery store line or picking up things with your toes to help us continue gaining balance outside of class.”



Even a pandemic couldn’t stop Pam’s commitment to her yoga class when Oasis transitioned it to Zoom. “It’s amazing how much the class didn’t change,” Pam says. “On Zoom, we were still able to see Kim doing the movements. All we needed was a chair or mat to adapt at home.”

She continues: “Virtual yoga class has many benefits. It gave new people a chance to try yoga without feeling awkward because if someone is self-conscious, no one can see you. It also meant we could attend class no matter what the weather or traffic was.”

During the months of isolation in 2020, Pam says the yoga class was the bright spot in her week that continues today. “It provides human interaction even virtually where we can laugh and see each other’s faces, which is good for all of us mentally and physically.”





# Rediscovering a Passion for Teaching

Although Pat Sellner planned to become a teacher when she graduated college, the job market at the time steered her in another direction. However, she found her teaching education helpful throughout her life, noting that “everything you do and learn you use along the way.”

Once Pat retired, her path led back to teaching. She became a tutor for Washington Metro Oasis, where she has happily been helping children for seven years. Tutoring was a natural fit.

“When I meet a child who doesn’t know which way the pages turn, I realize they have never been read to so I like to be part of the solution,” Pat says. “I’ve always been a researcher and enjoy discovering whatever the students are interested in. I also want to widen their horizons.”

When schools closed their doors during the height of COVID-19, Pat offered to participate in Oasis’s virtual tutoring program. This required tutors to learn how to function at a high level with Zoom while working with their students and sharing online resources. All training was virtual and required significant individual innovation and time.

“I really had to practice for the virtual tutoring by setting up two laptops,” Pat says. “It took a while to get all the steps correct so I would sometimes ask my student in Zoom tutoring sessions to help out, which she was happy to do. I explained that we would figure it out together. She has been a real delight.”

Pat feels she is helping the student as well as her family. “My student’s home includes several children all doing remote learning and the parent is stretched very thin. I can’t imagine how hard it is for the mother so if I can do anything to help it feels wonderful.”

Pat continues: “I’ve gotten as much out of the tutoring as the kids. It just highlights my day. The children say things from a different perspective and can be so funny. It has been a joy to be an Oasis tutor.”



**“I’ve gotten as much out of the tutoring as the kids. It just highlights my day. ”**

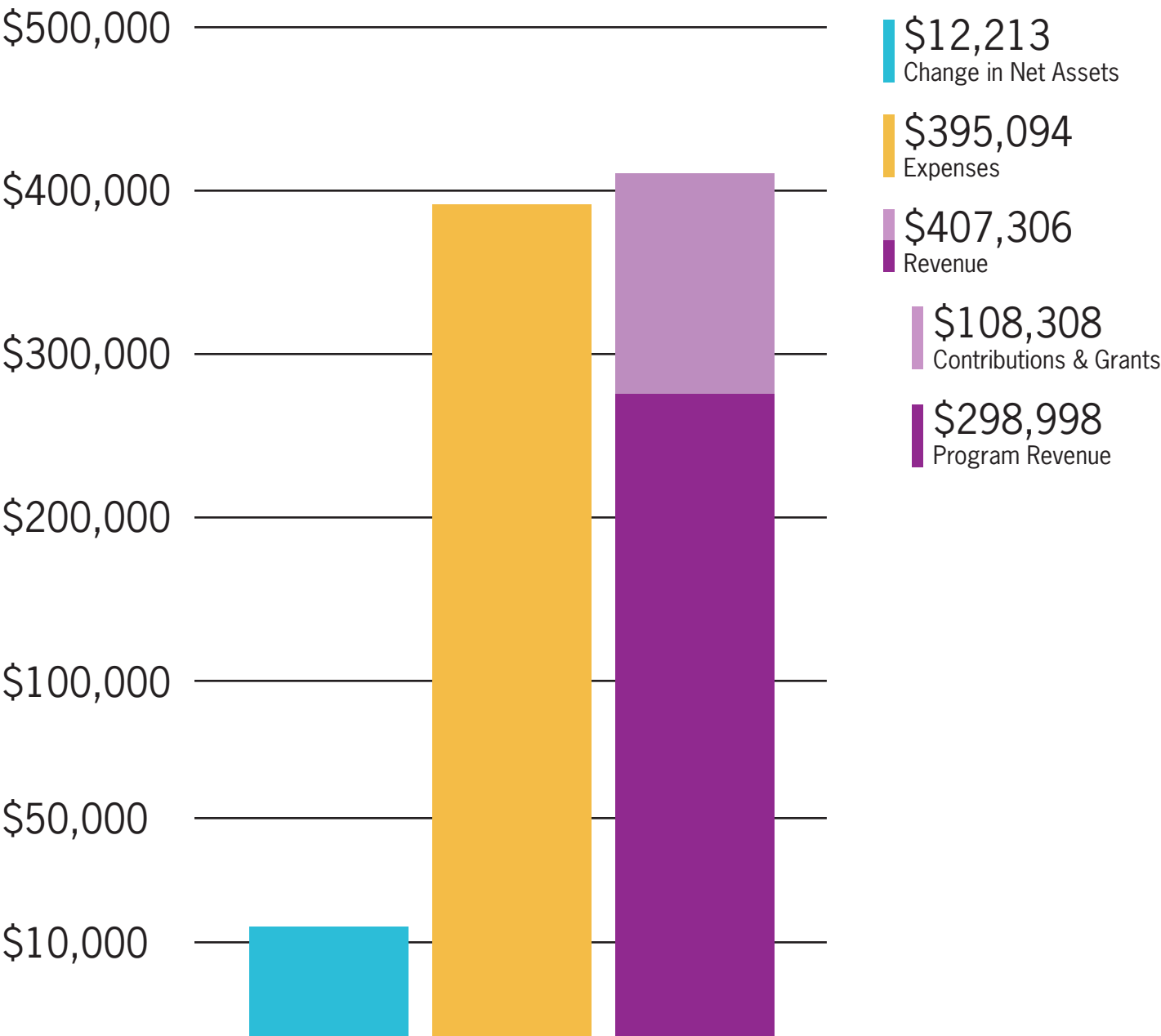
# Local Impact

**55**  
Volunteers

**1,188**  
Volunteer Hours

**2,309**  
Participants

**19,084**  
Class Enrollments



# National Impact

657

Schools

4,500

Volunteers

1,362

Communities Served

4,015

Tutors

82,675

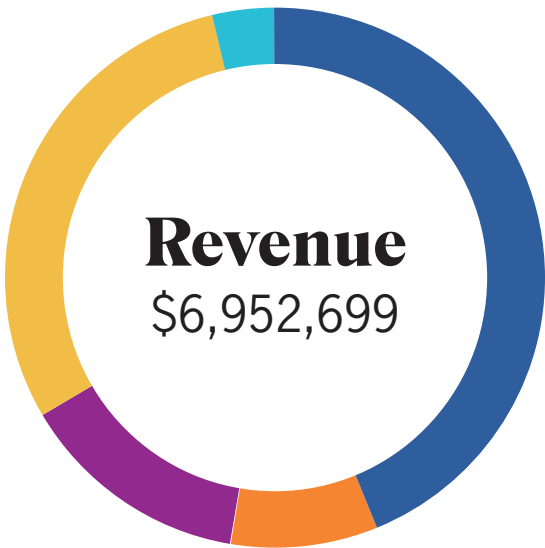
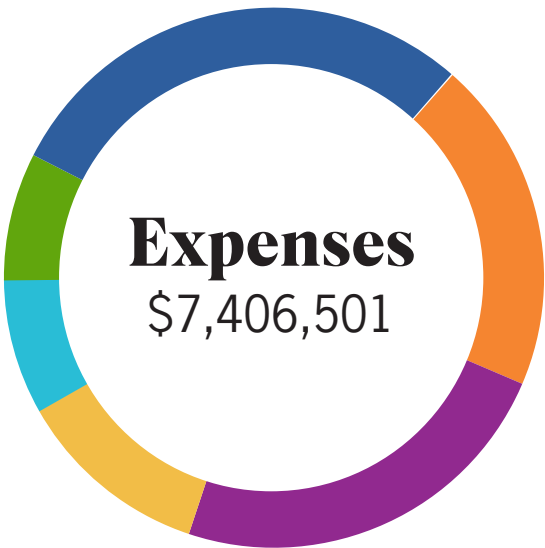
Class Enrollments

115,000

Volunteer Hours

27,250

Participants



\$862,741  
Volunteer Programs

\$2,139,445  
Health Programs

\$604,142  
Fundraising

\$1,488,532  
Education Programs

\$561,469  
Technology Literacy

\$1,750,172  
Administrative

\$257,121  
Other

\$3,049,109  
Contributions & Grants

\$2,074,862  
Government Grants

\$609,670  
In-Kind

\$961,937  
Program & Partner Revenue

\*Source: 2020 Consolidated Financial Audit



# Bringing Classes to Life on Zoom

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. In fact, Washington Metro Oasis instructor Dan Sherman made gallons of it after the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of multiple in-demand virtual classes.

While he has been teaching in-person classes for Oasis since 2017, the retired economist was busier than ever teaching during the pandemic, especially with a class on Hamilton, the musical, and other musical theater topics. He estimates that he has taught about 20–25 classes over the past year alone.

Even before the pandemic, Dan's in-person classes were designed to be visual with multiple performance clips, audio clips, and photos that he displayed on screen. "That made the switch to Zoom easy," Dan says. "The classes were ready for the screen."

To further elevate the classes, Dan adds subtitles to musicals and includes lyrics onscreen with audio clips so the class can follow along and discuss the lyrics.

In addition, he rehearses with the host before class to ensure the embedded clips work properly and to check volume controls to create the best experience for class participants.

Dan's reputation for interesting, well-prepared lectures has grown throughout the area and he has lectured for many organizations. However, he has taught more for Oasis than for any other group.

His class topics are "all over the map," he says, from lectures on mathematics to Rockefeller to Oscar Hammerstein to film music, and his repertoire continues to expand.

He tries to plug history into his classes, no matter the topic. But the common theme is well-researched information with captivating photos, video and audio and an enthusiastic instructor.

"The courses are popular because I try to curate the material well so it's seamless," Dan says. "I'm also a good ad libber and believe teaching is an art. It's fun and I appreciate being able to do it while meeting a need."

He creates additional value for his classes by sharing video links and sending extra material to participants after each class. Students often respond with questions and comments that open more dialogue.



"Teaching at Oasis has been a great experience," Dan says. "Older adults are inspiring. They bring something to the class because they often have experience with some of the topics and they will share personal stories about it. It's a trip down memory lane for them."

From Dan's perspective, the "lemonade" made during the pandemic includes class participants not having to travel, which opens up time to do other things.

"Zoom makes classes more available to people anywhere. I'm actually reluctant to go back to in-person classes because I can do more virtually. Zoom and I have gotten along very well."

# Community Partners

AARP® Medicare Supplement Plans,  
*Insured by United Healthcare Insurance*

AT&T

Bethesda Chevy Chase Rotary Club

Bethesda Regional Services Center

Go4Life

Family & Nursing Care

Macy's Foundation

The Richard & Nancy P.  
Marriott Foundation

Montgomery Art Association

Montgomery County Community  
Grants Program

Montgomery County Historical Society

Montgomery County Recreation

North Potomac Community Center

Potomac Community Village

Rotary Club of Rockville Maryland

Starbucks Coffee

Suburban Hospital, Johns Hopkins  
Medicine

Sunrise of Bethesda

Washington Performing Arts Society

## Thoughts from the Team

An urgent call for all hands on deck came from the president of Oasis' sponsoring hospital, Suburban Hospital, Johns Hopkins Medicine, to help set up a COVID-19 testing site in the hospital garage. The assignment was one I could have never envisioned as Executive Director of Oasis. But, my passion for nursing often presents unlikely forks in the road. **The testing site opened quickly, and people poured in with a mix of emotions, but they all left expressing gratitude and kind words.** I'm honored the hospital had faith in me. The experience has increased the breadth of my clinical lifelong learning skills. At 62, I can attest to the fact that you can teach an old dog new tricks. —Anna Stokes, Executive Director

**Working at the Suburban Hospital vaccine clinic filled me with pride and purpose.** Even more than Disneyworld, it was indeed the "happiest place on earth." I so admire the nurses and other health professionals who staffed and ran the clinic, day after day, with smiles, listening ears, and a gentle touch. —Janice Pliner, Program Manager

I joined the Suburban Hospital COVID-19 testing site team in October 2020. Working out of a parking garage turned makeshift clinic had its challenges, from cold weather and storms to pollen and cicadas. But, participating in this much-needed service was incredibly rewarding nonetheless. The testing clinic was constantly busy from open to close. Still, our team of staff and nurses worked so efficiently; we always hit our targets. **I'm proud to be part of this high-energy team that will undoubtedly leave its mark on history.** —Karla Lazarte, Health & Wellness Program Coordinator

Working in the Suburban Hospital COVID-19 vaccine clinic—often described as the "happiest place in the hospital" was immensely rewarding. Operating primarily as a greeter, I met and assisted countless members of our community, including many Oasis participants! Many arrived donning smiles—plainly visible even behind a mask. Others appeared anxious. I was happy to provide a smile, share a laugh, and offer reassurance they were in good hands with the incredible nurses in the clinic. **The experience was indeed an honor, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such amazing colleagues,** providing this vital service for our community. —Leah Russi, Office Manager/Volunteer Coordinator

To connect with Oasis, call or check us out online.

washingtonmetro@oasisnet.org | oasisnet.org/washington

