

FRIENDS OF THE OAK PARK CONSERVATORY

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



FRIENDS
OF THE
OAK PARK
CONSERVATORY



OAK PARK
CONSERVATORY

Park District of Oak Park



PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Our year at The Friends has been characterized as one of adaptation, a process of change to help us survive all that the current COVID-19 pandemic had brought to us. This adaptation has been a challenge we have met very successfully. Our staff, volunteers and board were forced to adapt operational methods that enabled us to stay engaged with our members, friends, donors, and the community, as well as support the Conservatory.

Our last pre-COVID in-person event was KidsFest, March 1, 2020, where more than 500 children and family members attended presentations and activities focused on bees. Then, we had to curtail face-to-face activities and limit the numbers in our programs, including temporarily closing the Conservatory. A quick pivot to virtual programming kept us connected to our members and drew a whole new audience of gardeners.

Our greatest adaptation was moving the ever-popular Plant Sale online. It was that format or we would lose our main fundraising event of the past 30-plus years. The Conservatory staff stepped in to put in many hours because our volunteers were not allowed in the greenhouses until the sale. We were thrilled to find how popular gardening became last summer and sales were strong.

Finally, our Annual Appeal began earlier than usual and was a great success. We knew the pandemic would bring uncertainty, but our supporters kept us in their thoughts. We surpassed our expected goal, which has enabled us to look to the future more positively. Thus, we are able to provide new educational and engaging additions to the Discovery Garden, refurbish the Conservatory's iconic historic entry door, and restore the "polyhouse" which will support future Plant Sales.

We are so fortunate to have a dedicated staff that has enabled us to move forward this year, generous supporters who believe in our Mission, and enthusiastic members who give of their time and expertise. We look forward to seeing you return to the Conservatory this year as things "open up."

Sincerely,

Sue Boyer
President

Judy Klem
Executive Director





Purpose

Our purpose is to deepen and enrich the visitor experience for diverse populations at the Oak Park Conservatory.



Vision Statement

Our vision is to connect people with nature and horticulture through the Oak Park Conservatory for personal enrichment and to inspire environmental stewardship.



Values

- **COMMUNITY** – We build community. We welcome all visitors as guests and treat them with respect. We strive to include a diverse range of backgrounds in our educational and recreational events and programming. We strive to build relationships with other related community groups.
- **EDUCATION** – We provide tools and guide participants to learn through exploration and discovery. We strive to craft memorable experiences through education and interpretive programs.
- **VOLUNTEERISM** – We value volunteerism and people. We strive to be a premier volunteer organization in our community. Our volunteers make a difference in the world. We are committed to shaping a better future through positive educational experiences with nature.
- **RESOURCES** – We strive for sustainable means and methods in all aspects of our organization. Through fiscal accountability and sharing research-based information with visitors, we maximize our limited resources to use them wisely and responsibly.

5-Year Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024

Initiative #1: Broaden & Develop Program Strategy

Initiative #2: Improve Volunteer Program

Initiative #3: Develop a Plan for Fiscal Resilience

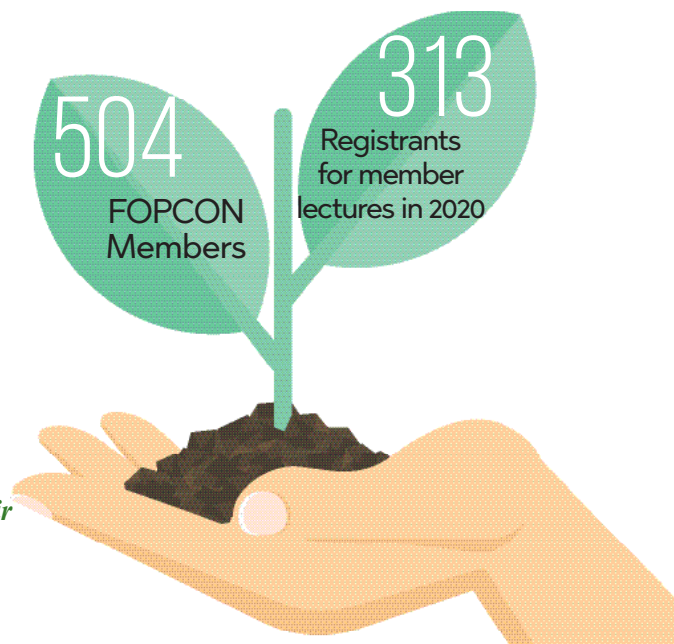
Initiative #4: Strengthen Relationship with the Oak Park Conservatory



MEMBERSHIP

We are so grateful for the support our members give The Friends and the Oak Park Conservatory. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we transitioned our member lecture series online with immense success, significantly increasing engagement. We doubled our programming and hosted lectures on native plants, succulents, bulbs, and seed starting, to name a few. Online lectures are convenient and accessible, and with the launch of our new YouTube channel, lectures can be watched at leisure. We also launched our Business Memberships in 2020, with an array of benefits designed to help local businesses engage with our members, volunteers and guests.

-- Kayla Chase, Membership Committee Chair



Annual Member Meeting Thursday, June 17, 7pm

Members are invited to join us for the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. The meeting will be held virtually on Thursday, June 17, 2021, at 7 pm where we will meet to elect our Board of Directors for the 2021-2023 term.

In recognition of our 35th Anniversary, we will have a special presentation on our history, plus we will hear from our Board President, Executive Director and the Oak Park Conservatory Director of Horticulture who will provide a Conservatory update.

Please join us!



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



The Education Committee, in spite of COVID-19 protocols, continues to develop new and exciting programs to enhance visitors' experiences and learning about nature at the Conservatory. Despite many of our programs being cancelled due to COVID, Zoom allowed us to continue in another format. With the reopening of the Conservatory, and following new protocols, we look forward to once again offering the following programs: Exploration Station, Toddler Exploration Time, Discovery Garden Exploration Time, Exploration Backpacks, School Exploration Kits, and Tours. We also look forward to partnering with other nonprofit organizations to enhance learning about nature. Our new program, Story Time, is a great success and will also continue.

We updated the Adult/High School Tour. We have interwoven the following topics into the tour: Conservatory History and Architecture, Sustainability, Mechanical and Maintenance Systems, and more in-depth information concerning our unique plant collection. We have also selected the interactive stations to be installed in the Discovery Garden the spring of 2021. We are so very excited to be able to begin to offer our educational programs again; please come join us and experience how fun learning about nature can be. We are waiting!

-- *Linda Smith, Education Committee Chair*



KidsFest, our popular family-focused event held the first Sunday of March each year, welcomed 567 visitors in 2020.



During 2020, Taste of Uncorked attracted 78 attendees.



Story Time at the Conservatory, a new program introduced 2020, has become a huge success.



COMING THIS SUMMER: Year of the Butterfly Celebration

Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden
Saturdays 10 AM-Noon



June 12: Butterflies & Moths with Oak Park Public Library

July 10: Bees, Flies & Wasps with Trailside Museum of Natural History

August 14: Bats & Other Pollinator Friends with WonderWorks Children's Museum

In celebration of the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory's 35th Anniversary, join us at the Conservatory as we explore pollinators during the Year of the Butterfly. Our docents will bring you fascinating information and activities about a variety of pollinators. We are teaming up with a different community partner with more activities in our Discovery Garden each month. Learn more at fopcon.org.



DONORS

*We are grateful to the following donors who
donated January 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021.
Thank you for your generosity!*



\$1,000 AND ABOVE

Ebinger Family Charitable Fund
Good Heart Work Smart Foundation
Emerson and Martha Lacey
Mary Kay Minaghan
Darla and John Patterson
John Seaton
Linda and Don Smith
Mary Ellen Warner

\$500 - \$999

Elizabeth Snow Memorial Fund
Richard and Pat Brey
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Judy and Tapas Das Gupta
Carol DeBoth
Carol and John Dudzik
Andrea and Dan Green
Ellen Jacobsen-Isserman and Max Kummerow

Ellen and Rick Kuner
Kimberley and Stephen Miller
Susan and Peter Milojevic
Julie and Scott Moller
Mary Ellen Murphy
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Jeff and Megan Hodge
Lillian Hohmann
Gail Holmberg and Henri Gillet
Barbara Hunt
Gertrude Johnson
Melissa and Ken Kansa
Laura Kaufman and David Levine
Susan Kelly and
Andy Wasserstrom
Judy and Jonathan Klem
Dennis and Roberta Kmiec
Cathi and Kevin Knickrehm
Henry Kranz and
Diane Stephenson
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Sandy and David Lentz
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Andrea Lofgren
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Joan and Lou Mercuri
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Renee Pleshar
Richard Pokorny
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Deborah Preiser
Roberta Rains
Madeleine Raymond and
Joseph McDonald
Colleen Reardon
Kathleen and John Roberts
McLouis and Harriette Robinet
Barbara Rose

Becky and Ed Rubio
Kathy Rush
Linda Ryan
Timothy and Susan Schiff
Shari Schindler
Jay Schulman and Carrie Kovach
Judy Shepelak and
George Vinyard
Ron and Carol Sherman
Inga and Bob Simitz
Rona Singer
Susan and Thomas Smith
Hyunchoo and Albert Sora
Stephanie and Jeff Stewart
Barbara and William Stratton
Laura and Richard Talaske
Denise and Rheel Turcotte
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Karen and Carl Waltenbaugh
Gary and Marilyn Wenzel
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M. Henrietta Yardley
Era Yee
Leslie and Robert Zimmerman
Michele Zurakowski and
John Flanigan

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Patricia Feeley
Milanne Bancroft
Amy Barrett
Linda Bernat
Peter and Linda Bertoncini
Catherine Bizek
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Mark and Miriam Burkland
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Midge and Jim Cogan
Karen Cole
Helene and Mark Connolly
Peggy and John Coon
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Melinda Degucz
Laura Derks
Pamela Doman
Jan and Charles Dressel
Linda and Thomas Dunne
Judy Eckberg

Tom and Bonnie Edwalds
Dennis Egolf
Mark Finger
Katie Frankle and David Goldman
Natasha Galavotti
Jim and Louise Gates
Carol Good
Rosalind Hays
Richard Helfer
Catherine Hoffman
Alan and Lynn Hoffstadter
Barbara Hofmaier and David Heim
Judy and Steve Humowiecki
Clifford and Sarah Hunt
Patricia Johnson
Carrie Kalina and Jim Whalen
Donna Kanapes
Timothy and Jamie Kearley
Peggy and Kevin Kell
Chelsea Kelley
Stephanie Kiesling
Adrienne and Steven Kirkeby
Cynthia Klein-Banai
Mary Sue Komaniecki and
Jim Haglund

Dea and Peter Korab
Ruth and Lester Kreyer
Frank and Theresa Lipo
Charlaine McAnany
Brittany McCreary
Mary McEnery and David Adams
Betty Lou McGhee
Rebecca McLane and
Paul Jacobson
Bill Merrill
Deborah and Charles Morris
Paul Naujokas
Nancy and Joe Norton
Margaret and Donald O'Brien
Mary O'Kiersey
Nancy Pajeau
Betty Peaslee
Pamela and Eric Penney
Bertha Peterson
David and Sharene Piech
Mary and John Plunkett
Dennis Poziombka
Karen and Jim Quinn
Janice Roberts
Bridget Rowan

Jim Sadowski
Julie and Bruce Samuels
Ed and Linda Schmitt
Julie Schneider
Regina Sennello
Lisa and Jason Sensat
Carrol Smith
Georgia Smith
Gregory and Leslie Smith
Mitch Theys
Peter Thompson and
Mary Kay Tobin
Cathy Tokarski
Russell Umbricht
Jeanne and Howie Visteen
Marietta Walsh
Peter Weismantle and
Sandy Williams
Melanie Weiss
Karen Wenzlaff
Rebecca Willard
Phillis Wilson
Dorothy Zukoski



Sustaining the Conservatory for the Next Generation

A planned gift to the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory in your will, trust, retirement plan, or IRA helps ensure The Friends' continued support of the Oak Park Conservatory. Sustaining The Friends with a planned gift supports our mission to provide education programs for all ages and backgrounds and rewarding volunteer opportunities for future generations.

We invite you to join fellow donors in the Legacy Society and make the generous decision to include the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory in your estate plans. Please let us know of your plans so that we can include you in Legacy Society programs.

For more information, please contact director@fopcon.org.



VOLUNTEERS

Who would have known at the beginning of 2020 that our beloved Conservatory would be closed to visitors for many months and our volunteers would not be able to serve in the same capacity as in the past? Despite the frustration and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, FOPCON volunteers continued to support the Conservatory and the FOPCON staff in a wide range of opportunities.

Many of our events had a different look—a drive-through plant sale with online orders, Fright at Night with limited visitors, and a physically distanced visit with Santa. New opportunities arose as we progressed through summer and fall. Volunteers assisted Park District staff in village parks and the lush garden at the Cheney Mansion. For parents looking for ways to engage young children, Storytime was created, a half-hour event packed with stories, song and fun.

The Education Committee took time to revise programs in preparation of the return to normal tours and visits in the future. Unfortunately, we were not able to host a celebration to recognize the dedication of our volunteers. However, FOPCON has continued to connect with volunteers through the monthly newsletter and thank you cards for the new year.

With the support of Volunteer Coordinator Nancy Silver, this year, 126 volunteers provided 4,962 hours of services valued at \$134,966. Although the numbers were understandably lower this year, they prove the commitment of volunteers to our work. With sadness, FOPCON accepted Nancy's resignation as she moved on in her career to a new position. We thank her for her ability to work so well with our volunteers and her easy smile. We wish her good luck in her new endeavors!

If you are not yet a volunteer, consider joining us once we are able to return to increased programming. We look forward to seeing you. We have missed you!!

-- Barbara Hunt, Volunteer Chair



Thank You
To Our Volunteers
FOR ALL YOU DO!

Friends Programs During 2020

The **31st Annual Plant Sale** was held online this year; 550 people ordered plants online and picked them up at the Rehm Pool parking lot. The Plant Sale grossed \$44,688 in revenue, with \$27,435 net. (The 2019 plant sale grossed over \$51,000 in revenue, with net over \$31,400.)



Other Friends programs held successfully in 2020 included:

- **KidsFest**, held the first Sunday of March, welcomed 567 visitors
- Summer & Fall **Taste of Uncorked** - 78 attended
- **Virtual Gardening & Nature lectures** - over 280 participants
- **Story Time at the Conservatory**
- **Toddler Exploration Time**, early 2020
- **Fall Plant & Tool exchange**



Board of Directors

OFFICERS

Sue Boyer, President
Inga Simitz, Vice President and
Governance Chair
Rebecca Callahan, Treasurer
Carol Einhorn, Secretary

MEMBERS

Kayla Chase, Membership Chair
Carol Dudzik
Bonnie Engel
Kathy FioRito
Barbara Hunt, Volunteer Chair
Ellen Kuner
Mary Kay Minaghan
Sara Neuner, Communications Chair
Mary O'Kiersey
Linda Smith, Education Chair
Jeff Stewart, Funding Development Chair
Barb Stratton

Part-time Staff

Executive Director

Judy Klem
director@fopcon.org
(708) 725-2460, ext. 1



Volunteer & Program/Events Coordinator

coordinator@fopcon.org
(708) 725-2460, ext. 2

Operations Coordinator

Andrea Lofgren
operations@fopcon.org
(708) 725-2460, ext. 3



STAFF & VOLUNTEERS



With Gratitude

Our volunteers are the backbone of each and every event and program at The Friends. We could not do this without your hard work and are forever thankful for the time you have given us.

2020 Volunteers

Karole Bair
Milanne Bancroft
Diane Baren
Deborah Becker
Hilda Birney
Kenneth Boyer
Sue Boyer
Marilyn Brumund
Rebecca Callahan
Jeanette Cannon
Terri Carlton
Pamela Charles
Kayla Chase
Peggy Coon
Ann Courter
Pat Cozzi
Julie Cross
Ellen Cutter
Joan Davis
Susan DeChane
Carol Dudzik
Duane Dupee
Carol Einhorn
Bonnie Engel
Mark Finger
Kathy FioRito
Hildegard Fischer
Frances French
Max Frueh
Suzette Gacek
Cheryl Gandolfi
Judy Germany
Katharine Gillies
Bruce Golden
Zoe Greco
Andrea Green

Marge Greene
Heather Guido
Ashima Gupta
Donna Hanert
Rachel Hart
Gayle Hedlund
Barbara Hunt
Erin Jacobson
Frances Johnson
Roman Johnson
Mary Ann Jurgus
Carol Kasper
Sundeepa Kaur
Edith Kause
Peggy Kell
Cathi Knickrehm
Mary Sue Komaniecki
Nathan Komperda
Lauren Krag
Ellen Kuner
Sandra Lentz
Cate Linden
Donna Makow
Roshan Mawani
Susan Milojevic
Mary Kay Minaghan
Mary Ellen Murphy
Janet Neal
Wendy Negron
Donald Nekrosius
Sara Neuner
Jill Niewoehner
Mary O'Kiersey
Dianne Olson
John Owens
Barbara Pagnucci

Nancy Pajean
Darla Patterson
Lourdes Plaza
Renee Pleshar
Sandra Reid
Katie Roberts
Isabel Romero Calvo
Becky Rubio
Chrys Rymas
Paul Ryza
Regina Sennello
Amy Shannon
Ronald Sherman
Inga Simitz
Georgia Smith
Linda Smith
Rachel Spears
Isabella Staples
Nancy Staples
Alex Stevic
Jeff Stewart
Barbara Stratton
Lona Sweet
Alice Tulley
Miguel Viruet
Jeanne Visteen
Susan Vonachen
Kathie Walsh
Kim Wilson
Loretta Wolak
Mary Woodley
Jane Yalcin
Martha Yount



FRIENDS BY THE NUMBERS

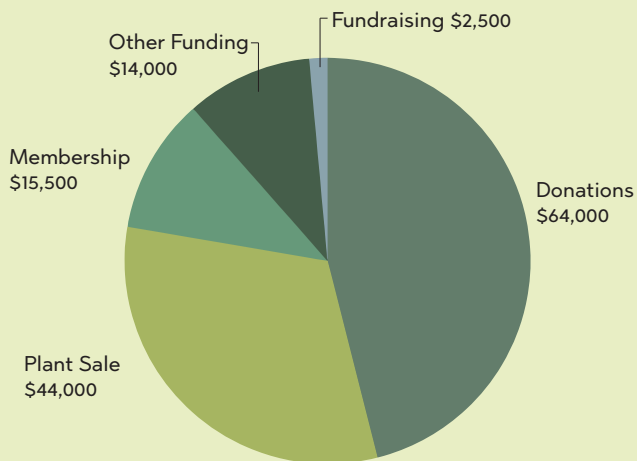
The Conservatory Pivots During COVID-19 Phases

The Oak Park Conservatory welcomed a total of 17,872 visitors in 2020. The Conservatory was closed 170 days due to the pandemic and stay-at-home orders in the state of Illinois. The first stay-at-home order went into effect March 20. When the Restore Illinois plan was put into place by the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Conservatory reopened in a limited capacity following new PDOP reopening guidelines. It reopened to the public on June 30, with a restriction of 50 visitors at one time. On November 13, the Oak Park region moved back to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois COVID-19 Plan, closing the Conservatory to the public once again. The Conservatory reopened to the public on January 22, 2021, again, with a restriction of 50 visitors at one time. In a year of uncertainty, The Friends adapted to challenges that allowed us to stay actively engaged with our members, donors and the community, as well as continue to support the Conservatory.



FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR FISCAL YEAR: OCT. 1, 2019 - SEPT. 30, 2020

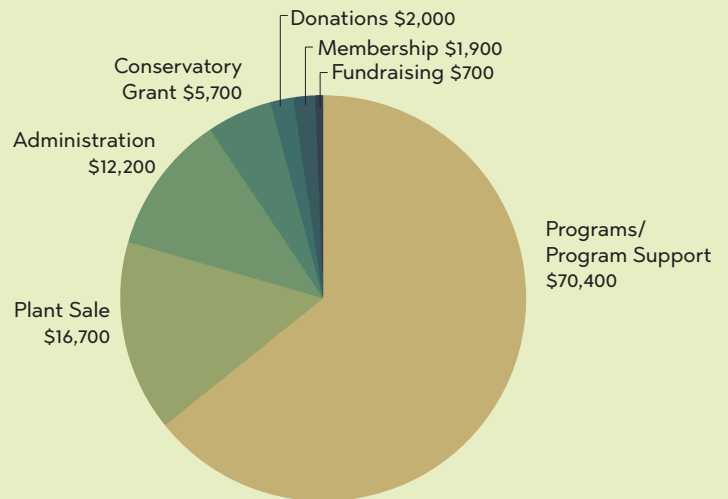
REVENUE



REVENUE TOTAL \$140,000

NET REVENUE \$30,400

EXPENSES



EXPENSES TOTAL \$109,600

UPCOMING FOPCON EVENTS

Visit fopcon.org for a full list of our programs and events.



Taste of Uncorked

June 25, July 23, August 27, September 24

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

In-Person, Ages 21+

Summertime is the best time to enjoy an evening of music and drinks outdoors at the Oak Park Conservatory. Celebrate FOPCON's 35th Anniversary in the Rubinstein Garden with friends under the night sky on the 4th Friday of each month. Admission includes two drink tickets.

Tickets are \$15. Please register in advance online at pdop.org to reserve your spot.

Oak Park River Forest Garden Walk

Sunday, June 27, 2021

\$15 in advance

\$20 event day

Children 12 and under free

Mark your calendars for the 27th Annual Garden Walk in Oak Park and River Forest. Enjoy a self-guided tour of unique, private, and public gardens. Appropriate social distancing guidelines will be followed. Advance tickets for the public will be available June 1st at www.gcopr.org. Advance tickets must be purchased by 5 pm June 26th. Tickets will also be available for purchase in-person on Sunday, June 27th from 9:30 am – 2:00 pm at the Oak Park Conservatory as well as Cheney Mansion, 220 North Euclid Ave., Oak Park.

Members of FOPCON and Garden Club of Oak Park and River Forest are eligible for discounted tickets. Children 12 and under are free. You will provide your own transportation. Biking is a good option. For more information, visit www.fopcon.org.



Due to COVID-19, events and programming may change. Please check www.fopcon.org for updates.