

FRIENDS OF THE
OAK PARK CONSERVATORY

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



OAK PARK
CONSERVATORY

Park District of Oak Park



FRIENDS
OF THE
OAK PARK
CONSERVATORY



PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER



Dear Friends,

Last year the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory celebrated 35 years of service to the historic Oak Park Conservatory and the community. Our shared love of nature and yearning for knowledge brought us together for rewarding events, programs, and lectures.

One of our longest-running and most beloved fundraising events is the Annual Plant Sale. Over 650 orders were placed in 2021 with thousands of plants nestling into gardens throughout the community. This year seedlings will be started in the newly renovated Polyhouse, partially funded by The Friends. Please mark your calendars for April 5-17 – our early Member-Only shopping days. Plant pick up is scheduled for May 10-12, with the 10th as a Member-Only pick-up day.

Our Spring Open House in May drew families to the Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden for hands-on learning and fun as we unveiled new nature-themed play pieces funded by The Friends. Children love to hide in the custom-made bee skep and thump tunes on the colorful flower bells.

The Discovery Garden is also where we hosted our summer-long programming for The Year of the Butterfly. The Friends partnered with local non-profit organizations to provide educational stations about butterflies, bees, bats, and other pollinators. Hundreds of visitors explored and soaked in the fascinating activities.

In July, Hephzibah Children's Association inquired about bringing their summer campers to the Conservatory for a guided tour as part of their Nature Days programming. Prior to this, the Conservatory had stopped offering tours for 18 months due to COVID. Our docents had not been in the facility, let alone led a tour for any group. Plus, moving 200 kids through the showrooms would be a logistical challenge.

This was the moment our small non-profit sprung into action. Working with our volunteers, we set up three tour groups two times a day. A total of six docents per day led 21 total tour groups. The staff at Hephzibah were thrilled and the kids loved the guided tours.

The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory is celebrating 35 years of doing just this. We rise to the challenge. We engage with our volunteers, members, the staff, and the community to share the enriching experience of nature with everyone.

As we look ahead, The Friends board is planning special enhancements to the visitor experience at the Conservatory, a full schedule of events and education programs, and ramping up our guided tour program once again. Please join us as we continue to create a vibrant organization for all to enjoy.

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. We hosted acclaimed lectures on Urban Foraging, Dahlias, Gesneriads, Orchids and Mushrooms, to name a few. Many of these lectures have been posted on our YouTube channel. We are looking forward to a successful membership drive in the coming year.

-- Kayla Chase, Membership Committee Chair



Annual Member Meeting Thursday, June 16, 7pm

Members are invited to join us for the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. The meeting will be held on Thursday, June 16, 2022, when we will meet to elect our Board of Directors for the 2022-2024 term.

We will hear from our Board President, Executive Director, and the Oak Park Conservatory Director of Horticulture who will provide a Conservatory update. Watch your email for more information about our Annual Meeting.

Please join us!



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



The Education Committee, in spite of Covid-19 protocols, continues to develop and deliver new and challenging programs to make coming to the Oak Park Conservatory a fun and exciting adventure! In 2021, some of the Conservatory's education programs were presented virtually and some were in person. We presented our Toddler Exploration Time (TET) virtually, exploring a new nature-themed topic each month on Zoom. The materials needed for the TET activities were assembled and picked up by the participants the week of the program.

Our Storytime Program for ages 18 months to five years continued all year in person! The new Interactive Learning Stations were installed in the spring of 2021 in the Discovery Garden. The Discovery Garden was the setting for FOPCON'S 35th Year Celebration (May) and the Year

of the Butterfly Celebration (June, July and August). We partnered with several other nonprofits during our Butterfly Celebrations (Oak Park Libraries, Trailside Museum, and Wonderworks). The Education Committee also partnered with Trailside Museum in September and presented at the Cook County Forest Preserve Celebration of the Monarch.

We are so excited to be able to expand our educational programs as the Covid-19 protocols allow. Please come by and visit us. You can even play a tune on the new large flowers in the Discovery Garden!

-- *Linda Smith, Education Chair*



DONORS

We are grateful to the following donors who donated January 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022. Thank you for your generosity!

\$1,000 and up

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Good Heart Work Smart Foundation
Emerson and Martha Lacey
Lumpkin Family Foundation
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Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation
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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.





DONOR SPOTLIGHT: JUDY SHEPELAK



Meet long-time member, volunteer and donor Judith (Judy) Shepelak, who has been a strong advocate of FOPCON for many years. Judy served as president of the FOPCON board from 2003-2005. During her term, she was instrumental in the establishment of the FOPCON Endowment fund held at the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation. Judy's vision for building a strong foundation for the organization led to the creation of the Legacy Society, our recently launched planned giving program.

Judy is an avid fine artist working with colored pencils. She enjoys time in nature and visits with her family and friends. Below, Judy reflects on the origins of The Friends and the important enhancements the organization offers to the residents of Oak Park and its surrounding communities.



"The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory has had a long history with the Oak Park Conservatory. When the Conservatory and greenhouses were slated to be destroyed in the early 1980s, a group of citizens got together and worked to save this historical building. Later, that same group of people became the founding members of Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. To The Friends, it was evident people needed to be made aware of this amazing structure and they took it upon themselves to re-introduce the community to the Conservatory.

While FOPCON has been focused on growth from its original beginnings, its members have always believed that important educational opportunities through the Conservatory should be created and shared with adults and children. Over the years, FOPCON worked to develop a variety of programs for schools and visiting children as well as adults. They have also provided assistance to the Oak Park Park District with restoration projects, developing new features and promoting events that enhance visitors' experiences.

Every year in the life of the Friend's organization brings a new opportunity or challenge to continue enhancing or developing new learning experiences in this unique oasis of plants. An opportunity that was once limited to wealthy owners of Conservatories is available right here in Oak Park for everyone in the community to enjoy."

— JUDY SHEPELAK



UPCOMING FOPCON EVENTS

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



Uncorked Continues to Thrive!

Fourth Fridays in June, July, August & September

\$18 FOPCON Members

\$20 General Public

Summertime is the best time to enjoy an evening of music and drinks outdoors at the Oak Park Conservatory. FOPCON's popular Uncorked event drew over 370 registrants in 2021, celebrating our 35th Anniversary in the Rubinstein Garden. Guests enjoyed live entertainment and lively conversations along with beer from local breweries and wine from Oak Park's Anfora wine shop. Delicious bites of food were provided by local favorites including Trattoria 225, Happy Apple Pie Shop, and Angie's Pantry.

Uncorked returns June-September 2022 with a special incentive for FOPCON members. A new benefit will allow members to purchase tickets at a 10% discount! Become a member today to take advantage of this and the many other benefits we offer.

SAVE THE DATE: 33rd Annual Plant Sale Exclusively Online for 2022!

The 2022 Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory Plant Sale has begun! We are pleased to be able to host this popular fundraiser for the 33rd straight year. FOPCON Members receive 12 days of priority shopping plus a Members Only pick up day on May 10! Join now to take advantage of the best selection.

2022 Plant Sale Key Dates:

April 5: Website Opens + Member Online Sale Begins

April 18: Public Online Sale Begins

May 1: Online Sales Close

May 10-11-12: Curbside Pick-up

For over thirty years, Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory and the Park District of Oak Park have joined together to select, start, and grow the very best plants for our gardens. This year we are continuing that tradition and are delighted to offer you thousands of plants grown in our Conservatory greenhouses. This year's selection includes many unique varieties of Edible, Ornamental, and Shade plants.



The Plant Sale will take place online with pre-purchase and curbside pick up from the Rehm Pool parking lot.



2021 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.

Zayna Ahmed
Karole Bair
Milanne Bancroft
Diane Baren
Debbie Becker
Pritesh Bhakta
Sue Boyer
Ken Boyer
Georgia Brown
Rebecca Callahan
Joyce Callahan
Terri Carlton
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Lise McKean
Kim Meyer
Kimberley Miller
Susan Milojevic
Mary Kay Minaghan
Mary Ellen Murphy
Janet Neal
Wendy Negron
Don Nekrosius
Sara Neuner
Emily Norman
Mary O'Kiersey
Dianne Olson
Peggy Osman
John Owens
Barbara Pagniucci
Nancy Pajeau

Kerri Pajeau
Darla Patterson
Renee Pleshar
Serenity Pryor
Karen Quinn
Katie Roberts
Janice Roberts
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Isabel Romero Calvo
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Chrys Rymas
Regina Sennello
Ronald (Ron) Sherman
Inga Simitz
Kristi Sloniger
Linda Smith
Georgia Smith
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Nichelle Stigger
Barbara Stratton
Ryan Stutz
Lona Sweet
Mary Swiontoniowski
Debra Tracy
Alice Tulley
Jeanne Visteen
Sarah Vivas
Kathie Walsh
Kim Wilson
Loretta Wolak
Mary Woodley
Elliot Young
Martha Yount



VOLUNTEERS



In 2021, we were thrilled to welcome back our volunteers in various ways throughout the Conservatory. In the past year, we had 111 volunteers who donated 4,246.5 hours of service. This translates to a value of over \$124,000 of donated time! We also began onboarding new volunteers once again—a total of 24 joined FOPCON to help with everything from special events such as Fright at Night and the Candlelight Walk to weekly Story Time, the Plant Sale, and a variety of office projects.

Our weekly volunteers are responsible for tending the Conservatory Showrooms and have been a constant and reliable source of help to the Conservatory staff. For those who helped with Uncorked, Year of the Butterfly, or the Plant Sale, we couldn't do these wonderful special events without you.

During our late summer Volunteer Appreciation Night, we hosted more than 70 guests outdoors at the lovely Cheney Mansion garden for an evening of recognition, refreshments and reuniting with each other.

Toward the end of 2021, FOPCON welcomed Volunteer Program/Events Coordinator Elizabeth (Liz) King. Liz hit the ground running and was a tremendous help in planning KidsFest in early March 2022. However, due to family circumstances, Liz recently resigned to pursue a full-time job opportunity. FOPCON is currently seeking a new Volunteer Coordinator.

-- Liz King, Volunteer Coordinator

Barbara Hunt, Volunteer Chair





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers



Sue Boyer, President



Inga Simitz, Vice President
and Governance Chair



Rebecca Callahan,
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Carol Einhorn, Secretary

Members



Kayla Chase
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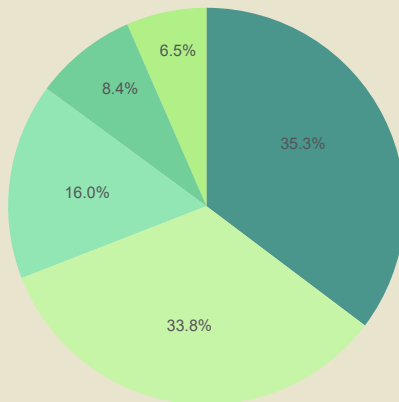
Judy Klem
 Executive Director
 708-725-2460 ext. 1
director@fopcon.org
 office hours: 9-3 Tu/W/Th



Andrea Lofgren
 Operations Manager
 708-725-2460 ext. 3
operations@fopcon.org
 office hours: 9-3 Tu/W/Th

FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR FISCAL YEAR: OCT. 1, 2020 - SEPT. 30, 2021

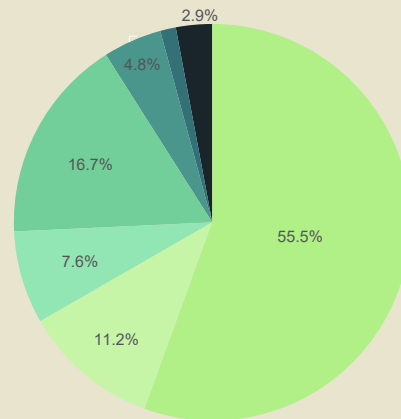
REVENUE



Donations	\$48,500
Plant Sale	\$46,500
Membership	\$22,000
Other Funding	\$11,500
Fundraising	\$9,000

REVENUE TOTAL \$137,500
NET REVENUE \$12,000

EXPENSES



Programs/Program Support	\$69,700
Plant Sale	\$14,000
Administration	\$9,500
Conservatory Grant	\$21,000
Donations	\$6,000
Membership	\$1,600
Fundraising	\$3,700

EXPENSES TOTAL \$125,500

PHOTO GALLERY

