FRIENDS OF THE OAK PARK CONSERVATORY

2022 ANNUAL REPORT















Dear Friend,

For years we have strived to connect more people with plants and nature through our work at the Oak Park Conservatory. We felt the setback of Covid 19 and have been steadily emerging from the pandemic with a fresh vision of engaging our community.

From toddlers and caregivers attending weekly story time or our monthly Toddler Exploration Time to offering robust gardening lectures for our adult plant lovers, we have felt a resurgence in program attendance that surpasses our prepandemic levels.

These programs are only possible with our dedicated volunteers behind the scenes planning for months at a time. Our program is 150+ volunteers strong and they bring their best to help us create enticing, engaging programs tailored to the wide community base.

Some of the highlights from the past year include:

- Almost 500 volunteer hours went into last year's Plant Sale effort. Thousands of plants were sold and made their way
 into gardens throughout our community. We were delighted to partner with the Park District of Oak Park for this
 fundraiser. What an amazing feat.
- Discovery Garden Exploration Time returned with great fanfare and support from our community. We welcomed
 over 650 guests to explore hands-on nature-themed activities over the summer. This free program returns in 2023 on
 Thursdays beginning in June.
- KidsFest returned with renewed enthusiasm in 2022 attracting almost 300 guests. Our popular free annual family event featured the theme of Animal Mysteries! Children enjoyed an opportunity to meet a pigeon and engage in several STEM activities, all while solving the mysteries of our native Illinois wildlife.

The Friends hosted a Spring Open House where members of the community could get plants repotted by Master Gardeners. Our school tour program welcomed over 900 participants through the Conservatory doors. We supported Park District events such as Fright at Night, the Winter Greens Market, and the Candlelight walk with a steady stream of volunteers. Out in the community, we grew engagement with FOPCON presence at the Oak Park Farmers Market Bake Sale, A Day in Our Village, and What's Blooming on Harrison Street.

Based on the community response to our programs, and the enthusiasm of our volunteers, we feel inspired and encouraged to keep growing our programs. Our Strategic Action Plan focuses on casting the net wider to attract participation from communities surrounding Oak Park. We want to invite neighbors who have never been to the Conservatory to experience it firsthand. We have plans in place to do just that. We'll also be expanding our programming in the near future, both to focus on programs for seniors as well as to include a Spanish language option.

We have a lot to look forward to and are grateful for your support in achieving our goals.

Sincerely,

Sue Boyer President

Judy Klem Executive Director



FRIENDS PURPOSE, VISION & VALUES





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

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Initiative #4: Strengthen Relationship with the Oak Park Conservatory

MEMBERSHIP OAK PARK CONSENTIONS

In fiscal year 2022 FOPCON hosted twelve free online lectures for gardeners and plant enthusiasts. The lectures were very popular, drawing over 900 registrants. Our speakers explored a fascinating array of topics from seed starting for beginners and square foot gardening to growing your own mushrooms and tomatoes and caring for orchids and African violets.

The orchid lecture by Dr. Kay Perry received such an enthusiastic response that we invited her to our June 2022 Annual Member Meeting. Dr. Perry led everyone in a very enjoyable hands-on orchid repotting activity. Kayla Chase, our former Membership Chair, provided orchids for members who didn't bring their own.

At the Annual Meeting we thanked Kayla for her outstanding work as Membership Chair, especially her efforts to find knowledgeable and entertaining speakers for our lecture series. We bid her a fond farewell on her move to Canada. In October Ramona Ramos-Sullivan and Kathy FioRito volunteered to be the new Membership Co-chairs.

Our goal is to raise awareness of FOPCON's member benefits and offer new incentives to join/renew your membership in the Friends. FOPCON's membership total in FY 2022 was 561. Our 2023 Membership Drive runs until March 31. Help us spread the word!

-- by Ramona Ramos-Sullivan and Kathy FioRito, Membership Co-Chairs



Missed a lecture?

Our online archive is available for lectures, going back to 2020!

Click here to watch previous FOPCON lectures:

https://fopcon.org/ previous-lectures-andevents/

















Annual Member Meeting Thursday, June 15, 7pm

Members are invited to join us for the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. We will elect our Board of Directors for the 2023-2025 term. Watch your email for more information about our Annual Meeting.

Please join us!

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS





















The FOPCON Education Committee reemerged in February 2022 with an in-person Toddler Exploration Time (TET) program. FOPCON's TET program engages young learners with stories, lessons and crafts led by our education volunteers. The participation through May was over 250.

Our Committee continued to engage with families in March 2022 by participating in Kidsfest, FOPCON's annual family event. Over 260 adults and children attended the event. The children enjoyed hands-on activities with the theme of "Animal Mysteries."

Over 650 adults and children participated in last summer's Discovery Garden Exploration Time free drop-in program held in the Discovery Garden.

> -- by Barbara Pagniucci and Kathie Walsh, **Education Co-Chairs**





Expanding Minds with Docent-Led Tours

Our docent-led school tours feature four distinct ecosystems and are aligned with the Illinois State Standards for science. Tours are designed for each age group and tailored to the needs of the group. Students travel through each habitat, see different soils, learn the structure of plants, and more. In FY22 we hosted over 900 tour participants.

In December, we were delighted to welcome 5th graders from a school in Cicero for their first-ever visit to the Oak Park Conservatory. We asked the students at the beginning of the tour if they had ever been to the Conservatory -- not a single hand was raised! It was such an uplifting feeling to introduce these kids to this treasure in our community.

This was the first school to take advantage of the newly launched Tour Grant Program after it was put on hold during the pandemic. The Tour Grant is for underserved communities and schools who do not have the funds to cover the cost of a docent-led tour. We are piloting the program now - our goal is to offer the grant to 500 students per year.

Another special moment with this group: we offered our very first docent-led tour in Spanish. It was incredible to witness this experience — both the docent and the kids were excited by this.

The Friends have great potential to impact lives in many different ways. From free early childhood programs to adult educational gardening lectures to special events for families, our work is only possible with support from our members, volunteers, and donors.

KidsFest 2023: Life Under a Log

Join us on April 16, 2023, for KidsFest our popular family event presented by the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. This year's theme, Life Under a Log will showcase the FrogLady! Discover and learn about amazing amphibians and reptiles while seeing them live and up close. Plus children will have an opportunity to learn about native Illinois wildlife from our partners from Trailside Museum, The Field Museum, Oak Park Public Library, and Illinois Master Naturalists.

Wildlife experts from the local Trailside Museum of Natural History will share the world of microscopy as guests examine live worms, crickets, and beetles found under fallen logs.

Illinois Master Naturalists will invite guests to touch and search the terrain of a decomposing log and identify the organisms they discover. Guests will also find local wildlife posters and preserved collections of amphibians and woodpeckers that rely on snags and fallen logs for habitat and food sources. Discover why the decimation of local ash trees has attracted the elusive pileated woodpecker to the Chicagoland area!

The Oak Park Public Library "Book Bike" will be at KidsFest! The OPPL Book Bike will be at KidsFest stocked with relevant materials! Enjoy hearing stories and perusing resources about wildlife and forests with library staff.

Registration is required for this FREE event on April 16.

-- by Sundeepa Kaur and Wendy Negron, KidsFest Co-Chairs

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















Plant Sale Inspires Love of Gardening, Community Spirit!

The 33rd Annual Plant Sale took place in May 2022. We are pleased to host this popular community fundraiser made possible by the extraordinary efforts of FOPCON volunteers, along with the support of the Conservatory staff. In keeping with our mission, proceeds from the Plant Sale support a wide variety of FOPCON programs and special Oak Park Conservatory projects.

Over the last few years, patrons have enjoyed the ease of making their early plant selections online and then picking up their beautiful plants boxed and ready to go at our convenient drive by pickup point.

Another wonderful Plant Sale is in the works for 2023! The 2023 collection brings back favorites but introduces several new varieties in the marketplace. A good mix of edibles and ornamentals is now growing in the Conservatory greenhouses.

Everyone can start planning their garden and containers plantings very soon. The website will show beautiful photos and plant information you will need to make your selections.

SAVE THE DATE: 34th Annual Plant Sale

April 1: Website Opens-Member Online Sale Begins

April 16: Public Online Sale Begins

April 30: Online Sale Closes

May 9-10-11 Rehm Pool Parking Lot Pickup

-- by Mary Ellen Murphy, FOPCON Plant Sale Co-Chair

















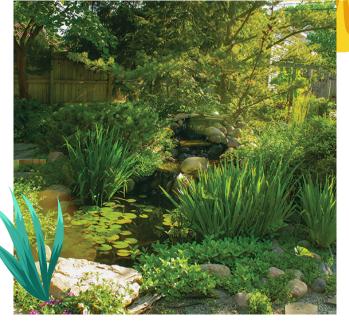






FOPCON EVENTS









Garden Walk Brings Community Together

The 28th annual Oak Park and River Forest Garden Walk was June 26, 2022. Over 800 participants enjoyed seven private gardens and a sustainable community garden planted by the Oak Park Temple. Each year the Garden Walk Committee strives to find a variety of beautiful gardens with interesting stories. Our 2022 Walk spotlighted many gems, including a zen garden featuring conifers and stone as well as a unique cottage-style garden with a French bathtub.

The Garden Walk is a community success story, thanks to the garden owners who generously share their gardens and to our event partner — the Garden Club of Oak Park and River Forest. Volunteers from FOPCON and the Garden Club collaborate on finding the gardens and organizing the event from start to finish. FOPCON and the Garden Club share the proceeds from this fundraiser. This year's Garden Walk raised almost \$13,000. The Garden Club's proceeds benefit scholarships and community projects. FOPCON's proceeds support projects that benefit the Oak Park Conservatory's mission.

-- by Kathy FioRito, Garden Walk Committee



































Uncorked Continues to Thrive!

FOPCON's Uncorked event in June 2022 was a magical evening. It was perfect weather to enjoy drinks and music and meet new and old friends in the Rubinstein Garden. The evening featured a special plein air painting demonstration by Oak Park Art League (OPAL) instructor Jackie Lakely. Jackie's involvement was the result of FOPCON's first-ever collaboration with theArt League. Jackie's engaging style drew many admirers. She graciously donated her completed painting to FOPCON to be raffled off.

Besides good conversation and music our guests enjoyed tours of the Conservatory showrooms and a raffle at each event, including wine and a gift certificate from McAdam Garden Center. Jackie's painting from our first Uncorked was on display until our September event when a lucky winner was selected.

Our Uncorked series drew over 425 attendees in 2022. We are grateful for the continued support of our local merchants, including Anfora Wine Merchants, Famous Liquors, Starship Subs, Happy Apple Pie Company, Taco Pros and Angie's Pantry. We also appreciated the participation of local artisan Tamara Koransky and merchants Olive and Well and Einnim (soaps and candles) in our Uncorked series.

Uncorked returns June-September 2023. Tickets are \$18 for FOPCON Members, \$20 for the General Public. Remember, FOPCON members can purchase tickets at a 10% discount! Become a member today to take advantage of this and many other benefits.

2023 Uncorked Dates:

Friday, June 23 Friday, July 28 Friday, August 25 Friday, September 29



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

VOLUNTEERS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Committee Report

The Volunteer Committee worked with the FOPCON staff to celebrate the return of volunteers following the COVID shutdown. As established volunteers returned and new volunteers came forward, we established new volunteer opportunities. Working with the Conservatory staff, volunteers provided additional support to a wide range of Conservatory programs.

As FOPCON continued its search for a Volunteer Coordinator, several members of the Volunteer Committee assisted in the selection process. The process provided guidelines for selection of a coordinator who would best meet the needs of FOPCON and its volunteers.

The highlight of the year was our Volunteer Celebration on September 6 at the Cheney Mansion. More than 70 volunteers and guests attended the event which recognized the many hours of service provided to FOPCON and the Oak Park Conservatory. Volunteers were able to learn more about the FOPCON committees and volunteer opportunities.

In November 2022 we welcomed Amy Lavery, our new FOPCON Program and Volunteer Coordinator. We're delighted that Amy has taken on this important role at the heart of FOPCON's mission.

We look forward to the new year as we hope to provide additional occasions for volunteers to socialize and to celebrate their important work.

-- Barbara Hunt, Volunteer Chair































2022 VOLUNTEERS





With Gratitude

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









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Andrea Lofgren Operations Manager



Amy Lavery Program and Volunteer Coordinator



We are grateful to the following donors who donated January 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023. Thank you for your generosity!

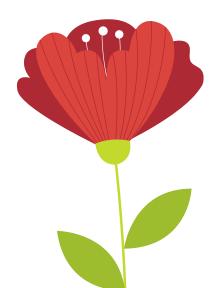
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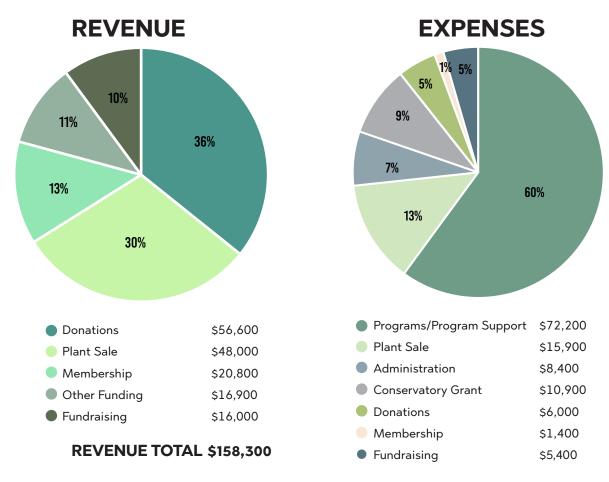


Sustaining the Conservatory for the Next Generation

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.

FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR FISCAL YEAR: OCTOBER 1, 2021 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2022



EXPENSES TOTAL \$120,200















































































