

A decorative pattern of green leaves in various shades (light green, medium green, and dark green) arranged in a dense, overlapping manner, covering the left side of the page.

2022

Annual Report

I am always proud to lead Oasis and be part of an organization with deep ties to our communities, especially as we’ve been working on a strategic plan following our 40th anniversary. The Oasis “Build the Future” approach to an aging America will address increased lifespans, a shifting distribution in age ranges, and the importance of technology. Plans include expanding our technology literacy curriculum with workforce development resources to help older adults navigate an increasingly virtual job search process, develop the basic skills needed to thrive in a modern work environment and enable older adults experiencing income insecurity to find meaningful work. Oasis will also be expanding our intergenerational volunteer opportunities, building a much larger literacy tutoring cohort of volunteers, and we will develop a math and STEM tutoring program to complement our work in childhood literacy and mentorship.

A longer life needs to be a healthier life, a purposeful life, and a life filled with social connections. Oasis is preparing for the next 40 years of work to improve older adults’ lives and our community more broadly by positioning older adults as solutions to challenges in the workplace, in education, and for our overburdened healthcare system.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for your steadfast support. Your partnership is essential as we build the future together.



Paul Weiss, Ph.D
President
Oasis

One of the things we know about living in the Rochester area is that even when the weather turns warm after a long winter, we enthusiastically turn our time and attention to refreshing our homes and preparing our gardens for the season’s first blooms. After two long and difficult pandemic years, the sun began to shine again. We planted the seeds for new growth in our organization and prepared for a welcome renewal of life-long learning programs that benefit so many of our participants.

- We came together to meet new people and strengthen valued relationships.
- We celebrated our return to in-person classes, including visits to area treasures like the Memorial Art Gallery, The Little, and Linwood Gardens.
- We continued to welcome new participants from all over the country using our newly learned skills to access remote learning.
- We celebrated our first anniversary of becoming our own non-profit agency.
- Our intergenerational tutoring program is re-emerging in the Churchville Chili Central School District

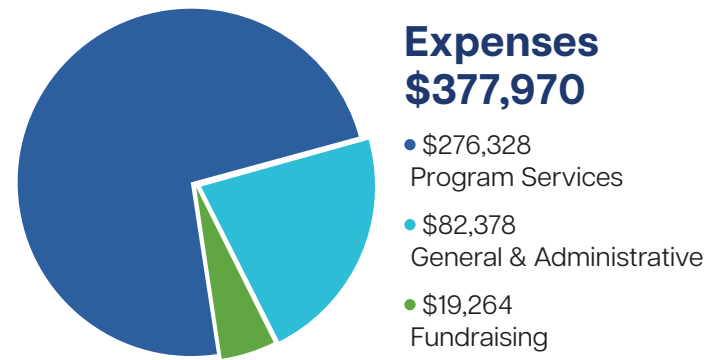
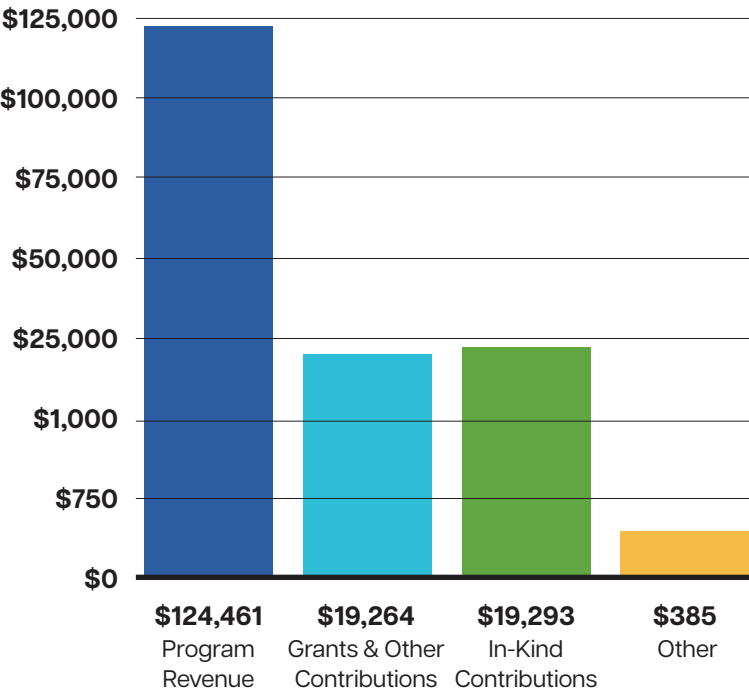
Oasis Rochester continues to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and healthy living. We don’t see aging as a number but as a time of opportunity for continued growth, which can also add to the quality of our life experiences. At Oasis Rochester, there is room for it all.



Ann Cunningham
Executive Director
Oasis Rochester

Oasis Rochester 2022 Impact & Financials

Revenue | \$163,403



To read more stories from Oasis centers across the country or to see our National Impact, please visit annualreport.oasisnet.org or **scan the QR code** with your phone camera.

Classic Shows Spark Entertaining Career

Otto Bruno has been leading entertainment classes for Rochester Oasis for six years. With a focus on movies, television, and music, he has covered performers from Dick Van Dyke to Ella Fitzgerald, as well as the films of Frank Capra. He recently wrote a book called “Barney Miller and the Files of the Ol’ One-Two.”

The youngest of four children with older parents, Otto grew up immersed in the Big Band era of music and classic television shows. “My father wasn’t interested in sports, but he loved movies and TV,” Otto says. “I started watching ‘Barney Miller on TV with my dad, and he died on the last episode of season two when I was 12. **Writing the book on Barney Miller kept me connected to him. Movies and TV became my escape.**”



As he got older, Otto sampled various jobs and ultimately became a freelance writer. **One of his magazine writing assignments was a profile on Sal Viscuso**, an actor who has appeared on dozens of TV shows and movies, including “M*A*S*H” and “Barney Miller.” Sal and Otto struck up a friendship that lasted for years.

“Sal suggested I write a book on Barney Miller and connected me to Max Gail and Hal Linden (pictured above)—actors

from the show,” Otto says. **“It took me five years to write the book I finished last summer.** Now my publisher wants me to write a second.”

Shortly before Otto wrote his book, he began channeling his creative curiosity as an Oasis instructor. Otto was hosting a radio show in Rochester that plays the classics from the Great American Songbook. One day, Jim Kraus, a longtime fan and Oasis instructor, called the radio station and invited Otto to talk as part of his Oasis class on Frank Sinatra. **“I had a ball speaking to the class,”** Otto says.

Otto soon began instructing his own Oasis classes, quickly gaining popularity. “My first class was on the Brooklyn Dodgers because I was fanatical about baseball as a kid,” he says. **“I started teaching one or two classes a semester, but now it’s every week.** I’m happy to keep memories alive with classes on nostalgic films, TV, and radio shows.”

“Oasis is such a great resource for the community. During COVID, I taught classes through Zoom. In some ways, it was fun to do it that way. But there’s nothing like the live interaction with people right in front of you.”

Teaching has become a natural outlet for Otto. “What I like about teaching adults is that they come to the class because they’re interested in the topic. They get as excited as I am. I joked for years that my only talent was talking and telling stories. I never had the guts to do stand-up comedy, but **I love nothing more than making people laugh while I’m teaching.**”

Every Minute Counts

When it was time to retire as an elementary music teacher, Sandy Wirth was pointed toward Oasis by a teacher friend.

“She urged me to at least take a class and see if I liked it,” Sandy says. **“So I took a German language class, and I’m still taking it ten years later.** I’ve also gone to many other classes and made so many friends. **We’re like groupies for some teachers.**”

When the pandemic hit, Sandy faithfully continued taking Oasis classes through Zoom. Her husband often joined her. **She even opened her door to a 94-year-old friend** who didn’t have a computer, so she accessed classes at Sandy’s house (pictured on right together).

“I was so pleased we could go online to take classes during COVID,” Sandy says. “Because we were so confined, Zoom won. Now we continue many classes online when we can so we don’t have to drive.”

However, Sandy is happy to drive the 45 minutes to Oasis for certain in-person classes, including her German class. “It’s fun to experience the enthusiasm of the people teaching the classes. And I like seeing friends and meeting new people. **These classes keep us thinking and challenging ourselves.**”

In addition to her German class, Sandy has taken art, history, and exercise classes. Surprisingly, she hasn’t taken any music classes, although she did attend the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra concerts through Oasis.



Oasis classes have been invaluable through good times and bad for Sandy. In 2022, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments. “My doctor said I had no restrictions, so Oasis has been a good thing for me as a distraction,” Susan says. **“I don’t want treatments to stop me from doing what I want.”**

Today, she continues taking two to three classes each week. “I love them. **My husband and I greatly enjoy retirement due to Oasis** because it gets you out, and you see places you didn’t know about.”

Lifelong Learner Follows Artistic Dream

Susan Carmen-Duffy grew up with an artist's soul. After high school, she received a full-ride scholarship to art school, but well-intentioned adults guided her away from that career path toward what they considered to be a “more practical” career. “It broke my heart,” Susan says.

Although her life took another path, her artistic spirit prevailed. As a working mother, she honed her art skills through reading, research, and practice; she participated in numerous art shows but needed more. “I wanted to do something with my art that gave me a real paycheck,” Susan says.



In her late 40s, she went back to college to pursue a degree in graphic design. After graduation, she declined a job working 80 hours a week in a marketing firm and decided to forge her own way instead. **“Sometimes in life, we pick up tools that we’re unsure how to use,”** she says. “But at some point, it becomes apparent.”

Twelve years ago, she opened her own art studio, offering workshops and supporting artists. **“I wanted to get more art into the world through my business, Create Art 4 for Good,”** the mixed-media artist says.

Today, she is a self-described “artist, writer, dreamer.” Susan’s success proves it’s never too late to learn or follow your dreams.

Four years after opening her art studio, she added another creative outlet by launching her greeting card company, Greeting 4 Good. “It was a way to translate my art and express sentiments as a writer,” she says. “And I’ve always loved sending cards!”

In the midst of her busy life, she was excited about the opportunity to teach art classes for Oasis for the past seven years.

“It’s so fulfilling and an incredible experience to show someone a new path they hadn’t explored,” she says. “For me, art is a different way to pray. I love opening the doors for different opportunities for others. My art is my oxygen.”

Susan aims to stoke a creative fire and make creating art more accessible. “I enjoy sharing the joy of art, especially with an older population,” Susan says. “Many students are retired, so they’re experimenting and figuring out what to do with their lives. They are often hesitant and nervous when they first come into the

studio. Then about 45 minutes in, this spark happens, and people get excited. You can’t put a price tag on seeing that spark. It’s why I do what I do.”

She teaches various artistic workshops, but mixed media is her favorite. “Every medium has grace and blessings, and when you put them together, it’s magic,” she says. “Some people are intimidated by watercolors, but the fire catches when I show them the basics and teach them some tricks. I don’t teach art; I facilitate it. Every time I pick up a brush, I learn something. This is the practice of art, and we’re all practicing. People need a jumping-off point to see how it works, and then they can take it in their own direction.”

Susan’s passion for art is contagious. In a recent workshop, she taught students how to make paper from supplies they already had. “Students said that it made them feel like a kid again and that it felt so good to have this level of joy,” she says. “I was in tears. **We often have things we want to try, but don’t allow ourselves the opportunity to explore them.**”

Today, nothing stops Susan from venturing down new paths or trying something new. “I don’t consider myself an expert in anything,” she says. “That’s why I’m a lifelong learner. **I feel every day is an opportunity to grow and learn.** I studied with other artists, returned to school as an older adult, and now have a new degree. **If I stop learning, I’ve given up.**”

Board of Directors

Dick Butler
President
Community Volunteer

Dawn Anderson
Director of Finance &
Administration | Oasis

Ann Duckett
Owner
Little Bleu Catering

Susan Friedman,
MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine
University of Rochester
Medical Center

Bonnie Fox *Secretary*
Community Volunteer

Pat Martinez
Treasurer
Community Volunteer

Connect with us!

Monroe Square
259 Monroe Avenue,
Rochester, NY 14607

(585) 730-8800
oasisnet.org/rochester

