

2022

Annual Report

I am always proud to lead Oasis

and be part of an organization with deep ties to our communities, especially as the leadership team has been working on a strategic plan following our 40th anniversary. The “Build the Future” plan focuses on several significant trends. **Over the next four decades, the anticipated average American lifespan will extend well beyond 100 years.** Advances in medicine and our understanding of the impact of lifestyle choices will add years of vitality to this long lifespan. At the same time, we will see a shift in the median age of Americans, meaning that **by 2034, adults over 65 will outnumber children 18 and under.** This shifting distribution of age ranges is already resulting in a shrinking of the American workforce, and this trend will likely outpace efficiencies gained through technological advancement. Similarly problematic is that older Americans are more likely to be alienated by swift technological advances in their personal lives and the workplace.

The Oasis “Build the Future” approach to an aging America will address these trends and challenges directly. **We are expanding our technology literacy curriculum to include relevant workforce development resources** that will 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 and meet the needs of employers during a time of increasing workforce scarcity. **Oasis will 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.

Oasis will continue our focus on community-based health improvement in partnership with BJC Community Health Improvement locally and with a diverse set of partners nationwide. 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.**



Paul Weiss, Ph.D.
President
Oasis

For the last five years, I’ve had the pleasure of serving as Board Chair for Oasis.

During that time, the world has seen many changes, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Oasis continued our important work with older adults, even though we shifted most of our programming online. **There were many challenges faced during this time, one of the most notable being social isolation and loneliness.**

As society emerges from the pandemic, **one thing that remains is the importance of social connection.** In fact, in May of 2023, the Surgeon General released an 85-page advisory declaring loneliness a new public health epidemic in the United States. The report states that **social connection is a critical and underappreciated contributor to individual and population health, community safety, resilience, and prosperity.** However, many Americans lack social connection in one or more ways, compromising these benefits and leading to poor health and other negative outcomes.

The good news is there are **organizations like Oasis that are addressing loneliness and social connection.** Expanding the social

footprint in the lives of older adults is the throughline for 100% of our work – and we’ve been doing this work for 41 years. Our long-standing history in the St. Louis community and **our work across the country has enabled Oasis to improve the lives of nearly 600,000 older adults.** As the nation’s demographics are shifting, and as social isolation increases, our work is even more crucial.

Whether people connect to Oasis through our expert-led lifelong learning, technology literacy and health and wellness courses, or by volunteering with our award-winning intergenerational tutoring program or in other roles, Oasis brings people together. **Whatever way you find yourself engaging with Oasis, we are glad you are here.** We look forward to keeping you socially connected for years to come.



Richard Miles
Board President
Oasis

Reading is a Springboard

“It’s the highlight of my week,” said Evan Bevirt when asked about his experience as an Oasis tutor. He currently tutors a first-grade student once a week, every week, in the Lindbergh School District.

Evan, a graphic designer, was **inspired to do something meaningful with his time when he retired.** For over six years now, Evan has been an active volunteer with Oasis Tutoring. Introduced to the program by a mutual friend, Evan quickly became a vocal presence in the room, sharing his experience, knowledge, and ideas with fellow volunteers.



During the pandemic, Evan created and published a color-along children’s book, “Pirate’s Treasure.” **He was inspired by the kids he tutored who struggled with both reading and writing,** and he thought his book might be one way to help. **“Reading is the springboard to everything,”** he said.

Here at Oasis, we agree! Reading is the springboard to everything, and we know our program is meeting a critical need. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant and wide-reaching impact on childhood education and literacy. Missouri was among the states hit hardest, with **66% of Missouri students testing below grade level in reading in 2022.**

Additionally, it’s no surprise that the pandemic impacted the well-being of older adults across the country, specifically regarding mental health. Researchers from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) reported that more than one-third of adults aged 45 and older felt lonely, and **nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older were socially isolated.**

Oasis programs are created to address the problem of isolation in older adults. The throughline in all of our work is social connection.

Our unique Intergenerational Tutoring program trains older adults to become reading tutors and places them in elementary schools throughout their community. By pairing older adults with younger children, this program is intentionally designed to maximize both the academic and social benefits of mentorship, and the results are in the feedback.

“I think I get as much out of it as the kids do!” Evan remarked. His story is echoed by many other Oasis tutors who find fulfillment and purpose in their roles. The program has also seen great success on the student side; **98% of students participating in the Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring program showed increased reading scores and comprehension.**

While many Oasis tutors are retired educators or school administrators, Evan is an example of someone who thrives in the role without a background in education. His story proves that **anyone can reap the rewards of the Oasis tutoring program.**

Evan continues to advocate for Oasis and urges everyone to try tutoring. **“A bunch of my friends are retiring right now, and I’m like, great! I have the perfect thing for you,”** he shared.



It’s easy to get involved in the Oasis tutoring program, and we are with you every step of the way! Oasis tutors receive full support from Oasis staff and formal training sessions to ensure they feel prepared and confident in their new role.

Becoming an Oasis tutor has opened many new doors for Evan and continues to open more!

If you, or someone you know, want to make a direct and meaningful impact in their community, please visit stloasis.org/tutoring or contact Mary Click at (314) 687-1117.

Connections & Cannolis

If you stroll through the historic St. Louis Hill district streets, you might see a captivating figure leading a group on a culinary adventure. **Meet Joe DeGregorio, a true St. Louis native and Oasis class instructor** who exudes passion for his neighborhood, city, and Oasis.



With **over a decade of involvement with Oasis**, Joe has become renowned for his iconic “Foodie Tours.” From Italian bakeries to delis, Joe’s extensive knowledge of history, culture, architecture, and food is boundless as he regales eager participants with decades-worth of tales.

His classes are in high demand, filling up quickly during registration thanks to his engaging teaching style and interesting topic selection.

Joe’s spectacular tours are a part of the Oasis Lifelong Learning programs, which offer a wide variety of classes and groups that older adults can register for and attend. From history lectures and biking groups to interviews with city leaders like the St. Louis Art Museum Director, these classes facilitate critical thinking and generate new connections and friendships.

The Lifelong Learning programs are just one-way Oasis harnesses the **power of community and connection to improve physical and mental well-being for older adults**. As Joe can attest, this method works. “I can’t stop doing it because it’s so fun and enlightening for the folks you work with,” he said.

“**People want to know. They want to hear and see** everything I have to show and tell them, which is different from anything else I do.” The unique community that Oasis has created through this program keeps instructors like Joe returning. Joe’s expertise is The Hill, but anyone passionate and knowledgeable about something can apply to teach an Oasis class. Oasis empowers our unique and diverse community to create their desired Oasis experience, whether

attending a course on Zoom, in-person, or teaching one themselves.

In a favorite memory that Joe shared, he explained that one of the best parts about working as an Oasis instructor is the freedom he gets over his classes and how **leading these classes encourages him to problem-solve and think creatively**.

Joe dressed to the nines as a mobster to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Prohibition era, and accompanied by friends in similar attire, took Oasis participants on a Prohibition-themed journey through the Hill. There, he showcased the neighborhood’s role in moonshine production during that period.

Joe brought the past to life with anecdotes and food samples, immersing his audience in a bygone era’s sights, sounds, and tastes. “You all push me to think outside the box and get creative – and I like that. **I’m always researching, always thinking about the next thing for the tours,**” Joe remarked.



Joe’s passion for Oasis and his community is palpable in every tour he leads, and his story is an excellent example of the success of Oasis programs.

“One of the things that give me, as the French call it, a ‘**Raison d’être**’ or **reason for being, is places like Oasis,**” he said.

As Oasis participants savor the treats of the Hill and absorb Joe’s wealth of knowledge, **they are left with a memorable experience and a newfound appreciation** for this vibrant St. Louis community.

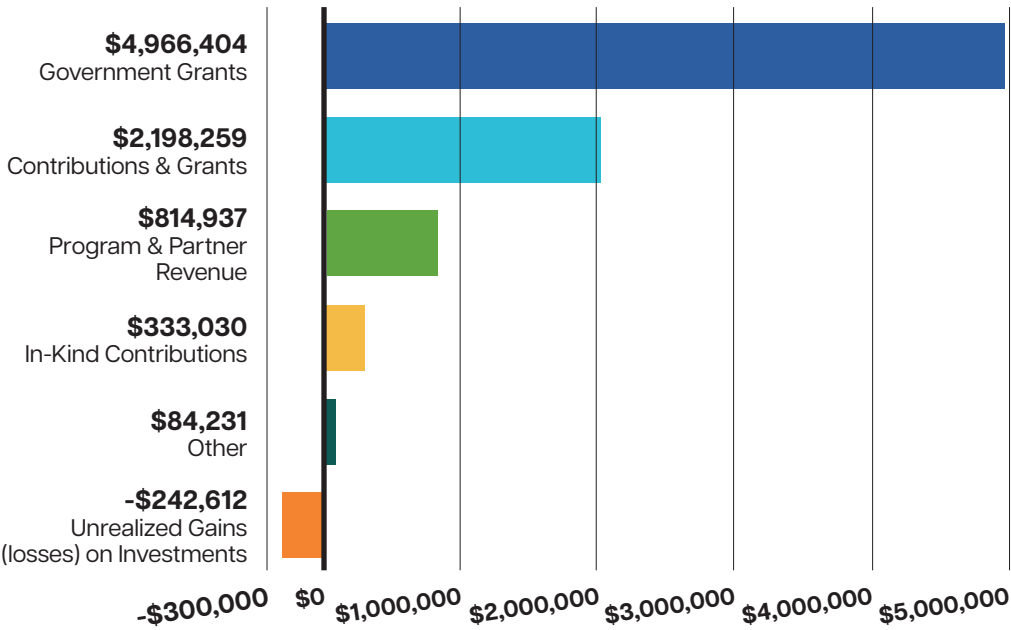
Partnering with St. Louis Oasis helps give Joe purpose.

Create connections, find purpose, and share your passions by becoming an Oasis instructor. Contact Juliet Simone at jsimone@oasisnet.org, or visit us at stloasis.org.

Oasis Institute
2022 National Financials & Impact

**Source: 2022 Consolidated Financial Audit*

Revenue | \$8,154,249



Expenses
\$9,463,688

- \$4,670,127 Health Programs
- \$1,221,729 Education Programs
- \$1,082,796 Volunteer Programs
- \$495,256 Tech Literacy Programs
- \$1,597,279 Administrative
- \$396,501 Fundraising

412
elementary school partners across the country

3,006
tutors served as mentors to students

85,791
participants enrolled in Oasis programs

3,110
students tutored across the country

195,387
volunteer hours provided to local communities

2,990
older adults provided volunteer service to local communities

1,117
communities served across the country

40 Years
celebrated serving older adults

Partnerships Make Way for New Possibilities



Community partnerships have been critical to the success and growth of Oasis since our founding in 1982. Fast forward over 40 years later, and that is still the case today. We are thrilled to have the support of two esteemed grant-making organizations, the Jefferson Foundation and the Norman J. Stupp Foundation, who have chosen to invest in Oasis programming, specifically in Jefferson County.

Thanks to this funding, Oasis has expanded our services and made a meaningful impact on the lives of older adults and children in Jefferson County. Currently, we boast a dedicated team of volunteers (a few pictured on the far right) who serve over one hundred ever-growing participants who benefit from our programs. Through the steadfast support of grantors like the

Jefferson and Stupp Foundations, our work is made accessible to those who need it the most.

When asked about the partnership between Oasis and the Jefferson Foundation, Melissa (Missy) Endres, Executive Vice President of the Jefferson Foundation, said, “I don’t know of anyone else providing the same services that Oasis is in this area, and that stands out. I do believe you truly are providing a unique service to the community and an important service.”

The Jefferson Foundation is dedicated to improving the community and empowering local nonprofits through a focus on health. “I think we both have the same desire to help our community and the same desire to help people stay healthy and active. It’s a direct connection between our mission and Oasis programs,” added Missy.



With the Jefferson Foundation’s help, Oasis has provided exercise and health classes to older adults in Jefferson County with great success; according to a recent survey, “88% of participants said that they were better able to manage their health as a result of participation in Oasis health programs,” due to participation in the program.

Similarly, the Norman J. Stupp Foundation divides its focus into three areas: strengthening the region, building strong communities, and helping youth succeed. The Oasis Intergenerational Tutoring program is a perfect match for this, and funding from the Stupp Foundation allows Oasis to train more tutors, reach more struggling readers, and expand our impact in Jefferson County schools. Oasis tutors are currently in five different school districts throughout Jefferson County.



Through our partnerships, Oasis, the Norman J. Stupp Foundation, and the Jefferson Foundation are working together to make a lasting impact on the lives of older adults and students in our community.

If you are a funder who shares our vision and wants to help Oasis expand our services, please contact Jo Flannery, at jflannery@oasisnet.org.



Healthy Habits for a Healthier Life



Research has shown that social and lifestyle factors, including access to healthy food and nutrition education can significantly impact health and well-being as we age.

The CDC recently reported that “eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help protect against several serious and costly chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and obesity.”

More importantly, this report also noted that many Americans need greater access to fresh produce and adequate nutrition information. Due to health and mobility challenges, older adults may find cooking and shopping for nutritious meals extra challenging.

To help our communities improve their aging experience, Oasis developed our Virtual Healthy Habits program to make quality nutrition education available and

easily accessible for older adults. As one participant said, “It gave me confidence again.”

Virtual Healthy Habits is an interactive group-based course held entirely online. Over a series of ten sessions, held twice a week, participants learn about the benefits and components of a healthy, balanced diet and tips for meal preparation and planning.

One of the critical features of the program is meal delivery. Oasis sends participants the ingredients and recipes they need to create healthy, nutritious meals in their own homes. The recipes have detailed instructions, and participants can see demonstrations, ask questions, and share experiences with their peers.

“You get the food delivered, and you don’t have to go to the store to get anything. You even get to pick the recipe. They give you everything, and you have options,” one participant shared.

As with all Oasis programs, another critical component of this program is the social connection participants experience during the classes.

“We were all good at giving one another suggestions and inspiring one another... it was like having some friends over for lunch because we could sit down in front of our

computers and share what we were eating and just chat,” said one Virtual Healthy Habits participant.

At Oasis, we know the positive impact social connection can have on health and well-being as we age.

With the help of our partners and funders, Oasis proudly offers Virtual Healthy Habits free of cost. Everyone should have access to the resources they need to live a long and healthy life, including a balanced diet.

Whether you’re in your 60s, 70s, 80s, or even 90s, it’s always possible to make positive changes that can influence your health for decades. As one participant said, “Rush to do it so you can be in the next group– you’ll get so much out of it!”

Learn more about the Virtual Healthy Habits program at stloasis.org/VHH, or by contacting Emir Kandzetic emir@oasisnet.org.



273 participants served in the program

1,365 meals have been prepared by Virtual Healthy Habits participants

“I thoroughly enjoyed this program. I wish there was more like this especially being able to zoom and meet new people. I ate food I never would have tried on my own and have bought more of these interesting foods.”

– Virtual Healthy Habits Participant

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**in blessed memory*

Funders

Administration for Community Living

AgeSmart

Aging Ahead

The Bellwether Foundation

BJC HealthCare

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Boniface Foundation

The Bridgeton Landfill Community Project
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Dollar General Literacy Foundation

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Connect with us!

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