



Levy Senior Center
Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



Stillness & Change

LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR



Dear Friends,

We are forever altered by the events of 2020. While we give thanks for the light at the end of the tunnel, our hearts go out to the 2.3 million world citizens who lost their lives to COVID-19.

In the blink of an eye, we went from connecting in person at the Levy Center to gathering online as a collective community.

We quickly sought new ways to adapt and connect, and we worked together to tackle new technologies while preserving the integrity of our analog population. This allowed us to gather safely and virtually to relieve our feelings of fear and isolation. With the assistance of volunteers, we helped many older adults remain engaged and digitally connected through free technology consultations.

In an effort to address the new needs of our older adult community during a difficult time, the Foundation brought the Levy Lecture Series online with more programs than ever before. We also expanded existing local partnerships and brought forth new community relationships. In collaboration with Northlight Theatre, we were able to bring the performance arts to hundreds of Levy Center community members with streamed performances. The Northlight/LSCF High Lights writing workshop continues to thrive and grow. Thanks to the Evanston History Center, we were able to host a series of masked, socially distant walking tours of Black Cultural Sites in Evanston. We also hosted the largest Jamming Jean concert event ever, thanks to the incredible Corky Siegel and Lynne Jordan.

As Chair of the Levy Senior Center Foundation, I invite you to join us as we work to achieve new goals in 2021, starting with a continued commitment to digital accessibility. In partnership with the City, our primary goal is to complete the full renovation of the Linden Room in early summer. It will be a hybrid meeting place that is handicap accessible, has a user-friendly floor, and includes an electric partition for flexible usage. With your help, this project will enable us to further expand our reach and meet the needs of our changing world and community.

As we move forward, we will work even harder to strengthen our community connections and partnerships to create and support programs that improve the quality of lives of all older adults in our community.

Be safe, be well, and be kind,

Judy Newton

Chair

Levy Senior Center Foundation

LSCF Board

Judy Newton
Chair

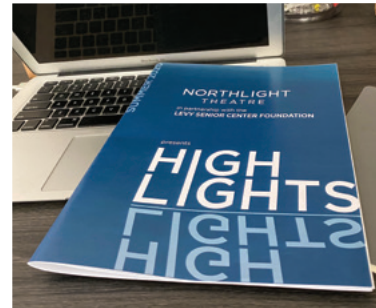
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Tapping Creativity from Home

While the months of quarantine were frustrating for all, the mandated alone time turned out to be a catalyst for creativity for our Levy Senior Center community members. As the months wore on, the LSCF worked hard to create new and stimulating at-home opportunities for older adults 55+.

Virtual Writer's Workshop

In late summer, the Foundation partnered with Northlight Theatre to launch a virtual Writer's Workshop. Underwritten by the LSCF through the Dennis Newton Scholarship Fund and taught by Northlight facilitators, the High Lights writer's workshop began as a pilot and blossomed into three cohorts in 2020 throughout the fall.

The workshops continue today including a continuing writer's group for alumni. The Northlight teaching artists provided the story prompts via Zoom webinar as well as writing/telling guidelines, including length and tone. The LSCF hand delivered notebooks and pens to all program participants.

At the end of the 4-week session, stories written in notebooks were

collected, compiled and printed. Lastly, each participant received a copy of the book of stories.

LSCF 2020 Photo Contest

Inspired by a desire to share our experiences during a difficult time, the LSCF launched its first photo contest in late 2020. With more than 200 photos submitted by Levy Center community members, Michael Mauney, former LIFE and People magazine photographer and contest judge, had a hard time selecting a winner. So hard, in fact, that he divided the submissions into five categories: Best in Show, People, Places, Selfies and Mood.

"I was incredibly impressed with the effort shown in the staging and captioning of the photos which so vividly depicted the story of the unusual and unique year that was 2020," Mauney said.

The top prize went to Jan McReynolds for "Playing it Safe," a photo in which McReynolds plays cards with two mannequins (wearing masks, of course!)

To view the 2020 photo contest winners please visit the LSCF website. And if you enjoy photography, start curating your favorite snaps for the 2021 photo contest, slated for this fall!

“

The Levy Senior Center has provided a well of opportunities for 2020!

Penny Geigner
community member

Clockwise from top left: Best in show photo, "Playing it Safe" by Jan McReynolds; "Levy Levity," first prize photo in the People category by Christine Bowman; High Lights Writer's Workshop program guide.

Building Community Through Virtual Events

Without a doubt, 2020 was a tough year, and one that involved big changes in the ways we communicate with and between our older adult community. Thanks to web technology, our community partners and your generous support, the Foundation was able to quickly adapt.

Levy Lectures

When the pandemic hit, the LSCF jumped into action and moved the acclaimed Levy Lecture Series online to a webinar platform, Zoom, connecting to guest speakers—and each other. It wasn't long before we realized that previously unknown interactive video technology was, in fact, a gift that allowed us to tap a much wider viewer network, resulting in a remarkable expansion of our digital footprint — and our audience. We quadrupled the number of lectures from monthly to weekly and diversified our topics, furthering our goal to help our at-home Seniors stay connected and engaged. With a speaker lineup that included scientists, social activists, authors, photographers, physicians, storytellers, and historical impersonators, the Virtual Levy Series in 2020 was a highlight for many.

Jamming Jean

We were lucky to host Chicago's own Dee Alexander live before the lockdown, and her band played to more than 350 guests who gathered at the Levy Center to hear Alexander's soulful R&B compositions. Later, in early December, the LSCF blew the virtual roof off with a rocking holiday concert featuring harmonica legend Corky Siegel and vocalist Lynne Jordan.

This hybrid pre-recorded/live concert experience drew our largest Jamming Jean crowd to date with 1000 registrations, bringing the Levy Senior Center Foundation to new heights with help from Emmy-winning director, producer and editor John Anderson, who produced the show.

Technology Assistance

In 2020, our computers, iPads and phones became lifelines. To that end, the LSCF found a group of willing and enthusiastic volunteers to help troubleshoot computer connection problems. Our valued teen volunteers addressed a wide variety of issues, including helping with Zoom setups, to help Levy Senior Center members stay engaged and participate in online programming. We received several emails from grateful Seniors who took advantage of the tech assistance option and, as a result, were better able to connect and communicate with friends and family. For older adults with low vision or an impairment, the LSCF also engaged a new volunteer to help older adults with low vision navigate the best resources for help.

Online Classes

When in-person classes were suspended due to Covid-19, the Foundation worked with the City staff to bring many group activities to life on the web. The presentation of regular Zoom Bingo and Zoom Yoga classes helped ease the monotony of the stay-at-home order, allowing for personal interaction and, more importantly, the opportunity to move and exercise. "You gave us free exercise classes during lockdown. Thank you." said Meg Simonton, a community member.





Virtual Performances

Thanks to our community partners, the arts came alive in 2020. Another positive outcome, was gaining access for our members through streaming technology to what before were limited capacity, ticketed performances.” Northlight Theatre generously offered free admission to a wide variety of shows including “The Outgoing Tide,” featuring the late John Mahoney, and

the blockbuster “Women of Broadway” concert series featuring Patti LuPone, Laura Benanti, and Vanessa Williams, streamed live from New York’s Shubert Virtual Studios. Levy Senior Center Foundation community members were also invited to register for a benefit reading of “MERCY” as part of Northlight Theatre’s Interplay New Play Development program.

“

It was exciting to see Jamming Jean come alive online. Thanks to Corky and Lynne for helping us bring joy to our largest audience ever!

Hugo Rodriguez

LSCF board member

Page 4: Levy Lecture speakers Kathy Borrus and Chris Benson; Singer Vanessa Williams; and teen volunteer Meg Barthelemy delivering Bingo prizes. Page 5: Corky Siegel and Lynne Jordan and volunteer instructors teaching Zoom yoga.

The Foundation for
**Community
Connections**



**Spreading roots in the community
Keeping the Levy Senior Center strong**



ity.
ong.

**Cultivating connections.
Thanks to you we're growing.**

Building Community Through Outdoor Experiences

After the shock of a spring spent inside, the arrival of a beautiful summer that lasted long into fall allowed us to recharge and keep our sanity in check. Time outside was a much-needed respite, and the Levy Senior Center Foundation worked hard to help our community maximize the opportunity to get out and take time to breathe.

Walking Tours

As soon as we could gather safely, the LSCF in late fall partnered with the Evanston History Center to conduct five socially distant walking tours of Black Cultural Sites of Evanston to celebrate local history. Interest was so great in these tours that all five sold out immediately, with more planned for spring 2021.

Garden Improvements

Providing support to maintain and improve the Levy Senior Center and the areas outside it is at the core of our mission. Over the summer, the LSCF funded and managed the complete refurbishing of the Center's front entry and side gardens. Evanston Township High School teen volunteers and LSCF board members worked diligently to maintain and water the gardens as the summer progressed and temperatures rose. For Evanston teen Bennett Pascal, helping out with the center gardens was a chance to do his part while the Center was quiet.

"It was rewarding to not only give back to our community of Seniors but our city as well during these times of hardships," Pascal said. "I can speak for everyone in saying we are proud of what we accomplished and are grateful for the opportunity to serve our community."



Top: Kris Hartzell of the Evanston History Center leads a tour of Black Cultural Sites of Evanston. Bottom: Levy Senior Center front gardens after renovation.

“
The Evanston History Center was happy...to explore some of Evanston's rich African American cultural heritage and stay connected with this walking tour.

Kris Hartzell

Director of Facilities, Visitor Services and Collections, Evanston History Center



Gifts in Action

In 2020, the LSCF focused on meeting the new needs of older adults resulting from the pandemic. As we moved from in-person to digital interactions, the LSCF not only evolved its current programming, but created new opportunities to help Seniors stay connected during a time of isolation.

Some highlights:

- Moved Levy Lecture Series online and increased lectures to weekly from monthly
- Provided tech assistance for Seniors to more easily engage online
- Launched High Lights Writer's Workshop in partnership with Northlight Theatre
- Offered free streaming concerts made possible by Northlight Theatre
- Produced our first virtual Jamming Jean Concert (our largest ever!)
- Partnered with the Evanston History Center to host Black history cultural walking tours
- Organized our first community Photo Contest
- Funded a major garden renovation
- Secured funding for and began the Linden Room renovation



It Takes a Village

During a year of big changes, the Levy Senior Center continued to serve as a critical focal point for Seniors in need thanks to hard work and commitment of the Center staff. Programs such as the Congregate Meal Program continued to operate and the Center became a key vaccination site for residents. When the Center reopened, the LSCF donated 4,000 masks to help keep our valued community safe. Lastly, the Linden Room Project is officially underway! We are in the final fundraising stages to complete this state-of-the-art meeting and event room, featuring an accessible loop audio system to assist the hearing impaired, enhanced video technology, electric partitions and special safety flooring.

Gifts Received 2020

Number of Gifts Received: 579

Total Gift Amount: \$222,681

Gift Designations:

Linden Room Renovations	\$150,618
Dennis Newton Scholarship Fund	\$2,845
Fran Randall Concerts	\$2,096
IL Senior Olympics Sponsorship	\$340
Jamming Jean Concerts	\$6,250
Center Entry Gardens	\$5,000
Levy Lectures	\$9,000
Art Equipment	\$2,500
Senior Lunch Program	\$1,100
UNIPER	\$1,500
Unrestricted	\$41,432

Clockwise from top left: Renovations have begun on the Linden Room with a slated completion date of early summer; community members received their vaccinations at the Center; the Congregate Meal program continued during the pandemic.

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Every effort has been made to make sure this list is accurate. We apologize for any omissions or misspellings. Please let us know. Write to contact@lscfevanston.org.



A Bright, Hopeful Year Ahead

We are heartened by news of friends and neighbors receiving their first and second vaccinations. As we prepare to come together again and celebrate coming together again in person, we are excited to share a few of our 2021 plans and goals with you.

Raised Vegetable Beds

This year we will be jumping into a variety of new garden projects. Top of the list is the installation of a new raised vegetable garden with help from the Evanston Garden Club and the ETHS Service Club/Art Department. This new community garden will serve as a learning opportunity for our older adult volunteers and the vegetables harvested will be distributed to the community. The beds are unique in their design as they are raised (hip level) for easy seated or standing planting and tending by Senior gardeners. The LSCF will be looking for donors who wish to underwrite this exciting new project, so stay tuned!

The Foundation also will be supporting the maintenance of the north and south gardens, upgrading the water and irrigation system, and installing new bird houses as part of a new

Adopt-A-Birdhouse fundraising initiative. We also plan to continue to work with the City on the Rothschild Garden.

Online Accessibility

Zoom webinar technology is a wonderful tool that allows our programming to reach far beyond the Center itself. So, even as the pandemic subsides, we are making a commitment to continuing to host virtual Levy Lectures and other online programs, in addition to live events. Engaging Seniors, wherever they may live, is at the crux of our mission, and we welcome the opportunity to continue to expand our community.

Providing Inspiration

The Foundation will continue to support the Center's key projects such as Inspire Through Flowers, a group facilitated by Center staff members that provides fresh arrangements to help brighten the lives of Seniors in hospitals, and veteran's facilities.

Longevity Series

The LSCF is proud to sponsor the new Levy Longevity Series to inform and connect older adults on the topic of aging well. The program is brought to you by AMITA Health, the LSCF and the Levy Senior Center. Our first online discussion was led by Dr. Jonathan Maks, who answered questions related

to the COVID-19 vaccine. We are looking forward to growing our partnership as this new series evolves.

Connect With Us

For the latest information about LSCF and Levy Senior Center events, please "like" us on Facebook at facebook.com/LevySeniorCenterFoundation. You can also access event dates, lecture recordings, news and a link to donate online by visiting the LSCF website at lscfevanston.org. Have an idea for a speaker or event? Email us at contact@lscfevanston.org or call (847) 238.2659.

“
The Levy Center
has provided me
with ways to
keep myself
healthy during
the Pandemic.

—
Karen Weine
community member

Mission

The Levy Senior Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3), operates to improve the quality of life for Evanston Seniors by soliciting monies to supplement the Levy Senior Center's operating budget. In partnership with the City of Evanston, we seek to improve the Center, its programs and resources.