



Levy Senior Center
Foundation

Listening & Adapting

LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR



Dear Friends,

It was another year of pandemic related challenges for so many of our most vulnerable and isolated Evanston elders. Thanks to your generous donations, we were still able to complete some impressive indoor and outdoor upgrades to our facility. These upgrades allowed us to continue supporting the needs of our diverse members with a variety of recurring virtual and in person community building programs and special events.

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Indoors, we're proud to announce the completion of Bobby's Room, our new high-tech multi-purpose event space complete with enough sophisticated audio-visual equipment to enable an array of online and offline workshops, performances, classes, and lectures.

Outdoors, with help from the Garden Club of Evanston and the addition of four new vegetable gardens to our grounds, we were able to combat food insecurity and offer free fresh produce to all our members throughout the growing season. Thanks to the assistance of a small group of dedicated volunteers, our new gardens quickly became a lively gathering site for spontaneous fellowship and impromptu recipe sharing.

As for our 2021 programming highlights, we continued to expand our robust virtual audience with more online writing workshops and theatrical performances (courtesy of the Dennis Newton Scholarship Fund and the Northlight Theatre), more remote offerings from our Levy Lectures Series, Levy Longevity Series, Fran Randall Music Series, and more of our popular virtual Bingo facilitated by the Women's Club of Evanston.

Of all the well-attended programs we delivered last year, I must reserve special mention for last fall's Jamming Jean concert in James Park where an all ages crowd of more than 500 gathered to dance their pandemic cares away beneath a sky streaked first by lightning and then, just before sunset, by a full rainbow. After many lonely months where so many of us remained largely trapped indoors, it felt like a rare and lucky mash-up of natural world wonder and happy human connections.

I have to believe that shared moments and connections like these will forever draw our community together as we continue to age, learn, love, and grow.

Looking forward to seeing you all virtually or in person in 2022!

With hope, health, and happiness,

Judy Newton
Chair, Levy Senior Center Foundation



Clockwise from top left: Evanston Mayor Daniel Biss officially opens Bobby's Room with LSCF Board Chair Judy Newton; Inspire Through Flowers members who donated arrangements for the event; Ruben Carrazan and Christina Lepri from Northlight Theatre; Board Members Dorrance Halverson and Toni Sims enjoy refreshments; Jeri Nolen speaking at the ceremony.

“
Modernization
of the room and
new technology
will create even
more opportunity
to do meaningful
things together.”

—
Daniel Biss
Evanston Mayor

A Flexible New Space for All

September 13 marked the festive reopening of the Linden Room, renamed Bobby's Room, after a major renovation. To provide our diverse community with more equitable access to the Levy Senior Center's many resources, a group of stakeholders, including Foundation board members, local business and nonprofit partners, private donors, and City leaders, came together to relaunch the space as a state of the art hub for greater virtual outreach and more inclusive on-site programming. New hybrid features include upgraded

audiovisual equipment optimized for the hearing impaired and for making and sharing more high quality digital content. New anti-glare window shades and ADA approved seating and flooring now better serve the needs of older adults with different physical abilities. A new electric partition now allows the space to simultaneously serve more than one group. New custom cabinets, built by a local artisan, hold all the equipment necessary to support this dynamic new room's expanded usage.

Top row pp 4-5: New garden beds in front of the Levy Senior Center; volunteers weeding and watering; zucchini harvest last fall; birdhouses styled by local artists in the courtyard

Bottom row p 5: Mainstage actors from Northlight Theatre performing "Fireflies" for Arts for Everyone; Dr. Maks, before speaking about Covid, for our Levy Longevity Series



New Initiatives to Nurture Our Community

Last year, despite the pandemic, the LSCF managed to enrich the lives of hundreds of Evanston seniors from many different cultural backgrounds. Our successes included everything from new partnerships, to new programs, to new diversity and sustainability focused upgrades to the Levy Senior Center's building and grounds.

Edible Gardens to Fight Food Insecurity

Around the Center's main entrance, the LSCF oversaw the planting of four new edible gardens, each seeded to support a different ethnic cooking tradition and provide our members, some of whom regularly go hungry, with fresh free produce. This year's gardens, for example, focused on producing ingredients commonly used by Latin Americans, Native Americans, and Italians. In 2022, that list continues to grow with four additional gardens which will include American Soul Food, Lao Laos Asian Garden and Grandma's Root Cellar.

Art Installations to Build Connections

The Hulda B. and Maurice L. Rothschild Enabling Garden, in the Levy Senior Center's courtyard, also got some love in 2021 with the addition of ten new decorative birdhouses. Built by one of our board members, an enterprising ETHS volunteer then arranged to have each birdhouse uniquely painted by a different local artist. All together, these birdhouses now imbue the garden with a sense of our community's vibrant artistic diversity. To better encourage our members to meet, mingle, and enjoy these ten new art pieces in the open air, the LSCF also paid to refurbish the courtyard's outdoor furniture and receptacles.

Native Birds to Enliven Our Habitat

In a thematically related donation, the set designers at the Northlight Theatre gave us three additional birdhouses that are all fully functional. Each birdhouse was custom built to attract a different

species of native bird. One targets house wrens, another eastern screech owls and another black capped chickadees. Interested visitors can now find all three of these functional new birdhouses hanging in ornithologically appropriate outdoor locations around the Center's extended grounds.

Access to the Arts

In a similar vein, last year also saw the Foundation partnering with the Northlight Theatre's Arts for Everyone program to provide Levy Senior Center members with complimentary tickets to all of the Northlight's mainstage productions. Approximately 100 Levy Senior Center members took advantage of this special benefit in 2021. We are looking forward to offering these complimentary tickets again in the year to come.

"Northlight hopes to break down the barriers that keep anyone in our community from attending live theater, starting with ticket cost," said Ruben Carrazana, Northlight's community engagement manager.



Health and Wellness

One of last year's biggest highlights was the launch of our Levy Longevity Series in partnership with Amita Health. In 2021, this virtual series featured nine talks by Amita healthcare professionals on various practical topics related to aging well. From how to dodge Covid and beat the flu, to how to prevent diabetes and stay active without inviting injury, these highly accessible Zoom based talks enabled so many of our most isolated members to feel seen, heard, and encouraged to stay healthy and engaged while also staying safe. In the future, we'd also like to offer these talks in an expanded hybrid format.

But for now, mid pandemic, we continue to look forward to the ongoing release of new virtual offerings in the Levy Longevity series from Amita Health in 2022.

Support of Local Nonprofits

In keeping with the LSCF mission, we continue to reach out to other nonprofits within our Evanston community. As we've learned from our pandemic experience, organizations mutually benefit from listening to and supporting each other's collective goals. We look forward to expanding our relationships so we can offer more opportunities to our older population.

“
Understanding how our brains age is so very important. It equips us with knowledge that helps us to take better care of ourselves. I love your seminars.”

—
Community Member
Levy Longevity participant

Coming Together in Person & Online

While ongoing Covid restrictions resulted in more virtual or hybrid virtual and in person programming in 2021 than ever before, the summer also brought a brief period of loosened mandates in which to physically gather for a couple of our signature musical events.

Jamming Jean Concert Series

On September 17, 2021 the stars aligned and the LSCF saw its largest outdoor

audience ever for a Jamming Jean concert. The performance featured the wildly eclectic and purposefully inclusive world music group, Funkadesi, named “Best World Music Group” by the *Chicago Reader*. A crowd of hundreds gathered to hear this ten piece melange of musical talent fill the air with bhangra, Bollywood, and Indian folk stylings all mixed in with the rhythms of Jamaican reggae and Afro Caribbean funk.

After so many months of isolation, it was a welcome opportunity to gather, dance, and celebrate our enduring human

connections. All were made possible and free to the public thanks to series long funding from the LSCF and Symphony of Evanston.

Months later, with virus numbers surging, our Jamming Jean series went virtual once again and saw an audience of more than 400 log on for a 90 minute holiday themed set of music, laughter, and conversation from the renowned jazz and blues collective, Corky Siegel and Friends. Siegel, who’s a harmonica legend, was joined by the inimitable jazz and blues singer Lynne Jordan and the Emmy award winning documentary filmmaker John Anderson.



Fran Randall Concert Series

This classical music series, dedicated to presenting the talents of award winning younger musicians, also featured both in person and online performances in 2021. In January, pianists Allison Wang and Lam Wong kicked off the new year with a virtuoso performance. Then, in May, the series posted a prerecorded YouTube concert featuring the Blue Violet Duo along with pianist Dr. Louise Chan and violinist Dr. Kate Carter. Finally, in November, the LSCF hosted a year-end in person performance by fellows from the Academy of Music Institute of Chicago featuring Tara Hagle and Elinor Detmer on violin and Jan Nedvesky on cello.



Clockwise: Crowds enjoy the September Jamming Jean concert featuring Funkadesi; enthusiastic attendees get their groove on; Blue Violet Duo from a prerecorded Fran Randall concert in May

Offering members multiple ways to stay connected and engaged once again took precedence in 2021. The LSCF continued to prioritize funding and resources for an array of remote programming options.

Zoom Gentle Yoga

Building on the popularity of our Gentle Yoga virtual offering in 2020, participation in this isolation busting online program grew even more robust in 2021. In these weekly sessions, for example, attendees climbed into the double digits and consistently earned thumbs up reviews from members.

Zoom Bingo

Continuing with the 2020 success of Zoom Bingo, this program grew even more popular in 2021 thanks to a new partnership with the Women's Club of Evanston. A collection of eager participants logged in to play, connect, and tell stories. Afterward, a team of volunteers hand delivered prizes to the homes of each week's winning bingo players.



*Lecturers clockwise:
Dino Robinson, Silvia Foti,
and Mark Larson*



Levy Lectures Broke Records

Not even the pandemic kept our community away from the Levy Lecture Series in 2021! We presented 36 unique lectures, the most ever since starting the series in 2017. Nearly 2,000 individuals attended at least one lecture with the total confirmed lecture attendance at more than 9,600! The authors, subject matter experts, and actors who educated and entertained us via Zoom did so from throughout the U.S. and even Amsterdam (thank you, Andrew Moskos!). Fifteen of the speakers were returning guests and 21 speakers were new to the LSCF stage. Four lectures

drew more than 400 attendees each: historian Leslie Goddard presented "Bette Davis: A Living History;" reporter and author, Jennifer Steinhauer, talked about "The Firsts," her book about the newly elected women reshaping the 116th Congress; author and historian Rich Lindberg kept us spellbound with "Tales of Forgotten Chicago;" and Megan Wells transfixed us with "The Speckled Band," a Sherlock Holmes tale written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. On the LSCF YouTube channel, Silvia Foti's presentation about her book, "The Nazi's Granddaughter," was the most widely watched with nearly 600 views.

“
Your lectures have made [this] Covid year so entertaining and enriching and memorable. Thank you for helping our whole community.

—
Elke Nicholls
Levy Lecture Viewer

Partners Help to Expand Programs



“

Abundant thanks! This mind-expanding course, led by a highly affable instructor, provided just the right scale, tone and motivation.

—
Stephanie Emrich

Writer's Workshop Participant

Beyond the various joint initiatives already mentioned elsewhere in this 2021 report, the Levy Senior Center Foundation would also like to gratefully acknowledge the following additional collaborations and partnerships:

Partners in Prose

In 2021, the LSCF continued to work with the Northlight Theatre in multiple ways, including, most recently, joining forces to offer Levy Senior Center members access to High Lights, a series of virtual writing workshops facilitated by Northlight teaching artists. These six session workshops, designed to help build a supportive community of storytellers, met weekly over Zoom to share work, get and give feedback, and at the end, receive a bound collection featuring at least one written piece from each participant.

Partners in Disco

With ongoing support from both the City of Evanston and LSCF, the Center was able to present a special Disco in the Park concert on June 11. Community members came loaded with lawn chairs and picnic baskets to enjoy the DJ stylings of Michael Stinson, who got the crowd dancing with favorite tunes from the '60s and '70s.

Partners in Longevity

Heaven Can Wait is designed to honor our most experienced community members. It offers free Levy Senior Center memberships to those 90 years and older. The program includes all of the perks and discounts afforded to members at no cost! To qualify, Seniors need to simply show an official ID with proof of date of birth when registering at the Center.



Top: Writer's Workshop Participant Stephanie Emrich in class. Bottom: A sketch of one of the 8 beds planned for 2022 from Cie Bond, a member of Garden Club of Evanston and Evanston Grows.



Partners in Planting

Beyond working with the Garden Club of Evanston on the Center's new raised beds, the Foundation also arranged for the GCE to mentor Levy Senior Center volunteers looking to become better gardeners.

At the same time, the Foundation also began partnering with Evanston Grows, a local nonprofit that works to promote equity by increasing access to edible gardens and healthy produce.

Partners in Entertainment

The Dennis Newton Scholarship Fund provided for travel and participation in stimulating group activities for many seniors in a variety of venues throughout the year.

“
I have learned so
much from this
wonderful garden
and all the women
I met. I have also
enjoyed many deli-
cious salads through-
out the summer.”

—
Janice Feigenholtz
Senior Volunteer

2021 Contributions

Your generosity provided funding for the following programs and events that were enjoyed by our senior community. Thank you!

Total Gift Amount: \$184,558

- Arts For Everyone
- Bobby's Room Renovation
- Dennis Newton Scholarship Fund
- Fran Randall Concerts
- Gentle Yoga
- High Lights Writer's Workshop
- Jamming Jean Concerts
- Levy Lectures Series
- Levy Longevity Series
- Levy Senior Center Gardens
- Partner Programs for Seniors
- Senior Congregate Meals
- Zoom Bingo
- 2021 Photo Contest

Clockwise from top left: Board Member, Bob Anthony helping to build the garden beds. Levy community members get down at Disco in the Park in June; Alex Richardson and sister, Phoebe Bradford wait to board the bus for a production of Cinderella at the Paramount Theater in Aurora in November.

Giving

Jay Adair
Karen and Frederick Adams
Laura Adler
Judy Aiello
Ronald Albiani
Steven Alex
Dee Alsberg
Sue Ann Glaser and Allan Alson
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Dorthea Martin
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Louise Mason
Steffi Masur
Ben Matsumoto
Claudia McCarthy
Carol McConnell
Evie McEwan
Ann and Tom McMahon
Joan Merchan

Thank you!

Irv Miller
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Lydia Zoleta
Carol and Gabor Zsolnay

Organizations

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AMITA Health
Avidor
Chicago Teachers Union
Cultural Fund Grant Program
Hecky's Barbeque
John J. Cahill, Inc.
NAACP Evanston
Romano Brothers and
Company
Symphony of Evanston
The Israelite Group of
Oppenheimer & Co.
The Skating Club
of Boston
Plush Apparel
Zurich Insurance Group

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



“Quite a few men and women use basketball at the Levy Center to help them age well.”

—
Rob Bady
LSCF Board Member

The Year Ahead: Goals & Highlights

Looking ahead, the LSCF is working to support a variety of new and existing programs in 2022.

Hoops for the Ages

Thanks to the organizational efforts of Levy Senior Center Foundation board member Robert Bady, the Levy Senior Center recently hosted a three on three community basketball tournament called Hoops for the Ages for older adults. The tournament, open to players 40 and up, helped support both the Center and a number of older local players looking to qualify for the National Senior Games later this year.

“Some players start participating in the National Senior Games as early as 50, others as late as 80. They use the Levy Senior Center to play organized games in preparation for the Illinois Senior Games. There, they qualify for the National Senior Games, which occur every two years,” Bady said.

2022 Center Enhancements

Among the Foundation’s many planned enhancements to the Levy Senior Center building and grounds in 2022, some

include the addition of a new Donor Leaf Wall across from the fitness center. Also planned is the addition of several new gardens complete with ADA approved access points for greater inclusion. These garden projects are scheduled to break ground in the spring. Additional garden enhancements, once that ground breaking begins, will notably include the installation of a sophisticated new water saving irrigation system that promises to increase crop production and decrease soil erosion.

Annual Photo Contest

To encourage creativity and art making, the LSCF was thrilled to once again sponsor the Center’s second annual Photo Contest in 2021. Submissions included more than 160 photos showing our community making the most of another not so normal year. Winning photos and honorable mentions can be found on the LSCF website.

Connect with Us

To learn more about the Foundation, our events and programs and to sign up for our emails, visit our website at lscfevanston.org.



Above top: Hoops for the Ages tournament; 2021 LSCF Photo Contest winner of Best in Show by Candy Heaphy.

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.