

Hope and Resilience in a Challenging World



This summer certainly feels more hopeful than last.

I write this in the final days of my term as Board Chair. When I started my term in January 2019, the Community Foundation had just hired a new president and CEO, was looking forward to celebrating its 60th anniversary, and the word “coronavirus” was a year away from becoming a familiar topic at most dinner tables. These have certainly been an eventful couple of years.

Especially after all that has happened in the past eighteen months, it is tempting to think that the world is a different place. But it is not. It is the same place. Many of us now see it differently, and we see that we need to engage with the world around us differently as well.

The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation has long been engaged in thoughtful discussions about the challenges facing our community, funding work to address the effects of inequity and providing training and support for nonprofits and nonprofit leaders. In 2020, the Board and staff undertook in-depth training over the course of five months to deepen our understanding of the roots and implications of racial inequity. Among other things, this work challenged our views about philanthropy and its practice, and it will inform our approach to grantmaking and community engagement to address the most persistent and pressing needs we all face. We could not be more excited to tackle these challenges with you!

I am so grateful for the deep commitment of the Foundation’s staff. Tony Martinez and his team have

done incredible work serving this community under extraordinary circumstances. Tony’s

leadership, as evidenced by the quick establishment and facile deployment of the Rapid Response and Recovery Fund, has been essential to the Foundation’s success. The team has grown the asset base and delivered more grants to more nonprofits than ever before. They have forged deeper, dynamic relationships with the support networks that hold together and nurture our community. They have engaged more donors in our work to see the issues and to strengthen those supports. And like most nonprofits during this period, they have done it with a small staff and under some serious budget pressure. They are phenomenal. The Foundation is well positioned for the future with incoming Board Chair Bruce Wojack.

It has been a tremendous honor to work with this incredible group of professionals and volunteer leaders, and to serve as Board Chair. Thank you for all you do to make the community stronger. And thank you for your support of the Community Foundation. Have a safe and energizing summer!

In partnership and service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna T. Myers'.

Donna T. Myers

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO THE REGION, AND CONSIDER A DONATION TO THE OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST COMMUNITY FOUNDATION TODAY. YOUR GIFT PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN BUILDING A STRONG AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY. DONATE ONLINE AT OPRFCF.ORG, OR CONTACT DONORSERVICES@OPRFCF.ORG FOR GIVING OPTIONS.

Issue Focus: Mental Health Care

Not long ago, mental health was rarely talked about publicly, but the reality is that everyone faces challenges in their daily life that can affect their mental health. During the pandemic, rates of depression and anxiety skyrocketed, and the long-term effects of the crisis on mental health are not yet known. In this newsletter, the Community Foundation is showcasing some of the local organizations offering mental health support and services to those in the Oak Park-River Forest area.

Find free or reduced-cost resources for mental health care, housing, food and other social services near you through the Health Connection HUB at www.healthconnectionhub.org.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255, or dial 911 in case of emergency.

Nehemiah Community Project Creates Space for Recovery

For many people, finding a safe space to let their guard down and share their feelings is a challenge. The Nehemiah Community Project's founder, Chris Chambliss, is out to change that.

"The vision of what we call NCP is to build facilities and promote unity within the Proviso community with reliable and sustainable resources for years to come, where people can come to a place and feel connected," Chambliss says. "Our mission is to provide a safe space where men, young adults and families can come to obtain resources to combat mental health challenges."

Founded in 2017, NCP provides emotional support services in group or individual settings, as well as trauma awareness training. During the pandemic when in-person services were limited, the organization continued to support the community in Maywood and Proviso Township by distributing food and personal protective equipment.

The Community Foundation awarded a Rapid Response and Recovery Fund grant to NCP in May to support men who have suffered trauma, including our underserved community of veterans and formerly incarcerated men of color and their families, and conduct outreach for COVID-19 vaccination. It also allowed the organization to return to providing emotional support and training, with a particular focus on men and military veterans.

"The grant came at a crucial time for us as an organization because it allowed us to kind of pick up and keep the momentum going," Chambliss adds. "We began to get space and began to set up the face-to-face exchange so that we can really kind of propel our mission forward."

In September, NCP will host a men's retreat in the western suburbs where they'll have an opportunity to talk about and deal with post-pandemic anxiety, stressors and lessons from the past year. The goal is to create a safe space to explore these challenges and provide the tools to be better prepared for what may be the new normal, because as Chambliss notes, it's going to be different for us all.



*Chris Chambliss,
president and CEO of the
Nehemiah Community
Project.*

To learn more about the Nehemiah Community Project, visit www.thenehemiahcommunityproject.org.

Thrive Provides Mental Health Lifeline During Pandemic



At the end of 2020, Thrive Counseling Center's President and Executive Director John Meister used the word "resilience" to describe that year in the agency's year-end report. COVID-19 stopped the world in its tracks and forced everyone to adopt new coping skills.

Meister's word for 2021 is "service," adding, "Transitions are hard, especially for youth." This next year, according to Meister, will be about making a difference for people in the community.

While COVID-19 affected everyone, it hit those in already marginalized and underserved communities the hardest. Thrive Counseling Center pivoted to meet the community's needs and its roughly 2400 clients almost overnight. Thrive is a community mental health center located in Oak Park that has been serving the area in some form since 1898.

Meister says Thrive had to change its model to meet the increase in demand for mental health services. So far in 2021, Thrive has seen a 43 percent increase in youth services demand.

One of the first actions the organization took during the pandemic was to maintain open communications with the local police and fire departments since they are often the

first to encounter and assess a possible mental health crisis. Then, in mid-March 2020, Thrive switched from face-to-face sessions to remote work, starting with phone sessions and then to video conferencing once Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) rules were relaxed and the organization was able to update its technology. Now all of Thrive's therapists are equipped with laptops.

Next, Thrive set up a "Check-In Line," a free phone counseling service to the community, early in the pandemic. Then Gov. Pritzker announced the state-wide Call4Calm emotional support text line, which Thrive helps support as a state-funded crisis center. If someone is having a mental health crisis, they can text Call4Calm or call Thrive directly and the call will be returned within 24 hours. Meister says in April 2020, it received 865 calls. Today it is incorporated with all mental health staff and is a regular service. It continues to get calls even though the state is now fully open.

The Community Foundation has awarded two grants to Thrive this year, including a grant in April to enable a psychiatrist, with the help of Thrive therapists, to meet with clients who require medication. The second grant, awarded in early June in partnership with the Women Leaders in Philanthropy giving group, will support Thrive's mental health programs extending through 2022.

To learn more about Thrive's counseling services, visit www.thrivecc.org.

Riveredge Hospital Helps Support Community Mental Health

Riveredge Hospital has been an integral part of the Oak Park-River Forest community since 1963. Riveredge is the largest free-standing psychiatric hospital in Illinois, specializing in client-centered therapy and Trauma-Informed Care with a patient makeup of roughly 60% adults and 40% children and adolescents. It provides both inpatient and outpatient treatment options as well as a hybrid of the two.

According to outgoing CEO Carey Carlock, Riveredge has approximately 50 therapists throughout the care continuum, including two licensed psychologists and five creative arts therapists.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused Riveredge, like most mental health organizations, to adopt a new treatment model. It remained open during the lockdown because of its inpatient clients, since they live in the facility 24/7, but the hospital needed to get creative in the face of a growing need for assistance for those who struggled with anxiety and depression during the pandemic.

"One positive aspect of the pandemic is that it propelled the utilization of telehealth, which has many benefits for our clients," Carlock says. "We remained open for in-person care throughout the pandemic, and we also expanded the options. As we see more and more services return to in person, we will undoubtedly see some clients continuing their treatment via telehealth. The convenience and easy access to compassionate care can remove a potential barrier to treatment for many." She adds that as the state opens and people feel more confident about being out in public, Riveredge hopes to provide more in-person care.

As a private for-profit hospital Riveredge is not eligible to receive grants from the Foundation. However, there is a solid partnership between the two, thanks to their shared dedication to the community. The Leadership Lab, for example, is a program the Foundation offers where emerging community leaders can hone their skills, such as public speaking and building their networks. It is a competitive process, and Riveredge has put forward employees to be part of it and has also offered its community space pro-bono to the Lab for course sessions. In addition, the hospital has provided its leadership and other experts to speak on a number of Community Foundation-sponsored panels about social issues ranging from food insecurity to mental wellness and suicide prevention.

Investing with Social Responsibility and Sustainability in Mind



Jon Hale, PhD, CFA, is global head of sustainability research at Morningstar and a member of the OPRFCF board of directors.

The murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests across our nation last summer underscored the urgent need to dismantle systemic racism in the United States. It prompted the Community Foundation to deepen its focus on racial justice and, as part of that, to re-examine all of our activities, including our investments.

To grow our assets, foundations like ours are long-term investors in stock and bond funds. This increases the money we can provide each year to our grantees in support of our mission. However, as we reexamine our investment activities, we are now factoring in the impact our investments have on perpetuating systemic inequality, rather than solely on the basis of maximizing returns.

Starting this summer, the Investment Committee has begun to align our investments with our mission. We haven't changed our risk-adjusted return targets, but to achieve those targets, we are now making investments in stock and bond funds that practice sustainable investing.

Also called responsible investing or impact investing, sustainable investing is about delivering competitive results while also driving positive environmental, social, and corporate governance (or ESG) outcomes. This includes better racial equity outcomes.

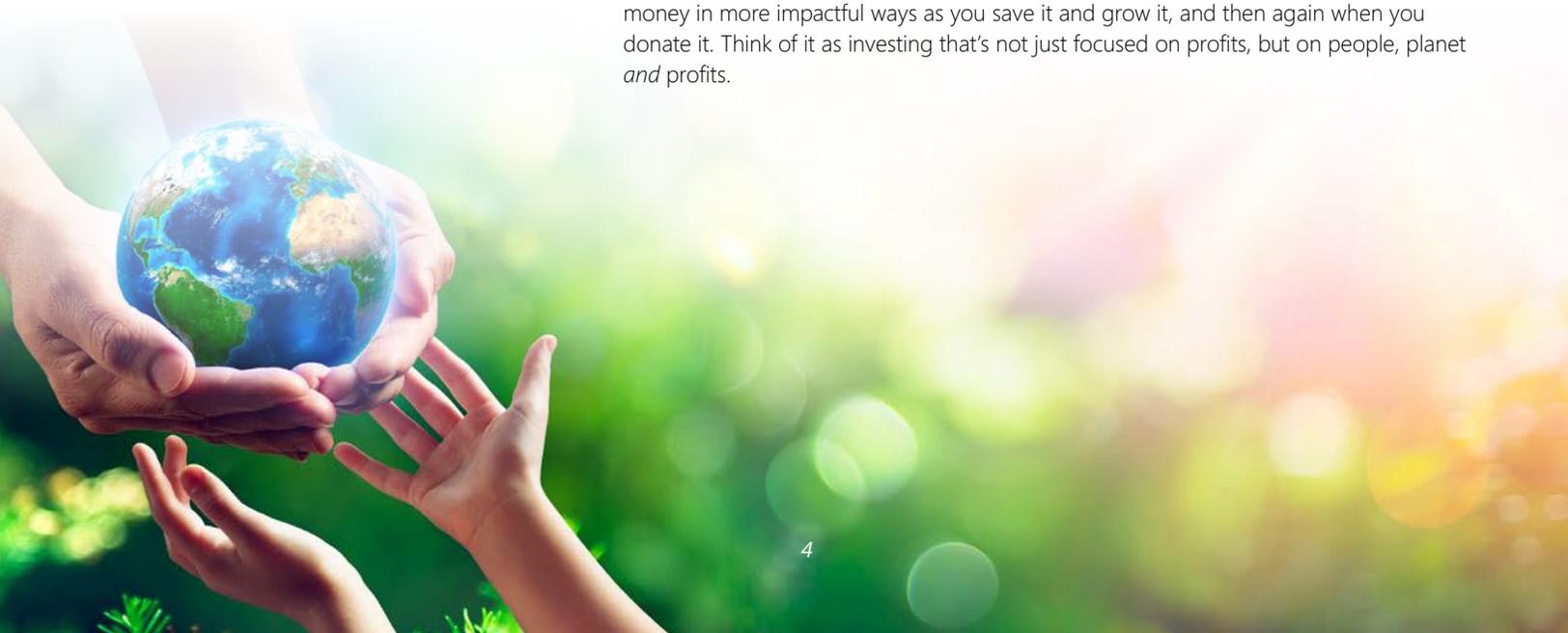
Sustainable funds address racial equity in several ways: Some may not invest in companies that have a negative impact on Black communities, such as for-profit colleges or companies that support the prison-industrial complex. Sustainable funds typically scrutinize public companies' workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion policies; board diversity; the overall treatment of workers; negative impacts of products and services on Black communities; and political expenditures.

Companies with poor performance on racial equity issues may be avoided in sustainable fund portfolios, but more importantly, sustainable investors can push for change at the corporations they do hold in their portfolios. If dialogue doesn't work, sustainable investors may propose shareholder resolutions for a vote at the company's annual general meeting. Shareholders have been supporting ESG shareholder resolutions at record levels, which can spur corporate action even when a vote fails to attract majority shareholder support.

Sustainable investors press companies on their diversity, equity, and inclusion policies; on the composition of their boards; on the ways they compensate employees—particularly lower-wage workers whom we are more fully recognizing as essential during the pandemic; on labor relations generally; and on where corporate lobbying and political expenditures go. This year, more than a third of shareholders at Amazon.com, Citi Group, Johnson & Johnson, and JPMorgan Chase supported proposals made by sustainable investors to conduct racial equity audits of their business practices.

We are in a take-action moment in America today. By aligning our investments with our mission, the Foundation is using its assets for greater impact during the investment phase, then using those assets for impact again in support of our philanthropic mission.

If you as an individual are fortunate enough to be an investor, you can activate your own assets with sustainable investments. Doing so gives you the ability to use your money in more impactful ways as you save it and grow it, and then again when you donate it. Think of it as investing that's not just focused on profits, but on people, planet and profits.



In Memoriam: James R. Marshall



Alexandra Polk, left, who attends DePaul University, and Justice Watkins, who attends Northeastern Illinois University, are Brookdale-Oak Park Employee Scholarship recipients.

James "Jim" R. Marshall passed away on March 24, 2021, at age 95. The longtime Oak Park resident was born in Dalton, Massachusetts, and attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he earned degrees in chemistry and food technology. There he met Alice O'Neil, who became his wife in 1951. The Marshalls lived in Tampa, Florida, before his job with the American Can Company brought him to Oak Park in 1959, where they raised seven children and became active in the community. The Marshalls were married for 65 years before Alice passed away in 2017.

When the Marshalls moved to Brookdale Senior Living Community in Oak Park in 2009, Jim took to the young people who worked in the dining room. He learned that Brookdale held an annual holiday collection for the full-time staff but not for the dining room workers. According to his daughter, Mary Blanc, "Dad was impressed with the kids who worked there, so he decided to do something for them. Most Brookdale residents didn't get to know these kids, so Dad made an effort."

Blanc says that since her father grew up during the Depression, his family didn't have the means to send him to college, so he relied on scholarships and GI Bill. Both were life-changing and helped him

achieve a lifetime of success. Blanc says her father believed the "best quality in life is to...help people and the community."

Marshall kept his word. Shortly after moving to Brookdale, he joined the Rotary Club, and through it, he discovered the Community Foundation. Blanc says, "Dad put seven kids through college, and when the last one graduated, he wanted to keep the financial help going."

Marshall created a scholarship fund with the Community Foundation to help support educational opportunities within the community. Since its inception in 2017, the Brookdale-Oak Park Employee Scholarship Fund has awarded 56 scholarships. That's roughly 12 to 20 awarded each year. Unfortunately, this year will see fewer scholarships awarded due to the pandemic.

"The passing of Jim Marshall is a tremendous loss to the community, and the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation offers its deepest condolences to Marshall's family and friends," says President and CEO Tony Martinez, Jr. "We at the Foundation are grateful for his generosity and kindness and believe the Brookdale-Oak Park Employee Scholarship Fund will continue to enrich the lives of the workers and their families."

Foundation Announces Seven Rapid Response and Recovery Fund Grants

The Community Foundation recently announced its latest round of Rapid Response and Recovery Fund grants, totaling \$115,000 for seven nonprofits in the western Cook County region.

"The vaccination effort has allowed many in our community to get out and enjoy something close to pre-pandemic normal, but many others continue to struggle, and the long-term effects of the pandemic are yet to be understood," says Tony Martinez, Jr. "This most recent round of grants therefore includes a number of organizations that provide mental health services, as well as rent and utility assistance, vaccine education, and support for minority owned businesses and arts organizations."

"These grants could have never happened if it wasn't for the heartfelt generosity of so many community members..."

*Tony Martinez, Jr.,
Foundation President & CEO*

The following organizations were awarded grants in the latest round:

- Leyden Family Service
- Children's Research Triangle
- Taller de Jose
- Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce
- Oak Park Area Arts Council
- Oak Park Regional Housing Center
- Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP)

The Rapid Response and Recovery Fund was created in March 2020 with a seed investment of \$50,000 from the Foundation to provide desperately needed dollars to agencies fighting to provide daily, ongoing support to our most vulnerable neighbors: those struggling with food insecurity, permanent housing, and health concerns. In addition, the fund is combating the socioeconomic inequities exacerbated by this virus, and is supporting the mental health and physical safety of

all our community members. The fund has received a total of \$1.2 million in donations since its inception, and has given grants to 56 organizations in the community.

Individual, family and corporate donors contributed generously toward this vital effort — including \$30,000 raised by the 700 Block of Bonnie Brae's LemonAid charity drive, which selected the fund as its beneficiary in 2020, and over \$500,000 in a match challenge by longtime Oak Parkers Ken and Patty Hunt. The fund also received \$250,000 from the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund.

"These grants could have never happened if it wasn't for the heartfelt generosity of so many community members," says Martinez, "We are eternally grateful to each one who contributed to this fund."

To support the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation and its work on behalf of the community visit oprfcf.org or call 708-848-1560.

Introducing Our New Board Leadership and a New Board Member



Bruce Wojack



Kelly Turner



Ana Garcia Doyle

The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation is pleased to announce that Bruce Wojack and Kelly Turner have been named the new chair and vice-chair of its board of directors, and also welcomes Ana Garcia Doyle to the board.

"I am very excited for the opportunity to lead the Community Foundation board, and a lot of that has to do with the incredible work Tony Martinez has done as president and CEO," says new board chair Wojack. "Through his leadership and that of outgoing chair Donna Myers, the Foundation has made great strides in supporting our community, but there is still much more work to do."

Wojack is a senior vice president and wealth strategist at The Northern Trust with more than 30 years of experience serving the needs of high net worth individuals and families. Prior to joining The Northern, he was a trust specialist with Merrill Lynch and a client advisor at JP Morgan. In addition to the Foundation board, Wojack serves as the co-chair of the Professional Advisory Committee of the Chicago Community Trust, as a member of the Chicago Estate Planning Council, and is a past president of the River Forest Tennis Club. He lives in Oak Park with his wife Kim, a lifelong Oak Parker and the granddaughter of the founder of Nielsen's Restaurant, and their two college-aged children.

"I am proud and impressed by the leadership role the Community Foundation took during the COVID-19 lockdown in creating the Rapid Response and Recovery Fund to get resources to local organizations quickly and without fanfare," Wojack says. "One of my goals as board chair is to raise awareness of the Foundation and the initiatives it is undertaking to support individuals and organizations in western Cook County."

Turner is a senior counsel with the American Arbitration Association (AAA) in its Chicago regional office. As a member of the AAA's legal department, she handles litigation, subpoenas and contracts, and works with employees across the country and

in Singapore. She was previously vice president in charge of the Chicago regional office, focusing on the association's commercial division. Before joining the AAA, Turner spent more than 19 years at Locke Lord LLP, a full-service international law firm. In addition to the Foundation board, she is a member of the board of directors of the Oak Park River Forest Infant Welfare Society. She lives in Oak Park.

With over 25 years of digital marketing and publishing experience, Doyle is co-founder and executive director of One Earth Collective, an Oak

Park-based environmental nonprofit that produces the One Earth Film Festival (the Midwest's premiere environmental film festival) and other programs. The festival is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2021. She is also a community leader, advocate, and public speaker in the area of environmental sustainability who helped lead an award-winning zero waste initiative in District 97 schools.

"I am thrilled and humbled to be a part of the Community Foundation board," Doyle says. "I think the work being done now is critical — not just substantively but as a model of how organizations with a long legacy can build on that legacy to effect change."

Doyle and her husband Jim live in Oak Park in a 100-year-old home that they renovated to be as environmentally sustainable as possible, including the installation of a geothermal system and 48 solar panels, as well as landscaping that incorporates native plantings, edibles, and a rainwater harvesting and irrigation system. The home received a 2012 Green Award from the Village of Oak Park, and 2019 LEED Gold certification from the US Green Building Council.

Doyle and her family have been involved in various aspects of the Foundation for a long time. Two of her children participated in the Future Philanthropists program when they attended OPRF High School, One Earth Collective is a stakeholder in PlanIt Green, and she has presented on sustainability issues to the Leadership Lab program. In addition, three years ago the Doyles created a scholarship fund to financially assist Austin residents interested in joining the Leadership Lab.

"We are pleased to welcome Ana to the board, and are excited for Bruce and Kelly's leadership over the next two years as board chair and vice-chair," says President and CEO Tony Martinez, Jr. "Their commitment to the community has been remarkable, and we look forward to having their help in guiding the Foundation toward its next phase of growth."



A Note of Gratitude to Rhea Yap

The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation extends its heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Senior Philanthropic

Advisor Rhea Yap, who has accepted a new role as director of strategic initiatives for the Chinese Mutual Aid Association in Chicago. In her eight years at the Community Foundation, she has been instrumental in the success of its mission and programs.

"It has been an honor to serve the community via the work of the Community Foundation," Yap says. "Oak Park, River Forest and area residents truly care about their neighbors; the staff and volunteers are dedicated to their work; and in partnership with over 100 nonprofit organizations, the Foundation makes positive change. My decision to depart was not made lightly. I will miss working directly with you, yet I know you will be in excellent hands."

Philanthropic Advisor Carrie Summy is ready to help you begin a tradition of giving that honors loved ones, reflects your interests, or aligns with causes and organizations you wish to support through sustained giving. Contact her at csummy@oprfcf.org or 708-848-1560 to learn more.



Talk With the Community Foundation About Planned Giving

As you discuss future planned giving with your financial advisor, please consider the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation as a partner in securing your charitable legacy. The Foundation has extensive experience working with financial planners and advisors, and our philanthropic expertise enhances the financial services they provide.

For example, during Lois Ebinger's life, she supported a dozen organizations annually. As she and her financial advisor were thinking about her legacy and how to support causes near and dear to her beyond her lifetime, they approached the Foundation. Together, we set up a charitable fund via an estate bequest. Providing her peace of mind, her financial advisor and the Foundation fulfilled her wishes to annually distribute gifts to the organizations she cherished long after she passed. We continue to serve Lois's estate today, supporting organizations such as the Chicago Zoological Society and Animal Care League.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you, your family and the additional trusted advisors in your life to accomplish your philanthropic goals. Community Foundation staff is always available to discuss individual client needs or answer advisor questions.

Please email us at donorservices@oprfcf.org or call 708-848-1560.

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The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation wishes to extend special thanks to outgoing board members Cuyler Brown, John Hedges, Phillip Jiménez, Barbara Rohm Rossa and Eric Weinheimer for their years of service.



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