



guesthouse

THE COMEBACK ISSUE! NEWSLETTER 2022

Resilience in the Pandemic Years

In February 2020, as the Guest House board gathered for our winter meeting at the center, Marianne Hile, our perpetually optimistic director of sales, seemed cheerier than usual. Handing us our room keys, she smiled broadly and announced that with the booking commitments she negotiated that day, our projected budget for 2020 revenue was covered.

"We had never met budget that quickly before," marvels executive director Saralyn Kerrigan. "Obviously, 2020 was going to be our best year ever." Then she pauses and adds, "One month later, I had to furlough the whole team."

The pandemic had hit, plunging Guest House—and the world—into perilous economic uncertainty, terrified isolation, widespread fears of contagion, staggering death tolls. "At first, we thought it would last six weeks," recalls Saralyn. "But then another whole month's worth of retreats would cancel." Each cancellation came like a gut punch, and demoralization began to set in.

Saralyn sprang into action. "The first thing we had to figure out was how to support our employees because we didn't know what the government was going to do." Two Paycheck Protection Program loans and an Economic Injury Disaster loan helped ensure full-time employees had health insurance, allowed Guest House to supplement

their unemployment insurance and to pay essential function wages that kept Guest House running. (Though we were closed, rounds still had to be made, equipment checked, licenses kept current, mortgage and tax payments remitted, utilities covered, and so on—all of it with zero revenue coming in.)

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GIVING CORNER

To Our Donors— Past, Present, & Future

Two and a half years have passed since Guest House closed our doors on March 13, 2020 and everyone fled to isolate from the deadly threat of Covid-19. Since that day, GH has been through a full Cycle of Life: the radical disappearance of life at our beloved home—of all jobs for our staff, of all guests, of all revenues, of everything we had planned for the future of GH. And then in the middle of this vast blank space

DONATE TODAY

[guesthousecenter.org/give](https://www.guesthousecenter.org/give)

you appeared with emotional and financial support. GH's life sputtered and stopped for the last half of that first year. Yet your generosity and encouragement grew and grew, and in that tragic year a record number of donors gave the largest total of annual donations in the history of GH.

The roller coaster life cycle continued throughout 2021. Once again you matched the previously unprecedented total of annual donations set in 2020! This year, 2022, Covid continues

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Essential Contemplations

Guest House and her staff have been tested in many ways: floods, tornadoes, record snowfall, maintenance emergencies, financial challenges, but never like the last two years. We reflect on that time with the quotes selected below.

.....
"Change is supremely inconvenient, uncomfortable and naturally scary. Yet we only move through life through the process of change, reinvention and renewal, and so bravery is our quintessential rebel for pushing us past our own limiting beliefs and behaviors. Bravery is feeling the fear, immersing yourself into it and through it so you can come out the other side."

—Christine Evangelou

.....
"Hope is a discipline. It's less about 'how you feel' and more about the practice of making a decision every day that you're still gonna put one foot in front of the other, that you're still going to get up in the morning. And you're still going to struggle.... It's work to be hopeful."

—Mariame Kaba

.....
*"When we say that steadfastness expresses the optimizing thrust of Being's dynamism, we mean that even in stuck, dark, or difficult times, the dynamism is still alive in the form of our **determination**."*

—A.H. Almaas

.....
"Renewal is not just innovation and change. It is also the process of bringing the results of change into line with our purposes."

—John W. Gardner

NEWS

GH News

STAFF OLD-TIMERS

Alan, Sep 2017
Bob, May 2016
Charlie, Dec 2009
Deb, Sept 2018
Keith, May 2017
Marianne, Aug 2010
Rich, Dec 2014
Ruth, Nov 2010
Saralyn, Nov 2014

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Guest Services

Brian, Nov 2020
Carol, Nov 2021
Michaela, August 2022
Mike, June 2022
Sonia, April 2022

Dining Services

Liam, Nov 2021
Mark, June 2022
Rabin, March 2022
Sal, August 2022
Tony, March 2022
Travis, June 2021

Housekeeping

Maureen, April 2021
Michelle, September 2022

Facilities

Scott, July 2021

SPECIAL

Staff Reflections on Covid Era

CHARLIE, ASSISTANT E.D. "A few weeks ago, Rich was out of town and asked me to cover for maintenance on a Friday. Part of that is doing the rounds, taking temperatures in the building, checking pumps, etc. So, I go and do it and I get this awful sinking feeling of déjà vu. I hadn't done that task in over a year—but I did it 3-4 times every week for a year and a half during Covid... It took me right back to how I felt when a big part of my job was in and out, 'just to check up on the building.'"

ALAN, EXECUTIVE CHEF "In this time of Covid, I thought about adapting, acceptance, peace, priorities, survival, identity and support. And that finally brought me to this, where I intend to spend my life going forward:

'Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.'

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 KJV"

RICH, FACILITIES DIRECTOR "As the boom year of 2019 closed, the entire staff was excited for 2020: The Year of Perfect Vision. We had it all figured out, and Guest House was headed directly upward after our best year. Interestingly, we chose to focus our 2020 staff development on 'Resilience.' The Universe chuckled, said 'Hold my beer,' and decided we were going to either learn this skill or end up closing our doors forever.

With the building devoid of guests, the staff pushed hard to keep our founders' dreams alive. In spite of seemingly fearless and undaunted leadership (Saralyn and Charlie have great poker faces), we were scared. We were always scared. Many unanticipated blessings and unprecedented generosity found us and kept hope alive. This team, years in development, would not, could not, fail.

In the end, Guest House was saved by her tirelessly generous friends and benefactors, an alphabet soup of relief programs, and blind faith in our mission: 'Hold the Space.' The Guest House community are my 'war buddies.' We held the space with determination, commitment, and hope.

Now, exhausted and still shellshocked, our success calls us to resume nurturing and supporting a tired, fractured, and uncertain world."

Conversations with Donors

We are so grateful to all our donors, who have been a vital part of helping Guest House to survive the intense Covid years.

"Gratitude is the most passionate transformative force in the cosmos. When we offer thanks to God or to another human being, gratitude gifts us with renewal, reflection, reconnection."

—Sarah Ban Breathnach, author

NEIL MOYLAN "Here at Guest House, there is something extraordinary that occurs, a deepening discovery of oneself that is also a discovery of others and of one's surroundings—the food in its essence, the quality of light, the hum of the place, the sharing. This is the very dawn-light of awareness. It seems like I've yearned for it all my life, whether I knew it or not. Truth to tell, this is something 'I' cannot do—yet it happens. And returning from GH, it has become the sense of what it means to have a life in this world."

MEG MILLER "I've always felt so blessed to be able to go to retreat at Guest House. I love so many things about it... from the deck with the big tree to the funky rooms with chairs that match the wallpaper! I love the grounds with the pond, paths, and labyrinth, the many meeting and eating rooms, each with their own flavor, the entire staff who resonate with our purpose, and the general feel of a classy New England inn with fireplaces and dark wood everywhere. I support Guest House because it's a precious spiritual home filled with a field of authenticity and love. I want it to survive, to continue, and to thrive."

WALTRAUD IRELAND "It is a retrospective honoring of GH founder Alia Johnson's desire for her New York groups to own a retreat center, to have a permanent home and not have to search for new centers for her retreats. I think Guest House has inspired care from many members of our Diamond Approach groups and others who have returned so many times. May it continue to do well and serve many groups in the future."

DIANE INGRAM "Guest House is so important to me, not only as a physical holding space to come to for retreats and do deep work, but also as a psychic holding space that brings me comfort and support—an apt metaphor for the importance of my spiritual development and well-being. During Covid, when we couldn't physically attend, it brought comfort as a place keeper in my heart. I financially support Guest House to the best of my ability to ensure that it can healthfully continue for me, and so many others, who value its essential contribution to our lives."



To Our Donors— Past, Present, & Future

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to linger, and we face another challenging year. The first quarter was difficult, as the latest variant caused groups to cancel. But groups are now returning, and bookings are on the rise. The board and leadership team are cautiously optimistic and are weathering another unstable but improving year.

DONATE TODAY
[guesthousecenter.org/give](https://www.guesthousecenter.org/give)

Your steadfast support and loyalty during these last three years continues to nurture the slow emerging of a new Cycle of Life for GH. As Rich Kerrigan writes: *"...our success calls us to resume nurturing and supporting a tired, fractured, and uncertain world."*



Roof work made possible in 2022 by donors



During (above) and After (below)



Resilience in the Pandemic Years

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It was month-to-month. Throughout the spring and fall, groups kept canceling. Guest House opened part-time in October of that year. We seemed to be coming through the pandemic as new infections and deaths began to abate. The staff became hopeful. But then variants—Alpha through Delta—scared more groups away. More disheartenment, more disappointment, more uncertainty about what to do. Unemployment insurance, after all, would not last forever, and government funds would eventually dry up.

Saralyn and facilities manager Rich Kerrigan engaged staff in all sorts of improvement projects—fixing things around the retreat center, tending to grounds, painting, cleaning. “We found things for people to do,” says Saralyn. “Everyone became flexible, moving around departments and doing whatever needed to be done.”

Meanwhile, Saralyn checked in weekly with her staff, convening Zoom meetings to share what was happening in their lives—what they were worried about, who had contracted Covid-19, how their families were doing, what Netflix series employees were binging on, or which books they were reading. She sent e-mails, keeping everyone current with the latest Covid news, offering inspirational quotes. The board conveyed notes of encouragement to staff. The resource development committee established an employee emergency fund and donations came pouring in.

A snafu with one staffer’s unemployment insurance held up approval for seven months. “He was so scared,” says Saralyn, who called the local unemployment office every week while using government funds to supplement his wages until it finally came through.



Travis Senechal, Alan Demick, & Tony Barbi

“Sometimes, people would randomly not get paid. There were so many challenges with the unemployment system. If anybody needed something, I made sure they were taken care of.”

There were socially distanced picnics on the deck “to keep morale up and remind people they had jobs to return to. So, when we all came back in October 2020,” she observes, “we hadn’t become strangers.”

The first group to return was Tammy Jo PhotoKeeping. It was just 13 people, but it felt like a lifeline. The Hoffman Process groups began returning November 2020 and have been steady ever since.

Then another blow in December 2021: the Omicron variant. Again, groups canceled, and Guest House remained mostly empty until March 2022.

Throughout this time, one staff member’s wife had a terrible auto-immune flare-up, Rich had major leg surgery, some employees left for other jobs that had less contact with the public, and some downsizing became inevitable. But there were beautiful stories too. Another staffer’s wife had a baby. Volunteers from the board and from Diamond Approach groups—particularly Emerald Mountain and Diamond Approach Retreat Group 5—pitched in, washing dishes, turning beds, filling in at the front desk, attacking invasive vines.

And, says Saralyn with some emotion, “The donors were amazing. The way they’ve continued to come through—we talk about it amongst ourselves all the time. I have a deep appreciation for that kind of giving. It makes such a difference to our team.”

Since the pandemic began, Saralyn has considered and reconsidered the meaning of resiliency. “I’m begging the universe for a new word,” she says. “This year I know more people in my life who are suffering from mental illness, deep emotional difficulties or physical conditions than ever before. Seeing people I know to be resilient struggle with feelings of not wanting to get out of bed in the morning has made me re-examine what resilience is. Resilience isn’t just about ‘we’ll get through this.’ It’s about having to dig so deep for new tools, learning how to rely on people, asking for help when we’ve never done it before. I believe Guest House is



Jorge Arango & Hadley Perry, GH board members, volunteering in the kitchen

resilient. The people who work here are resilient. It’s very, very real to be able to mentally, physically and emotionally survive these ongoing onslaughts. Our ability to be patient and compassionate with each other... that’s what resilience is about.” 🌸



Our Executive Director, Saralyn Kerrigan, interviewed Hoffman Institute Foundation Vice President and Director of Faculty Matthew Brannagan. Guest House has been hosting Hoffman retreats for over 10 years. The Hoffman Quadrinity Process®, founded by Bob Hoffman in 1967, is a week-long personal growth retreat that helps participants identify negative behaviors and ways of thinking that developed unconsciously during childhood. The Process then helps participants become conscious of and disconnect from negative patterns in order to make significant positive changes in their lives on a spiritual level.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO DO RETREATS HERE, CONSISTENTLY, IN THE MIDDLE OF A PANDEMIC?

"It was both challenging and rewarding. It felt important to respond to the crisis. We're grateful that both our team and yours were on board."

HOW DID THE PANDEMIC INCREASE THE NEED FOR YOUR SERVICES?

"It had an immediate impact on mental health; people were seeking support and therapists were overbooked. We wanted to step up and contribute by continuing to offer The Hoffman Process as often as possible."



Matt Brannagan

WHAT BIG CHALLENGES DID YOU HAVE TO OVERCOME?

"One of the biggest challenges was safety. We worked together with public health officials to see how we could modify the logistics of The Process to mitigate the risk of spreading Covid-19. Guest House was easy to partner with; we all considered the safety of our clients and staff to be the top priority, so it was seamless. Over time it became less about Covid itself and more about individual fears and beliefs, so we worked together to be sure our impeccability created a sense of safety for all."

WERE THERE ANY PROBLEMS THAT YOU DIDN'T FORESEE?

"We didn't expect the constantly changing regional travel restrictions. They were very difficult for both staff and participants. However, people had a great desire to provide and receive support, so in the end, just about everyone who wanted to get there did. We also didn't expect the Glass Fire in Northern California. We lost our White Sulphur Springs Retreat Center in late September of 2020. That was a difficult time for our community."

WHAT POSITIVE THINGS HAPPENED THAT WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT COVID?

"We created virtual programs such as Hoffman Essentials. The online programs greatly increased our inclusivity and diversity, with over four thousand people attending the online programs since they began."

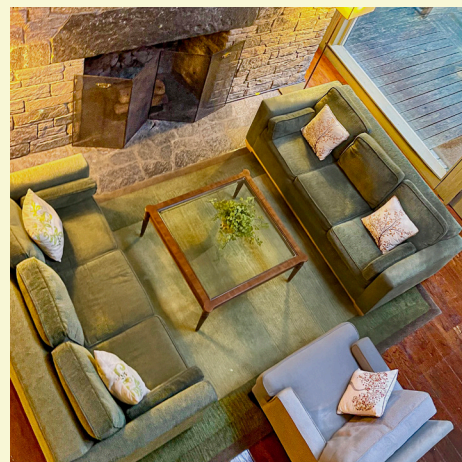
HOW DID YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH GUEST HOUSE DEEPEN?

"For some months during Covid we were Guest House's only client. We already had a very collaborative relationship, so much so that sometimes I forget that we aren't one organization. Something about being 'alone together' in this crisis with such deep reliance on one another was a special experience."

HOW DOES GUEST HOUSE SUPPORT THE PROCESS?

"Guest House staff knows how to 'hold the space.' They are very welcoming and nurturing. They exhibit a fluidity and flexibility that truly supports our work."

GH Is Ready for Her Close-Up



See Guest House in a whole new light! DO NOT MISS new staff member Sonia Fernandez's lovely entries on Facebook and Instagram and truly breathtaking new photos and videos by her and other staff of Guest House. Sonia has an ongoing marketing career with Timberland and has been working at the GH front desk since April 2022. For those of you who are not social media buffs, cash in a favor from your tech-savvy niece, grandson or neighbor and hop online for some inspiring entries and gorgeous pix of,

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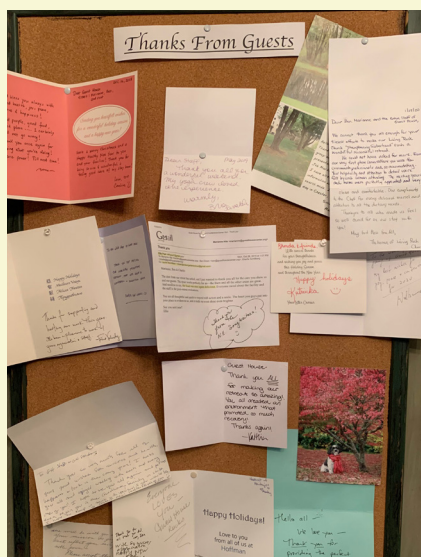
@guest house retreat



A Continued Exercise in Gratitude

In our last edition, back in April 2020, we showed a photo of our nascent "Gratitude Board." A home for the lovely cards we get from guests. While writing this newsletter we were shocked to realized how it had grown in the last two years. We thought we'd share our progress.

April 2020



September 2022



FEATURE

Earth Day at GH, 2022



Earth Day 2022 Volunteers, left to right: David Walker, Noell Goldberg, Hadley Perry, Robyn Mierzwa, Michael Bower, Dorothy Cochrane, & Cary Walker.

Each year, with the exception of the worst Covid Years, a group of volunteers has gathered in the spring to maintain and polish the public face of Guest House and its extensive landscaping. In the past, we built fences, hauled rocks, trimmed trees and shrubs and established the shade garden outside the kitchen.

This year, on the Earth Day weekend, Cary, David, Dorothy, Hadley, Michael, Noell, and Robyn, along with the support of Rich and his many, many bags of mulch, spent a weekend weeding, planting, dead-heading last year's blooms and growth, and spreading all those bags of mulch. The stone walkway in the shade garden was repaired, and Alan's compost bin—made of scraps from the kitchen and leaves from the grounds—went into the soil of the kitchen garden where herbs were planted. Scraps were turned into compost which will now feed the herbs for more of Alan's amazing meals.



David Walker, mulch master



Noell & Michael, putting their backs into it

The botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer said: "A garden is a nursery for nurturing connection, the soil for the cultivation of practical reverence. And its power goes far beyond the garden gate – once you develop a relationship with a little patch of earth, it becomes a seed itself."

Practical reverence... bringing muscle and mind, presence and persistence to our efforts reflected our reverence for Guest House, for the work done there by Diamond Approach groups and many others, for the dear staff that constantly cares for this spiritual home. And the little patch of beautiful earth that Guest House sits on is like a seed that sprouts new growth with every meeting, retreat, family reunion, or volunteer work day that happens there.



Create a Legacy for the Future of Guest House

The **Guest House Legacy Circle** was started four years ago to build the long-term financial foundation

GH needs to meet the inevitable, unexpected crises beyond our control – to survive and thrive and always keep our doors open. Most of our board members, past and current, and others have joined the Circle. But the reality of the devastating impact of Covid-19 has made asking for your future support more important now. We understand that many of you have loved Guest House but cannot afford to reduce your

vision that Guest House will be here for all of us and many more seekers for a long time.

Living and working in a pandemic for over two years has been an enormous challenge for GH. Thanks to your extraordinary annual financial support, we have survived and are stronger than ever. Now the GH leadership is clear about what is required to ensure that GH survives and thrives, not just in the next three years, but over the long term. Your annual support every year ensures that GH operations are sustainable.



current income or assets now to make a larger, or perhaps any, gift to Guest House. However, making a legacy gift—small or large—to Guest House, after you have passed, is a way to express your appreciation, and it will help ensure that many will be able to come to Guest House in the future.

You are the legacy of Guest House. Some of you have attended one retreat, some many retreats over the years. Some of you have donated once or often over the last 14 years, or never at all. But all of you who are reading this newsletter know Guest House and the special nurturing and holding space it creates to support your work for the world when you are here. All of the GH Family—staff, leadership, board and you—share the

But we must also build the long-term financial foundation of GH to meet whatever comes our way in the future.

Including Guest House in your estate plans is easy. There are three simple ways to do this: list GH as a beneficiary in your will; name GH as a beneficiary in your IRA or other retirement plan; and/or name GH as a beneficiary of your savings account or life insurance policy.

Now is the time to fund the future of Guest House!

Please contact GH board member Josie (josiesentner@gmail.com) for further information and/or to let us know if you have named GH in your estate plans. 🌸

GH Is Ready for Her Close-Up

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for example, one of our ceremonial fires (available to guest groups!) and posts like this: *"A gentle reminder that there is much power in coming together, connecting with the land, holding intention, and bringing what we wish to radiate out into our world."* As of press time, we have 817 followers on Facebook and 177 followers on Instagram. Follow us today! 🌸



Friends of Guest House 2020 & 2021 Honor Roll

Thank you all!

Amy Abelow	Robert Fierman	Ed Lynch	Diane Sacks
Towne Allen	John H. Fisher	Nicola Maloney	Leslie Sahler
A.H. Almaas	Judith Flanders	Gregory Marchini	Terry Saracino
Marie & Donald Amoruso	Patricia Galante	Cynthia Martin	Deborah Saunders
Rosanne Annoni	Anne Geary & Scott Valeri	Michelle McDonough	David Schulz
Jorge Arango	Noell Goldberg	Emily McKay	Duncan Scribner
Elizabeth & Ray Archambault	Ben Goldman	Colquitt Meacham	Amalea Seelig
Ann Backus	Valerie Gomes	Nan Meneely	Josie Sentner
Paula Backus	Eduardo Gomez	Margaret Mermin	Beth Shapiro
Terryll Bailey	Paul & Rosemary Gordon	Stephanie Mermin	Don Shaw
Bob Ball	Anne Gottlieb	Melanie Michaels	Carol Shyer
Gregory Beck	Michael Graetzer	Deborah Miller	Carla Simons
Jill Berman	Darlene Graham	Meg Miller	Anne Singer
Matthew Brannagan	Cory Greenberg & Parvati Grais	Mary Moloney	David Slade
John Brett	Jan Griffin	Bonalynd Mosteller	Elizabeth Slayton
Terri Bristow	Kristina Grondahl	Neil Moylan	Nicia Squires
Jessica Britt	Joy Gurrie	Thomas Muraco	Henry Stindt
Jane Bronson	Sandra Hamilton-Golub	Helen Newman	Jane Strong
Byron Brown	Robert Heald	Patricia Nichols	Sarah Tremaine
Laurie Brown & Michael DiLorenzo	Sarah Hernholm	Margie Nicholson	Olaf Unsoeld
Barbara Buda	Sadie High	Suzanne Noble	Aleta Vail
Silvia Burkhart Spillman	Margaret Hixon	Melissa Nuwaysir & William Walls	Meg Vandergon
Barbara Burst	Grace Holland	Jerry & Mary Ann O'Halloran	Cheryl Vaughn-Nilson
Tabor Butler	Jared Howe	James O'Hern	Ann Viviano
Marlene Caffi	Diane Ingram	Paul Ohanesian	Monica von Halle
Avenue Marie Campala	Waltraud Ireland	Kostas Oikonomou	Marcia Wakeland
Carol Carbon	Joey & Steven Jacob	Wendy Osborn	David & Cary Walker
Cara Carlson	Karen Johnson	Laurie Ososky	Neshama Waller
Todd Carter	Nancy Joly	Mercedes Pacheco & Gregory Knight	Jay Walsh
Betts Cassady	Peggy Joyce	Stephen Paschall	Michael Ward
Denise Catuogno	Michael Kanarek	Helga Paulsen	Diane Weinstein
Jeff Charno	Alan Katz	Evelyn Perkowski	Barada Weisbrot
Lauraine Chestnut	Stephanie Kenen & Richard Stover	Hadley Perry	Michele Weissman
Alan Chipetine	Penelope Keyl	Margie Phillips	Jennifer Wheeler
Leah Chyten	Tammy Kirby	Bernadette Prue	Allan Whiteman
Nancy Closs	Tracy Kirshenbaum	Alexis Rafael	Aileen Wigglesworth
Dorothy Cochrane & Michael Bower	Joanne Klein	Marlene Reisman	Maya Williams
Jeff Collins	Julia Knight	Lisa Ricci	Lisa Wolfe
Ken Crocker	Susi Korda	Gloria Richards	Douglas Woodard & Terry Pennebaker
Daphne Cruze-Zug	Michael Landgarten	Donna Ries	Jane Wulf
Ralph Curcuro	Dorothy Landry	Rashmi Ripley	Lilian Zwyns
Syd Cushman	Anne Laney	Debra Robinson	AmazonSmile Foundation
Jill Davey	Sara Laughlin	Barbara Rosen	Czepiga Family Retreat
John Davis	Laurie Leonard & Steve Jones	Laurie Rosenfeld	4 Circles Beyond
Julia Dengel	Barbara Lesko	Steven Rosenzweig	Frost Place Alumni
Ann Diller	Vladimir Lev	Michael Rosetta	Mermin Decagon
Juditha Dowd	Michael Levien & Brooke Conley	Richard Rowley	Robet Foundation
Nancy Dreyfus	Isabelle Lorans	Michael Rubenstein	Unity Center of Norwalk
Le Clanche du Rand	Henry Lowendorf	Margaret Rubick	Unity of New York
Sara Ellison	Vern Ludwig	Elizabeth Russell	Anonymous donors (3)

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