2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted By:
Steve Bartlett, Chair, RespectAbility
Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President, RespectAbility

RESPECTABILITY.ORG
Dear friend,

On behalf of the board, staff and entire RespectAbility team, we extend our warmest wishes and gratitude to you and your loved ones. May you get all you need and always be surrounded by love, fun, meaning and good health!

The Dickens’ quote above really sums up our experience at RespectAbility in 2020, and this annual report details our work in a year like none before it. According to the CDC, 90% of all COVID-19 related hospitalizations were people with underlying conditions. And while not all people with disabilities have comorbidities, most people with such conditions are people with disabilities. In fact, according to a recent New York Times article, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are three times more likely to die if they have COVID-19. Moreover, more than a million of the 7 million people with disabilities who had jobs have lost them. The truth is, our community has faced extraordinary losses, and they are not just financial—they include many lives lost.

However, thanks to you, we were able to help more people with disabilities than ever before. In this annual report you will find stories from some of the key members of our team, including several board members, who have shared personal accounts and critical impacts experienced this year. These include personal discussions about our work through which, thanks to your support, we have made a difference in many people’s lives:

SAFE ACCESS TO FOOD: When the pandemic started, millions of people with disabilities who received SNAP (food stamps) were forced to shop in person—a huge health risk. Our team, working alongside partners, enabled 90% of all SNAP recipients to have critical supplies delivered at home.

Today, 9.9 million people with disabilities in America now have safe access to food on an ongoing basis.

Our hearts break every time we see the lines at food banks across our country, so we know there is still more work to be done. But millions are better off because of what you made possible. Read the story from our Vice Chair Janet LaBreck on how we did this work.
SOLVING A MAJOR POLICY ERROR THAT WOULD HAVE COST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HEALTH CARE COVERAGE: The way the federal CARES Act package was originally designed, millions of Americans with disabilities would have lost both their health care and supports. Thankfully, because our team knew the facts and decision-makers, we were able to create partnerships, educate leaders and ensure millions of people with disabilities were able to receive the $1,200 payment without losing lifesaving supports. These economic stimulus payments reached approximately 8.5 million people with disabilities representing a total of $10.2 billion.

Your investment in our work saved lives.

Hear from our Board Secretary Randall Duchesneau on our policy work.

FIGHTING FOR MEDICAL CARE, SAFE SURROUNDINGS AND AGAINST MEDICAL RATIONING:
Thanks to you, we were able to work with elected officials and government agencies to help ensure that hospitals did not deny people with disabilities access to COVID-19 treatments based on disabilities. More specifically, by cautioning state leaders against medical rationing and devaluing the lives of people with disabilities, multiple states announced commitments to ensure equity of care. Read about how our Vice Chair Ollie Cantos’ blind triplets fought off COVID-19 and survived.

ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: Because you were there for us, we were able to create and distribute digital toolkits for online learning for students with disabilities.

You also enabled us to expand access to employment opportunities and job training for those experiencing job losses.

We are especially excited about developments in telework and entrepreneurship for people with disabilities. Hear from National Leadership Fellow Nicole Homerin on her role in this work.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO BE VIEWED AND VALUED:
Thanks to you, we were able to quadruple our impact in Hollywood this year.

Indeed, RespectAbility is bringing more and more authentic characters with disabilities to the screen. Our Hollywood Lab training program led to jobs for people with disabilities in the industry, and our partnerships with content creators dramatically improved and expanded inclusion of people with disabilities—both in front of and behind the camera. Read a firsthand account from Delbert Whetter, a deaf filmmaker who co-chairs this work for our Board.

photography by: Rick Guidotti and Positive Exposure
BRINGING TOGETHER PEOPLE WHO WANT TO CREATE A BETTER FUTURE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

More than 10,000 people attended our #ADA30 Virtual Summit.

Thousands more attended dozens of our online trainings and convenings where they gained skills, contacts and mental health supports.

ENABLING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO HAVE A SEAT AT DECISION-MAKING TABLES:

Across the country, we reached out to candidates for office across all parties on issues that impact employment and educational opportunities for people with disabilities.

Thanks to you, our National Leadership Program trained and placed talented people who will make a difference for generations to come.

Moreover, our work with faith communities provided access and inspiration during a critical time.

Read an account from board member Ila Eckhoff from who met with presidential candidates on our behalf.
2020 also afforded to us the opportunity to grow our team and make RespectAbility an even more innovative, experienced and diverse organization. We made several tremendous hires on staff to expand our impact in the areas discussed above, as well as welcomed new members to our boards of directors and advisors to guide our future.

We were able to achieve all this because of your support and that of others. We aren’t waiting for vaccines or an economic recovery to take our work to the next level. We know we are needed now and that, with your help, we can rise to the challenges.

Together we can create inclusive, welcoming and respectful communities where all people, including people with disabilities, can have a better future.

Because you have been there for us, RespectAbility continues to work collaboratively with employers, the entertainment industry, governors, policymakers, educators, self-advocates, nonprofits and faith-based organizations, philanthropists and the media to fight stigmas and advance opportunities. Led by a diverse team of people with disabilities and allies, RespectAbility knows that people with disabilities and their families have the same hopes and dreams as everyone else.

MISSION

To fight stigmas and advance opportunities so that people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community.

1. Fight Stigmas
   by promoting authentic portrayals of people with disabilities.

2. Advance Opportunities
   by promoting best practices in education, jobs and accessibility.

3. Leadership Development
   to strengthen a diverse talent pipeline of people with disabilities.

Our free tools and informative resources educate stakeholders so people with disabilities can achieve the education, training, economic security that comes from employment, and good health that everyone wants, needs and deserves.

Rest assured we are on the front lines during this crisis and, with your support, will be there to continue to help. Please take the time to read the firsthand accounts of our work in what everyone is calling an “unprecedented” year.
We are happy to answer any questions. Our email addresses are listed below.

Thank you for what you have done previously. You are in great company; at the back of this report, you can see our most generous donors. But we need more help. May we please count on you again now?

**We need your continued support and to connect with others who can help us expand our reach. Please spread the word about RespectAbility’s work so others can support us.**

Your generosity has allowed us to respond to the needs of the disability community, and during these times, we need your support more than ever. Thank you so much!

**RESPECTFULLY,**

STEVE BARTLETT  
Chair, RespectAbility  
SteveBartlettSAS@gmail.com

JENNIFER LASZLO MIZRAHI  
President, RespectAbility  
JenniferM@RespectAbility.org

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P.S. Please see the financial information and testimonials below. We are rated at the top level by GuideStar and are highly effective and transparent. A year-end tax-deductible gift will strengthen the future of people with disabilities. Thank you for your giving spirit and for all you do!
Ensuring people with disabilities are not forced to choose between hunger and COVID-19

I have spent my career advocating for people who are blind or have low-vision or other disabilities, and my work with RespectAbility continues along this path. Over the years, I have learned the value of listening to people with disabilities and key stakeholders to drive change. Leveraging partnerships and innovative strategies to transform systems to reflect the authentic voice of the disability community has led to more inclusive approaches to identifying and implementing potential solutions that we in the disability community can create.

In March 2020, RespectAbility exemplified these values during an online town hall meeting I co-hosted with people who are blind or have low vision. At the beginning of the pandemic, when confusion and misinformation were swirling about, RespectAbility organized a series of Zoom calls tailored to people with various disabilities to provide a gathering space for information sharing, peer support and solace. It was through these “temperature checks” with people who are blind or have low vision that we learned that many individuals with disabilities across the country were struggling with food insecurity in the face of the pandemic but could not use SNAP benefits online to secure food.

Imagine being blind and told that to use your food stamps, you must shop in person during COVID, where you can’t see if people are wearing masks or not, and often rely on touch instead of using online purchase and delivery services! But that was the case in almost every state, resulting in the unintended consequence of putting 11 million people with disabilities needlessly in danger of contracting the virus.

Sensing the danger of a vulnerable community being forced to break social distance to buy food, RespectAbility shifted focus to advocate on local, state and national levels. Today, thanks to collaboration between RespectAbility and many other advocates and legislators, more than 10 million people with disabilities no longer must choose between catching a deadly virus or going hungry, thanks to the option of home food delivery. We have more work to do, but we are moving in the right direction!
States in green allow people who use SNAP (food stamps) to order and receive groceries online. States in red do not. Map on left was situation when pandemic began. Map on the right shows how our progress enabled 9.9 million people with disabilities to have safe, ongoing access to food.

Janet LaBreck is a Vice Chair of RespectAbility. She began her career with the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) where she served as the first African American Commissioner before she was appointed by President Obama as the first African American Commissioner to lead the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Vocational Rehabilitation program. Blind herself, she has helped thousands of people with disabilities have a better future.
This year RespectAbility played a critical role in protecting people with disabilities during the pandemic in many ways, including economically. In March, when the pandemic took hold in the United States and the federal government prepared to respond, RespectAbility was on hand to help elected officials understand how their actions might help or hurt people with disabilities.

Over the course of my career, I have advocated for people with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities. Last spring, I saw the effectiveness of RespectAbility’s work in advocacy in action.

There were two issues in the CARES Act that could have backfired and adversely impacted people with disabilities: cash payments to individuals and families could have resulted in their income exceeding the threshold to receive health care through Medicaid; and people with disabilities who did not file a tax return could have had their stimulus payments delayed.

RespectAbility conducted outreach to elected officials and partners in the Department of Treasury to remove these risks, lessening the burden on people with disabilities during a year when so much was at stake. Working in a coalition, we were able to ensure that the Economic Impact Payment created by the CARES Act was a rebate and would not count as income for people with disabilities on benefits.

This means that approximately 8.5 million people with disabilities received $1200 for a total amount of $10.2 billion at a time when they needed it most.

We worked closely with the Social Security Task Force to push the IRS to allow people on SSI to receive the rebate even if they don’t typically file taxes.
Given that 90% of COVID-19 hospitalizations are people with underlying health conditions, I shudder to think what would have happened if millions of people had “accidentally” been cut off from their health care coverage. As a RespectAbility board member, I am proud of what we, with your help, have been able to accomplish.

Randall Duchesneau serves as Secretary on RespectAbility's Board of Directors. He has an undergraduate degree from Cornell and a graduate degree in public health from Yale. He is paralyzed due to a sports injury and is a nationally recognized disability advocate and expert on ADA accessibility.

RespectAbility’s COVID-19 response: Collective actions and the ongoing power of change

As part of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities’ COVID-19 Coordination Cohort, we have been helping lead the united efforts of more than 110 disability groups on Capitol Hill. We at RespectAbility are grateful to join so many other national disability organizations in standing with our community when we were needed most. Quite simply, we are family, and THAT is what families DO.
When COVID-19 began to ravage our own by threatening the lives, livelihoods and physical and mental health of our friends, colleagues and loved ones, we quickly activated all our assets at every level. We leveraged an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to make a difference on multiple fronts. As has been true since our inception, we called upon thousands to get involved. True to who we are, we rallied like never before:

As the pandemic’s impact caused persons with disabilities to wonder how they could best cope with the many challenges that emerged, RESPECTABILITY WAS THERE, quickly centralizing and distributing timely and critical resources on accessible teleworking, job seeking, online education, economic impact payments, unemployment and other government benefits, and access to COVID-19 testing, food and more.

RESPECTABILITY PROMPTLY SOLICITED AND ACTED UPON SUGGESTIONS from various community segments including those living with mobility, sensory, intellectual/developmental, psychiatric and learning disabilities.

When millions of fellow people with disabilities who had been receiving federal nutrition assistance originally were forced to choose between going without food or risking infection to leave their homes to obtain essential supplies, WE ACTED. In a mere six weeks, our team, working alongside partners, secured a way for 90% of all SNAP recipients to have critical food supplies delivered at home.

And, on a more personal level, when my blind Eagle Scout triplet sons Leo, Nick and Steven were infected with COVID-19 and two of them were hospitalized and had to be placed on oxygen, the whole RespectAbility family was there, sending their prayers and cheering them on.

The four of us, along with other voices throughout the movement, urged everyone to take this pandemic seriously to spare the pain and anguish this disease leaves in its wake.

In 2021 our activism continues. We urge all our fellow Americans to maintain appropriate social distancing, wear masks or face coverings, and wash their hands regularly. We may at long last get ahead of the disease by doing our part.

COVID-19 knows no borders. It devastates every part of the community and does not care about a person’s station in life. It is not liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, and we all must do our part. Even if we feel fine, we may nevertheless unwittingly infect those around us, especially those older in age or whose medical conditions leave them immunocompromised.

At a public policy level, as Congress debates new stimulus efforts, we will continue to be ready, along with others, to endeavor diligently and consistently to bolster support for our community of more than 56 million people nationwide. We also will keep developing practical tools and resources to help in whatever way we can.

Together, we will meet all the challenges before us as we continue being the force for the change we want to see. Herein lies the power of collective action!

Ollie Cantos is Vice Chair of RespectAbility. He is a noted civil rights attorney who has won numerous national awards and has been appointed to positions by two presidents. Blind himself, he adopted triplets who are also blind and who became the first blind triplets to become Eagle Scouts.
RespectAbility Fellow helps create educational guide that helps thousands

The RespectAbility National Leadership Program gave me an opportunity to learn and collaborate with experts in the field of disability advocacy and inclusion. I was able to learn about how my experience in the field of special education intersects with other areas of work that advance opportunities for individuals with disabilities. During my time in the National Leadership Program, I worked alongside a team of talented Fellows and staff with wide-ranging expertise to create an Educational Resource Guide to support distance learning for students with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guide also was downloaded more than 5,000 times via RespectAbility’s website, helping parents of children with disabilities and special educators cope during this pandemic. This experience allowed me to hone my research skills and collaborate with others to ensure the guide was accurate, accessible and user-friendly for individuals with and without disabilities.

OVERALL, THE RESPECTABILITY NATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM GAVE ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH INDIVIDUALS AROUND THE COUNTRY WHO SHARE MY PASSION FOR DISABILITY ADVOCACY AND INCLUSION.

RespectAbility also helped open my eyes to ways in which we can all work together to ensure that individuals with disabilities have a voice in education, advocacy, policy and beyond.

Nicole Homerin, M.Ed., was a Community Outreach Fellow in RespectAbility’s National Leadership Program for Summer 2020 and is a Ph.D. student in the Joint Doctoral Program in Special Education at California State University, Los Angeles and UCLA.
Empowering people with disabilities to be viewed and valued

While growing up I rarely saw people with disabilities on television or in movies. When they did make an appearance, it was usually as a character that needed saving or someone that the audience was meant to pity. This lack of authenticity in disability representation and portrayal in media leads to unfortunate caricatures or whitewashing of stories that demean, stigmatize and diminish our existence in society.

We believe that the world is ready for a more uplifting and aspirational narrative—one that authentically depicts people with disabilities as they deserve to be portrayed, as multi-dimensional characters with hopes, flaws, and dreams who are capable of being fighters, heroes, villains and champions in the stories that Hollywood puts on our screens.

Thankfully, the tide is beginning to turn, and we are beginning to tell our own stories.

For example, in 2020, my work on the children’s animated program Madagascar: A Little Wild (currently showing on streaming platforms Hulu and Peacock) supported the creation of two adventurous chimpanzee siblings that use ASL.
one of whom is deaf with a distinctive personality without being defined by his disability, and both of whom are integral to the show’s many zany adventures.

We are increasingly being asked to consult on projects with characters with disabilities, or incorporate disabilities in their storyline, on a scale far greater than we have seen from previous years. Many of our entertainment industry partners also have begun to recognize the importance of not only hiring consultants but also hiring writers and below-the-line crew with disabilities, and we have worked with many to create these hiring opportunities. This indicates both an awareness of, and a commitment to, the values that RespectAbility has worked so hard to advance in this industry.

RespectAbility is bringing more and more of these authentic characters with disabilities to the screen by creating a pipeline of diverse professionals with disabilities behind the camera through the Hollywood Lab training program. So much of our work is coming to fruition now!

And as a quick anecdote, I recently was selected as a Fellow in Film Independent’s competitive Fast Track program, which takes place contemporaneously with the annual American Film Market.

You will be pleased to know that RespectAbility’s work in the field came up often during the Fast Track program. In addition to my participation, a RespectAbility Lab alumnus also was selected this year as a Fast Track Fellow and won a prestigious Sloan grant from Film Independent. Several groups and speakers that had previously spoken at our Lab participated in the Fast Track program as industry representatives, all of whom recognized RespectAbility and its Lab participants/projects that were represented in Fast Track.

Two things became clear from my Fast Track participation: One, that our RespectAbility Lab is in really good company, and two, that the RespectAbility Lab is now a part of the various pathways to success that exist for emerging filmmakers in our industry.

It was hard not to notice that every single one of the Fast Track participants had received distinctions from film grants and awards and/or were active in the various artist development programs, labs and workshops offered in our industry by leading filmmaking organizations such as Film Independent, Sundance and the Producers Guild of America. They are terrific avenues for an emerging filmmaker to not only gain valuable support and resources from peers and mentors in the industry, but also to enhance one’s visibility as a professional. RespectAbility is quickly developing a reputation amongst these peer industry organizations in Hollywood for identifying and elevating filmmakers/professionals with disabilities who are worthy of notice.

Things look different this year. Our 2020 Lab was virtual, which presented us with new challenges that made valuable opportunities like in-person networking and tours impossible, but it also gave us new opportunities that Lauren Appelbaum and her team deftly capitalized on. The Lab’s virtual presence afforded us the rare and unprecedented opportunity to invite talented filmmakers with disabilities from all over the nation to participate remotely from their homes.

Despite the challenges this year, the power of supporting emerging filmmakers with disabilities remains the same and is more important now than ever before.

Delbert Whetter is co-chair of RespectAbility’s Hollywood Committee. He is an accomplished film executive and producer with several feature productions under his belt. Whetter is Deaf from a multi-generational Deaf family and the parent of two hearing children, one of whom is autistic.
Keeping issues that affect us front and center

To say that this election year was unusual is a drastic understatement! In January I traveled to Iowa with RespectAbility to raise the visibility of issues that affect people with disabilities during the presidential primaries. This was one piece of RespectAbility’s ongoing work to enable people with disabilities to participate in our democracy.

I have cerebral palsy. I also am a managing director at a large asset manager in New York. There is significant evidence that diverse teams, including those with disabled individuals, make better decisions and create better economic outcomes for the companies that employ them.

Everyone deserves the right to have a job, be independent and choose their purpose.

Over the course of four days, we attended events for presidential candidates Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Pete Buttigieg, Joe Biden and Andrew Yang. We asked questions and met with the candidates, staff and policy advisers. We also visited the Republican Party headquarters and spoke with their team.

Four years ago, most candidates did not have accessible websites or events. That also was true at the start of the presidential campaign season in 2019.

However, because of the advocacy of our group and others, people like me can go to an event and know there will be a place where we can sit and participate, just like anyone else.

All these months later, the trip paid off! The incoming Biden administration appears ready to prioritize issues that affect people with disabilities, including civil rights, affordable health care and economic security including competitive, integrated employment.

As I write this, several Senate races have yet to be decided, and RespectAbility is continuing to fight so people with disabilities have a say. None of the four candidates in Georgia even mention the word disability on their campaign websites, and none of their websites are fully accessible to voters who are blind or deaf. Our work is not yet done!

Ilia Eckhoff co-chairs the board nominating committee for RespectAbility. A senior level finance executive, she lives with cerebral palsy.
Appendix A: Our Funders

RespectAbility is able to accomplish everything we have detailed in this report due to our donors both large and small. If you would like to contribute, please visit www.RespectAbility.org/Donate or send your gift to our office at 11333 Woodglen Drive, Suite 102 Rockville, MD 20852.

**MAJOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RESPECTABILITY’S WORK WAS PROVIDED BY THESE GENEROUS FUNDERS, AMONG MANY MORE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Joan and Stanford Alexander Family Fund</th>
<th>Bank of America Charitable Foundation</th>
<th>The David Berg Foundation</th>
<th>Beverly Foundation</th>
<th>Christine Cadena</th>
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<td>The Walt Disney Company</td>
<td>Einstein-Sim Family</td>
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<td>Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles</td>
<td>JPMorgan Chase &amp; Company</td>
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<td>ViacomCBS</td>
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## Appendix B: Profit and Loss YTD Comparison

### Income Summary (Jan 1 - Dec 2, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Category</th>
<th>Total ($)</th>
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<tr>
<td>40110 Corporate Contributions</td>
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<tr>
<td>40120 Individual Contributions</td>
<td>97,701</td>
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<tr>
<td>40130 Foundations/Trusts</td>
<td>346,979</td>
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<td><strong>Total 40100 Direct Public Support</strong></td>
<td><strong>547,080</strong></td>
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<td>40300 Miscellaneous Revenue</td>
<td>1,200</td>
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<td>40400 Interest-Savings, Short-Term CD</td>
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<td><strong>Total 40000 Unrestricted Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>550,984</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>43000 Temporarily Restricted Revenue</td>
<td>173,000</td>
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<td>43500 Restricted Grants - JP Morgan/Chase</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<td>43800 Temporarily Restricted - Ford</td>
<td>351,726</td>
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<td>43900 Temp. Restricted Foundation / Trusts Grants</td>
<td>544,726</td>
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<td><strong>Total 43000 Temporarily Restricted Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,095,709</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
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### Expense Summary (Jan 1 - Dec 2, 2020)

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<td>60000 Office Expenses Combined</td>
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<td>63000 Office Rental</td>
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<td>66000 Salaries, Taxes, 401K</td>
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<td>66030 Employee Benefits - Health Insurance</td>
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<td>68000 Dues, Subscriptions and Memberships</td>
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<td>68100 Website Development &amp; Maintenance</td>
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<td>68300 Travel and Meetings - Outside Area</td>
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<td>68310 Conference, Convention, Meeting</td>
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<td>68320 Travel and Meetings - Local</td>
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<td>68321 Meals for Fellows &amp; Visitors</td>
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<td>68322 Travel Stipends</td>
<td>26,155</td>
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<td>69000 Gifts</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,461,213</strong></td>
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**Net Operating Income**

- $(365,503)

**Net Income**

- $(365,503)

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Pledges are booked in the year they are given. In 2019, we received several multi-year grants that were booked in 2019. This explains the negative amount.

Additionally, we anticipate that our PPP loan of $160,000 will be forgiven in 2021.
RespectAbility wishes to thank:

**BOARDS OF DIRECTORS/ADVISORS**
- Steve Bartlett, Chairman
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- Linda Burger, Treasurer
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- Autumn Blalock
- Zoltán Boka
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- Nebiyu Dingetu
- KiAnna Dorsey
- Natalie Dunaway
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- Lizzy Francis
- Jasmine Green
- Maria Heredia
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- Tyler Hoog
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- Liam Itgen
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- Angelique Uwabera
- Blair Webb
- Alexander Woods
- Ilya Zhitomirskiy

**ADVISORS AND CONSULTANTS**
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- Cathy Bolinger
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- Erin Dotson
- Stan Goldman
- Stan Greenberg
- Nicole Homerin
- Shea Mirzai
- Lupe Ramos-Silva
- Ava Rigelhaupt
- Leah Romond
- Robert Tombosky
- James Trout
- Donna Walton

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- Andrew Egan and CoolGraySeven for the design of this brochure and our imaging