

Hindsight 20/20

A look back at COVID's impact on our membership



The Nonprofit Partnership

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Innovative.”

**The Community Blood Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania
& Western New York**



Community Blood Bank was able to collaborate with UPMC Hamot and AHN Saint Vincent Hospital to develop a program for drawing and distributing COVID Convalescent Plasma (CCP) for area patients hospitalized with COVID-19. The idea that this might be a treatment started gaining traction March 25. Community Blood Bank drew our first CCP donor just a month later. By evaluating our existing capabilities and engaging our supportive partner hospitals, CBB was able to quickly respond to an emerging need for this innovative treatment. Despite the limitations the pandemic imposed on our mobile blood drives, CBB was also able to refocus recruitment efforts on a more customized approach for interested donors. There were certainly challenges this year but new relationships formed, many grew stronger and the unparalleled dedication of our staff was never more apparent.

Deanna Renaud | Executive Director, The Community Blood Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania & Western New York

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Fortuitous.”

Community Access Media



During the tumultuous year of 2020, we have realized several silver linings for our organization. Due to the inability to meet and communicate in person, people, groups, non-profit organizations, and small businesses were forced to turn to digital communication. The majority of people were communicating via video, doing ZOOM calls, livestreaming to social media, and creating virtual events. Fortunately for us at CAM, all of those things are our expertise. Our organization's membership base has grown by 33% in 2020! We continue seeing new members joining up every week to take advantage of our content creation courses, knowledge, and resources that are available. In addition, we have been able to help numerous other nonprofits and small businesses in the community with their livestreaming needs. This influx of opportunity has allowed our organization to grow our revenue streams. [allowing us to add] two additional staff members to our team in 2021. We have created more partnerships, made more contacts, and helped more people in the Erie community than ever before!

However, not everything has been sunshine and dandelions. We were forced to close our building from mid-March through Mid-July and had to be creative in order to continue our mission and help our members. We created a whole new curriculum online [and] had several LIVE in-person events that we cover each year cancelled due to the pandemic, reducing revenue. We have taken various precautions at our studio to ensure the safety of our guests, which has been an adventure.

Jake Bartko | Executive Director, Community Access Media

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Challenging.”

Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA)

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PACA pivoted on a dime during this time of COVID-19. We concentrated on three areas. PACA created a weekly music live-streamed concert series called PACA[Live!]. Every Sunday night at 8:00 PACA presents a local (or touring) band for an hour-long concert which we send out for free on our YouTube channel. This is our effort to keep live music alive and relevant in a time where other venues have been forced to close. PACA has presented a full-on stage play on our main stage. We purchased the rights to Marx in Soho, by Howard Zinn, and presented it to both a live audience as well as stream it with a four-camera shoot via the internet. With help from the CDC and the Erie County Health Board we formatted a safe procedure to seat a reduced audience of 25 patrons for the live show as well as send it out to our on-line patrons. PACA was the only theater in America to stage a show in this fashion in America. PACA also used our downtime to upgrade our historic property at 1505 State. We built two wheelchair accessible bathrooms on our first floor so patrons will be able to use them as soon as they enter the building. We installed a new LED sign on the front of our building to project wider visibility and create a safer corridor on our section of downtown. [Even now], PACA continues to serve our tenants, our patrons, the arts, and our mission.

Mark Tannenbaum | Executive Director, PACA

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Committed.”

Junior Achievement of Western PA

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When schools closed due to COVID-19, there was a lot of uncertainty of how students would finish the school year and receive JA programming now that they weren't in the classroom. We were committed to making sure that education did not stop. In response, our education team worked tirelessly to create new, innovative learning opportunities to support students, educators and parents digitally. In addition we created an at home resource guide full of activities sourced from JA programs. Through alternate-delivery methods, Junior Achievement served our students as promised and we are continuing to do this so our kids can spend more time planning for and dreaming about tomorrow, and less time worrying about today. We are committed to doing this until we can all be certain again. As a whole, JA lost half a million dollars due to cancelled fundraisers across our reach. We immediately sprung into action and launched the Whatever It Takes Campaign. The message was simple. JA was committed and inspired to meet the needs of those we serve—whatever it takes. Our supporters provided short videos highlighting their pledges to do whatever it takes to make sure that students were educated at home. Parents became first-time homeschool instructors, educators went virtual for the first time in their careers, and students adapted to a new learning style without warning. Our emergency fundraising campaign showed our community that we would not rest. Instead we would get creative and innovative to support students as promised.

Erin Sekerak | Executive Director, Junior Achievement of Western PA

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Chaotic.”

Erie Free Store



We closed from March 2020 through June 2020. When reopening in June, we were able to utilize a larger space without additional tear down and set up. Our operation stayed the same but more spaced out. Many new shoppers came to Erie Free Store during our open times and were looking for a variety of items. In late fall/winter we have conducted a few drive through events as it does not seem safe for indoor shopping options at this time. I worry about the volunteers being too close to each other and about the shoppers not disclosing if they have tested positive or should be quarantining. I do wish that we could provide more personalized shopping but am not sure how to do that without a large administrative undertaking. The pandemic has cemented our place within the community as somewhere that anyone can shop or look for items. We would like to better communicate how and what to donate.

Breanna Adams | Coordinator, Erie Free Store

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Focused.”

ExpERIEnce Children’s Museum



Since March, children's museums around the world have launched new efforts and transformed existing ones to support children, families, and communities facing unprecedented challenges. In these trying times, children's museums have leveraged their expertise in child- and play-centered approaches to academic and social-emotional learning to meet direct and pressing needs. Nothing about 2020 has been normal and the effects on children is insurmountable. The expERIENCE Children's Museum has tried to remain open and create the safest possible playing opportunity for our community in hopes to share a bit of "normalcy." Now more than ever, we realize that our community needs places like the Children's Museum to be a space for inspiration, hope community building and education.

Ainslie Brosig | Executive Director, ExpERIENCE Children's Museum

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Transformational.”

YMCA of Greater Erie

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In early 2020, COVID-19 prompted a government enforced stay at home order to temporarily close industries of all sectors including the Y. Within a 24-hour period the Y laid off and furloughed over 600 employees and consolidate corporate operations, pause all programs and close our physical facilities. The Y had to quickly pivot operations and move into response mode adapting services and programs to continue serving the community during this health and economic crisis. Within just 48 hours, the Y applied for and received an exemption waiver to offer the “essential” workforce childcare services and support families with free meals for children. During this time, the Y supported over 25 employers with essential childcare so their employees could return to work and cared for 311 children. The Y’s Meals for Kids program relieved tight family budgets by providing grab & go free dinner meals and snacks for children and 30-pound fresh produce boxes. 63,000 meals and snacks and 43,000 pounds of fresh produce were distributed. The crisis pushed the Y to innovate, notably through embracing technology – bringing people together in digital spaces and delivering 313 virtual health and wellness classes. Our Y’s conservative financial strategy meant that the Y had the cash reserves necessary to respond to this crisis without damaging future sustainability.

Tammy Roche | VP, Marketing Communications & Financial Development, YMCA of Greater Erie

In a word, describe 2020 at your organization.

“Historic.”

WQLN

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Like most nonprofits, the pandemic presented WQLN with a lot of challenges. Our story is not unique - but the pandemic also created a lot of opportunity for us. We were able to focus on our primary services of Civility, Education, and Public Safety. We put teachers on television, to teach children who are no longer in school, on the radio we broadcast the Erie Playhouse and Erie Philharmonic, we broadcast the Erie Blues and Jazz Festival, and are currently broadcasting the entire 2020/21 season of the Erie Philharmonic. Last July, we saluted every graduating senior in Northwest Pennsylvania in a 10-hour broadcast. We were the producing station for the County Executive's daily news conferences. Most exciting - will be what begins in a couple of weeks when we will use our broadcast signal to provide free internet services to kids who are unable to connect online to their classrooms.

Tom New | President & CEO, WQLN