identifies, advocates for, and invests in high-quality and innovative programs that unite multiple generations for the enrichment of our communities.
For over twenty years, The Eisner Foundation has been committed to providing access and opportunity to Southern California’s most vulnerable citizens. We have found over time through research and practice that the programs that worked the best were those that served children and older adults simultaneously and together, creating positive outcomes not only for both, but for our community and our society. Today, The Eisner Foundation is America’s only foundation focused exclusively on intergenerational programs.

In 2020, America faced unprecedented challenges and those that we seek to serve were obviously at great risk. Still, I was proud that The Eisner Foundation was able to provide some support to those who were working on the frontlines to protect our elderly, educate our children, and unite our citizenry. While our country was divided along many lines, it was comforting that many of the seniors and children that our partners serve were able to find common ground, and identify their own shared purposes and visions, for themselves and their communities.

We know from our own family that intergenerational connections can lead to good outcomes, and we see that every day in the non-profits with which we collaborate. We were so pleased to see how many of our partners were able to adapt their programming to work remotely in 2020, and to find new and innovative ways to bring people of all ages together. We saw in real time that under difficult circumstances older people could offer counsel, wisdom, knowledge, experience, and unconditional love, and the young could provide technology assistance, vitality, reduction from isolation, and most importantly, purpose.

The Eisner Foundation is pleased to continue our work in this intergenerational ecosystem. We invite you to join us, and hope you will take the time today to learn about what we have learned, and what is ahead. Thank you.

Jane B. Eisner, President, The Eisner Foundation

In this unprecedented and often terrible year, it was my great honor to work for The Eisner Foundation. Every day, our staff, from their garages and their dining room tables, did all they could to identify, support, and advocate on behalf of great non-profits that believe, as we do, that our nation must do more to promote intergenerational connections. I am again thankful to the Eisner family for their vision in identifying this unheralded focus, and their subsequent courage to commit their resources to addressing the inequities that threaten our society when we fail to create a shared vision between the young and the old.

At our organization, we believe that in a society that is being actively and intentionally divided along racial, socioeconomic, gender, and of course, political lines, we have an obligation as a funder and a thought leader to seek higher ground, and to work to unite people from different generations. In 2020, while our community, our country, and our world were under siege, we stayed focused on finding ways to end the divide between the generations. Some progress was made, under difficult circumstance, but much work lies ahead. We so very much look forward to 2021 and continuing our work to unite.

Trent Stamp, CEO, The Eisner Foundation
Los Angeles is a microcosm of the challenges today’s youth and older adults face across the U.S., making the need and potential impact of programs focused on these populations even greater. The Eisner Foundation’s intergenerational focus demonstrates our commitment to efforts that leverage the strengths of each age group to serve each other and create positive, lasting change.

In 2020, The Eisner Foundation invested several million dollars in intergenerational programs to further this goal. These gifts went to initiatives across a wide range of sectors, including education, kinship care, the arts, and more. These programs reflect the breadth of what’s possible through intergenerational connections, even in the virtual settings these organizations adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Eisner Foundation also continues to invest in partnerships to produce new data, models, and recommendations to promote intergenerational solutions to new and wider audiences.

We know that intergenerational solutions are efficient, effective tools to address societal problems and create stronger communities. With the division and polarization that has marred our society for many years, it has never been more important to bring people together to foster empathy and work toward a better life for all.
Covid-19 created an unprecedented crisis in the Los Angeles nonprofit community, with staggering uncertainty in the early weeks and months as organizations scrambled to adapt to remote work while pivoting in directions they never imagined. The need was great, and the time and funds were clearly short.

The Eisner Foundation board and staff knew there was a moral obligation to go above and beyond our usual grantmaking to match the admirable response of nonprofit leaders. First, we converted all current grants to general operating funds and suspended reporting requirements, and then considered what additional funds we could inject into the community to help those in need as quickly as possible.

When we launched our Rapid Response Fund in April 2020 to combat social isolation for older adults during the Covid-19 pandemic, we had no doubt that the Los Angeles community would be full of creative and urgently needed solutions. Initially announced as a $500,000 fund, The Eisner Foundation Rapid Response Fund ultimately granted $841,000 to 27 organizations to serve older adults and greater Los Angeles.
Given the enormous uncertainty in the early days of the pandemic, The Eisner Foundation simplified and expedited the Rapid Response Fund application process to get funds to nonprofits as quickly as possible. In many cases, successful applicants received funds within 2-3 weeks of submitting their request.

These grants allowed organizations to provide technology and internet access, hot meals, and social connection to older adults throughout the greater Los Angeles region. Recipients included long-time grantees like EngAGE and the Bresee Foundation, new organizations like the Exceptional Children’s Foundation and the LGBTQ Center of Long Beach, and former partners like Harbor Interfaith Services and the Southeast Asian Community Alliance.

As one of the first foundations to establish and disburse a rapid response program during this crisis, our action garnered notice in the press, including mentions in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, Inside Philanthropy, The Chronicle of Social Change, and more. We were also recognized by our philanthropic peers, many of whom reached out to create similar programs at their own foundations.
While The Eisner Foundation's grantmaking is generally focused in Los Angeles County, The Eisner Prize for Intergenerational Excellence is designed to recognize exceptional intergenerational models across the United States.

The Eisner Foundation has honored a wide range of individuals and nonprofits with The Eisner Prize since the first was awarded to Nancy Henkin and the Temple University Intergenerational Center in 2011. Other previous winners include DOROT in New York, Generations United in Washington, D.C., Bridge Meadows in Portland, and Encore.org in San Francisco.

In 2020, we celebrated the first Eisner Prize recipient outside the continental United States, as well as the first predominantly Spanish-speaking organization: The Recreational and Educational Community Association of Barrio Mariana de Humacao, known as ARECMA.
On October 7, 2020, we announced ARECMA as our newest Eisner Prize laureate. The Prize included a $150,000 cash gift in recognition of ARECMA’s work to unite multiple generations to bring about positive, lasting changes in its community.

ARECMA focuses on community self-management, cooperation and solidarity, and individual and collective social responsibility across generations. It serves the residents of the Mariana neighborhood in Humacao, Puerto Rico, by providing services and facilities that bring residents of all ages together. In particular, ARECMA promotes education and economic development through a summer camp, health and job fairs, recreational activities, and community events including the annual Breadfruit Festival, all of which are executed with an intergenerational lens.

ARECMA’s 38-year legacy shows how intergenerational solutions create connected, resilient communities that can mitigate the effects of natural disasters and other challenges. After Hurricane Maria in 2017, existing social connections and infrastructure allowed this relatively isolated community to recover quickly, despite not having water or power for months in the aftermath. During the Covid-19 pandemic, ARECMA staff and volunteers distributed food to residents in need, deployed social work students to address mental health concerns, and implemented safety guidelines to reopen community facilities as quickly as possible.
The Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) supports working and retired members of the entertainment community with a safety net of health and social services, including temporary financial assistance, case management, and residential living.

As Covid-19 forced many older adults into isolation, MPTF’s new Call Hub was poised to help. A scalable platform to connect volunteers to older adults for friendly phone calls, this effort had already been well underway when the pandemic hit. With The Eisner Foundation’s support, MPTF increased their capacity and expanded the program to other nonprofits doing similar outreach, including to fellow Eisner Foundation grantees like L.A. Works. MPTF is now exploring additional scaling opportunities to make this technology widely available to alleviate loneliness across the country.

MPTF also continues to be a leader in convening aging experts in Los Angeles and beyond. In July 2020, they moved their annual Social Isolation Summit to a virtual setting to share innovative approaches and resources to address the realities of isolation and loneliness and the risks to older adults. Intergenerational programming was a recurring theme throughout the Summit, with program experts, policymakers, and researchers alike sharing a wide range of case studies and data supporting the benefits of bringing the generations together to alleviate social isolation.
In addition to initiatives like community economic development, tutoring, and clinical services, the Koreatown Youth & Community Center (KYCC) also provides affordable housing to hundreds of Koreatown residents, many of whom are older. When stay-at-home guidelines were issued in March 2020, KYCC staff moved fast to deliver supplies, groceries and hot meals from local restaurants to these residents.

But while essential, a food delivery program can’t address all of the recipients’ needs. To make sure residents did not become socially isolated, the participants of KYCC’s new student journalism program sprang into action. Instead of having students go out into their community to connect with elders as originally planned, they began calling the older adults in KYCC’s low-income housing program to identify their immediate needs and to begin relationships. Over several months, the students talked regularly with the elders and documented their experiences in writing, audio, photography and video, which have been compiled into a multimedia website.

As the students continue conversing with older adults in their communities, they’re coming away with a deeper understanding of and empathy for what it has meant to be older during this crisis, while the older adults have found their physical and emotional needs met during a particularly vulnerable time.
Based in Van Nuys, ONEgeneration serves young and old alike through their Senior Enrichment Center and Adult Day Care Program, Child Care and Preschool, and other services like Grandparents As Parents. These programs are built around a core commitment to intergenerational connection, facilitating interactions between the older adults and children participating in their programs throughout the day.

But as with other organizations, Covid-19 forced a rapid change in operations to maintain safety and respond to the changing needs of those they serve. As the Senior Enrichment Center was forced to close and childcare services had to be adjusted to comply with safety guidelines, staff was also ramping up food delivery and friendly calling programs to serve the growing number of homebound older adults in their programs. Over time, ONEgeneration was able to virtually bring together older adults and children in their intergenerational programs once again over Zoom.

Other ONEgeneration efforts also transitioned to virtual environments. Their Sages & Seekers affiliate program, pairing students and older adults in an eight-week program to learn from each other’s life experiences, restarted via Zoom in September 2020 after a spring hiatus, and Grandparents as Parents support groups and court navigation services have also transitioned to meeting online.
School on Wheels volunteers provide free tutoring and mentoring to children from kindergarten through twelfth grade living in shelters, motels, vehicles, group foster homes, and the streets of Southern California. For several years, The Eisner Foundation has partnered with School on Wheels to support the recruitment and training of older volunteers to this effort to great success.

During the Covid-19 crisis, students experiencing homelessness immediately became a demographic most at-risk of educational disadvantages as schools transitioned to remote instruction. School on Wheels staff conducted outreach to shelters to identify immediate major needs and surveyed shelters and families about their access to the internet and computers, ultimately distributing Chromebooks and Kindles in addition to school supplies and hygiene kits to those in need. Fortunately, one of School on Wheels’ goals for 2020 was to expand their Digital Learning Initiative, and the infrastructure was already in place to move some tutoring services online.

For students without internet or computer access, School on Wheels also partnered with the City of LA Mayor’s Office, Kids First, and LAUSD to participate in the Hyland Motel Pod Pilot, where tutors help students with online learning in a safe and supportive outdoor study area set up in the motel’s plaza when such gatherings are permitted by state and local orders.
Research is a crucial part of our intergenerational mission. As our society siloes the generations, governmental and private funding tends to be siloed as well, leading to institutions that maintain this status quo. But with increased awareness of and supporting data for the benefits of intergenerational programming, we can create a shift toward making efficient and effective intergenerational programs and spaces more commonplace.

In 2020, we continued multi-year partnerships with Stanford University, the University of California, Los Angeles, and The Heart Foundation to determine the tangible benefits of intergenerational connections, map a path forward for our society, and improve the health of older adults to sustain their essential contributions to their communities.
Stanford Center on Longevity’s New Map of Life initiative envisions a society that supports people to live secure and high-quality lives for a century or more. In 2018, The Eisner Foundation funded a three-year proposal to support one of nine fellows working to advance these goals with an eye toward intergenerational opportunity. This new initiative is researching and defining new models for education and lifelong learning, redesigning how we work, advising new policies for health care, housing, the environment and financial security, and promoting more intergenerational partnerships. It also aims to advance a new narrative of aging and redefine what it means to be "old."

At The University of California, Los Angeles, The Eisner Foundation continued our multi-year partnership to support three intergenerational programs: Generation Xchange, TimeOut@UCLA, and the UCLA Alzheimer’s and Dementia Care Program, all led by UCLA researchers. These programs not only serve the public through intergenerational connection and service, but also provide the foundation for scholarly research that has already begun to document the tangible benefits of intergenerational efforts. While the Covid-19 pandemic and physical distancing requirements led to major changes in program delivery, staff were able to pivot and facilitate remote interactions between older adults, UCLA students, and youth.

Finally, our support of The Heart Foundation’s research furthered progress on a vaccine to provide protection against atherosclerosis and vascular inflammation, the processes that lead to clogged arteries, heart attacks, and strokes. By enabling older adults to live longer, healthier lives, this work will allow them to continue to play a vital role in our society.
Over the past year, The Eisner Foundation has supported efforts to bring together nonprofit, philanthropic, and civic leaders to advance intergenerational ideas and foster closer collaboration. These convenings include Policy Summits with the Alliance For Children’s Rights, multiple intergenerational practitioner virtual convenings with Encore.org and Generations United, a webinar on seeing older adults as assets with Grantmakers In Aging, a virtual Capitol Hill briefing on intergenerational shared sites with Generations United, and an Intergenerational Funders Forum.

The Eisner Foundation also continues to be a thought leader in the aging, child welfare, and intergenerational spaces with articles and op-eds in publications including the Chronicle of Philanthropy, EdSource, and The Hill that demonstrate the promise of intergenerational solutions, citing our grantees as case studies.

Finally, foundation staff continue to serve as dedicated board members for several philanthropic and nonprofit organizations, including Grantmakers in Aging, The Milken Institute Center for the Future of Aging, The University of Southern California Center on Philanthropy & Public Policy, Eisner Health, Asian Americans/ Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, and Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy.
Following our successful convening of Southern California grantmakers in 2019, we partnered with Encore.org, the Annenberg Foundation, The Irvine Foundation, and the Stanford Center on Longevity in October 2020 to explore innovative strategies for bringing the generations together to solve problems, bridge divides, and build a better future. More than two dozen philanthropic leaders from national, regional, and community foundations heard from thought leaders and social innovators, and had the opportunity for deep conversation.

Also in October 2020, we followed the previous year’s intergenerational shared sites congressional briefing with Generations United in Washington, D.C. with a virtual session presenting a new toolkit for interested communities and organizations to create their own shared sites. Because this session was held on Zoom rather than in-person in Washington, D.C., hundreds of people from across the world joined this hour-long session in addition to members of Congress, their staff, and advocates.

In addition, The Eisner Foundation supported two Policy Summits with the Alliance for Children’s Rights to explore the challenge of “hidden foster care,” or when kin caregivers are discouraged from formally entering the child welfare system. Amid much uncertainty in the child welfare system during the Covid-19 crisis, the Alliance also successfully advocated for accommodations for remote adoption hearings, increased funding for foster youth workforce development, and co-sponsored several successful bills in the California state legislature to improve access to resources for kinship families.
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