

SIENA RETREAT CENTER

Annual Report 2020-2021

Racial, Environmental, and Economic Justice Programs Inspire Expanded Range of Participants

One of the silver linings of the pandemic was our expanded geographic reach due to increased online program offerings. Participants and presenters alike became more skilled in their use of Zoom and other platforms, enhancing the quality of retreat experiences.

Highlights of the program year included "Working for Racial Justice" with Joan Crawford; "Pandemic and the Call to

Ecological Justice" with Diarmuid O'Murchu; "Retirement and Purposeful Aging" with Jim Briggs; "Reclaiming Indigenous Space" with Patty Loew; a weekend on the spirituality of Wendell Berry and Thomas Merton led by Eric Anglada; and virtual programs by Ann Garrido, Joanne Jaruko Doi, Lincoln Rice, C. Vanessa White, and Kimberly Payne.

The series "Exploring Prayer

“

What people are saying:

Siena Center is a place of healing.

I can sense a deep sense of care.

A sanctuary for our souls!

I'm so thankful that I found Siena Retreat Center!

”

in Recovery" led by Ruth Hoenick allowed participants to engage in themes relating to spirituality and meditation from a Twelve-Step perspective. Couples, veterans, volunteers, writers, and those healing from divorce also experienced inspirational retreats.

A weeklong icon retreat led by Drazen Dupor focused on the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi while participants "wrote" or painted an icon of the saint.

Participants in Siena Retreat Center's retreats came from many states—from California to Massachusetts.

Siena Retreat Center Celebrates 55 Years

The Siena Retreat Center community celebrated its 55th anniversary with archival images featured on our social media platforms. Our annual Spring Benefit Concert was offered virtually by Sara Thomsen in celebration of the anniversary.

Throughout the year, a successful Matching Challenge was offered by a group of generous supporters who matched \$5,555 in donations.

The roots of Siena Retreat Center date back to 1966, when several Racine-area women gathered to discuss the societal shifts of the 1960s. The Racine Dominican sisters, particularly Sr. Agnes Claire Lanser, invited the group for a weekend at the sisters' new mother house, Siena Center. A retreat ministry was born and has thrived in this special space ever since.



Above right: Racine Dominican Sister Agnes Claire Lanser.



Right and below: archival images of early retreat ministry



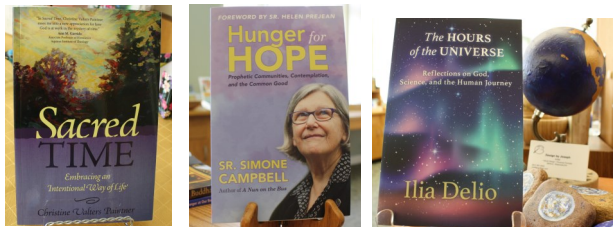
Siena Retreat Center's Bookstore Serves an Important Societal Need

As our society explores the implications of white privilege and greater racial awareness and as our human family faces global environmental challenges, Siena Retreat Center's Bookstore kept people current with contemporary titles.

On our shelves could be found such books as *Our Time Is Now* by Stacey Abrams; *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson; *My*

Grandmother's Hands by Resmaa Menakem; and *Peace, Love, Action!* by Tanya Zabinski.

Other popular titles have been *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, Simone Campbell's *Hunger for Hope*, and Anne Kertz Kernion's *Spiritual Practices for the Brain*.



A Record Number of Private Retreatants Found Sanctuary for the Soul

The COVID-19 pandemic turned people inward both literally and figuratively.

Over the course of the year, over 400 people sought space and time for contemplation at Siena Retreat Center, where, following public health protocols, we provided a safe space.

Here persons could be in the midst of creation's beauty and enter into silence to pray, to touch their inner spirit, and to re-member fragmented parts of themselves.

"I can't find the words to say what Siena Retreat Center means to me... a true treasure and precious setting for growth work and healing."

—Recent Retreat Participant



Walking the labyrinth, journaling, praying, and spending time in nature, are among the popular spiritual practices retreatants engage in during their retreat time.



Siena Retreat Center Graduates New Spiritual Guides Amid Pandemic

In November of 2020, Siena Retreat Center's Spiritual Guidance Training Program graduated 29 new spiritual guides. Participants came from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

When COVID-19 changed life as we knew it in March of 2020, the Program's Team of leaders worked quickly to shift the Program to a virtual format.

Much to everyone's surprise and with creative planning and adaptability on everyone's part, the result exceeded expectations.

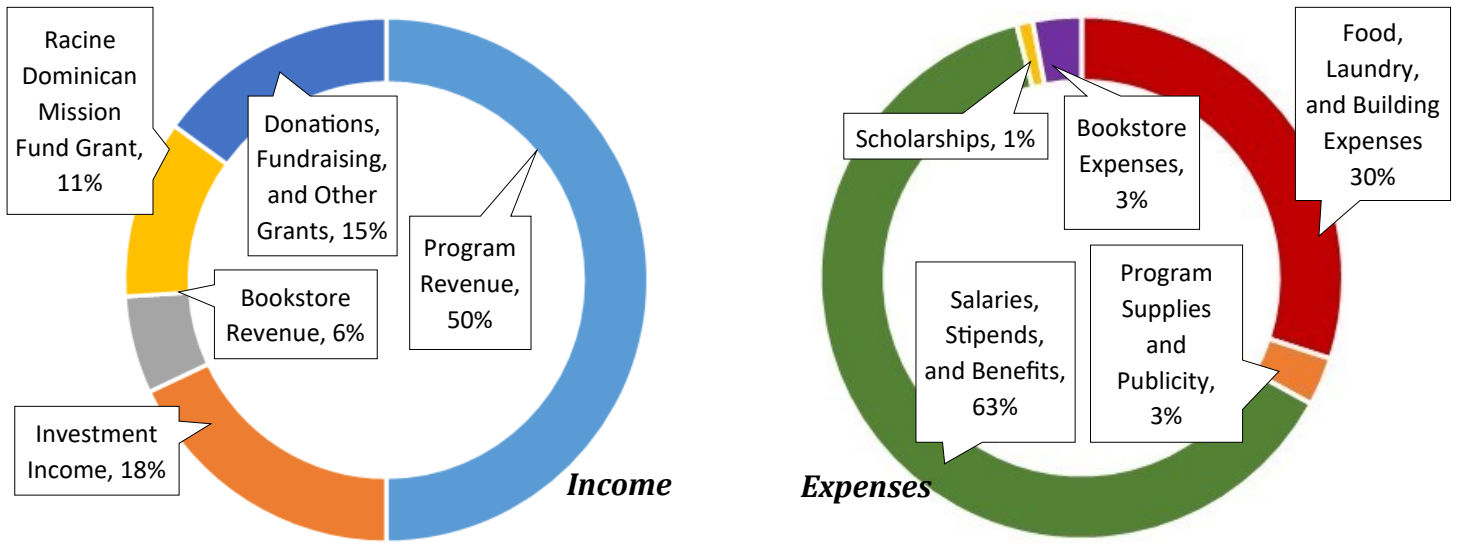
While many graduates are practicing as spiritual guides, others are using their skills as teachers, therapists, chaplains, pastors, and parents.

Thirty-one participants are enrolled in the current Program. A new Program, the Center's twelfth, will begin in January of 2023.

The Zoom platform was used for large and small group sessions of Siena Retreat Center's Spiritual Guidance Training Program. Participants and leadership team members alike found that the platform worked well in place of in-person gatherings.



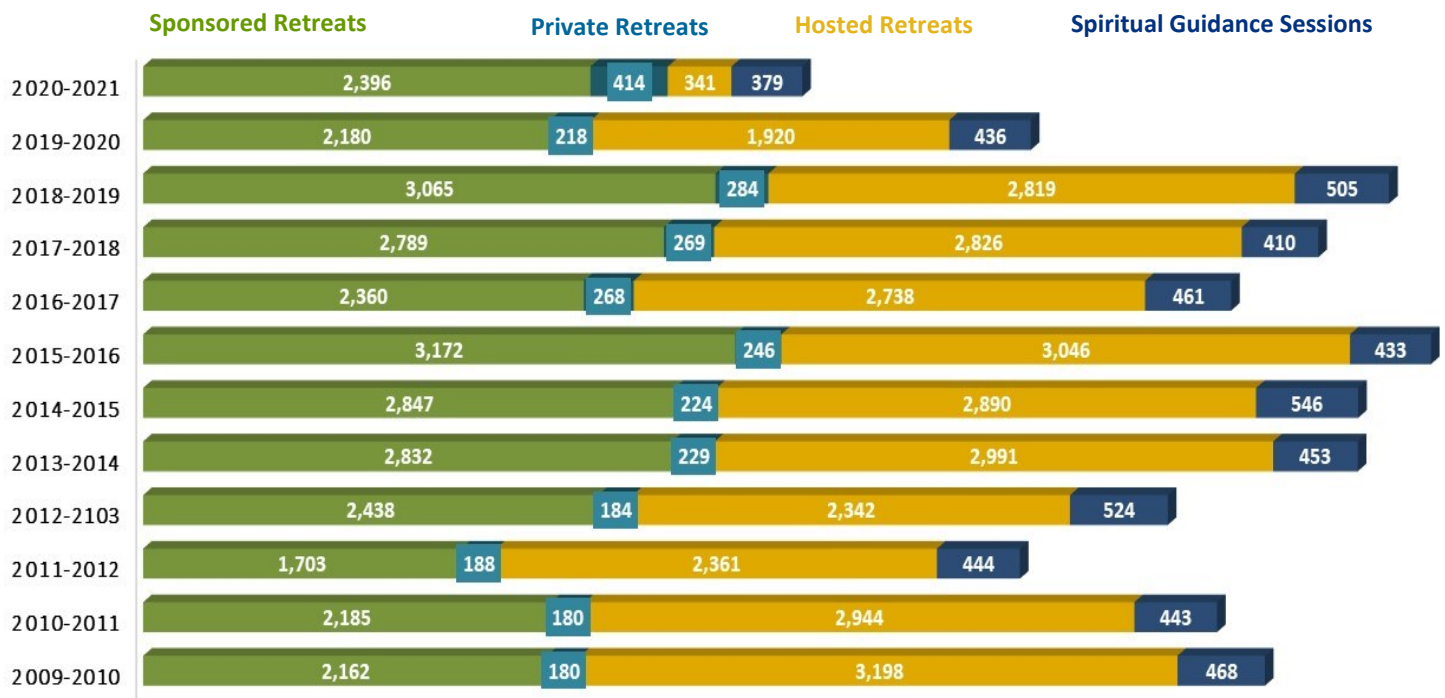
Donations, Grants, Retreat Income Place Organization on Solid Financial Footing



Siena Retreat Center's reserves, a second loan from the Paycheck Protection Program, generous grants, and numerous individual donations supported the organization's operations while pandemic conditions led to decreased retreat revenue. The budget totaled approximately \$1,000,000.

Many retreatants turned their cancelled retreat fees into donations, which demonstrates the broad community-wide support for Siena Retreat Center. The Staff and Board of the Center express our heartfelt gratitude for the generosity of so many donors.

Number of People Served



Siena Retreat Center served 3,530 people during the year through sponsored, private, and hosted retreats and one-on-one spiritual guidance sessions.

Due to social distancing requirements, we served noticeably fewer people through hosted group retreats

but continued dynamic online sponsored retreats and programs.

Three hundred seventy-nine spiritual guidance sessions were held, some virtually and some safely in person

The number of individuals coming for personal time away on a private retreat increased over the course of the year to an record high of 414.

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The Mary N. (Gallo) Iaquina Endowed Scholarship Fund provides partial scholarships for those with financial need who are otherwise unable to pay retreat fees. Mary N. (Gallo) Iaquina (1920-2016) devoted her life to literacy and literature, to her family and community, and to philosophy and the spiritual quest.

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