



Registration is now open for our

2021 Annual Spring Luncheon and Auction on Thursday, May 20th.

Virtual and In-person (Country Club of Buffalo) participation is available.

This exciting event will feature guest speaker Kim Pegula and

honor the Friends of Maria Love award recipients.

Please register [here](#) by May 13th.



Maria Love Fund Refresher

Our Namesake

Named in honor of Maria M. Love, a Buffalo social services pioneer, Ms. Love established the first day care center in the United States, and in 1903 organized a group of 31 prominent Buffalo women to raise funds and implement a program of convalescent respite care for mothers and their children.

Origin Story

Founded in 1903, the Maria Love Fund promotes health and wellness among Erie County residents by providing interim financial assistance during times of medically related hardship. When illness strikes, the Maria Love Fund is a quality-of-life saving safety net, helping to pay for high cost medication co-pays, durable medical goods, transportation to medical appointments, and assistance for rent, utilities, and basic human needs when surgeries or medical treatments strain financial resources.

Impact

Today, the Fund provides more than \$120,000 in financial assistance directly to more than 600 individuals with medically related conditions who meet the Fund's criteria for aid.

A Letter from the Maria Love Fund President & Executive Director

Spring has sprung, time for renewal and fresh starts!

Despite the many challenges the pandemic presented this last year, the Maria Love Convalescent Fund has been hard at work, and we have a lot of positive news to share. The Board of Directors has continued to meet virtually for more than a year now. Our Executive Committee met weekly (via Zoom) throughout the Spring and Summer of 2020 to keep

MLCF moving forward. We all knew in our hearts that Covid-19 was hitting our clients hard and that the needs for assistance were greater than ever. One year later, we must express how grateful we are for the generosity and support of current and former board members, sponsors, community partners, and the creativity and dedication of our board.

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(cont.) With a critical need to raise funds, and in the absence of our ability to host in-person gatherings, we “pivoted”. First, we replaced our annual Spring 2020 Luncheon with a virtual and written appeal, “Love Notes of Giving.” Warmest thanks to the many supporters of this appeal for your donations, as well as to Spring 2020 Luncheon Chairs Julie Gicewicz (Vice President) and Terry Anderson (Secretary) for spearheading our first virtual fundraising campaign.

Julie and Terry will be joined by Patti Lawley and Amy Carnevale in Co-Chairing the Spring 2021 Luncheon. The event is on May 20th at the Country Club of Buffalo. Guests may attend in-person or virtually (reserve your tickets [here](#)). Our financial strategy over the last year has enabled our fund to continue making impactful monthly distributions. During the 2020-2021 budget review, the Finance Committee, led by Treasurer Amy Nagy and Treasurer-Elect Liz Berghash, presciently advised the Executive Committee to take a very conservative approach in planning for the year ahead. The decision was to immediately cut the monthly distribution amount in half and cancel the Annual Special Grant application process in 2021.

One of the silver linings of the pandemic was the gift of time. Although social workers were furloughed and agencies operated with limited staff, we remained in contact. By reaching out to our community partners and the agencies we work with, we determined how best to serve the neediest clients on our reduced budget. The challenge to parse the most immediate needs from the many was constant, and it continues.

On average, the fund has been serving 20-22 clients monthly, aligning with our mission to be a bridge to independence. Critical care necessities, medications, and durable medical goods remain our highest priority.

Quarantine did not prevent Membership Chair Patti Deni from recruiting fabulous new directors. Maura Devlin, Molly

Hugar, Stephanie Kroth, and Kirsten Maidment joined our board and have demonstrated incredible leadership during their first year. Heartfelt thanks to outgoing members of the Executive Committee, Amy Nagy, and President Mary Bacon, who led us through the early months of the pandemic.

Charity Ball 2020 was an entirely virtual event and in every way a great success. Many thanks to the amazing leadership of Co-Chairs Heather Rumsey Gibson, Jennifer Bernacki Smith, Kate Bowen Smith, and the extraordinary contributions of every board member. The goal of creating an event suitable for all ages and families to view together truly did expand our audience. The virtual format allowed us to reach a wider audience, gain new sponsors, and help people better understand our mission. Patrons were offered a takeaway dinner option from Hutch’s, an online auction, and a live “raise the paddle” event. Charity Ball 2020 inspired us to develop a concerted marketing plan to promote Charity Ball and our mission, as well as a new Ambassador program that engaged our teenage children in sharing our message on social media.

The desire to connect during isolation led us to host two other virtual events: a Mat Pilates class in September hosted by our Treasurer Liz Berghash from her studio, and in early March, a mental health webinar: “Behind the Mask,” featuring adolescent mental health author and advocate, Ross Szabo.

We are proud and grateful. With your help we are assisting individuals and strengthening our community. We hope you will join us in welcoming Spring in the most LOVELY way at our 2021 Spring Luncheon!

With grateful hearts,

Sarah Williams, President

Nancy Stevens, Executive Director

Recent Event: Behind the Mask

The Maria Love Fund, in partnership with the One Last Goal Foundation, hosted a virtual event on Wednesday, March 3rd. This impactful session was free to the community because of the generous donations made during the Charity Ball 2020 Raise the Paddle.

The session served as a local, community mental health forum **featuring author and nationally renowned mental health advocate Ross Szabo**. In this hour-long program, Ross explored the mental health struggles that teens are facing today, a plight that is

being largely compounded by an ongoing pandemic which continues to rob adolescents of physical and social outlets.

Attendance was strong and met the goal of providing young adults with stories and coping mechanisms, as well as supporting parents, educators, and administrators with meaningful information. Special thanks to Danielle Vallas from the Nichols School. Read more about the coverage we received from the Buffalo News [here](#).

Executive Director

Nancy B. Stevens

Board of Directors

Sarah Williams, President

Julie A. Gicewicz, Vice President

Mary Bacon, Ex-Officio

Liz Berghash, Treasurer

Terry Anderson, Secretary

Patti Deni, Membership

Amy Bair

Jessica Baird

Amy Bard

Lori Bassett

Amy Carnevale

Candace Darby

Maura Devlin

Marcia Found-Hawkes

Heather Gibson

Jane Hamilton

Terri Parsell Hilmey

Beth Holmwood

Molly Hugar

Melissa Jerge

Heather Jermak

Stephanie Kroth

Patti Lawley

Betsey Locke

Kirsten Maidment

Angela McLellan-Desai

Amy Murray

Amy Nagy

Julie Plata

Odie Porter

Kristine Pottle

Amy Quinlivan

Amy Habib Rittling

Nandita Sharma

Jen Bernacki Smith

Kate Bowen Smith

Dana Stoffman

Julie Szumigala-Farkash

Karen Taneff

Karen Walcott

Darcy Zacher

MARIA LOVE FUND CHARITYBALL'20

Charity Ball goes Virtual

Buffalo's own Maria Love Fund Charity Ball is the nation's longest continually running ball and our mission was to carry on and #sharethelove in 2020!

Hosted by DJ Yes, DJ Milk, Joel Almand and celebrity Sabres broadcasters, Brain Duff, Marty Biron, Andrew Peters and Craig Rivet, the Maria Love Fund Charity Ball went virtual in 2020 and featured live bands, celebrity guests, a silent auction and more! Over 700 attendees, including Sabretooth, participated in this memorable evening to support fellow Western New York Community members and keep the wonderful tradition of Charity Ball alive.

The virtual format allowed adults to join in the fun and experience Charity Ball again, whether they last attended 5 or 50 years ago.

Ticket options varied from general admission for the evening, to a wonderful dinner package from Hutch's.

The mission of the Maria M. Love Fund is to provide interim financial assistance in order to promote independence and enhance the quality of life of Erie County residents with medically related conditions



who may be temporarily ineligible for aid from traditional sources like insurance.

Maria Love receives hundreds of individual requests each year and raises funds from gracious donors to support our neighbors. Past grant-recipients include City Year Buffalo, Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center, and Rural Outreach Center.

Stories in your neighborhood include... a wheelchair-bound teenaged boy who relies on a tablet to communicate. Given the high cost of his medical needs, his parents were unable to purchase an attachable holder to secure the tablet to his wheelchair. This device costs \$65. Charity Ball ticket sales help the Maria Love Fund service more needs like this – many of which are things we all so often take for granted.

Thanks again to all of you who joined us for this wonderful event and below are some of the highlights from our *Charity Ball Throughout the Years* slideshow!

