

# AMATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER

Putting Love into Action since 1984



Spring 2020

## A Shift In Focus

By: Amate House Fellow, Mari Riffle

On March 13th it was announced that from the end of the day forward, all of the Catholic schools in the Archdioceses of Chicago would be closed indefinitely. The staff of the Academy of St. Benedict the African (ASBA), where I work as a STEM educator, spent the rest of the day keeping the children's daily routine as consistent as possible while we prepared for the shutdown.

Fortunately for ASBA, we already had an e-learning platform in place. It had been implemented earlier this year in order to prevent us from having to make up days lost to severe winter weather. However, this platform is only for classroom teachers. I am not a classroom teacher. Therefore, I have not been able to see or talk to my students since March 13th. I miss them dearly and pray for them daily. I have some side projects to work on, but until schools reopen, my time of direct service is over.

Despite technology that keeps us deeply connected across distance, my world has effectively shrunk to the women I live with and therefore, my service has become about them.



Mari shows students how Legos can be used to explore STEM.



A blessing of the shelter in place order is that our fellows get to enjoy many more beautiful meals together.

I have spent the past few weeks learning the minutiae of each of my housemates. I am seeing how each of them deals with stress and challenge and their little quirks that make up the way they move through the world. I've learned how we all love. The small words of kindness, the little actions that knit us together (like doing someone else's dishes, the chore we all hate).

Part of my new routines of service revolve around celebration of the small. Events of quiet joy have now become full on occasions. Our time spent watching shows as a house have become rituals of closeness. Everyone gathers, bringing their favorite blankets, hoping to arrive early enough to grab the coveted corner seat on the couch. We laugh at nonsense on the screen and it feels good to laugh during this time of uncertainty. Our days are not perfect, but turning my focus to loving and caring for my housemates has helped me to feel less lost while we shelter-in-place far from family and the people we are meant to serve. I can no longer see my students, but I am not done serving. The wonderful women I live with pull me out of myself to care for someone beyond myself, and that is exactly what service means.

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## Dear Friends and Family of Amate House,

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and in good health. We are so grateful that our fellows have remained healthy while continuing to serve Chicago's most underserved communities. In spite of social distancing guidelines, our fellows have found a way to continue their impact on this wonderful city as it battles the spread of COVID-19.

Amate House has continued operations albeit in a way that we never imagined. Thankfully, because of technology, many of our fellows have been able to continue their work from home. They're meeting with colleagues via Zoom meetings, assisting teachers with curriculum development, and providing case management services remotely. A few of our fellows are deemed essential workers and they continue to serve the most vulnerable at their sites. They are an incredible group of young adults who, in community, have found ways to support each other during this most uncertain time.

As you likely know, we had to cancel our *Roaring into 2020* Amate Magic gala this year. We were so looking forward to celebrating with you at a new venue. With just a little more than a month's notice, Amate House Development Coordinator and super human, Lisa Wittig, re-tooled the gala into a virtual event.

Nearly 150 of our friends and supporters "gathered" together at our Amate Magic Zoom Party. We conducted a virtual paddle raise, picked the winning cash raffle ticket, and were entertained with a few songs by Joe Matise, lead singer of the Walk-Ins. Because of Lisa's hard work and your participation, we exceeded our \$150,000 goal grossing over \$160,000! You showed us how important the Amate House program and mission are to you, and for that, we are grateful. Thank you so much! We look forward to seeing you at Venue West for Amate Magic in April 2021.

We continue to recruit for the new program year that will begin later this summer. Recruiting in the time of social distancing is challenging but we are looking for ways to expand our reach virtually. We fully intend to begin our program year at the end of July. We have been working hard to conceptualize what programming and service will look like knowing that COVID-19 will still be with us through the foreseeable future. No doubt our site partners will need the services our fellows provide now more than ever.

Since 1984, Amate House fellows have provided nearly 1.5 million service hours, valued at \$37 million. This impact on Chicago's most vulnerable communities is not possible without you, our supporters, and the young men and women who seek to serve others. Thank you for all you do to support our vision to create a more just and loving world. And thank you for your continued financial support during this uncertain time.

Sincerely,

  
**Jeannie Balanda**  
*Executive Director*



# AMATE MAGIC 2020

*Thank you to everyone who participated in Amate Magic 2020!*

The decision to transition Amate Magic to a virtual event, in only 6 weeks' time, was an easy one. Amate House's mission is vital: serve, love, and make the world a better place. We knew that our supporters would continue to support us, especially at this difficult time. However, when we asked you all to join us in celebrating that mission during a global crisis, we never could have predicted how emphatically you would show up! Donors who hadn't given for 10 years pulled out their checkbooks. Alumni who had never given to Amate House gave their first gift. Our social media followers actively spread the word of our virtual gala and auction.



*Development Coordinator, Lisa Wittig, processed Cash Raffle tickets as they continued to roll in during the event.*



*Amate Magic co-host, Phil Zepeda, ad libs during the event with the help of his daughter.*



*Alumna, Sasha Hamilton-Cotter, exhibits some impressive Zoom etiquette with glam on top and jammies on the bottom.*



*Associate Board members, Jamie Hitro and Matt Schultz, are excited for Amate Magic to kick off.*



*Mary Wolff was our Cash Raffle winner.*



*A few fellows from the Little Village community dressed up to #PartyFromHome with us.*



*Co-host, Maura Daly Hesness, glammed up for the Roarin' 20s themed party.*

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*Sarah and Vicenta head out to grocery shop for the Little Village house.*



*The McKinley Park fellows planned a sunrise service on Easter Sunday in McKinley Park.*



*Corinne and Sara use some of their extra free time to make kombucha.*

## Amate Magic 2020 Donors

*Amate House would like to recognize all those who made a donation to the event and Funded A Fellow during our paddle raise. We also want to thank all who purchased tickets to the event and then donated that purchase back to us when the gala was canceled. Thank you for your incredible generosity.*

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