

# AMATE HOUSE NEWSLETTER



Putting Love into Action since 1984

Spring 2021

## Coming Together Again

**By: Program Formation Coordinator, Katie Cashman**

This year has certainly been a whirlwind. Despite the strange sense of time the pandemic has brought, this program year has flown by. I cannot believe we are already wrapping up the year with this truly outstanding cohort of fellows. Last year at this time we were still adjusting to life over zoom and trying to figure out what service means when we need to stay home. Like so many other aspects of our program, we needed to regroup and create a new plan for the spring in-service day. We decided to pull from the wisdom and expertise of our fellows and had the first Amate House “TED Talk” inspired day of learning. Each fellow was asked to prepare a five-minute presentation to share with the rest of the cohort something they have learned or reflected on throughout their experience. The day was filled with creative and profound ideas related to their service, their faith, community life, and their own personal or professional journey. Even though it was a virtual event, it was a breath of fresh air to gather and learn from one another’s collective wisdom and experience.

Needless to say, we decided to host a “TEDxAmate” day again this year, and once again, it was inspiring, encouraging, and life-giving. Even more exciting was being able to gather in person for the event.

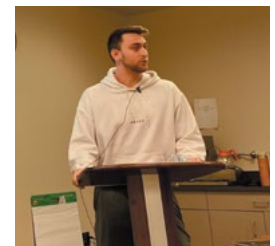


*Fellows present their “TEDxAmate” talks to their peers and staff on May 14th at the Cardinal Meyer Center.*

*From the left: Brian Gatter, Bryn Siberski, Chloe Juettner, and Lauren Jhin*

Each fellow stood in front of their peers and shared something they had learned about, reflected on, or wrestled with throughout the year. I was struck by the creativity, depth, and joy that each fellow shared on everything from regenerative agriculture to camp fashion to community organizing in a faith-based setting. I am overwhelmed with gratitude that we could share time celebrating the fruits of their year in person. I am also so thankful for each and every one of our fellows that have chosen to make this a meaningful experience despite the challenges of doing service amidst the pandemic. This group has not had an easy year and could easily have many complaints. However, despite these “uncertain times” and the endless requests of their adaptability and flexibility, they have truly made the most of this year. The presentations were a reminder of how much fruit there is to be celebrated this year.

To read a few of our fellows’ transcribed presentations, check out our blog page at [www.amatehouse.org/blog](http://www.amatehouse.org/blog).



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## Dear Friends and Family of Amate House,

I write this letter to you after spending a full day with fellows and staff at our second annual TEDx-inspired presentations. It was the first time in over a year that we were all together in one room. Everyone wore masks and socially distanced while we enjoyed fellows' talks. It was so joyous to be together. What a difference a year can make!

Amate House was fortunate to be on the early list for COVID-19 vaccinations. In January, staff members received their first vaccine, and by mid-March, all fellows were fully vaccinated. It was a relief to know that fellows could engage more fully in their work because they were protected from severe COVID symptoms while also protecting those they serve alongside.

In our ongoing efforts to become an anti-racist organization, fellows and staff worked together this spring to edit the language of Amate House tenets and covenant, two of our most important guiding principles, to reflect our values of anti-racism and inclusivity and to describe service in the context of solidarity with others. In the coming weeks, we will share with you our updated tenets and covenant.

We were also busy preparing virtual Amate Magic. Retooling our usual in-person gala to an online event is no small feat! We asked ourselves how we can create something engaging for our supporters who are no doubt very Zoomed-out? After some back and forth, Amate Magic Live was born chock-full of comedic acts and video showcases, including a heartfelt memorial tribute to long-time Amate House Executive Director John Lucas, who passed away at the end of last year. In addition, the board of directors announced that we will dedicate the McKinley Park house garden in John's name to honor his service to Amate House and his loving care in creating our beautiful gardens.

Over the summer, we are planning much-needed building renovations. Specifically, our Little Village home will get new gutters, and the McKinley Park house will get new bathrooms. Our residences are the center of Amate life, so we look forward to these improvements that will make fellows' home life more comforting. Amate House is also exploring sustainable ways to be better stewards of the environment beyond our current recycling efforts, including composting, solar panels, rain barrels, and planting native species in the Little Village gardens. We will keep you abreast of our stewardship plan as it evolves.

Finally, as a self-funded ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago, we rely heavily on our donors to fund our program. Our wider community showed up emphatically to support this year. Whether you donated to our Giving Tuesday campaign, or our direct mail asks, funded a grant request, or took part in Amate Magic Live, we are grateful for your generosity. Thank you for supporting our mission and the young men and women who seek to create a more just and loving world.

Sincerely,



**Jeannie Balanda**  
*Executive Director*



### **A Belated Welcome to Unity Ostercamp!**

*Recruitment & Communications  
Coordinator*

Back in the fall, Amate House welcomed our new Recruitment & Communications Coordinator, Unity Ostercamp! Unity joined Amate House after over twenty years of serving in higher education. Originally from New York City, her studies at the Moody Bible Institute brought her to Chicago, and she has come to see Chicago as home.

Currently, Unity is working on her master's degree in social justice from Loyola University, which she will complete this summer! In her first year, she's fostered wonderful relationships with our current fellows and has overseen Amate House's first-ever fully remote recruitment cycle. We're thrilled to work alongside Unity and so happy to welcome her to the wider Amate House community!



# Amate Magic Live

**Thank you to everyone who participated in Amate Magic 2021!**

Knowing this year's Amate Magic would be different from the start, we committed early on to create an entertaining and engaging virtual experience that would delight our audience and tell our story. It was a "throw out the playbook" year that saw many "firsts," including partnering with two homegrown comedians, Michael Issac and Pat McGann, producing ten short films, and even hosting our fellows as a "live studio audience!" We shared a heartfelt tribute to longtime Amate House Executive Director, John Lucas, and announced the decision to dedicate the McKinley Park house garden in his name. We highlighted fellows, Vilma Fermin and Linde Hoffman, and showcased their work this year at their respective sites. We also included some surprising "Magic Cameos" from supporters, parents, and even Southpaw from the White Sox!

With 350 supporters, including over 100 first-time donors, Amate House raised over \$120,000.00 to fund our program. Thank you to the Amate Magic Co-Chairs, Kerry Zepeda and Maura Daly Hesness, and the entire Amate Magic 2021 committee for leaning into the unknown and generating immense support for the program. Thank you to the board of directors, associate board, staff, and fellows who helped spread the word to make this event possible! We are especially grateful to our event sponsors and the many raffle item donors who were incredibly generous. Amate House is very proud of our 37 years of service to the city and Archdiocese of Chicago.

We look forward to seeing you for Amate Magic 2022 at Venue West next spring!



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*Amate House would like to recognize all those who supported Amate Magic Live by purchasing event tickets, donating to the event, 'Funded A Fellow' during our virtual paddle raise, or made a special "Magic Cameo" during the show! Thank you for your incredible generosity.*

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