WE ONLY NEED TO WALK OUR OWN GALLERIES TO FIND THE INSPIRATION TO PREVAIL THROUGH ADVERSITY AND AN UNPREDICTABLE FUTURE. WHETHER VISITORS ARE WALKING OUR PHYSICAL CAMPUS OR LEARNING THROUGH OUR DIGITAL EDUCATION PLATFORMS, IT IS CLEAR THAT OUR MISSION CONTINUES AND MUST ENDURE.

—STEPHEN J. WATSON, PRESIDENT & CEO
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MISSION STATEMENT

The National WWII Museum tells the story of the American experience in the war that changed the world—why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today—so that all generations will understand the price of freedom and be inspired by what they learn.
2020 – 2021
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MGen. James Livingston, USMC (Ret.)

Work continued this year on the Bollinger Canopy of Peace, which will become a stunning feature of the Museum’s campus and an iconic landmark of the New Orleans skyline upon its completion.

Years of planning, the Higgins Hotel & Conference Center celebrated its grand opening on December 6, 2019, with several guests, including our Board of Trustees, as well as the WWII Theatre, Inc. Board and donors.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT     43    THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM
IN FISCAL YEAR 2020, THE MUSEUM DISCOVERED NEW WAYS TO SHARE STORIES OF THE WWII GENERATION AND ENGAGE AUDIENCES WORLDWIDE.
The National WWII Museum’s collections are filled with stories of ordinary Americans faced with unexpected circumstances: men, women, and children who rose to the occasion, made sacrifices for the greater good, and harnessed their own strength, resolve, and ingenuity to endure the darkest days of the wartime era and help secure victory.

Since the Museum opened its doors in 2000, these personal stories have been at the core of our mission. And in our 20th anniversary year, as the Museum and world faced the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the words and actions of the WWII generation served as inspiration to carry us through Fiscal Year 2020 with a sense of hope, determination, gratitude, and optimism.

On the heels of our internationally recognized programs in 2019 commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day, The National WWII Museum headed into Fiscal Year 2020 with ambitious plans to open two new additions to the New Orleans campus, expand the reach of our educational programs, and ceremoniously mark the institution’s 20th anniversary and the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II—one of the last major milestones to commemorate with WWII veterans. Through this Annual Report, we reflect on how the Museum discovered new ways to share the stories of the WWII generation and advance our mission, even as plans for Fiscal Year 2020 unfolded in unexpected ways.

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe and the City of New Orleans emerged as one of the early epicenters of the US outbreak, the Museum temporarily closed its doors on March 14, 2020, during what is typically one of our busiest seasons. The financial challenges facing the Museum mounted quickly: hundreds of thousands of visitors delayed their travels to the Museum, overseas tours to WWII battlefields were put on hold for the foreseeable future, the new Higgins Hotel & Conference Center lost its early momentum as tourism grinded to a halt, and plans to bring hundreds of WWII veterans to New Orleans for 75th anniversary of the end of World War II programs became no longer feasible.

Inspired by those whose stories we honor and those whose generous support made it possible to continue our work, the Museum quickly pivoted to live up to our mission in this critical time. The Hall of Democracy, which had just celebrated its grand opening in October 2019, was designed to enable the Museum to reach broader audiences through the WWII Media and Education Center and the Institute for the Study of War and Democracy. Those efforts quickly accelerated.

Within days of the Museum closing, our team of curators, educators, and historians leveraged new technologies, platforms, and the Museum’s collection to produce daily digital content for students, teachers, and parents who were adjusting to online learning and for adult learners across the country in search of inspiration. Live webinars, oral history clips, videos, podcasts, and original articles made certain that audiences of all ages could commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II from the safety of their homes. Even the work to collect first-person accounts of WWII veterans continued through Zoom, helping ensure that as many stories as possible could be captured before the WWII generation passes on.

As Fiscal Year 2020 came to a close, many challenges still lay ahead for The National WWII Museum. However, thanks to our generous supporters, leadership from the Board of Trustees, and resilient staff and volunteers, the signs of a strong recovery and a bright future are evident: from the steady growth of Museum visitors and Higgins Hotel guests, to the progress on the Bollinger Canopy of Peace, and perhaps most poignant of all, the start of new construction on the Liberation Pavilion—the capstone exhibit hall fulfilling the final component of the Museum’s mission: what World War II means today.
THE MUSEUM MOURNS THE PASSING OF FOUR DEAR FRIENDS

This challenging year contained sadness for many, and the Museum was no exception as we mourned the passing of four longtime friends, supporters, and Trustees who played integral roles in the success and growth of the institution.

The Museum is deeply grateful to these four gentlemen for their service to our institution. Their leadership has guided our mission and ensured our continued success in inspiring new generations to honor the lessons of World War II. Their legacies will continue to live on in our galleries and initiatives, but their presence is already very missed.

RAY BRANDT
New Orleans businessman and philanthropist Ray Brandt passed away on November 14, 2019, concluding a life filled with service to the New Orleans community that he greatly adored. Brandt, who built an empire of automobile dealerships in Louisiana and Mississippi, shared his extensive business, accounting, and legal experience with the Museum as a Board Trustee since 2016, and most recently as Board Treasurer. The mission of the Museum meant so much to Brandt, who was a US Army veteran himself. His family’s multigenerational dedication to service inspired Brandt and his wife, Jessica, to serve as presenting sponsors of the Museum’s Victory Ball, paying tribute to veterans of all eras through the Brandt Family Foundation. His legacy as a respected businessman, community leader, and dear friend remains an inspiration to all of us at the Museum.

RALPH CRUMP
WWII veteran and longtime Museum champion Ralph Crump, who passed away on March 16, 2020, served as a Museum Trustee since 2014. In addition to being active on the Museum’s Education & Access and Collections & Exhibits Committees, Crump was an enthusiastic participant in many of our educational programs, regularly attending the annual International Conference on World War II with his wife, Marjorie, and their children, and joining us on several overseas travel programs. During World War II, Crump served in the US Merchant Marines in both the Pacific and Atlantic theaters, with his convoys suffering heavy losses in the Mediterranean, China, Burma, and India theaters. Following the war, he became a successful inventor and business executive, pioneering numerous groundbreaking efforts in medical engineering. His generous spirit and legacy of service lives on in our memories and through the Ralph E. Crump, LTJG, USNR US Merchant Marine Gallery.

HERSCHEL ABBOTT
Known for his extensive service to the New Orleans community and his love for Winston Churchill, Herschel Abbott was a fiercely dedicated advocate for the Museum since our early days. He joined the Board in 1996, during the tough journey to building and opening the institution, and served as Chairman from 2011-2013. In the community, the highly respected lawyer served on the Board for approximately 50 organizations and reigned as the 2011 King of Carnival. Before his passing on August 2, 2020, Abbott was involved in nearly every major decision at the Museum and was one of the early champions for expanding the Museum’s educational outreach, digital content, and public access beyond the New Orleans campus—leading us to establish a $10 million fundraising goal to digitize our collection of oral histories, artifacts, and images. It is largely due to his leadership, with the great support of his wife, Anne, that we have ensured not just preservation of the WWII generation’s stories, but also access to them by a global audience, which has proved even more critical to our mission this past year.

MARK RUBIN
Mark Rubin, who joined the Board in 2013, held a deep personal commitment to ensuring the memory of the Holocaust would not be forgotten by future generations. A survivor of the Holocaust himself, Rubin spent his early Czechoslovakian childhood in hiding before being sent to the Terezin concentration camp. As the only Holocaust survivor to serve on the Museum’s Board, Rubin has provided valuable insights in the institution’s development of its capstone exhibit hall, Liberation Pavilion. He passed away on February 13, 2021, but not before excitedly learning that the Board had approved the pavilion’s final content plans. A respected philanthropist and property developer in southern California, Rubin and his wife, Pam, have generously underwritten the pavilion’s first-floor Liberation Theater—which will pass on the stories of Holocaust survivors and camp liberators to future generations while serving as a permanent tribute to Rubin’s incredible story.

IN REMEMBRANCE

THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM
A few days after the Museum closed on March 14, 2020, members of the Board of Trustees met to discuss the enormous challenges facing our institution. New Orleans had become an early epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak, and while much was unknown, the Museum braced for millions of dollars in reduced revenue and an extended period of recovery.

As we began discussing a path forward, my predecessor, WWII veteran and 2018-2020 Chairman of the Board Paul Hilliard, shared this powerful quote from Winston Churchill's “Never Give In” commencement address in 1941: “Do not let us speak of darker days: let us speak rather of sterner days. These are not dark days; these are great days—the greatest days our country has ever lived; and we must all thank God that we have been allowed, each of us according to our stations, to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our country.”

In so many ways, having a WWII veteran lead the Board of Trustees during this incredibly difficult time set the tone for the Museum to respond with a spirit of determination, ingenuity, resolve, and hopefulness. We clearly understood the importance and relevance of continuing to advance the Museum’s mission at this critical time in world history. Bold decisions were made to continue employing and paying all staff through the Museum’s closure, to keep The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center open, and to dramatically increase the Museum’s digital outreach to students, teachers, parents, and audiences of all ages.

I am incredibly grateful to Paul and his wife, Madlyn, for their commitment to the Museum’s mission and for leading by example. It was not enough for the Hilliards to underwrite both the Madlyn and Paul Hilliard Research Library in the Hall of Democracy and the Madlyn and Paul Hilliard Conference Center in The Higgins Hotel—both exciting new developments that opened mere months before the pandemic. On top of that, the Hilliards also developed a COVID-19 Response Fund in March 2020 and made the first donation, inspiring more than 6,000 supporters to contribute over $1.7 million to sustain the Museum’s operations.

Having started my tenure as Board Chairman on July 1, 2020, I am honored to follow in Paul’s footsteps and grateful for the opportunity to help ensure the Museum’s strong recovery. Over the past year, the Museum team has worked tirelessly to enhance both onsite and online experiences, paving the way for the institution’s rebound and future growth. In New Orleans, the Senator John Alario, Jr. Special Exhibition Hall brings new rotating exhibits on lesser-known topics to visitors, who now have the option to stay across the street at the 1940s-inspired Higgins Hotel & Conference Center. With steel assembly complete on the Bollinger Canopy of Peace, the Museum looks forward to a dedication in late 2021 and is forging ahead with construction on the capstone exhibition hall, Liberation Pavilion, to open in 2022.

Less obvious to visitors is the ongoing work happening inside the New Hall of Democracy, representing the Museum’s educational outreach initiatives, which have always been core to the mission but became critically important during the pandemic. Due to the efforts of our historians, curators, and educators, the Museum did not miss a beat in fulfilling our educational mission in Fiscal Year 2020. Every day, new content was produced and shared with our audiences—delivering resources for students, teachers, and parents adjusting to home learning, providing historical context on current events, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, celebrating the Museum’s 20th birthday, and sparking inspiration through the firsthand accounts of the WWII generation.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without you—our friends and supporters—who remain committed to our mission, especially during what was a very difficult year for all of us. Your generosity is an inspiration and fuels our efforts to continue finding innovative ways to share the stories of the WWII generation with wider audiences.
Anniversaries have a way of making us pause to reflect on the progress we’ve made and consider the opportunities and challenges that await us in the future. As we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II and the 20th anniversary of the Museum—all in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Fiscal Year 2020 served as a strong reminder of all that we’ve been able to build with your support these past two decades and reinforced how important it is to continue expanding and evolving our educational outreach to audiences near and far.

Although the pandemic largely defines our reflections on Fiscal Year 2020, the Museum’s accomplishments earlier that year positioned us to endure the challenges of COVID-19, continue serving our audiences, and prepare for a strong recovery. The newly opened Senator John Alario, Jr. Special Exhibition Hall has expanded our ability to delve deeper into WWII-related subjects, starting with Operation Finale: The Capture & Trial of Adolf Eichmann and Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II. The Anne Frank sculpture bench on Founders Plaza, made possible by a gift through the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust, serves as powerful testimony of why World War II was fought and the freedoms we must continue to safeguard today. Nearby, The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center provides convenient accommodations for our visitors, especially as leisure travel begins to rebound, and expanded meeting space for hosting educational programs for onsite and online audiences. And of course, the Hall of Democracy offers new high-tech facilities and capabilities to reach worldwide audiences and support students and teachers through distance learning and digital outreach—the focus of our operations during the pandemic and a key part of our future growth.

The 2020 Annual Report celebrates the Museum team’s impressive response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our successes during what was arguably the most challenging year for the Museum since opening two decades ago. In addition to losing millions of dollars in revenue, closing the campus for two months, and ceasing all overseas educational travel tours, the Museum faced a series of obstacles and difficult decisions: reducing its workforce by 35 percent in June 2020, watching daily visitation sometimes fall below 100 people upon reopening, placing PT-305 in storage, and mourning the loss of several beloved Trustees, volunteers, WWII veterans, and friends.

But despite the challenges, the Museum’s work continued. Thanks to the leadership of Board Chairman Paul Hilliard and his wife, Madlyn, the COVID-19 Response Fund provided much-needed resources to sustain the institution’s operations during our toughest days. Our dedicated staff adjusted to working remotely and discovered new ways to accomplish our mission: from providing supportive resources for teachers adjusting to online learning to conducting Zoom oral history interviews with WWII veterans to producing podcasts and videos commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. Construction of the Bollinger Canopy of Peace and Liberation Pavilion forged ahead, as we near completion of the $400 million Road to Victory capital campaign. And our operations team worked tirelessly to implement new protocols to welcome back visitors safely, making it possible for The National WWII Museum to be one of the first major museums in the country to reopen.

This year’s Annual Report is a tribute: to our Board of Trustees for their unwavering leadership and personal generosity, to our dedicated staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to adjust our operations and fulfill our mission, to you—our growing number of supporters—who remained committed to our efforts in these tough times. It is also a tribute to WWII veterans, Holocaust survivors, and Home Front workers. Your stories have never been more important to us and continue to inspire us as we look toward the future with hopefulness and determination.
The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center Opens to Great Enthusiasm and Endures COVID Challenges

The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center made an instant splash when it celebrated its grand opening on December 6, 2019. Hospitality, news, and business publications across the country praised the hotel’s carefully curated décor, from the hand-selected artifacts in its public spaces to the 1940s-themed bars and restaurants, to the stately lobby with its towering art deco centerpiece mural. In a glowing review, Forbes Senior Contributor Larry Olmstead called The Higgins Hotel “America’s first true museum hotel,” a trend he predicts will become increasingly dominant as tourists seek out authentic travel experiences.

The project had been years in the making as the Museum pondered the best use for the prime location on the corner of Magazine Street and Andrew Higgins Boulevard. A hotel and conference center offered the greatest potential for furthering the Museum’s mission, by serving its overnight visitors with a wholly immersive WWII educational experience, providing expanded space for new conferences and educational programs, and generating financial support for the Museum’s endowment. The WWII Theatre, Inc. Board, chaired by Trustee Brandon Berger, led the development efforts, with donors helping to raise some of the early funding by sponsoring the hotel’s public spaces, including meeting rooms, hotel suites, and food and beverage outlets, in tribute to their WWII loved ones. Trustee David Nierenberg and his family paved the way by making the first gift to the project and issuing two fundraising challenges to match their contributions.

IMMERSIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

Offering first-class accommodations alongside 1940s art-deco style and wartime artifacts, The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center—named after the local shipbuilder Andrew Jackson Higgins—allows guests to truly immerse themselves in WWII history, enhancing their visit to the Museum.
The years of preparation and careful attention to detail paid off. Early visitors responded energetically to the new hotel, the first Hilton Curio Collection property in Louisiana. During the first few months of operation, occupancy rates hovered between 70 and 80 percent with The Higgins rising to the top of TripAdvisor’s list of highest ranked New Orleans hotels. The property’s accolades accumulated quickly as it was named one of USA Today’s 10 Best New Hotels in 2020—the only New Orleans hotel to make the list—and earned AAA Four Diamond status.

Beyond the unparalleled access to the Museum campus, The Higgins Hotel, named in honor of the New Orleans boatbuilder Andrew Jackson Higgins, enables guests to support The National WWII Museum’s educational mission during their New Orleans stay. And with its panoramic rooftop views and WWII-era-themed libations, Rosie’s on the Roof quickly became a popular destination for both hotel guests and local happy hour-goers.
In some ways, however, The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center’s first year was defined by its response to the unforeseen impact that COVID-19 had on the hospitality industry. Drawing inspiration from the generosity and resourcefulness of the WWII generation, the hotel adjusted its operations to remain open throughout the pandemic and played its own role in the community’s COVID-19 response and outreach. In partnership with the Gary Sinise Foundation, The Higgins Hotel provided over 3,000 meals in the early weeks of the pandemic to frontline healthcare workers at Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, part of the country’s most extensive non-profit integrated healthcare system, as well as meals to local first responders.

Despite the adversity of its inaugural year, The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center is well-poised and ready to welcome back travelers as they make their return to New Orleans and eager to resume hosting in-person educational programs, such as Memory Wars: World War II at 75 and Beyond in September 2021 and the International Conference on World War II in November 2021. General Manager Daniel Rhodes is enthusiastic about the hotel’s future as COVID-19 restrictions recede and leisure travel begins to increase. "As tourism returns and travelers express their desire to visit New Orleans, the Higgins has already seen exciting gains in occupancy from the pandemic lows of the past year. We expect this slow yet steady growth to continue through the end of 2021, as we prepare to welcome even more guests in 2022.”
The National WWII Museum debuted **Operation Finale: The Capture & Trial of Adolf Eichmann** on October 17, 2019, as the inaugural exhibit in the Museum’s newly opened Senator John Alario, Jr. Special Exhibition Hall.

**New Expanded Exhibit Hall Brings Operation Finale and Ghost Army to Visitors**

To continue preserving and telling the complete story of World War II, the Museum opened a new temporary exhibit space on the first floor of the Hall of Democracy to further explore some of World War II’s lesser-known stories and take a deeper dive into well-known aspects of the war.

In October 2019, Joy and Boysie Bollinger announced that the newly unveiled space in the Hall of Democracy, which they helped support through their $20 million gift to the Museum in 2015, would be named in honor of their longtime friend, Senator John Alario Jr. In 1973, Bollinger and Alario participated in the Louisiana Constitutional Convention together and formed a strong bond although they represented different political parties at the time. Alario, whose father served in the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division of the US Army during World War II, devoted 47 years of service to the Louisiana State Legislature, completing his final term in January 2020.

The Museum’s Senator John Alario Jr. Special Exhibition Hall stands 16 feet tall and offers 3,764 square feet in which to present major rotating exhibitions on WWII-related subjects not covered in the Museum’s permanent exhibits, as well as more in-depth coverage of subjects that are in the permanent exhibits, encouraging both new and repeat visitors. The exhibit hall also provides additional opportunities for Museum programming, educational activities, private receptions, and special events.
The Senator John Alario Jr. Special Exhibition Hall debuted on October 17, 2019, with the opening of Operation Finale: The Capture & Trial of Adolf Eichmann, presented by Perry and Marty Granoff and co-produced by Beit Hatfutsot—the Museum of the Jewish People, Tel Aviv, Israel; The Mossad—Israeli Secret Intelligence Service, and the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage. The special exhibit followed the trial of the head of the Nazis’ ‘homicidal’ ‘Jewish Department,’ Adolf Eichmann, who zealously managed the transport of millions of innocent people to death camps and vanished after World War II.

As the Museum’s Assistant Director for Curatorial Services Kim Guise described, the exhibit combined a classic spy story with an exploration of themes of personal responsibility and the search for justice for the crimes and horrors of the Holocaust. It is a riveting story and has the power to bring viewers, including this one, to tears.” The exhibit incorporated photographs, film, and recently declassified spy artifacts to reveal the dramatic secret history behind the daring abduction and globally broadcast trial of a principal perpetrator of the Final Solution.

Operation Finale was followed by the Museum’s own curated special exhibit, Ghost Army: The Combat Can Artists of World War II, which opened on March 5, 2020, right before the Museum temporarily closed due to COVID-19 and was extended through January 31, 2021. Exclusively sponsored by the E.L. Wiegand Foundation and displayed in the Alario Special Exhibition Hall, the exhibit told the story of the US Army’s 23rd Headquarters Special Troops. Activated on January 20, 1944, the “Ghost Army” was the first mobile, multimedia, tactical deception unit in US Army history, and they used visual, sonic, and radio deception to fool German forces during World War II’s final year. To bring the story of their deception operations across Europe to life, the exhibit featured artifacts such as artwork, uniforms, a replica of their infamous inflatable tanks, and more. Ghost Army will now travel the country on a national tour to reach wider audiences.

These first two exhibits set a perfect tone for those to follow in the new Senator John Alario Jr. Special Exhibition Hall, which is now hosting SOLDIER | ARTIST: Trench Art in World War II through January 2022.

The Museum also continues to bring additional temporary exhibits to campus through the Joe W. and Dorothy D. Brown Foundation Special Exhibit Gallery in the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion. In Fiscal Year 2020, the gallery displayed Remembered Light: Glass Fragments from World War II, the McDonald Windows, a collection of 25 art pieces using shards of glass from damaged and destroyed European churches collected during World War II and is hosting the interactive Dimensions in Testimony: Liberator Alan Moskin from USC Shoah Foundation through September 2021.

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Located in Hall of Democracy, the Madlyn and Paul Hilliard Research Library supports and facilitates The National WWII Museum’s research and education initiatives, providing diverse audiences with access to a growing collection of personal memoirs, oral histories, unit histories, and classic WWII and military literature.

Hall of Democracy Research and Education Hub Debuts, Fills Critical Need During COVID-19

On October 17, 2019, The National WWII Museum celebrated the grand opening of Hall of Democracy, the latest physical addition to the six-acre New Orleans campus and the new home of the Institute for the Study of War and Democracy and the WWII Media and Education Center. Completing the state-of-the-art facility in Fiscal Year 2020 marked a significant milestone within the Museum’s campus expansion plan. And, just five months later, the Hall of Democracy’s staff quickly accelerated their digital outreach efforts to sustain the Museum’s mission remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hall of Democracy is designed to provide greater access to WWII history and the Museum’s programs and collections for students, teachers, academics, museumgoers, and remote audiences. Outfitted with innovative broadcasting and recording technology and prestigious research facilities, it represents the center of the Museum’s growing educational outreach and scholarship community. The three-story research and education hub was made possible through the generous support of the Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation, the State of Louisiana, Joy and Boysie Bollinger, Madlyn and Paul Hilliard, DSF Charitable Foundation, Will and Karen Osborne, and Ralph E. Crump.

A WIDER AUDIENCE
The new pavilion has significantly expanded the Museum’s rotating exhibition gallery space through the Senator John Alario, Jr. Special Exhibition Hall while also providing ample new classroom, library, lecture, and symposium areas. Inside the Madlyn and Paul Hilliard Research Library, scholars and students can find curated materials and personal accounts related to World War II, housed in a world-class 2,141-square-foot library. And as the dedicated home of the Museum’s new suite of broadcast and production spaces, the Hall of Democracy’s opening signaled an exciting step toward making our educational content more accessible to audiences around the globe and establishing the Museum as the most accessible source for trusted knowledge on the American experience in World War II.

Before the pandemic, initiatives like The Manhattan Project Electronic Field Trip presented by The Lupo Family Charitable Fund with additional support from the Dale E. and Janice Davis Johnston Family Foundation explored the facility’s early potential. In late 2019, the Museum moved into the fully equipped Hall of Democracy while also providing ample new classroom, library, lecture, and symposium areas. The Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation made a significant commitment to the Museum in 2017 that was critical to making the Hall of Democracy possible. In addition to the grand opening, the museum’s CEO Emeritus Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, and Museum Board Chairman Paul Hilliard were further supplemented by debriefing lessons in the fully equipped Hall of Democracy classroom.

As the implications of COVID-19 became apparent, the Museum understood the need to pivot to an all-virtual model to continue delivering our mission and draw historical connections to the modern-day crisis. Staff immediately began furnishing homebound audiences with engaging and relevant content—particularly, teachers and parents in need of material to fill their at-home lesson plans. Already in the process of scaling up operations to bring Hall of Democracy entirely online, staff quickly adjusted to meet the moment remotely from their homes. Inspired by the can-do attitude of the WWII generation, Hall of Democracy educators and media professionals mobilized to increase available resources and connect with new and existing followers. Online content production increased by over 200 percent during the first months of the pandemic. During the challenging spring of 2020, staff in departments across the Museum pitched in to produce daily virtual webinars, activities, resources, and articles to inspire hope and perseverance. The digital content shared with our audiences was wide-ranging and engaging from oral history video clips and artifact spotlights to 1940s cooking demonstrations and wartime-inspired music playlists to an online WWII book club and live webinars from curators, historians, educators, and authors. Through programming partnerships with peer institutions, including the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum, Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, and The National WWII Museum, the integrative and connected vision for the Hall of Democracy was realized under circumstances no one could have anticipated. Commemorative ceremonies once held with large crowds in US Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center were moved to live streaming from The Karen H. Bechtel and William M. Osborne III Media Auditorium, continuing to safely serve audiences near and far.

Through the generous support of donors and the creativity and resourcefulness of the Museum team, we engaged record numbers of viewers with content exploring the modern parallels between World War II and the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic confirmed the need for a robust, innovative approach to teaching WWII lessons to audiences of all ages, regardless of physical proximity to our campus. Today, the Hall of Democracy positions the Museum staff and community of contributing experts and partners to continue expanding this vital work while serving as one of the country’s premier museum research centers and digital content producers.
Lawrence Brooks, America’s oldest living WWII veteran, turned 111 during the pandemic. Although the Museum had to forgo our traditional birthday party, we held a successful card drive that yielded tens of thousands of submissions, and we were able to deliver those to him along with cake, a Victory Belles performance, and even a flyover.

Museum Continues Connecting with WWII Veterans at a Distance During the Pandemic

The sacrifices and legacies of the WWII generation, whether on the Home Front or the battlefield, are at the heart of the Museum’s mission. One of the most fulfilling aspects of the institution’s work is having the opportunity to welcome WWII veterans to campus, collect their personal accounts of the war, and even collaborate with them to share this important history with our audiences.

COVID-19, however, posed a significant threat to the WWII generation and challenged the Museum to find creative ways to honor WWII veterans and continue recording their stories—safely and at a distance.

Inspired by the wartime care packages sent to those deployed overseas, the Museum connected with our friends at the Gary Sinise Foundation to create care packages for more than 550 homebound WWII veterans, mailing them boxes with Gary Sinise Foundation swag—including a note from Sinise himself—alongside carefully selected items from the Museum’s store. Additionally, the Sinise Foundation collaborated with The Higgins Hotel & Conference Center to prepare and deliver meals to frontline workers at the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Home in Reserve, as well as to the VA Medical Center in downtown New Orleans.
Continued to grow its collection of more than 10,000 personal accounts, preserving powerful stories from inspirational individuals such as:

Home Front Worker
DR. AGNES MILLER

Born in Ruston, Louisiana, Dr. Agnes Miller worked for the Douglas Aircraft Company Long Beach Plant in southern California, where C-47 Skytrain cargo and transport aircraft were manufactured. Miller, a Home Front worker, was engaged as a paratrooper who was killed in action on D-Day.

US Army Veteran
OLIN PICKENS

Olín Pickens served in the Army in the 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion and took part in combat operations in North Africa. During the battles around Kasserine Pass in February 1943, he was captured when German forces overran his position near Faid Pass. Pickens then spent much of the war as a prisoner of war in Stalag III-B Furstenberg, Germany, where he endured brutal work conditions, a starvation diet, and terrible weather conditions. While a prisoner, Pickens and another man escaped from Stalag III-B and made it as far as Czechoslovakia before they were discovered and recaptured. Pickens was finally liberated in April 1945 and spent 30 days at Camp Lucky Strike, putting back on some of the 50 pounds he had lost as a prisoner of war.

Civilian
THOMAS W. GILLETTE
Witness to Pearl Harbor

Thomas W. Gillette is the step-son of Rear Admiral Claude Gillette and lived on base at the Pearl Harbor Navy yard from June 1940 until December 1941. On the morning of December 7, 1941, he witnessed the Japanese attack firsthand from the front yard of his bungalow. On Christmas Eve 1941, Gillette was sent back to the United States mainland with his mother, sister, and all of the other civilian dependents of military personnel on Oahu. Gillette then spent about a year on the United States East Coast before his step-father took command of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Yard in Washington State. There, Gillette witnessed the restoration of many of the battleships that he had seen damaged during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Thanks to the creativity and determination of the Museum staff and its partners, the Museum was able to maintain special access to veterans near and far as they celebrated their milestone birthdays during the COVID-19 pandemic. As veterans continued to celebrate their milestone birthdays with socially distant drive-by parties and celebratory messages delivered by mail and online, the Museum sent special birthday greetings to dozens of veterans, including several centenarians.

The Museum’s annual tradition of hosting a birthday party for New Orleans resident and WWII veteran Lawrence Brooks morphed into a global birthday card writing campaign to mark the 111th birthday of the oldest living WWII veteran in the country. An astounding 37,000+ people from every state and over 20 countries sent birthday cards and other gifts to the Museum.

On Sept. 12, 2020, the bins of cards were delivered to Brooks during a celebratory morning including an outdoor victory Bellies serenade and flyovers from the four-ship Honda Aeroshell Aerobatic Team above his home.

Beyond the cheer that the Museum brings to veterans remotely, progress continued on our efforts to collect and share them with future generations. As veterans near and far celebrated their milestone birthdays with socially distant drive-by parties and celebratory messages delivered by mail and online, the Museum was able to maintain special access to veterans near and far as they celebrated their milestone birthdays during the COVID-19 pandemic. As veterans continued to celebrate their milestone birthdays with socially distant drive-by parties and celebratory messages delivered by mail and online, the Museum sent special birthday greetings to dozens of veterans, including several centenarians.

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Beyond the cheer that the Museum brings to veterans remotely, progress continued on our efforts to collect and preserve firsthand accounts from the WWII generation. Realizing what a limited window of time we have left to collect these personal stories, our oral historians did not let travel restrictions stop their efforts. Throughout the pandemic, the Museum’s oral historians put aside their modified interview process, the Museum continued to grow its collection of more than 10,000 personal accounts, preserving powerful stories from inspirational individuals such as:

Home Front Worker
DR. AGNES MILLER

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The year 2020 marked an important milestone—75 years since the end of World War II. Focusing on the legacy of that global conflict, archival photography from the Museum’s collection filled billboards in Times Square on V-J Day.

Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the End of World War II

In 2020, the world marked 75 years after the end of World War II while fighting another global crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a cascading series of logistical, financial, and emotional challenges for our community, which The National WWII Museum met head-on by channeling the WWII generation’s resilience and resourcefulness. While the Museum’s recognition of this milestone anniversary took a different shape from our original plans, a full slate of commemorative initiatives and digital offerings allowed audiences to reflect on the legacy and meaning of the end of World War II.

While the global health crisis scuttled plans for in-person events, educational travel, and on-campus programming and conferences, it presented an opportunity to activate new Museum resources. Less than a year after opening, the Hall of Democracy maintained a vital role in keeping audiences connected as the new home for the Institute for the Study of War and Democracy and the WWII Media and Education Center. A new podcast, “To the Best of My Ability,” made possible by the Nierenberg Family, was specifically produced to mark the 75th anniversary of the war’s end. The podcast explores the tragedies, triumphs, and difficult choices made by President Harry S. Truman in the wake of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s death in 1945. Launched in May 2020, the first two seasons of “To the Best of My Ability” have been downloaded more than 30,000 times and listened to in 57 countries.
With support from Bank of America, the team in the Institute for the Study of War and Democracy, WWII Media and Education Center, and Curatorial Services, also produced and promoted 16 new video pieces and 23 live educational webinars focused on the conclusion of the war as well as the impact of the postwar period on modern American life. These programs connected tens of thousands of viewers to a rich array of content, including original articles and special webinars commemorating Victory over Europe Day (V-E Day) and, included live discussions with WWII veteran and former POW Jim Bayham and Holocaust survivor Peter Somogyi. An online commemoration on September 2, 2020, recognized the 75th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day (V-J Day), and the Museum hosted virtual programs with authors Chris Wallace and Lesley Blume along with releasing video series spotlighting artifacts in Road to Tokyo. Two months later, a virtual Veterans Day Commemoration featured a special presentation by WWII and Korean War veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Hiroshi H. Miyamura.

Prior to the pandemic, The Manhattan Project Electronic Field Trip presented by The Lupo Family Charitable Fund with additional support from The Dale E. and Janice Davis Johnston Family Foundation took students nationwide on a virtual, interactive journey to discover the science, sites, and stories of the massive WWII undertaking that produced the first nuclear weapons. Airing on February 4, 2020, The Manhattan Project Electronic Field Trip reached more than 83,000 students in all 50 states and an additional 12 countries. As one teacher noted, this Museum initiative “explained a very complicated and difficult concept in a way that students could really understand.” In May 2021, The Manhattan Project Electronic Field Trip was nominated for a Daytime Emmy in the Outstanding Daytime Non-Fiction Special category. To accompany the live presentation, the Museum team also published a companion classroom guide funded by Boeing with lesson plans, essays, and other curriculum resources for educators related to the Manhattan Project.

Rounding out this collection of robust teaching materials, the Museum’s most recent curriculum guide, Liberation & Legacy, was published in July 2019. Featuring lesson plans, overview essays, and curated oral histories on the new postwar world, this resource was funded by the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation with additional support from the Greehey Family Foundation. As the fourth book in the Museum’s series From the Collection to the Classroom: Teaching History with The National WWII Museum, the Liberation & Legacy guide was designed exclusively for middle and high school students.

And while so many of our commemorations were necessarily adapted into a digital format, the Museum marked the 75th anniversary of the war’s end with some equally impressive real-life moments. A series of V-J Day and Veterans Day 2020 installations on prominent billboards in New York City brought archival photography from the Museum’s collection to life on a grand stage. As joyful images of post-war celebrations filled a modern-day Times Square, the triumphs and sacrifices of three-quarters of a century ago felt especially relevant in light of the difficulties and challenges faced by many Americans throughout the previous year.

Robert and Mary Lupo have been stalwart supporters of The National WWII Museum since before its doors opened on June 6, 2000. In fact, when asked about his fondest memory of the Museum, Robert Lupo said, “Being at the ribbon cutting of the then-D-Day Museum with my dad.”

His dad, Lt. “ Commodore” Thomas J. Lupo, flew a TBM Avenger torpedo bomber dubbed the “Boyoo Bamber” in the Pacific Theater. During the Invasion of the Philippines in 1944, US landing forces were threatened by a powerful Japanese naval squadron making a surprise attack, and a small American escort group fought them off in a David-and-Goliath battle. During the fight, Commodore Lupo expended all of his weapons on the enemy and then made dummy attack runs to distract the Japanese from other aircraft. In one of these runs, he famously found an empty Coke bottle in his cockpit and threw it at the bridge of an enemy ship. Thanks to a generous gift from the Lupo family in honor of Alvena and “Commodore” Thomas J. Lupo, a TBM Avenger painted with the markings of the aircraft Lupo flew at the Battle of Samar, one of the three naval battles collectively known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf, hangs from the ceiling of the US Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center.

Both Robert and Thomas served on the Museum’s Board of Trustees, and the Lupo family have been generous donors to a variety of Museum programs and initiatives, including The Manhattan Project Electronic Field Trip in February 2020.

“If we do not continue to educate present and future generations,” Robert said, “the importance of the story of World War II will be lost, or worse, corrupted.”

Over the years, Robert has enjoyed working with the Museum team, “from the veteran volunteers to the dedicated and passionate staff and the trustees who give their knowledge, particular expertise, time, and treasures to the Museum’s mission.” Each person, he said, has had a lasting impact on him.
Providing Historical Context on Today’s Challenges

In our ongoing efforts to become the most accessible and trusted source on WWII knowledge, the Museum’s historians, curators, and educators provided historical context on some of the major current events that dominated the news cycle in Fiscal Year 2020—serving as historical experts for national media outlets and producing original content for the Museum’s own media channels.

As the country began to feel the impacts of COVID-19, the parallels to life on the Home Front during World War II were made almost immediately. Similar to the dramatic societal changes that Americans faced after the attacks on Pearl Harbor, 2020 saw companies shifting their operations to manufacture much-needed supplies like hand sanitizer, individuals stepping up to run errands for their elderly neighbors and sewing homemade masks, frontline workers in hospitals and nursing homes putting their health on the line to care for their communities, and families across America making the collective sacrifice to stay home and adjust to remote work and school to help curb the spread of the virus.
The Curator webinar on rationing, Baking through its own content such as an Ask The Museum also explored the parallels permanent impact.”

Dr. Rob Citino told ABC News. “I have no idea of carry it around with you the rest of your life or the rest of your history as a society,” Samuel Zemurray Stone Senior Historian

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The Museum also explored the parallels through its own content such as an Ask The Curator webinar on rationing, Baking

with Nations recipes, and two live webinars hosted with The National WWI Museum in Kansas City exploring the 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic, how the global movements of World War I worsened its effect, and how medical innovations and lessons learned led to saved lives during World War II and today.

As attention turned to the 75th anniversary of Iwo Jima, Victory in Europe (V-E) Day, and Victory in Japan (V-J) Day, the Museum was once again front and center in national news coverage, securing multiple segments on NBC’s TODAY Show with Citino and WWII veterans who have traveled on the Museum’s educational tours. In addition to contributing to anniversary coverage by USA Today and The New Orleans Advocate | Times-Picayune, our collection of WWII veteran oral histories also served as great source material for pieces by NBC News and Newsweek. And perhaps most poignantly of all, the June issue of National Geographic highlighted the “Last Voices of World War II” with a cover image and story of New Orleans native Lawrence Brooks, the oldest WWII veteran in the US whose birthday celebrations have become a Museum tradition, along with a profile of Holocaust survivor Jeannine Burki, a Museum volunteer who passed away in July 2020, shortly after the piece was published.

The summer of 2020 also led to a nationwide conversation about racial injustice and inequality, with the Museum committing to sharing more articles, oral histories, lectures, and educational resources related to the experience of African Americans who fought for the “Double Victory” in World War II against the forces of oppression abroad and racism at home—in addition to the experiences of other ethnicities, women, and LGBTQ individuals.

Telling diverse stories of the American experience in World War II has long been important to the Museum, and efforts to enhance the institution’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts accelerated in 2019. In the months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the Museum hosted documentary screenings of Invisible Warriors: African American Women in World War II exploring Black Rosie the Riveters, Minor Accident of War based on a poem by WWII veteran and significant LGBTQ literary voice Edward Field, and The Six Triple Eight on the only all-Black female battalion to serve in Europe.

In summer 2020, the Museum more sharply focused its attention on advancing its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals by reflecting upon our progress, areas of needed improvement, and future initiatives related to the Museum’s content, workplace culture, recruiting and mentoring, staff training, community engagement, and antidiscrimination policies and procedures. A key part of these initiatives included increasing production of content highlighting diverse WWII experiences. In addition to sharing oral history spotlights on Tuskegee Airmen, webinars in summer and fall 2020 explored topics such as the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Japanese American WWII experience, African American servicemembers in World Wars I and II, Women’s Airforce Service Pilots, World War II and the early Civil Rights Movement, and the 10th Infantry Battalion, the only all Mexican American Army unit in World War II. Among the Museum’s future plans to continue sharing these stories with wider audiences include bringing back Fighting for the Right to Fight: African American
A museum is many things, but most essentially, it is a place for people to gather together to experience information and artifacts of historical, artistic, scientific, and cultural interest firsthand. The National WWII Museum is fortunate to have a terrific collection of online resources, distance learning programming, and digital materials, including thousands of available oral histories and photographs in the Museum’s digital collection. However, visiting the Museum in person is an unmatched experience. Whether families are tracing the footsteps of American service members in the Road to Tokyo and Road to Berlin galleries, gazing up at the warbirds in the US Freedom Pavilion, The Boeing Center, or catching a 40s-era show at BB’s Stage Door Canteen, the campus brings the lessons and sacrifices of World War II to life in an unforgettable way. 

Museum Reopening on Memorial Day Showcases Teamwork and Ingenuity

A NEW CHAPTER

The National WWII Museum reopened its doors on May 25, 2020—Memorial Day—after having been closed since March 14.
When the Museum closed its doors on March 14, 2020, due to the pandemic, the team immediately began working on plans for how we would reopen, once it was appropriate to do so, in a way that prioritizes the safety of visitors, staff, and volunteers without diminishing the impact of the Museum space.

During the shutdown, the operations team immediately began researching and developing new procedures to meet city, state, and federal guidelines, including maintaining social distancing, enhancing sanitizing and cleaning protocols, implementing mask requirements, and adding hand-washing and sanitizing stations. Staff worked tirelessly to gather the necessary safety supplies, including masks, gloves, plexiglass sneeze guards, and disposable stylus pens for interacting with Museum touchscreens. Staff also shifted into high gear to design and produce various resources—both printed and digital—that were needed to reopen safely and maintain social distancing across the six-acre campus. Museum graphic designers took inspiration from WWII-era visuals, including Home Front propaganda posters, in creating signage to encourage social distancing and new protocols. Campus security and facilities team remained on campus throughout the closure, ensuring that the Museum was secure, well maintained, and thoroughly clean. Upon reopening, security officers were also mobilized as gatekeepers, maintaining the proper number of guests in each gallery to avoid crowding and screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms before they entered the campus.

Fittingly, The National WWII Museum reopened its doors to 375 visitors on Monday, May 25, 2020—Memorial Day. Thanks to the great work of our operations and visitor experience teams, we were one of the first museums in the country to open to the public following the pandemic. The institution’s reopening guidelines were carefully developed and reviewed by Museum leaders with the help of more than 20 organizations and peer institutions across the state and country along with the American Alliance of Museums and local health experts. Returning guests and members were limited to 25 percent of the Museum’s total capacity to ensure a safe visit for all, and advanced reservations via online ticket purchases were highly recommended. As a symbol of gratitude, free admission was extended to medical professionals and first responders along with active-duty military personnel and their families through Labor Day.

Memorial Day 2020 marked a new chapter in the story of our campus. Reopening on such a significant day was meaningful for all visitors, staff, and volunteers as the Museum continued its annual tradition of honoring fallen military personnel who bravely served on behalf of our country. While operations continue to look a little different than they did before COVID, the Museum’s spirit is as strong as ever. We continue to welcome our visitors back to our world-class exhibit halls and galleries and serve as a place for people to understand and feel America’s strengths and values. If anything, the pandemic only reinforced the importance of values like teamwork, ingenuity, optimism, and determination that the Museum has championed since our founding in 2000.
June 6 is always a special day at The National WWII Museum, and in Fiscal Year 2020, it carried even greater meaning. As the world commemorated the 76th anniversary of D-Day, the largest amphibious invasion in history and a turning point of the war in Europe, the Museum also celebrated the 20th anniversary of its opening as The National D-Day Museum in 2000.

The milestone anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect on the Museum’s humble beginnings, the spectacular grand opening celebration and veterans parade in 2000, and its incredible growth over the past two decades into the Congressionally designated National WWII Museum and one of the top-ranked cultural attractions in the world. Against the backdrop of the global pandemic, the commemoration also signified a time to express gratitude for the Museum’s ability to endure several challenges (from near-bankruptcies to Hurricane Katrina to the 2008 recession) in its short history, to continue advancing its ambitious plans to reach greater audiences, and to share this journey with passionate supporters past and present who have made it all possible.
interviews and oral histories, a virtual performance by the Victory Six orchestra, special discussions with historians, highlights from the Museum’s artifact collection, tributes to Museum volunteers and staff, and live segments from the original D-Day Invasion of Normandy exhibit. Thanks to the generosity of Karen and Leopold Sher, audiences across the country and world tuned in virtually on June 6 to reflect on the legacy of the iconic battle in Normandy during the Museum’s annual Dr. Hal Baumgarten D-Day Commemoration Ceremony.

Nearly a week prior to the anniversaries, the Museum reopened its doors to the public, making it possible to welcome a limited number of visitors to its exhibits and galleries on June 6, 2020. To ensure visitor safety and enable greater participation, all commemorative programs were streamed exclusively online with the Museum’s 20th birthday celebration generously supported in honor of WWII veteran and former Trustee Richard Duchossois from his loving children.

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The dual commemorations of D-Day and the Museum’s birthday included a weeklong calendar of interactive D-Day webinars for students, parents, and lifelong learners, as well as veteran interviews and oral histories, a virtual performance by the Victory Six orchestra, special discussions with historians, highlights from the Museum’s artifact collection, tributes to Museum volunteers and staff, and live segments from the original D-Day Invasion of Normandy exhibit. Thanks to the generosity of Karen and Leopold Sher, audiences across the country and world tuned in virtually on June 6 to reflect on the legacy of the iconic battle in Normandy during the Museum’s annual Dr. Hal Baumgarten D-Day Commemoration Ceremony.

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TWO DECADES LATER

After years of fundraising and planning by Founder Stephen Ambrose and Founding President & CEO Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, The National D-Day Museum celebrated its grand opening on June 6, 2000. In the two decades since, it has become The National WWII Museum we know today, existing to tell the complete story of the American experience in World War II.

Longtime Trustee and one of the Museum’s most significant champions, Boysie Bollinger, joined Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, PhD, and Stephen J. Watson on June 6, 2020, to reflect on the Museum’s growth and impact over the past 20 years.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT
What began as a dream for a modest D-Day Museum in 1990 became a reality in 2000 as founder Stephen Ambrose and Mueller, his University of New Orleans colleague, secured the support, funding, and location for what is now known internationally as The National WWII Museum.

June 6 also brought together the Museum’s Founding President & CEO Emeritus Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, PhD, and Boycie Bollinger, longtime Trustee and one of the Museum’s biggest champions, for a special live conversation with President & CEO Stephen J. Watson as they looked back at the Museum’s 20 years of history, growth, and expansion.

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What began as a dream for a modest D-Day Museum in 1990 became a reality in 2000 as founder Stephen Ambrose and Mueller, his University of New Orleans colleague, secured the support, funding, and location for what is now known internationally as The National WWII Museum. Intended by Ambrose to serve as a “love song to democracy,” the Museum has now welcomed over 8 million on-site visitors, launched with hundreds of thousands of educators and students around the globe, launched meaningful online and research initiatives, and welcomed over 8 million on-site visitors, his University of New Orleans colleague, secured the support, funding, and location for what is now known internationally as The National WWII Museum.

Meanwhile, the Museum’s team of historians and curators also advanced the content plans for the three-story capstone exhibit hall, Liberation Pavilion, exploring the end of the war, the Holocaust, the postwar years, and the impact that World War II continues to have on our lives today. Their progress along with generous support from the State of Louisiana and several private donors made it possible for the Museum to begin construction in November 2020 with an expected opening in 2022.

In reflecting on how far the Museum has come in 20 years and its ambitious plans for the future, Mueller couldn’t help but consider what Ambrose, who died in October 2002, would think of the Museum today.

“If he was still alive, he would be bursting with pride and gratitude. I certainly am.”

Mark Norman has been an enthusiastic champion of the Museum’s mission since 2000, when he read about the opening of The National D-Day Museum and traveled to New Orleans to sign up as a Member. Since then, Norman has seen the institution’s growth firsthand from one pavilion to a six-acre campus that attracts visitors from around the world. For over 20 years, he has supported our endeavors to bring the lessons of the WWII generation to today’s audiences while honoring the courage and bravery of WWII veterans.

Norman has supported the Museum’s expansion through Membership contributions, artifact donations, and gifts to the Museum’s endowment and operations. “I’ve enjoyed Mark’s friendship and support for 21 years,” said President & CEO Emeritus Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller, “and have always appreciated his big heart, modesty, and humility, devotion to our country, and love of this Museum’s mission. He is truly one in a million, and we are lucky to have him among our ranks.”

When Norman learned several years ago that the Museum was searching for a two-and-a-half-ton WWII US Army truck, he generously donated two from his personal collection. Norman’s support of the Museum stems from his belief in the importance of educating future generations on the history of World War II and its lasting effects. While he honors all American WWII veterans through his support, his giving is particularly inspired by William Uphoff, a 20-year-old B-17 pilot who flew 35 missions over Germany before being shot down over Cologne. His fondest memories of the Museum over the years include his friendship with Mueller and a cherished PT-205 ride aboard the Museum’s “Sudden Jerk” on Lake Pontchartrain with his son, Tom.
Supporters Rally to Continue Advancing Museum’s Mission

As the global pandemic’s far-reaching effects impacted nearly every aspect of our personal and professional lives, the Museum took on the important responsibility of providing historical insights on the current challenges facing the world. The virus that proved deadly to so many members of our beloved WWII generation, however, also threatened the Museum’s capacity to keep their powerful story alive.
From the outset, though, the Museum was and normal operations. reopening, due to a slow return to tourism the two-month closure and long after significant financial challenges during grew each day, the Museum braced for However, as the severity of the outbreak funds available to address the short-term the leadership of the Museum Board of volunteers, the Museum was fortunately generous support from our Members, in a strong financial position with reserve Trustees, and the dedication of staff and during the extended closure. Thanks to lost several million dollars in revenue Memberships, and other contributions to support its operations, and subsequently ignored. As an independent nonprofit, the financial challenges facing the Museum became significant and impossible to ignore. Immediately after COVID-19 forced the closure of the campus in mid-March 2020, During the extended closure. Thanks to venedict of the Museum was poised for a strong recovery.

met with the optimism characteristic of the WWII generation. Both immediately and throughout the pandemic, supporters from across the country rallied to not just sustain the Museum’s work but in many ways to advance its efforts online. WWII veteran and Board Chairman Paul Hilliard and his wife, Madlyn, quickly established a COVID-19 Response Fund to support the Museum’s operations and personally made the first donation. Many of our closest and most devoted supporters answered the call and followed Hilliard’s lead. By now, 6,019 donors and Members across more than 27 states—plus London—have given more than $17 million to advance the Museum’s mission during this difficult time, with more than $950,000 of that total coming from members of the Museum’s Board of Trustees. Additionally, extra support came from across the country through online Museum retail orders, early Membership renewals, brick purchases, and other forms of support.

Immediately after COVID-19 forced the closure of the campus in mid-March 2020, the financial challenges facing the Museum became significant and impossible to ignore. As an independent nonprofit, the Museum largely relies on admissions sales, Memberships, and other contributions to support its operations, and subsequently lost several million dollars in revenue during the extended closure. Thanks to generous support from our Members, the Museum understood its important responsibility to continue our education and preservation efforts—and to provide historical insights on the challenges we were all facing. Thanks to our supporters, while our exhibits were temporarily closed, our work continued online, and we were able to re-open our campus poised for a strong recovery. Despite the unexpected hurdles, the Museum understood its important responsibility to continue our education and preservation efforts—and to provide historical insights on the challenges we were all facing. Thanks to our supporters, while our exhibits were temporarily closed, our work continued online, and we were able to re-open our campus poised for a strong recovery.

Additionally, the Allstate Sugar Bowl Crescent City Classic collaborated with the Museum to host the virtual Liberty Road Challenge, commemorating both the 76th anniversary of D-Day and the 20th anniversary of the Museum’s opening by recreating the route of Allied troops who liberated France in 1944. Participants were challenged to jog, walk, or cycle the virtual “course” from Sainte-Mere-Eglise to Saint-Malo in France. In all, the proceeds generated from entry fees and merchandise sales generated more than $80,000 for the Museum. This generous support went toward not only sustaining our operations, but also keeping all staff employed and paid during the height of the pandemic until there was no option except to make reductions to our team in early June 2020. As seen throughout this Annual Report, the contributions from across the country also made it possible to continue our mission in new and innovative ways with the Museum’s educators, curators, and historians expanding outreach to students, teachers, and parents across the country as they adjusted to online learning.

A voracious reader of history and biographies with a focus on military history, Elliott joyfully shepherded friends and family members to the Conference every year since 2013. He could easily be spotted in the audience, frequently wearing a Notre Dame T-shirt, fascinated by the facts and taking notes at every panel.

Elliott also loved traveling with the Museum and enjoyed recounting his trips with us to the Mediterranean, Normandy, Germany, and Eastern Europe. He was a favorite of many historians and staff members who were inspired by his knowledgeable passion for history and enjoyed his enthusiastic exchanges of perspectives.

Elliott’s genuine kindness toward and admiration for the Museum staff was palpable. He always let us know how much the staff’s commitment to the Museum’s mission fueled his loyalty and enjoyment. So, when he heard that the COVID-19 Response Fund would benefit employees through payroll support, he didn’t hesitate—effortlessly, he considered these employees to be friends he’d made through the years.

The Museum will forever be grateful to Elliott, and we will remember him for his “wonderful kindness, endless curiosity, generous spirit, ready smile, and genuine commitment, not just to the Museum’s mission, but to its people.”
COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND DONORS

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When the Museum temporarily closed its doors in March 2020 and financial challenges quickly mounted, WWII veteran and Board Chairman Paul Hilliard, and his wife, Madlyn, generously established a COVID-19 Response Fund and personally made the first donation. The response from the Museum’s loyal supporters across the country was remarkable, and we are grateful for the following donors for their contributions, which helped the Museum continue serving students, teachers, and parents when they needed us most, made it possible to take care of our staff, kept the campus safe and functioning properly during the closure, and ultimately prepared the Museum for a strong opening.

In addition to the donors listed, 5,901 Charter Members also responded to COVID-19 Response Fund appeals through the mail, contributing more than $240,000. In total, the COVID-19 Response Fund raised $1.7 million to support the Museum during these difficult times.

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Among the most loyal supporters of The National WWII Museum, Patriots Circle Members contributed $3.1 million to the Museum in Fiscal Year 2020—once again exceeding all previous records of giving from Patriots Circle Members.

As the Museum temporarily closed its doors during two of its typically busy months in 2020, Patriots Circle Members’ commitment to the Museum took on even greater significance. During the closure and in the months since reopening, Patriots Circle Members’ contributions enabled the Museum to continue standing as a national beacon for inspiration and learning when students, teachers, parents, and audiences of all ages needed us the most.

Reflecting back on our incredible growth over the past 20 years, The National WWII Museum would not be where it is today without the long-standing support of its Charter Members from across the country. This past year alone, 167,632 Charter Members played a critical role in ensuring that the Museum was able to continue expanding its educational outreach despite the significant financial and operational challenges brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic. Charter Members’ loyalty throughout Fiscal Year 2020 exemplifies their strong commitment to the values of the WWII generation and to the mission of America’s WWII Museum.

Combined, Charter Members provided the Museum with more than $11 million in operating revenue to help fund educational programming and preservation initiatives in Fiscal Year 2020. Even though the majority of our Members reside outside of New Orleans and were also personally affected by the pandemic, many have a deep personal connection to WWII history and are inspired to continue supporting the Museum’s efforts to preserve the legacy of the men and women who bravely fought to secure victory in World War II. With the generous support of our Charter Members this past year, the Museum’s educators, historians, and curators found new, innovative ways to share the complete story of the war that changed the world, especially as the Museum marked the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS for supporting The National WWII Museum in Fiscal Year 2020 and into the future, as we continue to grow and evolve to ensure that all ages understand the sacrifices made to secure the freedoms we enjoy today.

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Through their generous annual support, ranging from $1,000 to $10,000, Patriots Circle Members made it possible for the Museum to continue expanding its educational outreach despite the significant financial and operational challenges brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic. Charter Members provided the Museum with more than $11 million in operating revenue to help fund educational programming and preservation initiatives in Fiscal Year 2020. Even though the majority of our Members reside outside of New Orleans and were also personally affected by the pandemic, many have a deep personal connection to WWII history and are inspired to continue supporting the Museum’s efforts to preserve the legacy of the men and women who bravely fought to secure victory in World War II. With the generous support of our Charter Members this past year, the Museum’s educators, historians, and curators found new, innovative ways to share the complete story of the war that changed the world, especially as the Museum marked the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

THANKS TO EACH OF OUR PATRIOTS CIRCLE MEMBERS for demonstrating the American spirit in such a profound and meaningful way during this very challenging year. Your annual support will ensure a strong recovery and the continued advancement of the Museum’s educational mission.

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FOUR STAR DONORS

SANDY AND MARGIE VILLERE

Many years ago, Sandy Villere and his beloved wife, Margie, owned a house on the Mississippi Gulf Coast next door to Stephen Ambrose. Thanks to their friendly neighbor and the Villere family’s long legacy of service—dating back to General Jacques Philippe Villere in the Battle of New Orleans—Sandy and Margie sought to learn more about WWII history and became involved with the Museum being developed by Ambrose and Gordon H. “Nick” Mueller.

After helping support the Museum’s opening in 2000, Sandy and Margie, who passed away in January 2020, joined Patriots Circle as two of its earliest Members in March 2004. Since then, they’ve continued to make generous gifts to the Road to Victory Capital Campaign, the Museum, and have co-hosted the Museum’s COVID-19 Response Fund, and other initiatives, totaling more than half a million dollars.

For Sandy, the connection has always been personal. Even at age 72 he understood why his uncle Simon George Chevalin was away in France during World War II. “Here he was risking his life to preserve democracy, and I took time to send him postcards with images of the military in France,” Sandy said. “That gesture made quite an impression.”

Sandy was 9 years old at camp in North Carolina when the war ended. “Most of us were too young to grasp the gravity and significance of the war,” he said. “It went without lots of things but acceptable rationing as something we did to help out in the war effort. When the announcement of the end of the war came, the guys at camp started singing huge ball with lots of dancing and celebrating. That was a joy-filled moment that was.”

Today, Sandy takes pride in helping preserve his family’s legacy of service. “As a sixth-generation New Orleanian, I remain proud to continue my support of the Museum through the Patriots Circle and welcome its continued growth.”
Eugenia grew up in El Paso, Texas, near three military towns during the war years. Her own family contributed to the war effort by volunteering with the American Red Cross. "I remember my mother and aunt rolling gauze bandages and greeting the wounded when they arrived," Eugenia said. Along with her family helping on the Home Front, two of her uncles served in the Army in Europe and Asia.

"World War II was a defining time in all our lives. It was an overwhelming experience for younger generations, but also their families and friends waiting on them to return back home," Tommy said.

Not only to miss a Museum event, the Linds see the Museum as a jewel right here in their backyard and look forward to a return to in-person programs and events soon.

Tommy and Eugenia Lind of New Orleans have proudly supported the Museum since 2001. Tommy is a Charter Member and then upgrading to the Patriots Circle in 2016. "Initially we were unaware of the Patriots Circle," Tommy said, "but we are happy to have the opportunity to join and become more involved."

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”We were instantly impressed as soon as we stepped through the doors,” Brenda said. “The displays and the way the information was presented was very compelling and well researched.”

Both of their fathers served in World War II, along with several family members on each side. “We enjoy visiting the Museum, seeing the new exhibits, and attending the WWII Air, Sea, and Land Festival,” Brenda said. “It’s important to continue to expand their educational offerings, and finding new ways to honor the Greatest Generation.”

Sandy admits to being the bigger history buff, but both feel strongly about preserving the stories and lessons from the war. The Athertons find positivity in the unity the war brought together to stop the atrocities that led to World War II and ensure they do not happen again. “The events of heroism inspired the next generation of servicemembers, creating everyday heroes for them to look up to,” Sandy said. “Those heroes were their fathers, brothers, uncles, as well as their wives, mothers, and daughters.”

As proud Patricio Circle supporters, Sandy and Brenda often encourage friends to visit the Museum or become involved. “The stories and artifacts that the Museum is preserving are incredible,” Sandy said. “We are beyond thrilled to be a part of the Museum, and we want to see it remain a premier educational institution forever.”

**SANDY AND BRENDA ATHERTON**

Two Star Patriots Circle Members Hambry “Sandy” and Brenda Atherton from San Antonio, Texas, first become involved with the Museum through a fellow Patricio Circle Member who invited them to an event several years ago.

**THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM**

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A passion to learn more about her father’s WWII service led Florence Upson of Lakewood, Colorado, to begin supporting the Museum in 2008 and join the Patrons Circle as a One Star Member in 2012. Florence’s father, David Richardson Upson, began his military career in the US Navy in 1938. After assignments in New York and San Francisco, David was serving as navigator on the US General M.A. Steward transport ship in 1945 when the war ended, they were passing the Block of Cadrado, word came that the Japanese had surrendered.

“Knowing that they survived the war, my father said the soldiers celebrated all the way back to New York,” Florence said. He was so excited to learn of an official museum to tell the story of World War II and its lesser-known features, and as a result, she discussed the idea with her family and friends. The combination of my father’s interest in the Museum, my growth plans, and the wonderful people,” she said. “The lessons, as well as to honor those who served. “Based on his enthusiasm, I traveled to New Orleans to visit the Museum, and I was so impressed with the events, facilities, growth plans, and the wonderful people,” she said. “The combination of my father’s interest in the Museum, my interest in WWII history, and that visit attracted me to the Patrons Circle.”

Florence believes that remembering the lessons from World War II will help future generations avoid repeating history’s mistakes. “Some parallels between then and now suggest parallels between then and now,” she said. “As we found out before World War II, elected leaders can become dictators if too few citizens take action to check their power.”

While Florence has enjoyed attending the International Conference on World War II in person in New Orleans, she also gained an appreciation for the Museum’s digital outreach in 2019. “The live virtual programs were the highlight of some memorable November evenings during the lockdown, and the other content in the daily and weekly emails has been much appreciated as well.”
Museum supporters can pay tribute to their WWII heroes by purchasing a brick or paver in their honor. These tributes pave the way around and through the Museum campus, reminding all visitors of the service and sacrifice required to win the war against fascism.

And Twenty-One Donors Who Wish To Remain Anonymous
Edward M. Baker
Lt. John Leightron Baths, WWII Veteran
Mary Ellen A. Belden, WWII Home Front
Mary Joanne Belden, WWII Home Front
William E. Belden, WWII Veteran
George Benway, WWII Veteran
Donald J. Boulter, Sr., WWII Veteran
Jean Boucher, WWII Veteran
E. Francis Brown, WWII Veteran
Jessie Robert Brown, WWII Veteran
Charles E. Bowie, US Army, WWII Veteran
Lester J. Brown, WWII Veteran
Arthur Lewis Engel, WWII Veteran
Frank H. Foster
A. S. Glikbarg, US Army, WWII Veteran
Wallace Wernig and Goodly, Jr., WWII Veteran
C. Paul Hilliard, WWII Veteran
Lawrence F. Horan, II, WWII Veteran
Bernard Joshua, US Army, WWII Veteran
Lee C. Joshua, WWII Veteran
Bette M. Merrill, WWII Veteran
C. Dewey Peterson, WWII Veteran
Edward Stone Peterson, WWII Veteran
Richard R. Peterson, WWII Veteran
Woodrow Peterson, WWII Veteran
Robert S. Phillips, WWII Veteran
Col. Joseph F. Puett, WWII Veteran
Thomas I. Puett
Jed A. Rogers, WWII Veteran
Lt. Col. Harry M. Seld, WWII Veteran
Jack W. Thomson, WWII Veteran
Rhena J. Wirth, WWII Veteran
Albert E. Williamson

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The Museum is nearing completion of its $400 million campus expansion project to quadruple its size.

Through the Road to Victory Capital Campaign, The National WWII Museum will fulfill its mission to tell the entire story of the American experience in World War II: why the war was fought, how it was won, and what it means today.

Thanks to the generous support from Society of the American Spirit donors who have contributed to this capital campaign, the Museum is nearing completion of its $400 million campus expansion project to quadruple the size of the original Museum and raise endowment funding for future educational programs, research, collections, and exhibitions.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the Museum celebrated three major milestones in the capital campaign with the opening of the Hall of Democracy, the completion of the steel framework, and exhibitions.

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Hilliard, who made a moving impression on the couple. As Will remarks, “His warmth and likability to strangers on our first trip with the Museum made us feel immediately welcome and among friends. We will never forget standing next to him at the American Cemetery outside of Anzio, Italy, looking over the sea of white crosses marking the graves of American soldiers who gave their lives for an ideal so far away from their home. Our entire group was moved to tears. (Hilliard) quietly said, ‘This is the ultimate expression of American exceptionalism—that these soldiers fought and died not for personal gain, but for the freedom of others who lived thousands of miles away.’”

Both Karen and Will have meaningful personal connections to World War II. Karen’s father served as a P-54 fighter pilot in the Army Air Corps in the European Theater, and Will’s grandfather was a captain in the Medical Corps of Patton’s army in North Africa.

These connections and their love for the Museum community inspired the Osbornes to support the capital campaign by underwriting The Karen H. Bechtel and William M. Osborne III Media Auditorium within the Hall of Democracy. “The story of World War II is one of the ultimate truths that should be told and retold, and our support for this mission could not be more central to our core beliefs. It is an honor to have our names attached to an auditorium where these lessons can go on every day.”

The Osbornes believe that in the shared sacrifice of everyday Americans during World War II, we can observe the very best of our national character. Of their continued support of the Museum and its mission, Will remarked that “This story needs to be told, preserved, and retold, and our support for this mission could not be more central to our core beliefs. It is an honor to have our names attached to an auditorium where these lessons can go on every day.”

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Legacy gifts support our mission to preserve and share the history of the American experience during World War II.
The National WWII Museum thanks the following donors, whose support made our exhibits, educational programs, outreach initiatives, and commemorative events possible in Fiscal Year 2020 and beyond. During this pivotal year as we marked the 75th anniversary of World War II and dramatically increased our virtual programming to reach the widest audience during the pandemic, these generous individuals and organizations made it possible for the Museum to increase understanding of the war that changed the world among people of all ages across the nation.

The Dow Chemical Company
John P. DeJoria
Ken W. Davis Foundation
Steven L. Craig
Carmen and Jim Courter
Corporate Lighting and Audio
Cornerstone Chemical
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Over the pandemic this past year, since reopening to the public, the Museum has always remembered their names. “We are so thrilled to have their names and stories be preserved and also a room for the crew, Fitz, Jack, Leo, Bill, and Sid, telling them to come back home safe and sound,” she said. Natalie’s aunt, Susan Henkin got involved with the Museum as a way to preserve the legacy of Manny’s service. Natalie said, “It is an opportunity to keep them alive and always remember their names.” Inspired by Natalie’s tribute, several family members of Manny’s half-track crew three also purchased commemorative bricks honoring their loved ones who served.

“For us it’s just a thrill to be able to have their names and photos presented in such beautiful and meaningful ways,” Natalie said. “It is an opportunity to keep them alive and always remember their names.” Inspired by Natalie’s tribute, several family members of Manny’s half-track crew three also purchased commemorative bricks honoring their loved ones who served.
## ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
<td>61,912,459</td>
<td>67,463,061</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>30,043,121</td>
<td>30,493,131</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unconditional promises to give:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Campaign, net of allowances</td>
<td>19,146,448</td>
<td>16,799,122</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endowment, net of allowances</td>
<td>2,137,660</td>
<td>2,285,698</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other, net of allowances</td>
<td>1,341,204</td>
<td>1,676,102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notes Receivable</td>
<td>4,834,474</td>
<td>4,634,670</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail Stores Inventory</td>
<td>1,174,184</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Assets</td>
<td>4,384,264</td>
<td>264,626,342</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property and Equipment, net of accumulated depreciation</td>
<td>264,626,342</td>
<td>248,603,382</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collections</td>
<td>13,153,310</td>
<td>13,016,884</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>402,753,666</td>
<td>390,165,576</td>
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## LIABILITIES

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable Trade</td>
<td>962,602</td>
<td>2,548,078</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Accounts Payable</td>
<td>3,330,571</td>
<td>5,852,137</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accrued Expenses</td>
<td>2,957,591</td>
<td>5,828,444</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liability on interest rate swap agreement</td>
<td>2,693,140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deferred Revenue</td>
<td>3,903,563</td>
<td>4,007,484</td>
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<td>Line of Credit, Construction</td>
<td>51,803,493</td>
<td>40,242,415</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paycheck Protection Act Notes Payable</td>
<td>4,356,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hilton Development Incentive Note</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
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<td>Notes Payable</td>
<td>11,130,058</td>
<td>11,977,064</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td>82,437,018</td>
<td>70,456,622</td>
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## NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2020 Totals</th>
<th>2019 Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets without donor restrictions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated</td>
<td>37,175,876</td>
<td>42,519,028</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undesignated</td>
<td>234,075,244</td>
<td>231,707,331</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets without donor restrictions</strong></td>
<td>271,251,120</td>
<td>274,226,539</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets with donor restrictions</td>
<td>49,065,528</td>
<td>45,482,995</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>402,753,666</td>
<td>390,165,576</td>
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## SUPPORT AND REVENUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Without Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>With Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>2020 Totals</th>
<th>2019 Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
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<td>6,744,634</td>
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## EXPENSES

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<td>Program</td>
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<td>54,550,779</td>
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<tr>
<td>General and Administrative</td>
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<td>6,459,803</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>3,297,194</td>
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## CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in net assets before interest rate swap agreement</td>
<td>(282,079)</td>
<td>3,582,933</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in liability on interest rate swap agreement</td>
<td>(2,693,140)</td>
<td>(2,693,140)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>End of year</th>
<th>Beginning of year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of year</strong></td>
<td>271,251,120</td>
<td>274,226,359</td>
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<td><strong>End of year</strong></td>
<td>49,065,528</td>
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THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM
A cheering crowd of American civilians celebrates news of Japan’s unconditional surrender with flags, ticker tape, and confetti. United States, September 1945.