

A watercolor illustration of a person in a meditative pose, surrounded by radiating energy lines in shades of blue and green. The person is depicted with dark outlines and light washes, suggesting a sense of inner light and transformation. The background is white with scattered blue and green brushstrokes.


From Inner Transformation to Outer Change



MIND & LIFE
INSTITUTE

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Mind & Life bridges science
and contemplative wisdom
to foster insight and inspire
action toward flourishing.



The watercolor "blooms" featured in this Annual Report are from 2021 Summer Research Institute participant [Lígia Oliveira](#), a Portuguese artist. The event helped to inspire her recent work on the relationship between nature and the inner emotional landscape. We are moved by the beauty, light, and growth represented in her work—and we hope you are too.



President's Letter

At Mind & Life, we believe that change in the outer world begins with inner transformation. Our programs equip people with the values, insights, and practices that nurture their personal well-being so that they can play an active role in building more compassionate communities and protecting the earth—and all its inhabitants. Throughout this report, you'll see how Mind & Life's grantmaking, convenings, and digital offerings reflect our commitment to nurturing individual, societal, and planetary flourishing.

In 2021, dramatic growth in our global audience pointed to a profound yearning in the human heart for the knowledge and practices that have been a hallmark of our work for nearly 35 years. Our expanded digital offerings, launched in response to the pandemic, brought insights into the nature of the human mind **to an audience of over 1.5 million** who were called to a particular theme, an online event, a speaker, a podcast episode, an insight—and they shared their appreciation with us:

"I cannot wait to continue to engage with Mind & Life because it connects so deeply with what I want to do and how I want to show up in this world."

—2021 Summer Research Institute participant

We began the year with an online conversation between the Dalai Lama, Greta Thunberg, and leading scientists on climate feedback loops, and closed 2021 with another timely discussion with the Dalai Lama on fostering resilience and compassion in times of crisis.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and collaboration of our partners, in 2021 we shared **a record-number of Mind & Life offerings**: creating 11 online events, producing 19 podcast episodes, releasing a documentary film, launching an online course, and publishing a book. And we continued

on **our journey to practice anti-racism** through staff and board leadership trainings, and we brought our equity, diversity, and inclusion values into the field through our grantmaking, our speakers, and a new mentoring program. This Annual Report shares just the highlights of an incredible year. We're grateful to the Report's featured artist Ligia Oliveira and the way her work helps us compassionately come into the present moment.

This is a challenging time. **It's also a highly generative time** when how we use our minds—and the actions we take—matter more than ever. With evidence pointing to the tremendous ripple effect we can have on those around us, my hope is that you will continue to glean valuable insights through Mind & Life's offerings and engage others in your sphere of influence, as together, we work to create a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.



Susan Bauer-Wu

Susan Bauer-Wu
President



From our January 2021 Conversation with the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg on the Crisis of Climate Feedback Loops - Photo: Ven Tenzin Jamphel

By the Numbers



1.5+ million
REACHED



113,000+
ONLINE
VIEWS



1,247,000+
DALAI LAMA
EVENT VIEWS



155,700+
PODCAST
DOWNLOADS



12,000+
FILM
VIEWS



23

GRANTS AWARDED
Totaling \$822,668



24

NEW MIND & LIFE
FELLOWS



80%

INCREASE IN
WEBSITE VIEWS



300%

EMAIL LIST
GROWTH



~300,000

SOCIAL MEDIA
REACH



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Since 2017, we have been looking deeply at how to advance the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within our organizational structure, processes, and programs. Below are examples of how we took our EDI efforts to the next level in 2021.

LEADERSHIP

Eleven members of the staff leadership, Board of Directors, and Steering Council completed the yearlong [Mindful of Race](#) leadership training with Ruth King.

INTERNAL WORK

In response to the pandemic-related rise in anti-Asian violence, in March we published [a statement](#) and our staff finished a Bystander Intervention Training to stop anti-Asian and xenophobic harassment. Each staff member had an EDI "SMART" goal for the year, and our staff EDI Committee met monthly to reflect upon and assess our work.

MENTORING

We shared our ongoing EDI work in [a message from the President](#), including announcing the development of the [Global Majority Leadership and Mentoring Program](#) to support and grow the pool of Global Majority young investigators in contemplative research, launching in 2022. (Global Majority include those who identify as Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialized as 'ethnic minorities'.)

PROGRAMS

In our programs, we highlighted diverse voices: Indigenous scholar Kyle Whyte spoke at our [2021 Summer Research Institute](#) on "moving at the speed of kinship" for climate repair; mindfulness teacher and law scholar Rhonda Magee encouraged our [Inspiring Minds](#) audience to use their power rightly to combat injustice; and social psychologist Buju Dasgupta shared on the [podcast](#) how to counteract implicit gender bias.

GRANTS

Across the year, we awarded [23 grants](#). Grantees were 50% women, 57% BIPOC, and 22% international. Projects include Shin-Young Kim's work on [building compassion and interconnectedness during a pandemic](#), a Think Tank led by Anita Chari on [embodying Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in higher education](#), and Erika Diaz-Almeyda's study of [Mayan Milpa biocultural heritage](#).

Personal Well-Being



Mind & Life seeks to better understand the role of contemplative practices in helping people develop healthy mental habits—and resilience.

As we entered the second year of a global pandemic with rising rates of anxiety and uncertainty about the future, Mind & Life's online programs and digital offerings examined the impact of negative emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety in our lives, and explored how to nurture positive emotions, including love, compassion, gratitude, and forgiveness.

Across our work, we supported conversations and research on topics like how our brains construct our realities, different understandings of self, the training of attention and awareness, strengthening our inner capacity to face challenges, and ways to nurture hope in difficult times. In addition to our grants, podcast episodes, and Inspiring Minds episodes, we offered our first online course *[Illuminating the Mind](#)* in partnership with Wisdom Publications in November 2021.

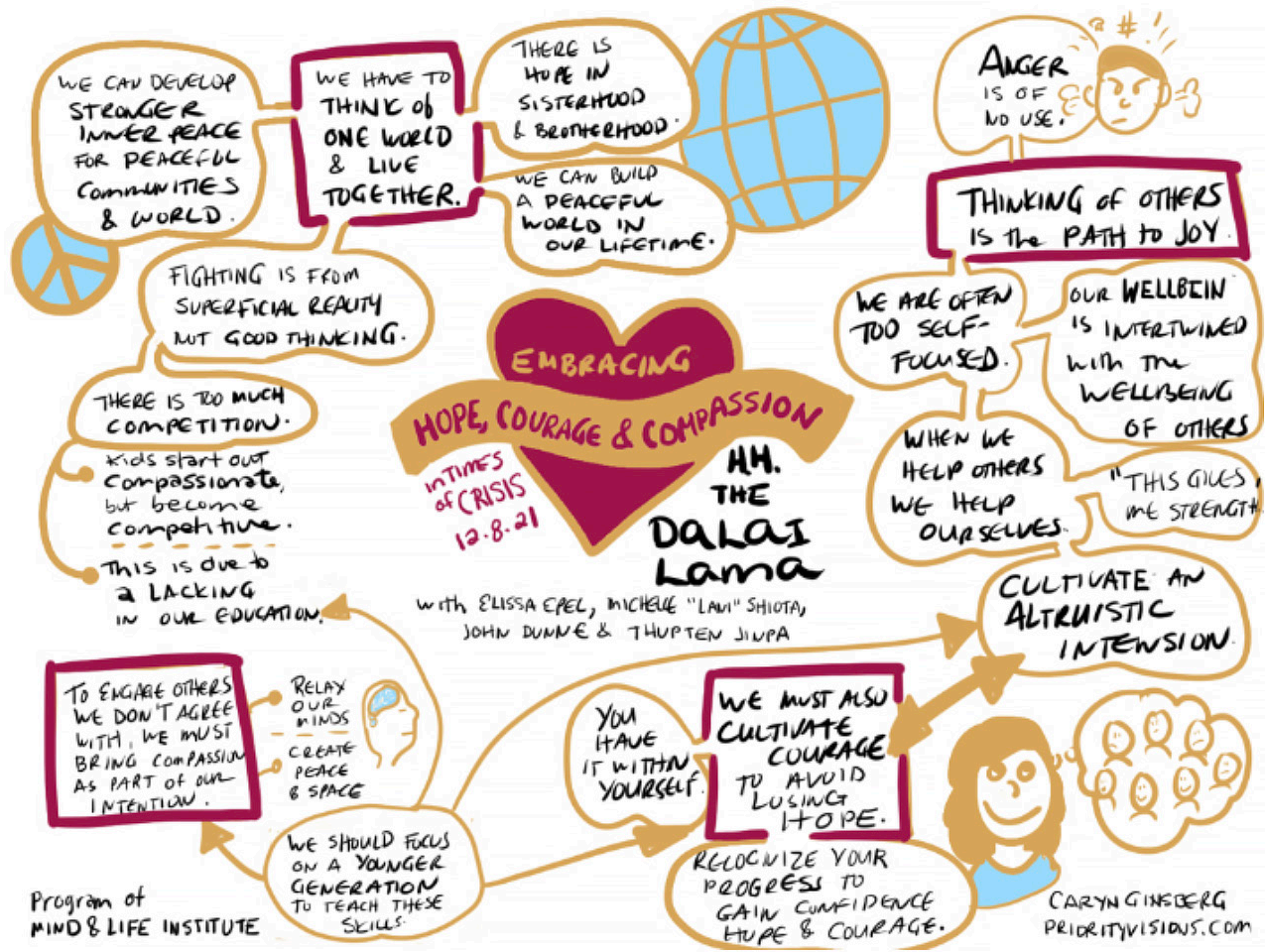
In December 2021, we hosted a livestream conversation with **the Dalai Lama** on *["Embracing Hope, Courage, and Compassion in Times of Crisis"](#)* to inspire our global audience with messages of hope and actionable steps to foster joy and courage in these challenging times. The Dalai Lama was joined by emotions researcher **Michelle (Lani) Shiota**, stress scientist **Elissa Epel**, and moderator Buddhist scholar **John Dunne**, with translation by Mind & Life Board Chair **Thupten Jinpa**.

"The trouble maker is our own mind. When the mind thinks in the right way, even in difficult circumstances, you can keep peace of mind."

—The Dalai Lama at our "Embracing Hope" conversation



From our December 2021 Conversation on Embracing Hope, Courage, and Compassion in Times of Crisis - Photos: Ven Tenzin Jamphel



Artist Caryn Ginsberg's representation of our December 2021 Conversation with the Dalai Lama

"I am already a seasoned and long-term mindfulness practitioner and meditator but find my attention hijacked often by social media and using the computer and smartphone. I have recommitted to practicing awareness of the impulse to go on the smartphone/computer and while on it, click the next button, and the next...and lose the very reason I logged on to work...It's challenging to keep focused on the task at hand. Your presentation helped not to personalize this or see it as a weakness."

—Participant at our April Inspiring Minds episode on "The Role of Attention and Awareness in an Era of Misinformation and Digital Seduction"

PODCAST

SEE THE FULL LIST OF PODCAST EPISODES →



ZENJU
EARTHLYN MANUEL

[Identity as Path](#)

(November 2021)



MINGYUR RINPOCHE

[Awareness,
Compassion,
and Wisdom](#)

(April 2021)



ERIC GARLAND

[Mindfulness
Approaches to
Addiction and
Recovery](#)

(February 2021)



LISA FELDMAN
BARRETT

[Your Emotions Aren't
What You Think](#)

(January 2021)



GRANTS

SEE THE FULL LIST OF GRANTS →



SHUFANG SUN

[Developing and testing an
internet-based mindfulness
intervention for women
diagnosed with gestational
diabetes mellitus](#)



MATTHEW SACCHET

[Biological and
psychological mechanisms
of mindfulness meditation-
based interventions for
depression](#)



DENNIS MUÑOZ VERGARA

[The acute impact of
yoga-based stretching
on inflammation and its
resolution: A pilot study](#)



POLINA BELOBORODOVA

[Effects and mechanisms
of smartphone-based
mindfulness training on
emotional well-being in at-
risk college students](#)



ILLUMINATING THE MIND

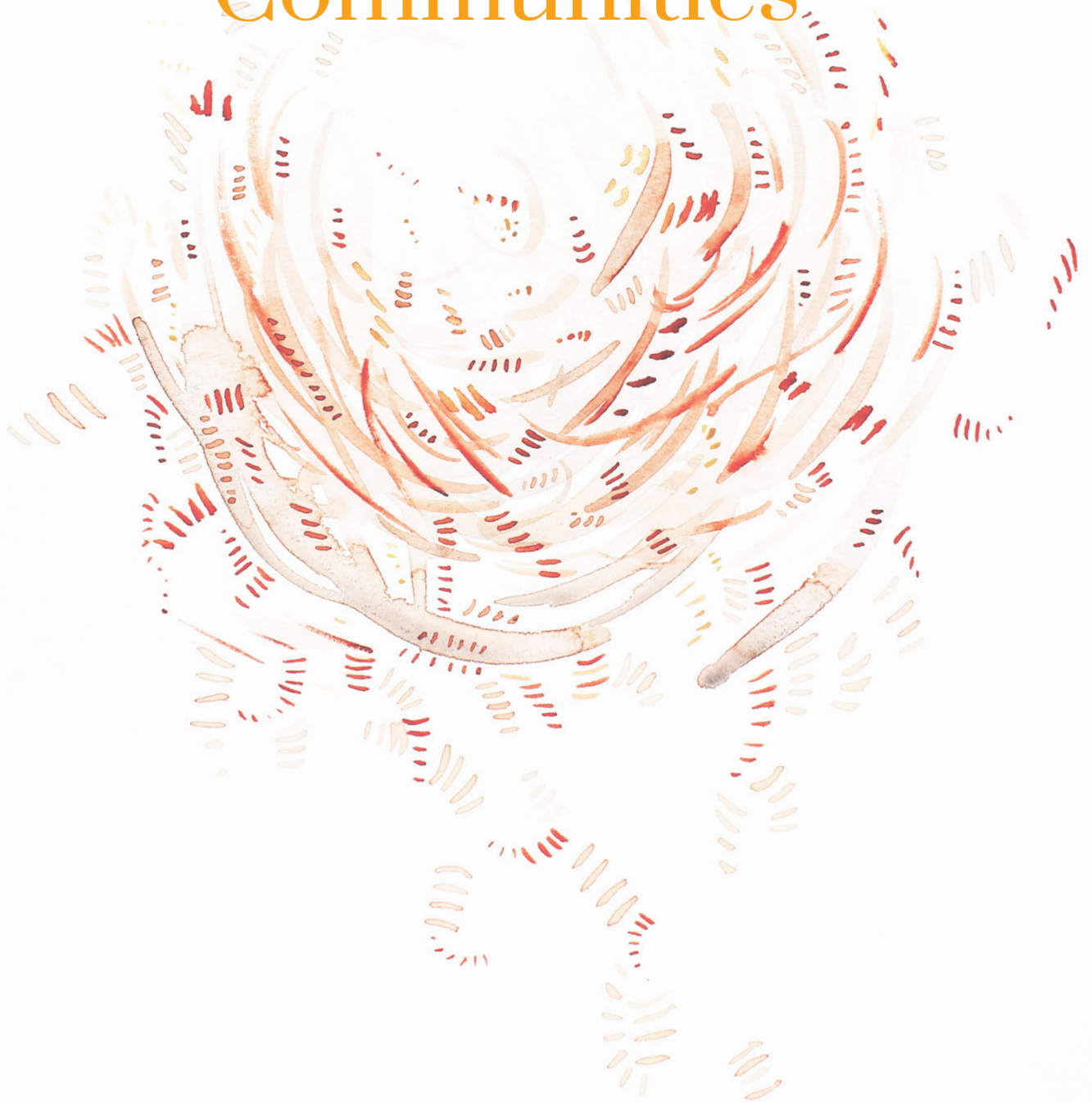
Using archival footage from Mind & Life's Dialogues with the Dalai Lama, we launched [an online course](#) in partnership with Wisdom Publications in November 2021. Across 8 lessons, 528 participants journeyed through a curated series of video presentations on the topics of attention, perception, and self. Presenters include B. Alan Wallace, Anne Treisman, Catherine Kerr, Matthieu Ricard, and more. Alongside the lessons, meditations are offered from Jack Kornfield, Willa Blythe Baker, and Tsoknyi Rinpoche.

"Mind & Life is for me a synonym of hope... I work as a contemplative researcher in Argentina and it's tempting to give up. Yet again, I have found the strength to make it work, thanks to the conversations and sharing that occurred within this unbelievable community.

—2021 Summer Research Institute Participant



Compassionate Communities



Mind & Life explores how the inner workings of the mind influence the formation of the views, behaviors, and social systems that separate us, and the role of contemplative practice in creating more compassionate communities.

Our efforts include taking steps to diversify the field of contemplative science through initiatives like the Global Majority Leadership and Mentorship Program, created by a working group of contemplative researchers guided by program development lead **Kamilah Majied**, a contemplative inclusivity and equity consultant.

In May 2021, we hosted our first online summit on [The Science & Wisdom of Emotions](#) in partnership with The Awake Network to honor the 20th anniversary of our "Destructive Emotions" Dialogue with the Dalai Lama. Reflecting growing interest in the cultivation of emotional well-being, **over 100,000 people in 140 countries joined us for this free online event.** Drawing from extensive scientific research, contemplative wisdom, and indigenous traditions, the four-day event made clear that the benefits of emotional awareness extend well beyond the individual, with the ability to address collective challenges from racial injustice to creating more equitable learning environments.

Our preoccupation with ourselves is the root of much unhappiness, emphasized the Dalai Lama: "The more we are able to think about others, the more we lay the foundations for our own personal happiness."

In celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6, we released [Evolution of the Heart](#), a 37-minute documentary with a [downloadable discussion guide](#). The film, chronicling conversations between the Dalai Lama, evolutionary biologist **David Sloan Wilson**, and social scientist **Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela**, has been viewed nearly 20,000 times. It was recently used with the discussion guide by a large, multinational corporation to help foster a more compassionate organizational culture.

"I would like to share my experience and support after watching "Evolution of The Heart." As the owner of two companies, as a British black woman living in Germany, with an African mother who was affected by war in Kenya, and as a mind and body healer who adores the philosophy of Buddhism, this was a life-changing and truly inspiring 37 minutes! Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

—Film viewer



PODCAST

SEE THE FULL LIST OF PODCAST EPISODES ➔



RHONDA MAGEE


Mindfulness, Interconnection, and Justice

(September 2021) 



JON KABAT-ZINN

The Heart of Mindfulness

(September 2021) 



SONA DIMIDJIAN

Bringing Relationship into Research

(March 2021) 

GRANTS

SEE THE FULL LIST OF GRANTS ➔



LINDSAY ROMANO

Mindfulness and the reduction of racial disparities and disproportionality in school discipline



ROMUALD ADILI AMANI

Community Suicide Prevention Project for Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)



SAMUEL B. HANSER VISIONARY GRANT

SAM ROBERTS, PETER MALINOWSKI

Gratitude interventions, well-being and social networks: A 16-month longitudinal study



SAM ROBERTS



PETER MALINOWSKI

Human-Earth Connection



Mind & Life investigates how the union of contemplative wisdom and science can lead to greater awareness of **the interconnectedness of all life**—and action—to support and sustain both individuals and the earth’s living systems.

Areas of study include how contemplative practice influences how people experience and respond to climate change, and the role of earth-honoring practices in reawakening our collective responsibility as stewards of our planetary future.

In January, we hosted [The Dalai Lama with Greta Thunberg and Leading Scientists: A Conversation on the Crisis of Climate Feedback Loops](#) as the official launch of the film series "[Climate Emergency: Feedback Loops](#)" narrated by Richard Gere. Joining the conversation were climate scientists **Susan Natali** and **William Moomaw**, moderator **Diana Chapman Walsh**, and translator Mind & Life Board Chair **Thupten Jinpa**.

The free online livestream reached a global audience of over 775,000 people, and inspired two books: [a German-language book](#) released in Europe with publisher edition a in November 2021 and an English-language book to be released in the United States with Shambhala Publications in 2023.



Participants join us on Zoom for our 2021 Summer Research Institute

In June, we held our 18th annual Summer Research Institute (SRI) on [The Mind, the Human-Earth Connection, and the Climate Crisis](#), with gratitude to the Hershey Family Foundation for its longstanding support of this flagship program. The on-line format allowed us to welcome **over 260 participants from 30 countries and 6 continents**. To make the event accessible, we removed application fees and made scholarships widely available.

We also piloted the first [Online Speaker Series](#) to provide an expanded audience with an alternative way of accessing SRI content—designed for those who could not participate in the live, immersive experience of SRI. **Over 685 participants representing 51 countries** registered for the series. After the event, we developed [a 10-hour, self-paced, online course](#) featuring SRI recordings, reflection questions, and a live session with **Vandana Shiva**, which launched in January 2022.

"I am so inspired having connected deeply with extraordinary people from around the globe and from many diverse fields and practices. I truly felt a part of a very special community who were all equally committed to helping this beautiful planet we all share and its creatures large and small. Thank you so much for the scholarship which allowed me to fully immerse myself in the week despite being in Australia."

—2021 Summer Research Institute participant



Beginning in 2021 and continuing into 2022, 17 members of the Mind & Life staff, Board, and Steering Council participated in the [Council on the Uncertain Human Future](#), a small-group guided discussion time to explore the climate crisis: its root causes, future implications, and how to live in this present moment. [Read more here.](#)

2021 MIND & LIFE SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Elissa Epel and Bobbi Patterson



Elissa Epel and Bobbi Patterson (left to right)

"Bobbi and Elissa are both bright lights who have generously served Mind & Life with their brilliance, heart, and time over the years. In 2021 they truly went above and beyond: together they were co-chairs for the program planning committee for the 2021 Summer Research Institute. They have profoundly impacted our organization and those who have attended our programs. From all of us who have been fortunate to know and work with them, we are eternally grateful." [Read more here.](#)

—Susan Bauer-Wu, Mind & Life President

"SRI was so so valuable and returning to my volunteer work in food insecurity I simply gushed forward new ideas and renewed passion... I don't feel so alone as I can rest assured there are so many SRI friends and family dotted about the planet doing the work with their hearts and minds focused on making a positive and gentle impact."

—2021 Summer Research Institute participant

PODCAST

SEE THE FULL LIST OF PODCAST EPISODES [➔](#)



PETER WAYNE
[Ecology of Mind](#)
(May 2021)



DEKILA CHUNGYALPA
[Human-Earth Connection](#)
(May 2021)



VANDANA SHIVA
[Earth Democracy](#)
(August 2021)



GRANTS

SEE THE FULL LIST OF GRANTS [➔](#)



JYOTI MISHRA
[Merging mindfulness and climate change education](#)



YURIA CELIDWEN
[Master Plants and Mindful Medicine: Towards Reciprocation and Recontextualization of Indigenous Practices and Western Psychedelic Research](#)

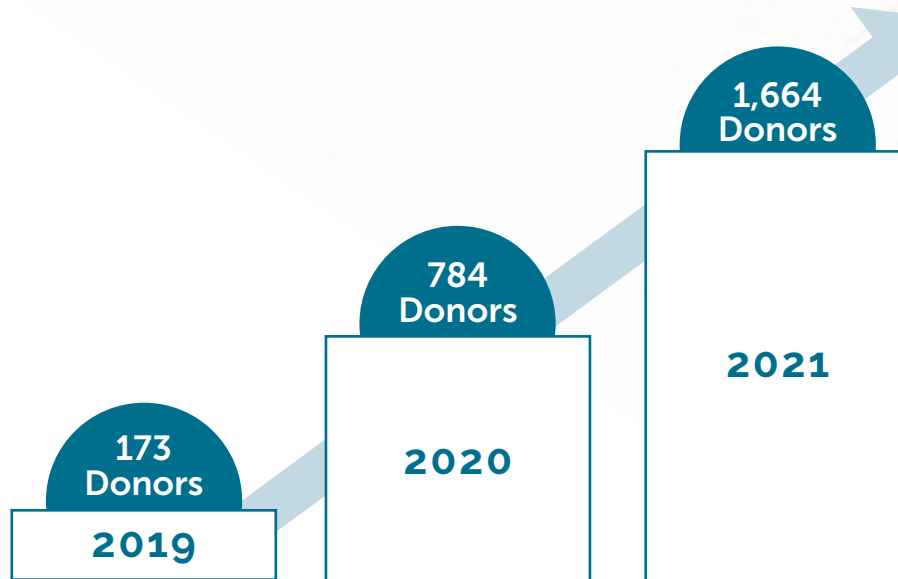


PAUL WAPNER
[Contemplative Environmental Mentoring Communities](#)



Donor Gratitude

We express our deepest appreciation to the growing number of Mind & Life donors for their generosity, engagement, and belief in our mission.

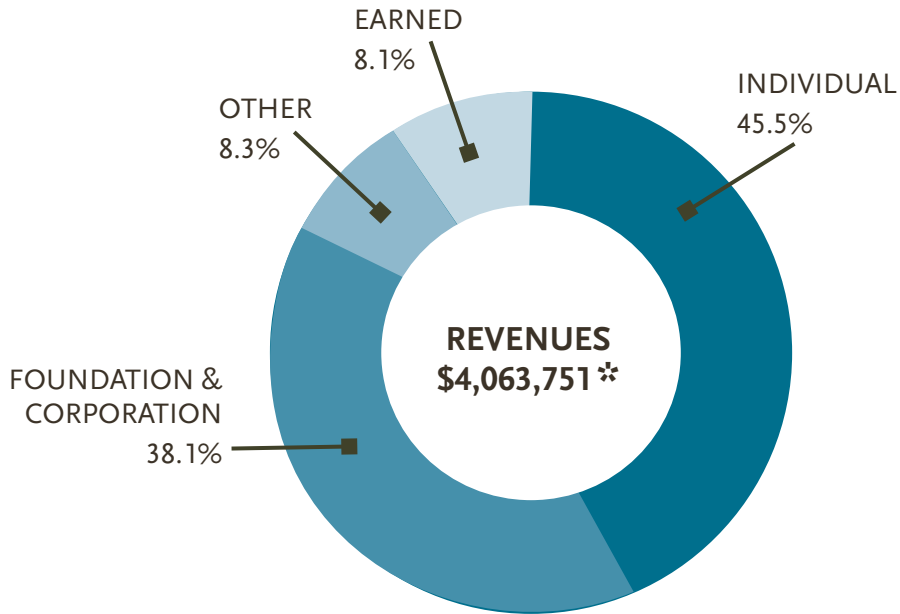


Rob Kaufold with Jessie and Richard Benjamin (left to right)

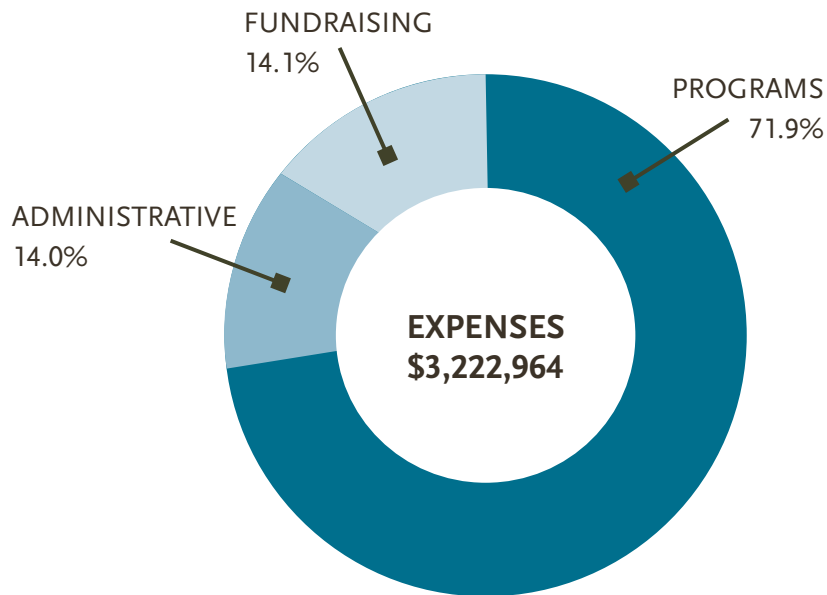
"One of the things that makes Mind & Life unique is its intention to foster connection and creativity in addressing the challenges of today. It's powerful and refreshing."
[Read more here](#)

—Jessie and Richard Benjamin, donors

Financial Summary



*Excludes \$1 million in restricted endowment funds received in 2021.



[VIEW 2021 FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT](#)



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I N S T I T U T E

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Our gratitude to featured artist [Lígia Oliveira](#)