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# Annual Report 2020

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# The Good Listening Project

## Try a Listener Poet

Want someone to talk to? Try a Listener Poet from The Good Listening Project. If you work at Inova Sehar Cancer Institute, they'll **write a free custom poem for you** about whatever you want. It's part of their mission to support nursing resilience, physician wellbeing, and the humanization of healthcare. Set up a session to talk with one this week at the link below.

~ Brought to you by the Smith Center's Artist In Residence Program. ~

Choose a 15-minute slot that works for you and they'll send a calendar invite with a video chat link. You'll receive your poem within a day.

[www.goodlistening.org/isci](http://www.goodlistening.org/isci)

free access code \_\_\_\_\_

### Tell us your story

Talk with a Listener Poet. They'll write you a poem about whatever's on your mind. Sign up online using the code above.

Sessions last ~10-15 min. Select your time to talk at [goodlistening.org/isci](http://goodlistening.org/isci)

\* Expires \_\_\_\_\_

*In 2020, our Listener Poets' work shifted online. It was a big upgrade for accessibility: for the first time, people could talk with us regardless of physical location.*

*This ticket and poster were part of our first experiment, one week into the global prohibition on hospital visitors.*

To Feel

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I would like to feel skin  
I would like to feel touch  
I would like to feel patients' hands  
    unceasing, squeezing, disbelieving

I would like to feel loss  
I would like to feel alone  
I would like to feel my stomach sinking,  
    upending, emptying everything

I would like to feel grief  
I would like to feel agony  
I would like to feel my heart ripped apart,  
    repair impossible, never unsevering

I would like to feel afraid  
I would like to feel rage  
I would like to feel terror uncontrolled;  
    heat, body, blood trembling

I would like to feel sorrow  
I would like to feel swelling  
I would like to feel salt-streaked cheeks  
    releasing concealing; healing

I would like to feel connected  
I would like to feel divinely connected  
I would like to feel soul returning to source,  
    opening, tethering, remembering

I would like to feel anything...

*"I would like to feel," she began. "As physicians, we're too good at putting our feelings aside. Someone once told me I was great at compartmentalizing, and meant it as a compliment. It's not a good thing."*

*This woman was an OB-GYN and a medical educator. She told me how difficult it had been to lose the ability to sit with a patient and hold their hand because of all the PPE she was now required to wear. "There is a sense of resilience and beauty that underlies it all, and this time has brought me in touch with the divine and nature in a way like never before," she said.*

*"At the same time, I don't know how we'll come to terms with what we've lost. It's not ever going to be what it was, and that's terrifying. I would like to feel the loss, the grief, and the connection."*

*~ As told to Listener Poet Jenny Hegland*

## Dear Friend and Supporter of The Good Listening Project,

You are the hero of our work. Burnout is rampant in healthcare, and if you're reading this, you're helping fight it. Your involvement, whether as donor, client, advisor, or volunteer, enabled our Listener Poets to connect with more people this year than ever before. Thank you.

Though 2020 was obviously quite perilous for many, we've come out stronger than we went in. In this report, you'll read some examples of what we've been up to. You'll find messages from our "poemees" about what our work meant to them. You'll find a long, inspiring list of everyone who made a financial contribution to help expand our reach and drive our innovations.

Thank you for making a difference in 2020.

With gratitude,



Frankie Abralind  
Executive Director

*Co-founder Kay McKean is currently taking a leave of absence. We wish her well!*

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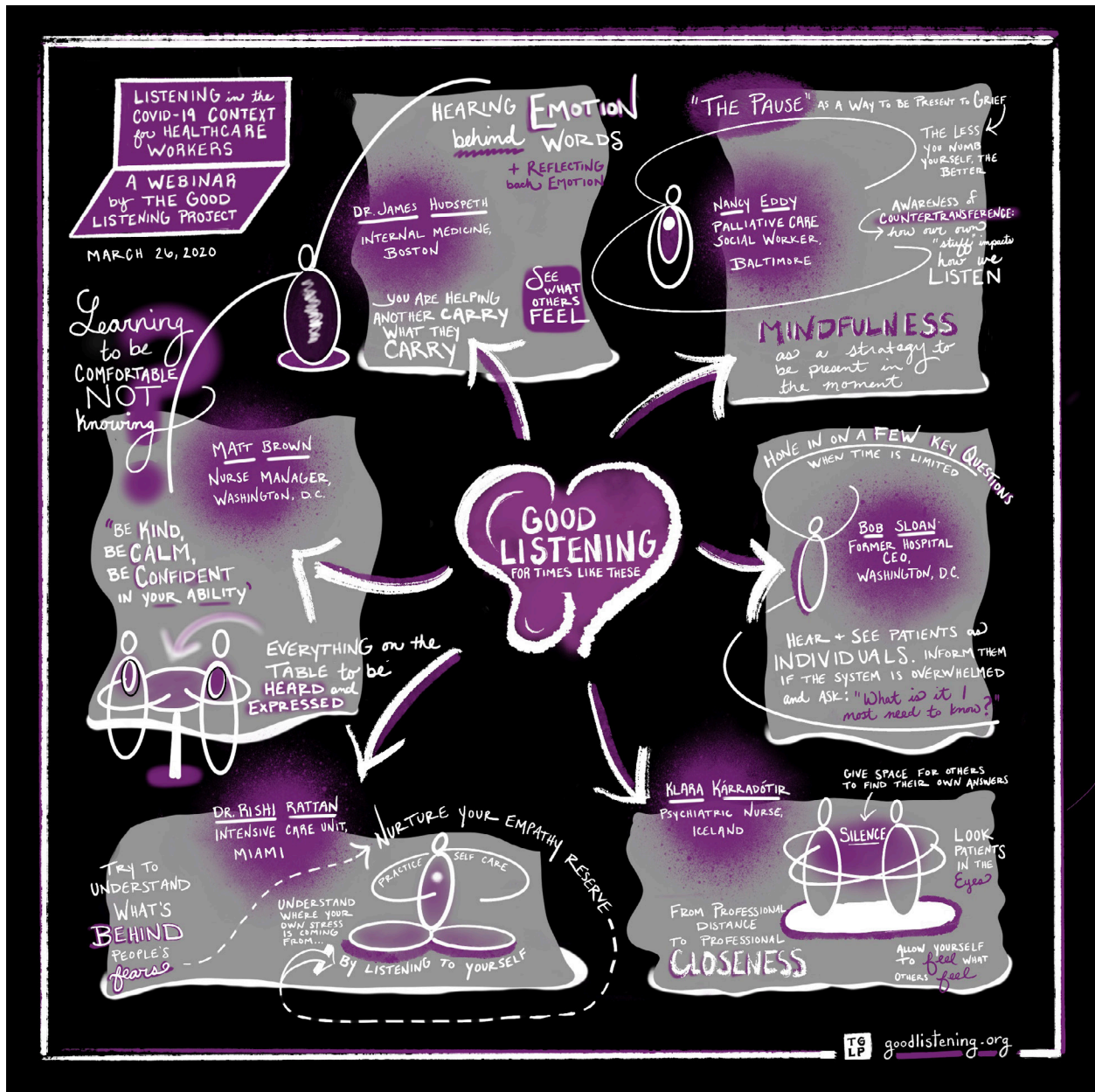
## Testimonial

*"The impact this poetry experience had on me was phenomenal. **It had a ripple effect that impacted so many more people in my life than just myself.** It helped me to get through the day with ease, as if weight had been lifted off my shoulders that I didn't even really know I had."*

*~ H, Nurse*



Our bemasked Listener Poets returned to the Inova Schar Cancer Institute in July, after a months-long prohibition on visitors due to the pandemic. Schar's Artist In Residence program has featured TGLP weekly for two years now.



On March 26th, a few short weeks into the global shutdown brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, The Good Listening Project held a webinar on how to be a good listener during those rapidly-unfolding, uncertain times. Jenny Hegland captured it in the above graphic.

Speakers included a former hospital CEO, two nurses, two doctors, and a social worker. The target audience was healthcare workers. More than 25 people tuned in to watch it live; nearly 200 watched the recording. You can find it on our eponymous YouTube channel.

## Activities

- **Inova Schar Cancer Institute** (Fairfax, VA)  
Listener Poets onsite weekly since June 2019 via the *Artist in Residence* program. Though the hospital prohibited visitors for several months starting in mid-March, we quickly pioneered a live video option on Zoom and were back up and talking to folks one week later.
- **Johns Hopkins Sibley Memorial Hospital** (Washington, DC)  
Listener Poets onsite for six weeks. Printed collection for the nurses we spoke with.
- **Georgetown University Hospital** (Washington, DC)  
Listener Poets onsite for one week in cancer center and med school. Printed collection.
- **Webinar** (Online)  
Six clinicians shared their pro tips for good listening in the chaos of the pandemic's early days during our special webinar. Thanks to speakers Nancy, Rishi, Klara, Bob, James, & Matt.
- **Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)** (National)  
Listener Poets available for any AAMC constituent via our first-ever National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)-supported project.
- **Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS)** (National)  
Talked with 75 people throughout the VAVS community, creating a printed collection to commemorate their 75th anniversary.
- **AdHoc, LLC** (Baltimore, MD)  
“Eleven Pro Tips for Good Listening” and “Collaboration, Conflict, and Why We Stop Listening” workshops for a tech company that works in healthcare.
- **Cleveland Clinic Rehab Hospital** (Cleveland, OH)  
Pilot project connecting staff with Listener Poets.
- **American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM)** (National)  
Pilot project connecting board members with Listener Poets.
- **Smith Center for Healing and the Arts** (Washington, DC)  
“Listen Like a Poet” workshop for organization that serves people affected by cancer.

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## Testimonial

*“I was thrilled by my experience in this project. The day of the meeting I had a clear, strong sense that I was listened to carefully. But the next day, when I received the poem, the experience was one of having been witnessed! It was very uplifting.”*

*~A, physician*



Our operating team holds an all-hands meeting each week.  
L-R: Elle, Frankie, Katherine, Jenny, Yvette, Ravenna, Elizabeth.



Listener Poet Ravenna Raven sets up to talk with nurses at Johns Hopkins Sibley Memorial Hospital, Jan 2020.

## Impact

Total Poemees: **473**

Despite the abrupt halt of activities in mid March, we talked with more people in 2020 than in 2019. They were all over the country.

Switching to Zoom for our Listener Poets has been a major accessibility upgrade. Now anyone with a computer can participate, regardless of physical location.

Ripple Effect: **Immeasurable**

Our Instagram continues to make waves. One poeemee wrote:

*"I shared [the poem] on my social media (tagged @thegoodlisteningproject). It put my friends to tears for them to read an amazing poem and to have a concrete glimpse into my life experience in that moment.*

*"The goodness of my short time with the poet quite literally touched hundreds of lives, who felt my emotions through her words, and resonated in their lives having experienced grief too. Long story short, this poetry experience was very impactful."*

Testimonials: **252**

When we give poemees the chance to talk about their experience, they're effusive.

We ask for feedback shortly after we deliver the receipt of good listening that we call a "poem." 1) How was your experience? 2) Should we change anything?

Sample responses appear throughout this report.

10-out-of-10 ratings: **92%**

On our post-interaction surveys, we also ask poemees how likely they are to recommend us on a scale of 1-10.

The answer: extremely. A few of them break the rules and award us a 10+, 11, or 100.

Occasionally, this sparks a sales conversation with a new client. If *you'd* like to hire us, please email [frankie@goodlistening.org](mailto:frankie@goodlistening.org). :)

## Testimonial

*"I was surprised how helpful it is to just **have someone listen** and ask gentle but meaningful questions."*

*~A, patient*

*"I wouldn't change a thing about the process and **I would give it 10/10**. You can ask my students, I am a hard grader, so this is not issued lightly."*

*~ G, med school prof*

*"I'm 50, and that was **the first time I've ever felt heard**."*

*~ K, administrator*



The inaugural members of our Clinical Advisory Group (CAG), a.k.a. CAGstars, L-R: Andrew Yin, med student; Nancy Eddy, palliative social worker; Matt Brown, nurse manager; Joy Friesen, discharge nurse.

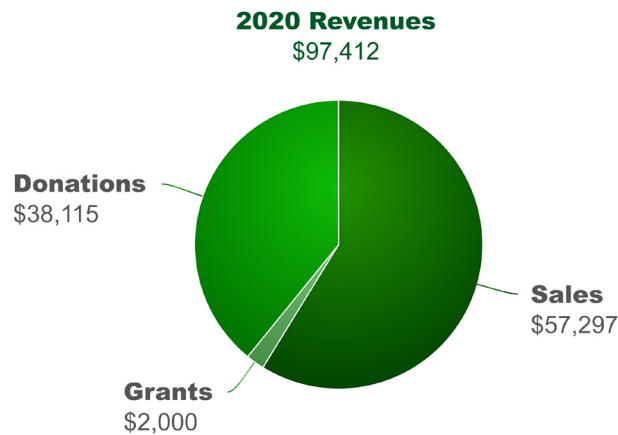


Photo credit: Jeff Krentel

ED Frankie Abralind presents a "Listen Like a Poet" workshop, Johns Hopkins Sibley Memorial Hospital, Feb 2020.



## Financials



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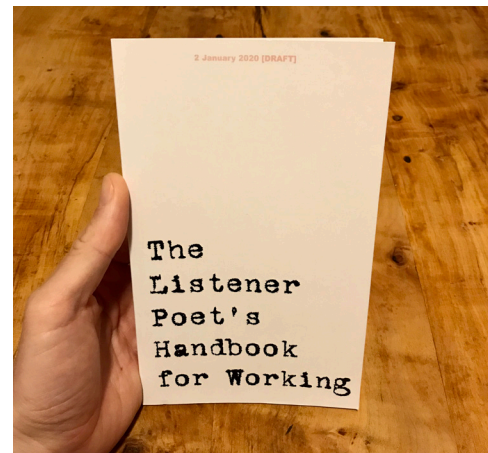
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## Testimonial

*“The experience gave me an opportunity to feel heard in an authentic way. I looked forward to it, and then **felt refreshed and rejuvenated after it.***

*When I received the poem, it felt validating. I’ve never shared that element of myself with anyone in my professional sphere, and it brings me almost to tears re-reading the words in the anonymized story – my own words – typed on a page out loud like that.”*

*~ M, hospital staff*



Our manual, currently undergoing its eighth revision. Chapters include “Why?,” “The Discipline Part,” and “We ain’t here to make friends.”



Listener Poet Jenny Hegland awaits passersby in the Schar Cancer Institute lobby, Summer 2020.

## Donors & Supporters

These particularly awesome people\* donated their time, money, and expertise. We wouldn't be having anywhere near this much impact without their support.

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
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| 👉 Kay McKean                   | 👉 Jason Chen       | 👉 Andre Lijoi        |
| 👉 Elle Klassen                 | 👉 Sara Vickers     | 👉 Susan M Verge      |
| 👉 Geoffrey Hall                | 👉 Nick Williams    | 👉 Michael Suchy      |
| 👉 Jenny Hegland                | 👉 Alan Schwartz    | 👉 Janet Riddle       |
| 👉 Katherine Gekker             | 👉 Michelle Scism   | 👉 Janet de Groot     |
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\* 81% more donors than 2019!

The quality of  
your listening  
determines  
the quality of  
their speaking.