**THE UPTOWN STORY**

Draft - Vincente Scott December 2022

Beginning in 1973, an ICA team joined Uptown residents and businesses in initiating programs, events and new relationships toward building a renewed community. They created guilds of volunteers, launched town meetings, training events, women and youth forumss, problem solving and celebrations for elderly and disabled.

Examples of Cultural events included such programs as Elders Valentine Balls and Banquets, bold street signs, dances for teens, newsletters and the creation of fix up and paint up campaigns.

Examples of economic activity included dozens of leadership forums with businesses focusing on diagnosing the barriers to healthy commercial environments and cooperative action to produce solutions.

Involvement by local political officials gave improved communication and support to neighborhood harmony.

This vigorous and determined work was aimed at addressing the innocent human suffering, economic deprivation, social inequities and destructive self-images faced by some residents in Uptown.

Major results of the collaborations were a raised sense of pride among citizens, higher consciousness of each person’s worth and contribution to Uptown. Find quotes for

* Uptownians said “XXXXX” and “YYYYY” as expressions of gratitude and excitement about being in Uptown.
* Business leaders said, “this work means that our future here is GGGGG.”
* Donors said, we can continue to support this work because RRRRRR and to be partners with ICA because PPPPP.”

It is hard to know what the longterm impact has been of that decade of work of Uptown beckoning people worldwide to see what was possible and envision with faith what was to come.

**THE UPTOWN VALENTINE BALLS 1974 TO 1982**

Draft: Alan Gammel, December 2022

The Aragon Ballroom in Chicago’s Uptown neighborhood vibrated with energy when more than 2500 people danced at the Elders Balls starting in 1974. Designed by the ICA’s Uptown Guild, the celebrations for seniors and people with handicaps became a local tradition to which busloads of attendees rocked the time away.

The programs included disco dance contests among teens and elders. There were sing-alongs, a 16-piece orchestra, and an old fashioned dance card for each attendee to write the name of her next dance partners.

The dance events were invented to change the narrative about how people in communities are often devalued. The sponsors and residents recognized that reports of people feeling pushed aside, ignored and even abused had caused friction and division in Uptown. The common public narrative did not acknowledge and make known the contributions that people “of a certain age” have made, the contributions they make now, and the many contributions they have the potential to make as neighborhoods change and grow.

The Valentine Elders Balls directly addressed those frictions and divisions. One leader remarked “We put our differences aside, we are Uptown”.

The steering committee composed of the ICA guild, sponsors and representatives from Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods (which had grown to 49 members by 1980) conducted extensive evaluation of the events. In addition to documenting that hundreds of people were engaged in the Valentine Balls, the committee noted that the first event generated $2650 income from ticket sales and donations of $3500 from in-kind goods and services.