



Dear Friends,

Over the last few weeks, I have found myself frequently using the opening of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* to describe our current state: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

The worst inexorably invades our consciousness: the precise, daily graphs charting the global upsurge of human suffering; the unbearable and bitter brew of isolation, uncertainty and fear; the grim, daily litany of closings and cancellations of our most beloved institutions and gathering places. Heartbreak and grief seem to be our daily bread.

And yet...every day we also see innumerable acts of kindness, heroism and connection large and small. Does your heart swell with gratitude at the mere sight of the mail truck? Are you awed by the inner flame that carries doctors and nurses to ERs and bedsides every day, risking their own well-being to care for others? Have you been inspired by the glorious and generous outpouring of music, dance and art being shared freely by artists and institutions? Are you surprised by the intensity of appreciation for that walk in the park, a home-prepared meal with family, the exquisite promise of Spring?

Recent findings in biology have revealed the existence of largely invisible, underground mycorrhizal networks that connect vast expanses of trees – a network that allows not only basic "communication," but "sharing" and "cooperation" and "altruism" amongst and between individuals. I think about this often when I am walking in the Spa State Park, stunned by arboreal majesty. And I think often of the invisible network of memory that weaves through SPAC and the Park and into the hearts and hearths of every member of our Community – collective strands of memory made of shared moments of beauty both natural and man-made. Beethoven. Balanchine. A canopy of stars. Remember?

As the darkness of suffering encloses, we look for the light in ourselves and others. It's there. The light of shared humanity and interconnectedness – sparked by beauty.

Elizabeth Sobol  
President & CEO