

Breaking the Pandemic by Amy Bogatch

How do you break a pandemic? By finding a purpose – something that makes things better in spite of this dastardly disease. I found that in CASA. Honestly, I was ready to give up. Here's why.

2019 sucked for us (Yes, 2019. Not 2020). Early that year my husband of 46 years was diagnosed with Lymphoma. We were told, "If you're going to get cancer that's the one to get." And due to a fabulous doctor (Dr. Indu Sharma), and the best hospital I've ever been to (Valley), by November he was cancer free. After working for most of my adult life (banking, bookkeeping, graphic design and finally web design), I retired mid-way through his treatment in order to devote myself to getting him better.

There we were in February 2020, finally both retired and ready to begin our adventure and BOOM! COVID. Not only did all our plans come to a grinding halt but we couldn't go near our children or grandchildren! Like so many other seniors, we were scared. We quarantined and watched the world go nuts. Luckily, the summer brought us back to sailing, hiking and gardening. That is what kept us sane. Sailing turned out to be one of the best, "socially distancing" sports available. We spent almost every sunny summer day on the Long Island Sound or hiking in the woods by our house.

As the summer wound down, I began to think about the long winter months ahead. Over the years I had volunteered with United Way, at an orphanage in Hackensack, and in a soup kitchen. None of these were available now because of COVID. I remembered hearing about CASA while involved with the foster kids and realized that maybe now was a good time to see if that could be a good fit. Turns out it was but not as a volunteer but rather as a board member. You see, I spent 10 wonderful years as board president of our local library and had some solid experience on how to help CASA. Lucy, Patty and Lauren figured that out very quickly and suggested I come aboard.

At first I was concerned about the value I might bring to the board. I'm not a great fund-raiser or networker. What I do excel at is web design, particularly improving the user experience. This was the field I retired from after 25 years of working on major websites for AT&T, BT, Sony, MetLife and AXA Equitable. I was passionate about creating websites that would not only achieve the corporate goals, but offer the visitors an outstanding experience. My timing couldn't have been better! Before I was even sworn in to the board, Lucy reached out for help with the CASA website redesign. We've spent the past month working on how best to achieve the CASA goals through an engaging, manageable web experience. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised when you see the results of our labors!

Bringing my web expertise and passion to CASA truly ticks all of the boxes for "what I want to do during my retirement." It's how I broke the pandemic. No more sitting around, waiting for something to happen. I've got my work cut out for me and I'm enjoying every minute.

Epilogue: Three years ago, my husband and I moved into our dream retirement home in Mahwah, on the top of Stag Hill Mountain where we found the best friends and life we could ever imagine. If you come to visit, you'll see our mission statement by the front door:

"I came to the woods to live deliberately..." Henry David Thoreau.

That's us in a nutshell. Living a life that is meaningful and important. Otherwise, what's the point?