



SHRINERS

INTERNATIONAL

OFFICE OF
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IMPERIAL POTENTATE

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MEMBER
MIDIAN SHRINERS
WICHITA, KANSAS

DATE: April 23, 2020

TO: Nobles and Ladies

It is my sad duty to inform you that the Shrine Imperial Session scheduled for June 29 through July 9 in Kansas City has been cancelled. This decision comes after many days of careful consideration of the data and opinions of public health professionals and the decisions of governmental officials acting in reliance upon that information. We have also had productive conversations with various entities in Kansas City, including the Kansas City Department of Public Health. A decision of this magnitude is never easy but every member of the Joint Boards felt this was consistent with the most current public health information and governmental “Stay at home” orders intended to protect the best interests of everyone concerned.

Ultimately it became an issue of following public health direction to provide safety – the safety of our members, of the residents of Kansas City, of those in our local communities once we returned from the Imperial Session and most importantly the safety of the children and staff in our hospitals that we would come in contact with after the session.

Cheryl and I are deeply grateful to the Imperial 2020 Team that has labored tirelessly over the past four years in preparation of the Kansas City Imperial Session. Our Director General Bart Ogden and his Lady Lesa, Deputy Director Generals Nick Baldi and his Lady Kay, and Chris Muro and his Lady Barbara have led the team in an outstanding way throughout this process. We know how hard they have worked along with everyone else that have volunteered their time, talent, and resources in an effort to make the session one that would be remembered for many years to come.

We would also like to thank two very special individuals from VisitKC that have assisted us along the way. Esther Walker-Young and Rebecca Elliott are to be commended for their support of our Imperial 2020 Team in every step along the way. They never wavered in their efforts and were always there to provide us with whatever we needed.

We **THANK** each of you for your support on our Imperial journey and know you join us in wishing Imperial Sir Jim Smith and his Lady Alice the very best as they start their Imperial journey on July 9. We look forward to seeing each of you in the months and years ahead – we will have completed our term but we will continue to work for our great fraternity and philanthropy.

Jeff and Cheryl

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2020 IMPERIAL SESSION CANCELLED

Based on data and opinions of public health experts and community officials, Shriners International has cancelled its 2020 Imperial Session, scheduled for July 2020, in Kansas City. In determining whether the 2020 Imperial Session could be responsibly held, the perspective of Shriners International was to take a global vision with local focus. The Imperial Session is truly an annual international gathering at one physical location. The Imperial Divan, the 2020 Convention Corporation, and the staff of Shriners International closely monitored developments and worked closely with the Kansas City Health Department in planning the 2020 Imperial Session. This planning was always undertaken with the hope and expectation that the convention would proceed, as long as it was reasonably safe to do so, based upon the trajectory of the Coronavirus and governmental quarantine and/or stay at home orders. actions based upon data and opinions provided by public health professionals.

Based on the information provided by public health professionals and recent governmental extension of existing public health orders, Shriners International determined that the safety of attendees and the safety of the community could not reasonably be provided on or before the start of the 2020 Imperial Session in Kansas City and therefore cancelled the 2020 convention, due to the impossibility of safely hosting it.

Imperial Sir and First Lady, Jeff and Cheryl Sowder, are extremely sorry that they will not be able to personally welcome Shriners from all over the world to celebrate fun and fellowship in Kansas

City. They have dreamed and planned for more than a decade to have Shriners join them for an incredible experience in Kansas City. While the worldwide pandemic prevents us from meeting in Kansas City and renewing our acquaintances, it does not prevent us from renewing our commitment to the important work of the Shrine.

Additional information related to governance issues for Shriners International and Shriners Hospitals for Children in the absence of the respective annual meetings of each corporation will be provided in the near future.

In spite of our disappointment, Shriners are encouraged to stay safe, stay strong, and stay involved with everything we can do now in preparation for doing more in the future.