

# Notes from the CHAIR



Greetings Area 1 members!

Handbells have been a part of my life since High School, and now as an adult, it continues to be a huge part of my social life, my travels, and my marriage.

I find great pleasure in traveling all over the country (and world) with my husband Chuck, using Handbells as the catalyst. We owe most of these opportunities to Handbell Musicians of America and so, I am writing this note to you from my heart.

We are living through a historic and difficult time. Much of what we do has changed and for most of us, that means no bells – or at least no socializing around bell events. I know for me, it has been very difficult - not being able to ring with my community choir, Merrimack Valley Ringers, since last March, and not being able to connect with our audiences across New England last spring, nor this upcoming holiday season. All the things that make my life musically fulfilling are gone, and with the recent resurgence of cases, who knows how much longer this will continue?

Due to the pandemic so many businesses and restaurants have closed permanently, and this also holds true for nonprofits. Museums are closing, Broadway shows are dark until at least the summer of 2021 and our own Handbell Musicians of America (HMA) has also been adversely affected by the pandemic.

HMA had a series of financial setbacks over the past few years, prior to the pandemic, due to hurricanes affecting Distinctly Bronze East and it has also been affected by a declining membership. A number of things were put into place to try and stabilize the finances and at the beginning of 2020, it looked like we were heading in the right direction. Bills were being paid, our line of credit was finally zero – and then the pandemic hit.

Currently, 500 memberships across the country have lapsed, which amounts to about \$45,000 in revenue. The AGEHR publishing house is not bringing in revenue either, as music purchases are on hold for most or all handbell groups, and there are no area or national events for the foreseeable future to generate revenue.

The National HMA was fortunate to receive a PPP grant, but that money has been spent. All expenses have been looked at and we are as lean as possible. All HMA staff have taken rotating 2-week furloughs to help cut costs.

I tell you this in order to be transparent and share with you how dire the financial picture currently is and to ask you for help in keeping HMA going.

Here are some ways that you might be able to help:

- Renew your membership now, if you haven't already.
- Consider becoming a Sustaining Partner – Chuck and I chose this option starting last year!
- Make an additional donation before the end of the year to help HMA through this tough time.
- Giving Tuesday, December 1, will feature many fun and creative ways to contribute to the HMA. We invite you to join in on the fun! Watch FaceBook and the website for updates.
- Give up one vice (like your daily Dunkin') per week, and donate the savings to HMA - \$20 month to help get us through this difficult time.

Our fall fundraising campaign officially began in mid-November and any contribution you make will help us as we move forward in the future. This year, for every gift donated, we will contribute 10% to help students become more involved in our organization.

Any amount would be helpful.

We can bring change, even in days of pandemic.

Please join me as we work to ensure the future of the Handbell Musicians of America.

Thank you,

**Lisa Arnold**

*Chair, Area 1*

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