

After receiving no assistance from the American Embassy, friends, family and colleagues began contacting their Congressional representatives. Sen. Tammy Baldwin's and Cong. Mike Gallagher's office responded directly with our two stranded local citizens. They were not alone; about 150 other Americans were also stranded in Morocco.

While the Americans were at the Marrakech airport, other countries were flying their citizens out, leaving the Americans alone. After taking their own citizens home, British Airways returned to collect our Americans, transporting them to London before they finally flew to Chicago en route to Green Bay on March 22.

Throughout the entire episode, the well-trained staff of the Green Bay Botanical Garden worked together supporting each other and communicating with volunteers. The hundreds of volunteers that are so indispensable to the Garden are primarily seniors. The first priority was their health and safety. At the same time, the staff realized that local families may need a place to go to reset from the stress of being home bound. The staff kept the Garden creatively open, free of charge, until March 24. The most recent mandate from Gov. Evers closed the garden as the COVID 19 virus accelerated and Garden staff and leadership always promote safety first. The Garden has always enjoyed a diverse group of visitors; we want to see them ALL back when this is over. Per the Wisconsin "Safer at Home" order, we hope to see you all again after April 24.

This experience has caused me to consider a number of philosophical questions. Hopefully, the future will provide the answers.

1. Has climate change caused viruses to evolve and become more lethal?
2. Will we learn that we are all dependent on each other for our health, rich or poor, and that disease does not discriminate?
3. As our environment changes will we be faced with future global pandemics?
4. Can we learn that to enjoy stellar physical and economic well being, we must co-exist in greater unison?
5. Can we accept that good ideas exist outside our country?
6. How much does "reinventing the wheel" versus using existing models cost us?
7. American innovation can improve on a model. Do we have to start from scratch?
8. How much will this crisis force us to "think outside the box" and create new opportunities, shattering old models?

This is the time in our history to raise each other up for the survival of all.