

State of The Grove Update from Susan Stautberg

April 20, 2020

Good day,

Lenin advised, “There are decades when nothing happens; and there are weeks when decades happen.” Pandemics can certainly pull the future forward.

Every crisis opens a course to the unknown and can mean a turn for the worse or a new day. Some of the greatest advances in American history— liberation of slaves, social security, pollution controls and water mandates—were birthed by disaster. So, it’s important to re-engage and prepare for the big reset.

So far, the disaster has helped us discover the importance of the human face and I want to thank Grovers for creating the 6pm Happy Hours and Virtual Table Topics.

As Lewis Carroll counseled, “It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.”

Due to the unpleasant virus, we all want to make sure that, together, we create a viable plan to steer through a time of massive uncertainty and a lot of grief. Our aim is to be both dynamic and flexible.

There is uncertainty whether members will want to travel to anywhere in September. So

- The Grove Executive Committee has decided (and the San Antonio committee has agreed) to move our planned fall meeting to late February 2021
- We will do a shorter virtual retreat September 25-26 instead of an in-person meeting.

- Our Argentina retreat will be moved to either late February 2022 or 2023. We will let you vote whether or not our sisters would like to move New Orleans up a year to save members both funds and length of travel. The New Orleans committee is prepared to host in January 2022.

We decided to act now - both for dealing with the San Antonio Hilton payments and some small contracts there and putting off signing any contracts in Argentina as the country has been known to default and not honor contracts. The Argentina committee, probably the biggest and one of the most enthusiastic we've ever had, chaired by Theresa Behrendt, planned a fantastic conference and places to visit. We look forward to convening in beautiful Buenos Aires when possible.

History accelerates in a crisis. This pandemic may not itself transform the world, but it's accelerating changes already underway. For instance: the cannabis and alcohol boom, or the growth of online shopping, and the fitness industry has gone virtual.

The Grove is comprised of educated, bright successful, and caring women who

- have a breadth of experiences and connections
- don't accept everything at face value

To survive in difficult times, Grovers like sharing relevant wisdom to help others to not only grip the driving wheel hard and steer sharp, but to also capitalize on opportunities.

Our retreats help all of us to Improve, Innovate, and Imagine so that we can succeed - and enjoy our lives and each other.

Our new plan is a September Virtual Retreat with the theme of either "Anticipating and Managing Accelerating Change" or "Finding the Silver Linings-How to Flourish in Difficult Times", potentially 2 ½ - 3 hours Friday night and 2 ½ - 3 hours midday Saturday and possibly time on Thursday night. We can combine substantial sessions with 7 minute Grove Talks (BGEs) as well as "break time" with jokes, interesting catch ups (I'm in love, my daughter got accepted to college, etc.), and songs or poems. We also want to do meaningful "conversations with."

We understand the need to balance out the time during the conference to create an atmosphere with both heavier and lighter discussions.

We will offer options for smaller venues; hopefully by making meals together, signing up for “dine arounds” on video, learning how to make cocktails together, etc. Each day we’ll have an hour or so “go deep fast” topics with specific leaders as well as breakout sessions.

Thrilled that Karen van Bergen and Jennifer Hill will move their panel “What’s the New Normal” up from our Argentina meeting to the Fall Virtual Conference. By the way, Karen and Betty Hudson have volunteered to be in charge of the cocktail portion of the virtual conference - so you know it will be fun. We’ll see what’s the best conference for Cathy Allen’s panel on “How to Quit.”

For programming we want to examine how sometimes change is so vast and dislocating that it is hard to tell disaster from opportunity. Companies and organizations for which the “wind of covid” has blown some good have been in the minority, but they do exist.

The pandemic and the damage done will accelerate trends that were already reshaping business, culture, and lives. It’s up to each of us whether we want to sink, swim, or surf and Grovers can help each other to do so. There are already Grove examples of how there are opportunities for reinvention and even restoration.

Sometimes it takes a crisis to spur innovation. Corporations world wide have moved fast to fight against the virus, including those of the Grovers. We want to share the success of leaders and organizations that are able to suddenly pivot in a crisis and request suggestions from you for speakers.

If this moment in history has even a hint of a silver lining, it’s that the urgency and innovation of businesses, non-profits, and governments in a crisis will become a template for us all going forward.

The purpose of the virtual retreat is both to reconnect Grovers and to illustrate that good things can come from bad things. (There's no reason why doing the right thing should not also provide opportunity to succeed.)

We are looking for volunteers to help our dynamite Virtual Table Topic & Retreat Committee plan and lead the virtual retreat. We especially need women with virtual event production experience.

The pandemic has put us in shutdown. Knowledge of how to handle upcoming more difficult pandemics or crises is being pursued now by all of us. Let's all share our knowledge and not let anyone or anything put Grovers off their game.

Our February 2021 retreat will be in San Antonio which will now be Thursday evening through Saturday night with optional tours and shopping. The tentative dates are February 18-21, but we are still negotiating with the Hilton. The dynamic San Antonio committee had already planned some great panels and speakers including: Artificial Intelligence, Art, Diversity, Rising from the Ashes, and more. Committee chairs, Pamela and Rebecca, urge you to listen to the song "Take me to Texas" by George Strait and are looking for volunteers to help plan the new extended retreat.

We will roll out in-person 7-minute Ted style BGE talks in San Antonio. This new platform will give more Grovers an opportunity to briefly present their expertise. The BGE talks will be deep and brief - designed to pique interest and foster further discussion. The application is in the design phase. The committee chaired by Jennifer Hill is considering reviewing videos, drafting a questionnaire, and other recommendations.

Back to back domestic Annual retreats will not only save Grovers time and money, but also bring tourist dollars to the U.S. — where cities like New Orleans desperately need the funds.

We are looking at the dates January 27-30, 2022 for the Crescent City. We had already lined up a Ritz Carlton with an adjoining Courtyard Hotel to enable a variety of room possibilities and costs. The committee, led by Elisa Speranza, has

members from around the nation who love New Orleans and were either born or lived there. They are planning a fascinating introduction to women leaders, artists, jazz musicians, Mardi Gras-sters, city architects, and more. The Grove will have a phenomenal opportunity to enjoy this irresponsible, irreplaceable American city. By the way, did you know the cocktail was allegedly invented in New Orleans?

For our fall mini retreat in 2021, we will be in Chicago, Thursday night September 23rd and Friday the 24th with options on Saturday the 25th and perhaps on Thursday.

The Windy City—a vibrant metropolis— has it all: arts, architecture, food, sports, business, shopping, and glamour. The Chicago Grovers, led by Lois Scott, plan to show it all to you. The 3rd largest city in our nation has so many strengths from the Art Institute to the Lake to Frank Lloyd Wright’s prairie school style houses.

In conclusion (those magic words), I want to thank you all for continually finding new ways to build our community with collective optimism and resourcefulness. When we care for each other we are not only affecting the lives of our sisters but also are shaping our futures. By the way, Henry David Thoreau got worldwide recognition for his writing on constructive solitude while in self isolation on Walden Pond for 2 years (but the world was never informed that his mother baked him pies and did his laundry.)

Now more than ever it’s important that our international and vital community remain connected. There are so many ways to stay in touch with the people and activities you love through a virtual retreat this fall and then hopefully returning to meeting in person.

It’s hard to find a silver lining in such a difficult time, but it’s heartwarming that we have been looking out for each other. All of the world is on a bridge and the most important thing is not to be afraid; but together, get to the other side.

Tough times never last, but tough people do. The world is going through the largest disruption for a generation, but Grovers are leading the creative work of crafting a post-virus world and a resilient future.

Thank you and I now look forward to your questions which will be moderated by our tireless and wonderful Charlotte Whitmore.