



March 20, 2020

Hello, my friends and fellow Sweet Adelines. What a few weeks we've experienced as Sweet Adelines and as a world. If you are like me, you probably could never have envisioned social distancing, self-isolation, community containment and all of the other new and, quite honestly, very disconcerting things that we are all experiencing right now. As you all know, Sweet Adelines are the polar opposites of distancing and isolating! We are huggers, joiners, and a great big family that wants nothing more than to gather together, sing our hearts out, and bring our beautiful music to the world. So, this is hard. But it's even harder on so many others, for reasons that are very serious and very significant. Many of our members are being forced to think about things much bigger than Sweet Adelines right now. The loss of jobs and income, the care of children and elderly family members, the reorganization of life as we've known it. It was with the deepest sorrow that we received the devastating news that one of our own members passed away yesterday from COVID-19. We grieve for her family and her chorus, as their lives are forever changed by this loss. And our hearts go out to all who have become ill from the COVID-19 virus, and to other families who have lost loved ones. Our collective goal right now is to do everything that we possibly can to help our families and our communities weather this viral storm so that as few as possible will be afflicted, and we all stay safe and healthy.

With all of that in mind, I'd like to update you on a few things that we've been working on for you that are being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. First is the 2020 Regional Video Contest. We worked diligently over last weekend and this week to create the plans and guidelines for the contest and they are complete. As with the decision to cancel regional competition, your health and safety is our primary concern in implementing this Video Contest.

Consequently, because the current guidance from the majority of our regions' local and national health and government officials is to restrict public gatherings, the International Board of Directors has decided NOT to implement the Video Contest at this time. I think we are all keenly aware that guidelines surrounding our behavior during this virus outbreak are changing rapidly. A pronouncement from doctors and government officials made today, might be radically different tomorrow. Such is the nature of this beast. Please be assured that when it is safe for all of you to gather again to rehearse and prepare a video contest submission, we will implement the contest. You have all been so patient in waiting for the information on the Video Contest, and now we just need to be a bit more patient so we can be safe and healthy. Until then, we encourage you to continue doing all of the creative and innovative things we see you doing on social media to stay connected and learning. You all never cease to amaze with your incredible inventiveness! BRAVO!

OK, next subject, and that is our International Education Symposium (IES) scheduled for July in San Antonio, TX. The research available at this time on COVID-19 indicates that it may last several months. As a result, the International Board of Directors has made another very difficult decision, and that is to cancel IES. If you have already registered, your payment will be refunded to you. Plans for the Rising Star Quartet Contest, currently scheduled to be held at IES, are now TBD. We will let you know of its status as soon as we are able. But be of good cheer, because your International Education Direction Committee is hard at work as we speak on a myriad of virtual educational offerings that we will provide to you, as soon as possible. And as I said earlier, y'all are already sharing some GREAT education and resources, and for that we are all so very thankful.

I know you are also wondering about our International Competition in October. At this point, we continue to study and research the data and information that will put us in a position to make the most educated decision about holding the event. We are meeting daily to discuss the latest guidance, and we'll inform you as soon as possible should plans for International Competition in Louisville change.

In other news, your International Board of Directors had a very productive board meeting a couple of weekends ago, and there are some things from that meeting that I will share with you all after we work through the more pressing issues resulting from the current pandemic. Something to look forward to, I promise!

Before I conclude this video, I want to express, on behalf of myself, the International Board of Directors, and our Headquarters staff, our thanks to all of you for your incredible understanding and support of the difficult decision to cancel our regional competitions. It was gut-wrenching for all of us because we know how hard you've worked to prepare for contest and we know how much you treasure these annual gatherings of friends, in song. Your support helped lift our spirits after having to make the decision, and we will be forever grateful to you for it. We also wish to thank each and every RMT member in each and every region for YOUR amazing response to the contest cancellations. In a word, you have been EXCEPTIONAL. Your professionalism, "can do" spirit, and outstanding leadership through this unprecedented situation have been incomparable, and we all owe you a huge debt of gratitude and thanks. The International Board of Directors and I also want to thank our dedicated Headquarters staff, especially the HQ Leadership Team, for their incredible work over the last few weeks. They are always committed, caring, and hard-working, but over these last two weeks they have gone above and beyond for all of us, and their professional expertise in so many areas has shone. We are so thankful for them.

In closing, I think we can agree that there is ONE THING we all know for sure right now — and that is that MUSIC HEALS. Whether through the external sharing of it OR the internal appreciation of it, WE KNOW, music can change and heal lives. It has been so heartwarming to see the videos of people all over the world turning to music — and to singing — to soothe their souls during this difficult time and to connect with one another. I like to think it's because singing is musical love, and the world needs a lot of that right

now. So, even though we cannot gather to sing together at this time, we can keep the music and the love alive within us. And we will find innovative ways to bring our song, our harmony, and our comfort to the world and to those in need during this difficult time. Because we are Sweet Adelines.

Thank you for listening, and take care.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patty Cobb Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P".

International President, Sweet Adelines International