

Dear Members and Friends:

Today is the first day of spring, and at this time of year Washington, DC, comes alive with splashes of color, from the Tidal Basin to our neighborhoods. Those of us who live in cities cherish the emerging beauty wherever we find it, be it in street trees, pocket parks, or community gardens, reassured by the seasonal vibrancy in the urban realm. Especially at this moment, parks and green spaces are providing much-needed solace to help people cope with the uncertainty of our health crisis, disrupted daily routines, and indoor sequestration, sustaining our physical and mental health.

The role of our local parks and recreation as essential civic infrastructure has never been more apparent as schools and workplaces have shut down and people find themselves isolated and in need of community.

On a recent walk through Rock Creek Park--a 1,754-acre oasis that runs through the city--it was good to see people heeding the advice of sticking to small groups and practicing "social distancing" while seeking social connection. I experienced the healing power of nature itself but also felt immense gratitude for all those at park and recreation agencies who help build, program, and maintain our city parks and public spaces; the advocacy groups, conservancies, and funders who bring much-needed resources and community stewardship; the designers who imagine these important parts of our urban infrastructure into existence as inviting and accessible places; and the mayors and other leaders who understand the true potential of city parks and recreation and prioritize them in their communities.

We are closely following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and local authorities and where possible urge you to safely get outside and enjoy the fresh air, exercise your body, and clear your mind. We have signed onto a joint statement on park use during the COVID-19 outbreak with our partner the National Recreation and Park Association and urge you to do the same by the end of today.

At City Parks Alliance, like most organizations, we have had to postpone our in-person networking and educational events, and our staff is now working remotely. We know how important these face-to-face opportunities are and commit to rescheduling as soon as is safe. In the meantime, we are adding many new documents to our online resource library and welcomed hundreds of you to our recent webinar on funding opportunities through the Outdoor Resources Legacy Partnership.

I want to ask you to do two things:

Join me in getting outside and enjoying your favorite local park, thanking the parks and recreation staff who care for our parks and green spaces. We invite you to share your photos, videos, and other messages of appreciation on social media by using the hashtag #powerofparks.

Share your programming story. With COVID-19 concerns forcing people indoors, park leaders and residents alike are struggling to balance social distancing with the need to maintain physical and

mental health. Do you have a strategy for helping seniors stay active and fight isolation? How are you managing staff morale or implementing changes in programming? Please email your ideas and initiatives to Diana Colangelo at dcolangelo@cityparksalliance.org for a chance to be featured with the broader parks community.

Thank you for all that you do to help our communities stay healthy and connected and your partnership with City Parks Alliance.

Catherine Nagel

Executive Director

City Parks Alliance