



THERE ARE **SIGNS OF HOPE!**

There are so many new signs, stickers and directional messages to pay attention to in the world today. “Enter here”, “stand there” and “move this way” are on signs in every part of our lives now. In all of the distracting signage, we must also see the positive signs taking place. Though hard to see in the midst of COVID-19 case numbers rising, phases going backwards, school cancellations, every decision becoming political and treasure hunting for paper products – there is hope.

There is physical hope that is generated from safety measures, better preparation, testing, more education and of course in vaccines. The physical safety measures taken after September 11th made us safer and gave us the confidence to travel again. However, it was the desire to be in attendance at those weddings and graduations, the passion to see the show live or to support your favorite team and the internal fire in us to conduct business again in person that powered us through that time’s new normal.

In a recent advertising campaign for the global medical technology company Masimo, I heard a very positive and powerful message that applies to us - *“Throughout our history, any time something bad has happened to us, we have recovered—and we have become our strongest ... When we come together, we can find a way forward.”*

Select industries are having record years! If you are in an industry in which people can come together safely, outdoors for a live experience, you may be having the best year in your history! We the people are drawn together and pulled from our homes with the need to unite. And, we are proving that we will spend money to experience life live.

- Bicycles, boats, kayaks, paddleboards and campers are all having a record sales year
- Neighborhoods have socially distant street gatherings and yard parties
- Painted “Social Circles” for public spaces and beaches are “sold out”
- The time slots offered by zoos and parks are all filled
- ESPN and FOX Sports are enjoying record ratings as sports

fans crave for some time with their favorite teams and live programming

- The need to come together and unite has never been more important
- And, especially here in the United States, people may not always agree, but they can still love their country – Lee Greenwood’s song, “God Bless the USA” hit number one topping all downloads for the recent 4th of July weekend
- Immediately following the spread of the pandemic, charitable giving skyrocketed for the greater good. Reuters reported in April, GoFundMe.com has seen a surge in donations since February, raising at least \$120 million so far for COVID-19 causes. Vanguard Charitable donors have given out more than \$31 million so far, with the average grant just under \$14,000.

These are signs of hope!

We desperately want to be there and be back in the action – so much so, people are paying for their personal cardboard cutout to be in the stands of their favorite stadiums across the world. Theme parks and professional sports are trying to get back to some sense of season, and even if they fail, the passion to return is real and is powerful. We can learn much from their success and their failures.

You cannot quarantine the human spirit. The sense of belonging, desire to come together and passion to celebrate will outlast the pandemic.

Though it does not feel like it now, our jobs may become more important than ever before! When we come together, we can find a way forward!

Ted Barody, CFE

IFEA World Board Chair

President

Norfolk Festevents

Norfolk, VA