

2020

A Retrospective



## (Hindsight is) 2020 Vision

*We Kept Calm and Gardened On*

**BY KATHRYN WELLS, PRESIDENT**

Happy New Year, friends! After a challenging (to say the least!) year, doesn't it feel hopeful to start afresh? As we look forward to the promises of 2021, here's a retrospective of all that we accomplished in 2020, synergistically working together even despite mandatory time apart.

### January

We celebrated and welcomed our newest Master Gardeners—36 members of the 2019 intern class who graduated and were officially recognized at our January 15th Graduation & Awards Banquet. Additionally, 18 veteran and rookie members were recognized with awards for outstanding achievements including Janie Farler (2003), installed as a Lifetime Honorary Member, and Sue Hudiburgh (2008), honored with the John Cooper Educator Award. And, the 2021 Board of Directors was officially installed: President, Kathryn Wells (2017); VP-Projects, Joanne Spurgin (2019); VP-Outreach, Kathy Rainey (2017); Secretary, Katherine Woodward (2013); Treasurer, Joe Beckett (2019); Communications Director—Systems, Liz Moyer (2009); Communications Director—Promotions, Treva McFadden (2017); Education Director, Barbara Brown (2010); Member at Large, Tammie Gurley (2014); and Immediate Past President, Pat Moyer (2013).

And, school was back in session for our newest group of interns – forty-four stellar individuals who comprised the Class of 2020; yay! About halfway through the curriculum, mandated COVID-19 protocols required Intern Class Administrators Kim Wootton, Barbara Beane, and Sonny Smith to quickly pivot and establish a virtual classroom for the remainder of the program. Of course, they rose to the occasion with their usual faithful excellence, and our ever-enthusiastic interns moved through the unprecedented program changes with skill, grace, flexibility, and determination.

Our projects hummed along including the Greater Aubrey Area Gardening Series and the Design Your Yard public classes. (Sadly, the planned autumn offerings for both projects were Covid casualties, but the early-year programs were hits!)



Photo Courtesy DCMGA

**Smiling from the first day to the last,**  
the 2020 Intern Class remained positive, flexible, and  
determined throughout an unprecedented year.



## March

During our one (and only!) in-person General Meeting of the year, 90 Presidential Service Award recipients—nearly one-third of our membership—were recognized and celebrated. Seven of the 90 completed more than 500 hours of service in 2019; what an achievement! Meeting Program Co-Chairs Beverly Duncan and Gay Campbell scheduled Dell Perry of Seandel Iris Gardens to present our CE program, and what an in-depth presentation it was! Who knew there was so much to learn about irises?

Two days after the March 11th General Meeting, our county (as well as the state, the country, and much of the world) was mostly on lockdown due to the worldwide pandemic known as COVID-19. In an effort to keep our interns and members informed, connected, and engaged, on March 20th, I initiated the first of what became (rather lengthy) weekly email updates—the *War and Peace* of electronic correspondence. (Kind of like this retrospective!);-)

## February

VP-Projects Joanne Spurgin and her team created a wonderful showcase for our DCMGA projects and committees at our annual Volunteer Opportunity Fair, and the larger space in Global Spheres Center’s multi-purpose room was a welcome upgrade. Over 171 veterans and interns visited 47 booths creatively designed by participating project and committee managers.

Project work continued including two favorite annual programs: the four-week Flower Mound Library Spring Gardening Series and Denton County Soil & Water Conservation District’s annual tree seedling sale distribution.

With all face-to-face activities necessarily canceled, many of our in-person projects, by default, were also suspended for a season, including the always anticipated Children's Garden at Fair Oaks. However, VP-Projects Joanne Spurgin and Education Director Barbara Brown regularly curated and communicated virtual and protocol-compliant volunteer service (VS) and continuing education (CE) opportunities. We discovered that we could serve and learn in cyberspace ... with an easy commute!

## April

Although March roared in like the proverbial lion, and spring looked a little different than we expected, DCMGA responded to this unexpected and unprecedented pandemic with resilience adaptability, and innovation ... much like the very best plants in our gardens. We celebrated National Volunteer Week virtually with a creative "thank you" from our AgriLife office.

We had a very short learning curve determining how to advance via videoconference technology, and our first virtual Board of Directors meeting was held in cyberspace on April 1st (no kidding!) followed a week later by our first virtual General Meeting (with 125 in attendance!). Our scheduled speakers from the Dallas Arboretum understandably needed to reschedule, so I attempted to pinch hit with my "Gardens Gone Wild: Putting Out the Welcome Mat for Wildlife Habitat" presentation. Unfortunately, the Google Meet videoconference platform did not support my video/photo/audio-saturated PowerPoint presentation, so CE was a bust for this meeting. Whomp, whomp. But, I was later able to record it for our friends and neighbors at Dallas County MGA. We quickly shifted, Zooming our way through subsequent "big" meetings for the remainder of the year.

With the help of Technology Chair Tom O'Brien and several others including Nick Barrows, Sue Hudiburgh, Kim Shaneyfelt, Steve Simpson, Russell Tyson, and Communications Director—Systems Liz Moyer, we evaluated our videoconferencing platform options and created procedures, which allowed us to continue meeting (mostly) uninterrupted.

Although our face-to-face AgriLife and DCMGA meetings, programs, and activities were canceled (originally through April 17th, but, through many necessary extensions, effectively through the end of 2020 and into 2021), we conducted many via videoconference. Although the AgriLife office and the entire Joseph A. Carroll building were both closed with no public access except by appointment, we stayed connected in cyberspace. And, although Denton County remained under a "Stay at Home" mandate for most of the year, home was a happy place for our horticulturists, and our gardens were grateful for the extra time and attention.

## May

As we eased into the month of May, service work remained decidedly low key. Our usually bustling activity was cautiously slowed and wisely sobered by the still unknown ramifications of COVID-19 and its mandatory national, state, and county protocols.

However, we kept calm and gardened on, and, as a result, we had the opportunity to rethink and refine many of the ways DCMGA educates and engages our community. One tool, our DCMGA YouTube channel, had not been used much in the past, but we dusted it off and decided to offer replays of our



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Brad Allison

### Offering (garden) glove service,

Plant Sale PMs Pat and Don Edwards (left) organized member orders for curbside pickup at Painted Flower Farm with the help of several fearless volunteers including (Resource Room Manager) Steve and (VP-Projects) Joanne Spurgin.



virtual programs. At the end of the year, with seven months of offerings, sixteen newly added presentations had garnered a collective 3,506 views.

Our public Plant Sale, scheduled for May 2nd, was necessarily canceled. However, project managers Pat and Don Edwards worked tirelessly to honor our vendor commitments. As a result, DCMGA members and interns had the opportunity for limited online ordering (plants2go—what a treat!). Curbside pickup was held at Painted Flower Farm on April 24th and 25th and at Global Spheres Center on May 1st. The affectionately nicknamed “Never-Ending Plant Sale” continued into June with a members-only, socially-distanced, pass-along bonanza in the

Edwards’ sizeable backyard with entry by appointment. Kudos to the Edwards and their hard-working, super-adaptable team: Plant Procurer Extraordinaire Suzie Cook and her behind-the-scenes team including Susan Cosio, Laurel Wallace, and Brenda Wellenreiter; Member Rose Sale Chairs Susan Novak and Shirley Manfredi; and Pass-Along Team Leaders (who became full-time caretakers of 650+ plants!) Lela Khan, Debbie Smith, and Bob Bender. We appreciate the many others who helped ... and purchased!

Our May 9th Garden Tour was rescheduled for October 10th as Project Manager Karen Roberts and her team (including ticket guru Melinda Woolley) worked through a myriad of postponement details. As many folks had previously asked about and hoped for a fall circuit, it seemed like the perfect opportunity, but, alas, the postponed date was also a Covid casualty. Thankfully, the 2020 homeowners graciously agreed to be featured on the 2022 tour! (Third time’s the charm, right?!) And, those who purchased advance tickets were given the option of receiving a refund or donating their purchase price to Christian Community Action (CCA) in Lewisville, one of the area food pantries supported by our community garden projects. As a result, DCMGA presented a lump sum payment of \$1510 to CCA, a gift from those who opted to donate the cost of their 2020 Garden Tour tickets.

### Thanks to the generosity of those

who opted to donate the cost of their 2020 Garden Tour tickets in lieu of a refund, DCMGA presented \$1510 to Christian Community Action (CCA) in Lewisville, one of the area food pantries supported by our community garden projects. CCA President and CEO Gilbert Montez (second from left) accepted the check presented by President Kathryn Wells (left), VP-Projects Joanne Spurgin (second from right), and Garden Tour PM Karen Roberts (right).



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Liz Moyer

A few of our projects like FMFB Community Garden in Flower Mound and Friends of Shiloh Garden in Denton fell into the “essential services” category, as we grew, harvested, and donated fresh produce to area food banks. Project Managers David Huffman, Carol Noble, and Cindy Helm faithfully persevered despite the daunting circumstances along with a handful of mask-wearing, glove-bearing, no-tool-sharing volunteers (all appropriately spaced!). Under the leadership of Patty Cooke and Sue Hudiburgh, much of Denton County Community Grove’s fresh fruit was also harvested and donated. And, with PM Daniel Arenas at the helm, Beulah Acres Agroforest flourished.

Our Help Desk continued to field a flurry of questions, and we were (and remain!) so grateful for the capable team, which provided (and continues to provide) unfailing education and information.

Nick Barrows graciously allowed us to “test drive” his Zoom videoconferencing platform for our monthly General Meeting, and Carol Arment, who was already scheduled to present her “Ease of Effective Hardscaping” program, graciously agreed to be our inaugural virtual presenter. Despite not having screen control of her own presentation, as always, Carol was a consummate professional, and her program remains one of the most viewed replays on our DCMGA YouTube Channel.

Unfortunately, the TMGA annual conference in Waco was also canceled due to the pandemic.

But, in the “just for fun” category, the home of our own Joanne (VP-Projects) and Steve (Resource Room Manager) Spurgin was chosen as the residential yard of the month by Keep Denton Beautiful. The Spurgins’ home will also be featured on our Spring 2021 Garden Tour!



Photo Courtesy Keep Denton Beautiful

**Keep Denton Beautiful chose the home** of (Resource Room Manager) Steve and (VP-Projects) Joanne Spurgin as May's residential yard of the month. The Spurgins' wonderful and expansive corner lot will be one of the featured properties on our 2021 Garden Tour.



## June

With the advent of June, we gradually and happily implemented the “return to service” protocols issued from our state office, although most of our face-to-face activities, events, and meetings continued virtually. We were grateful for the technology that kept us connected and allowed us to continue our mission of educating and engaging our community.

Food pantry needs increased up to 500% during the COVID-19 pandemic due to job losses, food shortages, and price increases, and Denton County Judge Andy Eads requested help to assist with the demand. Immediate Past President and Community Garden Consultation Team Project Manager Pat Moyer spearheaded our response and coordinated community efforts. Two of our projects, FMFB Community Garden and Friends of



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member David Huffman

### FMFB Community Garden

Project Co-Manager Carol Noble is a friendly face (even behind her mask!) at the designated food pantry donation drop-off station in Flower Mound.



The proverbial show must go on, and that was the plan (with proper protocols in place) for our June 20th Vegetable, Fruit, Herb, and Flower Show. Project Manager Debby Ishee along with Assistant PM Pam Hawkins and team wisely watched and proactively planned to ensure a safe and successful event for all, but, ultimately, Covid protocols required us to drop the curtain on this beloved production. However, we determined to take thyme to cele(ry)brate the fruits (and vegetables, herbs, and flowers) of everyone’s labor, so we were pleased to highlight photos of members’ prized harvests (with several delightful accompanying stories!) on social media and in our monthly newsletter, *The Root*. And, we encouraged our members and our community to share their homegrown premium produce with friends, neighbors, and local food banks—generous gifts of exponential proportion!

For our June General Meeting program, Education Director Barbara Brown presented “Preserving the Harvest”—a timely topic as the pandemic motivated many people to increase their own backyard produce production.

And, although a highly anticipated field trip to Dallas Arboretum was canceled, members had opportunity for a smaller, socially-distanced “pop-up” field trip at Lizzy Gator’s in Pilot Point.

### CEA-Hort Janet Laminack

contributed fresh oregano and flat-leaved parsley from her own backyard garden to supplement the harvest at Shiloh Field Community Garden. By the end of 2020's growing season, Project Manager Cindy Helm reported a record-breaking harvest of 41,003 pounds, all sown and grown at Shiloh Field ... and all donated to area food pantries.

With additions and improvements to the garden, Shiloh Field expects to double its production in 2021.



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Cindy Helm

Shiloh Garden enhanced and escalated their already significant production. Project Managers David Huffman, Carol Noble, and Cindy Helm, always dependable and faithful, led the charge.

Our Help Desk continued to answer community questions in record-breaking numbers. Of all our wonderful projects, events, programs, and activities, this one really honors the foundational reason AgriLife instituted the Master Gardener program. And it passed the COVID-19 test (safe virtual service that could independently carry on without interruption). What a remarkable team led by the indomitable Ann Hillmann and Pam Spooner!

## July

As summer unfolded, many of our face-to-face activities, events, and meetings remained virtual.

We continued to harvest fresh produce through our community garden projects, contributing our bounty to area food pantries. The Help Desk team continued to answer a record-breaking number of questions, and Project Manager Ann Hillmann was featured on a [Texas A&M AgriLife videoconference](#) during which she shared our DCMGA Help Desk practices and protocols with other Master Gardener Associations throughout the state.

We (mostly) mastered videoconferencing for our monthly General Meetings, and, after the livestream, recordings of business meetings and CE programs were uploaded to our [DCMGA YouTube channel](#) for replay. At our July 8th meeting, we recognized 67 members who achieved cumulative service milestone awards, and Daniel Cunningham of Texas A&M's (now dissolved) Water University presented "[Going Green by Saving Blue: A Virtual Tour of the Gardens at The Dallas Center](#)".

## August

Phase 3 of Texas A&M's return-to-service protocols was slated to begin August 1st, but, with the health and safety of our members and the community we serve as our utmost priority, we erred on the side of caution and continued exercising our Phase 2 protocols.

Pandemic protocols certainly inhibited some of our traditional means of service, but they didn't stop our ability and desire to educate, engage, and serve our community. And, so, we persevered! Our community gardens continued to produce record-breaking numbers of fresh produce for our area food pantries. And, we steadily refined the way we disseminate educational information through specialized platforms such as our website, social media, and videoconferences.

In August, Lynda Harvey presented "[Getting Buggy: The Wild World of Entomology](#)"—so appropriate as many felt a little buggy themselves from continued Covid restrictions.

## September

We made it to the "ber" months and breathed a collective sigh of relief to be entering the autumn season.

Since the May TMGA annual conference in Waco was necessarily canceled, the Search for Excellence awards presentation was conducted virtually, and DCMGA received two second place awards for our work in 2019. FMFB Community Garden was recognized in the XL Association Project category, and DISD School Days at Clear Creek, a collaborative project with the Texas Master Naturalist—Elm Fork Chapter, was also recognized in the XL Association Youth/JMG category.



Photo Courtesy DCMGA Member Liz Moyer

**Teamwork at FMFB Community**  
Garden resulted in a harvest of over 5000  
pounds in 2020 ... all donated to CCA's  
Lewisville food pantry.



### **The DISD School Days at Clear Creek**

project annually educates and engages over 4,000 2nd and 4th graders during their field trips to Clear Creek Natural Heritage Center. Initiated by Texas Master Naturalist - Elm Fork Chapter in 2017, project volunteers include Science with Attitude (SWAt) team members from DCMGA, TMN-EFC, and 4-H. Accepting the award are (from left to right) Denton County 4-H Coordinator Colleen Carpenter, TMN-EFC Project Manager Sharon Betty, SWAt DCMGA Program Manager Tammie Gurley, and Denton County CEA-Hort Janet Laminack.



Kathy Rainey, Kim Wootton, and Lee Ann Yates, led by Tammie Gurley.

Speaking of behind-the-scenes work, our 2021 Board of Directors selection process was well underway in the capable hands (and minds) of stellar Nom Com team members: Chair Jolayne LaCour (2014), Vice Chair Karen Roberts (2016), Jerry Alexander (2015), Randy Condit (2020), Beckey Cortines (2020), Cheryl Huckabee (2018), Sue Hudiburgh (2008), and Pam Spooner (2018).

Our September 9th General Meeting and Program featured Texas A&M Extension Viticulture Program Specialist Michael Cook, who presented "Growing Backyard Grapes"—a juicy presentation that gave many members and guests raisin to join us in cyberspace.

Although earlier TMGA AT classes were canceled, the fall offerings, Rainwater Harvesting and Greenhouse Management, were held virtually. DCMGA members were among the limited number of participants.

Two newly approved projects debuted: Plant ID Detectives (focused on plant identification) and Denton County Historical Park Gardens (a spinoff from our existing Bayless-Selby House project, which continues for tour-related service activity).

While DCMGA usually participates in North Texas Giving Day, we opted not to enroll this year. Instead, we encouraged members and community residents to give to their favorite eligible 501(c)(3) with special consideration for area food banks, which continued to be in need of financial assistance due to increased demand for and decreased supply of provisions.

Recognitions at the virtual awards ceremony included service milestones. DCMGA Members Gresha Leamon (20 years), Ruth Orpin (20 years), and Joan Stanley (25 years) were highlighted for their respective length of service. What amazing achievements!

Denton County MGs who completed state AT specialty courses in 2019 were also recognized: Janice Goetz (Propagation), Daniel Arenas and Mike Crawford (Tree Care), Ann Hillmann (Turfgrass), and Cheryl Huckabee (Vegetables).

None of the awards would be possible without the behind-the-scenes work of our Award Submissions Team, who created and submitted award nominations with oversight from DCMGA's Immediate Past President. For 2019, that included Barbara Brown, Gay Campbell, Beverly Duncan, Kathi Fast, Bernadette Gilbert, Sarah Hendel, Rhonda Love, Raeline Nobles,

## October

This October, we celebrated tradition with a twist: our annual Fall Garden Fest went virtual. Project Manager Sharrie Ely, Carolyn Stoy, Susan Novak, and the FGF team planned a jam-packed event in cyberspace with four speakers especially selected for their ability to educate, entertain, and inspire. Presentations included “North Texas Turf Needs” (Dr. Hennen Cummings), “Beautiful and Productive Vegetable Gardens” (Dee Nash), “Fall/Winter Tips and To Do(s) for North Central Texas Gardens” (Toni Moorehead), and “Gardens that Give Back: Lovely, Low-Water, Live-Giving Landscapes” (Betsy Marsh).

The virtual format was a cyberspace success! Of the 626 registrants, 504 logged in to view and participate. That’s a 73.4% conversion – a good and healthy number for a perfect-outdoor-weather Saturday! (What? You missed it? Well, I’m happy to report that three of the four presentations are available for replay on our DCMGA YouTube channel!)

Through online polling during each presentation, we learned that the top three mediums by which participants learned of the event were our DCMGA website, our DCMGA Facebook page, and our DCMGA newsletter, *The Root*. Those three averaged 75.5% of nine different poll answer options offered during all four presentations. So, I’d definitely say that our efforts to educate and engage our community via these three platforms is a winning combination! Several participants also shared that they learned of the event via KERA’s Art & Seek; how wonderful is that? And, while the vast majority of participants were from Denton County, we had a sprinkling of viewers from each of the surrounding counties (Collin, Dallas, and Tarrant), from Oklahoma, and from other states.

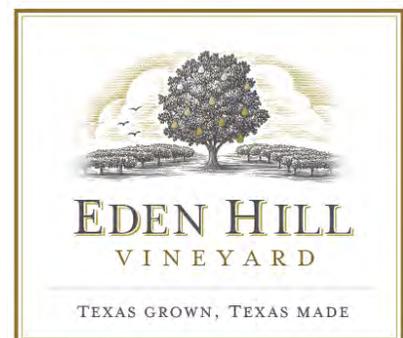
Speaking of educational presentations, our October 14th virtual General Meeting and Program featured Jim Apken & Nancy Nance from the Dallas Arboretum & Botanical Garden, who shared the latest information about the Plant Trials program including which plants are hot ... and which are not. Of all our wonderful 2020 General Meeting program offerings, this one generated the most interest with 145 virtual attendees. (Due to copyright protection, this presentation is not available for replay.)

And, the application process began for our 2021 Intern Class—a virtual program limited to 30 participants. A virtual informational meeting was held on October 20th, providing a great opportunity for class candidates to learn more about who we are and what we do. We were grateful to meet them all, even in cyberspace, and thankful that they want to grow with us!

Cool Shade for the Third Grade became another Covid casualty, but we look forward to visiting our tree-iffic third graders again soon (hopefully in 2021!).

## November

Inspired by viticulturist Michael Cook (September’s General Meeting program speaker) and to appease those w(h)ining for a fun opportunity, Programs Co-Chair Beverly Duncan organized an optional, protocol-appropriate, member field trip to Eden Hill Winery & Vineyards. Bonus: an educational tour provided one hour of CE!



For our November 18th General Meeting and Program, we welcomed Blake Alldredge of Upper Trinity Regional Water District, who shared how the process of protecting water sources begins in our own personal gardens and yards.

The 2021 Board of Directors slate was also approved at our November 18th meeting: President, Kathryn Wells (2017); Vice President-Projects, Joanne Spurgin (2019); Vice President-Outreach, Kathy Rainey (2017); Secretary, Katherine Woodward (2013); Treasurer, Jolayne LaCour (2014); Communications Director-Promotions, Kathi Fast (2016); Communications Director-Systems, Cheryl Huckabee (2018); Education Director, Barbara Brown (2010); and Member at Large, Tammie Gurley (2014) with Immediate Past President Pat Moyer continuing in his Board advisory role.

## December

In DCMGA's 31 years of existence, a virtual holiday party was never even a consideration ... until this year. As our traditional in-person December Christmas holiday luncheon was not a viable option, we planned a fun substitute—a virtual party featuring nine mini programs from members, who shared their favorite seasonal garden-inspired ideas.

Presentations scheduled by Christmas Party Chair Dee Payne included: Holiday Decorating with Natural Elements (Lori Barr); Veggie Gardener's Christmas Tree (Lynda Harvey); 12 Days of Christmas Box Tradition (Bonnie Ambrose); Flower Pounding (Sharon Clark); Has Santa Come Yet? (Ann Hillmann); Jalapeno Jelly (Debby Ishee); Quick and Easy Mailbox Swag (Cece Kenney); and A Christmas Tea (Lisa Lebsack). Meeting Program Co-Chairs Beverly Duncan and Gay Campbell planned fun virtual ice-breakers and games, and DCMGA members Lori Tate and Carolyn Tinner generously provided door prizes, subsequently delivered to our winners by our Dynamic Doorstep Dropoff Duo Divas (Beverly Duncan and Lori Tate).

Member at Large Tammie Gurley shared charitable giving opportunities, and a surprise video from Nikki Johnson and Janet Laminack was a perfect closing to our first (and, hopefully, our last!) virtual holiday party.



### Dynamic Doorstep

Drop-Off Duo Divas Lori Tate (left) and Beverly Duncan (right) delivered the door prizes won by members during our virtual holiday party. What a great dose of Christmas cheer!



Photo Courtesy Lori Barr and Beverly Duncan

## Final Remembrances

With the sweet, there is some bitter. Our Association became a little less rich with the passing of three valued members: Barbara Burgin in January (Class of 2007), Ann Turner in May (Class of 2014), and Sue Stunich in December (Class of 2013). As well, former member and 1994 DCMGA President Gene Gumfory, a Denton businessman and the force behind Shiloh Field Community Garden, passed away in May. While we mourn their earthly absence, we give thanks for their lives and their selfless contributions to our association and our community.



**Barbara Burgin**  
Class of 2007



**Ann Turner**  
Class of 2014 (Transfer)



**Sue Stunich**  
Class of 2013

And, while some members experienced great victories, others endured (and continue to endure) tremendous hardship. Please know that we collectively celebrate your joys and grieve your trials.

Believe it or not, these musings only hit the highlights of 2020's accomplishments. While some of our projects and committees were not named in this retrospective due to space limitations, please know that each and every one—and each and every one of you who serves on them—is beneficial and valuable.

Many thanks to each of our members, interns, committee chairs, project managers, directors, and officers for adapting and excelling through an unprecedented (at least in our lifetime!) year. I am grateful for your sunny spirits and indefatigable efforts! Much gratitude is also due to our 2020 Board of Directors, who kept calm and Zoomed on as we daily navigated the smartest, safest ways to navigate uncharted territory.

Most of all, thank you to the community that we serve. It is a privilege to share our knowledge of research-based horticultural and environmental practices with you, and it is a pleasure to see the exponential impact of sustainable gardens and landscapes in our community. We look forward to continuing our communal efforts in the new year.

As we look ahead to 2021, conditions remain challenging due to necessary pandemic protocols. Still and yet, we will advance our mission, and we will continue to grow together, even while we're apart.

*Kathryn*