

To our Valued Members and Friends:

As the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) outbreak continues to develop, our hearts go out to all who have been affected. At the Japan-America Society of Tennessee (JAST), we want to keep each of you advised of developments involving our organization during this challenging time. I am writing today to share two important announcements on behalf of the JAST Executive Committee.

Regarding the Nashville Cherry Blossom Festival, in light of the serious risks to our community posed by the spread of this virus, our Executive Committee has voted unanimously to postpone the Festival. The Cherry Blossom Walk has also been postponed. The annual event, which has in prior years attracted as many as 40,000 individuals, including vendors, performers, volunteers and attendees, has become a source of pride for our organization, city and state. As we monitor the extent and duration of this unprecedented public health crisis, we will work with Festival partners and staff to determine prospects for a future date to hold this popular annual celebration. We are hopeful that collective measures to thwart the active spread of COVID-19 will enable everyone to celebrate with us later this year.

I am also sad to report that JAST CEO Donna Lee Siple has tendered her resignation, which has subsequently been accepted by the Executive Committee. I know you will join us in wishing Donna Lee well in all future endeavors and share our gratitude to her for her service as a past volunteer as well as JAST CEO. Donna Lee was a tremendous help to me as I entered service as the JAST Board Chair. She has also initiated several long-term planning activities that will greatly benefit our organization in future years.

To ensure operational integrity during this leadership transition, Ginger Byrn will oversee day-to-day administrative functions for the organization. Former JAST CEO Leigh Wieland will take a temporary leave of absence from her role as a member of the Board to support the current staff in an advisory capacity.

In closing, I wish to thank each of you once again for your continued support and understanding as we work through the present challenges and look toward the future with confidence.

With gratitude,

Bob Booker

Board Chair, Japan-America Society of Tennessee

