LETTER FROM PRESIDENT AND CEO STEVE STENERSEN

I write this brief column in the middle of the most challenging period of my lifetime. The world – and our sport – has been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the endemic issues of race, class and social justice have been exposed like never before. The indefinite suspension of lacrosse and so many other aspects of our lives has been both upsetting and disruptive, but the scale of human tragedy experienced in a matter of months has been overwhelming. Our thoughts remain with those throughout our extended lacrosse family who are enduring significant pain and loss.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on US Lacrosse operations as well. We’ve been forced to dramatically evolve our financial model, which now projects a loss in revenue of up to 50% through 2020. Membership support has plummeted given the cancelation of play, and we’ve had to make very difficult decisions to significantly reduce the operating expenses of our nonprofit organization with the goal of preserving minimum operational readiness when play resumes. Regretfully, these deep budget cuts have included the elimination of staff positions, furloughs and a tiered salary reduction for all remaining staff.

Despite this existential trial, and within a work-from-home environment, we’ve moved quickly to evolve our operations and provide more accessible and interactive digital content and resources across our media channels in order to inform, connect and inspire the national lacrosse community like never before. We also assembled a respected group of medical professionals, led by the chair of our Sports Science & Safety Committee, Dr. Gene Hong, to develop and evolve Return to Play recommendations focused on returning players to the field as soon and safely as possible.

Membership support is the lifeblood of our nonprofit organization. Some view it as insurance and a magazine, but those who are more well-informed know that membership fuels our mission to provide leadership and a supporting national infrastructure of administration, educational resources, sport development programs, direct service grants, injury research, rule development, national teams, communication platforms, marketing initiatives and so much more.

Philanthropic support has always been essential to the execution of our mission and provided the investment required to both innovate and scale our operations. Given the dramatic loss in membership revenue for the foreseeable future, philanthropic support has become essential to our survival.

Each year we publish an annual report that looks back on the previous year and shares a sampling of US Lacrosse impact - enabled by members and donors like you. That publication will soon be shared with you via email, and I’m hopeful that you will be heartened by what you read within its pages. But there is much work left to do, and our ability to provide the leadership and resources necessary to advance the sport is more dependent on your philanthropic investment than ever.

Thank you for helping us to weather this unprecedented storm and continue our relentless efforts to secure the future of lacrosse in all communities.
US LACROSSE LAUNCHES #LAXATHOME

In the wake of the stoppage of play due to the COVID-19 outbreak, US Lacrosse has brought the game from the field to the homes of lacrosse enthusiasts throughout the county. The new #LaxAtHome initiative was created to keep the lacrosse community engaged during the pandemic and ready to return to the field when it is safe. The program turned into a centralized hub of resources for players, parents, coaches, and officials at all levels to stay on top of their game while at home.

Through the #LaxAtHome website and the various US Lacrosse and National Team social media channels, resources like at-home drills, workouts, stick skill exercises and e-learning and development opportunities were shared by some of the best players and coaches in the game. Jay Dyer, the U.S. Men’s National Team Director of Sports Performance and Strength & Conditioning, shared how players can work on their agility in their backyard without equipment. U.S. Women’s National Team star Megan Douty showcased her at-home drills, done with just her stick and a wall. Along with these videos of at-home drills, US Lacrosse also hosts webinars that bring together some of the top coaches in the sport to discuss tips and tactics they use with their respective teams. The resources and opportunities that US Lacrosse and the #LaxAtHome program provide are endless, as players and coaches around the country look for a way to continue to develop their game during the stoppage of play.

The outpouring of support from players and coaches who have continued their game at home during the suspended season has been inspiring. We hope to continue to see coaches, players, parents and officials come together and improve their games and make an impact on the lacrosse community during these challenging times.

US LACROSSE FORMS RETURN TO PLAY ADVISORY GROUP

In an effort to help provide informed guidance to the lacrosse community as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic, US Lacrosse has established a “Safe Return to Playing Lacrosse” advisory group. The group consists of leaders from the medical, lacrosse and event professions who provided their perspectives to guide players’ safe return to the field. The co-chair of the group and VP of Lacrosse Operations for US Lacrosse Ann Kitt Carpenetti explained: “We understand the strong desire for everyone in the lacrosse community to want to get back on the playing field as soon as possible, and it’s our goal to make sure that happens in a safe and responsible manner.” The group is looking to reach its goal by looking at different ways the game can be played without expanding the risk for all participants. This includes on-field risk mitigation, athlete health and injury avoidance and modified versions of play to allow for a smaller number of athletes and coaches.

On May 28, the Return to Play advisory group released their recommendations on the different stages of lacrosse’s return to the playing field, aligning with state/local public health guidelines. The first stage is at-home individual training, which consists of sport-specific drills to prepare for sports participation with cardiovascular activity. The second stage allows for small groups of less than 10 to socially distance, continued conditioning and improving hand-eye coordination, footwork and shooting skills. The third stage allows medium groups of 10 to socially distance, continued conditioning and improving hand-eye coordination, footwork and shooting skills. The fourth stage allows for groups of 50 people indoors or outdoors to participate in local competition/practices from teams within the same locale. Finally, the fifth stage allows for a full resumption of competition with multiple teams from different geographic areas.

The return to play recommendations are designed to create and promote innovative, athlete-centered, developmentally appropriate, graduated lacrosse programming and activities. To assure players and coaches can return to the playing field, programs need to adapt the lacrosse experience. You can learn more about the Return to Playing Lacrosse recommendations at uslacrosse.org/return-to-play.
USL STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

Once again, we are saddened and angered by the stark and tragic reminders of racial inequity that persist in our society. Lacrosse has been associated with this cultural divide throughout its modern history, from the systematic exclusion of Native American players in the late 19th century to the lingering perceptions and supporting examples that our sport remains exclusive to a community of privilege today.

US Lacrosse stands together in solidarity with those members of our community who routinely feel the weight of oppression, systemic racism, hate and a failing system of justice. We will continue to work to make the lacrosse community an agent of change for all who play and support the Creator’s game. Throughout its history, our sport has brought so many people together, and it’s our hope that we will emerge from this challenge a stronger community, a stronger sport and a stronger nation.

THANK YOU

We have been overwhelmed by the generosity of donors over the past few months and wish to share just a few of the messages of support that have inspired us.

“My son had severe depression and lacrosse saved his life. I’d like this money earmarked for clinics as you indicated on the first page.”

“Thank you for all the positive messages you have been sending out to the lacrosse community during this challenging time, as well as your thoughtfulness around adjusting your programming. I pray this virus is past us soon!”

“Lacrosse changed my life, and I hope it can change the lives of other kids who don’t even know they need it.”

“You will never know how much of an impact you had on many, like me, without which we would never have become the productive citizens and parents we are. Thank you.”

“Thank you for the great work you are doing! Let’s help keep Lax growing together, and make it a great part of kids lives!”

“Thanks for your continued inspiration to help us grow the game in New York City.”

“Happy to support this wonderful sport! I am a Baltimore girl, now living in AZ. My 5th grader began playing this year. Keep spreading lax love!”

“For the love of the game and the kids that play.”

“Thank you for this opportunity to give back in a meaningful way.”

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Norm Webb (1942-2004) was known as the “godfather of San Diego lacrosse.” He took the sport wherever he went, and trained generations of players to pass the game one.

HIS LACROSSE LEGACY ENDURES.
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To learn more about making a planned gift to US Lacrosse through the A. Norman Webb Jr. Legacy Society, visit

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