



*SEMNLA Mission: Serving the regional educational, professional and networking needs of Southeast Michigan's nursery and landscape industry*

## SEMNLA Chapter Update

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2020 SEMNLA PRESIDENT

### *Friends and Colleagues,*

I have been asked to pen a letter of encouragement and I take this on enthusiastically. I feel that I have always been an optimist with a proverbial glass that is half full.

I am old enough to have been alive during some turbulent times; no wise guys, not the Great Depression or the Big War, but 9-11, the Great Recession and now COVID-19.

I don't bring these times up to remind us of the pain but I bring them up to remind us of how we endured. This is a message of hope and encouragement. At no time should it be misconstrued for any lack of recognition of the gravity of the situation.

I think that after weeks of most of us being sheltered in place, most people are clear with understanding that we are in uncharted waters. We have all experienced loss in our life whether it's family, friends or even a business. It is life's biggest challenges that give us the perspective on what is truly important, and that is your health and the health of others.

That being said, it is only natural for people to fear the uncertainty of the economy and the effects this will have on the business that they own or belong to as a key team member.

To many, this business is the lifeblood of your family. It provides for your family, it provides a way of life, and a sense of security. I can appreciate the burden you may feel as you have so many counting on you to keep your business healthy so that your business can help everyone be healthy, which includes physical, mental, emotional health as well as financial health.

But remember, your business is not a building or a piece of equipment, a truck, a tool or a computer. A business is started with your spirit, your drive, Your Will. The same Will that was in you to start, join or build up your business is the same Will that will help you fight through this.

The road will be long; nothing great ever comes easy. In this time of great uncertainty, the one message I am most certain of is that now is the time for great leadership. If you happen to be in a

position of leadership...LEAD! Lead by example – you need to remember that people are looking to you for strength, guidance and support. They will be hanging onto not only your words but also your tone. Tone is crucial for your family members, members of your staff, even your customers.

People can rise to enormous heights and perform beyond expectations if they are motivated and inspired. You will need your team now more than ever, so tell them that you are counting on them, and they can also count on you. They can count on you to give it your very best, every day. We need each other.

As I write this article, I'm trying really hard not to sound like I think I have all of the answers; I humbly just offer some ideas that may help you. Stay focused on the positive. Stay focused on facts. Don't get pulled down with too many doomsday social media posts. Resist the temptation to watch 24/7 cable news. Yes, stay informed but do not become paralyzed by it all.

We live in the greatest country - with such great technology, abundant resources and very smart, hardworking people. A collaborative effort of epic proportions is underway to protect the way of life that we have worked to build.

We need to use some of this new found time to look inward. My wife reminded me that Anne Frank hid with seven other people in a 450-square-foot attic for 761 days to avoid Nazi persecution. Think about that...safe to say her plight came with much less comforts than what we now enjoy in our homes, including to ability to communicate with loved ones.

I find it amazing, if you have ever lost someone very close to you, how instantly, if only briefly, you have crystal clarity on what really matters - and what matters much less. It's not about making another sale or "where is my truck", but instead it's, "How is your Mom doing? Does she need anything from the grocery store?"

It's times like these when people show such generosity and kindness. We see people be the people they wish they would be more often. You see it everywhere, even though we are sheltered in place. Some great acts of kindness and humanity are everywhere. I hear stories of parents having their kids make posters and cards of love and support for our seniors at nursing homes that crave some social interaction. They visit from the other side of the glass to protect our beloved elderly. This is so heartbreaking knowing how much they crave the human touch, so be there for our greatest generation! They were there for us!

There are other acts such as people buying gift cards for restaurants or taverns for future dine-ins to keep them afloat while they are closed. General Motors and Ford are making ventilators. Fanatics (a sports memorabilia company) is making protective masks out of fabric they had earmarked for sports jerseys. Several breweries and whiskey distilleries are quickly manipulating the recipe to create hand sanitizer products to fill the void in the supply chain.

We need to be grateful and share thanks to all of the hardworking people that are still working such as our supply chain people running the trucks, factories, the loading docks, and getting the shelves restocked. Of course, we need to recognize all of the Heroes. The First Responders, Doctors, Nurses, Firefighters, Paramedics, Police, and our Military - AND all of the folks that work in a support role to

keep the hospitals running. I am always awestruck seeing the selfless acts of courage from first responders.

Also, tip of the hat to the parents that have now, in addition to all else, been made to be home school teachers during this time.

*Try your best to focus on any silver linings and I have listed a few:*

- It's still early in the season for Michigan's Green Industry – some years we still have snow and ice this time of year. Yes, it's tough to lose the whole Month of April but we really hope that we can get going by May.
- I do have many customers and colleagues in other states (i.e. Ohio) saying that when they have been opened, they have been VERY BUSY. This is encouraging!
- It's a safe bet that people will stay close to home this year. Undoubtedly homeowners will put some effort and investment into their outdoor space. They might be more cautious on larger sized projects, but they will spend time and money on yards this year.
- I do feel that there is a newborn general awareness of the plight of the small business person, because of the quarantine and Shelter-at-Home order.
- I really think that there will be a more supportive patronage from our communities as we move forward (shop small) and would love to see some of the marketing to emphasize the dire need to support small local businesses this year.

There are support programs available from the Administration, and more to come. I'm sure many business owners are aware of some of the financial aid programs that have been put forward so far but in case you aren't, you can find more information on [www.MNLA.org](http://www.MNLA.org). By now, your CPA and your lending institutions should be fairly well up-to-speed on how these programs work. I know it's still a busy time despite being closed, but I would encourage you to try to get on it as soon as possible, as backlogs are happening as expected.

In closing, this will be a period in time not soon forgotten. I hope when they write about it they will include all of the acts of kindness, the selfless giving, and the coming together for humanity's sake.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can offer you any support or information to assist you.

On behalf of the hardworking Board of SEMNLA— Jon Wurges – Brightview; Jeremy Christianson - Michigan Landscape Design Services; Jay Kelly - J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.; Shaun Breuer - Unilock Michigan, Inc.; Hugh McGillivray, Landscape Supply Inc.; and Jackie Grow - Michigan State University, IAT, Wayne County Community College District — Keep up the Good Fight.

