



NATIONAL GRANGE OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

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American Values. Hometown Roots.

Brothers and Sisters,

As news continues to break with more and more coronavirus-19 cases and a small percentage of those infected having succumbed to the illness, we continue to see the pattern emerge - not unlike that with the flu and other significant respiratory ailments - that older individuals are disproportionately impacted. Some of you have expressed concerns about what to do regarding Grange meetings and events, but until we had a clearer picture of the situation we wanted wait to issue clear guidance without causing undue panic.

While we know the risk from this virus is low, many of our members are or socialize with people in high-risk groups, especially the elderly, at Grange functions and in their daily lives. For this reason, we ask you to be mindful and preventative to help us all contain this novel virus as well as other nasty viruses such as the “typical” flu. The best thing you can do is take all necessary and advised precautions, which in some cases includes self-quarantine.

Grange events, meetings and activities should be evaluated

Grange meetings and our associated events are public gatherings that encourage friendly interactions, which may include handshakes, hugs or other contact or close proximity. Our events often include potlucks with buffet-style service that may also heighten the opportunity for the virus to pass from one person to another. Remember, symptoms may not appear until 14 days after exposure to the virus, and the virus may survive up to three days on surfaces outside the human body. Therefore, even if no one appears sick at an event, it is possible that illness could still spread.

For this reason, we encourage you to take a variety of recommended precautions including frequent and thorough hand-washing, wearing gloves, and having someone serve dishes rather than allowing individuals to serve themselves, limiting the number of individuals touching various objects, and other guidance issued by healthcare professionals.

With the elderly at heightened risk, Granges may want to consider postponing or canceling meetings if they feel it advisable in their communities. In the face of such an emerging health crisis, the Bylaw (6.12.1) that requires Subordinate Granges to meet monthly will not be enforced.

Use this as opportunity to Cultivate Connections

As individuals may choose to limit their social interaction and stay indoors in full or partial self-quarantine, feelings of isolation and loneliness may occur. The Grange theme for 2020 is “Cultivating Connections” and this time of preventative isolation allows us to do that in a truly meaningful, though different way than we may have imagined. Even before this pandemic began, loneliness affected more than 30% of older adults and itself can pose health risks, specifically depression and cognitive decline.

Let’s take this as an opportunity to reconnect with our Grange family and with those far outside our membership. Commit to calling or writing a letter to a different individual each day to check in. Let’s make this a movement, starting right here with the Grange, to ensure that everyone across our great country has regular and meaningful social contact and knows that Grangers care.

You may even find this a great reason to reconnect with long-lost Grange friends, those who you used to attend Junior/Juvenile Grange or Youth events with. Tell them what it means to you to remain active in the Grange

today and encourage them to reconnect. Maybe they can start with a subscription to our quarterly Good Day! magazine. The next issue is due to arrive in mailboxes in mid-April.

Washington DC Experience Participants Affected

Since taking office, I have made transparency a priority. This morning we learned that a member of Sen. Maria Cantwell's staff (WA) has been diagnosed with the coronavirus-19. Although their identity was not released, we immediately notified the Junior, Youth and adult participant who attended a meeting with one of the Senator's aides while at the Washington DC Experience earlier this week. We also reached out to every WDCE participant and provided them with the details we know so far. We have been in contact with the Senator's office and are awaiting further advice regarding the potential exposure risk and what our participants should do in the coming days. We believe there is very little risk to them or their families, but will continue to monitor the situation and communicate directly with those who attended.

We reiterate that it is important for each of you to take all of the measures of precaution advised by the CDC, to be very mindful of symptoms as they arise, and to consider avoiding contact with those in populations that are at high-risk for contracting the disease with serious complications.

DC Office Remains Open; Status May change

At this time, our National Headquarters in Washington DC remains open for business. Our staff assisted and participated in the WDCE and we are encouraging them to monitor any potential signs of illness and respond accordingly. Additionally, a state of emergency has been declared in Washington DC, so at any time our operations may change in response to the continuing outbreak. We will keep you posted if any operations are suspended but appreciate your patience if there is a delayed response to your requests, as our staff may be required to take leave or work remotely and be unable to fulfill some specific tasks.

I want to thank you in advance for forwarding this message by email, sending it by mail and calling to share it with other members, to make sure every Granger knows that we are aware of the health crisis and helping to combat its side effect of loneliness by cultivating connections. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

Fraternally and with best wishes for great health,

Betsy E. Huber, President
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