

Executive Director Mike Chrisley



Keep Doing What You Do

We are learning so much. We have met hundreds of times in the last several months using Microsoft Teams at a time when we might have believed that all meetings would be put-on hold. We have executed our very first virtual (at least partially virtual) board meeting. We have seen changes that have tested us and required us to see every side of an issue. We have tried our very best to be respectful of every mindset. The phrase “May you live in interesting times”, has taken on a whole new meaning in 2020.

Sarah Kelly was hired in early January and is in place as the Deputy Executive Director. She brings a great skill set to the position including banking, finance, and insurance experience. However, I believe as importantly as that she brings a genuine love for Ruritan to the position. Because of the circumstances surrounding the coronavirus many of her experiences have been different than we anticipated in her first year as Deputy Executive. Some of what she has experienced, may well be more valuable than if the year had been “normal”.

I would like to take a moment to just tell you how thankful I am for the staff here at Ruritan. My staff, your staff, our staff, has performed at a very high level during this crisis. They go above and beyond because they care about their jobs, because they care about Ruritan, because they care about our members. They are great, caring people who do not get nearly enough credit for what they do. None of them are here because they believe they will attain great wealth. They are here because they care about our noble cause and support Ruritan on a foundational level. Every single staff person is a member of a Ruritan Club and works just as hard outside the office on club projects and fundraising for their local community as they do for us. This year has not been easy for staff. I have been employed here for 40 years and this is the first time I have ever experienced a furlough. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Sarah Kelly, Craig Whitt, Diane Lawson, Bessie McCormick, Kory Wirt, Crystal Andrews, and Chris Pugh for all they do for Ruritan.

I also want to thank our board of directors and committees. We have had the privilege to work with all the committees since the March board of directors meeting. However, several committees deserve mention for the effort that they have put forth over the last four months.

Executive – This committee has met bi-weekly or weekly since March. Many of the meetings have focused on the pandemic and how we continue to operate without interruption in a time that is so interrupted. They have taken advantage of new technology, made hard decisions, tried to be conscious and respectful of all groups feelings and needs and done their level best to serve the directors, district and club leaders.

Restructure – This committee was given a task that is difficult out of the gate. They have met weekly with only one exception since March. In many cases the entire committee met, and then sub-committees would meet an additional time during the same week. They have examined data, done research, struggled with what the best choices would be and tried to come to conclusions that give us our best chance at thriving in a changing environment.

Bylaws – This committee has met every week, sometimes twice weekly since March. They have examined the national bylaws, district bylaws, club bylaws, current board policy, IRS code, Virginia law and have tried to streamline our bylaws. They always tried to keep the club, our members, and the communities that we serve in the forefront of their thinking.

Leadership Development – This committee truly made lemonade out of lemons. Faced with the task of planning a summer leadership conference, they did just that, only to have the conference canceled just prior to being held. In the final 60 days prior to the date of the planned conference they had to switch gears and determine how to deliver a viable training tool to members that were not going to be able to attend a physical meeting. I have never been prouder of what was produced because of this committee’s effort.

Most of all I am proud of you. Your commitment to serve even when it seemed impossible is remarkable. Again, in this magazine, the spirit of service rises in the middle of a trying time. When things are the hardest is when you see the true heart of a volunteer. We see your heart. The theme of this magazine is give. Each and every one of you who has found a way to give have become hope to so many people.

Keep doing what you do.

