

2020 SPAH Convention & the impact of the Coronavirus

Every day brings new information about the Coronavirus and steps being taken to mitigate its spread. The SPAH Board wants to provide members and convention attendees with an update given all of the news over the past few days.

First and foremost, our concern is for you, our members and convention attendees, as well as the SPAH volunteer staff, vendors and hotel staff. We are also keenly aware that many of our audience are in the over-65 age group, who are understandably anxious and concerned. We are tracking the advice and facts from public health authorities and other officials, both locally in St Louis, as well as nationally. We have a medical doctor on the team who is assisting us to ensure accuracy in our understanding and communications. We are also in frequent contact with the Sheraton Westport Chalet hotel.

At this time, while we are cautious, *we see no reason to change plans for our Convention in St Louis*. However, if restrictions currently in place persist for the longer term, we may have to change our position.

As a result, please take note of the following:

- Your hotel rooms at the Sheraton Westport Chalet are cancellable with no penalty as long as notice is given by 6pm the day before your scheduled arrival.
- In the event of cancellation due to the virus, any SPAH and Blowoff registration fees you have paid could be applied to our 2021 Convention, guaranteeing you no change in price, or refunded to you, *at your option*. We are talking to our credit card processor to see how we could make this happen with minimal effort, should the need arise.
- We recommend that you book airfares with no change fees, or that allow cancellation due to the virus.
- SPAH is financially strong, and will survive this, regardless of the outcome!
- There may be some (possibly obvious) measures we may take in how we operate in St Louis, such as prohibiting the testing of vendor display harmonicas.

It is also important to note that our performing musicians and teachers need to be able to perform, teach and sell product, particularly at a time when so many live gigs are being cancelled. We will do our best to recognize their contributions regardless of the outcome of this journey we are on together. That includes exploring the possibility of virtual gatherings if we must unavoidably change our plans.

Our commitment to you is that we will continue to update you as conditions change. As a team, SPAH and the hotel are looking at May or early June as the timeframe when we will need to make the final call on proceeding.

In the meantime, please be safe & healthy, wash your hands, and monitor your circle of friends and family! We truly hope that we will be able to be together in mid-August.

Thank you for your support of SPAH!

Your SPAH Executive Board
Michael, Jerry, Bruce, and Jay

