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Dear Friends of the Atheneum:

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This is my third annual letter to you as Chair of the Atheneum Board of Trustees. It is an opportunity for me to report on the state of the Atheneum, to share our plans for the coming year and to thank each and every one of you for your generosity and support of this very special institution. 2020 was a most unusual year which makes this report to you all the more important.

I am happy to report that the Atheneum weathered the challenges of 2020 remarkably well and, in many ways, enters 2021 stronger and better equipped to serve our community than ever before. Our leadership team is strong, our finances are strong thanks to your generosity, and we have built critical organizational muscles around our adaptability, creativity, and responsiveness. The Atheneum has a long and distinguished history of resilience and adaptation since its founding in 1834. I believe the performance of our public library in the past nine months is another proud chapter in that history.

2020 PERFORMANCE

The Atheneum closed its physical doors in mid-March in response to the pandemic. It was imperative that we find ways to remain open virtually, 24/7. To make that happen, our approach to everything we do had to change.

Our website and online meeting technology became critical delivery mechanisms as all of our programming became virtual. Internet access was provided in the garden. Thanks to a grant from the Nantucket Fund for Emergency Relief, we purchased 20 laptop computers and 20 personal hotspots which can be checked out like a book, allowing patrons without reliable internet access to connect to the internet for school, work or personal use.

Our librarians continued to provide the same advice and expertise on every topic imaginable, just not in person. Our circulation team processed, cleaned and hand-wrapped thousands of items for pickup service. Our homebound delivery program made it possible for our elder and more vulnerable patrons to safely access books and audio from home. For the first six months, the staff personally called every borrowing patron to confirm check-out availability.

Since June, almost 3800 Grab and Go bags have been created; parents and caregivers wait for them to come out each day. These bags are immensely popular and are both educational and entertaining. The word has spread beyond Nantucket; seasonal residents and new patrons from off island have requested information on how they can create the bags.

The Atheneum Dance Festival has become a significant cultural event for the island but could not be held in its traditional form. Thanks to the creativity and determination of our Artistic Director, Tyler Angle, and the generosity of our Dance Festival Committee and the performers, the Festival was reimagined and delivered virtually over several weeks. More than 3,000 people from four different countries viewed the Festival on our new website, making this extraordinary series of performances both an artistic tour de force and a financial success.

Speaking of financial success, thanks to you our generous and loyal donors, the Atheneum finishes 2020 in excellent financial condition. Our Annual Giving results of over \$600,000 not only exceeded our goal but was our best Annual Giving ever. This level of giving at any time would be gratifying but during the pandemic it is inspiring. We cannot thank you enough for your loyal and generous support. Without each of you, none of this would have been possible.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Like all of you, we are anxious for some return to normalcy including reopening the building for a limited number of patrons. In preparation for that, we have revamped all of our operating processes, created new work flows, and improved air circulation. We have done everything we need to be ready to move forward when public health considerations support such a move.

The Atheneum has been forever changed by the pandemic in some very positive ways. By necessity, we had to become stronger, more adaptable and more innovative in how we serve our community. Responding to the pandemic required us to change, to adopt different ways of looking at things, and to be creative and open to new possibilities.

We have learned so much about the importance and reach of virtual programs. Our virtual programs are now attended by three to four times the number of people than when they were delivered face to face. We now provide programming that is accessible across the country and the globe. We will not let this go when things return to normal.

We also learned that when we closed our physical doors, we needed to find new ways to reach all parts and members of the Nantucket community. If they could not come to us, we must find ways to go to them. We have a deepened appreciation of how much we all depend on each other. Expanding partnerships with other island organizations, strengthening our relationships in the community, and reenergizing our community outreach and needs assessment will be important priorities moving forward.

NEW AND DEPARTING TRUSTEES

This year we said goodbye to four outstanding trustees whose terms expired. Thank you Sam Bailey, Annye Camara, Cathy Weinroth, and Marcia Welch for the energy, thoughtful guidance, commitment and support you brought to the Atheneum. We are deeply grateful for their service.

We are delighted to welcome our new class of trustees - Bianca Bosker, William Cohan, Duncan Macallister and Bonnie Sacerdote. We know that each of these outstanding individuals will make a difference moving forward.

In closing, let me first acknowledge and thank our extraordinary and talented board of trustees for their dedication, wise counsel, commitment to the Atheneum and generosity of time and resources. 2020 was a pivotal year for the Atheneum and the leadership and strength of our board of trustees made all the difference.

Second, my deepest thanks to our dedicated, hardworking, talented staff for all they have accomplished in this difficult year. And a special acknowledgement to our Executive Director, Ann Scott, who has been amazing during this crisis. Her efforts to keep the Atheneum running during the pandemic were simply outstanding. She was exactly the leader we needed during the pandemic; she is exactly the leader we need moving forward.

And finally, I want to thank each of you, our generous supporters and donors. You make possible everything we do and we are deeply grateful for your support. We cannot thank you enough.

There has been so much grief, pain and suffering this past year. Going forward, we are determined to continue to do our part to enrich and brighten the life of every person we touch.

Best wishes and many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Gulley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joan Gulley

