



Good day everyone. Hope you are all well. I decided to do this by a video because I feel that emails are too impersonal for something this important. For those that don't know me, I am Keith Karaff, Executive Director of CASI.

We are all well aware of the crisis our country is experiencing at the moment, and your Board of Directors have been working on the direction of CASI concerning the immediate future.

Our organization revolves around charity, friendship and family. Never in the history of our organization have we been faced with the challenges and the virtually unknown situation at hand. We are all touched by this crisis in one way or another. There is no escaping it. We must think about our future, our members, our families, our friends and what is the best course of action for us at this time. No matter who you talk to, the members always refer to CASI as one large family. We take care of and look after our family. The one thing to remember during this crisis, is that this is not about you, the one person, this is about everyone, the family.

With this being said, I have been closely following the daily changes and recommendations. Looking at charts and graphs. I have been thinking about the present and our future. The Board has been updated frequently on the changing reports and we have decided on a course of action.

The number of cancellations and postponements is of course devastating not only to our organization, but to all the competitive cooking organizations. Most of you that know me also know that I am extremely and emotionally passion-ate about this organization and its members. The one thing I have learned from all this is that I have to remove the emotion and decide with what is right for us, not what I FEEL is right. The Board had a conference call earlier in the week and I have asked the Board to consider placing a freeze on all cookoffs following the recommended CDC guide-lines. With agreement from the Board of Directors and based on the current CDC recommendations, we are placing a moratorium on all cookoffs for a period of six weeks beginning Monday, March 23,2020 with a predicted end of May 4, 2020. Mid-April, the Board will again look at the deadline and using the CDC recommendations at that time, will make the decision whether to lift the freeze or continue. We understand that plans have been made for months and monies have been spent on cookoff items. The time, effort and planning that goes into each cookoff are put on hold for now. It is a no-win situation for everyone involved.

Because of the nature of our hobby, there is no other way to responsibly have our type of event publicly. We rely on our members and the public to function and there is no way this can be accomplished safely.

Since we rely on cookoffs and donations to financially function and with the loss of so many cookoffs, financially, we are taking an enormous hit. On Monday, I went to the cookoff calendar to figure where we were in terms of cancellations and postponements. At that time, there were about 12 postponements, 14 cancellations and 30 still on the books. This was about 9am in the morning. Since that time, there have been about six more added to that list and it continues to grow.

It's really very easy to understand, no cookoffs means no funds. As we all know, cookoffs are our funding. They are our income. They are what we must have to operate. At this time we have lost several large cookoffs and along with the smaller cookoffs, we are looking at a loss of revenue in the thousands. Granted, some of these cookoffs are going to reschedule and since no one can predict the future of this situation I don't believe

that it is financially responsible to spend monies that we may or may not receive in the future. With the unknown timeline on this crisis and not having any idea as to when we can resume cookoffs again, we can't continue spending money that in theory, we don't have and are not receiving. With the loss of so many cookoffs, unless we fill the *Trails* with article after article after article, we wouldn't be able to make our page printing minimum because we won't have any results to post or cookoffs to pro-mote and those take up several pages. I also asked the Board to consider the following action and they have agreed. Until further notice, we are suspending the publication of the *Terlingua Trails* beginning with the May issue. Issues will still appear online and as time goes on we will again reassess this expenditure. The *Trails* is the one concrete, recurring monthly expense the organization has that we can control. In order to continue to be financially responsible to the membership and the organization, I felt this was a prudent course of action.

Other specific temporary actions the Board has taken are:

- We have suspended the online TICC ticket sales at Eventbrite for the time being.
- We have suspended all purchases for the TICC, Krazy Flats and online stores at this time.

As we move through this daunting situation, the one thing that we all have in common is the realization that no one can predict the future. It may be weeks, it may be months. At this unprecedented time, your Board of Directors is tasked with something that no one could see coming...fighting for the life of CASI. We ask for your understanding. We ask for your patience and above all, we ask for your support. Negative comments and posturing help no one. One of my favorite quotes is "*Volunteers do not necessarily have the time...they just have the heart*" To many of us, we as a group have spent years dedicating and committing our time, our resources, our creativity and our knowledge to this organization that means so much to so many. I hope that you understand the actions that we have taken and see what we, the Board, your elected volunteers, must see...the future and the continuation of CASI.

The Board is now in the process of working on contingency plans for several items that affect our membership. A lot depends on the duration of this outbreak. As we move closer to the summer and we see the status at that time, we will enact or revise contingency plans on an as needed basis. At this time, to try and read the future is futile. We need time to look at all the particular issues that are affected and deal with each one. Now is not the time to begin making sweeping changes with old, outdated information because trust me on this, if we were to enact sweeping changes right now based on the information available, you would absolutely not like the outcome. We cannot treat this as a doomsday scenario, nor are we. With your support and understanding, we will all get through this.

A transcript of this speech will be emailed to all the Great Peppers and will be posted online. To everyone, be safe out there, God bless you all...and in the words of our dear Mama Sue Caffey, God bless America. Thank you.