Dear Community,

We are deeply grateful for the Neutral Zone community who has championed our teens to thrive through high quality arts and leadership programming. We know that we are more than just a place that teens come to after school, but we are a part of what they rely on for support, growth and future opportunities.

Our board and staff leadership, like every area community organization, is trying to make sense of how to address the challenges that COVID-19 presents. We have assessed teen needs, created a food drop off program, and worked to build our virtual programs across the center. However, an anticipated shortfall, as high as $250,000 representing 20% of our annual operations, looms above us.

Due to this financial challenge, we have had to reassess our priorities. We are committed to continuing to provide food to our families in need and refer youth to crisis support. And, we want to be here for our teens as the long-term impact on their families, education, financial and emotional well-being pile up in the coming months.

To be fully prepared to meet this need as the crisis subsides, we have made the difficult choice to suspend all programming for the remainder of the spring and summer. We will also begin a temporary furlough of the majority of our staff starting on April 15th. During this time, all healthcare benefits will continue as normal and all furloughed employees will be supported to apply for the CARES Act that now includes extended unemployment benefits of an additional $600 weekly.

Lori Roddy, the Executive Director, will remain on, along with Ramona, our Finance Director, to continue core functions of the organization. Suzie, our Associate Director, will remain on through at least April to support staff and teens in this transition time and help respond to critical needs. These remaining staff will all take salary cuts aligned with the furlough period.

Being here for teens when they need us most is the value that lies at the very heart of our decision. By taking these actions today, we will ensure the staff and teens will come back together strong and intact to build a thriving community when the peak of the crisis is behind us. You are a big part of our community. We hope you are safe, supported and well during this time. Please reach out to Lori Roddy if you have questions at this time.

Warm Regards,

Lori Bennett, Board Co-President
Samiksha Sneha, Board Co-President
Lori Roddy, Executive Director

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