

Your Les Clefs d'Or Key Updates



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From the President's Desk

Anders Jensen

President, Les Clefs d'Or International



Dear Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

Warm greetings to you all! It is my pleasure to address you. This is the second newsletter published during my mandate, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank those of you who took time to submit content. I can only encourage the rest of you to do the same, and share the activities or industry updates you may have in your section or area. I am sure it is in the best interest to us all to share our information in these uncertain times.

Since our first newsletter, we have been working on different projects and ideas that we will share with you, either in this newsletter or in the near future. There are discussions to have and decisions to make during our upcoming face-to-face meeting in Doha in September, where our global leadership team will attend either in person or virtually. The attendees will be our committee chairs, Zone Directors and the Executive Committee.

Also at this meeting, we will have a brainstorming day dedicated to mapping out the future of our association. To this end, we have engaged an external consultant who will help us build the future with the involvement of everyone. I truly believe this will benefit our society in the years to come.

In lieu of a full congress, we are planning to host a Board of Directors meeting in 2022. I would like to thank both Morocco and Qatar for their proposals to host this meeting next year. The final decision on where and when this meeting will take place will be made later on this month when we meet in Doha.



From the President's Desk *(continued)*

Many of you have been asking about updates from India, and we should be able to share an update with you very soon as we are in close dialogue with the hotels. At the same time, I would like to thank you for your trust and patience. I know President Edwin Saldanha and his team have been working tirelessly to have The LaLit start the refund process. We kindly ask if you have any questions in this regard to have them sent to your section President and not directly to the hotel, as this will not help in the ongoing conversations.

The Indian delegation had intended to give all attendees a congress bag, which because it was custom-ordered, could not be returned. We are now looking into whether it makes sense to ship these bags to those members who were registered for the India congress. A trial shipment was sent to the British section, and I would like to thank President Toru Machida for taking this on board to see if this was a feasible solution both in terms of the handling of the shipment as well as the procedures around taxes and costs. The feedback has been positive, and we are looking into possibly shipping the bags to those sections and areas who are interested. We are aware that there may be challenges, and we are also looking at alternative solutions to have this solved the best way possible.

I am also pleased to announce that our long-term partner American Express is ready to support Les Clefs d'Or on the same level as before the pandemic, and we are working on different scenarios to further foster this relationship. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, conversations with our other partners have been positive as well. And in the past couple months, we have been in talks with another international brand, identifying opportunities for working together in the future.

Despite a year when the pandemic has dominated our agenda, I would like to stay positive and believe that the future of our organization looks very positive.

Thank you all for your passion, time and dedication, because only together can we achieve more.

In Service through Friendship,

Your friend,
Anders

Executive Committee

Dear friends,

Your Executive Committee is committed to opening up as many lines of communications with our members as possible. To this end each one of the members of the Executive Committee will be hosting an informal chat session with our members.

These forums will occur on a monthly basis. Sessions will be at various dates and times to allow as many of our members to attend as possible. Any and all of our members are welcome to join the calls.

Each session will be an open forum where you will be able to ask questions, present feedback or discuss ideas. It's your session!

Please stay tuned for dates and times. We are hoping to get the first session up and running soon.

In service through friendship,

Your Executive Committee



COMMITTEE UPDATES

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)



The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Committee is excited to share its latest activities with all of you. We have compiled your answers from the "Guardian of the Guest" questionnaire and are in the process of visualizing the data. This study was in partnership with Forbes and developed by our very own Simon Thomas, Tom Wadley and Judith van der Heijden. We will share the results with you soon.

Furthermore, we studied all the replies from Section Presidents and have begun to select some very worthwhile projects to work on.

Stay tuned for our next updates.

In caring through friendship,

Your CSR Family

Education & Training Committee

The Education & Training Committee offered members a new opportunity to mix and mingle with colleagues during our recent **Social Soirée**.

It has been way too long since we have been able to visit in person at a congress, so this event was designed to allow members to do just that. Through our HopIn platform, you can meet in **Sessions** and chat on screen in group settings, "speed network" in **Networking** with random members or meet one-on-one via direct messaging in **People** by connecting directly with someone.

We created two events so all seven of our Zones would have an opportunity to participate in their time zones. Some joined in for one event, and some even signed in for both!

It was indeed refreshing to reconnect among members, even if for a short time to say HI.





COMMITTEE UPDATES

(continued)

Strategic Partnerships

The Strategic Partnerships Committee was first established in October 2017, with the understanding that each term would be for two years. After each term, two members would step down and be replaced by two new members.

The current team is listed below:

- Shujaat Khan - Chair
- Christophe Hundehege
- Eef Sparla
- Binoy Nair
- Julian Schweikert
- Dominique Guidetti



Pierre Kaiser remained as the manager of this committee. The primary objectives of the committee remained the same.

Preparations to start the mandate:

In order to be fully prepared to launch our activities, a new set of goals were established:

- Update the job descriptions.
- Establish dates for regular conference calls.
- Raise funds for the International Congress, Pan-European Congress and Pan-American Congress.
- Continue to strengthen our relationships with current partners.
- Find new partners who embody our brand.

We created sponsorship tiers for the International Congress in India, and also developed the Masala Ad campaign to tap into smaller donations of €1000 from sponsors who wished to place ads in the congress program.

The committee held three conference calls over six months to discuss, plan and monitor progress.

The Committee

It has been a great pleasure to work under the leadership of Pierre Kaiser. He has been extremely supportive and helped with any questions we had. The committee members made valuable contributions throughout the year in getting Masala Ads, calling vendors for sponsorships and providing input in all phases of our preparations.

Our goals were to:

- Secure sponsorship commitments from existing and new partners.
- Work closely with partners to help with registration if needed.
- Secure artwork for the program.
- Work with the Delhi Committee to ensure proper upgrades for sponsors.
- Assign a committee member to look after sponsors during the congress.

Even though it was difficult to get more sponsors, we were able to give enough funds to India so that they would not have a loss. Edwin, Rajesh and his team were able to get a lot of in-kind donations including cash sponsors. All aspects of Congress preparations were moving forward with full steam. Then came the big jolt – the pandemic. President Levejac and the Executive Committee made the tough decision to cancel the congress in the interest of our members' safety. It was the right move as India went into a total lockdown on March 15. All flights were cancelled and hotels closed. The lockdown remained in effect off and on for six months.

We are proud that we achieved all our goals leading up to the New Delhi Congress. The future timeline will depend on how quickly we recover from the Covid-19 challenges.



Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

By Mayako Sumiyoshi, Les Clefs d'Or Japan

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games were held in Tokyo from July 23rd to August 8th, 2021. The event was postponed for one year for the first time in Olympic history due to the influence of COVID-19. The population of positive cases soared, and public opinion was divided on whether the Olympic Games should take place or not until the last minute.



After Tokyo was selected as the venue in 2013, numerous hotels were constructed and various preparations were done to prepare for this event. Unfortunately, the effort did not pay off and only athletes and related parties were granted entry into Japan and public audiences were not allowed. The situation was very much different from what was to be expected originally.

We, as hotel concierges, had been looking forward to welcoming guests from across the globe during this international event, which followed the World Cup Rugby in the fall of 2019. This was indeed a great setback and a huge disappointment for us.



Although hotels in Tokyo were able to welcome some overseas guests for the first time in a year and a half, we did wish to have more people experience what Tokyo has to offer, with a variety of excitements and without limitations.

Despite the unfortunate circumstances, it was a delight to see the athletes' postings on the SNS of the beautiful sunset from the Olympic village, positive dining experiences at their dining halls as well as their special experiences during their limited time in Tokyo. For example, a Japanese man who stood with a message board of encouragement every morning as the athletes went by bus from the Olympic village, a restaurant owner who closed his restaurant to deliver dinners to the athletes for more than 20 days to satisfy their desire, and many photos of volunteers working hard in the scorching heat. A great number of moving stories were delivered behind the scenes. I am sure our colleagues were able to sense their small share of participation during the event at each of their positions.

It is our hope as hotel concierges that people from throughout the world who watched the Olympic Games on TV and followed the events on social media were able to feel the longing to visit Japan when the globe is safer to travel.

Once again, we were pleasantly reminded how sports can be very moving and have a huge impact through this special event. The torch will now be passed on to France, *le prochain lieu sera Paris 2024!!*





MEMBER SECTION UPDATES

Les Clefs d'Or Bresil

On behalf of *Les Clefs d'Or Brésil*, I am very pleased to share what's been going on in our section with you. Les Clefs d'Or Brésil celebrates **Concierge Day** every year, on June 29th, as it is Saint Peter's Day. Saint Peter is well known for keeping the keys of heaven with him, and as concierges who know our cities inside and out, we are often described as keepers of "the keys of our cities" as well.

Usually, we do one full day of activities in each city, with cultural events, one educational lecture and a party. Sadly, we were not able to do this for the last two years. Instead, we held a 3-day online event, including one virtual city tour through the city of Olinda, located on the northeast region of the country. On the second day, we did an open table discussion with representatives from our cities' important Convention Bureaus; from São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and Curitiba. To end our celebration, we organized a virtual "happy hour," and it was fun! Hopefully next year we will be able to celebrate our day, personally, without fear of gathering near each other.

This year we are facing a very cold winter, the coldest in the last 20 years. In order to help the local community, CSR Teams from both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro raised a campaign to collect clothes to donate to the needy. Together, we got more than 400 pieces!

Luckily, COVID numbers are decreasing in the country, and vaccination efforts are at full throttle. Hopefully we will be able to do face-to-face meetings again soon, and I will be very happy to share them with you.



The UAE chapter elected a new executive committee for 2021 to 2024 and to lead them through the Dubai Expo 2020.

Abey Sam (National President & Chief Concierge of JW Marriott Marquis Dubai) was re-elected as the president to lead our association through this amazing and challenging time. He said: "It is the most unusual times for the association. However, the professionalism every member has shown only comes with dedication and passion for the keys everyone wears on their lapel. The committee elected is the torch bearer to continue the success story for the next three years." This chapter has a history to deliver the unimaginable and with the World's Greatest Show Expo 2020 they plan to be an integral part of it.

The UAE chapter resumed its in-person monthly meetings after restrictions were lifted by the local authorities. With great vaccination numbers this meant life could become a little bit normal. All members showed up to the event, and Les Clefs d'Or UAE is strong and ready for the next challenge.

Les Clefs d'Or UAE will be resuming membership interviews to select new members to join the chapter. It will be of benefit to have more hotel representation before the Expo gets under way.



MEMBER SECTION UPDATES *(continued)*

Les Clefs d'Or Maroc

February 20, 2021: Les Clefs d'Or Maroc organized a trip to Tadmamet, a remote village located in Sidi Faress Valley in the Atlas Mountains. Given the conditions of extreme cold which the 46 families must face during the winter season, Les Clefs d'Or Maroc distributed a variety of warm clothing items along with many grocery baskets filled with foods of prime necessity in the area.



April 25, 2021: We celebrated the 69th anniversary of the foundation of Les Clefs d'Or. We would have liked to extend the invitation to all members, however, in compliance with the current Covid-19 sanitary restrictions, we had to limit the attendance to EXCO members. I seize this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude and sincere thanks to Pastry Chef, Yasmina, who gracefully hosted this event at the JASMIN'S YUMMIES, the pastry shop that she owns and runs. Yasmina and her staff indeed made our event a 'sweet' and memorable one. The CAKE was delicious and savory, and the warm and meticulous service embodied the highest level of professionalism.



May 7, 2021: We honoured the sacred month of Ramadan by dedicating our 'give back' efforts to the men and women (Artists/Entertainers, Hlakiya) who gain their daily bread on the Jamaa El Fna Square. This world-famous place, which represents the heart of the red city, has been horribly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The virus has absolutely reduced this loud and forever joyful place to an empty sad, silent space, leaving these hundreds of men and women with truly no resources. Les Clefs d'Or Maroc, along with another four benefactors, namely the Association of Tour Guides, the Assafou Formation and Development Association, the Brand Factory and Tourism Organizations, have together coordinated with the six associations that represent the Jamaa El Fna Square artists, donated food baskets stacked generously with daily food essentials, as well as some cash envelopes. These donations went to the Snake Charmers, Storytellers, Gnaoua bands, etc., who found themselves in dire need of financial resources due to the pandemic. A minor 'give-back' gesture from us to the mythical Square Jemaa El Fna entertainers that welcome millions of tourists every year. For this project, we also wish to THANK the local authorities and the Conseil Régional du Tourisme De Marrakech for their support and assistance.



May 25, 2021: We had the honor of hosting Mr Sujaat Khan and his wife Mrs Linda Khan. Mr Sujaat is an outstanding high-profile concierge, and a member of both the American National Board and of the Strategic Partnerships Committee Chair, UICH Les Clefs d'Or. For them, we arranged an excursion to explore the scenic High Atlas Mountains. On our way back, we visited an Art gallery called "Al Maqam" in "Tahnaout", which lies at foot of the lofty ranges. We were treated to a splendid lunch by the, world-famous painter, and the owner of the gallery, Mr. Mohammed Mourabiti.



MEMBER SECTION UPDATES *(continued)*

Les Clefs d'Or Japan

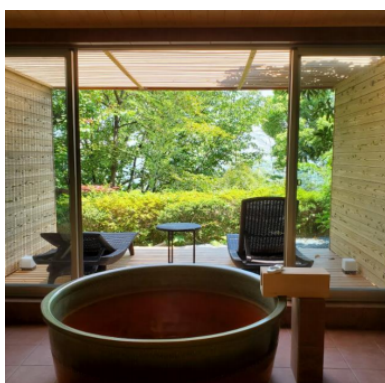
A Visit to the first Curation Hotel in Japan

Recently in June 2021, nine members from Les Clefs d'Or Japan gathered at Atami, a seaside city on Japan's Izu peninsula and visited the first Curation Hotel there. Greeted by Ms. Noriko Sawayama, the representative director of Curation Hotel, and Mr. Yu Ito, Manager of Momoyama Gaen, the Les Clefs d'Or entourage was taken on a tour to visit the three buildings that make up Curation Hotels, which are Momoyama Gaen, Suto-Suien and Tounoya-an.

This luxury one house accommodation facility is also a place to enjoy traditional Japanese architecture, craft, art, and fusion of local industries. The facility is furnished with sophisticated art, furniture, and beautiful walls and floor that complete the charming atmosphere.

Curation Hotel has important missions other than being an accommodation facility. The missions are: To preserve traditional architecture. To pass on traditional techniques. To activate local industry and art, with selected materials with cultural inheritance. And also being able to display the art and furniture to enhance the structure. We all were deeply impressed learning the importance of passing on our tradition, and it was a great opportunity to rediscover the gems of Japanese culture.

We are looking forward to introduce this amazing hotel to our guests. We are also excited that this will give us a chance to connect more with the Atami region and will bring more quality tourism to the region. Hopefully the sparkle between Curation Hotel and Concierges will be a connection to the world.
<https://curationhotel.com/>



Welcoming New Members to Les Clefs d'Or Japan

We are excited to announce and welcome two new members to Les Clefs d'Or Japan!



Ms. Rise Kame
Assistant Chief Concierge
Conrad Tokyo

Ms. Asako Koike
Concierge
Grand Hyatt Tokyo



Quarantine Hotels – An Insight from Our Members

By Sharezal Abdul Wahid – Society of the Golden Keys Malaysia

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, some hotels have been gazetted as Quarantine Hotels; a facility to temporarily house travellers from abroad, serving their mandatory quarantine period. Not without its risks, these brave hoteliers working in these kinds of hotels are considered our country's frontliners, working to protect us all from any possible spread of the virus from abroad.

Here we share the first-hand experiences of working in quarantine hotels from three of our members:

Mr. Badrul Hisham Nasarudin, Concierge Manager of the Putrajaya Marriott

Mr. CK Tan, Assistant Front Office Manager of Dorsett Grand Subang

Mr. Ali Saifuddin, Concierge Manager of Hilton Petaling Jaya

How is your hotel faring as a quarantine hotel?

Hotels are selected to be quarantine hotels by the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), and training is provided by the Civil Defense Forces and personnel from the Ministry of Health Malaysia. We are given strict safety guidelines to adhere to and are provided with the information, skills, required tools and protective gear to ensure everyone's safety while dealing with guests quarantining from abroad. It took us awhile to get used to the very strict rules and SOPs, suiting-in and out of (PPE) suits almost every few hours and overcoming our very real daily fear of becoming infected. However, as time went by, it all started to become routine and we got used to the humdrum of our daily tasks, and in doing so, we have played a pivotal role in helping our hotels 'stay afloat' during these very challenging times.

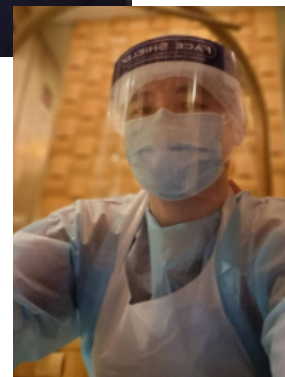
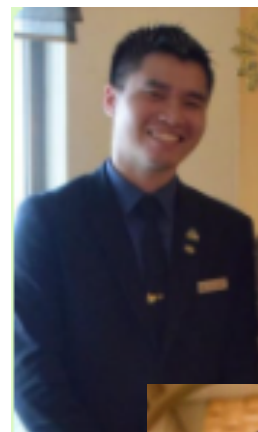
How has the service you offered your guests prior to the pandemic changed?

Despite having to protect our guests and ourselves by keeping a protective distance and having to wear masks and other protective gear, as hoteliers and especially as concierges, our innate hospitality and hidden smiles still shine through our eyes and welcoming gestures. Most of our guests are those quarantining, therefore most of our interaction with them is done remotely via online communication through WhatsApp or the room phones. The only time we physically see our guests who are generally categorised as "Person Under Surveillance" or PUS, would be when they arrive (usually in groups) and we check them in. Requests are made via the room phones and WhatsApp, and their movement within the hotel is restricted within the confines of their room. Deliveries of any items to their rooms (luggage, daily meals, etc.) are pre-scheduled and recorded by the government officials on duty, and delivered by our team, in full PPE suits. Any irregular requests from guests will have to get prior approval from the officials on duty.

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Mr Badrul
Putrajaya Marriott



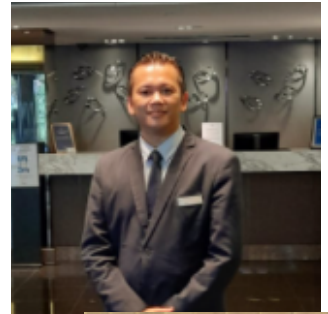
Mr CK Tan
Dorsett Grand Subang



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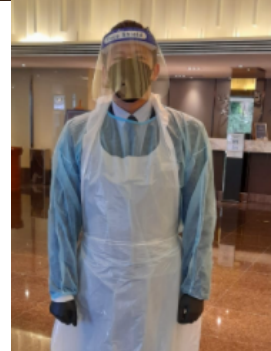
What are the challenges you face in the type of service you offer now?

Our first challenge was adapting to the very controlled and restricted movements in carrying out our duties. Having to wear PPE suits for extended hours at a time can be rather stifling. Second would be dealing with guests who find it hard to adhere to the quarantine restrictions. Some guests under quarantine arrive with high expectations of receiving the same five-star service they were used to prior to the pandemic. At times, we also encounter guests who suffer from depression because of being confined; we try our best to comfort them and make their stay as comfortable as possible. Another challenge faced is when there is a breakdown in communication; especially when dealing with guests from countries and there is a language barrier.



A summary of your daily tasks in a quarantine hotel:

Our day in a Quarantine Hotel generally starts with a thorough inspection of all our equipment (temperature scanners, hand sanitizer dispensers, etc.) ensuring they are all in working order. Then we will sanitize all our working stations and disinfect all our equipment and public access areas. This is scheduled and repeated every hour throughout the day. We will then study the arrival and departure list and the transportation arrangements for the day. All vehicles are disinfected before and after each transfer. We ensure that we have sufficient manning and are available to help with the check-in process, assisting the officials on duty with the relevant paperwork and reports.



Upon arrival, guests are given a list of Do's and Don'ts for their quarantine period, and a list of limited activities and contact details they may need for the duration of their stay. Meals and other items are delivered according to the pre-set schedule. We try our best to assist with any unusual requests, although they need prior approval from the said officials. Occasionally we do courtesy calls to rooms to check on our guest's comfort, and also provide moral support to the PUS in-house, as being in the room for 14 days can be very challenging to some. As additional services, we also provide items on loan such as phone chargers, etc. for those who need them. In the evenings, we stock up on PPEs in preparation for the next day's operations. We also check on the next day's arrivals to ensure all is ready to face the next day's challenges.

Mr Ali
Hilton Petaling Jaya



In Service Through Friendship During Covid-19

By Leigh Anne Dolecki, Les Clefs d'Or USA

We really are fortunate to belong to an organization based on friendship, especially during a pandemic. How far does our commitment to "In Service through Friendship" reach beyond our desks and hotels? This article is about taking stock of our personal and collective mental health, of being kind and respectful of the many different – and difficult – circumstances we are each facing. It is full of resources and references on the many different emotional conditions resulting from sustained and long-term identity loss and isolation. But mostly, this essay is about lifting each other up as we continue to endure uncertainty and enormous change.

We have always counted on friends to help us through a bad day or a difficult life change, but this pandemic has taken everything to a whole new level. Everyone is, at once, uniquely and collectively affected. It can be difficult to manage our own emotions, let alone nurture our friendships. For many of us, it might feel difficult to reach out for help, or it may seem too daunting to answer a call or respond to a text. For others, it might feel safer to reach out to no one because we don't have the time to care for everyone. What is happening?

In the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#), columnist Elizabeth Wellington reminds us that our friends may be vulnerable, that our relationships may be imbalanced. In many ways, we are at emotional odds with each other. Those who have been [languishing](#) may feel jealous toward those who returned to work right away. When you are still unemployed and the unpaid bills are mounting, it can be tough to listen to just how hard your friend's job is with minimal staffing, bare bones amenities and guests who ignore the safety guidelines. Conversely, those who have been working crazy hours in understaffed hotels may experience jealousy that they are working so hard while you are seemingly at home enjoying snacks and Netflix. It is not easy to share a rough day at work with a friend who has lost his or her job and has no immediate prospects. [Workplace survivor's guilt](#) is real. [Pandemic depression](#) is also real.

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In Service Through Friendship During Covid-19

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Our friends have not only lost their jobs, but they are also grieving lost loved ones. Perhaps they have given up their home, relocated, moved in with family members or roommates. Perhaps friends have been sick or injured and are experiencing challenges in getting timely medical care. Some of us have been and continue to be in financial distress or taken a job in an unrelated field to pay the bills. Others have been home-schooling their children and struggling to keep little ones engaged and active. Lives have completely changed within a truly short time, not by choice, and with little to no time to process the change. In a recent [New Yorker article](#), David Byrne observed: "All of us have had loss...this loss needs to be acknowledged." Let us take that a step further: we've all experienced emotions and feelings that, although normal, have been amplified to extreme degrees: anxiety, fear, anger, loneliness, isolation, exhaustion, jealousy, sorrow. The struggle to cope with our emotions is consuming; so much so that, without realizing it, we lose sight of the suffering of our friends and loved ones.



Many of us have already returned or will soon return to work. Many others will not return to their hotels; concierge desks have been eliminated and the area renovated into additional lobby space. Concierges have retired, some by choice, but more often not.

Let us celebrate those who have returned to their desks, those who are creating new desks, opening new hotels, relocating to new cities, congratulations to you! We combine that with our support, knowing that you are most likely the only concierge working, or at best, with only one or two other staff members, and are working harder than ever. You go home at night numb with exhaustion and stress

Let us also support those of you who have returned to work in less than desirable conditions such as steep pay cuts, minimal hours, and difficult schedules. We understand your sorrow, frustration, and sense of loss.

And let us remember and support those who have nowhere to return to, or who do not yet know what their future holds. We share your anxiety, and we feel your fear. We hear and support you all.

No doubt COVID-19 has been traumatizing, more so for some than others, and entering the new normal will be a gradual process, again more so for some than others. It is reported that many people are experiencing [agoraphobia](#), [social anxiety disorder](#), and [symptoms of PTSD](#). "In the diagnosis of PTSD, one of the first criteria is [being] at risk for serious harm or death or [knowing] someone at risk," says [Keith Morgen](#), Ph.D., the director of the graduate counselling program at Centenary University. "Even if you didn't know someone who died from COVID-19, you were still living in the same world as COVID-19." Many of our members have been living the new normal for some time now, while others have yet to enter it. Psychiatrist Dr. Arthur Bergman writes about the fear of going out in public, calling it "[Cave Syndrome](#)." A key factor in our friendships is understanding and having empathy for what each of us feels as we adapt to the new normal.



The concept of empathy is nothing new to us. But has empathy fallen to the bottom of our priority list? This article on [How to Practice Empathy](#) was published at the beginning of the lockdown, and while it doesn't break any new ground, it is well worth a moment of thought, especially after this painful year.

One of our friends used the analogy of having an injured friend who is wheelchair-bound. How much time would one spend telling that friend how excited they are about an upcoming vacation? A few minutes? Twenty minutes? Probably just a few minutes, because when you see the wheelchair, it's a visual cue to be sensitive. But when friends are inwardly wheelchair-bound, struggling with their own emotions, fear, and anxiety, there isn't any visual cue. Sometimes empathy means saying less and listening more.

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In Service Through Friendship – *During Covid-19*

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So, how can we empathetically demonstrate love and support for each other? The hope is, now that restrictions are lifting, it might be easier to reach out to friends. We have more things to talk about, we can make a date to see each other. We have more hope for the future. It has been a long haul, and maybe now it is time to break the ice and reach out.

As we learn how to be even more empathetic, let us review our own situations. How can we make sure we are taking the best possible care of our personal mental health and that of our loved ones?

In these uncertain times (pandemic cliché fatigue is also real), we can, and should, depend on what we know. We know we are resilient; our friendships are resilient. We know we are resourceful; we are problem solvers and caregivers. As my colleague and friend Frank Hernandez put it, "Focusing on the positive is good, but in order for our profession to survive, we have to be concierges, and be concierges to each other..."



As I summarize this essay, I really have to stop and reflect. I've been in my own bubble of isolation after sustaining a concussive head injury in an accident just before the pandemic. After sixteen months, I continue to hope for relief from the debilitating headaches. This assignment became its own journey of friendship. I'm still laughing at Robert Marks' indignance at being turned down by Target. During my conversation with RobinJill Hochmeyer, I unwittingly called her Tillie (the late Tillie Thompson, who succumbed to Covid last year), and we decided it was because Tillie just wanted to join the conversation. Laughing at Kathleen Fitzgerald's bigger-than-life sense of humor, sharing a good cry with Frank Hernandez, sitting in awe of Shujaat Khan, wincing at the thought of anyone showing hate to Daisaku Vondran or his mom... Knowing that some of you declined to share your stories because your emotions are still too raw, or because you feel somehow shamed or isolated...

All of this confirms, for me, just what Friendship in Service really means. As President Nathan Goff reminds us, we've all been in the same storm, just in different boats. Yes, a few of us have found ourselves in the proverbial yacht, but many of us have been struggling upstream in rowboats and canoes.

Now the storm is clearing. I encourage us to reconnect and share our stories, our strengths, and our weaknesses. When we practice our empathy, we can gain a whole new perspective on the meaning of "In Service through Friendship."



Your Les Clefs d'Or Key Updates is a periodical newsletter published independently by the Communications Committee of Les Clefs d'Or International, highlighting the activities carried by members across the globe.

Should you wish to share your respective section news or activities to be featured in future publications, kindly forward via email to: assistantsecretary@lesclefsdor.org