

Transcript: Public Relations

Missouri Arts Safety Alliance

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Abby Crawford, director of education, COCA, St. Louis

Unitey Kull, director of external affairs, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

Andrew Warshauer

Welcome to the Missouri ArtSafe public relations webinar. My name is Andrew Warshauer. I'm the director of marketing and communications for the Kranzberg Arts Foundation.

Today's webinar is presented by the Missouri Arts Safety Alliance, a collaboration of over 20 organizations in Missouri. The webinars are presented with platform support from ArtsKC and the Kranzberg Arts Foundation. So first, I wanted to provide you with an update on Missouri ArtSafe. They currently have 44 organizations that have been Missouri ArtSafe certified. To view a full list and for more information on how your organization can become certified, please visit MissouriArtSafe.org.

Now, a few housekeeping notes before we get started. This webinar will be recorded and transcribed. It will be sent you via email. It'll also be archived at MissouriArtSafe.org to watch and share. We ask that all questions are placed in the Q&A section of the chat at the bottom of your screen, and we'll leave time at the end to answer your questions. Also, at the end of the webinar, you'll be prompted to answer a survey. It should only take you a few minutes and will help us plan future webinars. So please take the time to fill it out.

With that said, let me introduce you to our panel. Kwofe Coleman began his Muny career in 1998 as an usher, and has served as managing director since 2018. Coleman has held several other positions at The Muny, including staff accountant, house manager, digital communications manager, and director of marketing. In the director of marketing communications position, Coleman directed the team responsible for all external communications, marketing campaigns, and the development of strategies to meet The Muny's annual revenue budget.

Among his duties as the managing director, Coleman oversees the organizational, financial, and business affairs of The Muny, embracing and articulating the artistic and institutional vision. This includes the development of annual budgets, determining income and expenses assumptions, and overseeing those revenues and expenditures. In this position, he also takes a leadership role in developing new and expanded income streams and creating strategic initiatives to expand and deepen The Muny's commitment, community engagement, educational and outreach efforts.

He was a 2018 fellowship advisor at the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland, and is the vice president of the board of directors for the National Alliance of Musical Theatres. He has also remained an active contributor to the St. Louis community, with local activities including the advisory board for Common Circles, advisory council for Cor Jesu Academy, founding board for Atlas School, and as a mentor for the Urban League's Save Our Sons program, and other social service organizations. He's the recipient of the St. Louis American's Salute to Young Leaders Award and the 2019 St. Louis Business Journal's 40 under 40. Thank you Kwofe for joining us.

Next, we have Abby Crawford, the director of education at COCA. Before joining COCA in 2016, Abby worked as a classroom teacher, program manager, and a designer of teacher preparation and learning experiences in

St. Louis, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Houston. Most recently, she worked with Teach for America, St. Louis, including a regional training institute for all incoming St. Louis Corps members. Abby holds a B.A. in political science communication studies at Texas Christian University and an M.A. from Webster University. Abby, thank you so much for being here.

Finally, as director of external affairs of the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Unitey Kull is responsible for marketing, communications, and visitor services, seeking to grow CAM's audience and reputation locally, nationally, and internationally. She also oversees the museum's earned revenue operation, retail, cafe, bar, and facility rentals.

Prior to joining CAM in 2011, Unitey was the executive director of the Manhattan New Music Project in New York City, where she led the organization to receive a five-year, four point six million dollar federal innovation grant. In addition to consulting for a variety of nonprofits, her background includes managing cultural grant programs for the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs. Unitey holds an M.B.A. in strategic management and public policy from the George Washington University and a B.A. in visual arts from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Thank you so much for being here.

So to get started, I'd really love to hear from each of you about how you handled the rapid influx of information over the past few months. And what you thought were successes in your communication and any pitfalls we can learn from as a community. Abby, would you mind starting it off?

Abby Crawford

I was fearful you were going to ask me first! For us, we're really fortunate at COCA to have an operations team that focuses on the way our facility runs and the way that we welcome folks into our studio spaces, even in non COVID times. And so during this particular moment in time, that team has served a very different function in making sure that we're sifting through all of the information that's available and ever changing and that we chose internally to take the most conservative interpretation of the information out there, because I think others can probably relate that very little of the policies and procedures that were recommended locally and nationally were like, hey, museum, do this, or, hey, art studio, do this. Right?

And so we had to really make a lot of very calculated inferences, choose a really conservative approach. And then our third piece is that we've been really consistent with it. So we piloted a set of procedures this summer at a very small scale. And we have maintained those procedures into the fall, even in some cases when we probably could have loosened a little bit. We have stayed really consistent because when you're working with children primarily, that consistency is really, really important.

I don't know if that's helpful, but that's how we approached it. And then every day, we find things out, we're like, oh, that's new information, we'll add that to what we what we know.

Andrew Warshauer

Thank you. Unitey, do you mind running us through it what CAM has done?

Unitey Kull

Sure, so in the beginning, it kind of felt like all of a sudden we were trying to be health experts, working in a museum...so much information, and we are about 18 full time and then we have a number of part time. But we have a decent amount of structure. We don't have a dedicated team that would deal with something like this. So we actually put together what we called our interdepartmental task force, and that was super helpful.

We had a number of meetings. We were just trying to consume as much information as possible. We would meet departmentally and as senior staff and within departments and just trying to learn from other institutions.

At one point, I think in our plan, we were talking about the Arnot and we were, we don't even understand what that means, we're not the health experts. So we decided that we would really pay attention to what the city is saying, what the mayor's office is saying. And ultimately we put together a plan. We got a lot of comments and suggestions and questions from the rest of the staff and then presented it to the board, got it ratified, went through the city office, got it approved.

In the meantime, our curatorial staff was trying to figure out what we were going to do with the exhibitions on view because they were scheduled to come down in April. And it's dealing with all the lenders and the special rigging equipment company. And ultimately, we were able to get approval for the exhibitions to stay up through August. And really, I think we felt like we had our plan mid to the end of June, and by then it was about training and really making sure that our front line staff felt comfortable.

We had to build the ticketing side of our website. So it was just a lot of new at once. But generally we felt pretty good about it. These exhibitions came down in August. We had a moment to really reset and reflect and then we had to develop - what does an opening look like? CAM usually gets about a thousand people on an evening for an opening, so we decided we would have an opening that went from noon to 8 p.m., and how would the tickets work?

It's all been a work in progress. But I feel like we feel good about it and I feel like all of our staff feel comfortable with the approach that we've taken.

Andrew Warshauer

Thank you. Now, Kwofe, what's been going on with The Muny?

Kwofe Coleman

I think Abby and Unitey made a number of really very valid and true points about looking at what the experts in the fields were saying.

At the beginning there was such an influx, like you said, of information that trying to discern which one, what's true, what's not, what makes sense, it can be overwhelming. So, we stuck with health experts. We stuck with science internally. Similarly, we also took our team and subdivided into areas so that everyone wasn't trying to absorb everything.

So there were a group that worked together identifying if we were to open, how much PPE would we need and what are those items or what are most effective. There was a different team that was talking about working with our front of house team as to how would the entrance and exit procedures work. A different team was looking at our relationships with some of the other unions and trades that we work with to see the feasibility. And then those groups and a representative worked together pretty regularly. It started off every week. Then it was every couple of days, and it felt like every five minutes.

And that was the reality. But I think what helped us internally the most was not feeling like any one person or any one group had to know everything. And that made a good difference for us internally.

Externally, transparency I think was the most effective thing that we could do. Knowing that we would either have an opening day or not an opening day, and that meant there was a season or not a season. We basically had two options, for a regular season or an extended season. And we told the public well in advance the day that we'd have to make that decision by, and that it would be one of two things, so that when we did speak externally, there was a trust in knowing that, look, these are the two options. We're telling you what we're deciding between and you're seeing the same news. You're seeing the same information that we're seeing.

Whenever we spoke in between then, I think it was always helpful, both internally and externally, to give the backup or the support for what these certain decisions are. If we're talking about thresholds of how many

people could gather for the office, then we gave them the background of where that came from, so people could feel empowered to research on their own and understand where those choices were coming from.

When we talk about pitfalls, I think that we probably all run into this question of that you hope that you can explain it well enough, that everyone will understand and accept the seriousness and the gravity of what we were dealing with. The truth of the matter is everyone exists on a sliding scale of belief or acceptance or whatever you want to call it, of what the health landscape was. So at some point, you just have to say we're making the best choice based on the facts we have with respect to everyone else's opinion, but knowing that we have to make that decision based on the community. I think we'll get to negative feedback a little bit lower in the agenda. But learning to absorb that and move on was new in this sense.

Andrew Warshauer

It's certainly a tough call. The information was evolving throughout the whole process, so not easy work that I know we all have to deal with. Kind of follow-up is then, as part of Missouri ArtSafe, we're asking that organizations publish their safety plans. So I'm curious how you all are communicating your plans and policies to guests and to the public.

Kwofe Coleman

I can answer pretty easily because we don't have guests right now. We're seasonal, so we don't have anything to communicate. When we do, by all means possible - we'll email, we'll print, everything will be online. We'll use partnerships like these to put that information out. And I think these partnerships are helpful because as we approach the fall, the winter and next summer, when hopefully more things are open, we're all going to need to be megaphones for each other. So I think that these things will help, but I own that we have it a little bit easier at the moment because we're not even supposed to be open anyway.

Abby Crawford

Yeah! For us, we started our fall semester the Tuesday after Labor Day, so September 8. But like I said earlier, we piloted two days a week, low scale, five-week kind of semester, mini mester, this summer. And so all the information, all of our policies and procedures are on our website. When families register, they also sign a commitment form that they are going to uphold the entrance screening policies and procedures, et cetera. We have trained all of our teaching artists in COVID modifications.

We also opened a new facility during the pandemic. I don't recommend that, but we did it! And so part of that training also included physical scheduled tours with our teaching artists so that they were really comfortable in the new spaces and that wasn't an additional barrier to their success in the studio.

Then we have maintained, obviously, a running set of procedures and policies on our website, including most recently, updates to include exactly what families should do or we ask families to do if and when they become exposed and need to opt out of classes for a set amount of time.

One of the biggest shifts we've made in our model is that families are now dropping students off at the door versus coming into the building with them. That has been a huge shift for us. We have never in our history done that before. So we also have more staff available to kind of be the parents in the hallways, if you will, and be supportive of kids. But what that has done is also set us up to know very accurately who is in the building. So if and when there is an exposure, we're able to communicate with those folks directly.

It has also meant that we have limited our classes and experiences to older students. So we're not doing anything with kids that are under six because, of course, one of the things that the county health department shared with us when we were writing our plan for approval - we sit in the county by about three quarters of a mile and so that's who approves our reopening - they said, don't make a procedure or policy that is bad for kids, but good for COVID.

So, for example, don't have a situation where an adult is not allowed to get out of their car to help a kid with a seatbelt when really that needs to happen. So we just need to ask them to have their masks on, et cetera. As a parent and as an educator, that feedback from the county was so helpful because it helped me think about the whole kid, the whole team. And then how do we communicate that to families? Because they're trusting us with their children and they're not even in the building to supervise what's happening.

So that communication with families has been really central to our work to this point. And quite frankly, just ongoing. Obviously, answering individual families' questions. If there are changes to our policy, we are texting families, as we know folks right now are just inundated with email and that sort of thing. And we're just making sure that we're staying, to Kwofe's point, as transparent as humanly possible.

Unitey Kull

So we did the usual things. We had to figure out where this information would live on our website. We had to figure out a ticketing system because as a free museum, we don't have tickets, but as part of that, we were able to build a system that that lays it right out when you make your free reservation, here's what to expect. You have to wear a mask and practice social distancing. Don't come in if you're sick, et cetera, et cetera. Please let us know if you need to cancel. And then we have a reminder that goes out right before. And then with that, we also have information for contact tracing.

We did decide that we wanted to be able to allow walk-ins based on availability. We try to be really accessible. So we think a lot about signage. We've got a sign outside that basically says, walk in. We get about 40 percent walk-in, which is kind of fascinating. We've got the sign on the door. We have the big sign. Once you walk into the space here, all the things, and something we stole from a museum in Milwaukee was, be kind to each other. This is the human aspect, obviously with social, et cetera.

Once we figured out the date, I think we reopened on July 9, so late June, we put out the press release. Thankfully, that got picked up a little bit. And then we looked at what PR partnerships, social partnerships we could do. So Curbside STL, Explore St. Louis, just thinking about how could we get out the word a little bit more. We haven't quite gone to influencer marketing, but it's something that we've contemplated, the whole "wearing a mask in a museum, this is how I'm visiting!"

And frankly, people have been coming, we have significantly limited our capacity based on...we said, well, if people need to be six feet apart, it's not even about that percentage of the venue, but we have all these gallery spaces. How are we going to do that? So we decided we actually only have one ticket every 15 minutes, which allows us to have availability for walk-ins.

I think from the public's standpoint, it's been working well. With our school community, this has been a whole nother...we have curbside pickup for art supplies, we've been dealing with Zoom, I think there's been a lot of one to one communications. We're still talking to our education partners. Yeah, all the things.

Abby Crawford

All the things, yeah.

Andrew Warshauer

That's super helpful and leads me into my next question. We're talking about guests a lot, but also we do know that there are a number of constituents and people who attend our programs that aren't guests, strictly. They're educators, they're staff, and they're partners. What strategies have you all developed to stay in touch with that kind of category of people? And what have you found to be successful?

Abby Crawford

Right now, we have done all of our professional development and workshops, so part of my department is responsible for stewarding all of our community partnerships and all of our school-based partnerships. And

we have used virtual platforms, primarily Zoom, to still engage in the planning, in the professional development that we would typically do and the collaboration that we would typically do.

We do have virtual after-school programs happening with several community partners. We have some virtual camps that were happening through St. Louis Public Library, et cetera. And we also are just in really heavy responsive mode. I'm a public school parent. My girls both attend school in St. Louis public schools. And so I see the realities of our partners from a lot of vantage points. And the reality, I believe, is that our schools are navigating just a torrential downpour of variables that I feel really privileged that my variables are very different in my work.

So we've taken the approach of care and maintaining relationships. And I've also really reinforced with my team the concept in the mindset of hibernation versus cancellation. So I'm not saying that...bears hibernate, but they wake up! They're not in the hole for the rest of their lives, I would hope. I think they wake up! That's what I was taught! So that's our approach with our partners right now. We're really remaining as flexible as possible and saying to them, if you need to hibernate for this period of time, we want to support you in that. And when you're ready to reignite, we're ready to do that. That also means for us that's language we have to use and are responsible to use with any of our stewards and funding partners as well.

And I think what is remarkably apparent and also very helpful about the pandemic is that there is no one that I know of that this has not touched. So if I'm calling up a financial partner or I'm calling up a school partner, everyone's in the same boat. It's not a shock. We have to hibernate this partnership or this is not going to happen in this in the way that we originally planned. No one is shocked by that. That is really great because it means that we can continue to work in a different format or we can continue to work at a later date.

Kwofe Coleman

Abby, again, touched on a number of important points, I think for us, to create a season, to create a show, there are a number of different disciplines, trades, that come together. They are represented by, simply put, by different labor unions and different groups. So what we found when we were preparing for the possibility of the season last year and as we start to prepare now, is each of these groups have a different set of criteria or needs to make, to deem the environment or what they do to feel safe.

And the truth is often they don't necessarily overlap too much to this extent in other places. And what we found is that we were become a little bit of a clearinghouse of different criteria that everybody wants to see. How can we marry those concepts to work in a theater or in an environment, ours being a little bit unique with the outdoor aspect. It's different how they have to work together here than a lot of other places. But the sharing of best practices of much different groups, when a pandemic hits, that communication amongst these groups falls apart. It's not the top priority. Employment and safety is.

So helping figure out ways for these groups to work together has been the difference for us. The truth is we can't do it without any one of them, so it's not like we can plug and play and replace. It behooves us to make sure that we can find some of that synergy. And we found that sharing that information has been helpful to some extent.

Again, we had to make an early choice that was a fact in the summer and that was it. And there were essentially nine months removed. So we continue to look at how the landscape changes, but there are no decisions for us to make in October that we think will be relevant come June. We keep looking at where we stay the course hopeful and optimistic, but still prepare for a couple of those eventualities.

Unitey Kull

I completely agree with what Abby said, this is happening to everyone, we remind ourselves as a staff sometimes that this is like, yeah, and what you were saying, Kwofe, that we're lucky we have jobs, we're healthy, what's the bigger picture? And the way that we've approached partners is really collaboratively, case

by case. I know that our learning and engagement team just did a really great hybrid onsite, online connection with their teaching artists for training.

I think for every community group that we're working with, it could be hibernating, it could be coming up with a new program together, working on a Zoom program together. It's sort of everyone's in it together, which is nice.

Andrew Warshauer

It is nice to know that none of us are alone in having to face these challenges. One of the biggest challenges that might come up for organizations is having a COVID positive case. I'm curious if you all have a plan in place or how you might approach if someone on staff, if an artist, if a performer, an educator has a case, how you might address that with the public.

Unitey Kull

We had a little bit of a scare this summer and it was a little crazy. The last weekend of our spring-summer exhibitions, we were fully booked online, everybody with the last weekend to come in and see the shows. And then one of our visitors service associates, one of our frontline staff, threw up in the bathroom.

This was at probably 1 p.m. And nausea, vomiting is one of a long list of COVID symptoms. But it's not a core, it's not like a fever. So immediately the visitor services manager calls me and we talk and she says, I just...everybody, staff, we would feel comfortable if we closed for the rest of the afternoon. We got the executive director in on it immediately and we decided, out of an abundance of caution, fine, we're going to close. I have to admit, it's a little hard to close when you have a lot of people that want to see the shows and you're getting a lot of good PR from.

But we were lucky that with our reservation system, as I said (and I'm sure everybody has a reservation system), we had contact info. So we had somebody that's just calling all the people and telling them, we're going to try to fit you in tomorrow. Our plan basically was, we had enough staff and we were able to call around and figure it out that none of the staff that were on site could come in the next day, that we could have a fresh start, we would do the extra cleaning, but we decided that it would be OK. Then immediately the woman that wasn't feeling well would go get a COVID test. She was sort of the idea of patient zero. Then if something happened, we would communicate that out. But ultimately it was from a migraine. She was fine. But we put it out on Twitter and Instagram and put a sign on the building.

It was hard, but I think people really understand right now and they kind of expect it. When we were coming up with the language, we were shy to use the word COVID, and honestly, it felt like probably it wasn't covered. So we just said, out of an abundance of caution, CAM is closing for the remainder of the day. It was a little hard because on the next day we had a lot of people coming in and we had to turn some people away.

But I feel like we prioritize our staff. And obviously, if something happened to a visitor or a teacher, whomever, we're going to do that over staying open. And I feel like we're nimble enough or small enough. We've got our cell phones. We can just make the call and then communicate it out.

Abby Crawford

For us, as I shared earlier, because children are entering studio spaces and with teaching artists, there's a lot of risk mitigators that we have in place.

We screen at the door, the temperature check, the questions. Everyone is in masks at all times. Every child or student, I should say, has a hundred square feet taped off that is their space in which to move. In every studio, we have these Ghostbuster guns. That's what I call them! They look they're the coolest...I want one for my house so bad you don't even know—if one goes missing, you'll know where it went. But we sanitize every studio between every class, all of the stereo equipment and that sort of stuff is wiped down.

All of our vocal music classes are all virtual; our art and design are primarily virtual with individual tools; all those things. I name all of those because those were very intentional risk mitigators. And so what that means for us –we use some decision flow charts that are out there, there's one from Wash U Pediatrics that was just published a few weeks ago, that really was designed for schools, but is very helpful in this context about layers of risk mitigators that help reduce the risk of exposure.

So if and when there is a positive case, when someone is, oh, I was in this class on this day and now I have COVID, we contact everyone. And this has happened one time. So let's be honest, right? We contact everybody in that class. We obviously make sure that they have access to all of our virtual offerings. And so our classes are livestream capable. They're Zoom capable when necessary.

Then over the summer, we also used some downtime because our teaching artists had some downtime because we were not doing as many classes. We had all of our artists prerecord several lessons in alignment with their curriculum that we now have as a catalog of resources. And so we're able to then let the families know that were in that class, "This is what happened. Here's the day that it happened. Here's your menu of options. Here's your path for the next two weeks." And that has worked.

We always come back to our screening questions because our first question asks if you've been exposed to someone with COVID in the last two weeks. So we get asked a lot by families. I do what's called the COVID Sudoku on the phone with moms. They call, and they're, "Two weeks ago, our soccer coach's cousin thinks they might have had COVID and we were at the park. Should we come to COCA?" And the question that I always come back to is the first question on our screening, which is, were you in contact with someone with COVID? If you can answer that question, then you can come in the building. If you can't answer that question, then you should not come in the building. And that's why we have these virtual options available for people.

To Unitey's point, we just try to be as transparent as possible with families and making sure that they know, while also anticipating this would happen and being prepared with resources to supplement, so that kids are able to continue their educational experience, their training, and their learning, regardless of what's going on, whether they were exposed at school, on a sports team, at the grocery store, wherever those exposures are bound to happen because it's a pandemic. So that's how we've approached it so far.

Kwofe Coleman

Fortunately, we haven't had from an audience perspective to be in a position where we've had to make that choice. But even from a staff perspective, when we were debating whether or not to bring the staff back or as we were creating our virtual online season, there were some people on site. For us, the number one question was with speed. It's about mitigating that exposure as much as possible. So, for a small sample, as we put it, we had a staff person when we were doing our virtual show whose job was to simply walk around and make sure everybody was following the six foot rule. Hand sanitizer was refilled, people were washing their hands, so you invest in resources in purely mitigating the risk as much as possible.

With the city and even on a national and local level, there are guidelines for large venues and large crowds. When we open back up at full tilt, you're looking at 11,000 people in one space, which at this moment sounds like a crazy thing or crazy number to say. But we follow all those guidelines. I think Abby said this earlier, you take the most conservative approach possible. We're not going to find ourselves in a position where we're saying, hey, this is maybe OK, if it even smells like it's sort of not OK. But that's the way we're going to go. We're never going to make the choice of profit over people. That's just not what we're going to do. So we look at it as what's the safest, fastest way to get the information out while still protecting people's privacy. Like I said, it's not something we've had to face yet. But to Abby's point, it's something that we most certainly will.

I mentioned earlier that we have these different unions and groups that have representation, and each of them also had to come with a protocol that must happen, whether you're a performer, or musician, of what must happen if someone comes in contact with that group, tests positive or even has the possibility of testing positive. So we follow those and it makes it tricky from a human resources and management standpoint because everyone has different rules. But like we were saying earlier, you try to find the best practices and you follow them.

We keep saying it's a refrain, we're all going through this at the same time, so it's confusing for all of us. And that whatever level of patience that you can have that people have with each other helps.

Unitey Kull

And I just want to quickly add that we are doing everything we can to make sure that we have all of the contact information for anyone that's in our building. We do a health screening for staff, for visitors. We just ask them to sort of self select on our website. But anybody that's working, so that as soon as you find out that something's happened, you're at the ready.

Abby Crawford

Andrew, I'm going to go right ahead for a second. There was a question in the chat that I think is related to our conversation. It was from Sarah Holt. She asked about sort of backing off a previous safety measure based on new data and how you handle that. The specific thing around like surface stuff and temperature, that we know. I mean, my dad has COVID right now and he has no symptoms. So, I yes, I get all of that. Is it OK if I respond to that question real quick? This is like improv. Andrew, are you ready for this?

Andrew Warshauer

We're arts leaders—we're all good with improv!

Abby Crawford

I think that is such a great question. One of the things that I think is a constant part of our conversations, especially with families, is that no single risk mitigator by itself is sufficient. And so, for example, if our primary risk mitigator at COCA was masks and that was all we were doing, that is insufficient. If it was just doing the studios with the Ghostbuster gun, that is insufficient. And so we have chosen to continue to do what Kwofe just reiterated, to continue to interpret the most conservative version.

I will say, with one exception—which is we have noticed in our studios there are classes where they do not do any floor work and there are classes where they do much more floor work. We noticed that in our pilot this summer. So we have differentiated the products and the way we're cleaning those studios based on the specific classes, versus this summer, when we were handling every single class the same as we were piloting.

But I do think that's just been our approach. I would imagine that if I were in a situation where I was maybe not seeing the same kids every couple of days for an entire semester, if I was doing more special events or kind of one-off things, that each time I rolled out an event that the procedures might be different based on the current research. For us, because we see kids for 15 weeks at a time, because they are in the building without grownups, and because they are they are not adults, they are children, that consistency piece is just absolutely critical. And so that's what we've chosen to do.

I don't know if that is helpful or if that resonates with other people, but I really think the context of your organization and the types of arts experiences that you're creating for people really drive the speed of change with some of those procedures. The end user in our case is a child. For you, it might be someone that could more fluently navigate those shifts.

There was another quick question, too, directly to COCA, but I don't want to derail you totally. So I'm just going to stop talking now.

Andrew Warshauer

No, no, that's totally fine! I did just want to see, Unitey and Kwofe, if either of you had anything to say about backing off policies.

Unitey Kull

We have one tiny example. When we reopened, you had to wear a pair of gloves in the shop. We have a tiny little shop. You had to ask at the front desk and then the front desk person would put on their gloves to give you a glove. And frankly, nobody is going to want to browse if they have to take that extra step. But then after this research is coming out, we're all in our communities, going out and about, going to be a little...and we're like, hand sanitizer is OK. So now we ask people to hand sanitize, and I'll tell you, those shop sales have gone up. We still limit to only one person in the shop at a time, but it does feel like that was a little extreme. We'll be OK.

Abby Crawford

Yeah, well, it's the scrub in and scrub out. That's what I tell teaching artists. When you enter the studio, you hand sanitize, and when you leave. It's scrub in and scrub out just like doctors do.

Kwofe Coleman

Our policies, again, haven't had to be external, given that we lost the season. But internally, just people to close the office, but they need to come in to get certain to get certain things out. And before, you were limiting how much time in between people coming in and what had to be cleaned or what not to be. It's a cleaning crew in between every visit as opposed to wiping down. So, again, I think we look at local and national best practices, and we're essentially sticking with the science.

I would say similar to what Abby said. More often than not, we're going to pile more safety on top of the previous safety as opposed to removing any. So there's certainly a belt and suspenders approach for now. We'll see how that evolves. But we're going to err on the side of abundance of caution—other than "pivot" that's probably the most used phrase in these past few months.

Unitey Kull

"Now more than ever."

Abby Crawford

Yeah, that one too!

Andrew Warshauer

"Changed society forever."

Abby Crawford

"The new normal." I mean that's one too. We can make a shirt. These are all good.

Kwofe Coleman

I don't know if I want to wear that!

Andrew Warshauer

I do think this question from Jennifer is really worthwhile for us all to take a look at, which is how do you communicate and justify the same price for virtual versus in-person classes? And I think this applies to more than just classes. It is also for many of us, how are you running your gala? How are you doing performances? How are classes operating? It's everything, that difference between what is now virtual that used to be in person. How are you messaging the value that is still there to your guests and to your audience?

Kwofe Coleman

I think one of the main things that we try to remind people is that whether or not you're switching to virtual versus you're doing this in person, to keep this operation running so that you can get back to whatever is normal, so you can keep the people employed so they can make the investment in the community, in large part still costs. It still has that cost. So especially when you're operating from a nonprofit standpoint, the truth of it is that you're operating on pretty thin margins.

So it's not like you are buying a pack of chips that has fewer chips in it. It's not that same analogy. We still have to keep these operations, these institutions open. Each of our institutions employs a number of people. And so long as we can continue to employ those people, those individuals are not our quote unquote "burden" on a system that is trying to support those that don't have that opportunity.

We all see ourselves, I believe, in some sense, as a conduit for keeping people employed, keeping their community engaged. Whereas we're limited to a medium of virtual to some extent, it's not our top choice. It's not what we want to do, even if you have a successful virtual season, I don't ever want to do that again. I think that we try to remind people that cost is an investment in the individuals that make it happen, the institutions that make it happen, and the longevity of those institutions as well. While also being honest and owning that "look, I know that this is a different product." I'm speaking a little bit out of my way in that ours did not have a cost in the summer. But I think we all still face the same question that people ask, "What's the money for?" So that it *can* be here.

Abby Crawford

Yeah, I have faced that as well! I love, "Why are we paying for this?" This is what I have explained to people from a purely in-the-arts learning space. It's very common that you go online and you're, freaking Debbie Allen is teaching a tap class and it's free. It's Debbie Allen. OK, I stan Debbie Allen for my whole life. OK, it's free. Here's the thing. That class is going to be broadcast to millions of homes. And it is going to be an incredible experience. And it is not the same as a multi-meeting painting class that you're going to go through that is limited in scope, that there are outcomes that you are working to meet. There is a teaching artist that is planning and thinking about that.

So what I have explained, both internally and externally, more times than I can count, is that virtual experiences can only become less expensive when they are scalable past their expense. And so that's not our model. Our model is 10 kids, maybe less, in a Zoom room with a teaching artist who has, quite frankly, put in more time than he or she is used to putting in for an in-person because they're having to wrap their brain around leveraging the virtual platform. There are very concrete and consumable materials costs, and it is an experience that is designed for those learners. It is customized in that it is only happening one time. It is not replicable. And it is a class.

So we have worked really diligently to specifically answer that question. We have not gotten any pushback. We are offering many of our classes right now either livestream or in person. It's the same class, and families and learners can opt in to which one works for them in their context. The class is the class. It has all of the same costs—to Kwofe's point, none of the costs change. The teaching artist, for us that's our primary driver of cost across the organization. The teaching artist is still sharing their expertise, their planning time, and their pedagogical experience with their learners. The medium is different.

What's been remarkable for me to witness is the level to which our artists have continued to raise the bar and go above and beyond and create just phenomenal digital experiences for kids. Way past the two or three hours of planning time that I'm able to compensate them for because they're so committed to making the experiences memorable and impactful for kids.

And I think that has been also helpful for families to see right away that this is a quality experience, and we're not just replicating what happens in person, we're doing it differently because the medium is different. That means there's additional design time, there's additional thinking time that goes into the experience.

So. It's a great question. It's a really great question.

Unitey Kull

Yeah, I'm scared, but it's funny, as a marketing person, I'm always, this is going to be so hard to solve. But it seems our community has been incredibly generous during this time. We had a gala that was scheduled for April. We were very lucky that we had sold most of the tickets and the sponsorships, and I would say 99.9 percent donated it to the institution. Then we did a virtual fund-the-need which made probably 80 percent of what we usually make in the room, which kind of shocked me. I mean, it's been shocking and lovely. So we were able to end our fiscal year with a balanced budget, which was really scary there for a minute.

And now, we usually have our Dada Ball and Bash, which is this really iconic and fun event, and that would be coming up in the spring. And so we've started to wrap our heads around, what does that look like virtually? I've noticed a lot of institutions are doing free galas with sponsorship, et cetera, et cetera.

Then we did our first trivia night. We had a virtual trivia night, and that was going to be our first one. It was so fun. Oh, my gosh! Again, like the marketing, I was a little skeptical. I was, who wants to pay to be on Zoom on a Friday night? I mean, really, don't you all feel completely Zoomed out? But we did great. We had a pass. We decided our capacity was 30 tables. I think we had 28 and, you know, it was fun! Me and my family and friends bought a table. You could have people in your house do it or you could...I'll say our development team really rocked it. And they learned from ArchCity Defenders, I think. They learned from other institutions that had done it and very generously shared all of their knowledge.

So I don't know. It's giving me a little bit of renewed hope. But it is still scary thinking about—how do you bring in \$300,000 for a virtual event? I don't know. Or maybe we just have to start innovating and go thinking elsewhere, frankly.

Abby Crawford

I do think that's one of the things that has the potential to be activated by us especially as arts institutions. I think that at least here I'll speak at COCA, we have not tapped into really even in the virtual space, we have not tapped into family members, community family like the COCA family, community members, engagement outside of the region. And that, to me, is such a missed opportunity, because when something is virtual, then it can happen anywhere.

This summer, we had an experience with several folks who did our virtual summer camps and they lived in other places. We shipped materials to them and they logged on from their homes in California or Virginia or wherever. And it was awesome. But it was a very, very small part of the work. And so that to me is the next frontier. How do we continue to elevate what's happening in our region in the art scene, which I think is very rich and very strong. And how do we share that across the country and across the world? Because it is so easy to join in—as long as you have an Internet connection, you're good! And I think that's where I want to see us move next, because I just think it's kind of the thing that to me we could do right now. And we haven't been able to necessarily do that before.

Kwofe Coleman

I agree fully that looking at what the next generation or the next version of the virtual concept is, I don't want to pass the opportunity to say it's tricky because there are still all those people whose jobs in this industry are dependent on physical presence. As companies we're solving the problem of serving our audiences and reaching our community virtually. There's that gap there. We're all struggling with it; we're all conscious of it. These are our peers, our co-workers, our friends, our families. And I don't have the answer. But you know

what? When you have a forum like this in their ears and their eyes, it's important to say that as much as we're figuring out ways to survive and fulfill our mission from a community standpoint, it's a challenge.

And there's collateral damage out there. The philanthropic support that you see in this community is tremendous. People have come to understand from a corporate standpoint. But how do you reach that group whose livelihoods are affected? It still is a question out there.

Abby Crawford

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Andrew Warshauer

And that leads into...Mary Claire put a question—how do you communicate with your donors, given that program is so radically modified? How are you making that case?

Kwofe Coleman

One thing I'll say is that we've gone really old-fashioned and we use that old house phone thing or even the cell phone. Maybe telemarketing was reaching a challenging point; it's not so much telemarketing, but I could speak for our development team when we postponed the season. We had a good amount of subscription to season tickets out there. And we needed to see who would be willing to donate those or credit them to forward to next year. And there was a virtual campaign, of course, through email and whatnot and paper. But to pick up the phone and call and hear from somebody was tremendous.

We have a large subscription base and we have a good-sized development team, but the ratio is a lot! So even having random staff who aren't fundraisers, we're not fundraisers by trade necessarily, but we represent the institution, pick up the phone and call...I'll be really honest, I think that was beneficial in both directions. When you've got a staff that's been home for a few months and you start to feel a little bit disengaged from the facility and your co-workers, to be able to pick up the phone and speak positively in an excited way or from a place of emotion about the place you love and work is something that we forgot we don't get to do. We didn't get to walk in the hallway and love life for several months. So some of the old-fashioned stuff of picking up the phone really made a difference.

Unitey Kull

It does seem like people are really valuing human connection right now.

Kwofe Coleman

Anything but a screen.

Unitey Kull

Totally, phone over screen, for sure.

Abby Crawford

We say from our Zoom room! So, yeah.

Kwofe Coleman

I mean, this is great. It's really good!

Abby Crawford

I think that's similar to what we said earlier. Nobody has been untouched by the pandemic. I was just in a conversation yesterday with our director of development, and one of the things he was sharing was that some of our funders are calling us and checking and saying, how are you and how is the work? How does the work need to change this year? And what can we do to support you? That is just remarkable.

I really think for many years I have wanted overall to strengthen our partnerships with our funders in a variety of ways. I do see them as partners, and I know that there are lots of ways that we can do better at that and lots of ways that funders can do better at that. I am truly hopeful that this experience globally is going to move the needle on that. That folks are going to be able to come to the table and think about community investments and investments in the arts in a different way than potentially has happened across the board up to this point.

So far, we have not had any major challenges in terms of anyone being upset or something. I think people are excited to hear about the changes that are happening and the responsiveness that we're taking with our programming and our work. And like I said, I mean...I just truly, I still am a little stunned, that they called and were like, how are y'all? How can we be helpful to you? There's nothing better than that. It's remarkable.

Andrew Warshauer

That is incredible. It is 6:02, and I'd like to be able to answer the last couple of questions that are in the chat, if that's OK with all of you. So very quickly, Gwyneth asks, and this is specific to the Kranzberg safety guidelines, are they available for review? I will say that our guidelines are available on our website, but they are also available alongside the other 43 organizations that have been Missouri ArtSafe certified at MissouriArtSafe.org. So you'll be able to see what safety guidelines all of the different arts organizations across the state are using and be able to get ideas and help build your plan there.

My next question is, and this is related to kind of, Abby, what you were talking about earlier, you're able to work with students that are in California and across the country, even the world. How are you differentiating yourselves from other arts organizations across the country that are offering virtual content to schools and organizations, but even just to regular guests that are tuning in?

Abby Crawford

I don't think we necessarily are. I think the primary way that we've tried to communicate that is by offering kind of a variety of different paths of entry. So whether a family does things livestream, whether they're doing them completely virtually, whether they're doing them in person, whether they're doing them in a hybrid model, that has been something we've communicated. And then, like I said earlier, we also have the prerecorded option, because what we knew was that asking families to commit to 15 weeks of anything during a pandemic is a really terrible idea.

So having multiple options for folks so that they know that their investment, both of time and resources, is going to lead to something great, regardless of what happens, regardless of the circumstance, we've tried to make that the leading story with our families. Our enrollment overall is down by about 30 percent, which is fairly strong, I would say, especially because our maximum enrollment in all of our studios is significantly lower than normal because of distancing.

But again, it's really been about leading with, here are all the different ways that this can still happen for you, because we just built the model in a worst case scenario mindset.

Unitey Kull

OK, really quickly, so we find that what we have in the artists that we present in our exhibitions, we already attract interest from all over the world. Just in terms of the social, the website, I will say, contemporary artists, there is a somewhat slow global community. And so I think we've definitely talked about the silver lining of, "great, if we have virtual events, we can reach so many people." The reality is right now for CAM, we are getting fewer virtual participants for our free public programs. I think we just have to figure it out still a little bit more. I really believe in CAM's artistic programming. And I think that there are opportunities there. It's exciting to be able to do an artist talk with somebody that's in another country. So we are trying to lean into, OK, this sucks. But what are the benefits? Can we try to capitalize on that a little bit?

Kwofe Coleman

What I was going to say is whether it's our education programs or the programming that we do, I think that we're all at a moment where we ask the question. It's less about what do we want to do or what do we want to present? We ask the question, what do people need? What holes are out there? What do folks need and do we have the capacity to fill that or not?

And I think the landscape's become far less competitive and more about making it feel, I guess, making it feel more complete or cohesive so that we're not trying to outdo the person down the street or around the corner. We're just trying to see where there's a hole. And can we fill it? Because the goal is to serve the public, to serve the community. It makes it...now granted, there's a decrease in profitability from that approach. But that doesn't truly feel like the goal right now. I think the goal is about...is there an education program we can develop that fills a need for schools and school districts for kids? Is there something...when we did our virtual season online, much of it was based on nostalgia, which was important for people in that time. So to answer this question directly, or the question before, I just don't know that you can do a whole lot of differentiating...just looking at what people need, and if you can plug that hole then you do it.

Andrew Warshauer

Thank you. And then Liz has a comment, too, that I think is really relevant just to share. Their development team and Metro Theater Company put on an amazing virtual gala. And I do recommend for all of you that are looking at doing virtual program, find those people that you want to support yourself, see what they're doing as you're going into your programming.

Abby Crawford

That's a great idea.

Andrew Warshauer

So with that said, I really wanted to thank everyone for joining us and a tremendous thank you, Abby, Unitey, and Kwofe, for taking the time to provide and share your experience and insights. Really appreciate it. We'll be providing a full transcript and recording of this webinar through email, and it will also be available at MissouriArtSafe.org. And we do ask that as you're leaving you fill out the survey that will pop up and provide some feedback on this webinar.

We're getting ready to launch the next round of webinars. So we really appreciate any feedback. If you haven't already, visit MissouriArtSafe.org to see examples of plans and a list of who's already been certified. And thank you again for attending and working to make the arts able to create safely, present safely, and attend safely. I hope you all have a wonderful evening. Again, thank you.