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PIVOT  
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**REDEFINE**  
**NORMAL**

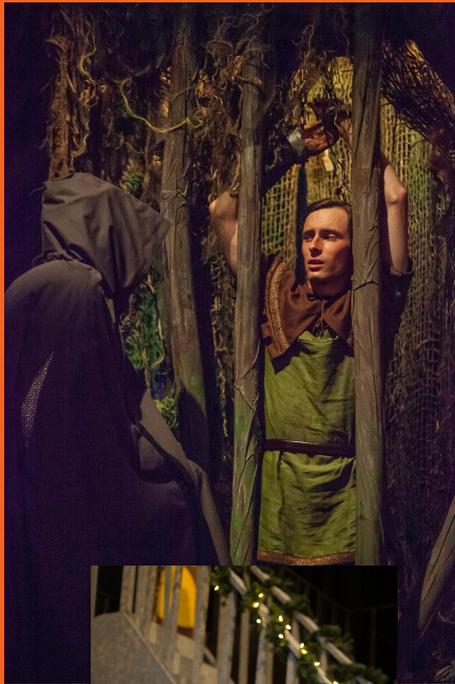
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# Pivoting in the age of COVID



Linda Anderson, Executive Director  
Black Hills Playhouse, 6.4.20

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# 1. Intro

**For those who might not be familiar with us:**

The Black Hills Playhouse delivers exceptional theatre programs that engage diverse people and strengthen South Dakota communities.

We do this through summer stock theatre in Custer State Park, performing arts camps for kids, statewide touring theatre education programs (Dakota Players), and theatre performances inclusive of people with disabilities.



Life is what happens to you when you are busy making other plans. *John Lennon*

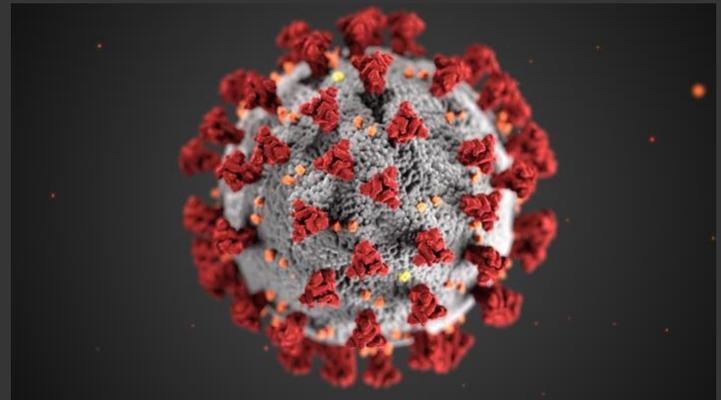
Back in March, we were VERY BUSY as we prepared for our 75th Anniversary Season, a reunion celebration, summer camp, touring program, and performances with DakotAbilities.



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# And then! Boom.

Everything came to a grinding halt.  
COVID-19 reared its ugly head.



We could never have  
imagined a situation where  
all of our income streams  
**could evaporate  
simultaneously.**





## 2. Team Time

Staff and the Executive Committee started weekly check-in meetings so we could work together on strategy. This was suggested by board members and has been really helpful.

→ **What**

We looked carefully at financials and researched program options.

→ **Who**

Staff gathered information for the Board of Directors. Executive and Finance Committees reviewed and took recommendations to the full board.

→ **On April 11th, board and staff met in emergency session.**

### 3 Important Things Happened

1. I made it clear from the get-go that retaining staff would be essential if we were to meet challenges and hit the ground running when things open. PEOPLE are the most precious asset we have.
2. Board members told staff that we are not in this alone.
3. We made a pact to weather the storm together.





So, we sent out  
press releases,  
contacted patrons,  
and adopted  
Pandemic  
Response Goals.

## **BHP Pandemic Response Goals**

- 1. Maintain year-round staff so we can hit the ground running when life opens. Continue to work remotely. Use remote work time to pivot and address projects that will strengthen BHP as we reopen.**
- 2. Keep people safe + healthy. Our projections told us that season proposed too much of a health and financial risk to pursue in 2020. First season in 75 years to be canceled.**
- 3. Review potential for education programs to resume as things progress. Use public health data to call it at the appropriate time.**
- 4. Stay solvent, keep close watch of finances and opportunities for disaster funding. Borrow wisely with an eye to what next year's needs might be.**
- 5. Schedule regular committee meetings to continue the work of the board. Reschedule summer board meeting remotely.**
- 6. Consider what we might accomplish towards physical plant projects in Custer State Park during shut down.**
- 7. Actively work to deepen our connections with board members, alums, donors, and patrons and prepare for one hell of a party in 2021.**

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**Quick observations about  
how things have gone over  
the last couple of months for  
the Black Hills Playhouse.**

We have discovered acutely that our programs require the luxury of people being able to gather for rehearsal, performance, or to participate as audience members.



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We wonder, **what does this mean for the future?** We worry sometimes about the unknowns.



**We have discovered that our audiences really care about us and want to help. Over 50% of people who had purchased tickets pre-season elected to donate the value of their tickets back. And some folks have elected to donate more.**



**We immediately jumped on government business relief programs and have received a PPP loan, as well as an emergency disaster loan from the SBA.**

**We have applied for disaster funding through the SD Arts Council.**

**We are working to fill a \$150 K gap in 2020 due to lost income.**

**We have not stopped asking for money!**

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# What people are saying

**We want to  
see you strong  
in 2021!**

**Please let us  
know how we  
can help!**

**We care  
about you!**

**What does planning look like over the next 6 - 12 months? DIFFERENT!**

**Staff is working to see how we might adapt our programs so we can keep artists and participants safe.**

**We anticipate both earned and contributed income may be down for a couple of years and will be budgeting carefully.**

So, we are  
charging forward  
to meet our  
mission  
regardless of  
obstacles.



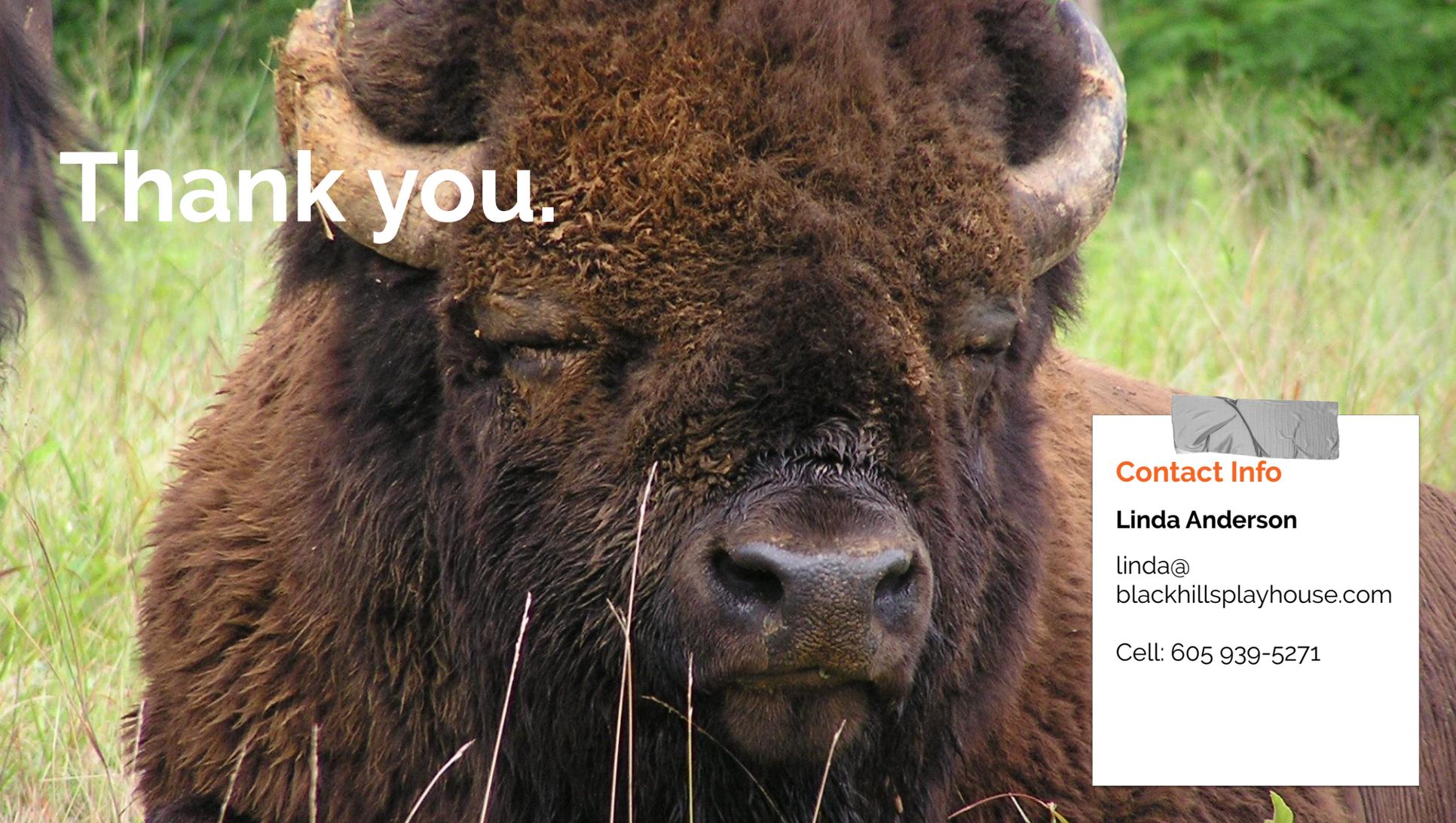


## 3. In Closing

A quote by author Alice Walker:

“The most common way people give up their power is by believing they don’t have any.” Take charge!

- **Don't give up! Reach out to other orgs, your board, and colleagues. We are in this together!**
- **Pick projects that will strengthen the organization when things open up. Be kind to each other.**
- **Don't be afraid to look at things through a new lens or to redefine “normal”!**



Thank you.



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