Some more good news…
By Bob Yates
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We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. –Winston Churchill

In last Wednesday’s special issue of the Bulletin, I shared with you three short stories of local leadership in crisis, tales of good people doing good things at a time when most of the news seems bad. Here are three more stories to make you smile:

**Feeding the frontlines:** Healthcare workers, often toiling extended hours to treat COVID patients, have to eat. Locally-owned Boulder restaurants prepare great food, but during the stay-at-home order often don’t have enough take-away business to justify keeping their kitchens open. Some Boulder folks had the brilliant idea of pairing these two needs with a program they dubbed Feed the Frontlines Boulder. Seeded with generous contributions to the Boulder Community Health Foundation by Boulder philanthropists John Goldsmith, Cindy and Dan Caruso, and Brad Feld and Amy Batchelor, the foundation buys prepared meals from local restaurants and provides them to healthcare workers, including at Foothills Hospital, easing their burdens of meal preparation.

Dozens of local restaurants are participating, with food styles ranging from the likes of T/ACO to Japango to the restaurants at Rosetta Hall. Each participating restaurant commits to applying any profits from the program to support their employees. Explains BCH Foundation president Grant Besser, “Feed the Frontlines Boulder has been successful because it has truly tapped into what makes the City of Boulder so unique – an entrepreneurial spirit and philanthropic ethos, combined with a thriving business community that has a deep love for their restaurants and unrelenting appreciation for their community hospital and many others on the front lines of this pandemic.”

The program was initially funded at $200,000, to provide 30 days’ worth of meals to the healthcare workers. But, overwhelming community response to the idea has boosted the fund to more than $650,000. To ensure that the contributions are well-spent, the BCH Foundation recently expanded the meal service to other frontline workers in the community, including Boulder Fire-Rescue and the Boulder Police Department, folks who are working every day to keep us safe. If you would like to Feed the Frontlines, you can contribute here.

**Keeping art alive:** During the Depression (which we soon may be calling the First Depression), the federal government created a vast WPA program to put to use the talents and skills of unemployed people across the country, including artists, some of whose murals and artwork is preserved to this day. Now, more than eight decades later, the city’s office of Arts & Culture is creating a smaller, local version of the WPA to support Boulder artists facing economic distress in the current crisis. A total of 66 artists will each be paid $599 to create art experiences in Boulder’s neighborhoods, ranging from murals to public performances.

Called Creative Neighborhoods: COVID-19 Work Projects, funding for the program came from the city’s Office of Arts & Culture and a grant from nonprofit arts support organization Create Boulder, with a lead gift from my former city council colleague Jan Burton. Create Boulder board member Deborah Malden explains that the grant for the COVID-19 Work Projects program is just the beginning of funding that Create Boulder hopes to provide artists and cultural organizations as a “stairstep to
sustainability.” “We hope to galvanize the community with an overall vision for arts and culture that can advance the quality of life in Boulder,” Deborah says. “While many of us are currently giving to support our human services organizations in this time of need, Create Boulder is also concerned about our arts and cultural organizations, which will play a vital role in Boulder’s recovery. Venues have closed and performances canceled for the undetermined future, and the organizations are suffering substantial revenue shortfalls.”

Create Boulder will continue to partner with the city of Boulder and the Arts Commission and will supplement the city’s Community Cultural Plan. “In times of great adversity, we must evolve and take a more cohesive approach to supporting the arts” explains Deborah. “We hope to generate more support from the entire community.” To lend your support, visit Create Boulder here.

Happy drive by: I feel a little sad for people who have had birthday celebration plans ruined by the COVID crisis. Our son turned 30 a few weeks ago and he had to celebrate it by himself because his friends were forced to stay away and Katy and I couldn’t visit him in Brooklyn. Next week, my mother will turn 80 and she will have to settle for a Zoom call with her seven children, who live in seven different states. To cheer up Boulder kids who face similar prospects on their birthdays during lockdown, Boulder Fire-Rescue has been conducting fire truck drive-bys, with sirens and lights going, so the whole neighborhood knows whose special day it is.

Fire Chief Mike Calderazzo explains why the birthday drive-bys are so important: “While birthday parties are not something we normally do, we felt an exception in these unprecedented times was warranted. Kids who couldn’t have their friends over could have their firefighting friends drive by and wish them a happy birthday.” And it’s not just the kids who are enjoying the break from the monotony of the lock-down. Says the Chief, “Since we can’t have visitors come to our stations right now, our crews jumped at the chance to safely visit our neighbors. It really is a highlight of their shift.” The drive-by program has proven so popular that it has been extended to retirement communities, with Frasier Meadows receiving a special visit from the fire department last week.

To see a short video of eight-year-old Harper’s special birthday drive-by, click here. If there is someone in your family with a May birthday who would could use a little special attention, contact fire department life safety educator Kim Scott to schedule a drive-by.

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Finally, a few folks have asked how they can contribute their time and skills to aid the community. Here are three opportunities:

For general COVID volunteering in Boulder, including for human services, the library, parks, or open space, go to CountMeIn.

For statewide volunteering opportunities and supply donations, go to HelpColoradoNow

And, to make a face mask for someone who needs one, go to the Boulder Mask Makers Facebook page.

Whatever you do and however you do it, thanks for looking out after one another.