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INDEPENDENT VOICES

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ASSOCIATION NOTES

We are better together

I do not have to recount for you all the ways our NATS community has come together in the past year.

As we mark one year since our first hurriedly scheduled chat for members at the outset of the pandemic, the ways in which NATS staff, leadership, and members have responded could fill the pages of multiple issues of this newsletter. As we have fought the fatigue together, I have been encouraged to see our members take ownership of the data and messaging NATS has provided, sharing it with colleagues, students, family, and friends. Our deep connections with our partners in the performing arts have allowed us to bring renowned experts on aerosols, viruses, and vaccines to speak directly to our community. We stuck together as we all transitioned to online teaching modes and launched searches for the best teaching solutions for our individual settings. Importantly, we felt connected enough to reach out to one another to share messages of support during times of loss. This community personally uplifted me when my father died last September. Although his death was not COVID-19 related, like many who navigated loss during this time, our grieving process was impacted. Thank you for your messages of support, which continue to be cherished.



Allen Henderson  
NATS Executive Director

While navigating the effects of COVID-19 on our membership and association, the elected NATS leadership also set about moving our association forward in many other ways. We recently met to assess the progress toward meeting goals and action items outlined in our Framing the Future Strategic Plan, and I am happy to report significant progress has been made in many areas. We are fortunate to have the expertise of president-elect Diana Allan to track our progress.

Moving forward, it is important for organizations like NATS to understand our part of the performing arts ecosystem better and more deeply so we can be prepared to respond reflexively as needs arise. We have engaged the services of PracticeCraft, LLC to help us. We will ask you soon to participate in three significant surveys

*(continued on page 5)*

## Association Notes — We are better together *(continued from page 1)*

NATS is conducting: 1) better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected our singing ecosystem; 2) income and employment trends for the singing industry; and 3) the overall state of the industry. Data from these surveys will be meaningful as NATS further elevates its thought leadership on critical issues facing our industry.

Since I last wrote in this column, NATS has added two new staff members. Beth Buchanan, marketing and communications manager, and Bob Bryan, development director, are welcome additions to our team. Their presence is already being felt as they use their expertise to help our association flourish. Beth is currently coordinating the refresh of our website, [nats.org](https://nats.org), incorporating input from many members and staff. You can look forward to an upgraded online experience soon. Bob, our first staff person devoted to the development function, has hit the ground running. He has been meeting with many leaders and members who have been generous donors financially to the work of NATS, and he is helping us meet goals in the friend-raising and fundraising area. Stay tuned for more announcements soon in these areas.

Numerous committees and advisory groups are actively pursuing their charges. Exciting conversations are ongoing regarding: diversity, equity and inclusion; the expansion of auditions; new and expanded membership offerings; diversifying fundraising initiatives to remove economic barriers to participation; expanded international initiatives; and so much more. NATS members are forging the association's future through their active engagement.

We are better together and our recent membership renewal season proves it. The 2021 dues renewal season resulted in the highest rate of membership renewal and the lowest lapsed member number in more than six years. We ended 2020 with a membership of 7,246, a 3% increase and well on the way to meeting our goal of 5% membership growth in our strategic plan. Read more on [p. 39](#). While many associations faced downturns in membership and finances during the pandemic, NATS has grown and strengthened its financial position.

As I reflect on the past year of pandemic living and its impact on my life as well as our association, I am incredibly grateful for the NATS community and colleagues who have helped me better serve my students and lead our association during these challenging times. Our work has literally saved lives during the past year. If you still need proof that we are better together, just take a moment to review the past year of your life and think about the many ways your connection to NATS benefitted you personally or professionally. How many times did you use information brought to you through NATS to guide you in managing your pandemic life? How many times did you share a resource from NATS with your students, colleagues, family, faith community, school, or friends? How many times was a NATS friend or colleague literally a lifeline of support at a critical time for you? Thank you all for your faith in the power of our NATS community. As we now have hope to emerge from an age of uncertainty to a post-pandemic future, I urge you to move forward with NATS by encouraging your colleagues to join us. *We are better together!*

As always, if you have questions or comments, please reach out to me at [allen@nats.org](mailto:allen@nats.org).

## It's not too late to renew your membership

### The renewal process:

- Log in to the [NATS website](#) with your e-mail address and password.
- Visit the [Member Home](#) area at the top of the website
- Click on the red renew button that will allow you to process your renewal instantly, even if paying by check!

Renewing online is simple and easy, and it allows members to check their profile to ensure that all personal information is correct. Need assistance? Call us at 904.992.9101, Monday–Friday 8 am–4 pm Eastern Time.

