For GOALS, the season of spring has long been a literal springboard as we launch ourselves into myriad summer programs and plans for growth of different types for the year(s) to come. As with many organizations and the vast majority of our citizens, we too are affected and, in some sense, restricted by what we can do physically for the time being. However, our abilities to share inspiration and enrichment with GOALS participants have not been slowed – in fact they are being improved. Our commitment to develop new ideas and new strategies for helping those with the greatest needs is now even greater. I also believe that our collective appreciation for many other aspects of daily life can be heightened in positive ways as well. The renowned “transcendentalist”, Henry David Thoreau, who spent a couple of years alone (by choice) in a small cabin at Walden Pond in Massachusetts observed long ago that “…one attraction in coming to the woods to live was that I should have leisure and opportunity to see the spring come in.” That is a profound sentiment that we should all embrace on many levels.

By now, many organizations across the country and all of our citizens are grappling with various degrees of closures, uncertainty, and yes, fear of an infectious disease that can affect anyone and particularly those who are the most vulnerable among us. We must all assume personal and organizational responsibility to respect and follow intelligent public health guidelines which in the short term may inhibit some norms to which we have grown accustomed. However, if these guidelines are practiced consistently, the hope is to dramatically shorten this period of difficulty and dramatically lower the breadth and risks of potential, associated health challenges.

GOALS like other entities, has correctly respected social distancing, suspended team use of our facilities, and limited personal interactions to the extent reasonable. However, we are about to expand our enrichment outreach on-line with a daily dose of healthy educational options and of course offer athletic recommendations featuring our coaches demonstrating independent fitness tips and training filmed from GOALS facilities, or sometimes their own homes and local parks. Several of our afterschool coordinators will be supporting school “homework” that is being distributed at respective locations in the region, and other GOALS leaders will be working through virtual means with our many partners in various cities and school districts as we provide content that is complementary to that being distributed by area educators as well. In one instance of “roll up your sleeves” activism, our Oak View elementary GOALS afterschool coordinator, Monica De La Cruz, recently spent two full days assisting district staff in Huntington Beach’s Ocean View District with distribution of computer/tablet devices to those who had no digital access.

We are also working closely with one of our favorite partners in service – AmeriCorps as we continue our placement efforts for what we anticipate will be our largest Summer Associates program ever, embedded with our annual GOALS Cadets Summer of Service. We are scheduled to launch training with 40 recruits by early/mid June and deploy these team leaders along with teen Cadets on a host of service projects across our region throughout the summer of 2020. GOALS is expected to host the largest base of service with AmeriCorps in southern California this year – a distinction we are extremely proud of. Naturally we may have to modify our approach to distance ourselves just a bit more as we improve parks, nature centers, plant gardens, assist the disabled, and support other GOALS facilities and summer programs through various “Homebase” projects. But our commitment to serve at an even higher level will be a good way to devote and deploy our collective, stored energies, while helping our greater community move forward in new and exciting ways. May I remind everyone to stay as active both physically and mentally as you can and I do hope to see you just as soon as possible….