

Dear Friends,



**Extraordinary Ordinary People ...**

Just a few weeks ago I had lunch with a wonderful couple—members, volunteers, community leaders, retired. They split their time between their hometown of Grand Rapids and Naples, Florida; he was a successful wealth advisor, she was a much-loved librarian. They serve as leaders in their church, attend and sponsor our *Fifth Third Bank Summer Concerts at Meijer Gardens* series, and LOVE Meijer Gardens. They even joke about the early days of running into Fred and Lena around town.

We had lunch to discuss “how” they hope to make a difference at our beloved Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. They want to support the concept of connecting children with our Gardens. They want to have a “place”—such as our Treehouse Village in the Lena Meijer Children’s Garden—where families can simply gather. They want to connect their children and grandchildren to the joy of this world-class institution, for generations.

They are ordinary people, according to them. I believe, however, they are *extraordinary* ordinary people.

Why do I bring this generous moment to the fore? It’s simple. As you consider your year-end philanthropic priorities, we ask that you choose to be *extraordinary*. Perhaps it isn’t here; perhaps you choose to support a program at your place of worship, or another cultural institution, or even one of our world-renowned medical campuses. Being a leader institution, we hope you’ll choose to invest philanthropically in our region and community. **If our community is healthy, we are healthy.**

Yet we would be honored and privileged to be your place of legacy and trust, for your year-end, long-term planned, or estate-based giving. You can be that *extraordinary* ordinary person. This institution is filled with *extraordinary* people—our volunteers, professional team, members, community partners, even general attendees—last year reaching more than 750,000 patrons! Our ask is this: Be *extraordinary*. Connect with the amazing spirit and promise of hope this cultural organization delivers each and every season. Reflect on how your life has been enhanced throughout the years, from a simple lunch in our James & Shirley Balk Café to a quiet walk in The Richard & Helen DeVos Japanese Garden. This is an *extraordinary* place filled with *extraordinary* people. We thank you for being part of our sustainable future by philanthropically investing in our beloved Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park.

As I close this note, mistletoe will adorn doorways, the glow of the menorah will be in full majesty, and snow will cover our pathways. With that, please accept my personal note of gratitude for your warm hospitality toward the Burke family. I began my tenure as your President & CEO last February, with my family moving our home in June. Our son is a freshman at MSU—Go Green!—and our daughter a senior at Butler—Go Bulldogs! On behalf of Kimberly and me, thank you for welcoming our family to Grand Rapids this past year. We are truly filled with joy to be part of this special community and blessed to be part of this institution. As the year ends, we offer our sincerest hopes and wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a peace-filled new year to all of you.

And on behalf of the entire Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park community—our extraordinary board, staff, and volunteers—happy holidays to each and all!

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "B".

Charles Burke, President & CEO,  
Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

*P.S. Should you wish to learn more about our extraordinary ways of being philanthropic, please contact Julia Van Fleet at 616.975.3177.*