

Board of Governors Round Table Discussions

October 12, 2011

District 1

Missy Buckingham, Director-at-Large

IN ATTENDANCE:

Cabell West, Meg Clement, Betty Michelson, Karmen Gustin, Missy Buckingham, Martha Moore, Linda Macdonald, Kay Outten, Joan Pollard, Susan Robertson, Jeanette McKittrick and Cathy Lee

Topic 1: FUN-RAISING

- Petersburg GC is taking members including their retired members to the Jefferson Hotel for a Christmas Brunch
- Tuckahoe took 33 members on garden tour in NYC
- James River has had 2 night meetings in member's homes, served wine & had a speaker.
- Three Chopt is trying a night meeting and they and Boxwood have an informal arranging workshop the day before their meetings to encourage "skeptical" arrangers to exhibit by providing a relaxed atmosphere to learn mechanics, etc.
- Bus trips are more popular these days as most clubs report the age of their membership is going up
- Suggested the Symposium be a club event
- Photographs in club communications add a lot of fun to overall message
- Several clubs have cocktail parties with husbands. Some have husbands bring an exhibit to be "judged"!
- Boxwood mentioned that it is hard to have meetings in member's homes because of need for space for slide shows or for demonstrations

The question was asked if the Flower Shows committee is exploring adding Garden Photography as a competitive section??

TOPIC 2: FUNneling New Members

- Ashland reported at least half of its members are working at least part-time and their meetings are at 3PM on a Thursday
- Brunswick continues to have difficulty attracting new members with only 18 actives with 13 or 14 who do all the work.
- Need to educate population better about the work of the GCV. Suggested a need for a GCV pamphlet to help them to recruit new members. All of the clubs agreed this would be helpful in their membership recruiting packets.
- The Mentor/Buddy program was well-received but most clubs have not implemented. Suggested that if this was done it should last for the new member's first year

District 1 would like their New Member Orientation meeting to be held at the KV House, Wednesday, February 1, 2012 with a snow date of February 8. Missy will see if the House is available and run it by the Admissions Committee

TOPIC 3 FUNDamentals of HGW

- The largest expenses are buses or shuttles and printing brochures. Some clubs get sponsors to underwrite
- Karmen said clubs can use the printer at the KV House but to notify the staff when you plan to use it. There is a nominal cost per piece.
- Some thought the ticket prices for some of the tours were too low ... when you open 8 amazing houses \$40 seemed too cheap
- The locality determines the price
- Acknowledged that higher number of people attending is more favorable
- Wondered if homeowners could be asked to open 2 days in a row? Questioned manpower for that
- Don't ever cut out the nicety of Punch and Cookies....hospitality is key
- Should tours stay open past 5 PM to attract working folks?...thought NO, they'd take the day off if they wanted to come
- Big complaint from someone who just opened her home for HGW was that people were taking pictures inside her home. Discussion put blame on hostesses but also thought "NO PHOTOGRAPHY" cards appropriate. Current policy allows exterior but not interior photography. This needs to be ENFORCED.
- Richmond tour gave sponsors 2 tour tickets in return for sponsorship
- Some clubs require their club members to purchase 2 or more tickets for their local tour to either keep or give away....this is done at the beach and in Brunswick, but not in Richmond
- Suggested taking a group of members to an HGW tour outside their own as a fun outing
- Discussed expectations of quantity of flower arrangements per home as varying greatly
- In favor of cards listing plant material used in HGW arrangements. Suggested that cards be provided by the GCV to be used around the state with GCV logo...for all homes.
- Recommended botanical names as well as common names should be on cards
- Suggest the club's horticulture committee send someone to each house to check cards and make sure they are accurate then make sure the hostess knows what is what

District 2

Catherine Madden, Director at Large

FUN-raising - How do you have fun in your club?

- Cocktail party w/ husbands, and everyone brings something(Charlottesville).
- “Mink, Manure, and Martini” party w/ husbands and great pianist(Augusta).
- As part of 90th anniversary celebration at each meeting someone comes dressed as different decade. At year end meeting everyone will come dressed in decade of their choice (Rivanna).
- Boxwood wreath making workshop in member’s barn with hot cider and cakes and then sell wreaths to their members and Lynchburg’s members (Hillside).
- Christmas auction and luncheon where every member brings something to auction-serve champagne and bring guests in community. Auction items include dinners in members’ homes, baked specialties. Professional auctioneer donates services (Spotswood).
- Scavenger Hunt with horticulture theme.
- Have annual meeting on bus while travelling to Richmond to visit KVH and Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden (Blue Ridge).
- Picnic in August with husbands and families (Dolley Madison).
- Have retreat before year begins at Pharsalia (country house/gardens/events) for new board of club (Hillside).
- Offset some of registration cost for members to attend symposium at the Homestead (Blue Ridge).
- Have travel committee in club to research and organize field trips for members.
- For luncheon meeting everyone brings a small centerpiece arrangement that is not judged. Had great participation (Blue Ridge).
- Have newer and older members to arrangements in pairs (Augusta).

FUNneling new members - Attracting and retaining new members

- With set morning meetings (10am – 12) it is difficult to attract working members. Possibly consider noon or evening meetings.
- Establish a mentoring program to make each new member feel welcome with sponsor serving as their mentor.
- Give new members a written list of expectations and information about the workings of the club.
- If there are problems with new member’s participation, have sponsor call new member to encourage them, etc.
- Clubs need to become more flexible by finding working members a job that they can do outside of regular meeting time.
- For members not participating send an end of the year letter asking them to reconsider their membership - possibly resigning in good standing and joining again when they are able to more fully participate. This frees up spots for new members to join the club.
- In the same vein, establish inactive category of membership for certain circumstances that lasts for one to two years.
- Offer some kind of activity or meeting that includes younger members’ children (mother/child flower arranging or children’s flower show).

FUNDamentals of HGW – Running a successful tour and reducing the bottom line

- All district 2 clubs agreed that transportation costs were the largest single expense. Other costs mentioned were printing costs for local tour brochures and posters and hiring off duty police for traffic control.
- Seek sponsorships to defray specific expenses having them underwrite the cost of the buses for example.
- Sponsors receive acknowledgement in print and complimentary passes.
- If tour is located in downtown area of city try to establish close alliance with local business association for additional exposure.
- Work with your local visitor's center as they can be an enthusiastic partner in publicity for your tour. Use save-the-date cards to be placed at visitor's center to highlight your club's tour and make sure it is on their calendar of events.
- Offer HGW passes as auction items for any fundraising you might be doing in your club this year.
- Have local garden day brochures and posters done in-house by using expertise of club members for design and layout. One club (Dolley Madison) even purchased an inexpensive copier to print their own brochures and posters.
- Consider advertising on your local PBS Television station. It is relatively inexpensive, or offer passes on their TV auction/fund drive.
- As a way to highlight what HGW does with monies from Garden Day, consider buying copies of new GCV Restoration book and selling it at luncheon sight. Question- Is this okay for local clubs to do, or will Restoration Committee be doing this again?
- Karen Miller mentioned to our group that donations over the cost may be tax deductible for the business. This policy will be in the next HGW handbook. Contact her if you have questions about this.

District 3

Director at Large, Dianne Spence

Scribe: Ann Milliman

FUN-damentals of Historic Garden Week: Anne Cross

Exchange of ideas re. curbing expenses:

Restrictions are no longer put on flower expenses:

Some flower committees bear the expenses of flowers, if materials beyond garden flowers are needed. Gloucester: major expense is shuttles, because of houses being far apart. Several clubs have no flower budget and recommend cutting and scavenging. This makes it more of a challenge to have consistent flower colors throughout homes. With changing weather patterns and increasing deer populations, several clubs find garden flower supplies becoming more difficult.

How many clubs have budgets for the tour? Few. The HGW sheet by Anne Cross should be used.

One club president brought up the idea of the clubs giving 85% of the proceeds from their tours to the GCV and keeping 15% for a local club project. It was noted that this suggestion has been previously brought forth and has been determined to be ill advised for a number of consequential reasons, including the significant negative impact on funding the restoration work of the GCV.

FUN-raising:

- One member club housed a celebrity (Sally Struthers) who performed at a local theater. Club had cocktail party, and meet and greet with celebrity, went to performance. Cocktails and theater charged \$150 per couple and made \$10,000 for a CD for future club GCV meeting.
- Gloucester has a Valentine or Christmas party, including husbands, to get the club together. One member club does cocktail party every other year.
- Middle Peninsula went to World Flower Arranging in Boston, and has a Christmas party each year and a club wide party after GW.

Do clubs include children in events? NO

- Flower Show teams brings people together, and is a lot of fun.
- Meetings: Some in the evening, some at noon to accommodate people who work, one has meeting which includes Program, Artistic, Horticulture, Business meeting and Lunch. One club has lunch at every meeting. One club brings sandwiches, puts them on a tray, committee provides drinks & desserts.

FUN-ning new members:

How do you attract and retain members?

- Rappahannock never has openings. One club, all members pay the same dues. Gloucester is full.

- One club asks a potential member if she would be interested in becoming a member. Most clubs don't discuss it, as "it's the kiss of death if we do." Most wrestle with this, as they don't want to lose potential members, but need to know whether a woman is interested and what her interests are.
- One club has sustaining members who must have been in the club for 10 years. A member can become a sustaining member if they no longer want to be active. No requirements. Another club has these requirements for an Active member to become an Associate: 15 years of Active membership, leadership positions (HGW, board positions, committee chairmanships, etc.) or, if age 65 or over, 10 years of Active membership, with the same leadership requirements. Associates are required to attend two meetings a year, pay more dues than Active members and must work on HGW.

How do we get younger members?

- Huntington has younger members who are brought in by women the same age.
- Programs that are more interesting to younger members, such as going to nurseries and getting discounts.
- Hostess list for Garden Day is a good place to look for members.
- The clubs who have several counties in their club: Each county has an admissions committee that recommends, and there is a quota from each county, in order to keep balance in the club
- Most clubs have sponsors mentor the new member; a "Buddy system", where older member work with new member on arrangements, etc. and proposers mentor the new member through the first year.

In conversation after the round tables, it was agreed by several members that more time would have allowed for in-depth discussions. At the same time, people wanted to begin the long drive home.

District 4

Donna Lawhon, Director at Large

QUESTION ONE - FUN-RAISING (How do you have fun in your club)

- Always plan a fun luncheon after the meeting for network and friendship time, rotating between eight hostesses during the year
- Have the December meeting as a cocktail party at a member's home
- Wine and Cheese party kickoff for new and existing members
- Have a Christmas or other seasonal workshop
- Have a monthly arrangement with a prior month demonstration by a GCV member
- Present an activity award based on point during the year, with an end of year presentation
- Institute the "Gabriella Gamer", a point driven bingo card format to encourage participation
- A plant exchange, field trips, make and take arrangements to meetings
- Supporting the local economy with a "farm to table" edible presentation
- Share your positive ideas with other clubs, such as outstanding speakers, etc, to encourage interclub participation

QUESTION TWO - FUN-neling - Attracting and retaining new members

- Maintain a vibrant, active membership and reduce club size to actives rather than a roster
- New member orientation and member refreshers
- Have a mentoring buddy systems or big sister programs to ensure new member participation and interest
- Maintain an enforced attendance policy to encourage members rather than penalize absences – A poster displayed with each member's attendance is a good way to have public accountability
- Invite prospective young members and their children to attend an event, such as a gumdrop tree event, or a mother/ child workshop

QUESTION THREE - FUNDamentals of running a successful tour and reducing expenses

- The largest expense items are homeowner gifts, brochures, and flowers for actual tour arrangements, taken from the each club's budget. Expenses may be taken out of ticket sales to help defray some of the larger expense items. Clubs were reminded that although HGW expenses are not managed by GCV, they should be kept below 15% of ticket sales. It appears that a large percentage of the clubs were not aware of this percentage and perhaps other areas of running a successful tour.
- It is noted that the GCV template to help promote the tours was a very useful tool
- Most clubs try to avoid tours that would require extra transportation expense, such as shuttles.

District 5

Director at Large, Jean Gilpin

Scribe: Sally Guy Brown

FUNneling New Members

We should have a new members orientation for District V. Where? For anyone who has joined in the past two years, or anyone that wants to attend.

- Fauquier Loudoun:
 - Need for clarity of responsibilities of new members; Best not to have too many rules
 - Each member contributes differently
 - This club has a wonderful newsletter that goes out regularly and helps keep members in the loop
- Winchester Clarke: provisional members are given a mentor
- Warrenton: Proposers are the mentors to the new members

How do some clubs maintain full membership?

- Leesburg: The Old Guard stays on.
- Winchester Clarke: Having trouble getting across a sense of commitment to new members.
- Fairfax: Need to find a way of communicating the necessary work involved in becoming a member.

How do you make it fun for members?

- Hunting Creek: We are work horses! Have to be up front and then help members find the pockets of activities that appeal to them.
- Warrenton: They instituted a Junior Program for those under the age of 35 or 40. No obligations for 5 years, but can participate in club activities. At the end of that period, you may become an active member with full responsibilities.

Meeting Hours?

- Little Garden Club of Winchester: 10 and 1 o'clock
- Three Chopt: 10, 1, and 7pm options

Do you include husbands and/or families in your meetings?

- Alexandria: Yes, we have a Christmas party after our December meeting and husbands come and love it.
- Warrenton: We have a Conservation Meeting each November and it is open to everyone.

FUNDRAISERS OR FUNraising

- Alexandria: Meg Carter designed a tie with Garden Club of Virginia images and it sells for \$80.
- Hunting Creek: Greens Workshop each year before Christmas. Amaryllis Sale. These two fundraisers bring in about \$4500.
- Warren County: Round Robin Bridge and selling chances at \$25 each for a member to decorate your house for Christmas
- Little Garden Club: Christmas auction and coffee. Greens are sold. Guests invited

- Fauquier Loudoun: Could GCV do a template that all the clubs could use for their various fundraisers?

Speakers? All agreed that they are expensive, but a good possibility for fundraising.

FUNDamentals of HISTORIC GARDEN WEEK

Biggest Expenses?

- Fairfax: Flowers
- Hunting Creek: Flowers
- Winchester Clarke: buses and drivers and flowers
- Alexandria: (insurance is very important)
- Fauquier Loudoun: Do not use buses any more.
- Alexandria: Got rid of an elaborate tea which was a huge expense.
- Leesburg: offer box lunches to be preordered and picked up at a local winery. This is very profitable.
- Little Garden Club: Tea is the highlight of the tour! Each member pays a fee.
- Warren County: Young members for us are “just retired”! Banks sponsor printing (The bank refused this year because the club wasn’t 501-C3. But, Anne Baldwin pointed out that the GCV does have a 501-C3, so the bank cannot use that argument.) They never have to buy flowers.
- Alexandria: We have underwriters for printing of posters, etc. by local realtors and banks. We are thinking of getting some restaurants in Old Town to offer a fixed price menu for Historic Garden Week. Good publicity for them and us.

ALL: We need clarity about selling club projects during the HGW tours. Maybe have an application? Clubs can sell projects during the tour, but not at the tour sites (homes). It can be done in a public building near the tour. District V felt VERY strongly that our own fundraising projects should be able to be sold at the HGW sites. They felt that since it is the clubs who put so much effort into getting a good crowd, they should be able to benefit from their hard work. Often sales off site are not terribly successful.

District 6

Director at Large, Linda Consolvo

HGW:

1. The largest expense for each club was transportation, then brochures, tickets and then flowers: NRG's brochures and transportation needs have been met by the City of Suffolk's Tourism Dept. The Dept. has donated trolleys and buses in the past. The Dept. underwrites the cost of the brochures. A bank has underwritten buses in the past.

Other clubs try to find sponsors for transportation and brochures, but not always successfully.

Across the board, sponsorship is sought for underwriting the cost of tickets.

Each club handles the cost of flowers differently: some assess per member with a \$125 per-house policy stated in their yearbook; one club \$100 per house; and another \$50 per house. One club emphasizes the use of garden flowers. All agreed that if a member chooses to go over budget, they must absorb the cost of flowers.

2. Running a successful tour and cutting expenses really depends on the weather and the houses/gardens being featured.

All agreed that success rides on the publicity generated about the tour and having additional attractions such as demonstrations to give allure to the tour. Eye-catching colored brochures have added a plus to advertising tours. All agreed that the new HGW website is a boon to the upcoming tours. All agreed, also, that the quality of the tour chair/chairmen can have an enormous impact on the end results of the success of a tour. Having the Restoration CD to use in homes will be another positive tool to further enhance the tours.

Other input from presidents: clubs in Virginia Beach and Norfolk combine to put on one tour. Elizabeth River and Nansemond River have worked together on tours in the past and will again in 2012. Some clubs have found that a formal agreement to individual club's duties works best and other clubs work as chair club one year and not the next. Franklin has a tour every other year and on their off year, host at Westover Plantation. In Virginia Beach their ticket price includes touring historic homes in Va Beach and allows the ticket holder to tour the historic homes on the day after the clubs' tour as well. Seven uses pre-ticket sales.

3. The clubs did not use trade arrangements.

FUN-raising:

- The clubs have parties either during the holidays or at other times of the year where spouses are invited. Most have Christmas cocktail parties. NR invites tour homeowners and new members to their holiday party. Elizabeth River invites guests and homeowners to their February cocktail party. Franklin combines a Christmas party with a fundraising silent auction. GC of Norfolk has a Ghoulish Garden of Delights fundraising party where spouses

and guests are invited. Va Beach has a party in the Park. Husbands help with tours providing transportation and assistance where needed.

- The clubs have ecology camps, support Lee's Friends (national cancer awareness/fundraising organization started in Norfolk), support parks that emphasize environmental programs for children and have club parties for the members' families.
- The cocktail parties and fundraising parties are after-hours events.
- The beauty of this organization is that you do make friends and that friendship flows into other aspects of lives outside the garden club.

FUN-neling New Members:

Most of the clubs have tried a variety of hours to accommodate working women. Franklin holds their meeting at the local country club over lunch, thus allowing working women time to attend. Norfolk begins their meetings at 9:30. Nansemond River acknowledges that working women cannot always make every meeting, but they are required to hostess a meeting and to participate in HGW and other club projects.

Franklin has an Admissions Chairman that presents the qualifications of proposed new members. Each proposal must be endorsed by five additional members. Harborfront has an Admissions Committee, and GC of Norfolk has an Admissions/New Member Nominations/Orientation Committee. Members of this committee may not propose a member. This committee elects the members to be presented for membership. Nansemond River's Board of Directors elects the proposed members to present to the club. Elizabeth River also has an Admissions Committee. In the bylaws of some of the District clubs it is stated that a proposed member must have resided in the area for two-years. Some of the clubs Admissions Committees investigate the applicant before a vote is taken. One club meets outside of a club meeting with the newly elected member to discuss responsibilities, etc. of the workings of the club. The new member then decides whether they will accept the invitation to join.

The area clubs do use the mentoring system to encourage and assist new members. All felt that this has been a most beneficial policy.

Attendance policies vary from strict, two absences only, to working with the individual and their particular circumstance. Perpetual non-attendance is not tolerated.

Flexible hours and family activities addressed earlier.