

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010 PORTLAND, OR

A big thank you to Janet and her Committee, the trustees, officers and volunteers who have been involved in this NAFOW, Stacy and Cheryl and the Executive Committee, that has been called on many times. There are wonderful, skilled people in this group who have given so much.

General Items

- A good share of what I have to say, I write each week in the President's Report in the Weekly Summary, so the Annual Report is somewhat of a summary.

There are some things that were instituted that I consider to be especially important, including (in no particular order):

Internal Improvements

- on-line communication with trustees, officers and Executive Committee.
- establishing an active Executive Committee.
- documenting responsibilities of the WNGGA committees. It will help new Board members decide which Committee they want to serve on as well as help new Committee Chairpersons.
- a history of the development and use of logos written by Gerri Baker Parry, who was involved with the development of the NAFOW logo.
- WNGGA membership list updated.
- a financial audit.
- establishing a Weekly Summary allowing Committees to share their activities with the Board.
- establishing a password protected area on the website for all documents important to the Board. New Board members will be directed here to learn about the various committees and activities last year so they can reduce the learning curve most trustees experience when they are new to the Board. It acts as a repository for current trustees and officers.
- more volunteers than Board members. Some volunteers put in an amazing amount of time.
- WNGGA historical documents shipped to the Great Plains Welsh Heritage Project archives in late June after the Board voted to do that at mid-year meeting.
- re-instituted two annual opportunities for members to donate.
- moving Hwyl to the Publications Committee freeing time for other International Headquarters' functions.

Publicity

- upgrading the website.
- 2 articles about WNGGA and NAFOW in Yr Enfys, published by Undeb Cymru a'r Byd.
- publicity through our web site, AWO Yahoo!Group, Facebook and Americymru.
- establishing an AWO program with vibrant interactive communication.
- a trial use of Constant Contact.

Festival

- registering for the NAFOW on-line.
- a number of AWOs making donations for events at the NAFOW.
- a fundraising event, Meet & Greet with author Rhys Bowen. This event counts towards the food and beverage minimum at the hotel and the WNGGA is the recipient of the income. This event is sponsored by Martha Davies. We hope that other people will consider sponsoring other fundraising events in the future. Diolch yn fawr iawn Martha.
- a \$5,000 donation by the Women's Welsh Clubs of America to sponsor the Opening Concert. Diolch yn fawr iawn Women's Welsh Clubs of America.
- sufficient ads sold to cover the printing cost of the program book.
- an evaluation form in the NAFOW program book to get member feedback.
- a table for WNGGA in the marketplace to relieve congestion at the registration area and to sell memberships, song books and items gathered to sell to augment our Festival income. It will be staffed by members of

WNGGA.

- writing a contract for entertainers.

Challenges:

FIRST - Our Performance: Low Numbers in Portland

-I have attached page 238 from Col. Alfred Reese's book, The History of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu (WNGGA), 1929-2003. When I read it, I thought, that I've spent all year thinking the same thing he said in 2003 in the last paragraph, especially in the last sentence. I think that it tells us that we have to reconsider what we are doing and how we are doing it. If we decide we should continue to sponsor a NFAOW, we need a new design and a new plan for executing it.

The board this year had 16 active officers and trustees plus volunteers who worked untold hours to produce a NAFOW for fewer than 300 (273 on Aug. 23) people who bought fewer than 425 meals (407 on Aug. 23) and fewer than 450 concert tickets (449 on Aug. 23). If we calculated how many hours each trustee and officer worked and divided it by the number attending, it would be a staggering number of hours per attendee.

August 25 we returned 60 half price rooms and 6 complimentary nights for a credit of \$4,104 towards our penalty of \$4,788. If we get a few other room reservations, it will reduce the penalty of \$684. Kerry has promised to do what she can for us if we are assessed any penalty, but I wanted to take care of as much of that as we could in advance, leaving a smaller amount for her to have to try to get negotiate away. The penalty for failing to sell enough of the three meals we offer is less. The three meals, the cash bars for our group, the Rhys Bowen fund raiser and the Ninnau breakfast count towards our food and beverage minimum of \$16,000 (reduced from \$20,000 originally). We moved the pub nights out of the bar to a room where the bar serves only our group and set up a cash bar for the informal singing. The amount sold at those cash bars will count towards the food and beverage minimum. The penalty is 30 cents on each dollar we fail to spend below the \$16,000 we guaranteed. Proposed penalty is about \$250, but with cash bars, I'm hoping we can negate that. So, right now, it looks like a proposed penalty for failure to fill rooms and sell meals is under \$1,000.

One problem is that we use a large number of meeting rooms for seminars, Board meetings, AGM, cinema, Eisteddfod, marketplace, tea room, etc. For us to get them free, the hotel thinks we should have more people staying at the hotel and more people eating the meals we sponsor. There are people who come, register, but do not sign up for any events or meals. When people come and stay at another hotel or do not attend any concerts or eat the meals we provide, it is a loss to WNGGA. I do not think our members understand how much the decisions they make about attending the NAFOW impact the WNGGA's financial well being.

We have to do a better job with contracts in the future. Unfortunately, the Cleveland contract is signed. This has been a huge drain on both Stacy's and my time and energy.

This year there are probably 3 confounding issues, the continuing problem with making reservations at the hotel, the location and the economy. It is impossible to identify a main issue, but if we see the same trend in Cleveland next year, it will be a message that we will ignore at our own peril.

The extensive problems with making reservations at the Doubletree in Portland and their continuing inability to fix, or cooperate by recommending the Crowne Plaza, has plagued us since we became aware of it in November 2009. It was never fixed to anyone's satisfaction.

We have an evaluation form this year that I hope will give us some information. but, likely the people we need to hear from are not here. One comment I have heard a number of times this year is that the Festival has become too expensive.

This year there was more widespread publicity, with the improvements Gerri made in the website, the work Mona has done with the AWOs and Constant Contact and the work that Dave Parry and Ceri Shaw have done with Facebook and Americymru.

As it is now, the Festival is not sustainable financially or in terms of amount of work required. We continue to

plan an event as we have done in the past, only now with fewer dollars, lower attendance, less sponsorship, less participation from local societies, more work by fewer board members and fewer IHQ hours. I do not think we continue on this path. We are expecting local societies and individuals to print out registration materials for us for distribution to their members (Increasingly, there are fewer WNGGA members among these dwindling societies.) By offering so many choices (all of which we have to pay for) we may be pricing the Festival out of the reach of the members and out of our reach as well. They say the definition of insanity is continuing to do things the same way but expecting different results. Is that what we are doing? We must rethink what we are doing and ask ourselves what is realistic. We will have to change the way we do things when we run out of money. Why not do it now!

Some things to think about include how does the Ontario Gymanfa Ganu attract close to 200 people from 300 members to their Gymanfa weekend? How does the GPWHP attract nearly 200 to their Welsh Heritage Weekend alternate years from their 300 members? This year, we have less than 300 from 2,600 members.

Are we providing a product only a few want or most cannot afford? Are we providing too much? Do we need to cut back one day? Do we need to change what we offer? Is it the cost of transportation that limits attendance?

In San Jose, CA, we had approximately 950 attend, in Richmond 675, Washington, DC.575, Chicago 400, Pittsburgh 500 (only 100 more in the heart of Welsh-America) and, now, Portland less than 300. This is a significant and steady drop in attendance.

*Buffalo
850*

We cannot afford to spend more on IHQ, but can we do the job we need done without spending more? If we spend more there, where do we cut? I have asked the same question in the Weekly Summary with no replies from the Board members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

-Ceri Shaw, from Americymru and developer of the Left Coast Eisteddfod and huge volunteer for WNGGA, will speak to us briefly Saturday morning about what he sees for the future, for sponsorship opportunities and will invite us to join him. He will also talk about how he sees attracting younger people to things they are interested in now can funnel them into a NAFOW or NAFOW-like program later. We need to listen carefully and see what we can use from what he says and how we can participate in what he suggests. We are all in this together with very similar goals.

-Set up an ad hoc committee to review the evaluation sheets to see if we can glean anything that gives us a clue to what is happening and evaluate what we are doing, suggest what we should be doing and how we should be doing it using the information from the evaluation forms. Ask the membership in the next issue of Hwyl why they did not attend and if they plan to attend in Cleveland.

-Be sure that all entertainers stay at the Venue hotel. If the choir had stayed at the hotel this year, we would not have any penalty. In fact, all entertainers should be booked at the Venue hotel by WNGGA. An updated contract including this will be discussed under new business.

-Provide an evaluation form at each NAFOW.

SECOND: Growing Potential Board Members

-Getting enough new members in the pipeline to become nominees for the Board must be a high priority. I sent a request to a number of Canadians, all previous officers, Board members and Venue Chair, asking for Board nominees. One person replied their society has two WNGGA members, one over 90 years old. No one else responded. If we do not have members in the local societies, there will be no way to fill a Board of Trustees as all trustees must be members of WNGGA for a year to be nominated to the Board. We may be seeing the fall out of handling the entire NAFOW and not including or, worse yet, ignoring or alienating local societies. In these cases the local society members will not join WNGGA or agree to be nominated for the Board

We cannot target Board members with certain skills when we can find so few who meet the qualification of being a member of WNGGA for at least one year.

When we do not have a full Board, and a fully working Board, it affects how much we can accomplish in terms of improvements and updates.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

-Address this issue at the AWO meeting Saturday and develop a plan how to turn it around. This is the subject of highest priority for the AWO meeting. Request their help and suggestions how to encourage their members to join WNGGA. We need to promote joining WNGGA as a benefit and explain why people should join. If we cannot get members we will not have a Board of Trustees.

THIRD: Efficient and Effective Use of IHQ's Limited Time

-Continue to reduce work load of IHQ so they can handle the work in the time they have to spend and the time we can afford to pay for. We have reduced the cost of IHQ salaries by about 50% this year. Taxes associated with employees should be down accordingly.

Some Committees, including Publications, Publicity & Marketing, Seminars and likely others, have taken over some of the IHQ duties under the previous ED. Membership Committee should once they get organized. I have taken on lots of tasks previously performed at IHQ.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

One place that seemed logical during preparation for the NAFOW in Portland is by having the Marketplace Chair receive the reservations for tables and collect the money. It would be easier for a potential vendor to contact one person for both the payment and table request. Other committees, such as the Local Venue, Electronic Communications and Publications needs the marketplace information on an on-going basis and it would be more available through the Marketplace chairperson. They could forward the money to IHQ on a regular basis.

I asked in the April 30 Weekly Summary for trustees and Committees to volunteer to take on some of the jobs from things IHQ do. If your Committee can take on some of the jobs, please let me know..

INSTITUTED:

The following is a partial list of things we have accomplished by month since the mid-year Board meeting and were originally published in the Weekly Summary. Diolch yn fawr for all you have accomplished as well as what is in the pipeline.

APRIL:

At the mid-year Board meeting, Berwyn Jones led Developing a Strategic Plan for WNGGA and Alan Upshall presented Sponsorship Strategies for the Board members attending.

New Finance Committee and Membership Committees established.

MAY:

Sent a list of sponsorship suggestions to David Jones to take to the Women's Welsh Clubs of America's annual meeting for their review. At their meeting in June, they did decide to donate \$5,000 for the opening concert at the NAFOW in Portland.

Mona and Pat attended a free seminar to learn more about the services of Constant Contact's Email Marketing Program. Mona tried a free 60-day trial that most Board members responded to positively. Jenny had recommended this program earlier to Mona.

JUNE:

The Board voted to hold the 2012 NAFOW at the Sheraton City Center in Philadelphia.

Membership list updated prior to mailing the issue of Hwyl containing the Annual Fund appeal.

Letter sent to Walter Wilde in response to his 2009 letter.

2011 mid-year meeting will be April 2-3. Plan to arrive to begin work early April 2.

JULY:

Barbara Jones and Sue Stealey volunteered to be Co-Venue chairs of the 2011 NAFOW in Cleveland.

Three Board members suggested someone to be nominated to the Board. Two of the three agreed to be nominated.

We released 42 rooms from our room block at the Doubletree hotel to reduce potential damages. We were not allowed to drop all the unfilled rooms.

Gerald Lewis, a Welsh videographer in Portland, did a gratis promotional video of Gerri and Alan Upshall for advertising purposes. It was well done and has been on Facebook.

AUGUST:

Megan Morris, winner of the David G. Morris Memorial Award at the 2009 NAFOW Eisteddfod competed in the National Eisteddfod in Ebbw Vale.

The Executive Committee is recommending the WNGGA follow the policies regarding logos that Gerri set forth in her history of logos and to consider developing a logo for WNGGA. The only one previously developed and accepted was for NAFOW. Gerri will chair this ad hoc committee.

Ceri Shaw of Americymru and a volunteer for WNGGA succeeded in getting an article he wrote about this year's NAFOW listed in the number one spot when a Google News search is done on the keywords: Welsh American.

Mona ordered banners and signs from Vista Print so we will have a coordinated and reusable set of banners and signs. Most will have a blank place to put the name of the seminar or performer so they can be reused in future years.

We moved pub night and informal singing to areas with cash bars rather than using the hotel bar. The money generated from the cash bars will go toward the food and beverage minimum. Our contract states we are not to be charged for bartenders at our cash bars. Money spent in the hotel bar and restaurants does not count toward our food and beverage minimum.

August 25 we returned 60 half price rooms and 6 complimentary nights for a credit of \$4,104 towards our penalty of \$4,788. If we get a few other room reservations, it will reduce the penalty of \$684. The way things sit now, we will have a penalty of under \$1,000. Kerry has promised to negotiate with the Doubletree on our behalf if we are assessed any penalty.

This is long. If you have made it this far, diolch yn fawr iawn.

Respectfully submitted,

AdaMae Lewis, President
Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association