

Mid-America Chapter News

AMERICAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION
MID-AMERICA CHAPTER

DECEMBER 2008/JANUARY 2009

Welcome

By Donna Coffman, MD

I hope everyone had happy holidays! This issue has a great summary of the Board of Directors Meeting by Dave Gattermeir and a few bits of interesting news from the FDA.

One topic I would like to address in the spring issue of the Newsletter is how the economy is affecting the members of our writing community. If you are game, consider submitting a paragraph or so on how the economic problems are or are not affecting your writing work at your company. For those of you who are self-employed, let us know how you are faring and what strategies you have used to manage your business in this difficult environment.

I wish everyone a peaceful and rewarding 2009!

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President's Letter

by Joanne McAndrews, PhD

Dear AMWA Mid-America chapter members,

It was great to see some of you at the AMWA annual conference in Louisville in October. Twelve Mid-America chapter members gathered for an informal chapter dinner in Louisville on Thursday evening, October 23. Thanks to chapter member Kathi Whitman, who reserved the private dining room at a Persian restaurant for our group. The food was delicious, and it was so nice to have our own space.

Kathi and I will be organizing another informal chapter dinner at the AMWA annual conference in Dallas in October 2009. Stay tuned for more details.

More information will be coming soon about our 2009 chapter conference. Look for information via email, posted on our chapter web site, and also in our chapter newsletter.

AMWA/STC freelancer's luncheons in the St. Louis area are still going strong. We meet six times a year for lunch and educational discussions about topics of interest to medical writers/editors and self-employed people. If you would like help getting a group going in your area, please contact me.

All the best for a happy and healthy 2009!

Joanne M. McAndrews, PhD

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St. Louis Area AMWA-STC Freelancers Luncheons

St. Louis area AMWA and Society for Technical Communication (STC) freelancers continue to meet six times a year for lunch and interesting discussion topics. This group is coordinated by Lisa Balbes, an STC member, and Joanne McAndrews.

Look for an article on the AMWA/STC luncheons in an upcoming issue of the AMWA Journal.

Anyone interested in joining these lunch meetings should contact Joanne McAndrews.

Upcoming STC/AMWA Freelancers Luncheons:

For those who like to plan ahead, here is a list of upcoming STC/AMWA freelancers luncheons in St. Louis. Later on in the year we will need volunteers to lead our July, September, and November 2009 luncheons.

Monday January 12, 2009 at 11:30 AM

Presenter: Jo Seltzer

Topic: Writing science and medicine articles for the St. Louis Beacon

Location: Two Nice guys (10935 Manchester, Kirkwood, MO 63122; Phone 314-821-1800)

Tuesday March 3, 2009 at 11:30 AM

Presenter: Lynne Roney

Topic: Troubleshooting Microsoft Word Problems

Location: Amici's (210 N. Kirkwood Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122; Phone 314-821-2222)

Tues May 19, 2009 at 11:30 AM

Presenter: Betsy Frick

Topic: Effective interviews with subject matter experts.

Location: Schneithorst's Restaurant & Bar (1600 S Lindbergh Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63131; Phone 314-993-4100)

AMWA Board of Directors Meeting News

By David Gattermeir

The AMWA Board of Directors met on October 22, 2008 in Louisville, Kentucky. Reports from various departments and committees were reviewed. Below are the highlights of these reports and the related actions taken by the Board.

Membership:

AMWA has more than 5700 members nationwide. This is a 14% increase since 2004, during which time the membership of many other associations has declined.

Treasurer:

Revenues for the current fiscal year were \$1,605,875 and expenditures were \$1,498,140. This represents an excess of \$107,735. The board voted to award the full-time AMWA staff bonuses totaling \$7500 from this amount. The Board voted that the remainder should be divided equally between short-term reserves and operating funds, long-term reserves, and the AMWA Endowment Fund.

WIT:

The AMWA subscription to MD Consult was launched in July and has been well received. It will be monitored over the following year to determine how much it is being used and whether funds should be budgeted to it for next fiscal year.

It was proposed that Chapter website guidelines be amended to make a link to the webmaster's email address sufficient to constitute contact information for that individual. The amendment would also allow chapters to allow others to link to the chapter website provided this is consistent with AMWA's mission. The Board voted to approve the amendments as presented.

Awards:

Winners of the Swanberg, Eric Martin, Student Scholarship, and Book awards were announced. There were record numbers of entrants for the Student Scholarship Award (11 entrants) and Book Awards (77 entrants in 3 categories). AMWA Fellowships were awarded to Lois Baker, Elliott Churchill, and Melanie Fridl Ross.

Education:

The Workshops planned to be given at chapter

conferences and on-site workshops in 2008 and 2009 were outlined. This information is available on the AMWA website.

Publications:

Letters to the editors and public relations pieces were reported. It was also reported that a consultant has been hired to index the AMWA Journal. Work is underway on a slide set for presentations to prospective members.

Special Projects:

AMWA's first webinar, "Dear Edie Live" has been presented and a second, which will involve a speaker from the FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) is currently being developed.

The Board voted to allocate \$1000 to complete the searchable indexing of the "Dear Edie" column from the AMWA Journal.

Other Business:

The Medical Communication Profession Research Task Force outlined a long-term research project to define the medical writing profession in terms of size, geographic distribution, and job function. This project will help define how AMWA should evolve to be recognized as the foremost resource for medical communicators over the next 10 years. The progress of the project will be reported at subsequent Board meetings.

A task force to explore partnering opportunities with higher education reported on efforts to work more closely with educational institutions, which have included a conference open session on educational issues, increasing awareness of student scholarship by targeting faculty members, and efforts in conjunction with the WIT Committee to promote the profession via the AMWA web site.

Changes to AMWA Bylaws:

It was proposed that the AMWA bylaws be amended

to more specifically define requirements for consideration for national office. It was also proposed that if no candidates can be identified who meet the newly defined requirements, the Nominating Committee may select candidates who best meet the criteria. The Board voted to approve the amendments as presented.

A proposal to include in the bylaws that all AMWA members should accept the AMWA Code of Ethics was discussed. While it was agreed that all AMWA members should accept the code, methods of documenting acceptance and the wording of this condition of membership in new member applications and membership renewals was discussed at length. The Board returned the documentation and wording issues were to the Task Force on Ethical Standards for further consideration.

Changes to Local Chapter Bylaws:

The Delaware Valley Chapter proposed amendments to its chapter bylaws to create separate program committees for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Princeton as well as to create freelance workshop, newsletter, and website committees. Concerns were raised that creating the new committees would unduly increase the number of members of the chapter executive committee. In addition, the proposed changes stated that the committees would be made up of "voting members", and concerns were raised about the definition of this term. The Board voted to approve the amendments, but the chapter was advised to take the Board's concerns under consideration.

The Mid America chapter proposed an amendment to its chapter bylaws that would allow electronic voting for chapter officers. The Board voted to approve the amendment as presented.

If you would like additional details about the October AMWA Board of Directors meeting, contact Dave Gattermeir at (314) 645-6600, extension 5645 or at dgattermeir@kvph.com.

Member News: Magdalena's Notebook

Magdalena has been busy finalizing the semester for her new Writing for Health Professions class at Missouri State University. She will be providing an update on her experiences for our Spring issue.

MAGDALENA IS AN INSTRUCTOR IN TECHNICAL WRITING IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY.

Wacky WORD Tricks

You do not have to resort to the Insert Symbol function every time you use a commonly-used symbol. You can assign short cut keys for the symbols you use most frequently. In the Insert Symbol menu, highlight the symbol you want to create a shortcut key for. Locate the Shortcut Key option and open that window. In that window, you will see an area where you can type in the short cut combination of your choice for that symbol. If your combination has already been assigned to another character/symbol, that will be indicated.

Some of my favorite created short cuts are:

Alt + a for the alpha symbol
Alt + b for the beta symbol
Alt + d for the delta symbol

I have also assigned shortcuts for a smiley symbol, various math symbols, the degree symbol, and various editors symbols, such as the double dagger. There are also some useful preassigned shortcuts!

Wacky WORD Questions

We do not have any new Word Questions for this issue, but you are welcome to submit questions for futures issues!

IF YOU KNOW A TIME-SAVING TRICK WITH WORD TO SHARE OR HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT WORD, PLEASE EMAIL THE NEWSLETTER CHAIR, DONNA COFFMAN, AT DONRCOFFMAN@EARTHLINK.NET.

Select FDA News:

September 12, 2008

FDA Approves Expanded Uses for Gardasil to Include Preventing Certain Vulvar and Vaginal Cancers

The FDA has approved the use of Gardasil for the prevention of vaginal and vulvar cancer caused by the Human Papillomavirus types 16 and 18. This indication is in addition to prevention of cervical cancer. For more information, see <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01885.html>.

September 30, 2008

FDA Awards up to \$2.5 Billion to Modernize Information Technology over Ten Years.

Information Technology contracts were awarded to information technology companies for the purpose of developing enhanced computing power and greater responsiveness for the FDA. All FDA software applications and hosting operations will transition to the new data centers over a two-year period. For more information, see <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01893.html>.

October 8, 2008

FDA Statement Following CHPA's Announcement on Nonprescription Over-the-Counter Cough and Cold Medicines in Children

The FDA supports the voluntary actions by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) in its effort to prevent and reduce misuse of over-the-counter cough and cold medicines in children. It recommends a label modification to say "do not use in children under 4". For more information, see <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01899.html>.

October 15, 2008

FDA Creates Web Page with Drug Safety Information for Patients, Health Care Professionals

The FDA has created a single page on the FDA's web site where consumers and healthcare professionals can find safety information about prescription drugs. The web page is <http://www.fda.gov/cder/drugSafety.htm> and provides links to additional drug safety information. For additional information, see the full article at: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01904.html>.

December 3, 2008

FDA Teams with WebMD for New Online Consumer Health Information

The FDA has announced a collaboration with WebMD (www.webmd.com/fda) to expand consumer access to important health information. For more information, see the full article at: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2008/NEW01918.html>.

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 Update on Chapter plans for future MAC chapter meetings
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