



AMWA Mid-America Newsletter

American Medical Writers Association
Spring 2010

Mid-America Chapter News

Welcome

From Larenda Mielke, Incoming Newsletter Chairperson

Greetings and welcome to the newest version of the Mid-America Chapter News. We will continue to anticipate regular contributions by Donna Coffman, who has had to step down as newsletter chairperson because of new job responsibilities. Larenda will attempt to adequately convey your news and notes as the year progresses.

Contributions are more than welcome for the next edition to be released in early fall. Larenda's email address is mielke@wustl.edu.

Annual Board of Directors Meeting

Report from Rona Claire Grunspan, MD

The board of directors meeting was held in Rockville MD on April 30 – May 1, 2010 at the Rockville Hilton Hotel. This gathering was a day and a half meeting and was attended by selected delegates and members of the board. Rona Claire Grunspan attended on behalf of our chapter. The meeting was conducted by Tom Gegeny, who was able to address many topics in a timely fashion. Treasurer Judi Pepin reported the “Good and Bad News” regarding the last fiscal year. Membership had a record high number of members in the last fiscal year. On the downside, attendance at the Annual Conference decreased compared to past years. This decrease is likely due

to many employers cutting down on travel expenses. The bottom line was that in the second quarter, AMWA excess of revenues over expenses had decreased by approximately 5%. Looking ahead for this year, self-study module sales are doing better than projected. One of the major topics of discussion was the Annual Conference that will be held in Milwaukee this year on Nov 11- 13, 2010. This year the conference will have 96 workshops out of which 10 will be new workshops. Cindy Hamilton, past president, will be teaching essential skills for medical communicators. Please check the AMWA website for periodic updates on the annual Conference.

Mid-America Chapter Spring Dinner

Report from Mary Jo Blackwood

Enhancing Marketability: Would We Like to Earn More?

Sometimes we get so bogged down working toward a deadline that we forget we also have to be getting more business into our pipelines. As our spring meeting speaker pointed out, sometimes it's a matter of working smarter, rather than harder.

On April 28th, Jackie Stack, PhD, Director of Communications and Marketing for Washington University Physicians gave 16 of us a chance to gain a different perspective on what we do and hone some skills that may have become rusty. Many of us are looking at our work with new eyes.

She told us a story of a writer she knew while working in Hong Kong who was trying to find work. Her friend was a talented medical writer but not suited for the available jobs; so she created her own freelance writing practice. She would attend an international health conference and go to various sessions, during which she would make notes on the core content and then interview session attendees from different countries and types of organizations. From that she would craft several articles arranged around the same core content but with a different audience in mind. This is the work being done and this is how it impacts health professionals in Brazil (quotes) or Australia (quotes)

and so on. Then she would sell those articles to English language professional journals all over the world, making a tidy living and getting important timely information into many different hands.

Having told that story, Dr. Stack then referred us to a press release put out by Washington University on a study showing that for some populations (but not others), just monitoring eye pressure had the same outcomes as treating for glaucoma. With that study in hand, we were each given a different publication for that information and asked to craft a title and first paragraph for that audience. Audiences ranged from an employee newsletter, to an AARP article, to an article for an African American newspaper, and so on. We shared and critiqued the titles and first paragraphs we had written.

All were based on the same study, but became very different pieces because each was designed to solve a problem for a different audience. When we do that, we solve a problem for ourselves: multiple articles = multiple paychecks. We all went home planning to look at what we write with an eye to how it could be reworked for another non-competing audience and generate more income for these trying times.

St. Louis-Area Freelance Luncheon Series

Report from Joanne McAndrews, PhD

St. Louis-area freelance Mid-America chapter members have been holding bi-monthly luncheons with St. Louis-area Society for Technical Communication (STC) freelancers since September 2006. A different topic of interest to freelance medical/technical writers is discussed at each meeting, over lunch at local restaurants. Since November 2009, discussion topics have included: Writing Clear Instructions; Clients: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly; Tools For Evaluating

Clinical Study Reports; and Writing for Blogs: Is it Worth it?

Lisa Balbes and Joanne McAndrews are the co organizers of this group. Please contact them at lisa at balbes dot com and jmmcandrews at earthlink dot net to be added to the mailing list for this group—new members are welcome. Past and upcoming dates and topics can be found at:

<http://www.stc-stlouis.org/cicsig.html>

Mid-America Chapter 2010-2011 Chapter Contacts

President: VACANT

Immediate Past President: Joanne McAndrews, PhD

Treasurer: Carol Sonderman, MA, ELS

Secretary: Larenda Mielke, MA

Membership Chair: Rona Claire Grunspan, MD

Newsletter Chair: Larenda Mielke, MA, with contributions from Donna Coffman, MD

Webmaster: Carol Sonderman, MA, ELS

St. Louis Freelance Luncheon Coordinators: Lisa Balbes, PhD and Joanne McAndrews, PhD

Job Opportunities

From time to time, chapter members are contacted with information on job openings and would like to share the information. Given the need to pass along job news in a timely fashion, we will be posting these opportunities on our Web site.