



AMWA Mid-America Newsletter

American Medical Writers Association
Spring 2011

Mid-America Chapter News

Welcome

From Magdalena Berry, Incoming Newsletter Chairperson

Greetings from Springfield, MO! I appreciate the opportunity to serve as newsletter editor. Think of the newsletter when you find out about and/or participate in an event that could help other members and send me a brief description. Share any and all ideas you have for a regular feature or a one-time article. For my part, I'll report occasionally on my activities in academia. As a chapter, we're widely dispersed, and our newsletter could be a valuable way to keep in touch, so thanks in advance for your contributions!

President's Letter

By Rona Claire Grunspan, MD

As the seasons began to change and we welcome spring in, I like to welcome our chapter officers for 2011-2012. Most chapter officers have graciously, agreed to volunteer once more to serve our chapter. I like to thank them dearly for their continued chapter enthusiasm. A special thank you to our past president, Joanne Mc Andrews who has served as our president over the past years and has done a wonderful job in keeping our chapter going. In addition, we have a new name to add to our board, Magdalena Berry who will be our Newsletter chair. Welcome Magdalena!

We still have one vacancy on our board for membership chair. If you are interested in being membership chair this year, please contact me. The main duty of the membership chair is to send out welcome emails to our new members

who join our chapter, and maintain an updated spreadsheet from headquarters of our members.

Moving forward into the year, I would like to hear from our members on what they look forward from our chapter. My goal is to increase the interest of our dormant members. With that said, I will be sending out a survey in the next months inquiring of specific interests and programs for our chapter to sponsor. The more we get involved, the more we all can benefit.

I look forward in serving as chapter president, and please do not hesitate to contact me at rona.grunspan@quintiles.com. Thank you.

Annual Board of Directors Meeting

The board of directors meeting was held in Rockville MD on March 25 – March 26, 2011 at the Rockville Hilton Hotel. Many topics were discussed at this day and half meeting. Our national president, Melanie Ross conducted the meeting and was able to address many topics in a timely fashion. Treasurer Judi Pepin, reported that our annual conference in Milwaukee was well attended with 902 registrants, which helped us bring in revenue along with slightly higher enrollment in the essentials skills certificate. The bottom line was that in the second quarter, AMWA excess of revenues over expenses had increased by approximately 31% compared with the second quarter last year. Consequently, we have a wealthier budget compared to last year. Tom Cegeny reported about his efforts in the task force moving forward with a certification program and laying down the groundwork for educational programs.

This would be a great opportunity for us as medical writers to set a standard of proficiency in our profession, increase awareness of the skill-set offered by professional medical writers and demonstrate the professions' commitment to ethical standards. Lastly, our Annual Conference will be held in Jacksonville FL on October 20-22, 2011. The theme will be **"Writing our Future."** The location is ideally situated along the beautiful St. Johns River with a wonderful view that includes a series of bridges, shopping and dining all within walking distance. This year's conference will have approximately 100 workshops. Keep checking the AMWA website for periodic updates; conference details will be posted regularly in the weeks and months ahead.

Semi-Annual Chapter Report, February 2011 from Joanne McAndrews, PhD

Chapter officers

The Mid-America chapter officers for 2011-2012 are as follows:

President: Rona Claire Grunspan, MD
Treasurer: Carol J. Sonderman, MA, ELS
Secretary: Larenda Mielke, MA
Membership chair: VACANT
Newsletter chair: Magdalena Berry, MA
Webmaster: Carol J. Sonderman, MA, ELS

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

Membership

The Mid-America chapter currently has 110 members. Since November 2010, the Mid-America chapter has welcomed 5 new members, and 10 members did not renew their AMWA membership.

Rona Claire Grunspan, our past membership chair, has sent a welcome e-mail to each new member upon receiving their contact information from Mark Rosol, with a link to our chapter web site.

Rona has also fielded questions about AMWA from a few interested potential members, as has Joanne McAndrews.

Financial status

The financial status of the Mid America chapter is healthy with a CD balance of \$12,426.93 and a checking account balance of \$7,727.19.

Chapter conference--2011

The Mid-America chapter conferences have rotated between Kansas City and St. Louis, MO in the past. The 2008 chapter conference with core and advanced workshops in Kansas City was not particularly well attended. Given that fact and the reality that many companies have reduced their employee travel budgets, the Mid-America chapter held chapter dinners with a guest speaker and a chapter business meeting in 2009 and 2010 in the St. Louis, MO area, which were well attended. Our plans for a chapter event in 2011 are still to be determined.

St. Louis-area freelance luncheon series

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. Since October 2010, discussion topics have included: "The relationship between the book and the index"; "Honing your writing with a critique group"; and "The importance of writing well". Lisa Balbes and Joanne McAndrews are the co organizers of this group. The average attendance at these gatherings has been 10 to 12 people, and these events take place at local restaurants, with each participant paying for their own food and drink. This group is planning a special celebratory dinner in September 2011 to commemorate five years of luncheons.

Chapter newsletter/Web site

Our chapter publishes a newsletter several times a year that is posted to our web site as well as e-mailed to each member. The web site also features announcements about current and future chapter activities, including the St. Louis area AMWA/STC freelance luncheon series, get-together dinners at the AMWA annual conferences, and information about our annual chapter conferences.



St. Louis Area Freelance Luncheon from Joanne McAndrews, PhD and Lisa Balbes, 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, usually over lunch at a local restaurant.

Our February 2011 luncheon topic, “Honing Your Writing With a Critique Group,” was presented by Mary Jo Blackwood. Mary Jo shared how she works with a group of writers, who critique each other’s work, and provide valuable feedback before a document is sent to the final client. She shared a feedback form she has developed, as well as tips for how to select appropriate members.

In March 2011, Linda Landon, PhD discussed “The Importance of Writing

Well”. Linda recounted her recent experience in Jefferson City, MO, where she spoke to a group of female middle school students about careers in science and medical writing in particular. Linda stressed how important communication is in science and medicine, and gave many great examples.

Our next luncheon will be held on May 12th. Jan Niehaus will outline steps for “Following Up With Your Prospects”. Lisa Balbes and Joanne McAndrews are the co organizers of this group. Please contact them at lisa@balbes.com and jmmcandrews@earthlink.net to be added to the mailing list for this group—new members are welcome, as are suggestions for future luncheon topics and volunteer presenters. Past and upcoming dates and topics can be found at:
<http://www.stc-stlouis.org/cicsig.html>

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.

Annual Conference in Jacksonville

We hope to see you at the annual conference. Check your mail this summer for information on our chapter dinner, organized by Joanne and Kathi (are there stone crabs in our future?)