

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

As prologue to report synopses of the GCWA Executive Committee reports, I add this brief commentary for the year (April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016) served as President of the GCWA.

Like all organizations, self-formed and self-sustaining, the Gulf Coast Writers Association lives on the energies of its membership. The past year has been one of significant living. Individuals have invested themselves in the multiple efforts devoted to the accomplishment of a single purpose: writing.

Unlike most other organizations created to enhance and involve individual efforts to achieve the goals of the whole, the Gulf Coast Writers Organization exists to support the goals and objectives of the individual: writers, we call ourselves. Yet, we know that we need each other for the unique support one writer can provide another writer. And, we know the false promise of too much, and the agonizing disappointment of too little. But we stay the course, knowing that surrender encourages doubt and even, self-loathing.

I suppose we could proceed to quote the icons of our craft, eulogize the pace setters who have hoist their banners for all to hail; instead, we simply humble ourselves in the activities of the mundane where our flags fly in the democratizing wind, breathing the same air.

The Tangibles:

GCWA held 10 general meetings and one award ceremony.

GCWA was one of many sponsors of the Florida Reading Festival in Ft. Myers and rented space for members to promote the GCWA as well as a selection of member-authored books.

GCWA sponsored an open-invitational writing contest that produced winners in three genres – poetry, fiction and nonfiction.

GCWA provided judges for the Keiser University Writing Contest managed by one of GCWA's members.

GCWA officers initiated an online newsmagazine available to members only.

GCWA sponsored Special Projects including, a three-day writing conference cruise featuring seminars and individual conferences for participants.

GCWA hosted a Social Media workshop that guided many members through the maze of how to communicate (and benefit) via social media.

GCWA members opened (2) bookstores in Fort Myers. Both stores operate on unique business plans that feature regional authors.

GCWA Writing Contest winners published their prize-winning stories in Fort Myers Magazine.

GCWA membership at last count numbered 227.

GCWA financial sheet showed a balance of \$12,744.66 at March 22, 2016 Executive Committee Mtg.

GCWA Nominating Committee provided the organization with candidates for the annual election of new officers, and those nominees were elected by acclamation of the membership to take office April 1st.

GCWA special committee revised the organization's Constitution and Bylaws which were approved by the membership by unanimous vote. The revised documents take effect April 1, 2016 along with the succession of new officers.

GCWA members published books, articles and poems during the past year. The GCWA website continues to feature member publications and personal profiles.

GCWA members encouraged its officers to pursue programs that focus on young people and writing.

GCWA members worked with teachers at Lehigh Middle School and gave presentations at a school assembly.

The Intangibles:

A movement toward a more educational and less marketing oriented program is underway. As with most trends, a year of active results will validate, or not, the change.

The pursuit of permanent quarters for GCWA continues, but the predictable Zion Lutheran and Covenant Presbyterian locations have established a credible degree of stability. Events and workshops at alternate sites, the Lee County Alliance for the Arts, for instance, can be added to our venue list.

GCWA members contribute to the arts in many ways in their respective communities by participating in book clubs, cooperative arts events, poetry-fiction-nonfiction critique groups and public readings of literary work.

The Corporate Board has become a sort of senate to the Executive Committee's house of representatives. This year may well set operational behavior patterns for the future.

How will GCWA measure its level of success during the next year and beyond? At this point the intangibles beg to be tangible. It could happen.

Recommendations:

The members, old and new, have voiced their desire for more hands-on writing activities. The new Executive Committee and (particularly) the program officers need to develop ways for that to happen.

Sub-Committee projects widened member involvement in GCWA functioning and should be continued.

Programs intended for a young audience may require external delivery. We need to go to them.

Communications needs to expand as described in the revised constitutional job descriptions. Going beyond public service announcements and classified ads means PR on many fronts, and plenty of opportunity for sub-committee involvement.

Guest Presenters need to be paid. A \$100 minimum honorarium should be budgeted.

A portable sound system has been on the to-do list for years. Let's appoint knowledgeable and aggressive member(s) to secure a sound system appropriate for GCWA needs. Assessing those needs and how to meet them within an Executive Committee determined budget could be part of the person(s)' job.

Sponsor two writing contests. One for members only, one open to the public.

Plan a one-day writing conference/retreat featuring plenary sessions to cover an agenda of writers' interests.

Continue to work on a solution to the electronic communication (email) glitch that limits GCWA messaging.

Evaluate Word Song and its potential for future literary purposes as well as informational roles.

Form a sub-committee to explore co-sponsored public literary activities.

Schedule a December party.

Thanks:

Gulf Coast Writers Association has played a major role in the most recent act of my life. It's plugged me into a fresh source of energy generated by the love of writing and those who do it. Finding kin in SW Florida was a dream I now live in reality. We all know how that feels.

Gary McLouth, President, GCWA

Contributors to this report and to this year: Don Cappelli, VP and Treasurer; Mike Neal, Program Director; Jennifer Fitzgerald, Webmaster; Irene Smith, Membership Director; Alice Oldford, Special Projects Director; Barbara Burnett, Publicity; Cyndi Anthony and Karla Webb, Secretaries.