



American Guild of Organists

Chapter Leadership News

February 2020

Thank you to the many chapters that have extended invitations for me to schedule a chapter visit during 2020. I am looking forward to traveling throughout the U.S., attending many education programs, celebrations and recitals.

This past month, I had the pleasure of attending the annual Martin Luther King Mini-Conference sponsored by the Queens, Nassau and Suffolk chapters. Breakout sessions included organ rehearsal techniques and teaching congregations new music. A superb recital with organist Michael Kaminski, featuring the music of Louise Vierne, concluded this wonderful conference.

I also had the pleasure of visiting the Clearwater Chapter and attending their January program, a dynamic master class for “Choral Techniques and Conducting the Image of Music,” led by Lei Yu. Many thanks to the chapter leaders and members who made me feel so welcomed during my time visiting with them.

This issue will focus on:

- ✓ **Successful chapter recruitment initiatives**
- ✓ **Creating policies and procedures for your board**
- ✓ **Making each member feel valued**
- ✓ **Achievement Awards**
- ✓ **2020 Pipe Organ Encounters: Growing the Next Generation of Organists**
- ✓ **Update regarding the AGO database transition to Impexium**

Thank you all for your hard work and perseverance.

Happy Valentine’s Day!



Elizabeth George, CMM
DIRECTOR OF MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT
Elizabeth.George@agohq.org

Successful Chapter Recruitment Initiatives

Many thanks to the Charlotte and Central North Carolina chapter leaders who responded to the question posed in last month's newsletter, "What is your chapter doing to grow your membership?"

- Nancy Watson, Dean, Charlotte Chapter: Our chapter has a Stigall Scholarship Program, offering students financial help with organ lessons from an organ teacher in our chapter. Many of those scholars have gone on to universities and are now church musicians, university professors, and of course, AGO members.
- Mark Anderson, Dean, Central North Carolina Chapter: Since becoming dean, I have instituted a canvass of the local music stores and piano teachers to find students who might have an interest in the organ. I have also started an organ exploration afternoon to accompany prospective members and introduce them to fine instruments in our area. Our chapter also sponsors the Cooper-Miller Scholarships each year, which are open to high school age students of both organ and piano. Together, all of this is bringing in younger members to help build our chapter's future. I have also used my personal mailing list from my concerts to invite new members to our chapter. We have recently added four new members from that list as well.

Thank you to Nancy and Mark for sharing these great initiatives. As I am sure everyone is aware, recruiting members is essential for the AGO to continue to grow and this must be a major focus for every AGO chapter board.

Please take a few minutes to read District Convener Shannon Fore's article "[Suggestions for Growing and Strengthening Your Chapter](#)" located in the **Membership Toolkit** on our website. This document highlights many successful strategies and includes steps for execution, to help you promote and grow your membership. If you are experiencing recruitment challenges, please contact me so that together, we can identify solutions to assist your chapter with member growth.

Why Every Chapter Should Create Policies and Procedures

I'm sure that each of you has at one time or another referred to the AGO Bylaws to better understand the requirements for chapter structure and officer responsibilities. Bylaws are a higher and more permanent set of instructions for how a board operates. Creating your own chapter policies and procedures are equally important. Board policy is a carefully designed, written statement for the organization, which is formally adopted by a majority vote of the

board at a legally constituted board meeting. Each AGO chapter is unique. Adopting detailed policies and procedures will provide guidelines and support clarity, as well as expected behavior regarding activities to help your chapter achieve its goals. Quite simply, a *policy* describes the ways things are done and a *procedure* articulates a series of steps to accomplish the end result. As referenced in **The Board Team Handbook**, a good set of written board policies:

- ✓ **Informs everyone of board intent, goals and aspirations**
- ✓ **Prevents confusion among board members**
- ✓ **Eliminates the need for instant (crisis) policy making**
- ✓ **Clarifies board member expectations**

Your board should *develop* policy, not just write it. Start by identifying the need for a particular policy that would support an anticipated problem, or the need resulting from a previous issue that was difficult for everyone to resolve. In order to do this, you will need to gather the facts and then schedule time for discussion, where everyone deliberates the issues and upon consensus, writes the policies. Your chapter's policies should include but certainly not be limited to:

- **Financial policies** such as guidelines for the distribution of chapter funds, scholarships, funding and bequests, who on the board can sign checks and what financial information must be shared at each chapter meeting.
- **Governance** such as term limits for officer positions. If you don't clearly state term limits, officers can (and often do) remain in the same positions for multiple years. This inhibits leadership development that can in turn lead to board stagnation and, well, you know the rest.
- **Conflicts of interest.** A conflict of interest policy facilitates disclosure of information that may help identify conflicts of interest. An example of this might be when a board officer might benefit financially from a decision he or she might independently make. Another example would be if two officers are working at the same organization and wish to influence a decision from which their organization would benefit. To resolve this, all officers should share any potential conflicts of interest that will affect chapter governance and recuse themselves from voting on any motions.

The AGO San Diego (Calif.) Chapter's policies can be found under the **Board Management & Governance Toolkit** on the AGO website. [Click here](#).

Happy Birthday! Making Your Members Feel Valued

Kudos to the Harrisburg (Pa.) and Palo Alto (Calif.) chapters for sending each member a birthday card! What a simple, yet heartfelt way to let a member know that you value and appreciate them. Is anyone else sending birthday cards? If you are doing something special to recognize your members, please email me so that it can be included in a future newsletter.

Central Hudson Valley Chapter Launches a Successful Achievement Awards Program



Congratulations to chapter dean Laura Ramsey Russell and the Central Hudson Valley (N.Y.) Chapter for participating in a pilot program of the AGO Achievement Awards. The purpose of the Achievement Awards is to help chapter members who wish to improve their organ playing at any level. Laura shared that 90% of CHVAGO's members serve as part-time organists, who desired to increase their proficiency but were not ready to participate in

the AGO certification program. The chapter identified those who could serve as mentors and teachers to assist each candidate in improving their organ console, manual and pedal technique, registration, harmony and transposition skills. Candidates who participate in the Achievement Awards program learn at their own pace and completion occurs when they have demonstrated to their mentors, competency in each skill.



CHVAGO launched the study program this past fall and in January 2020, they presented their first group with Achievement Award certificates at their annual "Spuds & Sundaes" chapter social. Three high-school student members of CHVAGO received achievement awards. Two adult members of the chapter are currently working towards achieving them, under the guidance of a mentor. After attending the awards presentation, several other chapter members expressed interest in participating in the program. The chapter plans to continue the awards program on an on-going basis. Laura shared

that when launching the program, they realized that participants worked at various levels of productivity. Some had fewer outside commitments and could work almost full-time on the awards process, completing it fairly quickly, while others were juggling multiple jobs and activities and needed a longer period of time to complete the program.

The **Achievement Awards** Program was created by Jonathan Hall, FAGO, and National Councillor for Education Don Cook, AAGO. It has been designed to engage chapters in educating and inspiring new organists. It serves as a motivating education tool and can become a powerful initiative to strengthen member engagement within your chapter. Full details of the awards program with guidelines for each category and a promotional flyer can be [found here](#).

Help Grow the Next Generation of Organists!

Eight Pipe Organ Encounters have been approved for 2020, including three POE+ events for adults. What fantastic opportunities to introduce people of all ages to the King of Instruments!

POE events have been approved for 2020 in:

- Long Beach, California (POE) – June 28-July 3
- Winston-Salem, North Carolina (POE) – July 19-24
- Manhattan, Kansas (POE) – June 22-27
- Hartford, Connecticut (POE) – Aug. 2-7
- Ann Arbor, Michigan (POE Advanced) – June 28-July 3
- Rockford, Illinois (POE+) – June 14-19
- Richmond, Virginia (POE+) – July 26-31
- Allentown and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (POE+) – June 28-July 3

Chapters can help grow the next generation of organists by:

- Encouraging pianists and organists of all ages in your area to register for one of the 2020 POEs. Brochures can be downloaded and applications for 2020 POE events are now [available online](#).
- Letting young musicians know that scholarship assistance is available for POE, POE-A, and POE-Tech events. [Learn more](#).
- Making a chapter donation to one of the host chapters to help underwrite some of the costs of producing the POE.
- Welcoming new members (all POE, POE-A, and POE-Tech participants receive a one-year membership in AGO) to your chapter and helping them get involved.
- Applying to host a POE in 2021 – it's one of the greatest experiences your chapter will ever have!

Chapters interested in sponsoring a POE, POE Advanced, POE+, or POE Technical (Organbuilding POE) in summer 2021 are encouraged to consult the POE Handbook (as revised and updated through 2019) containing application materials. This resource is on the AGO website or it may be obtained directly from AGO Headquarters upon request. [Click here](#).

**Applications to host 2021 POE events are now being accepted.
February 15 is the deadline to apply.**

For further information, contact Leslie Wolf Robb, director of the Committee on Pipe Organ Encounters, at 858-735-4338, or email lesliewolfrobb@mac.com.

Update - Impexium Implementation

The AGO's transition to Impexium, our new member database and association management software, has been delayed due to unexpected software issues. The software's programmers are continuing to fine-tune the system to meet the needs and expectations of the Guild. We currently anticipate transitioning to Impexium in the fall.

Question of the Month:

Does your chapter offer a scholarship program?

If so, please send the link to where it is posted on your chapter website.

We will be creating a webpage with links to chapter scholarships.

Please reply to elizabeth.george@agohq.org.