

President's Report for Convention 2011

My journey to present to you my first presidential report, began 7 years ago when I accepted the 3rd Vice Presidency. A lot has transpired during the past 7 years, not only with OAGC but across the nation as well. The financial crisis has impacted us all. We have heard over and over again, we need to make changes. Changes we have made.

Having served the past 2 years on the Handbook for Garden Clubs revision committee, it has been up to the current executive committee to implement the changes. The first biggest change was to downsize the number of department chairs from 12 to 8. We created a liaison position for the editor of our *Garden Path* instead of that being a department chair position.

Many improvements were made to all the contests that OAGC supports and at this convention you will hear about these winners. The junior department was renamed and the junior contests were updated as well. A decision was made to transfer the junior contests to the regions in the hope that more junior clubs and individuals would participate. Each region would judge the entries and the top 3 would be displayed at convention. Those winners are on display on the 3rd floor mezzanine. I hope you will take a look at them.

Another change has been to locate all major events sponsored by OAGC to an Ohio State Park Lodge. Just a couple weeks ago, we held E&J School at Deer Creek State Park Lodge for the first time. With absolutely wonderful instructors we had record attendance for a 2 day school, as most attendees stayed overnight and participated in the second day. While this is not our first convention at a State Park, we will continue to have conventions at a State Park somewhere in Ohio. That is very exciting, because if you were like me, I had never been to these parks or lodges. It is truly breathtaking to spend a couple days surrounded by nature. Our Executive Board meetings are all being held in the State Parks that have smaller facilities.

These changes have been a cost saving measure for the Association. That savings directly impacts each member by not needing to increase any fees for our events. A member asked me, if you say this is cheaper why is my room rate so high and why is my meal cost so much? My response is: the overall costs at a State Park Lodge are comparable to what the hotel costs were years ago. The meal prices at the State Parks are noticeably cheaper than planned meals at the hotels. These are hidden costs members don't see. I looked at a convention registration form for the year 2005 – that was 6 years ago. The overnight room was \$105.00 per night (and city bed taxes are higher so there are hidden advantages with cheaper taxes). The overnight price here was \$96.00 per room or cabin. This is peak season for State Parks and rates are in excess of \$129.00 per night and cabins require a full week of stay. Our rate is indeed a bargain. The convention banquet meals in 2005 were \$32.00 for both Monday and Tuesday evenings. Our banquet meals this year are \$29.00 and \$25.00.

While assuming the presidency, I have presided at more meetings than you have fingers. I have traveled more than 8,000 miles to regional meetings, planning meetings, Wahkeena liaison meetings, to name just a few. It would really be boring for me to list all the meetings I have attended. I do try to combine meetings when I know I will be in a certain area and I contact our sales rep for the State Parks. I am usually able to secure a reduced overnight rate or sometimes even a free overnight. By exploring our great state this way, new ideas are created and it is a pleasure to share these with all of you. Our Smithers Oasis demo and workshop yesterday was a direct result of this. I do hope you enjoyed that.

My personal desire to become more creative with my flower arranging has opened new doors that once again I am pleased to share these with you. The Creative Floral Arrangers of the Americas is one of those opened doors that gave me the inspiration to have a bus trip to the first World Flower Show to be held in the United States in Boston. I never dreamed it would be 2 full buses. That was an awesome, once in a lifetime trip that was filled with such creativity. Members will be sharing those memories for a long time. There is so much out there in this world with flower arranging, that I hope more will explore and gain personal satisfaction from thinking outside the box.

The Vice Presidents have been busy with their duties, traveling to their regional meetings, assisting the regions with nominations for their next regional directors. Mary Lee is busy making her presidential plans while Peggy has been farming for outstanding regional winners. Geri is busy planning Gardeners' Day Out at Schedel Arboretum and Gardens on August 31st.

Marlene is really busy with her computer and typing minutes, which are usually finished and ready for first draft the night she gets home! She also maintains our paper supplies of stationary, certificates, etc. Stephanie got a name change (there is that word again). She is now our sales secretary and I have kept her busy with all this new product from Smithers Oasis. She has also introduced a new line of metal containers from Ken Swartz. Our treasurer, Sue, has organized the financial records using the Quickbooks accounting system. This allows us greater knowledge as to profit and loss for each event as well as an overall picture of the financial well being of the Association.

All 14 regions have had successful fall and spring regional meetings. The regional directors have done their duties outstandingly. We continue to acknowledge a region 15, however there are no active clubs at this time with our organization. We have been informed of a possible new club that has formed that wishes to join our organization. This is sparking an idea with the executive committee that perhaps some sort of temporary membership should be granted for a club just getting organized. We plan to study this.

All eight of the department chairs have worked very hard to implement the changes within their departments. For some it was easier, and for others a little bit harder. But their presentations at convention will show you that they have done an excellent job.

Kathy Martino has scored the program books, publicity books and garden therapy books. She is already making notes on things to change or do a little different to improve the contests. Design Study, Naomi Ormes is eager to assist regions or even counties with workshops on floral designs. She accepted the photos for the Faye Collins Designer of the Year Award and presented those last evening.

Exhibitors' and Judges' Schools chair, Jan Stein, has successfully had her first school and is busy with school #4 in September. She maintains accurate records of the students, oversees their testing, and maintains records of the current active judges and judge emeriti. She is always on the lookout for vendors for the schools.

Our flower show chair, Joni Duncan, has proven she is worthy of this position by entering the World Flower Show. We were very proud of Joni's entry in the class "Glass". And don't be surprised at our next convention for some new twists in the artistic division of the flower show. She has received judges' scorecards and the contest books for this year's contest. Winners will be presented tomorrow morning. Horticulture chair, Charlene Thornhill, had to do some scrambling when she learned that the Bole Awards was eliminated by the American Horticulture Society and the convention horticulture schedule had been written and published in the Garden Path. The new OAGC Medalist Collection is an excellent replacement and the competition will now be every other year.

When a person agrees to accept a department chair position, sometimes you do not know the depth of that person's capabilities. Marian Moeckel is one of those. She is a retired teacher, aha great as a junior chair. She is an avid outdoor hiker and birder, aha leader of our morning bird hikes. She is a great auctioneer having helped Region 5 at their spring meeting make a lot of money, especially on a metal container that I wanted and Juanita got! She has great ideas for our junior projects and this next year at convention we will have an opportunity to display winners from both the fall and spring regional meetings.

Kim Cromwell did a shift from previous chair positions to membership chair. I don't know how well her computer spreadsheet skills were before she took this position, but they are superb now. Maintaining records for more than 4,000 people is a feat in and of itself.

Nature and Conservation also had a name change (from nature and beautification). Deborah Graham undertook the promotion and scoring of our first temporary seasonal beautification contest and when you hear her report tomorrow, I believe you will be impressed with the entries and winners.

The 6 liaisons continue to support the Association in their outreach with Wahkeena Nature Preserve, Mohican School in the Out of Doors, the Ohio State Fair, our own website, the storage of our precious history and the publication of our quarterly newsletter, *The Garden Path*.

My counselors have provided a support system for me and other board members. I could not have done this job without them.

I am deeply honored to be your State President and promise to uphold the standards of our organization as those before me have done.

Thank you,
Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Ware, President OAGC

