

Chapter Tune-Up

By Bill Stephenson

Periodically, chapters should review how well they serve each member's needs. The checklist at right supports such an evaluation. It is based on the input of several AAW members with extensive chapter leadership experience. How does your chapter stack up?



Photo: Judy Chesnut

Active mentoring program
At a Kansas City Woodturners mentoring session, Virgil Boyd and Edd Maxwell watch Jerry Darter turn. Edd mentors new and veteran turners for the chapter, which also conducts twice-monthly Saturday sawdust sessions.

Not every chapter will meet all of the evaluation points. Each organization should consider its operations relative to its goals, objectives, mission and strategy.

This checklist has now been incorporated into the Chapter Best Practices located on the AAW website (woodturner.org).

First Impressions

- Upon arrival, guests greeted warmly and introduced to officers and members
- Guest book maintained and guests provided with name tags
- At meeting outset, guests introduced to members, invited to speak, and join the chapter

Fellowship and Communication

- Meetings educational, varied, and social
- Social events offered regularly. Sawdust or other informal group activities encouraged
- Members participate in AAW committees and events
- Inter-chapter events and exchanges occur regularly
- Chapter newsletter issued regularly
- Chapter-developed informational brochure available
- Chapter activities and responsibilities organized to involve as many members as possible

Membership Strength

- Chapter has 40 or more members
- Members retained from year to year
- Woodturning and chapter promoted in the community
- Mentoring program for new members active and recognized
- Regular membership works to build the chapter and its programs
- Education programs and recognition events scheduled regularly
- Demonstration responsibilities shared among the membership
- Members who miss meetings contacted and invited to participate
- Members encouraged to join AAW
- All chapter officers and demonstrators AAW members
- Chapter membership reflects steady growth
- Membership skills increase
- Surplus materials (wood, etc.) made available to others – perhaps through a chapter donation or at nominal costs

New-Member Orientation

- Formal induction, including presentation of membership card and organization by-laws
- A coach/mentor assigned to new members
- Members involved in all aspects of the chapter activities
- Learning needs of the membership routinely assessed
- Material (wood) and tool needs of new members assessed
- New members recognized in newsletter

Program Planning and Meeting Organization

- Meeting location and time is consistent, and scheduled and advertised well in advance
- Demonstrations and special activities publicized well in advance
- Members know program responsibilities and are prepared to carry out all assignments
- Demonstrations range from basic to advanced topics
- Meetings begin and end on time
- Wood auction or raffle held at each scheduled meeting
- Positive and helpful critiques/evaluations of members work provided
- Chapter owns or has access to equipment necessary for programs
- Chapter applies for AAW and other educational grants
- Field trips to related woodturning sites offered
- Members of other chapters in the area invited to special events or demonstrations
- Meeting room professionally arranged
- Arrangements meet demonstrator's need

Recognizing Accomplishments

- Contests or challenges scheduled at least annually
- Contest winners recognized with physical awards and at meetings and in newsletter
- Exhibits and displays staged at least annually
- Chapter and member achievements publicized
- Member's contributions to chapter recognized at meeting and in newsletter

Chapter Organization

- By-laws define chapter operations, financial systems, officer election and duties, and revision procedure
- Maintain AAW local chapter status
- Membership roster up-to-date and available to membership
- Financial records up-to-date, reported to the governing board monthly, and at least annually to the membership
- Records of chapter assets up-to-date and reported to the governing board
- Records of chapter publicity maintained
- Attendance recorded at each chapter function
- Records of demonstrators maintained
- Chapter incorporated as a non-profit organization (state requirements)
- Chapter approved as a 501c (3) organization with the Internal Revenue Service
- Financial and asset records audited periodically
- Letters of appreciation promptly sent to all donors (IRS requirement for donations over \$250)
- Chapter maintains an annual plan of activities covering each month

Bill Stephenson (woodart@srbfl.com), is a member of the Chapter Best Practices committee. He is president of the Emerald Coast Woodturning Guild and a former AAW board member. Bill Small, president of the Bay Area Woodturners, also contributed to this article.