

## Cumulative Focus Group Report

Number of participants: 48

Combined reports from the following Focus Group discussions

Chapter Presidents (April 2013)

Chapter Treasurers (June 2013)

Chapter Secretaries (July 2013)

Chapter VPs and Program Committee Representative (August 2013) 6

Chapter Membership Chairs (September 2013) 8

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### What is your vision for the Guild's future?

**Location** – Guild will have a space to call its own, whether rented or owned, to include: good lighting and enough electricity as well as room for:

Education, large spaces for workshops, classes and bees

Library for books and rulers

Long-arm machine (or two) with teachers

Rooms to display quilts and hold meetings

A shop or boutique for members' goods

Storage space large enough for programs and showcase

**Communication** – Prompt, clear and with ample time for Chapters to respond; more intermingling of members; regional-based activities because sister-chapters are not always easy either (requires lots of scheduling and extra work)

**Programs** – Continuous; keep costs low; famous speakers (Alex Anderson, Mary Ellen Hopkins, etc.)

### Guild Quilt Show to rival Paducah

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### What issues, problems, breakdowns are facing your Chapter and the Guild right now?

**Guild sprawled out** – makes it difficult to get together to share, to intermingle with members from other chapters; size hampers sense of community

**Facilities** – In-House Classes and Bees are great but the current room [Clearwater at SeaBreeze] is way too small; different types of recreation facilities have different constraints about everything from number of electrical outlets to lighting and lack of storage; big difference in amount of free photocopying that can be done at recreation centers; even whether there is coffee, or not. Some people will not go back to the

Savannah Center because they believe they have experienced problems with their computerized sewing machines after brown-outs due to overloaded electrical sockets

**Too many meetings** – Smaller Chapters have a difficult time finding sufficient numbers of volunteers to commit to the number of committees needed to run the Guild; members don't want "another job," they just want to "have fun"; we need to learn how to engage members, to help them understand that it does take some work to create the fun and the more people who volunteer to help out, the less work is piled onto any one person

**Guild Executive Board meetings** – Tuesday afternoon is a conflict for Allamanda and Bradenton representatives; just as daytime meetings are difficult for Patchwork Garden [as of October 1, 2013, add Big Cypress Quilters to the afternoon roster].

Almost every Chapter misses at least one meeting a year because of a Chapter retreat or bus trip

The Executive Board sets policy and is responsible for providing the activities of the Guild, generally through Standing Committees. Meetings generally consist of reports from those committees and there is little time left over to engage in sharing of ideas among Chapter Presidents, much less with Members-at-Large. Is this format working and, if not, how can the meetings be improved?

**Regular Guild meetings** – All evening meetings means some members will never attend a Guild meeting; we need daytime events; Chapters sit in groups and don't mingle

**Communication and Interactions** – New Chapters (and many members) do not have a clear understanding of what the Guild does for them; what in-house resources are available, how to get them and why; there seems to be a disconnect sometimes between the Guild and Chapters when, in fact, the sum of the Chapters is the Guild

**Disconnect between the Program Committee meeting and subsequent Chapter meetings** – Some Chapters have monthly business meetings and when those are not right after the Program Committee meeting (held the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month), the members of those Chapters do not hear about upcoming events until two (or three) weeks later. Some Program Reps do use emails to send notices to their members; but not all have done so in the past

**Membership** – Each Chapter has its own requirements, from simply paying dues to, as one Chapter does, actually requiring prospective members to attend three meetings prior to joining. That same Chapter also requires a minimum attendance (6 full meetings per year) for renewal, to give space to those on a waiting list for membership.

Another question asked was what to do with individuals who apparently join in November of even-numbered years solely to get a membership card to show quilts or participate in the subsequent Showcase in the following January.

A photo directory of members helps people look up members and is particularly useful for snowbirds

Some Chapters have Sunshine funds and make an effort to stay in touch with members – calling those who miss a certain number of meetings to be sure they are doing well, etc. Other Chapters use newsletter formats to share information

Most Chapters maintain an email roster for membership; some share access to the roster among members and some use this to create group email accounts to distribute information on a variety of issues

**Money** – Need clarification for how much money a Chapter may have or the Guild may have and still be in compliance with our not-for-profit status [*MJP: this question was asked and answered toward the end of Beth Bender's term as Guild Treasurer so this speaks to the need to capture certain types of information to pass along to new Chapters and new officers when elected*]

Some members cannot afford to participate on the level of some others: not just the \$5 dues, but the workshop fees are often \$25 plus a hefty kit fee

New Chapters get \$250 start up but then money is deducted for copying of the materials in the New Chapter Packet, most of which is accessible electronically from the website; cannot get a checking account without a \$500 set-aside and that takes months to reach that level – **NO: Turns out that BB&T does not require \$500 set-aside!** [This is another example of poor communication, even among Chapter Presidents]

Chapter Treasurers do not have the information they need to answer questions from Chapter members about the Guild budget – where money is spent and why. [**NOW ACTION STEP:** LRP request sent to Guild Treasurer Lucy Verbois on July 6, 2013, to add Chapter Treasurers to her monthly email distribution of expense/income report.]

Chapter Treasurers would like to see the Guild Budget in a spreadsheet format by category (Standing Committee or officer) and to have expenses listed for what they are for, not just the name of the member being reimbursed.

**New to Quilting** – Every year, new members join to learn quilting; this puts a strain on every Chapter to provide time and resources over and over

Program Reps reported that some members feel they are not skilled enough to take a national workshop or even an in-house class. This may seem counterintuitive, but that is the member assumption that you need a certain skill set to even take advantage of the Guild's learning opportunities

**Established Chapters** – Average age of members may have started at 55-60, but now it is closer to 72 for many; they are less likely to have members with technical skills needed to do things like work on the website; more likely to have members who have already served on lots of committees over the past 20 years

**Older Members** – Many older members no longer drive at night and, therefore, can no longer attend monthly Guild meetings and/or “schlep” sewing machines and all the related necessities to a workshop or class site; their quilting circle is getting smaller

**Volunteer Organization and Member Skills** – It would be helpful to know what skills members bring with them to The Villages – from quilting to job-related skills. As an all volunteer organization, both the Guild and Chapter officers often have questions or needs that could be filled amongst our membership but there is no current way to identify people to ask for help; a comprehensive membership survey would be helpful

**New Chapters** – Need to know what the Guild does for them and what their members' responsibilities are to the Guild; need history of the Guild; (*see also*, Money); need a

revised Start-Up Package to better outline what the Guild and Chapter responsibilities are to members and for members toward their Chapter and the Guild.

The Guild responsibilities for Chapter Treasurers should be written out to clearly outline or document their duties. For instance, Chapter Treasurers are expected to participate in drafting the Guild Budget every two years and work at least a two-hour shift at each major income producing event (Showcase of Quilts and MarketPlace).

**Chapter Personality** – Each Chapter has its own personality and the Guild should be careful to honor the uniqueness of chapters

**Charity** – Why do Chapters have to report charity to the Guild? Is it true that every member must do one charity quilt a year? Chapters need clarity regarding charitable giving; why does Guild sponsor large charity efforts when Chapters also do charity work? Chapter Treasurers are not prepared to respond to member inquiries about where all the Guild money goes or why so much is spent on charity.

**Volunteer members** – There is no succession planning for volunteers who often take on major jobs for the Guild and for Chapters; what happens if Webmaster takes a sudden turn for the worse? What does a Chapter do when a long-term Chapter librarian moves north and no one else will step up to take on that role? There are many scheduling and training issues for volunteer participation as new members join and as new activities are added; even some members may be an issue in a community such as The Villages.

Typically, if someone is willing to volunteer for a position they are immediately accepted with very little, if any, thought or vetting into their qualifications for the job

**Snowbird members** – Question: How do other Chapters deal with snowbirds; people who rent for one or more months but without a permanent Villages address? Points to the issue of uniform, consistent policy on membership ... What about those who come in to meetings in November every other year to join a Chapter, just to put quilts in the Showcase?

Question: Are snowbirds missing out on benefits of Guild programs? Getting their fair share of benefits for their dues? How do snowbirds learn about or compete with full-time residents for workshops and classes?

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## CUMULATIVE FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

	<i>Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
1. The agenda was clear	6	39
2. The objectives were appropriate	12	34
3. The location of the meeting	10	36
4. The amount of information shared	7	39
5. The opportunities for participation and sharing	2	42

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