

President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

As I write this message, I have just returned from another successful convention, this time in Little Rock, AR. As has been the case in previous conventions, I really enjoyed the opportunity to get together with old friends, make new ones, and visit some beautiful gardens and hear interesting speakers.

Society conventions are usually sponsored by a society chapter (sometimes in conjunction with another organization) and take place generally in the geographic location of the chapter. The society does not have a chapter in Little Rock, though we do have members in Arkansas. This convention was the result of collaboration between a number of groups...the Louisiana Chapter, ASA members in Arkansas, other ASA members throughout the US (primarily in the area of plant sales) and most importantly by the Arkansas Master Gardeners, and in particular, Janet Carson, the head of the Master Gardeners in Arkansas. We thank all those involved for the time and effort they expended to ensure the convention's success.

We also tried out a new idea this year by holding an Azaleas 101 workshop for members of the Master Gardeners. Seventy participants heard discussions about azalea varieties including specific talks on natives and Encores, propagation, planting, insect and disease control and the Legacy Project. The audience was very attentive and interacted actively with the speakers. In addition to educating the Master Gardeners on azaleas, we gained 70 new members for the remainder of the year. The workshop was a new idea which was very successful. We need to continue to think about new ideas for getting the message about azaleas out to the general public and attracting potential azalea enthusiasts to the society.

The most important aspect of the annual conventions is that it brings members from across the US and Canada to the same location each year to share ideas and information. It is also a chance to learn from azalea experts. This year was no different. We had presentations on the migration of azaleas across the globe, native azalea species, and azalea varieties developed in Arkansas. All presentations were interesting and informative. During the business meeting of the convention, I once again brought up the importance of capturing and documenting information of this sort. The Legacy Project is one way to do this for specific hybrid groups. A subset of the project is writing articles for publication in *The Azalean* or other journals. If you have knowledge of ANY aspect of azaleas, I encourage you to write an article. If you know anyone who is an expert on any aspect of azaleas, encourage them to write, or work with them to capture their information.

The Board of Directors (BOD) discussed ways in which chapters could take more responsibility for encouraging the renewal of memberships. Guidelines and a process are being developed now to assist the chapters in this regard. In addition, a document containing suggestions for running a successful chapter program is also being finalized. Additional suggestions are being solicited from chapter presidents and other BOD members and will be finalized this summer. Gaining new members is one thing. Retaining them is another. The latter requires giving the member "bang for their buck." That is, there need to be benefits associated with chapter memberships. We hope that by sharing good ideas, we will foster the development of more successful chapters.

I'm excited about the enthusiasm, new ideas, and energy I'm seeing in the society at all levels. I encourage all of you to actively participate in and volunteer to assist in chapter and society activities.



The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation, and appreciation of azaleas which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

Officers for 2017-2019

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Vice President — Charles R. Andrews, III

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Terms expire 2019 **Terms expire 2020**

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serve as ex-officio directors.

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(chartered May 1980)
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(chartered June 1981)
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Texas
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Robert Thau, *Pres.*

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(chartered June 2001)
J Jackson, *Pres.*

Lake Michigan
(chartered May 2003)
John Migas, *Pres.*

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(chartered May 2010)
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Central Carolinas
(chartered October 2013)
Kevin McCorkle, *Pres.*

At-Large Contact

Robert Thau

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$30; life-membership for one or two persons at the same address is \$600. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society. For information and a membership application, write to Leslie Nanney, Secretary, 8646 Tuttle Road, Springfield, VA 22152 or visit www.azaleas.org.