

Dear SWMCCC Members,

As members of a local photo club, our meetings provide an opportunity for education, competition, and social interaction. I anticipate the education and competition each month, but more importantly, I have come to appreciate the friends I have made. I look forward to seeing them at meetings and photography events and many have become close friends that we see socially outside of club. I am also keenly aware that for some members, the meetings are their outlet for creative affirmation and a friendly smile. We may never know if a person coming to your club is out for their first time that week, so, as you greet others at your club, do so warmly and sincerely.

This letter is a brief "State of the Council" for SWMCCC. In an effort to be concise, you will find more detail on these topics on our website. As with many clubs, board members often hear only the complaints, rather than compliments. The board is frustrated by is the lack of response to council mailings and events. Much of our correspondence is via email. However, it seems that many people have only an inbox (they read incoming email) and no outbox (they don't respond to direct inquiries or attend advertised events). If you don't respond, enter a conversation, or attend an event, then all our efforts to make SWMCCC a better club will go unnoticed. You have only yourself to blame.

The strengths of our council are definitely the nationally recognized Summer Weekend of Photography held each summer at Hope College and our semi-annual competitions. Summer School experiences higher attendance each year which we attribute directly to our website. Our webmaster, Jim Schearer, Jr., recently was awarded an honorable mention in the PSA Council of Camera Clubs website contest. I also want to thank Don VanderMolen and the Summer School committee for their hard work year around.

Our competitions have been fun events, but seem to lack broad participation among all clubs. Several clubs are well represented, but others participate very little, if at all. The competitions are not operating at a breakeven, so we have increased the entry fees. In the past, the board has subsidized these events, but would like to see them self-supporting and more entrants would fill that revenue gap. For each competition, Randy Wegener, our Competition Chairperson, has compiled and distributed CDs to the SWMCCC clubs, showing the images of the place winners, and the honors and acceptances. We're hoping this is a nice way to share the results and get others interested in competing.

In an effort to involve more members in SWMCCC activities, we introduce our new Vice President of Events, Cari Weber. Cari is a member of The Grand Rapids Camera Club and is a published writer and an award winning photographer. She writes children's and inspirational nonfiction. Cari has had two photos published in "The Ultimate Bird Lover" magazine and she received a first place award in the national, "Great Lakes Forever Photo Contest". She will be responsible for organizing photo events and trips for the club, beginning with a winter photo shoot to area lighthouses to be held early 2012. In order for Cari to be successful in this new endeavor and for it to continue, we must have your support in promoting and attending these events.

SWMCCC also offers club shared programs. These are prepared programs or various speakers on specific topics and are available for clubs to use for their monthly meetings. Please check the website for this constantly evolving set of opportunities for your club. Also on the website are links to every club, which will keep you current on club posts, programs, events and photo walks.

Finally, we want to know what we can do to improve. The board and committee members are working together to make SWMCCC a great organization. What are looking from SWMCCC? Please let your board members or club representatives know what you would like to see from your Council, or you may contact the SWMCCC board directly. Contact information is available on our website www.swmccc.org. And when attending your local or regional club, get to know someone new, it might make their day... and yours.

Happy Photographing!

Kelly Walkotten, President SWMCCC