

# DELAWRITER

The quarterly newsletter of AMWA-DVC

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## Fall 2012

### A WORD FROM THE IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

*By Cyndy Kryder*

It was a bittersweet moment in June 2012, when I passed the presidential gavel to Jennifer Maybin after serving as president of AMWA-DVC for 18 months. Thank you for all the support you gave me during my term. Special thanks, too, to all the dedicated volunteers who work so hard for our chapter.

### Challenges

Until you've served as an elected officer or committee chairperson, it's difficult to imagine all the work that goes on behind the scenes to keep an organization like ours running fluidly. Planning educational programs and activities for nearly 800 members can be an overwhelming task, especially when our territory stretches as far as Central Pennsylvania to towns such as State College and Boalsburg, and covers portions of Delaware and much of New Jersey. That's a huge area! You can imagine the challenges involved in creating opportunities to reach as many members as possible.

Those challenges were apparent in the responses we received from the membership survey we distributed in February 2012. Through the survey, we wanted to identify DVC members' educational "wants and needs" and determine why they do or do not attend DVC events. The top three reasons members attend our events:

- Topics are interesting/relevant
- I like to network with colleagues
- Speakers offer valuable information

The top 3 reasons members do not attend our events:

- Location is too far away from my home or workplace
- My workload prevents me from attending
- Topics aren't interesting or relevant for my work

Finding new and innovative ways to reach all chapter members is our goal for the future.

### Membership and Finances

Despite a slight drop in membership over the past two years, AMWA-DVC remains one of the largest AMWA chapters, and a chapter to which other chapters look as an example. Our annual Freelance Workshop and Princeton Conference are known far and wide and are attended routinely by members from other chapters. Planning has already started for the 2013 editions of those conferences. Julie Munden will chair the Freelance Workshop, and Nick Sidorovich will chair the Princeton Conference. Contact them if you'd like to help.

From a financial perspective, AMWA-DVC is very healthy, with assets of approximately \$50,000. We use our funds to subsidize dinner meetings, to cover costs of the Freelance Workshop and the Princeton Conference, and to provide other educational opportunities for our members.

## Volunteers

An organization is only as strong as its volunteers. Without our volunteers, the DVC would not exist in its current form. To everyone who volunteers for our chapter, know that we appreciate your efforts. Thank you for all you do to make the DVC so dynamic.

The chapter is in the very capable hands of Jennifer Maybin and the rest of the Executive Committee. They will be working hard to provide meaningful educational opportunities and to reach as many members as possible. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you. Thanks for the opportunity.

## New Officers and Chairs

The following people have been elected or named to leadership positions in the chapter:

President: Jennifer Maybin, MA, ELS (as last year's President-elect, automatically assumes office)

President-elect: Joanne Rosenberg, MS, ELS

Secretary: Beth Pulaski, PhD

Treasurer: Kate Casano, MHSci, MSHvg (continuing for remaining year of her term)

New Jersey Program Committee Chair: Karen Todd-Jenkins, VMD

Pennsylvania Program Committee Chair: Kent Steinriede, MS

Princeton Conference: Nick Sidorovich, MSEd and Brian Bass (Co-Chairs)

Freelance Workshop: Julie Munden

Membership Chair: Cindy Shaler

Volunteer Coordinator: Dawn Salamon

Delawriter Editor and Newsletter Chair (starting with next issue): Amy Rovi

Congratulations to all these volunteers. We appreciate your time and energy.

## 2012 AMWA-DVC ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

*By Nick Sidorovich*

Significant developments at both the national and chapter level were shared with a dinner audience at the 2012 Annual Business Meeting of the AMWA Delaware Valley Chapter. The event, held at the DoubleTree Suites in Plymouth Meeting, Pa., featured an update from AMWA President Barbara Snyder on AMWA's certification program and other national changes.

## Serving the Needs of Members

The meeting began with AMWA-DVC President Cynthia Kryder presenting a State of the Chapter briefing and declaring that "DVC rocks!" which is an apt statement given that DVC is one of AMWA's largest chapters.

Kryder said that continuing to meet the educational needs of members within such a large geographic area remains the chapter's biggest challenge and that finding new and innovative ways to reach all chapter members is the goal for the future.

## Volunteers Recognized

Kryder recognized volunteers with thanks and a token of appreciation: Amazon gift cards. The people who provided volunteer help during the past year were as follows:

The Executive Committee:

- Jen Maybin, President Elect
- Eileen McCaffrey, Secretary
- Kate Casano, Treasurer
- Lisa Breck, Immediate Past President

Finance Committee:

- Kate Casano, Chair
- Lisa Breck
- Robert Hand

- Amy Rovi

PA and NJ Programs:

- Judy Keen, Chair, PA Programs Committee
- Joanne Rosenberg, Chair, NJ Programs Committee
- Kavita Gumbhir-Shah
- Beth Pulaski
- Sarah Thornburg
- Eileen McCaffrey
- Linda Felcone
- Karen Jenkins
- Cindy Shaler
- Ann Swift

Membership: Lori De Milto

Volunteer Coordinator: Linda Felcone

Newsletter:

- Alan Struthers
- Elisha Darville
- Lori De Milto
- Amy Rovi
- Ana Maria Rodriguez-Rojas

Web site Committee:

- Janet Manfre, Chair
- Lori De Milto, E-communications Subcommittee Member
- Amy Rovi, E-communications Subcommittee Member
- Ana Maria Rodriguez-Rojas, Listserv Coordinator; LinkedIn Moderator, E-communications Subcommittee Member

Nominating Committee:

- Jen Maybin, Chair
- Sarah Thornburg
- Nick Sidorovich
- Janet Manfre

Freelance Workshop:

- Jen Maybin, Chair
- Julie Munden
- Bonnie Schultz
- Dawn Salamon
- Ilsa Gomez-Curet
- Judy Keen
- Wendy Horn
- Ann Swift
- Janet Manfre

Princeton Conference:

- Brian Bass, Chair
- Nick Sidorovich, Co-Chair
- Kate Casano
- Janet Manfre
- Lori De Milto
- Amy Rovi
- Ana Maria Rodriguez-Rojas
- Jonathan Cargan
- Eileen Girten

Delegates:

October 2011 Board Meeting: Jen Maybin, Cyndy Kryder  
April 2012 Board Meeting: Cyndy Kryder, Beth Pulaski

To all our volunteers, we appreciate all you do for our chapter!

## National Involvement

Kryder noted that AMWA-DVC members are also active on the national level, with Lori De Milto receiving the 2011 AMWA President's Award, and Brian Bass serving as this year's Annual Conference Administrator. Brian will also be officially named AMWA President-elect at the Annual Conference in Sacramento, which puts him in line to become AMWA President in 2014.

## Presentation by AMWA President Barbara Snyder

Kryder then introduced Barbara Snyder, AMWA president, who reported that exciting things were happening on the national level (see the following article).

*Nick Sidorovich, MSED, is president of Rolling Hill Media, LLC, based in Chatham, N.J. He is a medical writer specializing in video scriptwriting, E-learning storyboards, and web content.*

## AMWA NATIONAL PRESIDENT ADDRESSES AMWA-DVC MEETING

*By Nick Sidorovich*

At the chapter's Annual Business Meeting, Barbara Snyder, AMWA president, reported on the new initiatives that have started since Susan Krug (a Certified Association Executive) was hired as AMWA executive director. Working with elected AMWA officers and AMWA headquarters staffers, Susan has overseen several new projects and improvements.

## Updating Infrastructure and IT Systems

A new association management system is being considered that will offer web-based tools, on-line collaboration tools, and integrated systems. An in-depth needs assessment was just completed with a firm that specializes in technology support for associations. The national office has been presented with on-site system demonstrations from three companies. Vendor selection is pending. One of the many expected advantages of this new system is a reduction in listserv delays and a reduction in manual effort from headquarters staff.

## Support for Chapters

A leadership training event was held as part of the spring Board Meeting. Chapters had the opportunity to send a representative in addition to their regular chapter delegate(s) with the aim of facilitating leadership skills that would benefit each chapter's members.

A dedicated listserv for chapter leaders is being developed, along with a monthly teleconference for chapter leaders. It is also expected that the aforementioned new association management system will provide more services for chapters.

## Support for Workshop Leaders

Workshop leaders for AMWA's Education Program provide an essential service in enhancing the skills and knowledge of AMWA members. Maintaining the quality of workshops and the availability of workshop leaders requires recruitment and succession planning. The Education Committee plans to staff a table at this year's Annual Conference to talk with people who may be interested in becoming workshop leaders.

Workshop leaders will now be rewarded for their service with a reduced registration fee for the Annual Conference. Also, a Workshop Leader Appreciation Breakfast will be held at this year's Annual Conference. During the breakfast, workshop leaders will have a chance to discuss topics that they will be surveyed about prior to the conference, such as challenges they face and their approaches to offering assistance and training.

## Headquarters Happenings

As noted previously, Susan Krug is AMWA's new executive director. We also have a new deputy director, Shari Rager, in charge of communications, partnerships, and member and chapter relations. Shari, like Susan Krug, is also a Certified Association Executive. Former

staffer Melanie Canahuate is now back at headquarters as education and conference assistant, helping in the areas of self-study exams, certificates, and general medical communication inquiries. All headquarters staffers are involved with setting goals and focusing on priorities for AMWA.

## Outreach to Other Organizations

AMWA has reached out to the Drug Information Association (DIA) and just recently had a meeting with DIA officers at the DIA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. AMWA and DIA agreed to conduct joint research with the DIA Medical Writing Special Interest Area Community on employer needs and expectations of medical writers. AMWA and DIA are also exploring options for extending membership privileges to each other's members and offering reciprocal booth space at our respective annual conferences. This October, DIA will be presenting at our Annual Conference in Sacramento. Finally, AMWA and DIA are exploring options for offering credit toward each other's certificate programs.

## Certification

AMWA recently formed a Certification Committee with an eye toward the development of a medical writing certification program. Not to be confused with the AMWA medical writing certificate program, the new certification program is a separate enterprise with an exam that would be administered by Shroeder Measurement Technologies (SMT), a full-service international testing company. The certification exam would measure competencies in key skills areas. Headquarters contracted with SMT and collected data on educational curricula, job descriptions, publications, guidelines, and other pertinent areas to draft a set of key areas of knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to medical writing. In addition, AMWA talked extensively with the International Society for Medical Publication Professionals about their exam-based certification for becoming a Certified Medical Publication Professional in order to learn from their efforts in developing a certification program.

Headquarters then formed a Job Analysis Panel, which met with SMT to develop the content for a survey to validate the key skills areas. This survey was advertised broadly to gather as much data as possible. The tasks of a medical writer were split, not by the type of writing, but by the type of activity required (gathering, organizing, interpreting, evaluating, and presenting information). SMT will summarize the results of the survey, which will then be communicated broadly. At that point, exam development will begin.

A question and answer period followed Snyder's presentation. Of primary interest was the medical writing certification program. When questioned about the need for such a program in light of medical writers (particularly freelancers) currently doing well in their careers without certification, Snyder replied that history has shown that certification gains credibility and relevance years after it is first developed and offered. Such was the case with the Regulatory Affairs Certification, where 20 years ago it was perceived by hiring managers as non-essential, but is currently held in high regard when making hiring decisions. AMWA leaders felt that, as the primary medical writers' organization in the United States, our organization should be the driving force behind developing a certification program.

To illustrate the forward thinking nature of the certification initiative, Snyder recalled the inscription on her grandfather's headstone which rests in a little country cemetery in Paris Crossing, Indiana, which reads "It is an unselfish man who plants a tree under whose shade he knows he will never sit."

## CRYSTAL CLEAR COPY IN THE MEDICAL MIRE: WRITING IN A REGULATED WORLD

*By Bonnie Schulz*

At the 10th Annual AMWA-DVC Freelance Workshop held on April 14, 2012, in King of Prussia, Pa., Elizabeth Ramicone's presentation on medical advertising copy was informative and often humorous. Ramicone described herself as a creative writer with a knack for science.

Advertising copy in the medical field not only has to sell but has to support the product. Copywriters are employed not to write literature, but to sell products, Ramicone explained.

Good copy is compelling, memorable, persuasive, and interesting but not always intellectual.

Medical marketing writers are different from standard copywriters mainly because they need to know the necessary medical terminology, the disease state and market, how to annotate and reference, and how to avail themselves of a good medical editor. Most important, according to Ramicone, is that writers need to accept that what they've written will rarely survive the way they originally wrote it, "especially when it gets back from regulatory."

To write effective medical copy, start by answering the following questions:

- Who is the audience? Physician or patient?
- What will be the format? Is it an ad, sales aid, editorial, or literature left behind at a physician's office?
- What is the message?
- What are the features, benefits, and comparisons?

Writing short copy can take the same amount of time as long-format writing because you have to deliver fewer words with more impact.

Ramicone said that you need to research the product's competition and consider the strategy for the product, whether it is new, next generation, clinically superior, or entering a heavily-occupied market.

Other strategies are to simplify your writing, exchanging words like "help" for "assist" and "use" for "utilize." However, Ramicone said, you need to forget all the grammar you learned in high school, as medical copy can start with conjunctions, end with prepositions, and often contain sentence fragments. One example of such a headline was "One Pill. Once Daily. One less thing to think about."

Ramicone said to let the headlines do the "heavy lifting." The headlines should attract attention, identify the audience, deliver the message simply, and draw in the targeted audience. You only have seven seconds to get someone's attention on a Web site, said Ramicone, three seconds in print, and three to five seconds on a sales rep's iPad.

When it comes to headlines, Ramicone said "Cute isn't creative, and punny isn't funny." She displayed examples of ads with poor headlines such as "Product X Takes the Doubt out of Gout" and "Get More Patients to Goal in Urate Control."

Good copywriting should generate emotion, according to Ramicone.

In creating media for a drug, Ramicone said that the brand team's objective is to get the product to the patients that it can benefit, marketing it as strongly as possible to generate profit so that the company can develop new products.

On the other hand, the regulatory team's objective is to have no violations, and therefore they must examine all copy carefully. A good medical copywriter knows how to work well with regulatory and not fight with team members.

Ramicone concluded by summarizing the steps to creating medical advertising copy:

- Know your product, disease state, and market
- Know your audience and strategy
- Write what you'd like to say, then carefully craft the message to what you are allowed to say
- Annotate or keep track of your sources
- Use the message to tell the story and create powerful headlines
- Visualize the ad whenever possible

*Bonnie Schultz of Schultz Writing Services, LLC, is a freelance writer with a focus on health and medical issues.*

**2012 AMWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE OFFERS EXPANDED  
NETWORKING EVENTS AND INCOMPARABLE EDUCATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITIES**

By Lori De Milto

The 72nd AMWA Annual Conference, to be held October 4-6 in Sacramento, Calif., is jam-packed with opportunities for learning, skill building, and networking, many of which are included in the basic registration fee. "Talk about value, this year's annual conference has so much going it won't be difficult to fill every minute with something informative and exhilarating. The challenge may be narrowing down what you want to attend, unless you know how to be in two places (or more) at once!" said DVC's Brian Bass, who is this year's annual conference administrator, president of Bass Marketing & Advertising, Inc., and author of *The Accidental Medical Writer*.

The keynote address, 41 open sessions, expanded networking events, and the exhibit hall and poster presentations are all free with your registration. Free networking events include receptions on Wednesday and Thursday nights, luncheons on Thursday and Saturday, and a breakfast on Friday (a combined value of \$180). There is also a speed networking session on Thursday. The Annual Conference also offers 79 roundtable breakfast discussions and 85 workshops.

### **A Valuable Opportunity to Network and Learn**

"The AMWA Annual Conference is a valuable opportunity to network, make new friends, keep up with what's happening in the world of medical communications, and get involved in helping other medical writers," said Nick Sidorovich, MSED, a DVC member who is poster presentation coordinator and is teaching a workshop on writing for video. "I always feel like I get my batteries recharged and come away with new ideas and contacts that enhance my business and professional development." Sidorovich is President of Rolling Hill Media, LLC. Another DVC member, Lori De Milto, is also on the annual conference committee, serving as co-chair of the roundtables.

Michelle Dalton, ELS, head of Dalton & Associates, is presenting at a session on subcontracting and mentoring and leading a roundtable on covering medical conferences. "In a few short days I can gain more education than I could in a year on my own," she said. "The AMWA Annual Conference also gives me an incredible opportunity to network with people whose names I know but have never met and other AMWA members. Many other DVC members are leading roundtables, presenting in open sessions, and teaching workshops.

### **Register On-site**

Pre-registration is now closed but you can still register on site, starting October 3. Download the conference brochure at: [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)

*Lori De Milto, Writer for Rent, LLC, is a freelance medical marketing communications writer based in Sicklerville, N.J.*

## **Delawriter**

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