

2018 Triennial Election Vice President Q&A

In this issue, all ARS members are receiving information for our triennial election. The candidate you elect for Vice President will become President of the American Rose Society in 2021. Here, our candidates answer key questions, to help us get to know them a little better. A brief resume is included in this issue on page 5.



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IF YOU ARE ELECTED ARS VICE PRESIDENT AND FUTURE PRESIDENT, WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR HOW WE CAN CONTINUE TO “PROMOTE THE CULTURE, PRESERVATION AND APPRECIATION OF THE ROSE AND TO IMPROVE ITS STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR ALL PEOPLE, THROUGH EDUCATION AND RESEARCH”?

DIANE SOMMERS: Over the course of many years, we have built an organization that is capable of reaching rose enthusiasts in a variety of ways. It is important that we nurture those channels (magazine, website, consulting rosarian program, local rose societies etc.), modifying and in some cases “reinventing them” to succeed in the future. Expansion of our partnerships with industry and researchers will enable us to gain visibility into the future of roses and gardening trends. As part of a small team that created the current strategic plan for the ARS in 2010, I suggested that we add someone from the industry as a board member. It was struck down but perhaps we need to revisit that idea or at a minimum welcome their attendance during strategic discussions with our board. Support for our local rose societies and enhanced communication strategies with our members are essential to share rose information and achieve our vision. I believe this needs to be a priority of our ARS Board. Our ARS Board, with insight from the members, should set the priorities, aligning action through volunteers, ARS staff and our committee structure to drive measurable success. With nine years on our board, I have been successful at leading change in our organization and I look forward to repeating that success. At the corporate level, I have also developed and led new strategies to successfully grow businesses. At a personal level, I own a small business and understand the need for constant focus. From a tactical perspective, we need to focus on enabling our local rose societies to succeed; with

their success comes impactful programs delivered in creative ways, growth in membership and participation in rose shows, and expansion of consulting rosarians and rose judges to share our story.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: My vision for the future of the ARS is one of promise and of change. I believe our future is bright, but only if we turn words into action and take steps to continue to promote the culture, preservation and appreciation of the rose. It is a responsibility that every member of the organization shares along with me as your ARS Vice President.

To continue to promote the rose, communication is key for our national organization. We must communicate with our members, our leadership and with the public across multiple media channels.

My vision is that the ARS will remain THE leader in rose education. We will improve through our ARS resources which will include:

- Our local societies, armed with new promotional materials, training in social media, and robust examples of successful programs that have worked across the country. The expertise, training, camaraderie, and one-on-one education that local societies can provide are our best way for gardeners to have success with growing roses in their gardens, which in turn will grow our membership. The greatest thing about the American Rose Society is its people. YOU are our greatest asset and resource!
- A professionally managed, content-rich website so members and visitors alike can easily find the information they seek.
- Online LIVE training events for beginners, rose societies and for consulting rosarians to maintain their certification.
- A strong social media presence that not only educates and informs, but also invites a watching world to join us in our noble mission.
- Increased use of video for education, tutorials, training and certification.
- Our national magazine, insightful newsletters and quarterly bulletins will continue to be filled with content that is representative of our membership interests.

Lastly, if we are to meet the needs of a changing demographic, we must be visionary in our efforts to discover innovative way to engage the hearts and minds of those who think and respond differently than we do.

OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS HOW HAVE YOU:

- **SHARED ROSE EDUCATION WITH THE PUBLIC? ARS MEMBERS?**
- **BEEN INVOLVED IN ROSE PRESERVATION?**
- **BEEN INVOLVED IN ROSE RESEARCH?**
- **BROUGHT NEW MEMBERS TO THE ARS, TO YOUR LOCAL ROSE SOCIETY AND TO YOUR DISTRICT?**

DIANE SOMMERS: Since joining my first rose society and the ARS over 35 years ago, I have been proactive in sharing what I have learned with others. I am passionate about my hobby as it is a meaningful part of my life and something I enjoy immensely.

Shared rose education with the public? As a member of the Greater Milwaukee Rose Society Speakers Bureau, I am a frequent speaker at libraries, master gardeners events, the Wisconsin State Fair, and local garden centers. I created the “library program” in our local rose society. As chair of the ARS Mini National in 2010, I encouraged the public to attend our educational sessions and our garden tours. This was a great opportunity to introduce others to our wonderful organization and it was successful bringing in members to our local rose society. It is a practice I have continued as I have chaired local and North Central District events. I have invited the public and various gardening clubs to my garden and I have chaired local garden tours; As an exhibitor and judge, I share my rose expertise with others at local, district and national rose shows. As ARS Membership Chair, I re-introduced the *Fragrant Rose* to the general public. Today that publication is often mentioned as a shining example of how ARS reaches non-members and how successful it is at adding new members.

Shared information with ARS Members? I am a past president of two local rose societies and have volunteered for every job you can imagine. As the North Central District Director, I was responsible for programs at our spring meets and annual district conventions for six years. I have chaired and taught at consulting rosarian and horticulture judging schools and I have presented numerous programs for local rose societies and ARS Districts. With the introduction of the new photography judging guidelines, I introduced a Region 5 photo contest at the NCD spring meeting. I have

encouraged and have personally donated to the ARS Education Endowment Trust. I exhibit and judge at rose shows. I championed the local miniature rose sale for over 15 years in my local society. I have authored articles in the ARS Magazine, as well as for local society and district newsletters.

Been involved in rose preservation? The area of rose preservation has not been a priority of ARS. That became obvious to me as I participated in my first World Rose Event in Lyon France in 2015, where I was a delegate representing the ARS on the Rose Exhibiting Committee. The historical significance and interest in old garden roses far surpassed anything I have experienced as an ARS member. I am so glad that Bob Martin has recommended adding this to our mission statement and I promise to support and enhance the history of roses to ARS members and the public.

Been involved in rose research? As a board member of the ARS, I have encouraged donations to the ARS Research Endowment Trust and have voted positively each time to provide funds to support specific research funding for projects. The enhanced understanding of the value of our Trusts has led to ongoing donations from the NCD and its members over the years as well as targeted donations to Dr. Davis Zlesak's blackspot research. These contributions have been recognized internationally.

Brought new members to the ARS, to your local rose society and to your District. At each public event I speak at, I always feature ARS and the local rose societies — typically through a hand out (most recently the ARS "Ten Tips") and a list of future programs and events. I have included the public in events I have managed for my local rose society and district as an opportunity for them to experience our organization. I enjoy sharing ideas for programs with other local rose societies and I am always looking for new ideas for rose societies. I encourage people to sign up for the Fragrant Rose, a list which I then send to the ARS. My focus has been on content at our meetings and events. The ARS mission is not about adding members, it is about rose education. When we add value, people want to be a member of our local and national organization. Membership becomes a measure of our success. I believe that building relationships at the local rose society level will ultimately bring long term success to the ARS. It is a challenging objective and one deserving the attention of the ARS Board of Directors.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: For many years now, I have been working inside and outside the organization to promote roses. Here is my experience in the areas mentioned above.

Sharing Rose Education with the public and ARS Members, Bringing in New Members: I have been a committed and consistent Rose Educator on behalf of roses and the ARS for many years. I have utilized every communications channel that I have felt is relevant to bring rose education to new audiences in new ways that have never been done before.

I created the Redneck Rosarian, an online blog and persona to help bridge the gap between horticultural societies and backyard gardeners. A natural offshoot of this effort was the Rose Chat Podcast, an online radio show that talks about all things roses. With 193 published episodes, we have made inroads to a new generation of gardeners. The podcast has had over 750,000 downloads! This represents a large amount of interest in roses and a lot of education accomplished on behalf of the rose.

As an avid user of social media on behalf of the rose, I have worked to grow the audience for the rose across multiple channels. I have over 11,000 followers on Twitter, over 7,600 followers on Facebook (combined), 2,500 followers on Instagram and over 90,000 views of my YouTube videos. I believe that I am one of the most highly visible rose advocates in the country and the American Rose Society.

I have had success using mass media to provide rose education. I make regular appearance on local television, national television, and online videos to talk about roses. I have written articles for regional magazines and national websites to provide rose growing information. HGTV, P. Allen Smith, *Southern Living Magazine*, about.com, Dallas News, WIAT-TV are some of the places you will find my rose education efforts.

I have also served the American Rose Society on a local, district and national level to share rose education. Serving as President, Vice President and as a Director of my local rose society, we have worked to revitalize the group and have swung the door wide open for all who love to rose to join.

I have served as Chairman of our local rose show on many occasions as well as being Chairman of the 2017 Mid-

Winter Meeting for the Deep South District. My success in my work as Membership Director for the Deep South District has allowed me to share insights and information with district leaders that can be used to bolster membership throughout the district.

As editor of *The Fragrant Rose*, the American Rose Society's e-membership newsletter, we are reaching out to thousands of subscribers encouraging them to become members and many have. The Fragrant Rose e-membership newsletter has proven to be one of the top ways that the ARS acquires new members.

As a national speaker, I have crisscrossed the United States on annual speaking tours, speaking to crowds at some of the nation's largest home and garden shows as well as many ARS district and local rose society meetings. Wherever I speak, I promote membership in the ARS and many times I also sign-up people as e-members of the ARS.

Rose Preservation: As a writer and gardening communicator, I have tried to draw attention to the plight of disappearing species of roses with articles such as Who the Heck Cares Whether You Save A Rose? This article received national attention and helped draw attention to the possible destruction of roses at the Sacramento Historic Rose Garden. I was part of the team that was advocating on a national level to save the garden and its historic roses.

Rose Research: Back home in Alabama, as Chairman of our local beautification board, we cultivated a partnership with Texas A&M to become the first municipality in the nation to conduct an Earth Kind Rose Trial. This vital research effort will help determine rose varieties exhibit resistance to disease, drought and pest tolerance. I was instrumental in creating this partnership, establishing the garden and promoting the Rose Trials nationally and locally. I serve as the Rosarian-in-Residence.

WHO DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY?

IANE SOMMERS: There are many different facets of our rose hobby and anyone interested in the rose will enjoy being a part of our organization.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: No matter what your interest level, there is a place for everyone in the American Rose Society. Whether you're a novice rose grower seeking information for beginners, a world class exhibitor, arranger, photographer or just an admirer of the rose, there is a place for you in the ARS. We must swing the door of membership wide open and invite all those interested in the world's most beloved flower to join.

If we want the American Rose Society to continue to grow and remain viable as an organization, this is the path we must all embrace.

HOW WILL YOU HELP THE ARS DISTRICT AND REGIONAL LEADERS GROW MEMBERSHIP IN THEIR LOCAL SOCIETIES AND THE ARS?

DIANE SOMMERS: I will support the priorities established by the ARS Board of Directors, and lead the board, committees and ARS staff to be successful in achieving those activities. From my perspective they include the following:

- Increased visibility that introduces people to the ARS. Most often people don't know we exist. Our partnerships within our community and the rose industry can help this immensely. Our new ARS Garden, restored to beauty through our Great Garden Renovation Project will also bring visibility to the value we add to all rose growers. The ARS needs to pro actively participate in community gardening events and partner with other horticulture organizations.
- Enhancements to programs and activities that are of interest and add value to rose gardeners, supporting the membership of our local rose societies. We need to identify the best alternatives to provide information and support that delivery through our local rose societies. I expect this to be an investment that the ARS must provide.
- Promotion of the ARS and our local rose societies in various social media channels. Help our local rose societies to establish a presence and promote their meetings. In 2010, the new strategic plan confirmed this need and focus - it is time we deliver on it.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: Leaders on all levels of the organization must be committed to and engaged in the process of membership. A quote that has often inspired me is: "It's not the will to win that matters, it's the will to prepare to win." This is true of all of us who want to see this organization grow.

We must be intentional in our approach to membership and we must have a plan. A plan that encourages growth and not stagnation. A plan that gives all who love roses a warm and genuine welcome.

The national organization must do their part to motivate district and regional leaders, listen to their needs, and provide appropriate resources. The resources need to be multi-faceted, easy to implement and easy to customize to meet local needs and situations. Programs that allows local societies to provide their new members with a free trial membership in the national American Rose Society need to be better promoted and utilized to foster growth on all levels.

We must act decisively to cultivate a culture of membership growth on national, district and local levels. Who is calling our expired members? Who is encouraging our local societies to become active in the communities they serve? A focus on membership must be intentional and a top priority on all levels of the organization. We've got to step out of the confines of committee meetings where much is often discussed and little is done, and get out among the people to find new members. This is going to take a focused effort and the participation of us all. Who will join me?

HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE ARS MEMBERS TO SERVE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES?

DIANE SOMMERS: My experiences within the local rose society and the ARS have been very rewarding to me. These experiences have helped my professional career and brought satisfaction to me as a leader in the non-profit sector. My passion speaks for itself, and I strongly encourage others to take that step and get involved. I am always there to help them and we have fun.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: I lead by example not directive. I'll never expect something from anyone that I am not willing to do myself.

I'll encourage new leaders by building a bench where they can learn by example and hands-on training. Training up leaders not by words but by mentorship is important to me. All District and Local Rose Society officers should be mentoring someone in their groups. It's through this culture of "passing the torch" that we will begin to see a new generation of leaders rise from within the organization. I have done that on the local level in my own society by training officers, training rose show chairmen and anyone who will listen how to carry on the time honored traditions we all love and I have done it in my professional career for over 25 years.

I also want us to continue to build a culture of appreciation and gratitude in the American Rose Society. We are all volunteers, motivated by our love of the rose. Finding ways to express and acknowledge the efforts of our members is important and will contribute to the positive culture and environment that we know is essential to keeping leaders and members involved and motivated.

THE ARS IS A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, THIS MEANS OUR ANNUAL FUND AND THE AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY ENDOWED TRUST FUND (ARSET) ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR CONTINUED SUCCESS AND LONGEVITY. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SUPPORT THESE PROGRAMS? WHAT WILL YOU DO AS VICE PRESIDENT TO EDUCATE OUR MEMBERS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE PROGRAMS?

DIANE SOMMERS: Since taking on the role of ARS Finance Committee chair in 2007, I have focused on bringing visibility to the opportunities our Trusts can provide in support of our mission and to the importance of the Annual Fund to our annual operations. I restructured board financial reporting to bring visibility to these funds and provided board education through an outside facilitator, an opportunity spearheaded by the Finance Committee that I chaired. In my district, I incorporated the opportunity for people to donate as part of our standard event registration process, a practice that has continued. On request from the ARS Board of Directors, I chaired a campaign in 2012 that raised over \$70K for the ARS Annual Fund and I have personally donated to the ARS for over 10 years. My goal is to grow our Trusts so that they can support our overall mission and minimize the emphasis on annual funding and membership dues. My financial background enables me to help others understand financial concepts and I have been successful in doing so since joining the ARS Board of Directors in 2007. I look forward to continuing that practice.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: People want to see the value of what they do. I feel we need to do a better job of communicating how these funds are utilized to advance our mission and how your contribution matters. We must seek corporate

partners to join us as we continue to look for ways to expand our income base and expand our membership offerings.

As part of the fundraising efforts for the ARS Annual Fund, several times a year different people are asked to pen a letter to ARS Members to request a contribution. As a regular contributor to the Annual Fund, I had the honor of writing one of the Annual Fund letters, and I was pleased to find out that my letter had one of the largest monetary responses ever. I was glad to find out that I am able to write and share my passion for roses in a way that yields a positive financial result. As a person with this type of ability and track record, I can't wait to utilize it more for the benefit of the American Rose Society!

I have served on multiple boards, foundations and nonprofit organizations. I have been involved in a range of fundraising activities and programs. My strong financial background due to my over 25 years experience in the banking industry gives me a foundation to understand ARS finances and budgets and the role that the Annual Fund and Trusts play. I have a deep understanding of the financial needs of the ARS and the impact that proper financial management and fundraising will make to the vitality of the organization.

Tina and I have included the ARS in our estate plan and we encourage all ARS members to do the same. It's one way we can help ensure the future of the organization.

ARS HAS BEEN SERVING ITS MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC FOR MORE THAN 125 YEARS. IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT THE ARS?

DIANE SOMMERS: It is the people! Without our talented and generous members, we would not be as successful as we are today. We have all learned so much through each other and we need to encourage that practice and support the means that can facilitate that interaction

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: The very best thing about the ARS is its people. As I have traveled around the nation this year, I have not met a stranger. At each event, I was met with open arms. Never in my life have I been a part of a organization where I felt such a sense of comradery and support among its members. That's the secret sauce and the key to our future. I joined this organization to learn how to grow great roses, I have stayed for the people and the friendships I have forged along the way.

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR ARS PRESIDENTIAL LEGACY TO BE?

DIANE SOMMERS: My goal is that the organization will thrive for many years because of the enhanced practices we can bring to the organization. That includes an improved business model so that we are outward looking and continually reinventing ourselves; That true communication and partnership with industry, researchers and communities exists and the opportunity to share is robust and natural. That our local rose societies are successful and work together, sharing ideas to enhance the experiences for all members. That 50 years from now, the changes we make to the organization are still impacting and enabling our organization to not only achieve it's mission but to thrive.

CHRIS VAN CLEAVE: I'd like to leave behind a legacy where people remember my tenure as one of growth and advancement for the ARS. A legacy where I have worked to ensure the long-term relevance of the organization to our members and to a new generation of gardeners who come can enjoy the beauty and joy of growing the world's most beloved flower.

I believe that my background, experience, skills, viewpoint, enthusiasm, and passion make me uniquely qualified to serve the American Rose Society as its Vice President and President. My respect for what has worked over the years, along with my willingness to try new ventures on behalf of the rose has yielded positive results. My work has contributed to the transition of the American Rose Society to the state of growth that it enjoys today. I have dedicated myself and worked tirelessly over the past few years to educate people about roses. I have loyally served the organization on all levels.

I feel that I am the right person at the right time, that is why I am asking for you to vote for me, Chris VanCleave for ARS Vice President. I thank each of you for what you do for roses and the American Rose Society. Let's do more of it, together!