Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 10/22/2023
Online Zoom Meeting
taken by Melanie Simon – CoC Chair

Melanie Simon called the meeting to order at 06:32 PM

In attendance (21) – 20 of 33 Chapters
* indicates proxy or guest

Citrus – Gail Taylor*
Citrus – Marcie Clutter*
Cocoloba – Ben Johnson
Conradina – Martha Stewart
Cuplet Fern – Al Squires
Eugenia – David Martin
Ixia – Cate Hurlbut
Lake Beautyberry – Tina Mertz
Longleaf Pine - Kimberley Bremner
Magnolia – Maddie Snuggs
Mangrove – Laura Soule
Marion Big Scrub – Deborah Curry
Martin County - Dianna Wentink
Palm Beach County – Rebekah Kaufman
Passionflower – Melanie Simon – Chair
Pawpaw – Karen Walter
Pine Lily – Jennifer Adams*
Pinellas – Pam Schrader*
Sarracenia – Lynn Artz
Sea Rocket – Elizabeth Bishop
The Villages – Sue Egloff*

Regular Agenda Items

- Minutes from 9/24/23 meeting
  - Cate H. motioned to approve the September 24, 2023 meeting minutes. Gail T. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- Next Meeting November 26th at 6:30pm.

News/Announcements/Reminders

- Vice Chair and Secretary positions
  - Positions are still open - please consider volunteering a few hours a month

- Dicerandra Workday
  - October 25th workday at site SW of Ocala

- Membership
  - Requested change to default sorts for New Members and Expired Members reports so most recent appears at top of list. Also requested report for Renewed Members (so people who renew can be recognized monthly).
Kimberly asked about getting lists sorted by date range. Melanie said date ranges can be set using the Filter function, but this should be explained as part of training.

Kimberly noted that Sustaining Members don’t show up on some reports.

Melanie noted that when she manually totals members the total does not match the summary numbers. Linda Manley (Mangrove) has noted the same issue. Kimberly also noted she has to manually count members to get an accurate total.

Another time-consuming task is manually putting new member information into email programs. Jennifer noted a csv file can be uploaded to Gmail. This is another item which should be included in training.

- **Volunteer Hours Reporting**
  - Melanie clarified reporting for Chapter Representatives: *Do not* report hours for Council of Chapters meetings (these are reported by Melanie). Report hours under the “Council of Chapters” category for hours working on Council initiatives (for example, New Members Package) or Council officer work. Report hours under the “Chapter” category for hours reporting back to your Chapter and meeting follow-up with your Chapter.
  - Reporting link: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd-IR5D7KMMyMMQpxGRQlKj_a7hMFXdl8HdsDd-O_9ic4jwGzg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd-IR5D7KMMyMMQpxGRQlKj_a7hMFXdl8HdsDd-O_9ic4jwGzg/viewform)

- **Council Initiatives and Ongoing Business**
  - **Council Survey**
    - Still missing responses from three Chapters, so results are incomplete (preliminary result charts are in the agenda document).
    - Preliminary results show the percentage of Chapters doing great has increased from 12% last year to 24% while the percentage struggling has decreased from 24% to 15%. May indicate “recovery” from effects of Covid.
    - Chapter challenges in order of largest impact to smallest impact (with approximate percentage of responding Chapters indicating a major or moderate challenge):
      - Recruiting Leadership (80%)
      - Virtual Meeting Technology (50%)
      - Activity Participation (40%)
      - Publicity and Outreach (40%)
      - Membership Management (35%)
      - Membership Growth (30%)
      - Membership Retention (25%)
      - Chapter Administration (20%)
      - Finding Speakers (20%)
      - Fundraising/Financial Security (15%)
  - Reviewed and discussed comments and suggestions.
  - Discussed State-wide training for officers to increase confidence in taking on leadership roles.
    - Hurdle would be different election times throughout the year.
    - Cate H. pointed out that, in her experience, most of the Chapter-specific training comes from previous officers.
    - Cate H. noted, and Karen W. agreed, that an exception would be Treasurer training especially when it comes to forms and reporting.
    - Jennifer A. suggested “on-boarding” videos to cover the basics for each role.
Discussed officer/Chapter volunteer needs and duties
- Pawpaw has separated Program coordination from Vice President duties
- Secretary only does minutes – President does letters and Newsletter person does monthly news communications
- Melanie noted that some Chapters have coordinators/committee chairs for different activities - Field Trips, Demonstration Gardens, Outreach, Plant Sales, etc.

Engaging and re-engaging members and reaching new audiences
- Sue E. noted that some counties are increasing requirements for plantings that require less water
- Most Outreach is to like-minded people - nature and wildlife
- Jennifer A. noted Pine Lily has done Art classes (including for kids) and integrated Book Club activities to engage different groups
- Karen W. spoke about Pawpaw’s involvement with a popular scenic and motorcycle “Regrow The Loop” – the County has meetings every Saturday with speakers who talk about the importance of planting natives – residents go to classes and sign a pledge to reduce water, pesticide, fertilizer use and then get a free tree – pilot program
- Rebekah H. noted that people who are not into natives or the environment want solutions to practical problems – want to reduce the amount of yard work
- Sue E. said they encourage people to start by planting a small plot of natives
- Outside Collaborative is working to train landscapers for native yards – should be some kind of certification – FANN may be working on this.

Discussed Virtual Meeting Technology issues
- Issues include having WiFi connections and adequate bandwidth at meeting locations.
- Rebekah K. noted Zoom is a good tool for engaging new people
- Kimberly said they use hybrid meetings since Longleaf covers 4 Counties
- Discussed how hybrid meetings gives people an opportunity to participate without having to travel
- Gail T. mentioned streaming programs to YouTube
- Training to use Google Docs would be helpful

Publicity and Outreach
- Some Chapters have both webmasters and social media people, some have a single Communications person, sometimes activity coordinators do posts
- Some Chapters track usage and it seems to be trending up

Speakers
- Discussed Carnivorous plant programs – Kenny Coogan (from Tampa) does programs (Kennycoogan.com). Pinellas and Sarracenia have had him as a speaker and programs were well attended.
- Michael Manna (561-966-7797) from Palm Beach County also does carnivorous plants programs.

Native Nurseries
- It was mentioned that David Chiappini died – hopefully his nursery will continue to operate

Action items:
- Need to define what the specific issues are for some of the challenges
- Set up committees to define/discuss issues
New Business

- **Credit Card Payments**
  - Chapters were asked if they are set up to take credit card payments.
    - Coccoloba, Cuplet Fern, Pine Lily, Pawpaw, Ixia, Marion Big Scrub, Lake Beautyberry, Sea Rocket replied yes. All replied they use Square.
    - Mangrove is in the process of getting set up using Square.
    - Citrus used to, but no longer does (used Square and PayPal).

- **Strategic Planning**
  - Deferred to next meeting.

Open Floor

- **Conradina (Martha S.) and Book Sales**
  - Just had their 13th annual yard tour – didn’t sell as many tickets this year but still did well. Had a plant give-away for attendees. Also sold books.
  - Did September and October programs based on books - Doug Tallamy books and Ginny Stibolt’s “Step-by-Step Guide to a Florida Native Yard”. Had 50-60 attendees at each meeting and sold a lot of books.
  - Books were purchased through a local wholesaler. They don’t keep a lot of books on hand, but order them as needed. Sold 30-40 of Ginny’s books. Able to sell below retail and make a few dollars per book.
  - Karen W. reminded that they have an active on-line library that has become very popular.
  - Gail T. asked if FNPS makes any money from books ordered from Amazon.

- **Native Plant Month Programs**
  - Pine Lily is doing a hike and participating in a bioblitz at Split Oak Forest
  - Sarracenia did a proclamation & presentation on the importance of native plants to the County Commission last year. This year they have exhibits at 2 big festivals, a plant drawing to raise money for FNPS, and a big planting weekend at Sopchoppy Depot Park.
  - The Villages did a presentation “Why and How to become a good steward of our community”.
  - Marion Big Scrub is hosting the Dicerandra Day.

- **Community Bag Program**
  - Kimberly B. said Longleaf received a small donation from a “Community Bag Program”, but are not sure where it came from or who initiated it.
  - Laura S. said Mangrove was nominated by a Winn Dixie employee to receive a donation from bag sales.

- **Mockingbird Nursery**
  - Mockingbird Nursery attended a Conradina meeting and sold plants.
  - Will be at the Ormond Environmental Center on November 4 per Karen W.

Motion to Adjourn

- Al S. motioned to adjourn. Sue E. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:54 PM**