

AASG HANDBOOK

12/6/2020

The mission of the Ann Arbor Storytellers Guild is to promote, perpetuate, and celebrate the art and craft of storytelling.

This document is designed to supplement the By-Laws of the Ann Arbor Storytellers Guild (AASG), and to provide guidance for those who represent the AASG in any way, whether as a member, an officer or Board member, an event organizer, a promoter, or in any other capacity.

It is the goal of the AASG to grow into a professional organization that promotes, perpetuates and celebrates the art and craft of storytelling. This goal includes support for members at all levels of storytelling, from the interested beginner to the working professional. In order to meet those goals, the organization needs to establish a consistent level of quality and cooperation that allows all of its endeavors to function smoothly and consistently, and to present a positive image in the larger community.

Such an effort takes not only standards of practice, but communication and team spirit between all members of the organization as well as cooperation among individuals who are involved in specific initiatives and events. The goal of this document is to provide guidelines to help facilitate that cooperation, but it is the individuals themselves who will not only make that work, but improve the efforts with time. To that end, this should be a living document, and feedback is critical. Thank you all for being active participants in the AASG.

1. Membership – (See By Laws section II)

A. Benefits

- Telling, hearing, and discussing stories in a community of friendly, supporting people
- Learning new ideas and techniques through workshops presented by members and nationally-known storytellers
- Participation in Guild-sponsored events
- Opportunity to support Guild by serving on board and special projects
- Nominate and vote on board members
- Receive notification of meeting, events, calls for tellers, notes from monthly Guild meeting.
- Affiliate membership in NSN (storynet.org), which confers many benefits including an option to have a profile for A2 on story guild's page of website, and use of Eventbrite for event listings

B. Responsibilities – members are expected to:

- Work hand-in-hand with a wide range of storytellers, from beginners to national professionals, in a supportive and safe environment
- Engage in a creative, sharing environment
- Be respectful of everyone's voice, and their privacy

- Be an active member of the storytelling community
- Uphold and support the mission and values of AASG
- Follow Guild procedures in all dealings with Guild/community
- Communicate information about local events which could be of interest to Guild members.

2. **Board & Officers** - Advisory Board and Officers (See bylaws section III)

- Will be active in promoting Guild and mission.
- Will act as team members and are expected to support the Guild

3. **Meetings**

- Member meetings - 4th Sunday – (currently not held in Dec)
- Board meeting - generally meets quarterly (more as needed)
- Monthly swaps - 2nd Sunday

4. **Events**

- Guidelines, Standards – see By Laws and Appendix I
- House concerts – 5th Sundays on months that they occur
- Special events – eg story night, Artisan’s Market, Matthei Gardens
 - Annual concerts - eg StoryFest
 - Classes and Workshops
 - Guild Sponsored – money allotted
 - Guild Supported – advertised only
 - Parameters for open/closed events
- includes coordinators' responsibilities (detailed in Appendix I)

5. **Promotion**

- Advertising
- Photo archive and list
- Mailing lists – 1- Members 2- Audience
- Members/Affiliates doing private event

6. **AASG Properties**

- Physical - see Appendix II
- Intellectual – Stories/recordings, permissions, acknowledgments and courtesies - See Appendix III
- Financial

[7] **Communication (Refers to all items)**

- Listed specifically to underscore that communication is key to all operations. We’re storytellers, remember?
- In email correspondence to all members, it should be sent BCC to help prevent proliferation of spam listings
- **Email “reply all” should be restricted to situation when everyone on the list needs to know the specific information being discussed**

APPENDICES

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MEETING & EVENT COORDINATORS

- Accepting a position as meeting coordinator requires a regular commitment of time and energy. Members attending these meetings rely on the coordinator to make sure that the meeting is on time and well organized. Coordinators are representatives of AASG, so are expected to conduct themselves accordingly.
- In order to minimize burn-out, it is highly recommended that meeting coordinators seek to share responsibilities, either by always having a backup coordinator, or working as a pair of co-coordinators. Specific arrangements would be up to the team, but one possible approach would be for one to act as producer – greet attendees, issue name tags, take notes and distribute them afterwards, etc, and the other would be the meeting coordinator so would develop the agenda and run the meetings. These duties could, for instance, be flipped every other meeting. Also, the responsibility for a specific position will run for one year, renewable upon approval of the Board.
- Make meeting purpose and objectives clear at the beginning
- At private events (invitation only or not open to the public), opening announcements should include a statement that any pictures may be used unless individuals specifically request otherwise, especially when children are present
- Consider the audience and make sure stories are age appropriate
- Stress confidentiality where appropriate
- Create an open, positive environment
- Stress respectful listening
- If the event includes story comments, ask the storyteller what specific comments/feedback are requested
- Feedback guidelines, with thanks to Jim May: The person telling the story should be at all times, in control of the level of feedback they want. If at anytime during the feedback session, the teller wants the feedback session to close, they may do so with no questions asked. The feedback levels begin with only positive comments and progress to more constructive criticism as the session progresses. The 4 levels are as follows
 - WOWS!. What was really impressive or engaging?
 - Questions from the teller about specific aspects of the story or telling?
 - Questions from the audience about things they didn't understand or took them out of the story
 - Comments – note that these are not directives of ways to “fix” the story, but issues and suggestions for some potential improvements to the story. For instance “You might want to think about how the story would change if the narrator was a woman”, rather than, “Why don't you make the narrator a woman?”
- Coordinator should announce in advance that there may be “difficult” subject matter, and generally what that might include (e.g., graphic description, adult situations, violence)
- Manage time out of fairness for everyone

II. LIST OF AASG PROPERTY

- CDs – Signature Stories, Time Warp Tales, Tellabration Live!
- Microphone, sound system, phantom power generator, mic stand, and cables
- Table cloths, etc

III. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, PERMISSIONS AND COURTESIES

- AASG properties: CD compiled content, Logos, advertisements, website
- Photo permissions: Before posting photos of tellers or audience (with the exception of composite audience photos/videos in a public place), it is the policy of AASG that verbal permission shall be sought. If such photos are to be used in advertising, permission shall be in writing (email permission OK)
- If anyone wants to record audio or video of a performer, they should first seek and receive permission from the teller. If a recording is to be posted, it is up to the person recording to make sure that the permission is verifiable in some way. If, after a performance has been recorded with permission, the storyteller changes their mind the recording should be destroyed, and if it has been posted, the posting shall immediately be removed.
- If a teller does not want their performance to be recorded or posted, they should make this clear before the performance. If they have granted permission for recording and decide after the performance that they do not want that version to remain in recorded form, they should immediately notify the person(s) who recorded it.
- The event organizers may, at their discretion, request that there be no recording or posting of performances unless the person making the recording has specific permission from the teller.
- It is the responsibility of the teller to ensure that any performance be free of copyright restrictions, or that they have permission from the copyright holder, especially if they give permission for the performance to be recorded/posted.
- If unsure whether permission is necessary, AASG policy is that the courteous thing to do is to ask.

IV. TELLERS SELECTION FOR AASG EVENTS

- Event level should be established as follows
 - Informal – regular meetings, swaps, and event where input is desired during the formation stage of stories
 - Level 1 – Stories with some level of polish in venues that may include a small public or private audience
 - Level 2 – Finished stories delivered in a informal setting to a significant public or private audience (eg 25+). May be some competition for stage time, but selections can be based on event coordinator judgment
 - Level 3 – Highest quality stories only. Larger audiences, or event where the quality of the event may significantly impact the image of AASG. Typically selection will be juried with stories sent in advance to a selection committee.
- A call for tellers should be sent out for Level 1, 2, and 3 events. Sample language:

- Level 1 – We are looking for quality stories for a small audience event that you are comfortable telling in an intimate and supportive environment....
- Level 2 – We are looking for finished stories that appeal to a broad public audience. Bring us stories you have told in public and are comfortable with...
- Level 3 – We need your best stories, ones that have been told a number of times, are well polished and timed, and will appeal to a large audience.....
- The call should go out well in advance of the event, with the timing determined by the level of the event. Calls should also ask for story title and timing, and if necessary, a description of the story content.
- Notify tellers who are not selected first, so they do not hear of selections from someone else. Notify selected tellers next, with details of their responsibilities, when to arrive, what to expect, and where they are in the lineup.

V. MASTER OF CEREMONY GUIDELINES

- The main function of a Master of Ceremonies is to provide program continuity and pacing, and to highlight the tellers. This also includes involving the audience as part of the program and sometimes performing housekeeping and announcements.
- Introductory comments should be focused on the event of the day with the purpose of getting quickly into the program. Housekeeping should be limited to shutting off cell phones, pointing out bathrooms, and providing a quick outline of the event.
- Introduce each teller with highlights as befits the occasion. Sometimes only a word or two is necessary, but comments should always be designed to get the audience to enthusiastically welcome the teller.
- Thank each teller when they have finished, before introducing the next teller.
- Any comments or short stories should be designed to comment on the story just heard, get the audience re-engaged, or create a bridge to the next story.
- Announcements are best made before intermission or at the end of the program
- Control the time of intermission and call people back as forcefully as needed (hopefully with good humor as well), in order to keep the program on time.
- At the end of the program, acknowledge the tellers once more (on or offstage as the situation demands), and thank everyone for coming. End on a high note.

VI. STORY SWAP PROCEDURES

- This is considered an informal level meeting
- Coordinator should send out BCC invitations via email in advance of the meeting
- Coordinator says a few opening words to set the boundaries
- The primary job of the coordinator is to provide a safe and supportive environment to allow members to experiment with stories and learn together. Coordinator must be responsible to monitor and direct commentary, and also to cut off feedback if it deviates too much from the feedback guidelines presented under general meeting guidelines in this document.
- Although meetings can be held in dedicated meeting spaces such as those offered by the

library, they generally work best if they are held in member homes.

- All stories are welcome, whether polished or still in process. A story idea or question or problem can also be brought to swaps for discussion.
- Comments should follow the guidelines presented in Appendix I. The coordinator should make certain that all who wish to provide comments within the guidelines are encouraged to do so, as time allows.
 - WOWS!. What was really impressive or engaging?
 - Questions from the teller about specific aspects of the story or telling?
 - Questions from the audience about things they didn't understand or took them out of the story
 - Comments – note that these are not directives of ways to “fix” the story, but issues and suggestions for some potential improvements to the story. For instance “You might want to think about how the story would change if the narrator was a woman”, rather than, “Why don't you make the narrator a woman?”
- Teller please ask for the kind of feedback wanted, or no feedback is also okay. They can ask for applause only, or anything up to comments and suggestion, but it is the teller who drives the level of feedback and they can also end feedback whenever they want.
- Identify how many stories there are. For instance, allow a maximum of 4-5 stories, depending on length, and adjust feedback time to give everyone a chance to tell their story and receive feedback.
- Keep track of time and limit side conversations.
- If there is time, additional stories can be told. If a teller has more than one story or if someone thinks of a story they want to tell or discuss.

VII. MONTHLY MEMBER MEETINGS

- This is considered an informal meeting but as there are often non-members present, stories tend to be somewhat more polished than at the story swaps
- If the regular meeting format is to vary, for instance by including guest speakers or special reports, the coordinator should submit a written proposal to the AASG Board at least two months in advance to allow time to approve, promote, and announce the special format. A proposal form is provided at the end of this handbook.
- The coordinator or designees will distribute the sign-in sheet, name tags, and agenda, and also provide note form to the note-taker for the meeting. These forms are provided at the end of this handbook.
- The coordinator will provide a brief introduction and orientation explaining the purpose of the monthly meetings, which is to provide a safe and supportive environment to tell stories, both completed and in progress.
- As an introduction and ice-breaker, the meeting starts with the coordinator asking participants to state their name and tell a one-minute personal story about a broad theme. The theme is the coordinators prerogative, and should be announced only at the beginning of the meeting to keep the stories spontaneous.
- Participants may choose to pass on telling this one-minute story, but should still introduce themselves. Timing of these introductions should be carefully, but gently, controlled.
- Coordinator should consider having a couple of stories preplanned by seasoned tellers to

serve as an example of a finished piece. The coordinator should ask how many people have stories to tell and estimate how long those stories those stories might run, in order to manage meeting time.

Stories should be told, not read, although the coordinator may make an exception on a one-time basis as long notes are not used at future tellings.

- If more people want to tell than time allows, priority is given first to new members or members who have not told before, then to those who have not told at a recent meeting.
- The coordinator should ask the teller if they want feedback at all. For these meetings, feedback should be limited to #1 and #2 of Jim May's feedback suggestions.
 - WOWS!. What was really impressive or engaging?
 - Questions from the teller about specific aspects of the story or telling?
- After the stories, 10 minutes or so should be allowed to discuss upcoming events. A report will be given by a representative of the Board, as needed.
- A report is available of the monthly board meeting minutes and financial report in a member-only section of the website.
- Conclude the meeting with an invitation to return next month.

VIII. HOUSE CONCERT PROCEDURES

- The main purpose of House Concerts is to provide an encouraging, supportive environment for novice tellers to develop performance skills. Secondarily, new members and more experienced tellers may find opportunity to demonstrate their skills and perhaps try out new material.
- House Concerts are private events. Attendance is limited to members and their invited guests.
- The concerts are listed as member-only events on Guild calendars and social media.
- In keeping with the intent to offer a comfortable setting for performance skill development, no photography or recording is permitted at House Concerts except by specific request of the performer or audience member.
- Concerts are held 2-4 pm on the 5th Sunday of months when they occur. To help defray rental costs, a voluntary "tip jar" is available for those who would like to contribute.
- One of the coordinators typically acts as MC. At their discretion, others may be invited to fill this role.
- Call for tellers should be sent out at least 2 weeks before the event. This is considered a level 2 event.
- Tellers should be notified no less than 1 weeks before the event. Tellers who are not chosen for any reason are contacted first.
- If there are more teller volunteers than time, priority is given to novice performers, newer members and those who have not told recently at Guild events.
- At least two reminders are sent to the membership in advance of the concert. The final announcement includes names of tellers.
- Selected stories should fill no more than 90 minutes. With MC introductions and short break, this will fill a 2 hour program.
- At the discretion of the coordinator(s), coffee, tea and/or water are provided by the

Guild, with attendees invited to bring finger foods to contribute to a snack table available at the break.

IX. STORYFEST (Tellabration!tm)

This is the annual event/fundraiser for AASG, and is a Level 3 event. It is the primary showcase for AASG, and, as such, should represent the best that the organization and members can offer. Consequently, preparation for this event is extensive at all levels. As with all events, contact people, time and place can be adjusted to fit the needs of the event.

PRODUCTION JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Co-coordinators

- Arrange adult concert: Trinity Lutheran Church
Contact person: Daryl Hurst – 734-662-4419
- Arrange family concert with AADL
Contact person: Allison Jones <jonesa@aadl.org>
- Establish teams (names and timeline)
- Supervise staying on timeline for production
- Schedule and manage production meetings
- Oversee activities and assist where needed
- Assist with promotions
- Manage the dress rehearsals
- Email meeting minutes to Production Team
- Send out emails to AASG
- Assist in maintaining communication among Team Members
- Arrange support team to work with designer to get postcards and programs printed.
- Distribute postcards to AASG members for distribution.
- Be sure yard signs are up for events.
- Debrief at meeting with team and create StoryFest report and distribute.
- Assign volunteers for front table at the Family concert.

Promotions Team

- Manage press releases, articles, radio contacts
- Explore new avenues of publicity

Designer

- Design postcards, fliers and program for event.
- Work with team for proofreading and printing

Refreshment Team

- Recruit volunteers to bring intermission refreshments and beverages
- Arrange with Mark Wagon to supply coffee
- Arrange for paper goods (plates, napkins, cups, etc.)

- Remind volunteers week of event
- Recruit some table moving brawn to set up and take down snack tables
- Set up food and beverages
- Host the table
- Clean up refreshment space with volunteers

Facility Manager -

- Recruit some brawn to set up/take down ticket table and CD tables.
(Possibly working in conjunction with refreshment team.)

Night of Adult StoryFest Concert:

- Obtain key from Darryl Hurst
- Unlock facility at 5:30 and lock after event.
- Regulate sanctuary heat
- Regulate sanctuary lighting
- Make certain the gurgling fountain is turned off
- Oversee setup of ticket table and CD table
- Restore any moved furniture to original place

Stage Manager

- Adjust the stage microphone for individual tellers
- Work with person doing the sound
- Work with person doing the recording
- Assist tellers in being comfortable on stage

Emcee

- Introduce the evening
- Introduce each teller
- Announce intermission
- Recall audience after intermission
- Close the evening

Selection Team Coordinators

- Put out call for Tellers along with explanation of submission process.
- Manage story drop box
- Tabulate votes
- Determine vote median
- Call and conduct story selection meeting

Selection Team

- Individually listen to all stories submitted
- Rate each story on rating sheet
- Meet as a group and discuss ratings
- Choose tellers and arrange order of tellers for Adult concert
- Select tellers for Family concert and arrange order.
- First contact tellers not selected. After confirming that all of them have

been contacted, then contact selected tellers and remind them of mandatory practice. These contacts can be delegated.

- Attend practices for adult concert and family concert

Front Table Director night of StoryFest concert

- Set up admission table
- Recruit two other people to help take money, pass out programs, and greet people as they enter building.
- Manage getting change box and collecting admission \$ and returning box to AASG Treasurer.

EVENT PLANNING TIMELINE

January

- Decide on dates and book venues
Adult Concert for 2020
October 10: Trinity Lutheran Church
Contact person: Daryl Hurst - 662-4419
- Family Concert - Co-sponsored by AADL
October 11: Pittsfield Branch AADL
Contact person: Allison Jones <jonesa@aadl.org>

January through March

- Recruit people to be on Team
- Assign team members to specific work groups.
- Set first meeting of committee for sometime in April

April

- Convene first meeting
- Decide and contact possible MC
- Get schedule for future meetings of team
- Get mailing labels.

May through July

- Finalize MC's for both programs
- Put out call for tellers by early July
- Decide on tellers for both programs
- Send thank yous to those not chosen
- Create quarter page flier to distribute at:
 - Michigan Storytelling Festival in Flint (July)
 - Michigan Gathers
- Create quarter page postcards
 - For handouts as soon as possible
 - With names of tellers as soon as selected
- Promotions team:

- Create calendar listing
- Develop introduction for program
- Find out publication deadlines
- Send website update to webmaster, social media maven
- Seek opportunities for radio/video interviews
- Print media- Crazy Wisdom calendar, annarbor.com, Current Magazine, Observer magazines, etc

August/September

- Mail postcards
- Submit basic information to calendars - email pictures with info if possible
- Write press release and distribute - with pictures if possible to various editors
- Send letter to school media specialists and/or principals for inclusion in school newsletters, and flier for posting in schools.
- Distribute fliers to AASG members at Aug. & Sept. meetings
- Encourage members to carry and distribute postcard fliers
- Mail postcards to former StoryFest attendees
- Develop program for Adult Concert

September/October

- Schedule reminders to all involved (Including sound production company)
- Send out list of times when people are to show up
- Send out list of all jobs for evening with names attached
- Send reminder to all AASG members about upcoming programs
- Have rehearsals for tellers for both concerts about a week before programs
- Invite all tellers and volunteers to afterglow following family concert
- Enjoy the show!!!

Ann Arbor Storytellers Guild Meeting

Sign in sheet – PLEASE PRINT

NOTE: If the Guild already has your contact information, print your name.

Date _____

Location _____

Name: _____ Email address: _____ Member? Yes
No _____

Ann Arbor Storytellers Guild

Monthly meeting Notes

Date _____ Location _____

Attended:

Introductions:

Stories:

Business:

Other:

Upcoming Events:

Respectfully Submitted by: _____

AASG MEETING AGENDA DATE: _____

Introductions: 1 minute stories

Stories:

Other:

Upcoming Events:

For more information about Ann Arbor Storytellers' Guild, visit our website:
www.annarborstorytelling.org

Ann Arbor Storytellers' Guild – Request Form
Proposal for workshop, concert, special event
Please send this form to AASG secretary for Board approval

Today's date:

Your preferred contact info: (phone #, email address)

Event:

Event Description:

Additional members: (who you are working with—name and phone numbers)

Plan of action (include Guild involvement, if any):

Event date: (actual or approximate):

Location: (address, Room, capacity)

If this event is a concert:

Who will be telling stories?

Who will choose tellers?

Who is invited to attend?