

2023 Clowns of America International General Membership Meeting May 10, 2023

This was the 39th annual COAI membership meeting, held virtually via Zoom. With 51 members present, there was a quorum, and the meeting was brought to order at 8:06 pm.

Board Members Present:

Executive Committee: Adam Schill, President; Dan Langwell, Vice President; Beth Cedarholm, Secretary; Jerry Gill, Treasurer

Directors: Gloria Sterrett, Alley Regional Support; Keshia Beckley, Membership; Regina Wollrabe, Junior Joeys; Jim Donoughe, Education; and Kynisha Ducre, Conventions

Regional Vice-Presidents: Connie Morrow, Northeast; Alyse Axford, Northwest; Bobby Semon, Mideast; Sarah Smith, Southwest; Sara Kreutz, North Central; and Matty Spraggins, South Central

Other: Sammy Smith, *New Calliope* Editor

Board Members Not Present: Chia-chiao Lin; International RVP; Dale McKenzie, Canada RVP; Angel Morales, Latin RVP; Kent Sheets, Southeast RVP; Patti Ummel, Midwest RVP; Cleon Babcock, Parliamentarian

Call to Order/Welcome: Adam called the meeting to order, and he welcomed attendees to the meeting. He said that the floor will be recognized for speaking and asked members not to speak until recognized by the chair. Members are to raise hands or state in the chat to be recognized and are not to speak out of turn. They should stay muted until recognized. Once recognized, they must state first and last name before making comments. Floor will be recognized for two minutes for discussion, and rebuttals will be recognized for one minute. He said that the basic format will be "I move that ____." A second is needed before any discussion. Once there is a motion and a second, the motion will be discussed. Once the president determines that the discussion is finished, he will call for the vote. If

members notice a problem during the meeting that needs to be addressed immediately, they may unmute themselves and say “Mr. President, Point of Order to be recognized.”

Approval of Agenda: Adam reviewed the meeting agenda, and asked if anyone had any items to add. There were no additions, so minutes stand as presented.

Adam introduced the board members, as well as Sammy Smith, *New Calliope* Editor. He recognized COAI’s Parliamentarian Cleon Babcock, and introduced WCA President Jackie Newton Banjavic. Adam said that Dan Langwell and Jim Donoughe will be serving as Sergeants of Arms.

Approval of 2022 General Membership Meeting Minutes: Adam asked if there were any corrections to the minutes, which were posted online. There were no changes, so minutes stand as presented.

Director Reports

Education (Jim Donoughe): Jim said that he recently assumed the role of Education Director. He has been writing articles for *New Calliope* and said he looked forward to serving as Education Director.

Membership (Kesha Beckley): Kesha greeted the membership. She said she has served in the position for several years. She asked those who are submitting an awards nomination to please do so electronically and to also be mindful of the deadlines.

Alley and Regional Support (Gloria Sterrett): Gloria thanked those who had submitted alley updates and newsletters. She said that she has only received updates from 11 alleys and urged all alleys to submit their update as soon as possible. She recommended that members send updates to her electronically.

Junior Joeys (Regina Wollrabe): Regina said that she had one new COAI Jr. Joey member. She said new members are encouraged to join the Jr. Joey Facebook group She thanked all of those individuals who have served as Jr. Joey mentors. She said that the program is finally “gaining momentum” after the pandemic. Regina said that Alley 185, the Sioux City Clown Alley, has been

conducting a class for new clowns and will have four Jr. Joey graduates. This will bring the current number of active Jr. Joeys from nine to 13. She has created a graduation certificate, which will be available for alleys to use. She said she has been thinking about the best way to retain Jr. Joey members and asked others to brainstorm on this. She said she has continued to work on the pin program, which is a way to reward young clowns for learning and mastering different aspects of clowning. She currently has 20 pins and criteria, with ideas for five more. She said she will be happy to discuss how alleys can use the pin program for their Jr. Joeys. Regina showed the group photos of the pins that have been developed.

Conventions (Kynisha Ducre): Adam said that Frank Bunton had recently resigned from the Convention Director position, and that Kynisha had been appointed several days prior to the meeting. Given that Kynisha had just accepted the position, she had no report. Adam announced that the 2024 convention will be held May 13-17 in Niagara Falls, NY.

COAI Business Manager//New Calliope Reports (Sammy Smith): Sammy said that Dawn Hoffmeister has been handling many of the COAI office duties and is doing a “terrific job.” His wife, Laurel, is still pitching in when she can. The office just sent out an email reminder for renewals and urged members to renew, so that reminders wouldn’t need to be mailed to them. Six issues of *New Calliope* have gone out since the last membership meeting. Sammy pointed out that very few organizations are still producing print magazines, and that this is a huge membership benefit to COAI members. He said that there are a number of free online books available to members on the website’s Clown Cloud. There are also more than 10,000 pages of back issues of *New Calliope* available to members in the Vault (accessible on website). Sammy said that he is looking for someone who can help find authors for articles and collect articles. Anyone who is interested should email him at newcalliope@gmail.com. He said that every year he gets to name two awards: Best in Press and Editor’s Choice. This year, the Best in Press award will go to Bonita “Bon Bon” Love for the San Diego Allstar Clowns Clown Crier. The Editor’s Choice award will go to Patricia “Pricilla Mooseburger” Manuel.

Treasurer’s Report: (Jerry Gill): Jerry thanked the group for placing their trust in him as treasurer. He presented a balance sheet, showing total liabilities of \$0 and

equity as \$11,613.33. He said that, in the past there were individual checking accounts for the Education fund, Barbara Cox Fund, and Jr. Joeys. This was very expensive, due to checking account fees. These separate accounts have now been combined into one account, but listed individually as sub-accounts. Jerry shared the Profit & Loss Statement from July 1, 2022 through May 10, 2023, which showed total income of 35,502.14 and total expenses of 39,269.80, for a total of - 3,767.66. Jerry shared the current budget with membership. Income is \$112,750. Expenses are \$107,102. Regina and Adam both thanked Jerry for making all of this information simple and easy to understand. Adam added that, while COAI is not in great financial shape, its most lucrative months are coming up. He asked members to encourage other clowns to renew their memberships, since most of COAI's revenue comes from membership dues.

Grievance Committee Report (Connie Morrow, on behalf of Paul

Kleinberger): Connie said that there is a clown with a disability who approached the grievance committee because he felt that other clowns in his alley were intentionally excluding him from events. The Grievance Committee was concerned that COAI could get in legal trouble from the ADA, even though this was a situation happening within an alley. The committee has not heard anything more from this clown or the alley president, so they are hoping that the alley was able to resolve this situation. Adam said that he plans to reach out to both the clown and the alley president. Joseph Cloutier urged the Grievance Committee to document everything about this situation, just in case there is a lawsuit. Adam encouraged anyone who is an expert on this to email him with their advice.

Award Announcements (Kesha): Kesha thanked the Awards Council members for their help selecting this year's awards. The 2023 awards are as follows:

Ring of Honor: Judy "Dearheart" Quest

Excellence in Clowning: Brenda "Sally" Smith

Lifetime Achievement: Elaine "Val N. Tine" Peterson, Bill "Dabbles" LeBlanc, and Mike "Bonkers" Cox

Clown of the Year: Jim "Donut" Donoughe

Award recipients will receive their awards at the 2024 convention. If they are unable to attend the convention, their award will be mailed to them.

Teresa Gretton then presented the Clown of the Year Award to Jim Donoughe. She said that Jim had suffered a stroke during Clown Week and managed to

celebrate Clown Week from his hospital bed. Teresa told the membership about the history of Clown Week and urged members to promote it. If anyone has any questions regarding clown week or the COTY award, please contact her.

Next year is a COAI election year, with candidates declaring their candidacy in January. Adam urged members to get involved with COAI by running for a board position. There will be a “meet the candidate” night at the 2024 convention.

Competitions (Adam): At the 2022 convention there was a motion to dissolve competitions. Since then, three individuals, including former Competition Director Bill LeBlanc, had a brain-storming session, during which they tried to figure out how to “take the competition out of competitions.” The following are ideas of activities to hold in lieu of traditional competitions: holding makeup classes and critiquing them, performing skits for fun, holding an open mic night or an “anything goes” event with facepainting and balloons, and doing a parade for the hotel. It is increasingly difficult to find judges for competitions, and the cost of elaborate costumes is out of reach for many. The following are some of the reasons the group felt competitions needed to be revamped: At recent conventions, only 21% of attendees competed. If competitions were eliminated, there would be more time to focus on education. The hotel space required to hold competitions is expensive. Adam said we have one year to determine how competitions will be modified. An official competition committee will be formed to work out the details. Hal Grant said that usually it is the same people who compete year after year and that competitions don’t attract new people. He urged COAI to become more diverse and to represent all of our clowning disciplines. Brenda Smith suggested awarding each competitor either a gold, silver, or bronze ribbon, so that they are competing against themselves. Kynisha suggested limiting the number of clowns competing in events so that several competition categories could be held on the same day and use the same judges. Regina suggested incorporating Mike Bednarek’s Red Nose Festival competition format, where clowns are competing against themselves. She said she wonders how it would affect convention participation of some of our international clowns, who are very involved in competitions. Brenda Marshall said that she agreed with Regina and that we need to be more concerned with our performance than how we look, especially those of us who have been clowning for a long time. She suggested holding critique sessions for those who wish to be critiqued. She said she was in support of focusing on bettering ourselves rather than winning.

Adam then thanked members for attending and adjourned the meeting at 9:25.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Cedarholm, Secretary