

Conference-Going 101

by Linda Oestreich, Senior Editor, BMC Software Inc., and STC Fellow

Throughout my 20+ years as an STC member, one thing has remained a constant—my excitement about and participation in conferences! For instance, I have been a main speaker for several years at First Timer’s Sessions for the STC Annual Conference. I have helped put on local seminars and conferences for STC and for the American Society for Training and Development. I was even Program Manager for the 1995 STC Annual Conference in Washington, DC. Because conferences are something I know and love, I am comanager for the Region 5 Conference to be held here in Houston this coming October.

At the very least, know what it is you expect to get from the conference, and then think about what you’ll do if your first choice doesn’t work out.

Whether you attend the STC Annual Conference, a technical conference

such as SIGDOC, or a smaller local or regional conference, I hope that the following tips will make your experience a better one. In addition to these ideas, be sure to check out “Tips for Attending Conferences” by Deborah S. Ray at <http://www.raycomm.com/techwhirl/tipsforconferences.html>. Some of the tips included here are from that article.

1. Prep for the party!

Whenever you attend a conference, do some planning. Read the preliminary program. Check out the conference Web site. At the very least, know what it is you expect to get from the conference, and then think about what you’ll do if your first choice doesn’t work out. If your boss absolutely insists that you get information about a specific topic, don’t rely on just one session to get that information. Network with the presenter, talk to others in the session, and find other sessions that can give you what you need. If you depend too heavily on one session being available, you might be disappointed! Work the program! Know what’s offered and

give yourself Plans B and C to accompany Plan A.

2. Pick a format.

Most conferences have sessions in different formats: STC has workshops, demonstrations, papers, progressions, and panels. I know some people who attend nothing but workshops because workshops offer some hands-on experience and a smaller audience. Other people enjoy the variety that a panel or group of papers gives.

continued on page 6

In This Issue

STC Houston elects officers and directors	2
From the President.....	3
Contractor’s Corner	5
New Member News	6
Louisiana Workshop Improves Technical Communication	8
Houston Chapter May Volunteer of the Month	8
Director-Sponsor Report	9
Chapter Honors Student Writers	10
Calendar.....	11
May Meeting Details	12

Dateline Houston

Dateline Houston is the newsletter of the Houston Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit organization. Ten issues are published each year (September through June).

Newsletter Staff

Managing Editor: Rhonda Hector
Layout Editor: Erika Frensley
Coordinating
Editor: Lisa Muenchow
Features Editor: Donna Marcotte
Story Editors: Melanie Boston, Jamie
Diamandopoulos, Jim
Hunt
Staff Writers: Heather Shelly
Lisetta Lavy

Submissions

Submit newsletter contributions are due by the 25th of each month. Please submit articles in Submissions in Microsoft Word or FrameMaker 5.x format. All submissions are subject to editing. Send submissions to Rhonda Hector:

e-mail: rhonda@newmc.cc

phone: 832-200-9000, ext. 107

Reprints

Articles published by *Dateline Houston* may be reprinted in other STC publications provided credit is given and a copy is sent to the managing editor for *Dateline Houston*.

Address Changes

Send address changes to the database and directory manager:

John Reynolds
P.O. Box 130873
Houston, Texas 77219-0873
jreynold@compassnet.com

Production

Dateline Houston is produced with FrameMaker 6.0 on a PC, using clip art from CorelDraw 4.0, Microsoft Word 97, and other sources.

Printing

Some of the costs associated with printing *Dateline Houston* are donated by IKON Office Solutions.

Cover

The cover is based on an original photograph by Catherine Bendig. The graphic design is by Ruth Metcalf.

The membership directory password is homer+wagner.

STC Houston elects officers and directors

By Patrick Rockecharlie, Lead Information Developer, BMC Software

STC Houston held its annual chapter leadership election at the April program meeting, and George Slaughter was elected president for the 2001-02 program year.

George is a senior member of STC, and has served the Houston chapter as communications director since 1999. Among his accomplishments as director was the planning and execution of the chapter web site redesign and re-launching last year. The web site, www.stc-houston.org, won a Society-level Award of Merit in the recent STC Public Relations Competition.

The STC Houston membership also elected the following officers and directors:

- Vice President: Dorothy Murray
- Treasurer: Wayne Schmadeka
- Secretary: Sahar Othman
- Communications Director: April Cooper
- Competitions Director: Suzanne Stuckly-Taboada
- Membership Director: Linda Oestreich
- Planning Director: Ron Kirk
- Programs Director: Paul Mueller
- Satellites Director: Heather Shelly
- Volunteer Resources Director: Mary Gwynne

"We've got a wonderful group of officers and directors, and we're looking forward to another great year," George says.

The new officers and directors will assume their positions at the STC Houston Leadership Transition Meeting, which is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, June 9, in the auditorium at BMC Software.

"We've got a big year planned," George says. "Among other activities, our chapter will host the Region 5 Conference in October. The conference will be a great opportunity for people to create partnerships and develop skills that will benefit their careers."

George says that being elected chapter president came on an already special night for his family.

"My mother received an award for being Rookie Teacher of the Year in her school district the same night I was elected chapter president," George says. "She was in one place, receiving her award, and I was at the STC meeting, being elected. It was a big night for the Slaughters."

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

From the President . . . Mentoring New Technical Communicators

by Deborah Long, Strategic Communications, Enron Net Works

While I still have this column as my soapbox, there is something I feel passionately about and want to share with all STC Houston members. The joy of mentoring is something I discovered last summer around the time I took office as president of our chapter. I was asked to act as mentor for a summer intern (Craig Oishi) who assisted our technical communications team. It turned out to be a most rewarding experience for both of us, as I showed him the ropes and introduced this young student to the *real* world of corporate America. "How unlike the classroom," he commented enthusiastically at a gathering with fellow interns. It was cool to watch him soak up knowledge and the surrounding vibes.



Deborah Long

Craig caught on quickly in the hands-on internship I designed for him that included accompanying me to meetings with all level employees, including management. It was interesting to witness his amazement that a Director talked to him just like a "regular guy." He also learned the technical writing task at hand sooner than one would expect by jumping in feet first and welcoming feedback. By my example, he established good working rapport with those he met and began to understand the value of "schmoozing."

My most thrilling moment was when I watched Craig instruct Monika McKay, a new person on our team, so that she was able to carry on his functions when the summer was over (as they say in the medical field, "see one, do one, teach one"). To me, this was a full circle, as well as a new beginning...yet another chance to work with an entry-level technical editor/writer who has dreams of advancing in our field. I was really off and running when an additional editor, Lisa Anderson, was hired to assist me with Quality Assurance Editing, once again seizing the opportunity to instill my high standards of perfection, quality, and creative technical communications (all of which Lisa already possessed to a large extent).

On a larger scale, the opportunity to lead the STC Houston chapter has been another form of mentoring to me, as we signed up new members, welcomed students to our meetings, and sponsored the writing awards for the annual Science and Engineering Fair at the junior and high school level, along with providing stimulating presenters to keep us informed of emerging technologies.

The mentoring process is not only of benefit to the protegee; the mentor gets to reinforce the importance of his/her own beliefs, values, and knowledge base that is often taken for granted after achieving a senior status. I hope that future leaders and members alike adopt this same positive attitude about mentoring, as we all impart our knowledge to the next generation of technical communicators. Remember, your reach is further than your grasp...

Deborah

Chapter Contacts

Administrative Council

President, Deborah Long
713-853-7087 deborah.long@enron.com

Vice President, Jocelyn Williams
713-918-2489 jocelyn_williams@bmc.com

Treasurer, Zach Moring
281-856-0315 zmoring@hotmail.com

Secretary, Carolyn Kelly
713-963-1774 ccksam@juno.com

Past President, Janette Sexton-Shahout
281-479-0934 jsexton19@aol.com

Director of Satellites, Pat Bishop
713-260-1718 patbush@earthlink.net

Director of Programs, Dorothy Murray
713-688-1890
dorothy_murray@msn.com

Director of Planning, Jim Hunt
713-918-4640 jim_hunt@bmc.com

Director of Memberhip, Lisetta Lavy
281-584-1852 lisetta.lavy@aspen.com

Director of Volunteer Resources,
John Reynolds
713-861-3334 jreynold@compassnet.com

Director of Communications,
George Slaughter
713-830-0000 gslaughter@flex.net

Director of Competitions, Heather Shelly
713-918-5216 heather_shelly@bmc.com

Chapter Resources

Employment, Chris G. Smith
713-907-8823 chrissmi@ix.netcom.com

Membership, Ron Hartberger
713-784-9286 ronhmath@pdq.net

Information line: 713-796-3303
Web site: www.stc-houston.org

Special Interest Groups

Consultants/Independent Contractors
Gaynell Doehne
713-524-5401 gdoehne@words-work.com

Kim Shaw
281-367-1202 kim@twowriters.com

Information Mapping
Helen Shoup
713-728-4316 shoup@flash.net

Online Documentation
Larry Dybala
713-215-4259 lwd@hal-pc.org

Satellite Group

Louisiana/Gulf Coast
Jim Brown jim@xentech.com

Conference-Going 101

by Linda Oestreich, Senior Editor, BMC Software Inc., and STC Fellow

continued from page 1

Some want to see the latest tools and techniques displayed in a demonstration, yet others enjoy the intimacy of round-table discussions (called progressions in STC). (I like to mix them up!) As you prepare, realize that workshops fill up fast. If they are your first choice, get to the room early. Papers and panels are usually presented in larger rooms and give you a better chance of getting a seat. Whatever choices you make, consider format as a factor in your decisions.

3. Know your focus.

Deborah Ray begins her article with some questions about objectives that each conference attendee should address:

- Are you attending to gain new knowledge in specific topic areas?
- Are you attending to gain as much new information as possible?
- Are you primarily attending to network with new people?
- Are you attending to find a new job or investigate relevant services?

The list of reasons why you might want to attend is almost endless. The the idea is to know what you want, but be prepared for surprises. Even small conferences—ones with only two or three tracks—can be confusing and difficult to maneuver in. Never be so exacting about your focus that you'll stop yourself from learning new things if your first choice isn't available. Mark your second and third choices, too.

4. Be flexible and friendly.

Leave yourself open to possibilities. Full session? Go to the exhibit area. Too late? See who's at the coffee bar or bookstore. Start a conversation. Smile and ask people where they come from. Ask them what they do and what new tools they use. Trade business cards. Be sure to bring lots of them with you! Take advantage of all the knowledge around you. Talk to folks in the hallways, on the elevators, at the refreshment tables. Offer help, share what you know, and say what you hope to learn. You might make a friend from another state, another country, or another hemisphere!

The list of reasons why you might want to attend is almost endless. The the idea is to know what you want, but be prepared for surprises.

5. Be courteous.

As in any other business or social setting, be considerate of others. Keep the following tips in mind:

- Have patience with inexperienced speakers; don't malign them; offer them constructive criticism.
- Avoid being late to sessions; if you must enter or leave when someone's talking, stay to the side or rear of the room so that you won't disrupt other people's line of sight or listening.

- Stand when you ask questions, and ask them in a strong, clear voice.
- If you have questions that aren't answered, write them on the back of your business card and give them to the speaker. I've often contacted folks after conference—having the question and the contact info in one spot made it easy!
- Fill out your evaluations. That's the best way to provide feedback on what worked and what didn't.
- Overall, be patient, flexible, professional, and courteous!

6. Have fun.

One thing Deborah Silvi strongly recommends—and I second—is to bring and wear comfortable shoes. You can't have fun or be at your best if your feet hurt. Take advantage of tours, lunches, dinners, and happy hours to meet and greet people. Find time to shop or take advantage of the hotel's amenities such as masseurs, gyms, walking trails, and salons.

Being a conference attendee takes a lot of energy. Give yourself some downtime. If the conference is in a new city, take advantage of being there. I often stay a couple of days after the conference to see the city. Because of STC, I've been to places that I never would have visited otherwise.

Remember to be open to new ideas, new ways of doing things, new people. Soak up everything you can. Help yourself to new opportunities and new technology. You could find yourself enjoying a new perspective on a new you.

STC Annual Conference May 13-16 in Chicago
Visit the STC Web site www.stc-va.org/48thconf/index.html



Contractor's Corner

Making Fixed-Fee Pricing Work for You

By Kim Lee Shaw, Principal owner, Words & Graphics, Inc.

Many freelance projects lend themselves to fixed-fee pricing (a lump-sum fee for a specified scope of work). Yet, independent technical communicators seem to work on an hourly basis most of the time. Respondents to STC's 1999 Contractor Survey reported performing only 17 percent of their work on a fixed contract.

The advantages of fixed-fee pricing are numerous:

- **Helps you manage cash flow** – When you work at a fixed fee, you know ahead of time what you will make on each project and approximately when payments are due. You can then identify any gaps in your cash flow *before* they happen and take steps to fill the holes.
- **Increases client satisfaction** – Clients may often prefer fixed fees because they offer more control over project budgets and reduce the risk of hourly work that exceeds the expected timeframe.
- **Improves your returns** – Accounting for all the time spent on project work is difficult when charging by the hour. For example, can you bill clients for time spent commuting to their office for meetings? Do you record every 5- or 10-minute telephone conversation on your timesheet? Do you capture the time you spend on billing? Over the course of a

project, these unbilled items can significantly reduce your hourly rate. A fixed fee, on the other hand, allows you to anticipate and cover such costs.

- **Saves time** – Hourly projects require more timekeeping and reporting, and more complex invoices, than fixed-fee jobs.

Accounting for all the time spent on project work is difficult when charging by the hour. For example, can you bill clients for time spent commuting to their office for meetings? Do you record every 5- or 10-minute telephone conversation on your timesheet?

Clearly, it's worthwhile to consider fixed fee pricing for all suitable projects. The challenge is developing a fee that reimburses you fairly for the work required. There are several steps you can take to make sure fixed fees work for you and not against you.

First, track your time. Record your time on every project. You can quote

fixed fees with far greater confidence when you know, based on history, how long it actually takes to do things.

Specify, specify, specify! Invest enough time up front to understand all project requirements before trying to develop a fixed fee. Will the project require research and, if so, how much? Is the work local or out-of-town? How many pages is the final document expected to be? What kind of graphics are required? How many review drafts are needed? What is the final deliverable (e.g., an electronic file, a paper document, a printed manual)?

Limit the scope of work. Clearly define what your fixed fee includes — number of hours of research, number of pages, number of drafts, number of illustrations, etc. Quote extra fees for work that exceeds the scope.

Consider all cost factors. A fixed fee should cover administrative overhead, project management, materials, and other project-related costs. Expenses that you cannot control (e.g., long-distance phone calls) are best billed directly, however.

Monitor your returns. Track your time and determine the hourly return on each fixed-fee project. If your hourly rate is in the range you expect, you know that you quoted the fee properly. If not, consider making adjustments the next time you quote a fixed fee.

New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy, Manager, Documentation, Aspen Technology

Lori Casimiro

Lori Casimiro spent 20 years in the banking industry, most recently as a project manager.

Lori has been responsible for developing, writing, and implementing procedures. She also designed, tested, and implemented system enhancements from a user's perspective.

When the bank that Lori worked for recently moved its operations center from Houston to Rochester, New York, she decided to stay here and pursue a certificate in Online Documentation at Houston Community College.

Lori will obtain certification in December and will then be looking for a job, although she plans to continue in school.

Sarah Corkern

Sarah Corkern is a new student member looking forward to becoming an active part of our organization.

Sarah is a senior at Louisiana State University and will graduate this month with a B.A. in English and a minor in Sociology.

Sarah is interested in technical writing and editing and is searching for a position with a software company in the Louisiana/Texas area.

Karen L. Estep

Karen Estep arrived in Houston 23 years ago, having taught theater arts in a small liberal arts college, where she was also technical director.

Before Karen found a niche as a trainer and technical writer, she tried sales and marketing and was an

information center consultant and supervisor.

In 1997 Karen became an education coordinator in the IS department at Texas Children's Hospital, where she wrote and produced a popular pocket guide to the hospital's information systems.

Karen has also published articles in *American Cemetery Magazine*, *IHRIM Journal* (for the International Association for Human Resource Information Management), and the *HAL-PC User Journal*. Karen is interested in online help and wants to continue learning how to write better.

Phyllis B. George

Phyllis George has been in the communications industry for 16 years, including 10 years of teaching.

Phyllis is a senior technical editor for Kitba Consulting Services, Inc. Her primary interest is editing computer documentation.

Phyllis first moved to the Houston area in 1977, moved away in 1988, returned in 1993, and now insists that she won't move again.

Nolan Habegger

Nolan Habegger is the communications manager of the Professional Services division of DYONYX, an information technology consulting firm, where he manages documentation outsourcing, development, and support for all three divisions of the company.

Nolan's career in technical writing began in 1991. His main area of interest is technical communications career development, with an emphasis on business consulting and professional project management.

Nolan is a transplanted Hoosier and a 13-year resident of Houston.

Dane Kerne

Dane Kerne is employed by Shea Writing Solutions, a technical communications company located in southwest Houston.

Shea provides proposal project planning and writing; hazards and operability analysis; project, health, safety, and environmental review scribing services; and procedural manual and training development.

Dane has technical writing experience in all these areas, as well as website content development and design.

Ron Kirk

Ron Kirk spent 20 years in the U.S. Navy, where he learned the fine art of communication from an electronic and instructional standpoint.

After retiring from the Navy, Ron started what he considers a very satisfying career as a technical writer. Ron says "the love of technical writing has allowed me to broaden my horizons and help others become more effective in this field."

Ron is a manager of documentation solutions with Kitba Consulting Services, Inc. Ron's motto is "lead, follow, or get out of the way."

Erin Kline

Erin Kline will graduate from the University of Houston-Downtown this Spring. Erin's major is technical writing.

Erin is exploring job opportunities and has been impressed with the diversity in the technical writing field.

New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy, Manager, Documentation, Aspen Technology

continued from page 5

Erin's recent work experience includes a part-time job at Diverseworks, where she served as the facilities manager.

Terry Lindsay

Terry Lindsay graduated from Brigham Young University with degrees in English (B.A. 1976 and M.A. 1983).

For several years Terry taught English at BYU, then at Ricks College in his home town of Rexburg, Idaho.

In 1994, Terry accepted a position with Novell in Provo, and for the next several years he developed and maintained SDK API documentation.

Last October Terry moved to Houston, where he develops documentation for application knowledge modules at BMC Software.

At BMC, Terry works on stand-alone help systems and more traditional installation and user guides.

As time allows, Terry pursues a life-long passion for classical music and dabbles in foreign languages, especially German. Most of his spare time, however, is spent with his wife and four children.

Rikki Mitman

Rikki Mitman has more than 20 years of writing experience, including marketing copy and technical writing.

Rikki has been a contract technical writer in the Houston area for the last 11 years, working mostly on user documentation and online help, with an occasional marketing assignment for variety. Rikki works primarily offsite.

Lori Schaub

Lori Schaub works for the Integrity Group, where she is a client relations and communications specialist. The company provides worldwide documentation and multimedia services.

Lori works with Integrity's clients to ensure that documentation teams from Integrity meet their needs. Lori's interest in STC includes networking for industry leads and keeping up with trends in technical writing.

Barbara Shepard

Barbara Shepard has returned to Houston after six years in London working for DHL Systems as a technical writer, and she has rejoined STC.

Barbara reports that "software manuals are not that much different from the US to the UK, but the working environment sure is!"

STC Houston President Deborah Long, left, hands a Korger Card to new member Patricia Selmo, right as Susan Jaeger, center watches at the March 24 New members Luncheon.



Barbara is writing an article for an STC magazine in London to compare and contrast her experiences.

Barbara is on a contract for Halliburton under the aegis of Kitba Consulting Services.

Ann Sumanth

Although Ann Sumanth is new to the Houston area, she is not new to STC—she was a member of the Boston chapter for the last two years.

Ann and her husband relocated to Houston in 2000 and now live in the Woodlands.

Ann is an information designer for Information Mapping, Inc., the company she worked for in Boston. She works remotely from home.

Ann's work in information design has mainly been in the health care and financial industries and for the government.

Houston Chapter May Volunteer of the Month

by Deborah Long, Strategic Communications, Enron Net Works

Trinh Abrell, Arrangements committee manager and our May Volunteer of the Month, has not let us down all year! Working behind the scenes, Trinh has initiated the necessary phone calls, e-mail, and follow-ups to make sure our meetings run smoothly.

This ongoing role includes reserving adequate meeting space at the Westchase Hilton, ordering a variety of delicious food, specifying the appropriate audiovisual equipment to accommodate each presenter's needs, and anticipating the number of attendees—to avoid running out of chairs. These tasks have been accomplished in a proactive manner, single-handedly, by Trinh.

Of course, others have made suggestions and Trinh has been responsive to feedback. But she has always made the final decisions, which have turned out to be right on the mark.

With Dorothy Murray gently guiding in the wings, Trinh helped make the

transition to our new meeting location go extremely well. STC Houston now has a reputation for putting on an enjoyable event for members, and guest speakers have likewise enjoyed their speaking engagements at this fine facility.

With Dorothy Murray gently guiding in the wings, Trinh helped make the transition to our new meeting location go extremely well. STC Houston now has a reputation for putting on an enjoyable event for members, and guest speakers have likewise enjoyed their speaking engagements at this fine facility.

During this year's Technical Publications, Art & Online competitions, Trinh was a lead judge for the online entries we received from the Twin Cities chapter. She also submitted an online entry produced under her supervision, which won an award of Distinguished Technical Communication.

Trinh is employed by Enron Net Works as a senior specialist in IT development. Her creative ideas and technical know-how are put to good use every day, adding to Enron's spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation.

We have been fortunate to reap the benefits of Trinh's creativity and organized planning skills. A well-rounded professional, she has added value and pizzazz to chapter activities. Special thanks, Trinh, for helping the chapter through the year!

Louisiana Workshop Improves Technical Communication

by Pat Bishop, Senior Information Developer, Candle Corporation

The Louisiana/Gulf Coast satellite held its annual workshop in March at the National Wetlands Research Center in Lafayette, Louisiana. The workshop theme was *Improving Good Technical Documents by Enhancing Curb Appeal*.

After introductory remarks from Jerry Graw, director of the NWRC; Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 director-sponsor; and Jim Brown, Louisiana/Gulf Coast satellite president, the morning session addressed common documentation issues and solutions. The afternoon session provided presentations and a tour of the NWRC. The center's

focus on quality publications has earned numerous awards from STC.

Suzanna discussed principles and methods of making and delivering effective presentations.

Nathan Carley of NC Graphics encouraged attendees to use creative thinking techniques such as brainstorming and mindmapping. He discussed some design basics such as the use of headings, white space, contrast, repetition, grouping, alignment, and fonts. Nathan also discussed software tools for page layout, illustration, and photographic elements.

Beth Vairin, Tammy Charron, and Ronda Davis, editors with the NWRC, discussed technical editing—including quality control issues and the need to check facts. They also recommended online resources for verifying facts, obtaining statistics, checking acronyms, and other editing needs.

Suzanna concluded the workshop with a discussion of trends in technical communication. She said the demand for technical communicators will increase, with a corresponding need to master new technology tools.



The Art of Recruiting Volunteers

by Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

When you need help with something, how do you go about finding volunteers? Do

you say, “I asked for volunteers, and no one offered to help”? I can make several suggestions right away because this is the most frequently asked question that I receive as Director-Sponsor. The next question that I hear the most is “How can I keep volunteers?” Now is the time when STC chapters hold their elections and start recruiting the volunteers who will lead their committees next year. Whether you are a chapter or project leader, a committee manager, or even a team leader looking for talented people to help, these tips should provide you with ideas about how to successfully recruit and keep those volunteers.

Why People Volunteer

In order to persuade people to work with us effectively, we need to get to know and understand them better. It is through this understanding that we see and treat volunteers as individuals as they interact with us. Some help only once, while others help for a lifetime. In Sue Vineyard’s book *Secrets of Motivation: How to Get and Keep Volunteers and Paid Staff*, here are six of the characteristics that she relates about today’s volunteers:

- When individuals perceive that they are likely to learn something from a position, they are more likely to respond positively to a request to volunteer.
- Adults overwhelmingly (98%) believe that a great deal of satisfaction is gained by volunteering, and 76% think that it

is important to include volunteer activities in their lives.

- Most volunteers give an average of 3 to 5 hours a week.
- Time is one of their most valued commodities. Volunteers love to combine volunteering with other commitments so that they can do good work, socialize, and model values to their children and co-workers, all at the same time.
- Relationships are highly valued, so opportunities to work with people whom they enjoy are snapped up.
- Volunteers prefer to be creative as they solve problems. They believe in what they can do and want people to let them do it without red tape or hassles.

Conveying What You Need

In order to tap into your chapter’s volunteers, first you must know what needs to be accomplished. What responsibilities and deadlines are inherent in the project? How much time will it require? What guidelines are available that explain how to do the job? Is there ample funding for the project? How many people will be working on the project, and who will lead the team? What goals or awards will the project help the chapter achieve? Once you have all of this information compiled, you are ready to find a volunteer. The challenge is to motivate volunteers to become involved and to work effectively to complete their project. By sharing this information with them, telling them what you expect of them, and sharing common goals and visions, you can often inspire them to volunteer!

Motivating People to Volunteer

First, a quick idea about what motivating is NOT: it is not dishonest, manipulative, arm-twisting, bribing, threatening, or offering what you can’t provide! Most of us have probably tried these things in the past, and they may work for a while, but they don’t leave you or the volunteer in the best frame of mind. Now that we know that these things don’t work well, what works best? Try these ideas, because they could work for you:

- The work must provide value to the volunteer. Volunteers whose needs are met participate and stay committed longer. Try to assign people to committees or projects that will help them meet their goals or learn skills that they want to acquire. Do you have people in your chapter who want to learn more about Web site development, public relations, or leadership? Perhaps they need to learn how to manage projects better, develop stronger organizational skills, or use their time more efficiently. All of these skills can be acquired or sharpened by participating in STC, then transferred to the office—and they also shine through on a resume.
- Recognition is another powerful motivator. Rewarding successful performance along the way is a great catalyst! Everyone needs to feel appreciated. Sometimes a few well-chosen words of thanks can make all the difference.

Rewards can include all kinds of things—verbal thanks in front of
continued on page 10

The Art of Recruiting Volunteers

by Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

continued from page 9

their peers, a certificate or plaque, nomination for a Society-level award such as the Distinguished Chapter Service Award, or a letter of appreciation sent to their employer and outlining their involvement. Be creative, but make sure they know they are appreciated!

Listening is an important way to support volunteers, and one of the most effective ways that you can help them achieve their goals. Invite people to come to you with any concerns they have after they begin

work. The purpose of good listening is to get a better understanding of what is going on and what needs to be done to help them solve their issues. If you listen well, you can hear what is really being said!

A great resource for more information on this topic is the STC Chapter Handbook. If you haven't read the section entitled "How to Recruit and Keep Volunteers" by Judy Glick-Smith, do it as soon as possible. This volume of great information can be found on the STC web site at

www.stc-va.org under Leader Resources, Reference Materials.

When you encourage people to volunteer, you are offering them opportunities that can help them develop confidence in themselves and their own abilities. When you find out what motivates people, provide opportunities to help them meet their goals, listen to what they have to say, and recognize them often for their contributions, volunteers are more likely to return for new assignments as they continue on their mission to become the best that they can be.

Chapter Honors Student Writers

by Ann Jennings, Senior Member

On March 24, STC-Houston awarded gift certificates to the twelve winners of the essay contest of the 2001 Science Engineering Fair of Houston. Chapter President Deborah Long presented the certificates at the Awards Ceremony held at the AstroArena. She was assisted by George Slaughter.

Awards of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place and Honorable Mention were made in the grade categories Senior (grades 10-12), Junior (grades 7 and 8), and 9th Grade. The students attend schools in the 14-county region served by the Fair.

Wallrick Williams, winner of first place in the Senior Division, was also presented with a check for \$500 at the chapter meeting on April 10. He is a student at Klein High School. The title of his essay is "Concentration and Purification of a 44.5kDa Protein Band from B16 Melanoma and Recognition of a New Protein Band in Cloudman M3 Melanoma Cells."

His work was displayed at the April chapter meeting along with the essays of the second and third place Senior Division winners. Those three essays will represent STC-Houston in the 2002 STC International Student Technical Writing Competition (ISTWC).

Winning essays were selected from among 113 essays submitted to the

contest. Essay judging occurred on March 3, 2001, at the University of Houston-Downtown. Among the 20 judges were STC-Houston members Cathy Bettoney, Bill Hunter, Marlane Kayfes, Molly Johnson, Dorothy Murray, Matthew Veazey, Scott Ward, and Ann Jennings, who serves as Chair of the contest.



Ann Jennings, University of Houston-Downtown professor; Melissa Frazier, Klein High School teacher, Yvette Williams, mother of the scholarship winner, Wallrick Williams, scholarship winner, and Deborah Long, STC Houston President, pose with Wallrick's scholarship check at the STC Houston April Program Meeting.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Time	Event/Topic	Location	Contact
May 8	5:30 p.m.	General Meeting	Westchase Hilton Hotel 9999 Westheimer Road	Deborah Long deborah.long@enron.com
May 8	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston admin council meeting	Westchase Hilton Hotel 9999 Westheimer Road	Deborah Long deborah.long@enron.com
June 9	10 a.m. to 1 p.m.	STC Houston Leadership Transition Meeting	BMC Software, 2101 CityWest Blvd	George Slaughter at gslaughter@flex.net
July 10	6:30 p.m.	Administrative Council meeting	TBD	George Slaughter at gslaughter@flex.net
July 25	EBD*	Deadline for September newsletter	N/A	Rhonda Hector rhonda@newmc.cc
August 14	6:30 p.m.	Administrative Council meeting	TBD	George Slaughter at gslaughter@flex.net
Sept. 11	5:30 p.m.	General Meeting	Westchase Hilton Hotel 9999 Westheimer Road	George Slaughter at gslaughter@flex.net
Sept. 11	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston admin council meeting	Westchase Hilton Hotel 9999 Westheimer Road	George Slaughter at gslaughter@flex.net

*End of business day

May 8, 2001 Program

End of Year Celebration

"Let's Party!"

presented by

2000-2001 STC Houston Chapter Administrative Council

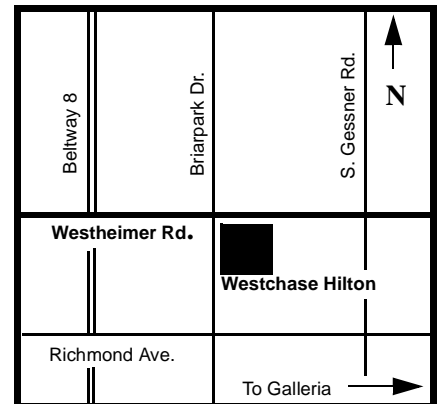
Life or work may not always be a picnic, but our last meeting of the season will be an "indoor" picnic! So, leave the insect repellent home, dress casually, and come enjoy the fun, friends, and food as we honor our Volunteers of the Year! This is also a perfect opportunity to get to know the new officers, who will be on hand to discuss your interests in chapter activities. Together, we can discuss opportunities for participation in the upcoming year. Also, consider this the all-night networking event that Deborah promised us and feel free to bring resumes and/or job requisitions for swapping. Finally, we have one guitar player so far and welcome other musically-oriented members to join in a jam session for our listening pleasure. It's been a year to remember, so let's make this meeting a blast!



Meeting Basics

Place:

Westchase Hilton Hotel
9999 Westheimer Road
(at Briarpark, between
S. Gessner and Beltway 8)



Date:

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Time:

5:30 p.m. program

Cost:

\$10 (members)
\$13 (non-members)
\$3 (student and unemployed
members)
\$6 (student non-members)

Monthly Drawing

A drawing for various prizes is held at the end of each general meeting. Tickets for the drawing can be purchased at the registration desk. Proceeds benefit the Marx Isaacs Student Scholarship Fund.