

## President's Message

### Upcoming 30th Anniversary Conference, exciting Veterinary Affairs Committee and a new treasurer



**G**ALA launches into 2017 with good news and a promise of interesting and enterprising Committee and Member activities.

GALA's Annual Conference, its 30th Anniversary, will be celebrated in Corning, NY, home of Corning Glass. Co-Chairs Dawn Bishop and Cheryl Germain have enthusiastically launched the event with "30 Colorful Years" as the theme. They report that part of the Conference will focus on "down memory lane," highlighting major events and members who put GALA on the map. Mark your calendars for November 2-5.

The GALA Board has agreed to continue the Membership Recruitment Campaign for 2017. According to Membership Chair, Miranda Brown, the Campaign will run from January until the November Conference. For details, see the Campaign ad in this Newsletter. Recruiting new members is one way all of us can contribute to the vitality of GALA.

A welcome to Katrina Capasso who has volunteered to serve as GALA Treasurer, succeeding Carol Millard who has served as our Treasurer for eight years.

Katrina is a long time member of GALA and has served in many capacities over the years. She is familiar with the board, conferences and behind the scenes support that goes on in GALA. She enjoys bookkeeping and has extensive experience working for an accountant. Carol will work with Katrina in a transition period, assisting her in understanding GALA's finances, and will remain on the Finance Committee.

Thank you, Katrina, for stepping up.

Hats off to Carol Millard! During her tenure as Treasurer, she spent enormous amounts of time and energy streamlining our financial records, over-seeing bud-

gets, and was always on call to answer questions or to offer counsel to Members and Board Directors. Many of you have seen Carol at our Conferences "running" around with a large ledger from which she writes checks to cover the various expenses incurred and receiving all the fundraising that members so generous participate in during the Conference. Thank you, Carol Millard, for your extraordinary service to GALA.

Our new Veterinary Affairs Committee has swung into action. Chair Barb Baker reports that the Committee, whose mission is to encourage vet students to consider including camelids in their practice, will launch this effort by hosting Ohio State Vet students for a hands-on day at Barb's farm, Baker and Co. in Mt. Vernon, Ohio on April 29.

The idea is to provide a venue where Vet students can learn by doing, alongside a practicing vet, to draw blood, to castrate, to practice ultra-sounding and other procedures. In addition, students can work with experienced owners to acquire skills to calmly and confidently handle camelids.

Barb Baker reports that there is much enthusiasm for this new program with GALA members volunteering their farms for one of these events.

At the 2016 GALA Conference, a serious topic of discussion was a distinct need to educate the general public on the virtues of llamas. As a result of those discussions, a group came together to address this challenge. The Board has given this Committee, to be known as the Llama Promotion Committee, a green light to proceed with plans for both national and regional educational campaigns.

This need was re-emphasized recently when a friend who teaches in an elementary school reported the following: "Our

music teacher had presented a rhyming song in which one of the lines sings 'Did you ever see a llama wearing pajamas...down by the bay.' This teacher concluded that part by saying that llamas don't wear pajamas but they do eat them" My friend objected to such nonsense, but the teacher persisted and made this remark again in the next class. This was obviously disturbing to my friend. When I told her that GALA had created a Committee focused on educating the American public about llamas, she was thrilled.

The Llama Promotion Committee will develop specific proposals (for Board consideration) designed to educate the general public on llamas as highly intelligent, cooperative, with great work ethics and dispositions, with highly marketable fiber, ability to function as pet therapy and companion animals, and to be guard animals for sheep and goat herds. At this time, the campaigns will focus on llamas. Over the years, the alpaca community has conducted national promotions. The llama community has so far not organized such.

Creating llama awareness campaigns requires lots of serious thinking about how we might accomplish this. The input of our GALA members will be very important. Please send your ideas and suggestions to Committee members: John Mallon, Niki Kuklenski, Bev Vienckowski, Carol Reigh or Jane Hamilton-Merritt.

Also, be sure to mark your calendars for November 2-5 for the 30th Anniversary

GALA Conference. The Conference Chairs promise great sessions and a celebration of our Anniversary.

Wishing everyone well with the trials and tribulations of winter. Keep safe.

—*Jane Hamilton-Merritt*