



HOLIDAY MESSAGE TO ALL

At this joyous time of year, let's celebrate and thank everyone for bringing good tidings to GALA.

At the 2017 Conference, the Maine Llama Association, MLA, granted \$2,409 to GALA to add to its previous grant of \$3,000 to be used to encourage Members to attend their first Conference by offering a 50% registration fee reduction. This year, 21 Members, including two junior Members, took advantage of this opportunity. The GALA Community thanks the MLA for its generosity and I'm certain GALA will use this grant to stimulate more first timers to attend Conferences.

One first time attendee at this year's Conference, Leigh Barnett, from Virginia who works with youth with serious trauma, reported that learning more about llamas has helped solidify her plan to have therapy llamas in her life. Leigh was surprised and impressed that llama fiber is useful and valuable. In sum, she reported: "There were truly a million tidbits of information I learned that added up to a really cool experience. The llama community is clearly a supportive one and I am very excited to be joining in the fun!"

The educational value of the Conference was echoed by other first timers, including the Cornell Vet students. Responses all included comments about the impressive session speakers and the valuable information they provided, the warm and welcoming GALA community, and the thrill of hands-on opportunities with the on-site llamas and alpacas.

This year, Conference Co-Chair Cheryl Germain received an anonymous donation of \$3,000 from a GALA Member to promote GALA and the Conference. A portion was used to purchase a full page ad in *Wild Fibers Magazine*. Cheryl noted: "The donor wanted GALA to continue to be a source of education for camelid owners, to reach the vet students who will continue on with research and treatment of our dear animals, to bring new members into our group that will make GALA strong into the future."

We thank this donor for supporting GALA's current initiatives with its newly created Veterinary Affairs Committee and its efforts to recruit vet students to consider a mixed practice including camelids and for supporting GALA's on-coming commitments to camelid education, camelid medical research and the recruitment of new members.

National Llama Appreciation Day is June 21. Now is the time to begin planning an event. I'm hoping to join with a non-profit organization that features a working farm where visitors can learn about cows, sheep, and chickens in a hands-on environment. It seems a natural site to educate the General Public about llama history and to celebrate the virtues of llamas. For community event ideas, visit galanationalllamaappreciationday.weebly.com.

As we all know, controlling or eliminating meningeal worm is a most serious medical problem. In 2016, GALA funded Tufts' Dr. Daniela Bedenice's research to experiment with a new preventive protocol against meningeal worm, using eprinomectin. At this year's Conference, Dr. Bedenice reported that her research results were not as hoped. However, she hasn't given up as indicated by her recent request to the GALA Board asking if we would like to continue her research "using a no-cost extension of the current grant...to continue some work on *P. tenuis* using a no-cost extension of the current grant for another 12 months (funds are still available, especially for technical support). We have established a large snail colony which I would like to maintain for this time, in order to test higher drug concentrations, and to obtain L1 larvae from deer or moose that have been necropsied. This would be of no cost to GALA and would allow us to gather more information ... hopefully to finally get closer to finding an effective management or prevention protocol. "

I immediately forwarded Dr. Bedenice's request to our Board Members who responded in the affirmative. We are grateful to Dr. Bedenice in her determination to solve this problem.

There is much to be grateful for as this year comes to a close. As I leave the Board, I again thank all of you who generously gave of your time, talent, and energy in making GALA relevant, innovative, and vibrant.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPIEST OF NEW YEARS

Jane Hamilton-Merritt, President
GALA