

**2023 League Volunteer Council  
Strategic Conversation #4                      October 11, 2023 at 3pm Central**

Facilitators: Laurie Skjerseth, Volunteer Council President  
Florence McLean, Volunteer Council Secretary  
Gail Corvette, Charleston Symphony League  
Darlene Clark, Volunteer Council, Conference Chair Houston  
Maggie Stehman, Volunteer Council  
Melanie Hausmann, League Liaison

Attendees: JoAnn Sanborn, Adrian Symphony Orchestra, Al Chaney, Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra; Paula Abernethy, Annapolis Symphony Orchestra; Betty Fox, Asheville Symphony; Ann Rivard, Huntsville Symphony Orchestra; Barbara Sturges, Illinois Philharmonic; Connie Stirgus-Marley, Uta Cross, Kansas City Symphony Orchestra; Amy Ferguson, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra; Judy Kalan, Madison Symphony Orchestra; Julie Brantley, Richmond Symphony; Michael Kikta, Rockford Symphony Orchestra; Debbie Monark, Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra; Martha Kroese, Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra; George Hesse, Quad City Symphony Orchestra; Gail Corvette, Charleston Symphony; Richelle Rabenou, The Philadelphia Orchestra; Leslie Graitcer, The Coastal Symphony of Georgia

Laurie Skjerseth, President opened the meeting, and introduced today's facilitator, Gail Corvette, who provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Ladder to Leaders". Her presentation included discussions of communication, manageable roles, committee health, nominating committee, succession planning and leadership development.

The attendees moved into 5 breakout rooms to discuss issues pertaining to membership. The moderators were Darlene Clark, Florence Mc Lean, Gail Corvette, Maggie Stehman and Laurie. The questions for discussion:

1. What do you do to learn of your members' skills and interests?
2. How do you communicate volunteer roles?
3. How do you "sell" your roles... do they seem doable?
4. Are your committees fluid and experiencing healthy turnover?
5. When does your Nomination Committee start its work?
6. Are you intentional in succession planning? How?
7. What leadership development techniques do you employ?

We assembled after the completion of the breakout rooms and the groups reported out. Gail facilitated and Laurie thanked everyone for their wonderful discussion and comments. A special thank you to Gail for presenting today's session

General comments in response to the questions were as follows:

- Board members are busy and aging out, it is difficult to recruit younger and new members.
- Explain needs and time requirements.
- The same issues apply to the symphony
- The usual 20% of the people do most of the work
- Some databases, however, need to be improved database management.
- Communicated via email and signup.com
- Try incentives and perks to get volunteers
- New members serve on education committee and then maybe volunteer for other committees
- Has nominating committees that function at various times during the year.
- Informal succession plans
- Need for job descriptions
- Use co-chairs to spread responsibilities
- Use of 'Club Express' to get the word out and gather information when doing fundraising projects.
- Challenge in selling roles, use email to keep members informed and obtain participation.
- Ask Junior League members/parents, social events to get new members.

Laurie mentioned that Marylou Turner was asked to discuss mentoring. Marylou was unable to attend this session, however, Laurie will include her report in today's minutes:

Marylou Turner is the Volunteer Council's Sustainer Chair of Mentoring. She has had a very long association with symphony and the Volunteer Council of the League of American Orchestras. In fact, she created, initiated, and chaired the Mentoring Program since 1999-2000. She was a member of VC in 1995-2001. She has attended 25 Annual Conferences. Her first conference was in 1992 in Washington, DC.

While on the Council she saw the need to aid other volunteers with various tasks:

- Saw the need for Volunteer Council to assist other orchestras with various phases of their organization. The program began in 2002 serving in two-fold:
  - To keep past Volunteer Council members involved.
  - Give support to current Volunteer Council.
- To create a Directory of Sustainers (Past Volunteer Council members are named "Sustainers" once going off the board).
- Keeping Sustainers involved would assist the League of American of Orchestras with fundraising.

She would make announcements at Annual Conference if any organizations needed any expertise. She then would coordinate with past VC members, known as "sustainers," to assist the group in need. Marylou created a list of those who would assist with membership,

recruitment, specific fundraising ideas, etc. and then be called upon them to assist other organizations. She then connected the two to work together to find solutions.

Recently she assisted the Rochester Symphony League when asked about “Giving Circles” within an orchestra community of volunteers. She kept in touch with them and the report that they have good support from donors and office staff to proceed with her Giving Circles plan.

We appreciate Marylou’s guidance and determination throughout the years.

Laurie introduced Darlene Clark who informed the attendees of the next League Conference in Houston scheduled for June 5-8, 2024, and suggested that they submit projects for consideration of the gold award in 2025.

Laurie proceeded to wrap-up the session, thanked everyone for their attendance and asked everyone to complete the survey which she will send via email. She also mentioned that she plans to organize a meeting in January and that Paula McReynolds planned to meet March/April to discuss strategic planning and get an update from each organization represented at this year’s Strategic Conversations.

Melanie stated that she is always available to speak with anyone and to answer questions. Her email is [mhausmann@americanorchestras.org](mailto:mhausmann@americanorchestras.org)

Minutes Submitted by Florence McLean  
Secretary, Volunteer Council