

2021 DCLIR Annual Meeting Welcome Address

Door County Learning in Retirement

Welcome to the first *virtual* annual meeting of DCLIR! What?! You say it would be more fun to watch paint dry? Well it *has* been 2 years, and one or two important things have happened!

First, it is my pleasure to announce that thus far our organization has survived the global pandemic. We have 2 watchwords for DCLIR. They are *adapt* and *sustain*. What a year it has been! Here are seven brief milestones of **2020**:

The Year in Review:

1. **ProClass** After research that began in fall of 2019, the board of directors voted in February 2020 to subscribe to ProClass software with a go-live date of July 31, 2020. This program can register and enroll most members online. After months of preparation and troubleshooting, the ProClass program was activated for fall of 2020. This transition better serves members, saves money, and conserves efforts of volunteers and staff. Cost of ProClass with technical training and support is \$2000/year. Little did we realize in February what a prescient and valuable choice this would be!

2. **Spring Elections** resulted in 1 continuing and 3 new board members. Ballots arrived on campus before the brunt of the pandemic reached Sturgeon Bay. We were fortunate to be proactive before we even realized the need!

3. **Membership and Course Count** Spring 2020 saw DCLIR with an all-times high of 670 members and a catalog of 122 classes. We were on a roll, and life was so good! All classes were in person, and we were planting, learning local history, and socializing. Then Covid-19 steamrolled over New York State hospitals, and the handwriting was on the wall for the impending pandemic. With the final class (Succulent Gardening) on March 18, all remaining classes were cancelled for the foreseeable future. This was not the spring and summer we anticipated, and it was scary.

4. **Adapting to the Pandemic** Office staff donned masks and worked at school and home. Renee Bauernfeind and Cheryl Tieman, the NWTC Liaison, retired in May. Dixie Luedtke was hired to work with Monica in the office. Board meetings went virtual with WebEx and then Zoom platforms. These were times crying for a crystal ball to predict future membership numbers, the budget, and what Covid-19 would look like come fall. Board officers all agreed to continue in their office another year, although Janet Gale was the most excited about a third year as treasurer. (!)

5. **By-Law Changes** The By-Laws needed amending because it was necessary to delay the annual meeting for a year, offer virtual classes, and permit a treasurer to serve a third year. In November a diligent *ad hoc* committee tackled revision of the By-Laws to keep DCLIR on track for a pandemic year. Major changes to the By-Laws will be posted on the DCLIR website by the end of the week.

6. Virtual Learning The Curriculum Committee contacted all presenters to ask who was willing to present a class using the Zoom platform. Some classes such as painting, food preparation, and soap making did not lend themselves well to remote learning. Some presenters were uncomfortable with Zoom. So were some members, and internet access was not equal for all. Fall semester had 43 classes and saw membership decrease to 185. Thank goodness for a membership fee increase, because while membership was down, expenses remained about the same. Major expenses are salaries, the ProClass annual fee, and insurance. In spring 2021 enrollment grew to 225, and had 54 classes.

7. New Changes for Fall Next semester, with the vaccine protecting members, some classes will be in person only, some Zoom only, and some blended, Members can participate from anywhere using Zoom, or they can gather in person in smaller numbers. Although the social component of learning is hugely popular, some members travel or may still prefer virtual classes. We anticipate offering 70 classes. Catalogs will be mailed the second week of August. Despite the pandemic, we awarded 4 local NWTC students scholarships of \$750 each in 2020. Funds for scholarships does not come from budgeted funds For 2021 we will award 3 students scholarships of \$1000 each. Was the need ever greater? It feels good to support learners in our community!

Our current board is composed of myself as President, Jim Mitsche, Vice-President; Janet Gale, Treasurer; Char Rowe, Secretary, Barbara Bunning, Natalie Hagen, Fran Uteg, Mary Beth Williams, Pam Gillespie, and April Konitzer. (In summer of 2020 Sue Maclean resigned and Pam Gillespie was appointed to complete her term.) Board members, would you please wave a hand?

Staffers Monica Nelson and Dixie Luedtke extend top-notch customer service. We are grateful for their positive attitude and generous assistance. They seem to handle every phone call or drop-in visit as an encounter with a friend and offer assistance and encouragement.

My special thanks to past president and secretary Char Rowe, past secretary and Membership Committee Chair Barb Bunning, and Treasurer Supreme Janet Gale. These wonderful board members retire at the end of June. We truly could not have adjusted and sustained DCLIR without them!

Finally, many thanks to you, our loyal members who continue to attend classes and support DCLIR. We appreciate your willingness to enroll, participate, and make valuable suggestions to presenters and coordinators. It has been a learning experience for us all. This was not the learning experience we anticipated, of course. If you want to make God laugh, tell Her your future plans! Nonetheless, we will go forward with optimism and have an exciting collection of classes to offer for fall. You are all invited to attend board meetings, typically the third Thursday of the month. Contact Monica to receive the Zoom passcodes. Being a coordinator is an easy way to contribute to DCLIR. One perk of coordinating is that you are guaranteed one class you want to join, beyond the one you coordinate. We always need volunteers for a variety of tasks.

It has been a challenge and an honor to serve as president of DCLIR the past 2 years. I am impressed by the resilience and expertise of our board, staff, and members. Stay healthy and enjoy summer. I hope to see you in person this fall.

Yours truly,
Suzanne Holvenstot