



USA Area President's Newsletter Spring 2022

AHHH Spring is here! |But right now, in my part of the country we are finally getting WINTER!! At least with the colder weather we are also getting some much-needed rain in the valleys and snow in the mountains! It is heavenly and we are so grateful for it. I know many parts of the country are getting hammered by bad weather, I hope you all are staying safe.

I am so excited that the ACWW World President, Magdie De Kock will be attending the Country Women's Council Conference in September and will speak during CWC Day and ACWW Day. I know she is looking forward to meeting with you. Please plan to attend the CWC conference and meet Magdie! If you or your society are not members of CWC you may still attend. You have all been invited to attend by the CWC Chair and the ACWW USA Area President. Magdie will also be attending the National Master Farm Homemakers Guild meeting. It would be wonderful if a good number of NMFHG would attend that meeting. More information on the conferences and meetings will be sent soon.

In February, I had the opportunity to attend the first in-person ACWW board meeting since October 2019. It was wonderful to be back together as a board. Some board members could not attend in person due to restrictions in their home countries, but they were able to attend via ZOOM. It was a good meeting, a little intense at times, a little sad at times, but very informative and eye opening.

This was not an ordinary board meeting, as we had some tough decisions to make. We spent a week discussing the future of ACWW, looking at the lessons we could learn from the past, and how best to secure the next 90 years for our organization. I do not have the room in this newsletter to address all the issues and changes, but I will give you a short version. You can see a complete version of the issues and challenges as well as the changes on the newly updated website. Please take time to look at the Strategic Plan, it will help make things clearer to you than I can in this article.

During this board meeting we examined data from the last 30 years. This includes income, expenditure, membership numbers, and the reports of all member societies on their own member numbers and activities. It was clear that income was not growing enough to sustain the organization. In real terms, and with inflation considered, declining income was evident. Membership numbers were also declining and membership of member societies was also shrinking. Reports to the Triennial World Conferences illustrated this, as well as the lack of engagement of members with ACWW issues. The complete separation of advocacy work and projects was artificial and did not reflect the policy objectives of ACWW or the realities of international project aid. The current situation was a result of many years of gradual decline brought to a head by the Covid pandemic and it needed to be addressed. While our financial reserves remain healthy, annual income was insufficient for sustainability. The Board agreed that to do nothing was not an option.

One of the biggest concerns over the last 30 years, and especially in the last two years because of Covid, has been funding. The separation of fundraising streams into restricted "projects" donations, and unrestricted "Pennies for Friendship" donations

does not line up with ACWW's experience that advocacy and projects are completely and importantly linked. The Board has therefore agreed to phase out Pennies for Friendship and the Women Empowered Fund and replace them with the 'Rural Women in Action Fund'. This single fundraising stream will support all the work ACWW does and allow clearer communication of how we spend money. Please continue to collect donations during your meetings and send them to ACWW for the Rural Women in Action Fund.

In many parts of the world, ACWW is best known for its projects work. We want this work to continue in the spirit it has always had, meaning that local women are determining the changes that will make the biggest difference in their lives. Alongside this, we can add international development experience and expertise to ensure significant, positive, and long-term improvements in the living conditions of rural women. This means that from 2023, ACWW will fund fewer projects, but with a similar annual level of spending. This means more money per project. There will be potential for projects to run over a longer-term, especially for agricultural projects – meaning we can ensure they really are sustainable. There will be capacity building and education alongside the project, and there will be measurable impact and effect, in-depth, collaborative evaluation – we can chart success, find, and address obstacles before they become problems, safeguard investments that are made, and drastically improve the quality of our UN and advocacy work with the input of project participants.

A notable change is the Associated Country Women of the World logo. I love the bold new look and I am especially excited that it has our whole name on it! No more explaining to people what the ACWW around the compass means. The layout of the logo is a blend of our former compass logo and our forward-looking tag line Rural Women in Action. I cannot wait to get the new pin to wear!

Another major change will be the work of ACWW's Committees. We want to better reflect the diversity of ACWW's membership and ensure that voices from all over the world are heard. The Board has therefore decided to establish a global network of ACWW Coordinators; with each member society invited to nominate a Coordinator. They will help raise awareness of ACWW's work, fundraise, and provide the feedback we need from every member society and region. These Coordinators will have a job description and code of conduct to give clear understanding of what is expected and will also participate in a detailed program of training and receive support from ACWW. Coordinators will meet regularly online with the World President, their Area Presidents, and members of Staff. This means that ACWW will hear a lot more from each member society, and that each member society hears a lot from ACWW, this will also provide fantastic training and background for those members who would be interested in standing for election to ACWW's Board in the future. I am excited to work with all of you who are nominated by your society to serve as a coordinator. I think this will be a great way to get more information to our grass roots members.

Please remember these are just a few of the changes but I hope it will get you excited and that you will go on the website and look at the Strategic Plan and the rest of the changes noted on the website, as well as the great new look for the website. The link is below.

I encourage all of you to send in your society reports to ACWW, when you receive the Triennial circular. Please report on all things you do that correlate with the ACWW Resolutions, Recommendations, and the ACWW Activities such as Women Walk the World and other fundraising for ACWW. The Report Circular will be sent to each Society President or listed contact person. It is very important that it is filled out and sent back to ACWW. That is the main path we have that can track the work of the Societies so we will know how we are making a difference in the lives of our members and their communities.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments, please email me.

Looking forward to seeing you in July, August, and September at the upcoming conferences for several of the societies!

Bonnie Teeple
ACWW USA Area President
usa@acww.org.uk
Website----acww.org.uk