

Prepared by LaVerne Morris

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Annual CCGA Conference: Final Report**

Because I've never seen a final report from any of the previous conferences; although I have asked about them several times; I have no guidelines to guide me in making this report. I'm not sure what is expected, because I have yet to see a report of what was spent last year, the attendance records and registration fees, or a report from the evaluations collected last year, which leads me to think that an actual **written** report was never prepared nor distributed.

**Conference Budget:** I have been asked many times throughout this process 'what is the budget for this and that'. My answer has been and continues to be "There is no budget, because CCGA has no money." Only once during this process, (and that was from Sally from NeighborSpace) did I hear that CCGA had \$1500.00 being held by NeighborSpace as our fiscal agent. This coming after it being said that there was over \$2,000.00 in the account during last year's debriefing meeting. To my knowledge this CCGA Conference Planning Committee never definitively addressed the expenses of this year's conference.

**Logistics:** Conferring regularly with a Park District/SSCC representative and Robin/NeighborSpace, I prepared a site analysis, floor plan, registration process, sound system analysis, room division options, and other logistic aspects of the Conference, based upon an expectation of 200 registrants. I obtained quotes for all expense items except food, based on the Park Districts requirements and approved vendors.

As the registration quickly climbed from 200 to 230+ after the Final Walkthrough, I attempted to persuade the Communications Committee to cut off registration. This was not done, and the registration climbed to 250+ before ostensibly being cut off. However a notice was kept on the CCGA website encouraging people who were not able to register to simply come and register on the day of the Conference.

This unilateral action compelled me to ask for changes in the set up from the Park District to accommodate the extra guest and I also felt compelled knowing that the number of attendees was likely to exceed the 200; the final count number that had been given to the cater; to contact Wishbone and negotiate an increase to 250 guest at an additional cost of \$900.00. I felt it would have been irresponsible to have a repeat of last year when we ran out of food.

I also decided not to ask that our usual reminder email during the week of the conference to those who had preregistered be sent. This was a carefully considered decision; based on registration patterns for prior Resources Committee events, it was clear that without such a reminder, there would be more than the usual number of no-shows. Partially balanced by the 38 guest who registered on the day of the conference, the final number was 219 guest plus 13 comp tickets for lunch given to the speakers and children.

**Venue: South Shore Cultural Center:**

The Cultural Center is a lovely venue and from all accounts the Community Gardeners enjoyed being there. But in my opinion, its large cavernous rooms with such poor acoustics are not conducive to doing workshops. The cost of PA Systems rentals, (using the Park Districts approved vendors is quite expensive). We also found that because we were not allowed to use the Dining Room, we had to divide the Solarium into two spaces which was impossible to do in such a manner that the sound from one workshop did not travel into the adjoining workshop.

Most speakers today use slides & power point presentations where projectors and screens are used. The natural light (that everyone seemed to love) in the rooms can't be properly blocked out for today's technology.

It is my understanding that we were allowed to use the Center pro bono. Although there was no cost to CCGA for the venue; we had to adhere to their rules and regulations which included Park Districts approved vendors. Part of the cost for these vendors included fees to park district.

**Education Committee:** the Education Committee fulfilled its responsibilities by determining Conference topics and finding speakers in a timely fashion. There were some issues: we learned that most speakers now prepare presentations based on "visual" learning; i.e. they expect AV equipment and a dark room. Because the Solarium does not fit the light requirement, one speaker canceled shortly before the Conference. Breanne Heath stepped in to give an excellent presentation in his place. Without consulting with the Committee, another speaker decided to change her assigned topic (for which people had already registered) to one identical with another workshop and

to cede part of her presentation to a person we had not chosen. When confronted with these unauthorized and unilateral acts, she also chose to cancel. Breanne Heath again saved the workshop by obtaining Rosario Maldonado of Windy City Harvest, who gave an excellent presentation on the assigned topic. The Evaluation summaries are summarized elsewhere in this report.

**Resources Committee:** Centerpieces for tables were obtained, grown, and helped in putting together by the Resource Committee who also did an outstanding job soliciting a remarkable number and variety donations of raffle prizes from various sources.

**Expenses:**

Catering: Vendor: Wishbone Catering: Continental Breakfast and Picnic Luncheon: \$4519.00. Increase 50 guests: \$900.00

PA system and projector for Roberson Room: Vendor: Meeting Tomorrow: \$1575.75

Pipe & Drape to separate the Solarium into 2 workshops: Vendor: AAA Rentals: \$1,025.00 of which \$425.00 was for premium Saturday delivery and pickup charge because we were not allowed to set up on Friday. Normal delivery charge would have been \$120.00.

250 Guest and Volunteer Packets (increased from 200): These included name badges, event tickets, programs, evaluation forms, pencils, compost ordinance information and seed starting article. Printed programs, registration supplies, organization supplies, ink cartridges, photocopying of workshop hand outs, event tickets, and name badges- \$758.58

Table Coverings: Garden Tarps & tablecloths for registration tables - \$157.76

Total expenses: \$8,936.09 which has been partially offset by the Conference revenue (registration fees) of \$2,230.00 and a \$2,747.09 donation by an anonymous donor.

**Number attended:** 219 guests

**Complementary Lunch Guests (Speakers and children):** 13

**Pre-registered** – 252                      signed in- 180                      No shows- 74

**Pre-registered & pre-paid**-56                      signed in- 43                      No shows - 13

**On-site registration** – 39

**Evaluations: 92 responses**

5 categories - Poor, Fair, Average, Excellent and Wow!

**1. Conference as a whole:**

No response-2; Poor- 0; Fair-1; Average-3; Excellent – 65; Wow! – 21

**2. Workshop session #1:**

No response-4; Poor-3; Fair-0; Average – 15; Excellent- 56; Wow!-14

**3. Workshop session #2:**

No response-10; Poor-0; Fair-1; Average-9; Excellent- 51; Wow!-21

**4. What can CCGA do to improve?**

As expected the room acoustics were a big problem for many guest. Some suggested microphones, (but that would have caused competing loudness). Also because the Park district wanted us to use approved vendors, PA systems were very expensive.

## **Summary of the quotes:**

**Cons:** More workshops, prayer was offensive, kids should not be allowed, more participation of Latino organizations, workshops in Spanish, more networking time, time to talk with speakers, free parking, have some advanced workshops, longer seed table.

**Pros:** Loved SSCC as the venue, food was great, Greeters and volunteers were wonderful, raffle was the best, and Speakers got high marks; Breanne and Robert by name, happy the price of conference was the same, great organization, great planning, and many thanks for bringing people together.

**4. Future Workshops:** cold frames, garden art, dealing with pest in eco way, native planting, how to plant seeds, how to shut down a garden, team building, bee keeping, legal considerations involved in community gardening, mixing veggies with flowers, container gardening, food organics, season extension, design strategies, best tomatoes for Chicago, finances and grant writing, plot design, land acquisition, conflict management, watering tips, succession planting.