

### **Much More Than a New Look**

Everyone at the 2008 AAGT Conference couldn’t help but notice AAGT’s new logo: bright as a desert sun, blue as an Arizona sky, with a message reflective of the great work that you as AAGT members do: “Creating a Bright Future” for the gifted and talented children of Arizona and, indeed, for all Arizonans.

During my term on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, it has been my honor to work on developing AAGT’s new look, and much more. I’d like to tell you about the other great changes to your association that will help support you and the children you care about so much.

Regions: AAGT has divided the state into 16 regions to help open up lines of communication to all corners of the state. This will make it easier for you to find and work with others in your region who care about G&T. This will also make it easier for you to get involved in AAGT. Each region will have an Educator Regional Representative and a Parent Regional Representative, who will report to the Regional Coordinator serving on the AAGT Board of Directors.

The Regional Reps will be the “go-to” person in their part of the state to provide information to educators and parents and communicate important feedback from them back to AAGT. Regional Reps can set up meetings and events, and make it easier for you to share ideas and experiences with other educators and parents in your region. When we launch our new website (see below) you will be able to identify your region and reps, and apply to be a Regional Rep on-line.

Thanks for Terri Cubillas for masterminding the map of the regions, and to Roberta Russell for working with me on the Regional Representative application.

Board Divisions: AAGT now has an internal structure designed to support our efforts to carry out our mission. When we launch our new website, you will have the opportunity to volunteer on-line to participate on AAGT committees that relate to the following divisions: **Membership** (chaired by the AAGT Secretary), which includes membership outreach, affiliate chapters, and marketing/publications; **Education** (chaired by the President-Elect), which includes conferences, professional development, research, and Speakers Bureau; **Finance** (chaired by the Treasurer), which includes budget, scholarships, and awards; and **Governance** (chaired by the President), which includes legislative advocacy, publicity, and the advisory committee.

Advisory Committee: AAGT also has a distinguished group of leaders from around the state to serve on our new Advisory Committee. Now serving are: long-time Board Member and AAGT historian Jenine Jackson; Assistant Superintendent from Glendale Elementary District Mark Jorenstaad; and ASU Professor Sanford Cohn. Details of the accomplishments and contributions of these fine leaders must be left for another article, but AAGT is pleased and proud to have them on board. Thanks to Dina Brulles for working on developing the related advisory committee policy and procedures.

Affiliate Chapters: A brand new program has been created to encourage local groups to organize and become affiliate chapters of AAGT. The purposed is to strengthen the state-wide network of parents, students, teachers, administrators, or anyone interested in forming a group to support gifted children. This is especially important since state law now mandates parent involvement in the development and evaluation of gifted programs and services.

There is a new Application/Agreement, Sample Bylaws, and even a detailed Affiliate Chapter Handbook to address why it is important to organize, how to organize, and how to run a local chapter of AAGT. All Affiliate Chapters receive tax-exempt status and get to use AAGT’s new website to create their own webpage, post their group’s events, and send e-newsletters to members! AAGT is proud to provide this support to local groups, which work so hard to improve gifted education at the grassroots level.

AAGT already has seven affiliate chapters from around the state: Cottonwood, Deer Valley, Paradise Valley, Scottsdale, Tempe, Wickenburg, and Window Rock. Judging from the interest at the conference, AAGT will be assisting teachers and parents in organizing many more groups around the state.

Many thanks to Alison Porter, AAGT Office Manager (and former board member) for working with me on the internal process to manage applications and for supporting my word processing efforts as I developed the handbook.

Website and Customized Database: Stay tuned for the launching of our brand new website! It will be **very** user-friendly and capable of providing the information you need in a well-organized, simple design. You will be able to access valuable information and conduct “AAGT business” on-line, such as search and register for events, renew your membership, make donations, apply for scholarships, and more. You will even get to request speakers through our new Speakers Bureau or apply to be a speaker/member of the Bureau.

What a great pleasure it’s been to work with the talented professionals from NPower Arizona, Design 44, and Salesforce to create the new website and related customized database. Many thanks to Lori Rubin-Williamson and Alison Porter for working on the Conference Registration Tool, especially their hours and hours of testing to make your conference registration easier. Thanks to Trish Hutchinson for bringing wonderful photos to the new website. Thanks to Kim Elms for working with me and Salesforce to develop the customized database (it is going to be amazing!). Thanks to Susan Mahoney, who will be using the new website and database for new fundraising projects.

As my two-year term on the AAGT Board of Directors and Executive Committee comes to a close, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to implement many ideas and work with caring people to develop these new structures, programs, and processes. AAGT is now in a much stronger position to impact gifted education in Arizona, and I hope to have the opportunity to serve again to help create a bright future for the gifted and talented children of Arizona!

Shelley Ackerman Hirsch