

New Developments in the hobby are encouraging

It is time to revisit that old Bob Dylan song, "The Times are a Changing". It has been a while since this column passed down this road. However, there are some very interesting initiatives starting to take place in the hobby that should interest every collector. In fact, you may even want to participate in or donate to them.

The Stamps Teach program

This program is sponsored by the National Postal Museum's Council of Philatelists in concert with the APS. It is now in phase two of the pilot program. From there on they are investigating the process of going after grant money to expand the program dramatically and eventually get stamps into thousands of classrooms with this important project.

What is **Stamps Teach**? (From the APS website) *"Our mission is to provide educators with lesson plans, activities, and worksheets that use postage stamps as hands-on learning tools. Educators can use these tools to add some fun and interest to their current curriculum while exposing students to postage stamps. The American Philatelic Society, the nation's largest stamp collecting organization, will provide free youth memberships to all children who send in an application for the Young Stamp Collectors of America (YSCA) program. YSCA is a national program providing monthly online meeting with children who collect stamps, led by an APS staff person. Other services include an e-newsletter about the hobby, live meetings twice a year in cities around the country, and a pen pal service."*

If you would like to see the entire program and documented results just go to the APS website at www.stamps.org

I had an opportunity two years ago to sit in on a developmental meeting for this project at the Museum. While a bit skeptical at the time I am impressed with what the program has achieved in a short time. This could be a big shot in the arm for the future of the hobby if the right amount of grant money can be secured.

The Improving Stamps Shows Conference (Working title)

This is the brainchild of ASDA Director, Mark Reasoner of Columbus, OH. Mark has done all kinds of shows over the past 20 years. He has noticed that some shows may excel in one area and fall down in another. The opposite may be true for another show. Mark's idea is to set up a conference on the Wednesday before StampShow in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The conference would include show committee

members from WSP shows from around the country, Amy Nicklaus, the executive director of the ASDA and representatives from the USPS. The agenda is simple: find out what works and share it with everyone. Here is a sample of what Mark plans in a nutshell:

"The purpose of the conference is:

- 1) Identify current best practices of successful stamp shows whether large or small, club sponsored or commercial.
- 2) Identify areas in which shows struggle and generate possible solutions or actions to minimize those struggles.
- 3) Produce a record of results and conclusions of the conference and publicize via internet and/or hard copy.
- 4) Demonstrate that the APS, the American Stamps Dealers Association (ASDA), and the USPS can work together in a mutually beneficial activity and establish contacts and communication networks to promote even more significant cooperation in the future."

It gets even better!

It will cost money to bring all of these people together. Mark, Amy, APS and the USPS will already be there. However, for show committee members who had not planned to be at StampShow and want to come in for the conference it will cost them money and probably out of pocket. Here is where it gets better. The ASDA is going to raise a significant sum of money to help defray some of the expense for the people who want to come and participate. In the first week alone (when this is being written) we have already raised \$3,000 from the ASDA dealer community and we are just getting started.

It benefits everyone

The development of a successful stamp show strategy, one that will continue to evolve absolutely everyone who participates in the hobby. It will be a win, win, win!

If you have an interest in participating or want to donate contact me at jim@jameslee.com.

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