

Report of the 2005 Local Arrangements Committee  
Philadelphia, PA

Committee Members: Claire Renzetti, Chair; Raquel Kennedy Bergen; Shana Maier

Annual Meeting Site: The Crowne Plaza Hotel in center city Philadelphia was chosen earlier as the site for the 2005 annual meeting. Michele, as always, did an excellent job of negotiating favorable rates and other contract terms with the hotel sales manager. Claire and Michele conducted a site visit on February 2-4, 2005. They toured the hotel, confirming specific meeting space, going over menus with hotel representatives, and finalizing other aspects of the meeting arrangements. An advantage of the Crowne Plaza is its proximity to the ASA conference hotels, obviating the need for bus transportation. Claire provided walking directions from the Crowne Plaza to each of the ASA hotels so they could be included in the program.

Audio Visual and PA Equipment: During the site visit in February, Michele and Claire met with the rep from the AV company that the Crowne Plaza uses. Following traditional practice, Michele also sought bids from other companies. The hotel company offered the most favorable rates.

Conference Registration Materials: The tote bags and restaurant guides were delivered to Claire's office. Claire and Shana transported them to the hotel on August 11th, where Michele and Denise put together the registration packets.

Book & Film Exhibits: Michele secured the contract with the firm that handled the book exhibit for this year's meeting. Michele solicited the membership via email for suggestions for the book exhibit and requested they contact the exhibitor firm directly with their suggestions. The majority of the books will be transported to the conference by Mental Health Resources. The remaining books were shipped to Claire's office prior to the meeting, and she and Shana transported the boxes to the hotel on August 11<sup>th</sup>, so the book exhibit could be set up. Films for the film exhibit were shipped to Michele, while other materials for the film exhibit were shipped to Claire.

Meeting Promotion: Claire wrote two essays for the SSSP Newsletter that were subsequently also posted on the SSSP website to encourage members to attend the meeting. In addition, she enlisted a colleague, Rob Moore, to write an essay about Philadelphia neighborhoods; this was also published in the Newsletter and on the website. In June, she wrote a preview of the Graduate Student and New Member Reception and AIDS Fundraiser and Auction for the website. Claire also had copies made of each of these items so they could be included in the registration packets.

Claire compiled a list of area colleges, universities, and community colleges along with their addresses, so Michele could send the sociology departments a letter reminding them that the annual meeting was being held in Philadelphia this year and encouraging the participation of their faculty and students.

Claire prepared a press release, subsequently approved by Michele, Tom, and Gary, and sent to local news media, including newspapers and television stations. Jerry Jacobs from the University of Pennsylvania, also contacted Gary about a local media contact he had made, and Gary offered to be in touch with this individual concerning the meeting.

Program: Claire wrote a welcome message for the preliminary and final programs. Michele, Claire, and the Program Committee proofread the preliminary and final programs before they went to press.

Board of Directors Dinner: This proved to be the most difficult aspect of the local arrangements this year. Part of the difficulty derived from the budget constraint of \$25 per person, including tax and gratuity. In addition, the restaurant has to be within walking distance of the hotel, be able to provide vegetarian options, be able to accommodate 18 people on the required date, and be accessible to the disabled. Claire and Raquel spent several days in January checking out restaurants that had been recommended by colleagues, by Gary, or where they had previously dined. When Michele visited in February, she and Claire sampled the fare at four restaurants. Two were eliminated because the food was not good or because the restaurant could not accommodate a group of our size. Of the two others, Vietnam and Joseph Poon, Gary preferred Vietnam. While the food at Vietnam was delicious, the problems were that it was not accessible to the disabled, the restaurant does not accept reservations, and their third-floor private dining room could only be used by groups of 30 or more. Gary chose not to use Joseph Poon because he had read unfavorable reviews of it and it is scheduled to close in September, so service could be poor. Gary then identified the Sang Kee Duck House and personally contacted the restaurant. Gary also selected the menu served at the dinner, and Michele negotiated the final contract, which came in at slightly below budget.

As president-elect, Claire made a request to the Budget, Finance and Audit Committee to increase the per person cost of the Board dinner to \$30, inclusive of tax and gratuity, to make this task of the LAC less difficult in the future. BFA approved this request.

President's Private Party: Claire and Michele toured the space used for the party and Michele made the arrangements for the party with the hotel.

Banquet: Michele and Claire reviewed banquet menus during the site visit. Michele handled the banquet arrangements.

Graduate Student and New Member Reception and AIDS Fundraiser and Auction: Michele negotiated the food and beverages for this event. The Crowne Plaza provided the beer and wine. Claire identified the local AIDS organization, MANNA, which is the beneficiary of the fundraiser. MANNA is sending representatives to the event. Claire contacted several bands who were recommended by colleagues and friends. One band, Exit 5, was very highly recommended and after the band leader was told of the nature of the event, he offered to perform "at cost," charging the Society only \$300, significantly under budget.

Members were directed to contact Claire if they wished to read poetry during the open mic prior to the fundraiser. Claire took these requests by email, but they were very few. Perhaps future LAC's can develop strategies for encouraging greater participation in this event.

Claire solicited the membership for auction items and got a strong response. It was more difficult to solicit items from local businesses. Most items were included in the silent auction, with a few saved for live auction. New to the fundraiser this year was a raffle. The Crowne Plaza generously donated a two-night stay that could be redeemed at check-out at the close of the meeting. Raffle tickets were priced at \$5 each and were offered during pre-registration and on-site registration. The winning ticket was drawn at the fundraiser. The purpose of the raffle was to increase the revenue raised for the AIDS organization benefiting from the event. Future LAC's should evaluate the success of the raffle as well as develop other methods of increasing fundraising at this event.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Renzetti, 2005 LAC Chair