December 9: Dinner Meeting in Waltham, Mass.

Building and Hosting Your Professional Web Site for as Low as $9.95/month

The New England Chapter’s next dinner meeting, on Wednesday, December 9, takes us to Yangtze River in Lexington, Mass. Our AMWA colleagues, Andrea Gwosdow, PhD, and Jill Shuman, MS, ELS, will share the trials, tribulations, and ultimate success in bringing their Web sites online and “live.”

Andrea Gwosdow is owner of Gwosdow Associates, a science consulting firm that provides medical and scientific writing, editing, and support services to a diverse client base. She holds a faculty position at Harvard Medical School and is a senior scientist in the Endocrine Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital. Andrea is a past president of the New England Chapter of AMWA and is a frequent presenter at chapter and national meetings. In 2008, Andrea and her daughter Rebecca were the recipients of the New England Chapter’s Neil Duane Award for Distinction in Medical Communication for their online series, What a Year!

Jill Shuman is an award-winning medical writer/editor with many years of writing and editing experience in both print and electronic formats. She is a certified editor, life sciences (ELS), an AMWA fellow, and a past president of the New England Chapter, and she currently serves as chapter treasurer. She was on the original team that conceived our chapter Web site. Jill regularly leads AMWA workshops and holds faculty positions at the Tufts University School of Medicine and Northeastern University.

As professional biomedical communicators, a Web site is your electronic business card. It helps you look serious about what you do and can increase your visibility among potential clients, your colleagues, and your employer. Your Web site is an opportunity to highlight your proficiency with using Internet-based technologies. A Web site is also your electronic filing cabinet—a unified place to showcase your print documents and live presentations.

In the past, Web site tools were cumbersome and typically required knowledge of HTML and complicated, sophisticated software programs that were best handled by specialized (and expensive!) consultants and designers. Today, however, myriad free and low-cost tools are available to help even the most technically challenged create professional-looking Web sites that are easy for users to navigate. For those who need a Web site with more challenging layouts and formats or more sophisticated elements, such as e-purchasing, collaborating with a Web consultant incurs additional costs but is much less expensive than ever before.

Andrea and Jill will navigate through their Web sites and candidly discuss their motivation for building their sites. They will also suggest low- to moderate-priced design and hosting resources, discuss search optimization strategies, and offer encouragement to those of you still unsure about the whole concept.

Feel free to visit their Web sites prior to the meeting — Andrea’s is at www.gwosdow.com, and Jill’s is at www.writersgrouponline.com — and bring your comments and questions.

As always, the New England Chapter welcomes guests and prospective members. Please join us on December 9.

Validate Your Professionalism

AMWA’s Professional Development Certificate (PDC) is a way for you to demonstrate your continued commitment to professional development beyond the scope of your regular job. You can earn 5 points toward a PDC by attending this chapter meeting. For details, go to www.amwa.org and click on Education/Certificates, then Professional Development Certificate.
Chapter Calendar

The New England Chapter holds six regular meetings a year, from September through June. Four of the meetings are in the Greater Boston area, and two are in Connecticut. Typically, meetings begin with a social hour, followed by dinner (except for a Sunday brunch in midwinter), then a program with a speaker, a panel presentation, or roundtable discussions. A writing competition, culminating in the Will Solimene Awards banquet, is held every other year, alternating with the New England Conference, a full day of workshops on a Saturday in the spring. Occasionally, informal networking meetings or tours are scheduled.

February Sunday Brunch in Greater Boston Area

Sometime in February the chapter will hold its traditional winter Sunday brunch meeting. This year’s program will feature the perennially popular roundtables on career development topics. If there’s a topic of particular interest to you, or if you think you might like to lead a roundtable, send an e-mail to our program director, Laurie MacDougall (calicomedcomm@earthlink.net). She will give consideration to any suggestions you may have.

April Dinner Meeting in Greater Boston Area

TBD

Spring Dinner Meeting in Connecticut

TBD

June Awards Banquet

The chapter’s 14th Awards Banquet will be held in mid-June. This celebratory event will feature an Honors Award Speaker and presentation of the 2010 Will Solimene Awards for Excellence in Medical Communication.

Online Meeting Registration at www.amwa-ne.com

Online registration is required for our chapter meeting on Wednesday, December 9. Although you may still follow up by putting a check in the mail if you want to, you now have the convenient option of using PayPal to pay electronically with a credit card or an e-check.

PayPal Option

You do not need your own PayPal account, and you will not be charged anything for the transaction. Simply go to www.amwa-ne.org and click on Registration in the Upcoming Events box on the home page. The link will display instructions for registration and payment.

Paying by Check

Please note that if you opt to send a check by regular mail, your registration will be considered tentative until we actually receive the check. If your payment arrives after the registration deadline (Friday, December 4) and seating for dinner is no longer available, you will be notified by e-mail and your check will be returned.

2010 Writing Competition

Start thinking now about what you have published in the last two years that you might like to enter in the New England Chapter’s 2010 writing competition. Chapter members may submit books, articles, and other materials written for a professional, general, or patient audience and published after December 31, 2007. Take advantage of this opportunity to have your very best work recognized by your peers. It only comes around every other year.

Submission guidelines and an entry form will be posted in PDF format on the chapter Web site before the end of the year. As soon as the Call for Entries is available, members will be notified via the AMWA New England E-News. Deadline for submissions will be February 1, 2010. Authors of winning entries will receive the Will Solimene Award of Excellence in Medical Communication at a banquet in June.

If you have questions, please contact the awards director, Jill Shuman (writersgroup@comcast.net).

Chapter Membership Awards

The New England Chapter’s Judy Linn Membership Awards provide professional development and networking support to medical and health communicators who are fairly new to the field. The chapter will accept applications from candidates who live and work in New England. There is no application fee. For details and an application form, go to www.amwa-ne.org and click on Awards. The information is in the second paragraph under New England Awards.

If you have questions, contact the membership awards director, David Olle (dolle@eastshirecommunications.com).
September Meeting Report
Members, Guests Expanded Professional Connections While Enjoying Ice Cream

In a change from our usual dinner program format, members and guests had fun making their own sundaes while networking and socializing at the chapter meeting in September at Lizzy’s Ice Cream in Waltham, Mass.

Special guest at our first-time ever ice cream social was Thomas P. Gegeny, MS, ELS, fellow New England Chapter member and incoming president of AMWA. Tom spoke briefly, reminding us of the many benefits of AMWA membership: education through core and specialty workshops, the award-winning AMWA Journal, job listings, the Freelance Directory, the opportunity to connect with one another through listserves, and the terrific networking benefits of meeting members through volunteerism. Tom also touched on some of the challenges and opportunities in the field of medical writing being considered by AMWA leaders: addressing the questions being asked about medical writers’ contributions; recognizing the increasingly global nature of our business and understanding the best way forward; and sorting through the many programs emerging in universities and other institutions to specifically train medical writers.

After Tom’s upbeat and encouraging words, we each ordered our favorite flavor of ice cream and loaded the scoops with delicious toppings. The many lively conversations got only a little quieter as people were finishing up their creations and then fired right back up again. Attendees new to or considering getting into the field sought out veterans for advice on how to get started. Experienced medical writers new to New England looked for new connections. Old friends caught up on a summer’s worth of news. And new friendships were forged. A few people who’d driven long distances to be at the meeting said they were glad they came. Judging from the smiles and laughter, I’d say most would agree.

—Debbie von Rechenberg, President
with reporting by Jerome Lang, Secretary

AMWA Conference Report
Inspiration and Enrichment at 69th Annual Conference

At the 2009 AMWA Annual Conference in October in Dallas, Texas, more than 800 members—including 50 from our own chapter—had the chance to attend a thought-provoking keynote address, their choice of 38 open sessions, 85 workshops, 75 breakfast roundtables, and 30 discussions over coffee and dessert. Also available were 15 poster presentations, exhibitors and vendors, two luncheons with prominent speakers, a gala awards dinner, and receptions bookending the conference.

Board of Directors Meeting Highlights
At every conference, before the activities begin, national officers and committee heads, along with delegates from all the chapters, discuss important business in the Board of Directors meeting and in the chapter delegates session. This year, we covered a number of exciting developments that will take AMWA to the next level.

The certificate program is undergoing a major overhaul, with the new programs and requirements to be rolled out over the next few months. If you are already enrolled in the core or advanced program, you may complete that program as is. Going forward, however, each certificate program will include a required ethics course, and the programs will be rearranged to make it easier to earn more than one specialty certificate. Two important things to remember: No one will lose credits, and no workshops are being eliminated. In fact, more workshops are being added! Watch the AMWA Journal for details.

The Web and Internet Technology Department (WIT) has several projects underway to improve the member benefits and services that fall under its purview. It has revamped the AMWA Web site (www.amwa.org) and is collecting feedback to improve the Freelance Directory and member listserves. The newest project is “pocket trainings,” which will be mini-tutorials available on the Web site, similar to the how-to sessions we’ve had at the Annual Conference, only virtual. Examples include: how to use editing/comments tools in Adobe Acrobat, how to prepare for an employment interview, and tips and tricks for EndNote. The tutorials will be developed by members, and will include instructional materials in various media that could be reviewed in a short time. WIT is looking for volunteers to develop these pocket trainings, as well as help in other areas, so contact Donna Miceli, the WIT Department administrator, if you are interested. This would be a great way to get involved with AMWA. And watch for more news on these exciting improvements!

The AMWA History Task Force reported on its efforts to record and archive the association’s history. If you have stories to share or know someone who does, contact Melanie Fridl Ross, the task force chair.

As Karen Woolley said in her keynote address (see below), for medical writers to get the respect they deserve, they need to show what they bring to the table. Two

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initiatives will address this issue. First, a new award has been developed, the AMWA Award for Best Published Research. Candidates must present, in a peer-reviewed, PubMed-indexed journal, original research on the value added by medical writers and editors. For details, go to http://www.amwa.org/default.asp?id=476. Second, AMWA is partnering with an external research group to survey pharmaceutical companies and clinical research organizations about the value medical writers add to their research. The results will be shared with participating companies and will be summarized for publication by AMWA.

Keynote Address

Karen Woolley, PhD, of the University of Queensland and University of the Sunshine Coast as well as CEO of ProScribe Medical Communications, gave a stirring talk titled “Getting Respect—Two Steps Forward and?” The audio and slides from the lecture are available in the Conference section of the Web site under “Annual Conference Lectures.” (You will need your user ID and password; this is a great member benefit!)

Dr. Woolley’s lecture touched on three topics: Where is the evidence that proves the value and ethics we add to research we assist with? How can we be sure our fellow medical writers all over the world are offering a similar value? How do we get out and tell our side of the story when we’re often made out to be part of the problem in reporting research?

She went on to offer results from a study she and colleagues conducted on the rate of retractions in articles where medical writing assistance was declared versus those with no such declaration. You have to see the results to believe them! She also presented a checklist that she and others developed and published in PLoS Medicine. AMWA leaders will discuss endorsement of this checklist at the spring Board of Directors meeting.

With outsourcing becoming more and more common, it is easy to despair over the future of our profession. However, Dr. Woolley challenged us to recognize that globalization is here to stay, and our job is to make sure we educate our new colleagues, no matter where in the world they are. She presented a tool she and others are developing that assesses the skills, knowledge, and behaviors of medical writers. The hope is that the tool will be used to bring all medical communicators to a single high standard. Once the tool is complete, it will be freely available.

Finally, Dr. Woolley addressed the question of how best to educate those around us about what we bring to the table. She suggested that the various scientific and medical communications societies speak with one voice. She encouraged all attendees to use the right words (for example, not to call what we do “ghostwriting”). And she reminded us to remain respectful when dealing with people who challenge us.

I encourage you all to take the time to listen to this incredible leader in medical communication, who has thought long and hard about the issues we face today and, more importantly, who has taken concrete actions to address those issues.

Chapter Greet & Go

On the Thursday of the Annual Conference, AMWA traditionally hosts an early-evening event at which members of each chapter can gather and meet one another. Over the years, this has evolved into the Greet & Go, where chapters meet up and then head out to dinner at a nearby restaurant.

This year, at least two dozen New England members gathered briefly over soft drinks to socialize, and then 20 of us walked to Iron Cactus for dinner. They expanded our reservation from 14 to 20 as we walked, to accommodate people who didn’t recall getting the E-News notice about the dinner. The food was classic Tex-Mex, and the margaritas were on special for happy hour. Several far-flung chapter members were present (some live closer to Montreal than Boston), and it was a great pleasure to get to know them. The service was impeccable, making for a very pleasant evening and allowing the Coffee and Dessert Klatch participants to get to their event on time. The company was even better, and a good time was had by all. The chapter president (yours truly), who organized the dinner, was pleased and relieved.

The Rest of the Conference

First-time attendees gush about how much they’d learned and how many people they’d met… New acquaintances have long chats in the hall… A freelance signs his book and freely offers advice on how to get started… Workshop participants hustle from one learning experience to the next… Vendors hand out trinkets… Business cards are exchanged… Old friends hug… People whose nametags are festooned with ribbons (indicating their various roles in the conference) chat amiably with people whose nametags have red dots (first-time attendees)… Question and answer sessions are lively and as educational as the presentations… The outgoing president chokes up handing over the gavel to the incoming president… Food, drink, laughter… And most of all, the generosity and openness of those who have been in the field a long time in sharing their experiences and expertise with those just starting out… All of these things make me proud to be a medical writer, and even prouder to be a member of AMWA.

See you next year in Milwaukee!

—Debbie von Rechenberg, President & Delegate to AMWA Board of Directors

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Personal Notes

Cheryl Riel has been promoted to senior manager at Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company, Cambridge, Mass.

Thomas J. Giove of Allston, Mass., received his PhD in biology from Boston University this year, and he is now a medical writer at Millennium.

CHAPTER CHANGES: Janet M. Cromer, RN, MA, and Ellen C. DeNigris, MD, are now members of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter. Watson B. Laughton, PhD, is now a member of the Delaware Valley Chapter.

AMWA Membership Campaign
2009 Drive Ends Soon
Share the benefits of belonging to AMWA, and you may gain an association colleague and a monetary reward at the same time. If you successfully recruit a new member by December 31, 2009, AMWA will thank you with a $25 Amazon.com gift card.
For details and a membership campaign form, go to http://www.amwa.org/default.asp?id=452.

New Members
The New England Chapter welcomes those from our six-state region who have recently joined AMWA, reestablished their affiliation with the association, or moved here from another chapter area:

Satya B. Allaparthi, MRCS, MD
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

Lauren J.L. Angotti,
Billerica, Massachusetts

Joanne L. Barker
Barker Health Communications
Somerville, Massachusetts

Brenda L. Conaway
Conaway Communications
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Valerie E. Cooper
RDMD LLC
Washington, Connecticut

Kimberly M. Cushing
Waltham, Massachusetts
Seapcor

David Danese, MA
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Custom Learning Designs

James F. Dickinson, MS
Dickinson Partners LLC
Newton, Connecticut

Truc Diep, PhD
Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Charles Gershman, AB
Yale School of Medicine
New Haven, Connecticut

Susan M. Gifford, MS
West Newbury, Massachusetts

Francine L. Healy
South Glastonbury, Connecticut

Jamileh A. Jemison, MS, MD
Waltham, Massachusetts

Anil Karihaloo, PhD
Cheshire, Connecticut
Yale University School of Medicine

Alice Lesch Kelly, MA
Newton, Massachusetts

Thomas A. Laage, MD
Concord, Massachusetts

Elizabeth A. LaPointe, BA, MA
Lancaster, Massachusetts

Susan M. Lemere, MSW, LICSW
Ashburnham, Massachusetts

Joseph S. Lubiner, BA
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

Lori A. Martell, PhD
Lexington, Massachusetts
[from Canada Chapter]

Catherine McKeon-O’Malley, PhD
Scientific Word Craft
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts

Hibo Mohamed
Malden, Massachusetts

David C. Nobile, BS
MedKnowledge Group LLC
Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Kevin M. Norgeot
Sanford Rose Associates
Hingham, Massachusetts

Jill Petrie
Cramer
Norwood, Massachusetts

Larry J. Rosenberg, PhD
Envision Pharma Inc.
Southport, Connecticut

Todd Ryan
Gemini Staffing Consultants LLC
Woburn, Massachusetts

Fernando Urea
Framingham, Massachusetts
UMass Medical Center
Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center

Katherine S. Woodworth, BA, MFA
Arlington, Massachusetts

Jamie Ziobro
Marblehead, Massachusetts
Directions to December 9 Meeting

Yangtze River Restaurant
21 Depot Square (off Massachusetts Avenue)
Lexington, Massachusetts
781-861-6030

Depot Square is a small, three-sided block directly off Massachusetts Avenue, which is the main street in Lexington Center. The Depot Square roadway begins and ends on Mass. Ave.

There is some on-street parking as well as parking in municipal lots in back of Depot Square.

From Route 128/I-95
Take Exit 31A East to Routes 4/225, which is Bedford Street. Follow the signs into Lexington Center past the Minute Man statue, where Bedford Street joins Mass. Ave. Go straight ahead and take the third left into Depot Square.

From Route 2
Take Exit 54 to Waltham St/Waltham. Follow the signs for Lexington Center to the traffic lights at the end of Waltham Street. Turn left onto Mass. Ave. and stay in the right lane. Depot Square is on the right, about 100 yards beyond the traffic lights.

From Cambridge/Arlington
Follow Mass. Ave. north to Lexington Center. Depot Square is on the right, about 100 yards beyond the traffic lights.

Need a ride to the meeting?
If you don’t have a car, Judy Linn, meeting registrar, can tell you whether there’s someone from your area who may be able to give you a ride to the meeting. Contact Judy at judyhlinn@aol.com or 508-358-7071.

New England E-News
A Benefit of Chapter Membership

The AMWA New England E-News, which the president sends to chapter members a few times a month, reminds you of an upcoming event or lets you know about a job opening, freelance work, local event, or anything else that might be of interest to you or other New England AMWA members.

If there is something you think would be appropriate to mention in the E-News, please send it to President Debbie von Rechenberg for consideration (dvonrech@yahoo.com). In the case of a job notice, be sure to follow the submission guidelines, available as a 1-page PDF at www.amwa-ne.org under Jobs.

Anyone is welcome to submit an item, but nonmembers are not included in the E-News distribution list, no exceptions.

Save the Date
As you begin to fill in your calendar for the coming new year, don’t forget to include a note about AMWA’s 70th Annual Conference, which will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, November 11-13.

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