

Opera Volunteers International

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Spring 2006

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Kansas City Hosts OVI Conference

by *Don Dagenais*, Conference Chair

Delegates from 19 states and one foreign country attended the Opera Volunteers International conference held in Kansas City, Missouri in March.

In addition to enjoying a preview by Guild member **Debra Karr** and the Lyric Opera presentation of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the delegates also participated in workshops and panel discussions involving such topics as adult and children's education, how to put on an opera ball, legal and accounting issues for opera volunteers, running efficient meetings, organizing opera trips, community outreach and fund raising.

Ten individual volunteers from across the country were awarded special honors for outstanding volunteer efforts in their own communities. Five outstanding volunteer projects were recognized for



Don Dagenais,
Conference Chair

their special merit at the conference, and two checks providing \$1000 grants for meritorious projects were presented.

Lisa Sicola served as co-chair, and other members of the conference committee included **Bob Baughman, Tom Brandt, Mort and Una Creditor, Amy Henry, Sandi Simmons** and **Joan Wells** (president of The Lyric Opera Guild). Over 25 other guild volunteers helped out at the Conference, making it one of the most successful every held by the organization.

OVI conferences in addition to serving the needs of volunteers and support groups through the activities outlined above also serve as a funding source to support other OVI activities between conferences. In this respect also the Kansas City conference was an outstanding success. The conference was able to send a check for \$12,679.08 to OVI (which included returning \$3000 seed money). Of this amount over \$5500 was earned by the silent auction.



Sandi and friends enjoy a shopping break



Conference Registration (left to right)
Bob Baughman, John Gazda, Morton Creditor (seated) Lisa Sicola, Una Creditor (seated) and Sandi Simmons

Partners In Excellence Winners—2006

by *Eunice Ganteaume*

Wendy Isbell of the Anchorage Opera Guild. Wendy has been in charge of successful fundraising events, and also hosts singers in her home when they are in Anchorage for a production.

Helen Baxter of the Austin Lyric Opera Guild. Helen is president of the Lyric Opera Board of Trustees, is a major fundraiser and has steered the company through a difficult financial period. She has worked to make trustee/guild relationships smooth and productive.

Suzanne Hasl of the Cincinnati Opera Guild. During 20 years in service to the Cincinnati Opera Suzanne has worked in numerous capacities, including education/outreach, dress rehearsals and educational tours. She has helped by the contribution of her time, problem solving skills and financial support. Suzanne served on the board of Opera Volunteers International.

(continued on page 3)

INSIDE

President's Letter
Fall Board Meeting 2

Grants
Resource Showcase 3

News From The Regions 4

Some things are worth repeating!

One, is how pleased and proud I am to serve as the president of OVI. Many of you heard me say this at our wonderful conference in Kansas City, but I'm delighted to say it again!

Another, is how fortunate I feel to be able to guide this group which has so enthusiastically supported music and opera for so many rewarding years. Since we began in Seattle as Opera Guilds International, OVI has

faithfully forwarded our mission to promote awareness, stimulate interest and encourage the growth of opera in communities across the United States and Canada.

I'm looking forward: to many more years of serving opera and working with all its volunteers, to listening and learning, and to enjoying the company of all you amazing members who make our organization so special.

Sincerely,

Fern Grauer

President



(left to right) Past president Sandi Bruns and President Fern Grauer

Dear OVI Board Members and other OVI Members:

The Fall Board Meeting has been scheduled for November 3, 4 and 5, 2006. Please mark your calendars as we are hopeful everyone can attend. The Board will meet on Saturday and anyone is welcome to attend whether they are a board member or not. On behalf of the Chicago gang (Roy, Fern, Barbara and I) we very much look forward to your visit.

More information will be forthcoming about lectures, symphony and other activities that may be of interest to you but in the meantime, you should know that:

- 1 A block of rooms has been reserved at the Seneca Hotel just off the Magnificent Mile and across from Water Tower Place. The hotel is an older boutique property located in the best part of town and the suites are spacious (small living area, bedroom and kitchen). The rates are \$149 for a king bed and \$169 for two queen beds.
For a virtual tour go to:
www.senecahotel.com/vtours.htm To reserve please wait until after Monday April 17 which will be when our OVI group rate will be entered into the system. For reservations call 1-800-800-6261 or 312-787-8900. Don't forget to mention OVI.

- 2 The board meeting will be between 9am and 2pm on Saturday, November 4 with a Dutch-treat lunch orderable in advance.

- 3 "Salome" at Lyric Opera of Chicago will be performed Friday night, November 3.

For production information go to:

www.lyricopera.org/productions.aspx?arrRef=3D20073 = and if you're interested in tickets contact Roy at Yorhc@aol.com

- 4 "Trovatore" at Lyric Opera of Chicago will be performed Saturday night, November 4.

For production information go to:

www.lyricopera.org/productions.aspx?arrRef=3D20074 and if you're interested in tickets contact Roy at Yorhc@aol.com

- 5 The "King Tut" exhibit will be in Chicago during that time for those that are interested.

For more information go to:

www.fieldmuseum.org/tut/index.html

Regarding the opera tickets at Lyric, Roy plans to secure a block of seats (various prices are available from \$175 on down) for our group if the 15 minimum is met. Again contact Roy at Yorhc@aol.com if your interested in going with the group.

Although this is not a Regional Meeting or a Conference and there won't be any workshops, any OVI member is welcome to join us for the fun. Depending on the number attending it may be possible to set aside time with the Board to meet with support group representatives and volunteers, so let us hear soon if you are considering attending and we will plan accordingly.

Warmest regards,

Julie Anne Benson,

Chicago Meeting Committee



"The Chicago gang"

(continued from page 1)

Anne Mathew At the grand age of 85, Anne participates daily in her Guild, volunteering before, during and after the season. Her comprehensive knowledge of business practice makes her a part of the company's infrastructure. She maintains membership and donor lists and trains volunteers to do direct mailings. As Archivist, her album gives a beautiful record of each season.



Presenting the Awards: Sandi Bruns and Eunice Gauteaume

Stuart Lewis of the Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild. "Stu" is famous for the opera booklets attendees receive at Kansas City Lyric Opera performances. These contain a wealth of information about opera, composer and librettist. His contributions also include preview lectures, newsletter articles and participation in the "At Ease With Opera" program.

Shelley C. Page of the Nashville Opera Guild. Shelley has been active in Nashville's guild since its inception in 1987. Her many offices include hospitality chair, vice-president of marketing and president. She has served on the Nashville Opera board and its Advisory Board. Other numerous volunteer assignments include meeting and housing artists and hosting events. Shelley is a former OVI Regional Director and Board member.

Margaret King Stanley of the Opera Guild of San Antonio Margaret is Past President of her guild. A leader in education, she established the "Opera in Schools" program, bringing opera free of charge to city schools, where many students hear opera for the first time. Margaret endeavors to raise support for this underfunded program. She is also active with the San Antonio Symphony and founded an Early Music Festival.

Verna Parino of the San Francisco Opera Guild. As a proud nonagenarian, Verna is a long-time active and successful opera volunteer. As Chairman of the preview committee, she recruits and signs on speakers from the world over, thereby giving San Francisco patrons on of the best opera lecture series in the country. She also works to encourage support for opera programs in the Marin county community. Orpha Harnish of the Guild of Tulsa Opera Orpha has had many titles during time as a Tulsa Opera volunteer—Parliamentarian, President, patron and fundraiser. In 2005 she produced a history of the guild for its 50th anniversary. Her leadership skills have been recognized not only by the Tulsa Opera but by other arts organizations in the community.

Judy Westacott of The Vancouver Opera Guild. Judy's first involvement was with Membership. Since assuming editorship of the newsletter, Judy is bringing about efficient changes, improved the format, content and distribution. The newsletter is now electronically sent to members having e-mail addresses. Judy also is editor of VOG Notes.

Grants

by *Mary Earl*

Nancy Krigbaum accepted the \$1,000 OVI Matching Grant for the Opera Illinois League project called the "Opera Illinois League Speakers' Bureau".

Addie Appelbaum, Exective Director of the Central Pennsylvania Youth Opera accepted a check for \$1,000 Matching Grant for the project "Opera Ambassadors."

RESOURCE SHOWCASE: 2006 PROJECTS OF SPECIAL MERIT

by *Barbara Eckel*

Opera in the Schools: Premiere of an Opera by Opera Guild of San Antonio, Roger L. Bessey, President. With a goal of engaging and educating secondary school students about opera, the guild joined the University of Texas at San Antonio to present the premiere of a Seymour Barab opera. The guild raised funds, provided publicity and supplied ushers at the two free concerts for students, and generated study materials for teachers.

OPERA ROCKS! by Central City Opera House Association Guild, Catherine McClean, President

This program for young people under 18 is an ongoing project to encourage, develop and sustain interest in opera for the student and their family. They participate in projects and events throughout the year, including a day at the Summer Opera Festival and keeping an opera diary.

Sweetheart Luncheon by Sarasota Opera Guild, Juanita Connell, President. This fundraising project has been held since 1978, and is one of the guild's most successful. Each year an opera personality is honored, and sometimes a performance is included, and always the event affords a wealth of anecdotes for opera fans.

The College of Opera Knowledge by Kansas City Lyric Opera Guild, Joan Wells, President. This is a series of multimedia supported lectures covering the history of the art form, and is designed to appeal to a broader audience than the guild's preview lectures. The hall was at capacity for each of the ten lectures, and there are plans to repeat.

2005 Garden Festival by Austin Lyric Opera Guild, Leslie Thomas, President. Three of Austin's loveliest residential gardens hosted events that successfully raised funds for the company and broadened interest and participation in opera and guild activities.

Three former "Classic" projects were also represented in the Showcase during our lunch at Ruth's Chris Steak House:

Divas/Divos: The Artists' Volunteer Committee by Michigan Opera Theatre Volunteer Committee, Dodie David, President. The Committee was formed to assist artists while in the metropolitan area. The committee produces a directory that includes photos and contact information to assist in making contact for needs as diverse as babysitting, recreation, shopping or sightseeing.

Opera in the Classroom by Lyric Opera of Chicago Lecture Corps, Mary & Howard Robins, Co-Chairs, Diana Hunt King, Coordinator. Opera in the Classroom consists of a series of four visits to the same elementary school class to study an opera chosen by the Lecture Corps for that year. The volunteer helps the students study the story, basic vocal ranges, relevant vocabulary and the music of the opera. As a finale, the class presents a pantomimed performance to recorded highlights.

Using the Internet to Provide Information to Current & Prospective Guild Members: A Low Cost Approach by Houston Grand Opera, Susan & Ward Pennebaker, co-Presidents. Using volunteer developers and a simple template, the guild produced a website that includes not only calendars, registration forms, a guild history and also an increasingly successful boutique. The site includes private pages for use during strategic planning. A monthly newsletter is a new innovation.



by Gerald Elijah, Editor

Well, folks, this is my last issue as Newsletter Editor before turning that very fulfilling task over to my good friends Warren and Melody Schubert. Warren and Melody have long been my colleagues on the board of the Opera League of Los Angeles (Warren was a former president). Although they have recently moved to the far northeast



Gerald Elijah, VP-Outreach as the moderator of the "Guild Highlights" sketch courtesy Sandi Brauns, past president

from the far southwest, the newsletter will continue to be produced by our current wonderful team of production artists and printers in Los Angeles. Please continue to send me copies of your newsletters, as I will need them in my new role as Vice president-Outreach, and please send a copy to Melody and Warren at their new address (see the masthead). Of course you should also send a copy to your own Regional Director (see below for addresses).

As you will note below, we were still looking for a willing leader from the Northeast area to replace the departing Patricia Gallegher as Regional Coordinator. The new Coordinator is currently in Europe, and will be announced in the summer Newsletter.

This month's news will begin with reports from the Regional Meetings that took place during the OVI Conference 2006 in Kansas

City in March. Certain items were on the agenda for each of the Regional tables to discuss:

- The importance of communication; sharing information via support group and OVI newsletters, as well as the importance of e-mail (including the development of Regional e-mail or print newsletters/bulletins).
- Obtaining willing leadership names for regions needing a new coordinator
- Any suggested changes in regional boundaries that would facilitate the above, e.g. regions such as the Northeast, where there are a large number of support groups in a relatively small geographic area, and the Mountain, where there is a relatively large geographic area to cover, and making communication more difficult.

Good ideas developed at each table will be followed up on, and shared with all Regions, and I encourage you to get acquainted with your new Coordinator (Mountain and Central Regions), or reacquainted with those in the other Regions. For the time being I suggest you in the Northeast Region should contact either Addie Appelbaum Vice-president, Membership (who resides within the region), or of course me in my new role as Vice-president, Outreach.

Critical to all Regional and OVI communications is the importance of always getting updates of changes in mailing addresses and support group

officers. Be sure you keep the OVI office and the Regional Coordinators informed as changes take place—don't wait for membership renewal time!

Other support group reports are limited (one time only!) to reports from correspondents and Liaisons due to the need to devote space to conference reporting, but if you keep your Coordinators fully informed, you will be back in the limelight very soon.

Northeast Region

Regional Coordinator (vacant)

Connecticut	Delaware	Maine	Massachusetts
New Hampshire	New Jersey	New York	Pennsylvania
Rhode Island	Vermont		

Addie Appelbaum reports that although there were not very many representatives from the Northeast Region attending, those attending discussed the need for monthly updates. Is there something of interest to share with other support groups, i.e. a new production, a special event? Perhaps an opera trip that a fellow Northeast region member might be able to take advantage of? Would there be reciprocity? Would a fellow Northeast Guild be able to purchase discounted tickets? Or be invited to a dinner or a special event as the guest of the host guild?

Most of the members felt that this kind of reciprocity would be very appreciated, especially by some of the smaller support groups. Members also suggested that individual members in the region be included in the monthly updates. One of the points made was that OVI needs to offer more in terms of perks for support groups and individual members. If each of the regions were able to offer reciprocal perks (as mentioned), this might also tempt new support groups to join.

Members also hoped that regional coordinators could find time to visit with support groups, if they are close enough, in their respective regions. This would put a "face" on the Regional Coordinator.

NEW YORK

Friends of Lake George Opera at Saratoga at their annual meeting in late January presented Lake George Opera a check for \$3500, the profit from their 2005 endeavors (a total of over \$8000 for the year). The majority of the income is from the "Pasta and Puccini" fund raiser. The annual meeting coincided with the annual meeting for the opera, at the invitation of the new opera director Curtis Tucker, and signifying the joint efforts for the success of the opera.

Seven new board members were elected, and plans made for the coming year. New on the calendar is to be a "meet and greet" event with the cast on their first day of rehearsals...a breakfast buffet in June. Pasta and Puccini moves to May this year. Our numbers have increased for this event each year, and we always look for ways to include more in our FUN fundraiser. The balloon raffle with its 35-50 balloon gifts, all Italian and opera oriented is a big seller! (reported by Pat Gallagher).

Southeast Region

Lee Damus

damusl@aol.com

phone 305-667-7671

8145 SW 53rd Ave, Miami FL 33143

Alabama	District of Columbia	Florida	Georgia
Kentucky	Maryland	Mississippi	North
Carolina	South Carolina	Tennessee	Virginia
West Virginia			

The Southeast Regional Director, Lee Damus was unable to attend the Conference (she is working on the Gala Grand Opening of the new

Performing Arts Center), but reports plans are in motion for Miami to host the OPERA America conference the first week of May 2007 in the new Miami Performing Arts Center. It is her hope that we can have a great showing of OVI members as an integral part of that conference. Meanwhile those attending the KC Conference discussed the possibility of having a Regional Meeting in Sarasota, Orlando or Nashville. Former OGI Regional Director Shelley Page offered to help the Regional Coordinator cover the activities in the region for OVI. From all that was said our Southeast Region seems ready to showcase OVI in a BIG way.

Central Region

Wilma Wilcox
phone 913-302-9789
 Arkansas Iowa Kansas Minnesota
 Missouri Nebraska North Dakota Oklahoma
 South Dakota

wilmawilcox@yahoo.com

The Central Region coordinator was unable to attend the table discussion, but a lively discussion did ensue (after all, this region was hosting the Conference! Unfortunately notes disappeared, as they can all too easily do.



Conference Delegates from the Central Region

MISSOURI

Opera Theatre of St. Louis Guild' Eileen Garcia reports that docents have been busy at Opera Theatre getting ready for their speaking engagements with the help of Glen Bauer, Assitant Professor of Music at Webster University, who gave an in-depth lecture on *Street Scene* and Gina Pellegrino, staff member at OTSL's artistic department who lectured on both *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Barber of Seville*.

In February our Artists in Training students gave their winter recital . Seventeen students sang this year, covering everything from gospel to Mozart arias. They never cease to amaze with their talents and aspirations to achieve.

On March 10, 27 of us went to Chicago for a weekend of opera (*Der Rosenkavalier* and *Orfeo ed Euridice*) and adventure. A special treat was a backstage tour of Lyric Opera. The tour guides were a very enthusiastic bunch, you could sense how much they enjoyed their task! Roy Fisher, whom we met at the conference in Kansas City the following weekend led the segment on the Lyric performance stage. It was a great trip and a wonderful weekend of opera.

Great Lakes Region

Mary Ellen Clancy
phone 309-686-1368
 Eastern Canada Illinois Indiana Michigan
 Ohio Wisconsin

meclancy@sbcglobal.net

Mary Ellen Clancy reports that in the Great Lakes Region discussion, ideas were expressed on what was wanted from a Regional Coordinator, and what Regional Coordinator needed from the field to get the job done. The highest priority was solid information for contacts.



Conference Delegates from the Great Lakes Region

We exchanged e-mails at the discussion and I am weeding out ones that are no longer active from the list of folks not at the discussion.

Some people expressed a desire not to be too structured in the use of Regional Coordinators. (I have a hunch they feared a lot of bureaucracy), but most agreed we have not been structured enough. All agreed that the conference opened up new ideas for sharing all kinds of things among guilds. We ARE currently sending each other directories and newsletters from our guilds—a great place to start!

Mountain Region

Shirley Litchfield Bird
phone 480-515-3725
 Arizona Colorado Idaho Montana
 New Mexico Texas Utah Wyoming

shirleyabird@cox.net
630-837-6071

Rose Betty Williams (the prior Regional Coordinator) was unable to attend the Conference. Sandi Bruns moderated the discussion and reports:

- Shirley Litchfield Bird's appointment as Regional Coordinator had been confirmed in the earlier business meeting. Unfortunately she too had been unable to attend the Conference, but is very enthusiastic about the opportunities presented. Shirley resides for half of the year in Arizona, and is very active in opera activities there. She also maintains a residence in Chicago, Illinois and is well acquainted with OVI president Fern Grauer.
- The issue of boundaries was discussed, and although Idaho, Montana and Wyoming are far afield from the core membership in the southwest (and no support groups from these states are current OVI members), the group did not feel a need to request a boundary shift at this time. (There are not really too large a number of support groups involved for effective communication and involvement at present.) The representatives DID have fun thinking of new NAMES for the region, and proposed a change to the "Wrangler Region", since all the states included DO have cowboys, though not all (Texas) have mountains! (As it happens, OVI rules require geographic names for regions—so for now, we will continue to refer to this area as the Mountain Region. Perhaps at some time in the future there could be a split in boundaries if a significant number of new groups join OVI fulfill our outreach goals.



Conference Delegates from the Mountain Region

- The Regional Coordinator should plan to put together a **Regional Calendar** to be shared with all support groups in the Region, so everyone is aware of each other's activities, and encourage travel and sharing.
- This led to the idea of **Reciprocity**. Support groups could extend both hospitality, and Guild perks to OVI members or members of OVI support groups who were visiting and participating in events, similar to what museums do. A list of who were the point persons in each locale would be needed, of course with the approval of their board. This could grow into OVI Reciprocity, but could begin as a Regional pilot mode.
- A **Regional e-newsletter**, to be shared with president Fern Grauer, VP of Outreach Gerald Elijah, and OVI newsletter editors Warren & Melody Schubert for the OVI newsletter and regional e-communications.

ARIZONA

Arizona Opera League (Shirley Litchfield Bird reporting) hosted a fundraiser on April 22nd. This was part of their "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" yearly event—this year the theme is "Country Western Barbeque

(continued on page 6)



by *Gerald Elijah, Editor*

(continued from page 5)

Dinner and Dancing: Bill and I will be welcoming guests to our home and entertaining on our large patio. This is the sixth consecutive year of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" presented by the League. Bill and I open our home to other charities (such as International Foundation Anti-cancer Drug Discovery, with pianist Ronald Jacovowitz, Metropolitan opera auditions Arizona singers, Phoenix Boys Choir, etc.

TEXAS

The Austin Lyric Opera Guild (Rose Betty Williams reporting) is looking forward to a Guild Garden Festival that will be expanded to four days. Garden lovers, food and wine aficionados and music buffs will get the opportunity to enjoy these special pleasures in four of Austin's finest residential gardens in May. Tickets for individual events range from \$30 (wine & cheese), \$55 (for a fabulous picnic buffet) to \$160 (an individual sit down dinner), and the final festival event is the Children's Musical Garden Party on May 21 with lemonade and "flower power" cookies—\$10 children and \$25 adults. A ticket for all four events is \$250 per person.

On a sadder note, we must pay tribute at the passing of one of Austin's, Texas' and the Southwest's leaders, **Alfred King**. Founding chairman of Austin Lyric Opera's board of directors, his vision and guidance for the arts and performing arts are long-lasting and with infinite dividends. We have warm memories of his attendance at OVI's Austin Conference.

Pacific Rim Region

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 3988 Jefferson Ave, Emerald Hills CA 94062
 Alaska Australia California Nevada
 Oregon Washington State Western Canada

With representatives from Alaska, California, Washington State and Western Canada there was a lively discussion at this table. A significant amount of time was spent discussing Bob Brock's fabulous e-mail news service to opera lovers in the California Bay area, where there are reportedly some 27 small and large opera companies in operation. We expressed hope that this could become a model for an "E-Mail Regional Newsletter", and might be expanded by Bob to include current information on activities and events within the region that would be of interest and available to our members. This will require that Bob is able to get current and future information from our members, but it set as one of our goals.

There was a shared discussion of successes experienced by the representatives present with their organizations, as well as some problems (you know—that is what OVI is all about!) With the example that kicked off the Conference (in Volunteer Highlights) of the demise of the San Diego guilds we talked about timely outreach to faltering organizations, and also how we continue to assist new support groups get firmly on their feet.

Finally, there was discussion of where there might be interest in holding the next Conference or a Regional Meeting. There was interest expressed by both Los Angeles in California, and Anchorage in Alaska in holding a future Regional Meeting, and that was passed on to the OVI board who will work with the various groups offerings to select the best time and place.



Conference Delegates from the Pacific Rim

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BE ON THE MAP!

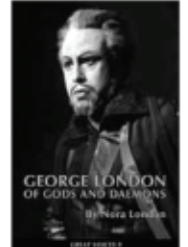
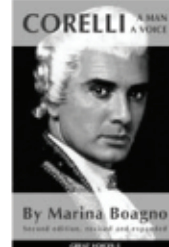
Go to our OVI website www.operavol.org and on the front page is a new feature—a map of where OVI members are located. Now all we need is for you to follow the simple instructions, and you too will be in your place on the map!

Let everyone see where you are from, and you can add such information as your opera company and the name of your support group. As you join in, the map will look impressive because it will show how widespread we are throughout the United States and Canada. (Sorry, it doesn't cover Australia.)

All you need to do to join is to click the "Add Yourself" link. You will be taken to another webpage where you can enter your name, e-mail, Zipcode and an optional message, such as your affiliated group or opera company.



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MATCHING GRANTS

If YOUR guild could use \$1000 for a special project, applications can still be submitted, and grants will be awarded on a continuing basis. All it takes is a really good idea, and an application to get the process underway!

The requirements are that the Grant Project be devoted to:

- A. Formation or expansion of programs for recruitment, development and training of volunteers with special consideration for programs which involve the multi-cultural community, or
- B. Creation of programs for recruitment, development and training of volunteers for opera for disadvantaged or underserved groups, or
- C. Development of programs for recruitment, development and training of volunteers which are educational, audience development or recruitment programs of support group members that include special consideration for programs involving the multi-cultural community.

Grants are up to \$1,000 and must be matched dollar for dollar. We hope to have groups develop programs that would encourage participation from those who have traditionally not been associated with opera and to encourage the participation of volunteers in all phases of supporting the opera company.

Information can be obtained from:

**MARY EARL,
7115 PIPER GLEN DRIVE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62707.
phone 217 483-6680 or email Maryoperal@aol.com**

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	1 Insertion	4 Insertions	Savings
Business Card	\$ 45	\$ 165	\$ 15
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4-color full-page flyers are available: \$1,000

Prices are for camera ready copy or copy on computer disk (pdf, tif or jpeg formats).

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Opera Volunteers International Newsletter

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