

GCA President's Message - November 4, 2013

The Georgia Chess Association's mission is to promote chess in Georgia. I'd like to briefly outline how our organization continues to ensure that chess remains a vibrant pastime in our state.

GCA is actively increasing the quality of chess tournaments in Georgia. We know that a good experience at a tournament leads to an increased interest in chess and greater participation. We understand that getting the basics down is *most* important. We are turning the process of running tournaments into an art and trying innovative ideas to make chess tournaments more convenient. We are publishing pairings on-line at larger events which reduces the amount of time it takes to get seated at the board. We have Chess Control as a resource for players and parents to get questions answered and make changes if needed. These steps are helping us keep tournaments running on time. We are training more volunteers to coordinate events, use tournament software, and work the floor which will allow our tournaments to grow. In the future, we hope to broadcast games in progress at some of our larger open tournaments.

We are addressing member concerns regarding our open events. We have increased the number by adding the Women's Open and bringing back the Georgia Open. We're having the State Championship at a hotel as a matter of practice. We will do the same for all our open tournaments as they become financially feasible. Frank Johnson will likely be serving as the Board Liaison to the Open Events Committee. We are committed to having a solid Open Events team with strong leadership and planning.

The Scholastic Committee is headed by Ben Johnson and Katie Hartley. We continue to push the state-of-the-art in larger tournaments and hope to transfer these experiences to the Open Events committee. We have a strong group of dedicated volunteers on the Scholastic team - many of whom worked together last year and have gained valuable experience and momentum working together again.

The GCA has concluded a collaborative agreement with the Emory Chess Club to create a low-cost series of sustainable chess tournaments in the Atlanta area. It has been a great learning experience for both organizations. We are offering to share the knowledge we've gained to clubs statewide as well as help recruit experienced volunteers. We'd love to see six tournaments run outside of the Atlanta metro area.

Since 2011, we have had a shortage of qualified tournament directors (TDs) in Georgia. GCA has been encouraging players to become TDs and to provide them opportunities to gain experience. One thing I have learned is that it takes a significant amount of time to become a TD, even for those who are motivated and who have opportunities for experience. We are training TDs with a series of seminars, which are open to anyone interested. The GCA wants to ensure that we have well-trained TDs to officiate at tournaments across the state.

In 2011, the GCA still had a lot of club mentality. I knew that the organization needed to mature and grow its infrastructure to attract quality, dedicated volunteers. We are on a course to operate more as a non-profit business than a club. In order to accomplish this we have engaged a facilitator to assist us in this transformation.

Now that the GCA has created a friendlier environment for volunteers, the GCA has appointed Frank Johnson as its Volunteer Coordinator. We know that there are a number of exceptionally talented people within the families of Georgia's chess-playing community. It is Frank's job to identify talented people from our volunteer pool and to direct them towards positions where their talents would be best used. As communications has become a bit more complex, the GCA is looking for a Communications Director. This volunteer would help streamline all communications operations from the website to the magazine and ensure that the organization communicates effectively to the membership as well as the public.

Improving communication to GCA members is paramount. I like to say that "tournaments are all about the results," and we need to decrease the time for players to read about the results. *Georgia Chess* magazine has been our venerable vehicle to be the periodical of record to archive our results; however, the magazine operation loses \$5 – 8 per subscription and no one has offered a solution for making the magazine a break-even publication. Evan Mah, an Expert player, a yearbook editor, a college newspaper editor, a successful Atlanta blogger, and a current columnist for *Atlanta* magazine has been consulted to create a publication that would be timely for Georgia players, yet still remain the periodical of record for GCA events. The idea is to create a blog similar to Chess Life Online, but to create a periodical that could also become a print version. Details are still being worked out.

As the GCA develops additional infrastructure, it is natural to look at the issues of Scholarship and Sponsorship. The GCA currently accepts donations on our website though we haven't received much. We are receptive to any proposals of scholarship or sponsorship, but believe that our best opportunity for sponsorship sustainability will lie with seeking corporate sponsorship in particular. We are looking for at least two individuals who would like to team up to develop a sponsorship program. Corporations these days are looking for organizations that will show them exactly how their money will be used, as well as periodic progress reports on how funds have been used thus far. We will not be able to initiate this program until the appropriate talent has been identified and we will look at any funding streams that would promote chess in Georgia. A committee is forming to examine current and future options. Participation from any interested persons is encouraged.

We believe that a dynamic organization that has a good working environment for volunteers will be capable of fostering an improved environment for playing chess that encourages sportsmanship, fair competition, and a family-friendly environment that players will want to return to again and again. We believe that with the right environment, demographics in chess will change favorably such that Chess would be perceived to be a more mainstream pastime within American culture, with a more balanced representation of the population. With everyone's help, it could very well become a reality.

-Fun Fong, President
Georgia Chess Association