

Society News — HELP!

Bob Stelloh, Treasurer, ASA — Hendersonville, North Carolina

At the recent convention in Atlanta, the Board of Directors reluctantly approved our budget for 2002. They were reluctant because the budget showed we will spend \$5,600 more than we will take in this year, even after trimming out some very desirable items we simply can't afford, such as a color membership brochure, and an expanded website. The only reason we can spend more than we take in is because we can dip into our Endowment Reserve of around \$40,000. While \$40,000 sounds like a lot of money, it won't cover many such years of losses.

The reason for the problem is simple: National keeps about \$21 of your \$25 dues (actually \$25 for at-large members and \$20 for chapter members), and the costs are about \$28 for each member, mostly for preparing, printing and mailing *The Azalean*.

The solution is also simple: distribute the cost of *The Azalean* across more members. We are printing 900 copies of each issue right now, at a cost of about \$6.45 per copy mailed, or about \$26 per member per year. Increasing the number of copies

printed to cover more members only adds about \$7 per member per year. That low \$7 is because many of the costs stay the same regardless of the number of copies printed, and the printing costs rise only slightly.

More arithmetic shows we would break even at around 1,100 members, up from in 2001. Unfortunately, it is hard to attract that many more members **unless you bring them in!** You know the value of azaleas in your life, and you know your friends with similar interests who are not yet members, so you are the ones who can do it.

Until you can bring those new members in, there are several other ways you can help. One is to **become a Life Member**, which is a true win-win situation for you and for the Society. You win because at the current low interest rates, you only get about \$10 or \$15 interest on the \$500 cost of a life membership, so you can buy your \$25 dues for that \$10 or \$15—just send us the \$500 instead of leaving it in the bank. The Society wins because we will treat the \$500 like an annuity, where we will use the interest plus a little bit from the principal each year

to pay your membership-related expenses. And we will save the \$1 or so cost of sending you a dues envelope each year.

If you don't have \$500 to invest that way, **consider paying your dues a few years in advance** instead of one year at a time, for another win-win situation. You save \$1 for each year you pay in advance up to five years, and the Society draws interest on the future years' dues. And we save the cost of sending you renewal envelopes for those future years.

Finally, consider becoming a **Contributing Member** by sending us \$50 instead of \$25, or a **Supporting Member** by sending \$100, or an **Endowment Member** by sending \$200. Here the win for you is the satisfaction of supporting your Azalea Society of America, and being able to deduct your contribution over \$25 on your income tax. Again, your gift goes into the Endowment Reserve to draw interest, and will be used only when Society expenses exceed income, as they will this year.

Our future is in your hands!

Board Action Item List

At the first Board of Directors meeting, April 17, 2002, President Joe Schild called for a special committee meeting to determine what actions the Society may take. The following lists the results of that special meeting.

- Check on whether reciprocal advertising among non-profit plant organizations is law or convention. **Barbara Stump**
- **Barbara Stump** will check on the cost of getting extra copies of the current *Azalean* covers, possibly with an application form on the back. Consider changing the format of the magazine to put an application on the inside cover.
- Write up blurbs to attract members, by geographic area, to include with the magazine cover to act as a "quick-and-dirty" color brochure for membership recruiting. **Bob Hobbs**
- **Joe Schild** will kick off an extended effort to write articles for other (related) magazines. Other Society officers and members will follow with additional articles, which we feel will be more effective than small, expensive ads in those magazines.
- Develop a poster with the Society logo to put in point-of-sale retail areas showing azaleas in bloom. **Maarten van der Giessen, Buddy Lee, Barbara Stump**
- Appoint a Liaison Director to ensure that chapters have, understand, and follow through on Action Items developed by the Board. **Bob Hobbs**
- Local chapters to open meetings to the public, advertise locally (as through arboreta, garden clubs, etc.) and have meetings with lectures and events. **All Chapters**
- Pursue an "Award of Merit" for plants, the costs of which would be paid by the winners. This would include a prominent ad showing the award; the Society name, address, logo; the plant name; and plant and Society contacts. **Buddy Lee**
- Develop a recognition program showing chapter membership progress (positive statements) in *The Azalean*, possibly with an annual award to the chapter with the largest increase. **Membership Committee**
- Develop a plant tag with the Azalea Society logo to promote the Society. **Buddy Lee, Maarten van der Giessen**
- Develop an Awards Program for outstanding members. **Dave Nanney, Bob Hobbs**