

# President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

When I joined the Azalea Society back in 2002, I knew little about azaleas, other than I thought they were beautiful. It's hard to believe that 15 years later, I'm president of the society. While I have learned a great deal in the last 15 years, one of the things I've learned is how little I know! I look forward to continuing my journey learning about azaleas.

I have had a number of years of experience at the chapter level as president or vice-president. I realize that the chapter is where the rubber meets the road. That is where most of the society action occurs. It is important that our chapters not only gain members, but retain them through offering of interesting programs and other activities of value to members. Our conventions are also essentially chapter activities conducted for the benefit of the society as a whole.

The question then becomes, what is the role of the national society? My simple answer is that it should support the high level goals of the society "to foster knowledge and improve standards of excellence with respect to azaleas" and provide support to the chapters and the general membership. Over the last several years, I'm proud that the national society has been taking steps to support these goals. The **Azalea Research Fund** has provided seed money for projects studying issues of concern to our communities. Our journal, *The Azalean*, is an excellent and informative publication. The initiative to digitize the journals and make them easily available to all, including the general public (for older issues), was a great step towards providing information on azaleas to the public. The recent rebuild of the ASA website not only provides a crisp, professional look to our portal, but also makes it much easier to find desired information.

Going forward, I plan to continue to focus on these initiatives, as well as a couple of additional areas. Membership has been a continual issue, mentioned in almost every president's message over the past 15 years. Our new membership chair, Robert Thau, is focused on "exposure," that is getting our message out to the general public. Robert has some exciting ideas which he will share with our chapters in the near future. I hope we can generate new chapters out of our increased membership. We should also grow our use of social media to get out the word. Use of social media will enable us to tap into a younger audience. We must not ignore the many good ideas at the chapter level. We will work to share these successful ideas among the chapters.

The board of directors also approved moving the Legacy Project to the national level. This initiative is an effort to maintain information and true copies of cultivars which may, or may not, have made it into the commercial market. I will be writing an update article on this initiative for a future issue of *The Azalean*. Hopefully a large number of our society members will participate in this project. As part of this initiative, I also hope to strengthen ties between the society, azalea nurseries, and public gardens.

I'm honored to be your president. I'm frankly blown away by the knowledge and abilities of many of the society members with whom I will be working. My goal is to build on the successes of the past. I look forward to your assistance and support.

*Best regards,  
Rick*



The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation, and appreciation of azaleas which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

## **Officers for 2017-2019**

**President** — Rick Bauer

**Vice President** — Charles A. Andrews, III

**Secretary** — Leslie Nanney

**Treasurer** — Paul Beck

**Immediate Past President** — J Jackson

## **Directors**

**Terms expire 2018**      **Terms expire 2019**

Larry Miller

Jim Campbell

Jo Ann Smith

Kevin McCorkle

Chris Wetmore

Sally Perkins

Chapter presidents

serve as ex-officio directors.

## **Chapters**

**Ben Morrison**  
(chartered May 1980)  
Budne Reinke, *Pres.*

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(chartered May 1980)  
Barbara Kirkwood, *Pres.*

**Louisiana**  
(chartered June 1981)  
Allen Owings, *Pres.*

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(chartered Oct. 1981)  
Beverly Knight, *Pres.*

**Texas**  
(chartered May 1989)  
Harold Hall, *Pres.*

**Vaseyi**  
(chartered June 2001)  
J Jackson, *Pres.*

**Lake Michigan**  
(chartered May 2003)  
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**Alabamense**  
(chartered May 2005)  
Patrick Thompson, *Pres.*

**Rev. John Drayton**  
(chartered May 2010)  
Tom Johnson, *Pres.*

**Central Carolinas**  
(chartered October 2013)  
Sandy Yakob, *Pres.*

## **At-Large Contact**

Chris Wetmore

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$30; life-membership for one or two persons at the same address is \$600. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society. For information and a membership application, write to Leslie Nanney, Secretary, 8646 Tuttle Road, Springfield, VA 22152 or visit [www.azaleas.org](http://www.azaleas.org).