

## Recap of 2008

In 2008 the SFTGG Board made a strong commitment to include the full membership in the Guild's decision making process, and to keep everyone very well informed about ongoing projects.

Toward these goals, we conducted five membership votes during the year, so that all members would have the opportunity to give input and vote on various issues of importance. To keep everyone informed, we sent out more than thirty Messages to Members by email, approximately one every two weeks, along with the Board messages in the quarterly Guidepost newsletter.

The Guild conducted a year-long Strategic Planning process, beginning with focus groups and followed by an in-depth survey. Several new policies and changes to the bylaws were proposed to implement the desires expressed by the members in the survey. All of the proposals were approved by overwhelming majority votes of the members, with a minimum of 74.4% approval. (By way of comparison, Barack Obama was elected with a 52% majority vote.)

On the Strategic Planning survey one member suggested the organization should have a little more flexibility. She pointed out that "Not everything is in black and white. We have millions of shades of gray colors!" What a good sentiment! It's true that many of us spend most of our time doing DMC work and so it makes sense that the Guild has a focus on that, but looking at those "millions of shades of gray colors" the Board tried in 2008 to make the organization more supportive and inclusive of those who do other kinds of work.

For example, we have some members who spend 100% of their work lives giving tours, e.g., working for per capita tour operators. However, oddly, until now the Guild has not been willing to bestow the title Certified Tour Guide on those who give tours full time! We are very proud to have corrected that this year. On the Strategic Planning Survey 76% of members said there should be some way to become certified just by giving tours, and on the Policies/Bylaws vote 74.7% approved the proposed method.

Some long-time members have voiced concern that there are not enough "new" Guild training tours for those who have been in the organization a long time. Also, members who lead many over-the-road tours (and some other members too) sometimes have difficulty attending the two Guild training tours that have been required to meet the Continuing Education requirement since there are only about 11 opportunities each year. With the recently implemented changes, it is now possible to use the excellent training programs given by organizations such as City Guides and the California Historical Society to meet our requirements. This makes Continuing Education more flexible, but does not weaken the requirement, since the newly allowed programs are strong educational resources. This change was requested by 80% of members on the Strategic Planning Survey and was approved by 84.4% on the Policies/Bylaws vote. Another

change that was approved is to allow a small portion of the tours for Certification to be over-the-road tours.

On another topic, nearly two-thirds of our tour guide members (65%) are Associates, yet it has never been possible for those members to be elected to the top leadership roles in our organization. The Guild has now eliminated this “second-class citizenship” by allowing Associates to fill all roles on the Board, including President and Vice President. This change was requested by 55% of members on the Strategic Planning Survey and was approved by 75.3% on the Policies/Bylaws vote. This change also has the pragmatic benefit of allowing the Guild to accept offers by qualified people who are willing to take on the work of leadership roles.

While we strongly believe in the value of Certification (and therefore send job leads first to Certified members), we have also made clear this year that the Guild supports all of its members, Associate and Certified, new and long-term — we’re not just a “club” to represent the interests of a few individuals as some have perceived in the past. We have stated in the Merit Hiring Policy that the most qualified Guild member should be hired for any job, regardless of certification status or seniority. This new policy was approved by 75.6% of members.

The Guild is now offering Liability Insurance, which was of interest to 83% of members.

We have updated the 2001 and 2004 Suggested Rate Sheets for DMCs with a new version for 2008, and, with the initiative of a group of members, have created an expanded Suggested Guidelines section for 2009. The 2008 Rate Sheet was approved by 73.5% of the members and presented to the DMCs in July. The 2009 documents are currently under consideration by the membership.

The Guild has created an Automated Job Referral System. Since this task is no longer able to be done manually by a volunteer, the automated system is a good substitute that should serve the organization for years to come. It was a complex project to implement, but has been working well since its launch in July. We estimate the system will pay for itself in less than two years, compared to having to pay someone to do the job.

We are finalizing the Guild’s first formal Policies and Procedures Manual. Though some policies have existed previously, others are new. We now will have all policies in one place, and future Boards can easily add to them, rather than having to re-invent the wheel each year.

We are also creating the Guild’s first formal Management Binder, which puts all of the organization’s most important information in one place, and is easily passed on from Board to Board.

We are pleased that two members became certified this year, and the Guild sponsored a food- and fun-based study session that had a great turnout.

We received fantastic publicity this year, with a TV appearance on the Jan Wahl Show on KRON. We also had continuing participation with SFCVB programs and with the SF Museum & Historical Society on the Mint Project.

Finally, we had a strong line-up of programs and training tours in 2008 including dine-around training, Wine Country, SF movie locations, Haight Ashbury, Victorian Homes, Muir Woods (led by the Chief Ranger), the Contemporary Jewish Museum, preview of the California Academy of Sciences, AT&T Park, City Tour, Mission Dolores, and the Columbarium. The City Tour had strong participation from DMC staff, which has been an important goal of the Guild.

Please join with fellow members at the Autumn General Meeting to celebrate the Guild's achievements in 2008 and prepare for a strong start to 2009. The meeting will be held Monday, November 17 in the Farallon Room at the Aquarium of the Bay at Pier 39, from 6-9 pm. Please bring your 2009 dues renewal checks and program verification forms (2 programs, but the General Meeting can count as one). Dues are \$50, but if you would like to purchase liability insurance for 2009, bring a check for \$130 (\$50 dues + \$80 insurance), payable to SFTGG. Donations of canned or boxed food or checks for the San Francisco Food Bank will be accepted. Limited free parking will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis (Pier 39 management is donating 50 passes for 3-hours of free parking).