

This expanded discussion grew out of a recent President's Column in the *Daylily Journal* about membership dues, charitable giving, and the role each of us plays in supporting AHS. Whether or not you saw that column, the larger question is worth exploring: what does it really take to sustain the American Daylily Society, and how do membership, volunteer service, philanthropy, and good stewardship work together to support our mission today and into the future?

Beyond \$30: How Membership, Giving, and Stewardship Support AHS

Rich Crider, AHS President

When you pay your \$30 AHS membership dues, have you ever wondered where that money goes?

It is a fair question—and the answer might surprise you.

One of the most visible benefits of membership is the *Daylily Journal*. Each year, AHS spends approximately **\$70,393** to prepare, print, and mail the Journal to approximately **3,658** members. By the time those costs are considered, a standard \$30 membership barely covers the cost of producing and delivering the Journal to that member.

That simple example illustrates something important about how the American Hemerocallis Society operates.

AHS is a nonprofit organization. Membership dues provide an important financial foundation, but they cannot support everything the Society does—or everything we would like to do for our members and the daylily community.

The rest depends upon something that has always been at the heart of AHS: people willing to give a little more.

Sometimes that gift is money.

Very often, it is time, talent, knowledge, and service.

A Society Built on People

AHS could not accomplish its mission without volunteers.

Across the Society, members serve as regional and club leaders, garden and exhibition judges, committee members, board members, writers, photographers, garden hosts, convention volunteers, technology volunteers, mentors, educators, and in countless other roles.

Our clubs and regions are especially important. Much of what people experience as “AHS” happens locally and regionally—through meetings, shows, garden tours, educational programs, conventions, friendships, and opportunities to share our enthusiasm for daylilies.

Those activities do not happen because someone at the national organization simply decides they should. They happen because people volunteer to make them happen.

That is one of the great strengths of AHS. It is also something we should never take for granted.

Our members are not simply customers purchasing services from an organization. They are participants in a community that depends upon people contributing what they can.

For some, that contribution is leadership.

For others, it may be opening a garden, writing an article, judging a show, serving on a committee, helping with technology, mentoring a new member, volunteering at an event, or simply saying, “I can help.”

Those contributions matter.

What Financial Support Makes Possible

Financial contributions are another important part of that equation.

Membership dues alone cannot support all of the programs, services, and opportunities AHS provides today, much less the investments we need to make for tomorrow.

Donations help support scholarships and education, youth activities, grants, awards and recognition programs, technology, outreach, preservation of historical and registration information, and other programs that advance the mission of AHS.

Some of those programs are especially visible. Others happen quietly behind the scenes.

AHS maintains several endowments and designated funds devoted to scholarships, education, and related pursuits. During the past five years, AHS has awarded approximately **\$31,000** in scholarships to **10** recipients.

Those scholarships represent something larger than the dollar amount alone. In many cases, funds given years ago continue to create educational opportunities today.

That is stewardship across generations.

AHS also supports youth activities and opportunities designed to introduce young people to daylilies, gardening, and our Society. If we want AHS to remain strong in the future, we

cannot simply hope another generation discovers us. We need to give young people opportunities to participate, learn, build relationships, and discover for themselves why so many of us developed a lifelong interest in this plant and this community.

Financial resources also support the programs through which we recognize achievement.

AHS recognizes hybridizers whose work advances the daylily, as well as individuals whose service, leadership, knowledge, and contributions have strengthened the Society and the broader daylily community. These awards do more than recognize accomplishments. They help document our history, celebrate excellence, and encourage others to contribute.

Our resources also help preserve an extraordinary body of daylily history and registration information that has been built over generations. Maintaining and improving access to that information is both a service to today's members and a responsibility to those who will come after us.

Technology increasingly touches nearly everything we do as well—from membership and registrations to judging, awards, communications, education, and access to information. Maintaining existing systems requires resources. Improving them requires resources too.

All of these things are part of what AHS membership helps make possible.

But membership dues cannot do it alone.

Where AHS Stands Financially

I believe any organization asking its members for financial support has an obligation to be candid about where it stands.

AHS is financially stable.

We are meeting our obligations and paying our bills. This is not an appeal prompted by a financial crisis.

At the same time, we are not an organization with unlimited resources, nor are we sitting on more money than we reasonably need.

AHS has been extraordinarily fortunate to receive several very generous gifts in recent years. Those contributions made a tremendous difference. They strengthened our financial position and helped put the Society on firmer footing.

We should be grateful for that generosity.

We should also be careful not to confuse improved financial stability with having all of the resources necessary to meet our current and future needs.

That distinction matters.

Our members and their expectations continue to change. The ways people communicate, learn, participate, and interact with organizations are changing. Technology changes rapidly. Clubs and regions need support. Educational opportunities can be expanded. Young people need meaningful ways to participate. Historical information needs to be preserved. Member resources need to improve.

And we need the ability to respond to opportunities we may not even know about today.

Maintaining what we have requires resources.

Building what comes next requires them too.

Stewardship Works Both Ways

That brings us to an idea that I believe is central to this entire conversation: **stewardship**.

AHS depends upon the stewardship of its members, and in return, we have an obligation to be good stewards of what our members entrust to us.

Members entrust this organization with their time.

They entrust us with their volunteer service and professional expertise.

They entrust us with dues and charitable contributions.

Some have created endowments or contributed to funds intended to support particular purposes for years to come.

Others have chosen to remember AHS as part of their legacy.

Each of those gifts carries a responsibility.

Good stewardship means using resources thoughtfully and for their intended purposes. It means balancing today's needs with tomorrow's responsibilities. It means investing in programs and infrastructure that advance our mission while maintaining the financial strength necessary to sustain the organization.

It also means asking whether the things we have always done are still the best ways to serve our members.

Good stewardship does not mean simply accumulating money and being reluctant to use it.

And it does not mean spending money simply because it is available.

It means putting our resources to work carefully and deliberately where they can best advance the mission of AHS.

It also means transparency.

Members should understand what it takes to operate their Society, where our resources come from, and the kinds of choices we must make about how those resources are used.

That is part of the responsibility we accept when members entrust those resources to us.

Investing in What Comes Next

Financial stability gives AHS an opportunity.

It gives us the ability to think beyond the next bill or the next immediate problem and ask a more important question:

What should AHS become?

How can we better support our clubs and regions?

How can we provide educational opportunities in ways that meet members where they are?

How can we welcome people who are just discovering daylilies?

How can we engage young people and give them meaningful opportunities to participate?

How can we preserve decades of knowledge and history while making that information easier to access?

How can technology make participation in AHS simpler rather than more complicated?

And how can we continue to recognize and support the hybridizers, volunteers, educators, leaders, and members whose contributions make this Society what it is?

Those are not simply financial questions.

But accomplishing them requires financial resources.

That is why continued support matters even when an organization is financially stable.

Every Gift Does Not Have to Be Large

One of the most important things I hope members take from this conversation is that supporting AHS does not require a major gift.

Large donations can obviously have a tremendous impact, and we are enormously grateful for them.

But many smaller gifts can have a tremendous impact too.

If members who are able choose to contribute something beyond their annual dues—whether that is \$25, \$50, \$100, or another amount—those contributions together provide resources that allow AHS to do more.

There are also other ways people sometimes choose to support nonprofit organizations that are important to them.

Depending upon individual circumstances, charitable giving may be incorporated into retirement planning, including giving associated with Required Minimum Distributions. Others may choose to include nonprofit organizations in their estate planning.

These decisions are highly personal.

AHS cannot provide tax, financial, legal, or estate-planning advice, and the rules and benefits associated with charitable giving depend upon individual circumstances. If these options are of interest to you, I encourage you to speak with your financial, tax, legal, or estate-planning advisor about what may be appropriate for you.

Sometimes one of the most meaningful gifts a person can make is simply deciding that something that mattered to them during their lifetime should continue to matter after them.

Your Time Matters Too

And please remember that not every contribution has a dollar sign attached to it.

AHS needs financial resources.

We also need people.

Perhaps you have professional experience that could help solve a problem.

Maybe you enjoy writing, photography, education, technology, finance, communications, gardening, organizing events, or working with young people.

Perhaps you know more about daylilies than you realize and could help someone who is just getting started.

Maybe you have a few hours available rather than a few dollars.

There is value in all of it.

The future of AHS will not be built by a handful of people doing everything.

It will be built by many people doing something.

Something Worth Caring For

I hope this provides a little more context about why we talk about membership, volunteering, charitable giving, and stewardship together.

They really are parts of the same conversation.

Membership dues provide a foundation.

Volunteers turn ideas into action.

Donors provide resources that allow us to support programs, meet new needs, and invest in the future.

And good stewardship ensures that all of those contributions are used responsibly.

If AHS and the daylily community have been meaningful to you, I hope you will consider what role you might play in continuing that work—through your time, your talents, a financial contribution, or some combination of the three.

There is also an especially good opportunity for financial contributions to have additional impact right now. **General Fund contributions to AHS are currently being matched through 2027.**

You can learn more about ways to support AHS, including the funds and programs available for charitable contributions, here on the **AHS Donations page**.

Whether you give your time, your talents, your dollars—or some combination of the three—thank you.

The American Hemerocallis Society exists today because generations of people cared enough to contribute something to it.

We have inherited something worth caring for.

And something worth investing in.