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**MEET US AT THE 2023 CONFERENCE OR HOW GOES THE BATTLE, JOHN?**

*By Mike Movius*

It has been three long and dreadful years since a REAL opportunity for the CWRT Congress to meet in person. During that time, Round Tables have experienced venue closures and loss of members. Some CWRTs have closed their doors forever. And yet, there has also been some very good news. Many Round Tables have experienced the growth of new and younger members. Some have expanded their reach through Sister CWRT relationships. And one CWRT has spawned an international Civil War virtual study movement into South America and Europe.

What can we learn from those experiences? How does that translate to our local CWRTs and prevent the negative while accentuating the positive? Of course, the answer is in the approach CWRT leaders have adopted, their emphasis on the importance of their organizations and members, and a willingness to take on new challenges.

During the last weekend of August, we will be bringing you stories of hope and regeneration at our first conference since the pandemic. And it will be held in GETTYSBURG! The theme is **Membership Expansion and Retention**. So, expect great ideas and new approaches.

We have been blessed with partnerships that include the Seminary Ridge Museum & Education Center, Adams County Historical Society, the Gettysburg Foundation, and the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College. Their participation is indicative of the importance they place on the sustainability of CWRTs.

We will hold several panel discussions, led by leaders in the Civil War community, on subjects such as *Coming Out of the Pandemic*, *Organizational Culture*, and *Community Partnerships*. We'll also present new and innovative ways to attract new members. And your voice will be a part of these discussions.

Come to Gettysburg and learn how you can truly become a leader for sustainability. Come to Gettysburg and be inspired to lead your Round Table into the future. Come to Gettysburg and develop a relationship with others such that together you can make the study of the Civil War an important part of your community.

We are putting the final touches on the program agenda. Follow our progress at: <http://www.cwrtcongress.org/2023-conference.html>



**SAVE THE DATES OF AUGUST 25, 26, AND 27, 2023 IN GETTYSBURG!**

## NO FEAR LEADERSHIP

By Mike Movius, President

As we begin our third year as a registered 501(c)3, and our eighth year overall, I'm reflecting about my CWRT journey and my metamorphosis as a nonprofit leader. It was my experience as a local CWRT leader that made me dubious about the future of round tables and was the genesis of the CWRT Congress.

Let me explain. I became a member of the round table in Seattle much by happenstance. My best friend gave me a book he enjoyed called *Confederates in the Attic*. As a side note, I met Rob for the first time just last summer. The story mentioned a Civil War Round Table in the UK. I thought that that might be a bit difficult to attend, so I conducted an Internet search and found that there was one in Seattle.

Their website was minimalistic... and that included the size of the fonts and lack of images. It was truly a barebones site. But I attended a meeting and learned some things about the Civil War. Over the next few weeks, I attended a board meeting and suggested that the website underrepresented the organization and volunteered to spruce it up. Since it was looked at as an unimportant item, the board agreed.

Then I talked with the current webmaster, and I found out why it was so meager. He told me that the board continued to ask him to remove pages of information he thought was relevant. So, with that

in mind, I developed a broad, inclusive process of transformation. It included categories of high priority, medium priority, and low priority. Few items were in the high priority category, but as we went through the process, and over the next 18 months, we added most medium and a few low priority items.

At one point, it occurred to me that if we were to add PayPal to the website, we could more readily receive payments for dues and meals. I did the research and brought it up as an agenda item to the board. The discussion exploded!! The treasurer threatened to resign if we adopted an online payment system. The program guy began shouting about the risk, the problems such as refunds, etc., and the idiocy of such an idea. Cooler heads prevailed, however when it was decided to allow PayPal only for dues on a test basis. The following year, 55% of membership renewals were paid through PayPal.

When I became president of that round table, I initiated all sorts of innovations and brought up even more ideas for change. We began to hold lectures in local neighborhoods and adjacent cities. We became a color bearer in the Civil War Trust and financed through direct donations and a raffle of color bearer event tickets. We held

a strategic planning session and developed five goals for the upcoming year. We began a member recognition system. We started giving new members minié balls, taking their photos, and celebrating them on our Facebook page and newsletter. We began recognizing members when their birthday month came around. We began documenting the Civil War veterans buried in Washington State. We successfully used Meetup to attract new members and to market the CWRT. We started expecting 2-minute reports from board members on their activities at monthly meetings. And many more.

I learned that there will always be negative Nellies. The 'we tried that before and it failed' crowd. I learned that if an idea fails, it doesn't reflect on me, it just wasn't the right time or circumstance. I learned that different members are motivated by different activities. I learned that people like to be consulted rather than just fed the same Pablum. And I learned that recognizing people for their contributions of time and talents is important for them and the organization.

With all that said, perhaps you have a better understanding of the culture of the CWRT Congress and why we have removed barriers to entry by not charging dues, seeking round table or individual member-



## IMPROVEMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND NETWORKING

And I learned that recognizing people for their contributions of time and talents is important for them and the organization.

ships, constantly badgering about renewals, suggesting rather than telling, and asking about critical issues and how various CWRTs handle them. I'd like to hear about your experiences and learn how you addressed your challenges. In fact, if you attend our upcoming Sustainability Conference August 25-27 in Gettysburg, I guarantee that your voice will be heard.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CWRTS

CWRT Congress with Craig D. Apperson, MS, LMHC, CCCJS

There is a growing trend of CWRTs closing due to lack of interest. There are those members who give up and stay home because they're tired of the struggle. And then there are those who have to work twice as hard to try and keep their CWRTs together – they're tired too. We asked Craig D. Apperson, MS, LMHC, CCCJS, of Public Safety & Behavioral Health Consultants about this situation.

**CWRT Congress: Has there been research done on how the pandemic has affected volunteer organizations?**

**Apperson:** I have conducted a review of the research on how nonprofits have coped with the pandemic, so many of my comments reflect what is going on

in other organizations. Most of the research that exists focuses on volunteers for organizations that were directly impacted by COVID, such as medical and social services. They can't keep staff let alone volunteers. Special interest groups, such as CWRTs, are not as well researched in the United States.

One of the better studies was conducted in Australia, where they conducted structured, in-depth interviews with volunteers in 14 different non-profit organizations and five themes were generated by this method: 1) **What's important to me?** (i.e., personal values relative to organizational values) 2) **Learning and growth** (i.e., personal growth experience potential) 3) **Somewhere to belong** (i.e., sense of belongingness) 4) **Meet me in the middle** (i.e., willingness of the

organization to accommodate to my needs) 5) **Not just a number** (i.e., having a role that allows for some degree of recognition and/or achievement). These themes offer leadership ideas on how to revise mission statements to support members.

**CWRT Congress: How can CWRT leadership energize their membership?**

**Apperson:** It is important that leadership maintains a focus on how people evolve in the various organizational roles and why they volunteered in the first place. In the research, volunteers highlighted that their primary motivation involved developing a sense of community. The style that most volunteers said they appreciated was a proactive and supportive approach. Volunteers are more

**Volunteers highlighted that their primary motivation involved developing a sense of community.**

likely to stay and be engaged if they feel included and recognized for their efforts.

**CWRT Congress: Are people just tired of the fight?**

**Apperson:** The pandemic created a sense of loss and distress for many. Some are struggling to return to pre-pandemic activities. Our culture hasn't seen anything like this since the 1918 flu pandemic. In more normal times, interests change, people move on to other activities, and they are dying in some cases, so you have a natural attrition rate. What can you do to offset or mitigate this? To a degree, that requires a different focus as the pandemic is slowing down. Since a lot of this type of volunteering is done via the internet, pandemic issues wouldn't directly impact that.

*Continued on Page 4*



Antietam. Photo: Stuart Harder, Twin Cities CWRT

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CWRTS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Those choosing to meet in person may have to make accommodations for those who remain at risk for communicable diseases.

Leadership must stay focused on building a resilient culture, where members assist one another. A warm, welcoming experience leaves one with good feelings, almost regardless of the nature of the organization.

For soldiers who have been through the initial stages of treatment for PTSD, research has found that an effective method to keep people engaged is to reach out through emails, telephone calls, and social media just checking in to

find out how people are doing. The soldiers' reaction is 'it's amazing that you care.' Some of those simple approaches doing outreach would have a lot of impact over time.

### **CWRT Congress: What else can be done?**

**Apperson:** We live in a mobile society and people are moving, so it would be useful to have a process that if you move, the organization can find a program for you in your new town.

People generally are motivated by being around people they like to be around. It helps to give members the opportunity to get to know each other. Part of the mission really needs to recognize the affiliation that we all need in

our lives. That's a good, healthy thing that we should all aspire toward, building a community. So a fellowship period an hour before the formal program with food, books, and artifacts is helpful. It may be that some CWRTs lose members because they may not have that connection anymore after several years of pandemic. Even if you are having a Zoom meeting, host a happy hour and set aside time to talk about what's going on in their world. These are some basic ideas to consider.

Craig D. Apperson can be reached at [Craig.Apperson@comcast.net](mailto:Craig.Apperson@comcast.net)

**Leadership must stay focused on building a resilient culture, where members assist one another.**



Major General George Gordon Meade, Cemetery Ridge, Gettysburg

Photo: Mike Movius

## REVIVING THE CENTRAL DELAWARE CWRT

By Carol VanOrnum

The Central Delaware CWRT, located in Dover, had to make the tough decision to go on a hiatus in September 2020. Their member numbers were severely dwindling, in large part due to the pandemic. More than anything else, however, it was a financial issue as their meeting place became too expensive to keep.

They were determined to return together, having formed in 1994, and so the core group of volunteers, led by President Bobbi Steele Wilkins, stayed in touch over the next year. In July of 2021, their leadership group – Bobbi, Vice President and program director Polly Steenhagen, Past Treasurer Brenda Hiott, incoming Treasurer Jim Tribett, and Past President and now Director Tom Smith – began to look at how they could do things better as they planned for a revival that was set for September. Former

President Glenn Layton was invaluable in helping as well.

They reached out to the CWRT Congress in September. Rich Jankowski, Director of the Ambassador Team for the Congress, visited them in person and made several suggestions on moving forward, later following up on their progress. Bobbi was much appreciative for the help in getting refocused.

One issue they faced was that these people were doing all the work. Remarkably, each of these board members had served in almost every position at least once at one time or another. It was a “musical chairs” rotation of service. They needed other members to step up and help. Despite the frustration of such a small core of volunteers, Bobbi shared, “I feel very blessed to have this group.”

The second issue was that they hadn’t raised their dues in twelve or fifteen years. They had raised the meal prices, based on

what they were charged, with an additional one or two dollars on top for profit. Beginning in July 2023, their dues will raise an additional \$5.00 at each level.

Their new member care was severely lacking, according to Bobbi. “I now make sure I introduce myself to new members and find out what their interests are. As President, I want to know them on a more personal basis.”

Currently, their speakers come from within. Many of the board members have several presentations from which to choose. They are working to get funding together to get outside speakers. Bobbi realizes there are several nearby round tables who could participate in reciprocity of speakers. The Heritage Shores CWRT of Bridgeville, DE did that for their first live speaker events in November and December 2022. The first three programs of 2023 will be presented by current CDCWRT

**“I now make sure I introduce myself to new members and find out what their interests are.”**

**Bobbi Steele Wilkins**

members.

Finally, their Board is brainstorming on ways to promote themselves in the community. The Dover Air Museum holds a “history of flight” type of program once a month. Bobbi suggested that it would be fun to present in period attire a program on the balloon corps during the Civil War. There is a genealogy society which does outreach programs. She hopes to present in-depth details of Delaware soldiers along with that group. They are also looking into returning to school visits and participate in homeschooling group events to present in period attire.

Reviving a dark Civil War Round Table is a tough, uphill endeavor. To date, the Central Delaware CWRT has 23 members with hopes to grow more. But they are optimistic about their future. You can find them on their Facebook page at [Central Delaware Civil War Round Table](#).



Central Delaware CWRT’s Facebook Page

Members of the 2nd Delaware Volunteer Infantry. Their reckless bravery at the Battle of Antietam gained the 2nd Delaware the sobriquet, “The Crazy Delawares.”

Source: [2nddelaware.com/UnitHistory.html](http://2nddelaware.com/UnitHistory.html)

## HOW ARE YOUR VISITORS TREATED?

By Carol VanOrnum

An anonymous comment was posted at the conclusion of our blog post of [November 27, 2022](#) for the *Emerging Civil War*. It was most concerning to the CWRT Congress:

*"It is unfortunate that so many CWRT's are failing. Equally unfortunate is that some CWRT's are their own worst enemy. I recently moved to another state and joined the local CWRT. I attended four meetings, and nobody, including the president, made any effort to speak to me or to make me feel welcome. I tried to start conversations with other members with no success. I felt like the unwanted guest at a family dinner. So, I stopped going and will never go back."*

It was followed by a comment from another reader:

*"Had the exact same experience in my various moves during my military career ... members were uniformly unfriendly and clubbish ... didn't seem to care if they had new members or not."*

This lack of awareness and care was a wasted opportunity by a couple of CWRTs to sustain, or even expand, their organizations. A leader's care and consideration for visitors should be a top priority. The message should always be 'we're so pleased that you came.' And, it is up to leaders to ensure that occurs every time.

Janet Whaley, President of the

Pasadena CWRT, shared, "Now that we've returned to in-person meetings, we've had very good luck at having two designated Board members serve as the official "greeters" for the Pasadena CWRT. They greet all attendees at the door and make sure they are on our mailing list to receive future meeting notifications." That response shows initiative and leadership.

The CWRT Congress recently conducted a Visitor Experience Survey. Of the 53 responses, 83% took the time to allow for visitor introductions at the beginning of their meetings. However, fewer than half have a visitor greeting program. Those that do told us they felt improvements could be made.

The responses to the question of why your CWRT does not have a greeter program were rather dismal: "No one is interested"; "It's not necessary"; "We aren't interested in visitors"; and some responded "We never thought about it before." For those CWRTs who recognized the value of cultivating visitors to grow their memberships, we asked if they followed up with the visitors post-meeting. More than half said yes. Matt Farina of the Rufus Barringer CWRT shared that their visitors received the next three months of newsletters, and he claims that about half of those join. After this survey, 69% said they would consider collecting

visitor feedback in the future. That's good news.

So, to review, there's much more a CWRT can do to be welcoming. We suggest you officially register all meeting attendees and track their information. Introduce them or have them introduce themselves with a few words about who they are at the beginning of the meeting. Follow up with visitors. Tell them how happy you are they attended and invite them back. Be sure to include meeting dates, notices, partner events, etc.

All of these suggestions are found in the CWRT Congress' [Sustainability Challenge](#), specifically in Modules four through six. There's more there, and we invite you to explore the Challenge.

**"We've had very good luck at having two designated Board members serve as the official greeters..."**

**Janet Whaley  
Pasadena CWRT**

Bill Miller, President of the Williamsburg CWRT, offered this: "It boils down to this simple phrase: 'This is my last chance to make a good first impression.' My personal philosophy has been successful, and I continue to work very hard to follow my mantra every minute of every day."



Photo Library of Congress and recently shared on Garry Adelman's Facebook page.

## LYNCHBURG CWRT—MANY WAYS A SUCCESS

By Carol VanOrnum

Lynchburg CWRT's December speaker, Lt. Col. Harold Knudsen, shared his experience. "I spoke to the Lynchburg CWRT last Tuesday. A good turnout - about 60 or more. A few first-time attendees and about half a dozen young people - younger than 35. Good group. The president does a good job. He is energetic and motivated; he has a great venue at an old hotel downtown and takes care of his speaker with a nice hotel room. These are some key attributes to having a successful round table."

President Kevin Shroyer explained why. Located in the heart of the Eastern Theater,

Lynchburg has access to a treasure trove of quality speakers, and Shroyer knows them all - park rangers, historians, educators, and more. He values the speakers' expertise and reputation and works hard to treat them well. So much so, that many speakers offer to return before they leave.

LCWRT feels fortunate to meet in historic downtown Lynchburg at the Lynchburg Grand Hotel, where the food is great, and the accommodations are superior. The LCWRT has approximately 100 dues-paying members, and an average of 50 to 60 attend the meetings.

They are also fortunate to be in the heart of several universities

and colleges. Liberty University has a strong history program. In fact, two of its history professors are members of the round table. Those professors encourage their students to attend the meetings. "Once the seed has been planted," Shroyer adds, "I think that most eventually join. The dues are only \$10 for students, so we want to make it as easy as possible to get them to come."

The LCWRT is not without its challenges, however. Shroyer has been president the last six years, and he's served in that capacity four or five other times over the past decades. He thoroughly enjoys serving as president and feels appreciated by the members. But he also

arranges speakers, edits the newsletter *The Skirmish Line*, and runs the Facebook page. He hopes that others will join him in running the organization - a common issue many CWRTs face. In the meantime, LCWRT continues to grow its membership and provide quality speakers in the Eastern Theater.



Photo: NPS

## HONORING A LEGEND—ED BEARSS

By Mary Kloik

Although it has been more than two years since his passing, the

**Together, we will ensure that this incredible man's indelible legacy will remain for generations to come.**

Civil War community still feels the loss of Ed Bearss keenly. He was a giant across the entire fields of history and preservation but held special fondness for the Round Table movement. And the feeling was mutual—Bearss is likely to remain the gold standard against which all speakers and guides are judged for years to come.

In the immediate wake of his passing, the American Battlefield Trust worked with the Bearss family to create a memorial fund in his honor, focused on creating a war chest

that would enable us to move quickly and proactively to protect additional lands associated with sites of his beloved Vicksburg Campaign. Donations have been put to good use, helping acquire critical lands at Champion Hill and elsewhere.

Despite the passage of time, as more and more Round Tables returned to their traditional calendars post-pandemic, they felt a Bearss-shaped hole in their schedules and their hearts. Many expressed a desire to honor his memory through a communal contribution to a

cause close to his heart. Responding to this sentiment, the ABT has re-tooled our original memorial fund to better accommodate this goal, recognizing that individual groups will follow their own established protocols for collecting member gifts for submission. Together we will ensure that this incredible man's indelible legacy will remain for generations to come.

To donate, click [HERE](#). *In Memory of Ed Bearss, American Battlefield Trust.*

**GIVING TUESDAY— NOVEMBER 29, 2022**

# GIVING TUESDAY

*By Andrew Mizsak*

On Tuesday, November 29, 2022, the CWRT Congress held its largest philanthropic effort of the calendar year with Giving Tuesday. Giving Tuesday was established in 2012 at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in New York City as a way to support efforts to fund programming and other efforts of that organization. Giving Tuesday has grown to a global effort to support the works of non-profits and other organizations whose missions are to advance causes and initiatives that enhance communities.

Our CWRT Congress Giving Tuesday efforts reached our goal and raised \$2,642, of which we donated \$1,321 to the American Battlefield Trust expressly for the Restoration and Interpretation sections of the ABT. These are restricted funds that can only be used for that purpose. Daniel Davis, Senior Education Manager for the American Battlefield Trust said, "We cannot thank the CWRT community enough for their generous support. Their gift will assist us as we restore hallowed landscapes and educate the public on our shared American story."

The Congress' portion of the Giving Tuesday contributions are earmarked for our upcoming Sustainability Conference in Gettysburg. Room rental, tour bus and driver and a host of expenses not covered by conference fees will be offset by those funds. We wish to thank every person and entity that donated. It is truly a blessing to be part of the CWRT community.

Giving Tuesday is important because it allows individuals and organizations to support causes that are important to them and make a meaningful impact. Many organizations count on Giving Tuesday as their major philanthropic campaign of their calendar year.

In the coming years, we will strive to keep that mission alive.

Giving Tuesday 2023 is set for Tuesday, November 28, 2023.

Sweetwater Creek / New Manchester Mill, located southwest of Marietta, Georgia. General Sherman's troops removed the workers and burned the textile mill. The mill and town were never rebuilt.

Photo: Nancy Harder, Twin Cities CWRT





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Marietta Confederate Cemetery. The inscription reads: *Representing the ladies who dedicated their time to bury the men and maintain the graves. Jane B. Glover donated the parcel of land for the burials of soldiers killed at Chickamauga. Mary Green oversaw the return of Confederate bodies from North Georgia to this common burial ground.* Photo: Nancy Harder, Twin Cities CWRT