

BEST PRACTICES

Starting a Local Chapter Introduction from AAW Membership Chair



Here are some suggestions for those who are working to bring together a group of turners in your area and anticipate forming a chapter of the AAW.

With a small group of interested woodworkers and turners (perhaps as few as 4-5 people)...

First Meeting

Set up a first meeting. The content of the program is important. Find a central location (woodworking business, local high school, community college, grange hall, church, bank, member's shop or place of business.) Arrange to have name tags and refreshments. Get contact information for all attendees, including names, addresses, preferred phone number, and email address.

Put out a news release at least two weeks before the first meeting. Send a short, well-written announcement of the meeting to all local papers. List why, where, when, and what you plan to do. Provide contact information where you can be reached for additional information.

Keep the goals broad but plan a variety of programs to attract people with a wide spectrum of skill levels and interests.

Use those people who come as resources. Encourage even small contributions, ideas, or suggestions. Have attendees give their names and experiences in a round-robin style.

At the first meeting, set the time and place for the next meeting and select at least a president, secretary, treasurer, and newsletter chairperson. Have a "show & tell" at each meeting, encouraging everyone to participate. Follow presentations with additional discussions.

Program Possibilities- slides, demonstrations, video (with discussions), shop visits, tool sharpening, tool selection & sources, wood identification & selection, identification of local trees that would be suitable for turning, jigs & fixtures, special techniques, chucks, finishing, power & hand sanding, boring, threading, pricing, words to sell, etc.

Community Involvement

- Place displays of woodturnings in local storefronts and arrange demonstrations at local high schools, church groups, fraternal organizations, 4-H, scouts, street fairs, sidewalk sales, wood working retail stores, local craft organizations or shows, state fairs, etc. Contact the AAW office for brochures.
- Contact hardware, lumber, and tool outlets, some of which may offer discounts.
- Establish a community project and support a worthy cause.
- Seek out old tools, lathes, “old timers,” and local history connected with lathe work (pictures, people, places, artifacts).
- Set up a “watch one, teach one” process.

Second Meeting

Establish some goals, bylaws, constitution, and a uniform meeting schedule, such as the 2nd Tuesday of the month.

Set dues based on realistic costs of keeping the chapter afloat for a year. Consider including AAW dues for each member as a part of the local chapter dues.

Have a good program (not too long) and introduce every attendee with name tags.

Conduct a “show & tell” at each meeting and encourage participation from everyone.

Try a challenge project. Give out 4-7 pieces of some special wood and request each recipient to bring it to the next meeting turned and finished.

Start building a chapter library of catalogs, books, and DVDs.

Newsletter

- Circulate a newsletter soon after each meeting or at least one week before the next meeting.
- Include a review of the previous meeting and information about the next meeting.
- Include personal notes about members, awards from shows, trips, demonstrations given, and articles published.
- Discuss wood, tools, offers to help, shop sharing, etc.
- Provide some sort of humor – cartoon, philosophical sayings, etc.
- List names and information about new members.
- List show and sale opportunities in your area.
- Provide the names and contact information about the chapter leadership.

Summary

Chapter success will depend on the leadership, activities, and enthusiasm of its members. Consider developing a 1-year cycle of events, planned in advance, so members can make preparation (and pieces). An annual event (picnic, show, auction, public display, demonstration) will help keep the group looking ahead and moving forward.

Success of the American Association of Woodturners will be reflected by the vigorous qualities shown at the chapter level.

For more information, please contact the AAW Membership & Chapters Chairperson, or the AAW headquarters. inquiries@woodturner.org.