

The story of HSA (by Mike Seliger)

The concept of a special interest group focused on healing was first proposed by Gail Rosen, based on discussions she had with others who cared about this area. When told by NSN that special interest groups required a specific number of signatures, she mobilized people at one of NSN's annual conferences, and collected over 500 signatures to start the SIG, while only 30 were required. An anonymous donor provided seed money for initial program activity.

Gail served as the first chairperson of HSA, guiding it through its formative years, during which its website, listserve, journal (Diving on the Moon), newsletter, and series of workshops and teleconferences became regular parts of its activities.

In addition, HSA participated with preconference workshops at each NSN conference, and offered a preconference concert often featuring the presenters at the preconference event. The preconference workshops addressed topics that were meaningful for many throughout the storytelling community and frequently beyond.

According to its bylaws, HSA also holds at least one, and frequently two annual meetings of its membership per year, including one at the NSN annual conference. Until Covid disrupted that, this year, the annual meetings served as opportunities to engage members in the plans and activities of HSA

The main sources of revenue for HSA were dues and revenue from the preconference program and concert. Many activities, including the listserve, workshops, teleconferences, and website materials were made available free, as this was consistent with HSA's mission.

The time came, when in spite of some exciting program activity, many of the original active people who had developed and sustained HSA, chose to pursue other roles, leaving maintaining the programs that had been developed, in the hands of a very small team, primarily Lani Peterson and Lorna Czarnota. After several years, both of them chose to step down from their role at the same time, with Gail and Laura Simms stepping back into leadership roles.

About a year later, Gail had decided to step down, and asked me to assume the coordination role. There were no other viable choices at the time and I accepted that responsibility.

Allison Cox who had been one of HSA's founders, became our first, minimally paid, staff person. As coordinator, she carried out the major day to day administrative responsibilities, while always checking to make sure she was carrying out the intent of

the executive committee, while I maintained liaison to NSN and worked with those people who cared to participate as members of the executive committee and HSA's various program efforts.

Allison served as editor of HSA's journal, and is the author/ editor of a wonderful pair of books, The Healing Heart: Families, and The Healing Heart, Communities, both of which provide relevant stories shared by storytellers with useful guidance on how these professional tellers used the stories in support of healing in various forms.

When Gemma Benton replaced Allison in the coordinator/ staff role, she encouraged us to think about new technologies, but it took Zoom and Covid to fully convince us to pursue those opportunities. (We have not had even a minimally paid staff person for more than two years!)

I am not going to overwhelm you with lists of the great preconference workshops that HSA delivered over the years, but rest assured, they and the concerts offered, and the teleconferences, and the journal, all were wonderful, and provided rewarding, educational and or entertainment experiences for so many participants.

A lot of that material can be found on HSA's Website. Much of this material is available on our website.