



Neighborhood Group Coordinator's Guide

An ASG Leadership Library Publication

American Sewing Guild, Inc.
9660 Hillcroft Street, Suite 510
Houston, TX 77096-3866

713-729-3000
713-729-9230 (Fax)
www.asg.org

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This publication is intended to help an American Sewing Guild neighborhood group coordinator do her/his job. In any situation in which advice given in this guide contradicts policies in the *Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters*, the latest edition or amendment(s) to the *Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters* will prevail.

The neighborhood group coordinator is encouraged to speak with the chapter president and the other members of her/his chapter's Chapter Advisory Board and with the Chapter Development Administrator for additional help or clarification.

For purposes of conciseness, the term "neighborhood group" as used in this guide encompasses special interest groups and youth-oriented groups..

If someone in your chapter is organizing or working with a youth-oriented group, please refer also to the manual entitled *Teach Another Generation (TAG) Guide for ASG Chapters* for additional guidelines for working with minors.

References in this guide to the ASG website refer to www.asg.org.

Any comments or suggestions regarding this guide may be directed to the chair of the ASG Board of Directors.

Table of Contents

Section 1	Overview	1-1
	What Does the Neighborhood Group Coordinator Do?	1-2
	Sharing the Position.....	1-2
Section 2	Getting Started.....	2-1
	The First Months.....	2-2
	Let's Get Organized.....	2-2
	Introductory Contacts.....	2-2
	Visiting Your Neighborhood Groups.....	2-2
	First Aid Techniques	2-5
Section 3	Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting	3-1
	The Meeting.....	3-2
	Planning.....	3-2
	Invitations.....	3-2
	Agenda.....	3-2
	Ideas for Programs	3-3
	Items to Hand Out.....	3-4
Section 4	Working with the Chapter Advisory Board	4-1
	Newsletter Editor and Listserv Administrator	4-2
	Website Administrator	4-2
	Membership Chair	4-3
	Community Service Chair.....	4-3
	At CAB Meetings.....	4-4
	Your Report.....	4-4
Section 5	Starting New Neighborhood Groups.....	5-5
	Why and When to Start a New Group	5-6
	Contact Person	5-6
	Location	5-6
	Publicity	5-7
	The Organizational Meeting	5-7
	What to Bring to the Meeting.....	5-7
	Conducting the Organizational Meeting.....	5-8
Section 6	\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$	6-1
	Neighborhood Group Coordinator's Budget	6-2
Section 7	Special Situations.....	7-1
	Ineffective Group Leaders	7-2
	The Co-Leader System	7-2
	Getting New Leaders.....	7-2
	When a Group "Dies"	7-3
	Distant Groups.....	7-3
	Groups Doing Their Own Thing.....	7-4
	Helping a Group Become a Chapter	7-5
	In Summary	7-6

Appendix A. Neighborhood Group Problems..... A-i
What’s Wrong with This Group? A-ii

Appendix B. New Group Sample Flyer B-i

Appendix C. New Group Meeting Sample Agenda..... C-i
New Group Meeting Sample Agenda C-ii

Index i

Section 1 Overview

If you are reading this, either you are – or you’re contemplating becoming – your ASG chapter’s neighborhood group coordinator. This guide is meant to help you do your job and to help you with some of the everyday and once-a-year responsibilities that come your way.

What Does the Neighborhood Group Coordinator Do?

Why does a chapter need a neighborhood group coordinator? When a chapter gets large enough or spread-out enough that it has more than four neighborhood groups, communication among neighborhood groups becomes more difficult. For the chapter to be successful as a chapter, the groups have to know and remember that they are part of something larger. They have to be involved in chapter undertakings. And for the groups to be successful, their leaders may need help learning to lead and help with ideas for programming. As neighborhood group coordinator, you are that communications link.

You are also the person who helps new neighborhood groups get started. And once a group is started, you help neighborhood group leaders do a better job by providing them some training, advice, and support. Part of your function is to work with and provide information to the chapter’s neighborhood groups.

Among your duties are to

- Function as a liaison between the CAB and the chapter’s neighborhood group leaders.
- Organize and conduct a meeting each year of all the neighborhood group leaders to enhance their leadership skills and share program ideas.
- Help neighborhood group leaders with program ideas and coordinate members who will present programs to various neighborhood groups.
- Initiate new neighborhood groups as the need is identified or as membership growth dictates.
- With assistance, and at the request of a neighborhood group, help recruit a new leader.
- Be familiar with sections of the *Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters (P&P Manual)* that pertain to neighborhood groups.

You and your chapter CAB should determine whether or not you will also

- Coordinate a column for the chapter newsletter on neighborhood group activities and future meeting topics.
- Coordinate the involvement of neighborhood groups in chapter activities.

Sharing the Position

Some chapters may have co-neighborhood group coordinators because of the number of groups, because of the geographic spread of the groups, or because two people want to share the work. If this is the case for your chapter, your first meeting should be with your co-coordinator.

You and your partner can decide how to divide up the groups and/or otherwise divide up the job. You don't necessarily have to divide the groups geographically; for example, it might work better for the two of you to have one work with the groups that meet in the day and the other with the groups that meet in the evening. Or maybe one of you will work with setting up the Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting and starting new groups while the other has the day-to-day contacts with all the current group leaders. Regardless of how you structure your respective duties, you'll want to let the rest of the CAB and the neighborhood group leaders know how the job will be done.

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Section 2 Getting Started

The First Months

Let's Get Organized

Here are a few things you'll need to get ready to start on your job:

- Your predecessor's files
- A copy of the *Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters (P&P Manual)*, a list of the neighborhood groups, their leaders' names, contact information, and where and when they meet
- The most current membership list for the chapter
- A copy of the *Neighborhood Group Leader's Guide*
- Either a file folder, 3-ring binder or computer file for each neighborhood group or a with a section for each group
- A calendar to track neighborhood group meeting days and other ASG events

Introductory Contacts

Within the first month (or months, if you have more than a half-dozen groups), you'll want to introduce yourself to the group leaders via phone calls or electronic media. This is especially important if the groups are some distance from your home or if you are new to the CAB. Besides introducing yourself and finding out something about each group leader, you will also want to find out some things about each group, such as

- How long the group has been meeting
- How many people usually come to a meeting
- How many people come to meetings but are not regular attendees
- Where the group meets and whether there is anything unusual about the location, for example, whether the group has to pay to use the facilities
- What sorts of programs the group enjoys, for example, if they usually have hands-on meetings or if they take a lot of field trips
- How many months in advance the group schedules its programs
- If the leader has any particular plans -- either for the group or for her/himself

Visiting Your Neighborhood Groups

If possible you (and your co-coordinator) should try to visit each group within the first six months of your term of office.

Why should you visit the neighborhood groups? First, you want to know whom you're representing on the Chapter Advisory Board. Groups will have different personalities too – some might be more interested in doing community service projects while others are more interested in garment construction. You will find it helpful to understand those varying personalities.

Second, you represent the chapter to the neighborhood groups – you can describe chapter events and projects, let them know what is happening in other neighborhood groups in the chapter, and solicit volunteers for committee openings and so on – in other words, keep the connection between the chapter and its neighborhood groups strong.

And third, you will want to find out what sort of help, if any, the group leaders need from you.

In your visits to the neighborhood groups, you wear three hats – that of politician, that of inspector general, and that of visiting nurse. You can also add a fourth hat: that of sewing expert, if you also come and present programs.

The Politician

You may have to remind yourself that the neighborhood group and the neighborhood group leader might think of you as coming from “Headquarters” to check up on them. You are representing the CAB. So, introduce yourself to people you don’t know. Chat with everyone you can. Asking what kind of sewing machine they have is a good conversation starter. Move around so that you don’t stay in conversation with only a few.

When you are setting up the visit with the neighborhood group leader, ask that she/he allow you to say a little bit before the main program. During your talk, introduce yourself to the whole group, with your job title, and explain a little about what your job is. Then remind the group about any upcoming ASG chapter events. To create interest, maybe you can include something about the event that isn’t in the newsletter. If there are openings on the CAB or a need for members on a particular CAB committee, mention them. If you know of the group’s efforts on community service projects or help during a recent chapter event, thank the group on behalf of the chapter. Then thank the group leader(s) for leading the group and sit down. Five to seven minutes should be enough.

During the main program, you might have things to add. For example, you might have found another way to solve a particular problem that the presenter brings up. Remember that you are a guest of the group and feel free to add to the discussion, but never so much that you take away from the presenter or monopolize the discussion.

And lastly, bring along something for show-and-tell. It doesn’t matter if you made it months ago – as long as you aren’t a regular at this meeting, it is new to them. If the technique is of interest to the group and you are interested in doing so, offer to return and give a program – just don’t attempt to give all the instructions during show-and-tell!

Inspector General

It may become obvious in either your phone calls with the group leader or during your visit that something isn’t working well with the group.

Especially if you’ve been attending other groups, you might see that this neighborhood group isn’t functioning as well as the rest.

Maybe the group leader talks all the time or perhaps she/he can’t control the group’s side conversations. Maybe the group is listless, sits glassy eyed during the program, or hasn’t brought anything for show-and-tell. Or the group leader her/himself may have asked you for help in your get-acquainted contact.

During your visit with this group, you will want to see if you can diagnose what is happening that doesn’t seem right or like other neighborhood groups in your chapter. You may be able to pinpoint problem areas during the meeting. Look in Appendix A for some questions that may help you determine what the problem is.

Visiting Nurse

If you have determined that a group isn't doing as well as it could, part of your job as neighborhood group coordinator is to help with the first aid. But before you do anything, ask yourself this question: is any first aid called for? This question is particularly important if the group has not sought your help.

Perhaps the leader, the group, and the rest of the chapter are perfectly happy with how the group functions. Maybe the meeting location is so handy that, even if it is too small, the group would rather squeeze together than drive across town. Perhaps the members of the group are so stressed out at work that they welcome the chance to sit and socialize. Maybe they'd rather have a boring group leader than hurt her/his feelings (or volunteer to do it themselves). So even if the group is not functioning as you would like it, perhaps it's working well enough.

If, however, you determine that a neighborhood group does need help, answering these questions may help you determine what to do:

- Does the group leader (or the group's attendees) think there is a problem? If the answer is "no," do you think that those involved would realize a problem exists if you talk it over with them?
- If those involved do recognize the problem, will they "take ownership" of the problem; that is, will they know that they have some responsibility in causing the problem and, equally, that they have some responsibility to helping to fix it?
- Can the problem be solved? If it can be, who should be involved in the solution: the group? the group leader? you? the whole chapter?
- Are you the right person to mediate a resolution to the problem? Or could and should you get someone else to help?
- If you will act as the mediator, what is your plan?

Sometimes, you may decide that this is an issue that can best be addressed, with the neighborhood group leader's permission, at a Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting (more about this later). This is particularly helpful if the issue is one that has affected other neighborhood groups or for which much input will be effective.

At other times, you will want to discuss the issue with your chapter president first and decide together what you will do. This approach is essential when the issue is extremely sensitive or when numerous people are involved. It may or may not be the kind of problem that can be discussed in an open CAB meeting initially because of privacy concerns; ultimately, however, the CAB will probably learn about the problem.

Put checkpoints into your plan. The checkpoints may include several more visits to a group meeting or requesting information from all of your neighborhood groups – all depending on how you have decided to approach the problem.

Sewing Expert

As a neighborhood group coordinator, you might want to help group leaders out by giving a program – "Have Program, Will Travel." If you're a member of a different group, you may have learned a technique that another group would also enjoy learning. Doing a program can act as an icebreaker and help introduce you to the group as a fellow sewist.

First Aid Techniques

The Talk

Perhaps you can ask the group leader out for coffee after the meeting and start with an open-ended question, such as “how do you think your group is going?”

If you can, compliment the leader for things she/he is doing right. “I noticed that you have the sign-in sheet on a clipboard that you can pass around. Do you mind if I tell the other group leaders at our group leaders meeting how well that works in your group?”

After a while, throw in some observations: “I noticed that very few people had anything to show-and-tell” or “there seemed to be a lot of side conversations during Shirley’s program.” If the group leader agrees, you have an opening to throw in a few suggestions for improving the situation.

If the leader doesn’t seem receptive (“Oh, that’s the way it always is”), you can try using another group as an example. “Fran has a little bell that she rings if her/his group gets too noisy to hear what’s going on.” “In Ruth’s group, people who bring show-and-tell get a ticket for a chance on a big drawing at their holiday party – and Ruth has lots of participation.” Or you can refer to “something I read somewhere says that...” When working with a leader who might be resistant to change, try using phrases such as “You might do” or “You could try” rather than appearing to issue orders. Follow your suggestions with, “I hope you’ll let me know how it worked.”

The Model

Sometimes it helps to see someone demonstrate or “model” a suggested change. If a rambling program is the norm for this group, maybe you could volunteer to do a program (or bring one of your sewing buddies to do it) to model for the group a non-rambling, more organized program.

If enthusiasm is missing from show-and-tell presentations, you could demonstrate a better way to show-and-tell. Maybe you could bring a carload of friends with you on your next visit to show what enthusiastic sewing guild members are like.

A side benefit of doing the presentation is that you can ask that the room be arranged a certain way – for example, in a semi-circle. Sometimes room arrangements have a great effect on the degree of formality and tone of a meeting. You may be able to point out to the group the difference the new arrangement makes in how the members interact.

The Book

Make sure that the group leader has her/his own copy of the *Neighborhood Group Leader’s Guide*. You might put a post-it note on an appropriate section and write something like “the book says we should do it this way.”

The Phone or Email

If the leader knows problems exist, she/he may just needs a friend. After your visit and talk, you may want to set up a schedule of phone visits or email conversations. Your neighborhood group coordinator’s budget should cover the costs of any long-distance phone calls.

As you work with a group leader and group, keep your chapter president advised — of what you think the problem is, what your plan for solving it is, and how that plan is progressing. See also “Special Situations” on page 7-1 in this guide for more information about talking with group leaders.

Section 3
Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting

The Meeting

At least once a year, plan a meeting for all of the neighborhood group leaders. The purpose of the meeting is to provide a forum for training the group leaders and for sharing program ideas. Some chapters require all potential group leaders to attend a Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting before they take over leadership of a neighborhood group. An equally important goal of the meeting is to thank and recognize the neighborhood group leaders.

Planning

In planning your Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting, you should decide whom to invite, when and where to hold the meeting and whether or not to serve refreshments or include a sewing-related activity.

Included in your meeting should be current neighborhood group leaders and co-leaders, future group leaders, and the CAB.

Places to look into for holding your meeting include community centers, libraries, retirement homes, nursing homes, fire stations, someone's home, a room in a church or synagogue, a community room of a condominium, a meeting room in a mall, or a private room of a restaurant. You will need to reserve the meeting space for at least three hours, including a half an hour to set up, a two-hour meeting, and another half-hour to clean up. More elaborate meetings – for example, workshops to introduce several group program topics or those that include lunch – may require a half-day meeting or more.

When to hold the meeting – weekday or weekend, daytime or evening – will be dictated by the availability of the meeting location and the attendees' individual schedules. While the food isn't the main reason for meeting, it often increases the comfort level of your attendees and helps carry them through a long meeting.

Invitations

When you issue invitations to your group leaders and fellow CAB members, include the following:

- the date, time, and location of the meeting,
- directions to the meeting place,
- an agenda,
- any materials that group leaders should bring, for example, program ideas or patterns for community service items, the most difficult situation that they have had to deal with, or helpful hints for incoming group leaders, and
- a request for invitees to RSVP.

Agenda

An agenda for the meeting might include the following:

- **Welcome:** Thank everyone for coming to the meeting and add a few remarks about the purpose(s) of the meeting
- **Introductions:** Introduce yourself first, and your position. Then have CAB members introduce themselves. Lastly, have the group leaders introduce themselves, including where their groups meet and maybe the size of the group.

Nametags are a good idea, especially if there are new people among either the CAB or the group leaders.

- **The program:** Ideas for this can be found starting on pg. 3-3 of this guide.
- **Break** to eat and socialize.
- **Recognition.** Serious or silly ways of thanking the group leaders, either individually or as a group. Maybe a flower, a certificate, a small, inexpensive present or something relating to sewing for each leader – or maybe nothing. Something sincere and not the same every year.
- **Sharing:** Often group leaders can help each other with ideas – either for program ideas or ways to solve problems. Be certain that everyone has a chance to contribute.
- **Conclusion:** Summarize the program, make chapter announcements, reiterate any assignments people (including yourself) have undertaken, and thank the attendees for their, support of the ASG, attendance, and leadership.

Ideas for Programs

Program ideas can be broken into four major types. You might want to alternate programs from year to year.

Leadership training programs

These are presented by someone in the chapter or from the community. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Care and Handling of Volunteers
- How to Run a Meeting (have a mock neighborhood group meeting with some of the CAB members playing roles such as “the person who doesn’t listen and asks dumb questions,” “the shy newcomer,” etc.)
- How to Make Presentations (maybe a high school speech teacher telling how to stand, what to do with your hands, how to make yourself heard, and so forth).
- Communications for Certain Situations – perhaps done as exercises in pairs or small groups. Tailor the situations to suit your particular group leaders.
- Neighborhood Groups 101 – the basics if many of your group leaders are new in their jobs.
- Overview of the *Neighborhood Group Leader’s Guide*

Brainstorming

The leadership of your chapter is all together – take some time to brainstorm what they see for the chapter a year, two years, and five years from now. If your group is large, you might want to divide into smaller groups and each work on a different topic. Be sure to record the ideas.

Sharing difficult situations and successes

When you issue your invitations, ask group leaders to bring situations they have had trouble with. Alternately, you could make up situations for discussion on how to solve.

Chapter’s expectations for neighborhood groups

The chapter and the neighborhood groups must agree on what responsibilities each group has to the chapter and the chapter to each group. Perhaps groups think that they have been assigned to do responsibilities that are too difficult to accomplish. The whole chapter

may have to revise its expectations and find other ways of accomplishing projects that neighborhood groups are reluctant to do but that cannot be eliminated.

The CAB should also revise its standing rules, if necessary, and spell out what happens if a group does not meet its responsibilities. If changes to the standing rules have been made, the new standing rules should be communicated to each group. Your cover letter should highlight how changes affect groups and how long each affected group has to come into compliance. Include as well the rationale for changes and an avenue for comments.

Sharing neighborhood group program ideas or community service projects

When you issue your invitations, ask attendees to bring finished projects and/or patterns to share.

Items to Hand Out

Your meeting will be more effective if you provide the following items for the attendees:

- A current chapter membership quarterly report.
- Copies of the form your chapter uses to track community service projects and hours (if you do).
- A copy of the *Neighborhood Group Leader's Guide* – hard copy or CD – for each new leader (and maybe a few extra copies for the “old” leaders too).
- A list of chapter members who give neighborhood group programs. Large chapters (in either number of members or distances between groups) may want to compile a list of members who are willing to give programs for other neighborhood groups, – the topics they talk about, whether they are available for day and/or evening meetings, and their contact information. This is a handy tool for all the group leaders in the chapter to respond to their groups' program requests.
- A current list of all items in your chapter's library.
- A sample neighborhood group meeting agenda . Forms, if any, that your chapter's newsletter editor wants the group leaders to fill out to report program topics, etc. for the newsletter, along with deadline information.
- Mailing labels and/or envelopes and/or stamps if your chapter requires the leaders to submit information periodically.
- Extra copies of the current newsletter, discount information, flyers for programs, etc.
- ASG Membership brochures

Section 4

Working with the Chapter Advisory Board

Another part of your role as neighborhood group coordinator is handling the communications between all the neighborhood groups in your chapter and the rest of the Chapter Advisory Board. Your chapter probably already has effective procedures for handling communications. If it doesn't, or if you think established communications could be improved, you will need to work with several other CAB members.

Newsletter Editor and Listserv Administrator

Once a chapter is large enough to have several neighborhood groups and a neighborhood group coordinator, the news concerning the groups is going to be a main feature of your newsletter and listserv. In order to publicize meetings of each group, the editor and listserv administrator will need to know the following:

- Name of the group
- Group leader's name and contact information
- Regular meeting information, including the day of the week, time, address of meeting place, and any special instructions such as "enter through the back door."

When possible, it is also helpful to include the following information:

- In the chapter newsletter: the program topics for whatever period is covered before the next newsletter plus any special information, such as what to bring to a meeting or a change of meeting place or time
- On the chapter listserv: the program topic for the next meeting and any special information

You can help your newsletter editor, listserv administrator, group leaders, and chapter members by making sure that meeting and contact information about each group is current and correct.

You can help neighborhood group leaders meet publication deadlines by working with them to plan their programs a year in advance. Providing a listing such as shown in Appendix A of the *Neighborhood Group Leader's Guide* to you, the editor, and the listserv administrator will make everyone's job a little easier.

Some newsletters include reports from all of the neighborhood groups telling what their activities have been for the past several months. If your chapter does this, you might want to work with your neighborhood group leaders to find a reporter in each group who can write this article for the newsletter editor, on time. It's interesting – even to chapters across the country that read the newsletter on the ASG website.

One of the topics you might bring up in a group leaders meeting is privacy. When a large number of newsletters is left in public places, people might prefer to use only first names and phone numbers or not to include full addresses of private homes, if that's where a group meets.

Website Administrator

Publicizing information about neighborhood group meetings can attract potential ASG members. However, individual privacy and safety must always be considered when publishing information to the public. Use meeting days and location identifiers such as city, town, or area of town to advertise meetings. Then, work with your website

administrator to establish an email link to you to enable visitors to acquire specific meeting information. As with other channels of communication, be certain that information published on your chapter website remains current and correct.

Membership Chair

You and your chapter's membership chair should work closely to support each other. The membership chair can provide you with a list of your chapter's members. You can use, this along with information from your neighborhood group leaders, to track which members attend each group, which groups show decreasing attendance or are becoming unmanageably large, and which members don't participate in neighborhood groups. You can also provide group leaders with lists of their own attendees to facilitate communications within each group.

Working with the membership chair, you should also be certain that neighborhood group leaders have a supply of membership forms for guests at their meetings. Whether your chapter encourages neighborhood group leaders to accept membership forms and payments is a difficult decision. Accepting checks places a fiduciary responsibility on group leaders but ensures that guests complete the membership process. On the other hand, a guest who chooses to join via the ASG website, might forget to do so; in this case, a follow-up phone call from the group leader to the guest might be helpful. You and/or your membership chair should address this issue at the Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting.

You might also work with the membership chair to determine a procedure for letting neighborhood group leaders know that there are new members in their areas. That way a group leader can contact the new member personally to invite her/him to attend the group. These contacts can help make both the neighborhood groups and the chapter stronger.

Working with the membership chair, you might also want to create a means of monitoring members who have failed to renew but continue participating in ASG activities. One way to do this is to enlist the neighborhood group leaders' assistance.

Using information from the membership chair's list, you could help group leaders create sign-in sheets that include attendees' expiration dates. That way, attendees have a visual reminder each time they sign in at a meeting. Group leaders can also send reminders to attendees whose memberships have lapsed.

Community Service Chair

For many chapters, the bulk of community service projects are initiated and completed by neighborhood groups. It is to the benefit of the neighborhood groups, the chapters, and all of the ASG to keep track of the number of items and hours spent on these projects. Work with your chapter's community service chair and the group leaders to create an easy reporting system. For example, it is a goose bump-producing moment to realize how many items the ASG has donated in a year. Often, the service projects are what newspapers will publicize, sometimes the only event they deem newsworthy. This information can help your chapter get grants from outside sources, too.

In addition, you and/or the community service chair should determine who reports on the various neighborhood group projects at the CAB meetings. Without a community service chair, you may become the de-facto collector and reporter of this information for the chapter.

At CAB Meetings

Your role at a CAB meeting is to speak for the neighborhood group leaders, to provide information about the groups to the chapter leadership, and to provide your own insights in discussions. When the CAB plans an event that involves the support of the neighborhood groups, your input regarding which groups are most appropriate for which tasks will be extremely helpful.

Your Report

Items that need to be shared in CAB meetings would include:

- Changes in leadership
- Changes in meeting specifics, e.g. location of meeting
- Problems in a group (remind the CAB that this is to be kept confidential) and what's happening to fix them
- Publicity or honors any of the groups have received
- Special projects or activities a group has undertaken

Your report can form the basis for other CAB members' actions. The newsletter editor can glean information for future articles. She/He and the listserv and website administrators can change meeting listings. The president can congratulate the leaders on their groups' accomplishments. The community service chair will want to track groups' projects to gather ideas there for the whole chapter as well as collecting numbers for the chapter community service total.

Section 5

Starting New Neighborhood Groups

Being instrumental in the start of a new neighborhood group is exciting. It helps underscore your important role in the strength of your chapter and the growth of the ASG.

Why and When to Start a New Group

A neighborhood group where there wasn't one before will attract new members for your chapter. Here are some additional reasons to start a new neighborhood group:

- There is an area in your chapter's region that has members but no nearby group.
- There are sewing retailers in an area but no neighborhood group.
- There is an area of your chapter's service area that is "too far away" to make traveling to existing groups convenient.
- There are a lot of members in a particular zip code who don't go to a neighborhood group (a sort of your membership list will reveal concentrations of members).
- There is an existing neighborhood group that's not convenient for working people or those who don't drive at night. There are people in a group who are losing interest because of the direction the group has taken – perhaps too many programs on one particular area of sewing, for example.

Contact Person

Very often the decision to start a group comes from having a contact person in an area. This may be a guild member who is eager for a nearby group or a shop owner who has heard about the guild and is ready to open her/his store to a group. If you know it's a good idea to form a group in an area and do not know a contact person, see if you can locate one. You might be able to do this from scanning your chapter's membership list or by contacting the owners or managers of sewing stores in your area.

If you're initiating the group, you might need to recruit someone to help you find a meeting space or distribute flyers. She/He may also be able to invite others who sew who can become the nucleus of the new group. This person will not necessarily become the group's leader, something that is often reassuring for a recruit.

Location

Find a place to hold the first several meetings. It should be large enough to hold 15-20 people and be available for three hours. The people who find the first meeting day and time convenient will probably vote to hold group meetings at the same time the next month, so reserve the place for the same time for each month for a three hour meeting.

The location should be free and handicapped accessible. Find out if you can serve refreshments (nice but not necessary), how much room set-up you can or must do, and parking particulars.

Determine the meeting date and time by considering when your chapter's other groups meet (a new time and date might encourage current members to attend) and your potential attendees' demographics. Remember to pick a day and time that is convenient for you for the first two months because you will want to be there to get the group off to a good start.

Publicity

An effective way to get the word out is to provide take-away flyers at sewing, quilting, and fabric stores. Public libraries are also good places to distribute flyers. See pg. B-i for an example of a flyer. Blank flyers can also be downloaded from the “Logos/Graphics/Ads” tab of the Leadership Section on the ASG website. The number of locations in which you can place the flyers will determine how many flyers you print, but you should consider about 200 copies. The flyers should go out about three weeks before the organizational meeting is to be held.

You might also want to do a direct mailing to members in nearby zip codes.

Ask storeowners and managers to mention the upcoming meeting to customers and/or include an item in their newsletter. Ask if you or your contact person can call them to check on the flyer supply in their store. It would be helpful if your contact person could get more copies of the flyer made and delivered.

If your chapter has a publicity chair, she/he may be able to help with publicity in small, local community newspapers. You or she/he may want to contact the Extension Service to find out about advertising they can do for you. Local Newcomers Clubs may have a ready pool of people who want to meet other people. Other places to try are local radio or television community announcements. Be certain to determine how much lead-time is required to get an announcement on the air.

The Organizational Meeting

You will be the one running the meeting, but it would be great if you could take several of your sewing friends and/or other CAB members to the meeting. You will have jobs for them – maybe one will give the mini-program and all should bring something for show-and-tell.

What to Bring to the Meeting

Here's what to put in your new neighborhood group start-up bag:

- Your chapter's banner, if you have one
- Equipment to hang the banner, such as masking tape or hooks
- Nametags and a bold marker
- Two clipboards with pens attached
- Pre-formatted forms for attendees to sign in (if you have a form to fill out, you're more likely to get information you can actually read)
- ASG tri-folds, with current membership forms **with your chapter's name filled in**
- Bookmarks or similar mementos listing the URL for your chapter's website, your current neighborhood groups and your contact information.
- A mailing envelope already addressed to national Headquarters to send off membership forms and checks
- Lots of extra chapter newsletters A portable flip chart and markers or dry erase board and markers
- Things to prop the flip chart or dry erase board
- Copy (or two) of *Neighborhood Group Leader's Guide* to leave with new neighborhood group leader(s)

- Refreshments, if you're providing them – include napkins, a roll of paper towels, a sponge trash bags, coffee maker or ice chest, cups, plates, plastic utensils, and the refreshments themselves
- The program materials, if you're the one giving it, such as the finished item, samples, a supply list handout, and specialized sewing gadgets – or bring a friend who is ready to give a program with her/his samples, handouts, and so on.
- Your show-and-tell item(s)
- Spare stationery items, such as pens, pencils, paper, masking tape, marker pens, and plastic bags
- Enthusiastic ASG members

Conducting the Organizational Meeting

Set Up

In the half-hour before the meeting is to start, you have a chance to set up the space. Hang the chapter banner. If possible, set up a table by the door for people to be welcomed and get nametags. Put a table in the front for the program speaker's convenience and another table for the refreshments. Start the coffee and arrange the cookies. If the room accommodates it, place the seats in a semi-circle with 6" – 8" of space between the chairs. Other friendly configurations are around a large table or behind tables arranged in a U- or diamond shape.

Once you are ready to start the meeting, you can use the sample timed agenda on pg. C-i as a guide. You might decide to have the icebreaker at the beginning or determine that "committees" could simply be individual volunteers. These decisions will be based on your reading of the attendees' dynamic.

The timings are also approximate; however, your entire meeting should not last more than about 2 hours.

Sign In and Socializing

While your friend sits and writes out nametags you, your contact person, and another sewing friend can stand at the door welcoming people in and directing them to the nametag table. Circulate as much as you can, introducing yourself to people and introducing them to each other. A good conversation starter for this sort of gathering is, "What kinds of things do you like to sew?"

When it looks as if most people have come and have been "name tagged," raise your voice and ask everyone to get their cup filled and find a seat.

Introduce Yourself and Why You Are Here

You want to let people know who you are, why you are there, and what's going to happen today. Also, you will want to thank various people. Here's what you might say:

Good morning/hello. I am XXXXX and I am the Neighborhood Group Coordinator for the XXXXXX Chapter of the American Sewing Guild, Inc. We call the American Sewing Guild "ASG" for short. As the neighborhood group coordinator, part of my job is to start new neighborhood groups, and today we are here to start a neighborhood group in XXXXXX.

A neighborhood group is a group of members of ASG who get together every month for a meeting. Most meetings include a program on some technique or sewing project. Usually,

the program is given by a member of the group and this responsibility passes around. After the program comes my favorite part of the meeting – show-and-tell. This is when members bring or wear something that they have sewn and tell about it. Members also use this time to ask questions about a work-in-progress or get ideas for a planned project.

Each neighborhood group is led by one or two members called the “group leaders.”

Today, I want to thank Annette who is from Boynton Beach but who has had to come to Boca to go to a neighborhood group meeting. She/He encouraged me to get a group started here in Boynton, and so, here we are! I have depended on her/him to distribute flyers and to find us a space to meet in. Also, I want to thank Jo-Ann’s for giving us this room. On your way out, I would appreciate if you would also thank one of the associates for letting us meet here. Let’s give Annette and Jo-Ann’s a hand.

I want to start passing around two clipboards for you to sign in on. Let me now introduce some of my ASG sewing friends who have come with me to help out. In a moment I will tell you about the American Sewing Guild and a little more about neighborhood groups. Also, today we will conduct a short version of a neighborhood group meeting. Then we will get the XXXXX neighborhood group organized. What we have to do today is get a leader, get a few programs planned, and assign some jobs.

At this point you will briefly describe a little on the history and structure of the ASG and the benefits of membership. The above introduction will take about 3 minutes, depending on how many sewing friends came with you. Condense your talk about the ASG, how neighborhood groups fit into the chapter, and benefits to about 5 minutes. If you need a refresher, read the first two or three pages of the *Chapter President’s Guide*. At the end, ask if there are any quick questions, before introducing the meeting.

A Mini-Meeting

You can set the stage by saying the following: *This is our mini-neighborhood group meeting. Today, I am going to take the role of group leader. There are usually three parts to a neighborhood group meeting – welcome and announcements, a program, and show-and-tell.* [You may want to have something written on your flip chart or board that shows the three segments of a group meeting to help attendees see what’s going on.]

Also be sure to emphasize that Neighborhood groups do not have to worry about organizational business such as managing a treasury. The chapter takes care of “the business.” The neighborhood groups can just come together to enjoy learning more about sewing and other needle arts and to make friends with other sewing enthusiasts in a fun, informal setting.

First welcome everyone to the meeting and then go around the room and have attendees introduce themselves. You might ask that they tell their names, the areas in which they live, and/or the number of sewing machines or the brands of sewing machines each has. Ask them also to report their particular sewing interests. Have one of your friends write this down. This information will be used later. Perhaps people who don’t know each other will find out that someone is nearly a neighbor or that someone owns the same sewing machine. Other icebreakers are contained in Appendix B of the *Neighborhood Group Leader’s Guide*.

You may have to decide on the fly how much to have the attendees say depending on how many guests are there.

Make some real announcements of chapter events and benefits – fashion show, a retreat, classes, exhibits in the area, the chapter library, retail news, etc. Put in plugs for the ASG as you are doing the announcements: *For members of our chapter we have about 200 books and videos available to check out – they are free to ASG members and you get them by just calling up the librarian. And once you join, you get the library list.* Mention the newsletter and if you know you have brought enough newsletters to go around, pass them out too.

The Mini-Program

Introduce the person who will do the short version of a program. Since you have already been speaking for a while, it would be great if someone else could do the program.

Here are some guidelines to use in planning the program for this mini-meeting:

- It should fit into 10 or 15 minutes.
- It should be sort of generic, that is, the information could be used by both someone new to sewing and someone who is an expert. It should be of general interest.
- It should contain enough information so that even if this neighborhood group never gets off the ground, anyone who came today would still get something out of the time she/he has spent.

Here are some suggestions for program topics:

- Mini-trunk show – showing three or four well-made garments made from independent pattern company patterns or made from a single pattern and modified each time.
- Sewing machine needles – sizes, shapes, and numbering.
- Covering a pillow with a square piece of fabric.
- Purses made from decorator fabric samples.
- Ways to turn a vest.
- Photo transfer – different methods, different results.
- Ideas and examples of using stamping to embellish purchased garments.

Keep watch on the time. If the program is running short, ask if anyone has any questions of the presenter, or ask one yourself if no one else will. If the program is running long – step in as gracefully as you can at a logical breaking point, thank the presenter, and say something like, “Well, we can see that we will have to get a group started here so that we can ask Pat to finish her program. But today we have to end the program a little early so that we can get on to show-and-tell.”

Show-and-Tell

Since you have the floor, you get to start show-and-tell. Come to the front and face the attendees before you start talking.

- Hold the item up high and make sure you move it around so that everybody in the room can see it.
- Explain the item. Whenever you can, bring the ASG into the explanation, For example, “I got this fabric right after a neighborhood group meeting where Chris, who is our ASG chapter’s retail liaison, told us about the great fabric sale at one of our sponsoring retailers, the Fabric Shoppe. They give a 10% discount to ASG members. And I learned how to make the buttons at one of our Boca neighborhood group meetings.”

- How much time you take in your explanation will depend on how many sewing friends also brought projects to share are along and how warmed up the group of attendees is, that is, whether they too will share.
- Call on one of your friends next. If the room or the group is large, make sure comes up to the front so that everyone can see the item. Then ask if anyone else has something she/he would like to show. Call on a new person if you can. If necessary, ask coaching questions or add comments. Thank the presenter.
- If newcomers are eager to participate in show-and-tell, call on them before calling on the rest of your sewing friends

After show-and-tell, runs out of steam or out of time, end the mini-meeting, and call a short break to get people up and moving and talking. If you have refreshments, remind the group to fill up their plates and cups.

Getting This Neighborhood Group Going

During the break, set up your flip chart or dry erase board. Write something like this on it:

DECISIONS:

Group? Yes? No? Leader(s): Time: Place: Phone: Next Program:

Call the attendees back to their seats and announce that it is now time to organize their neighborhood group – if they want one. Explain that a neighborhood group is pretty independent. Assure them that although you will be around to help out, especially during the next month or two, they will need to have a leader, a place to meet, and enough people willing to put on programs and bring items for show-and-tell to make the group worthwhile to the participants. Also explain that anybody who continues coming to the group must join the American Sewing Guild by the time she/he has attended two meetings. Explain the dues and that ASG members are also welcome at any other neighborhood group in the chapter and around the country.

Point to the word “**Group?**” and ask for a show of hands for people who are interested in forming a new neighborhood group. If most of the new people raise their hands, don’t bother asking for the “undecided” vote, but ask if they have any other questions about neighborhood groups. If the show of hands looks less than overwhelming, ask people who want to think it over to raise their hands and then ask if they have some questions that you could answer now. Be certain to pause and look around the group for questions.

If four or more people did indicate that they want to start a group, continue with the rest of the decisions and tell the undecided attendees that , the chapter will look forward to welcoming them when they decide to join the ASG.

If there are fewer than four people who want to form the new group, ask that they stay around. Then end the meeting for the others by thanking everyone for coming, pointing out that they have your name and contact information as well as your chapter’s website URL and that they have a membership form in the tri-fold that they got. Remind them that there are other neighborhood groups around that they can visit up to two times before joining the ASG.

Cross out “**Group?**” on your board and point now to “**Leader(s).**” Explain briefly what a leader does and doesn’t do. Emphasize again that the leader does not have to put on all the programs. Say that the job can be as little as a one year commitment. Explain that two

people can share the job. Tell the attendees that in addition to your help, you can give them a booklet to help them. Then ask if anyone will volunteer and KEEP QUIET!

If after a dreadfully long length of time has passed and no one has spoken, remind folks that two people can share the job and that it can be for as little as a year. KEEP QUIET again!

If still no one has spoken up, ask if anyone is willing to do it if someone else volunteers. KEEP QUIET for the third time.

Remember that some people will not volunteer, but like to be asked to do something. You may have clues to who might be “persuaded” to lead the group or would be a good leader by how an attendee spoke up or interacted with others during the breaks. You might ask, “Lou, would you be willing to be our first leader if everyone helped you?”

If still nobody volunteers, say that you are willing to come back and help run another meeting the next month if someone volunteers to do a program. Tell them that someone will have to step forward to lead the group by the end of that meeting or there won't be a neighborhood group. This same technique also works if you have a volunteer for co-leader but no one else has stepped forward to share the position.

Write any volunteers' names on your chart and cross out “**Leader.**”

CHOOSING A TIME AND FINDING A MEETING PLACE

Point to “**Time.**” Tell the group that the same place is reserved for the same time and date the next month. If the current location will not be the group's permanent home, explain that future meeting times and dates may be dependent on what places are available. Confirm that the current time and date are the most convenient for most attendees; in all likelihood, they are.

Now explain that you need one or more volunteers to look for a permanent home for the group. Write their names next to “Time” and “Place.” Ask that they be able to report on possibilities at the next month's meeting. Cross out “**Time**” and “**Place.**”

PHONE/EMAIL VOLUNTEER(S)

Ask for a volunteer to call or email the people who have signed in at this meeting four or five days before the next meeting to remind them of it. If there are more than 12 to 15 people to call, try to get two volunteers and write their names on your chart.

PROGRAM PLANNER(S)

Ask for someone to present a program for the next meeting. Explain that the program can be anything about sewing – a technique, a project, or tools – and can be presented in quite an informal manner. Mention and wave in front of the group the list of topics from Appendix A in the *Neighborhood Group Leader's Guide*. If the group has been volunteering for the other jobs, see if they are ready to also volunteer for a program committee to plan the programs for the next 3 to 6 months; otherwise, explain that this will be another item that can be discussed at the next month's meeting. Make sure you write the name of the presenter and her/his topic on the board.

You could also ask attendees to suggest topics they'd be interested in learning more about – you might take notes on your flip chart. Then ask who could “do something” with one of these topics – you may just have put together most of the year's program agenda.

If no one is volunteering, now is the time to pull out that list of the particular sewing interests that people gave when they were introducing themselves. You could say, “Susie, you said that you did a lot of quilting. Could you give a program on how to get started with quilting – what’s a good block to begin with, what tools you need, and how to pick colors and fabrics?” In this way, you not only have pulled out a topic, but you have given the presenter an outline of a possible program.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS

At this point, you will know how readily the group has volunteered and how excited they are to have a neighborhood group.

Go through the points on your chart and explain very briefly what each person has promised to do – or where there are holes that need to be filled before the group can become established.

Explain also what you will be doing in the next weeks:

- You will send in all the membership forms that are filled out today. Again show the group where the membership form is and point out that they can charge it to a credit card or give you a check or cash at the end of the meeting.
- You will give the leader or co-leaders a copy of a guide before you leave today.
- You will be talking with the leader about conducting the next meeting.
- You will copy the sign-in sheet and send it to the phone/email volunteer(s) and to the leader(s).
- You will answer any phone questions or emails you get from the group (remind the group that your contact information can be found on the bookmarks that you distributed).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Now end the meeting:

- Thank people for coming.
- Thank the contact person and the program presenter again.
- Thank the leaders and other people for volunteering.
- Remind people to fill out their membership forms.
- Ask people to bring their sewing friends to the next meeting.
- Announce the particulars of the next meeting – day, date, time, place, and program of the next meeting.
- Encourage attendees to create a “nickname” for the new group, e.g. the “Darning Needles.”
- If there are refreshments left, ask people to please take some more and meet and visit with each other (as long as you’re not pressed for time to be out of the room).
- Declare “The [name of neighborhood or town] neighborhood group is now a part of the [name of chapter] chapter.” Lead a round of applause. “Meeting adjourned.”

What If Nobody Comes?

If you have only a few people who are interested in forming a neighborhood group, or if only a few people show up, sit with your friends and these people and try to diagnose why so few people showed up and/or were interested.

Point out that with three people they could start a neighborhood group that met in someone’s home. Explain that they would have to do some advertising via the chapter

newsletter and use free publicity methods around their neighborhood, and word of mouth to get more members. If they want to get started, ask for one to serve as leader .

If most of your flyers are still sitting in the stores, you could ask the store managers for their insights . If you plan on trying again, perhaps it would be wise to wait a few months and/or choose another meeting place, day, or time.

If you had a lot of attendees but people weren't interested in forming a group, you and your friends should try to analyze the poor response and determine if the meeting could be improved.

The Next Meeting

At the second meeting of the group, your role is more that of an observer and to help the leader(s) only as necessary.

If no leader has yet come forth, conduct a meeting following the agenda much as you did at the last one. However, if no one steps forward to lead the group or if the only volunteer for co-leader will not work by her/himself, the group can't continue. Invite any attendees who joined the ASG to come to groups in neighboring towns and to come to chapter events. And if later they can find someone who will be the leader, have someone call you to get the group "officially" going.

Special Interest Groups

Special interest groups (SIGs) are a different type of neighborhood group because their members don't share a town but an interest in a particular form of sewing and needle arts.

Here are some examples:

- Machine Embroidery
- Hand Embroidery
- Quilting
- Community Sewing for Children/Babies
- Tailored Clothing/Career Clothing
- Wearable Art
- Beading
- Heirloom Sewing
- Home Dec

For some of these interests, there may already be guilds in your locale. Your group may decide to form a SIG anyway, since the SIG's emphasis may be somewhat different from that of the other guild.

Special interest groups will draw on the members of the whole chapter. To form such a group, advertise it in your chapter's newsletter, on your chapter listserv, and at chapter-wide functions. Tell your group leaders to announce it in their meetings. Use the same publicity methods that you used for starting a neighborhood group if you want to encourage non-ASG members to attend.

The organizational meeting would be a lot like the one outlined above with the possible exception that you might not have to tell the attendees about ASG. Again, this group needs to have leaders, and members of the group need to be members of the ASG.

If you get a SIG started, remember to have a plan to feature their creations at chapter special events.

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Section 6
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Neighborhood Group Coordinator's Budget

As the number of neighborhood groups increases, your budget needs to increase proportionally.

Your budget should provide for:

- A group leaders' meeting at least once a year
- Copies, such as handouts at meetings, new *Neighborhood Group Leader's Guides*, and membership list copying
- Postage, Mileage reimbursement
- Costs involved in starting new groups
- Long distance phone charges
- Refreshments for various meetings

Most chapters cannot afford to cover mileage for visiting distant neighborhood groups, especially at the IRS-approved rate. Instead, the CAB might agree to reimburse you for a tank of gas for every 300 miles you drive in performance of your duties.

Include in your request what you will need to start each new group: at least three trips to the area, 200-500 copies of a flyer advertising the first meeting, refreshments and associated service items, and some postage.

Section 7 Special Situations

This section discusses a number of difficult situations that you may have to face and some suggestions for dealing with them.

Ineffective Group Leaders

From your visits to groups, your phone calls, and the grapevine, you will probably realize that some group leaders do a better job than others. And despite your efforts – suggestions for change, showing the “right” way, and addressing the topic at a group leaders’ meeting – things still have not changed or improved. Some questions to ask yourself about the group leader are in Appendix A. If the group is happy with the leader and no ASG policies are being violated, it might be best to leave the situation alone.

If the group is getting smaller and smaller, if someone from the group approaches you, or if the CAB has been unable to effect a change and you believe that the group leader, really is the problem, it is time to ask the leader to “retire.” You might talk with the leader and diplomatically suggest that she/he appears to be too busy at this time to devote the necessary time and energy to leading the neighborhood group. Offer to help the leader find a co-leader or a new leader who will succeed the current leader within an agreed-on time period. Help introduce the co-leader to the group at the next meeting.

If you can’t find a co-leader, maybe you can persuade the leader to announce her/his retirement at a meeting you attend. You can take over at that point and work with the group to get someone to volunteer to lead it. Remember that you may have to ask someone directly to volunteer.

It may be necessary to have the group stop meeting for a few months. During this time, you can phone former members of the group who have drifted away to get them enthusiastic about the ASG again. Tell them that you are going to reorganize the group and that it will need a new leader who will work effectively with the group. . You may want to re-start the group in a different place, at a different time, or on a different day. In this manner, the group can separate itself mentally from its previous problems.

The Co-Leader System

As neighborhood group coordinator, you may be able to implement a system for keeping leaders fresh. For example, each group would have a co-leader who would be the leader’s successor. At a certain time of year all the leaders “retire,” the co-leaders become the group leaders, and a new co-leader steps in. This way, leaders don’t get burned out and one person is committing to leadership for only two years. The switchover date could coincide with your Neighborhood Group Leaders’ Meeting. Consider proposing that your system become part of the chapter’s standing rules.

Getting New Leaders

Most of the time, the neighborhood groups are able to select their own leaders.

But what if it a group is unable to do so and throws the ball into your court? Refer to the section on selecting the leader for a new group (see pg. 5-11) and use the same technique with a group that has been in existence for a while.

If the leader's departure is imminent and no leader has emerged, attend a group meeting. Outline the group leader's job and mention that the job can be shared. Ask for volunteers. Keep quiet while you look for a hand to go up. If necessary, ask again and then keep quiet.

Your responsibility to an imminently leaderless group is to facilitate the finding of a new leader; it is not to lead the group yourself.

Here's where the co-leader system discussed in the last section becomes valuable (see pg. 7-2).

When a Group “Dies”

Sometimes a group's problems are sufficient that the group must be disbanded. The problems can include lack of a group leader, attendees, or appropriate meeting place.

Again, your role is to facilitate the group's solving its own problem. If the group has gotten so large that it has outgrown every available meeting place, you can help the group seek creative solutions.

Sometimes a group may just run out of steam. Perhaps the lives of the core attendees have taken other courses. Perhaps the town or neighborhood has been depopulated. While the disbanding of a group is unfortunate for your chapter and the group's attendees, it sometimes just represents part of a natural life cycle.

As neighborhood group coordinator, you will need to oversee a few clean-up activities:

- The group should spend its petty cash or turn it over to you to go into the ASG chapter treasury.
- The group can give supplies for community service activities to another neighborhood group or to you for eventual use by the chapter. Give these to another group as soon as possible.
- The group should donate any completed community service items to the agency they were made for.
- The group should report to you or the chapter's community service chair any hours or items completed during this year.
- You should collect any videos or books from the chapter's library that the group had.
- You should give your newsletter editor the news and a short article for the next issue of the newsletter. In your article specifically thank the leader(s), invite the members to join other groups, and perhaps give a brief history of the group.
- Also make sure the newsletter editor and listserv and website administrators remove the neighborhood group's name from their respective domains.

Distant Groups

Part of your job is to keep geographically remote neighborhood groups connected to the chapter.

Here are some ways that you can do this:

- Maintain contact with the group leader so that she/he doesn't feel abandoned. Make arrangements to feature the group, its activities, and/or its members in the chapter newsletter at least once a year.
- Try to hold a chapter event closer to their town every once in a while
- Ask the CAB to budget some money for the group to put on a special event.
- At the special event, they can be "double teamed" by friendly members of your chapter who have been prepped to look out for them, save seats for them, introduce them around, or otherwise make sure to include them in socializing.
- Make a special effort to involve the group leader in the group leaders' meeting, especially in her/his first year. Consider using internet meeting technologies such as Skype.
- Coordinate a joint field with two scattered groups to trip to visit fabric stores in some in-between town or have lunch together when one group is in another's town.
- The CAB or your sewing friends and you might plan on a visit.
- Actively seek opportunities to increase person-to-person contact between that group and other members of the chapter so that the group knows that they are part of your chapter.

Because of the distances involved, you, the CAB, and the group's leadership may want to work toward that group's becoming an independent chapter. See pg. 7-5 for ideas.

The chapter and the leadership of the group should come to an understanding of what chapter support responsibilities they can reasonably perform. The group probably couldn't be called on to fold, stamp, and mail the newsletter, for example, but they might be asked to make favors for the annual meeting.

Groups Doing Their Own Thing

Some groups prefer to operate outside the scope of what neighborhood groups normally do. While this is certainly allowable, the groups must still follow basic ASG policies and procedures:

- The group must have a leader or co-leaders.
- The leader/co-leaders and all repeat attendees at meetings must be current members of the ASG.

If the group is operating in violation of ASG policies or chapter standing rules, try to work with them to underscore their importance in the workings of your chapter. The CAB will probably have to be involved and your president may need to call the Chapter Development Administrator to get advice.

The consequences may be that the group is told it is no longer a neighborhood group of your chapter. Of course they can meet as friends to talk about sewing, but **notice of their meetings will not appear in your newsletter, and the ASG, Inc., insurance will not cover meetings of the group.**

If this is what you have decided, the chapter president should inform the group in a letter sent via certified mail with copies to the chair of the national Board of Directors, the Executive Director, and the Chapter Development Administrator at Headquarters.

Helping a Group Become a Chapter

On a more positive note, circumstances might lead a neighborhood group to decide to become a chapter of its own. In order even to be a candidate to become a chapter, a group should meet the following three criteria:

- It should be significantly distant from or separated by some physical barrier from the most populous center of the parent chapter;
- It should consistently have over 25 attendees;
- It should already have at least five people ready to lead— in other words, ready to assume the extra work that comes with becoming their own chapter.

It is not your job or decision to form a chapter from a neighborhood group. But since you will probably have the best idea of what is happening within a group, you may recognize or hear of the situation first. The first thing to do is to discuss the possibility with the chapter president and the rest of the CAB. Be prepared for negative responses since the creation of a new chapter will result in the loss of membership revenue to your chapter.

You can help your chapter understand the positive side of fostering a new chapter: there is often a rebirth of momentum and enthusiasm for the ASG with the founding of a new chapter. They recruit new members – and the existing chapter doubles its efforts to recruit new members for the sake of its budget.

Also, your chapter president needs to get in touch with the Chapter Development Administrator at Headquarters to discuss the pros and cons of the situation and any current guidelines for the size and geographic area a chapter serves. The Chapter Development Administrator will also consider the membership numbers that make the difference between a struggling chapter and a strong chapter.

Assuming that it seems like a good idea and your CAB agrees, it's time for you and/or the president to talk with the neighborhood. Once the current leadership and attendees of the group understand the work involved in establishing a chapter, they might decide to continue as one of your chapter's neighborhood groups.

If the group is indecisive, your function might be to help them make a plan for two or three years hence. Have them consider the reasons for their hesitancy and make plans to solve these problems over the period they've selected. The existing chapter might decide to start setting aside part of this group's rebates to give them as seed money when they do strike out on their own.

Or maybe the group is in a position to form a new chapter immediately and has announced such to the CAB. It's your role to discuss the plan with them and with the CAB. At this point, your president should call the Chapter Development Administrator at Headquarters so that she/he can start working out the details of the plan with the leaders of the group.

Your chapter's CAB should discuss the following issues:

- Is there enough population in the existing chapter's area to support two strong chapters?
- Are there enough people in both chapters to step into leadership roles?
- Will the existing chapter contribute money to help the start-up chapter?

- Can both chapters discuss and come to an agreement on recruiting new members, how special events will be shared and/or supported, how the library can be split or shared, and how mentoring can be done?

You might have to be the leader on this effort to moderate discussions and propose starting positions on these questions.

The two groups should formalize their decisions in a written agreement.

In Summary

As the neighborhood group coordinator, you nurture the “heart of the ASG” – the neighborhood groups. Making groups stronger makes the ASG stronger and more fun for its members. Visiting the groups widens your circle of sewing friends, gives you the opportunity to learn from a variety of people, provides you with inspiration from show-and-tell, and allows you to share what you learn with more people, .

So thank you for all that you do and best wishes in your new position.

Appendix A. Neighborhood Group Problems

What's Wrong with This Group?

About the physical space:

- Is the space too large? Too small?
- Could the seating be arranged more appropriately?
- Is the temperature comfortable?
- Can people hear?
- Are there outside distractions?
- Is there a feeling of being rushed by another group waiting to use the space?
- Is there anything else about the room that makes people uncomfortable?
- Is the meeting at the right time of the day? On the right day of the week? And for the right duration?

About the group leader:

- Does she/he seem happy and comfortable in front of the group?
- What kind of mood does she/he set?
- Does she/he lead the group without being dictatorial, demeaning, or dismissive?
- How is the group reacting to her/him?
- Does she/he allow everyone a chance to talk and control very talkative members?
- Does she/he disparage other neighborhood groups, other members, the chapter leadership, or chapter activities?
- Does she/he use inappropriate language or allow inappropriate remarks?
- Does she/he encourage participation by calling on people, by giving positive feedback, and by making the meeting fun?
- If the group is meeting in a retailer's store, is she/he supporting that retailer?
- Does the leader speak loudly enough? Or too much?

About the group:

- Do there seem to be cliques within the group?
- Are there lots of side conversations?
- Do attendees seem passive, even with an interesting program?
- Is the atmosphere hostile toward the group leader?
- Is there anything else you can pinpoint about this group's being different from other neighborhood groups in your chapter?

About the program:

- Did the group leader introduce the program presenter?
- Did the program seem to present new information or was it a stale repeat?
- Remembering that the person isn't a professional, was the program presenter adequately prepared? Could she/he answer questions? Did she/he have samples?
- Was there adequate time for questions from the audience and did either the presenter or the group leader control the questions appropriately?
- Was the program of appropriate length and depth?
- Did the leader do anything to help the presenter explain something a little better, to get the question period off the ground, or to stop the program from going on too long?

- Did the group leader make announcements, for example about upcoming chapter activities, the chapter library, openings on the Chapter Advisory Board, etc.; was she/he prepared for doing this?
- Did the group leader control the pace of the meeting and keep everyone on track? Did she/he offer appropriate comments and appreciation for those participating?
- Did the group leader end the meeting in an appropriate manner (thanking people for coming and sharing, by thanking the program presenter, announcing the next meeting) or did people just drift off?
- Was the meeting fun? Informative?

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**Appendix B.
New Group Sample Flyer**

Friday, March 14, 2003



9:30 - 11:30

***Riverdale Sew & Vac
414 NW Live Oak Ave
(Oak Plaza Shopping Center)***

LIKE TO SEW?

Presented by:

**Lexington Chapter of
the
American Sewing Guild**

**Questions?
Call 505 555 1455**

National ASG Headquarters
9660 Hillcroft, Suite 516
Houston, TX 77096
(713) 729-3000

E-mail: info@asg.org
Web site: www.asg.org

American Sewing Guild
(ASG)

***Organizational meeting for a
monthly sewing group in
Riverdale!***

- *Sewing Program*
- *Show and Tell*
- *Getting Organized*

Bring a sewing project to show!

**Appendix C.
New Group Meeting Sample Agenda**

New Group Meeting Sample Agenda

Duration	Segment	Who?
	Start the meeting	You
5 min	Introduce yourself and why we are here	You
5 min	What is a neighborhood group and what is the American Sewing Guild?	You
	Mini neighborhood group meeting	
10 min	Welcome and icebreaker	All
10 min	Chapter announcements	You and your friends
15 min	Short program	A friend
15 min	Show-and-tell	You and your friends, any attendees
	End of Mini-meeting	You
10 min	Break for refreshments	You and your friends, any attendees
	Organize the new group	
5 min	Ground rules	You
5 min	Getting group leaders	You and attendees
5 min	Setting up the location committee	You and Attendees
5 min	Setting Up the phone committee	You and attendees
5 min	Setting Up the program committee	You and attendees
5 min	Summary of organizing decisions	You
	End of organizing tasks	You
2 min	Conclude meeting	You

Index

A
ASG tri-folds 5-7

B
benefits of ASG membership 5-9
book as first-aid 2-6
brainstorming 3-3
budget 6-2

C
CAB 3-2, 5-7, 6-2, 7-4
 meetings 4-4
 report 4-4
chapter
 banner 5-7
 creating from neighborhood group 7-5
 library 3-4, 5-10, 7-3
 neighborhood group responsibilities 3-3
 president 2-4
Chapter Development Administrator 2, 7-4, 7-5
Chapter President's Guide 5-9
checkpoints 2-5
circulating 5-8
co-leader 7-2
community newspaper 5-7
Community Service Chair 4-3, 4-4
community service projects 4-3
co-neighborhood group coordinators 1-2
contact person 5-6

D
direct mailing 5-7
division of duties 1-3
dues 5-11
dues rebates 7-5

E
email as first-aid 2-6
email link 4-3
enthusiasm missing 2-5
Extension Service 5-7

F
First Aid Techniques
 Phone or email 2-6
 The Book 2-6
 The Model 2-5
 The Talk 2-5
flyers 5-7
friendly configurations of chairs 5-8
future group leaders 3-2

G
geographic spread 1-2
getting started 2-2

group dynamic as neighborhood group problem A-ii
group leader as neighborhood group problem A-ii

H
handouts 3-4
history and structure of the ASG 5-9

I
ineffective group leaders 7-2
insurance 7-5
introductions 2-2, 2-3

L
leadership training programs 3-3
listserv 4-2
Listserv Administrator 4-2

M
members willing to give programs 3-4
membership chair 4-3
membership form 5-12
mini-neighborhood group meeting 5-9
mini-program 5-7
modeling as first-aid 2-5

N
nametags 3-3, 5-7, 5-8
neighborhood group
 becoming a chapter 7-5
 clean-up activities 7-3
 disbanding 7-3
 doing their own thing 7-4
 finding a leader 7-2
 removal from chapter 7-4
 reorganizing 7-2
 visiting 2-2
neighborhood group coordinator
 as facilitator 7-3
 as Inspector General 2-3
 as observer 5-14
 as politician 2-3
 as problem solver 2-4
 as representative of chapter 2-2, 2-3
 as Visiting Nurse 2-4
 budget 6-2
 need for in chapter 1-2
 report to CAB 4-4
 role in new chapter 7-5
neighborhood group leader 1-2, 4-4
 burn-out 7-2
 new group 5-12
 selecting in new group 5-12
 working with membership chair 4-3
Neighborhood Group Leader's Guide 3-4, 4-2, 5-8
Neighborhood Group Leaders' Meeting ... 1-2, 1-3, 2-4,
 7-2

handouts	3-4
invitations	3-2
planning.....	3-2
purposes	3-2
sample agenda.....	3-2
neighborhood group meeting	
3 parts	5-9
sample agenda.....	3-4
Neighborhood Group Problems	
group dynamics.....	A-ii
leadership	A-ii
physical space	A-ii
programs.....	A-ii
new chapter	
considerations	7-6
New Group Meeting Sample Agenda.....	C-ii
new group sample introduction.....	5-9
new neighborhood group.....	5-6
contact person	5-6
decision time	5-11
location.....	5-6
low attendance	5-14
mini-meeting	5-10
planning programs	5-13
publicity.....	5-7
sample flyer.....	B-ii
second meeting	5-14
setting meeting time and date	5-12
new neighborhood group leader.....	5-8
no volunteers	5-12
newsletter.....	3-4, 7-3
newsletter editor	4-4, 7-3
Newsletter Editor.....	4-2
newsletters	
neighborhood group column.....	1-2
non-effective neighborhood group.....	2-4

O

Organizational Meeting.....	5-7
circulating.....	5-8
concluding remarks.....	5-14
friendly configurations of chairs.....	5-8
nametags.....	5-8
set-up	5-8
sign-in.....	5-8
socializing	5-8
Organizational Meeting Sample Agenda.....	C-ii

P

phone as first-aid	2-6
physical space as neighborhood group problem.....	A-ii
<i>Policies and Procedures Manual for ASG Chapters...</i>	2
president.....	4-4, 7-4, 7-5
privacy	4-2
program planners.....	5-13
programs	5-8, 5-10
as neighborhood group problem.....	A-ii
for new neighborhood group	5-13
going overtime	5-11
ideas.....	1-2, 3-3
mini-meeting guidelines	5-10
running short	5-11
sharing ideas.....	3-4
public libraries	5-7
publicity chair.....	5-7

R

radio community announcements	5-7
refreshments	5-8

S

Sample Agenda, New Group	C-ii
sample new group flyer	B-ii
set-up.....	5-8
sharing difficult situations.....	3-3
sharing program ideas	3-4
sharing successes.....	3-3
show-and-tell	2-3, 2-5, 5-8, 5-11
SIG	<i>See Special Interest Groups</i>
Special Interest Groups	5-15, <i>See Neighborhood group</i>
standing rules.....	3-4
start-up bag	5-7
storeowners.....	5-7

T

TAG.....	2
talking as first-aid	2-5
<i>Teach Another Generation (TAG) Guide for ASG Chapters</i>	2
television community announcements.....	5-7
training	1-2

W

Website Administrator	4-2
-----------------------------	-----

Y

Youth-oriented groups.....	<i>See TAG</i>
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