

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



July 2015

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President's Corner

How fast a year goes by! As I close my presidency and hand over the reins to Brian Smith, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who help to run NEO STC and make all of our activities possible. Our volunteer award winners and election results are also listed in this newsletter. AA special thank-you to Tricia Spayer, who has agreed to be our treasurer for 2015-16.



Photo by Tricia Spayer

Our 2015 NEO STC scholarship winner, Lee Murray, is a student at Youngstown State University. Lee and six other YSU students joined NEO STC this spring. Welcome!

Also, Janean Voss, Barb Philbrick, Kate Dodds, Brigid Brockway, and I visited YSU in May over two days to review the senior project presentations. It was fascinating to see the work that the students put into their projects over a semester, the types of writing they worked on, and the tools that they used. If you have the opportunity to attend this session next year (or to visit any local classrooms), I highly recommend it!

At the recent STC Summit in Columbus, I was thrilled to be among the members who accepted NEO STC's Community of Distinction award. Thank you again to our volunteers who worked at the host table and represented NEO STC to all of the visitors: Tricia Spayer, Tom Embaugh, Bob Young, Julianne Forsythe, Carrie Cianciola, Kate Dodds, Brian Smith, and Heidi Wood. Tricia, Tom, and Bob were our rock star coordinators for the table and the baseball game!

Thank you to all of our chapter members for supporting NEO STC, and I hope to see you at a future meeting or networking event! If you are interested in volunteering on a committee for 2015-16, please contact Brian Smith.

Kind regards,

Lisa Mileusnich, NEO STC Chapter President

Great Year, Great People

NEO STC awards, recognition, and election

By Claudia Thompson

Thanks to its dedicated and hard-working volunteers, community partners, and corporate sponsors, NEO STC has had another banner year.

On May 14, 2015, NEO STC celebrated this success with its annual Election and Awards Dinner at Creekside Restaurant in Brecksville, Ohio. The awards presentation was followed by a special presentation by Giao Buu, greeting card writer and editor at American Greetings.



Voting for the NEO STC 2014/2015 officers was held during the event, with results announced at the end of the evening.

President's Year-in-Review

To kick off the event, Lisa Mileusnich, 2014/2015 NEO STC President, reviewed the year's achievements and expressed her thanks for the hard work everyone put in to make these achievements possible. She then began the presentation of awards; a summary of these awards follows.

NEO STC Scholarship

Every year, NEO STC offers a scholarship to encourage local academic excellence, provide the profession with educated communicators, and promote awareness of and participation in NEO STC. The 2015 recipient received a \$1000 scholarship:

- ◆ Lee Murray, Youngstown State University. Lee will graduate in August with a bachelor's degree in Professional and Technical Writing, and then continue with a master's degree program this fall.

Community-Level Awards

NEO STC earned the following community-level award for the third year in a row:

- ◆ Community Achievement Award, Community of Distinction. The highest possible level of community recognition. NEO STC earned this award for

exceptional service to its members and for meeting Society goals well beyond expectations. The citation for the award reads:

"For providing value to members beyond your chapter's geographic boundaries and helping to secure the future of technical communication through excellent programming, award-winning communications, and outstanding sponsorship efforts."

Society-Level Awards

A number of NEO STC members received honors for their extended service to both the Society and NEO STC:

- ◆ Bob Young, Fellow. The rank of Fellow is the highest honor an STC member can receive. STC fellows contribute to the profession and the Society at the highest level, and are among the top technical communicators in the Society.
- ◆ Amy Vogt, Associate Fellow. The STC organization bestows the rank of Associate Fellow upon a senior member who has attained distinction in the field of technical communication.
- ◆ Janean Voss, Distinguished Chapter Service Award. This award acknowledges members who provide exemplary service to the Society.
- ◆ Paul Barans and Brian Walters, New Senior Members. These NEO STC members received Senior status for five years of continuous STC membership.

NEO STC Volunteer Awards

Each year NEO STC recognizes its volunteers for their service in several categories. This year's winners:

- ◆ Tricia Spayer, President's Achievement Award. Awarded for outstanding contributions to the community; Tricia earned this award for her continued dedication to the chapter while simultaneously serving in a Society-level role.
- ◆ Lynn Nickels, Volunteer of the Year. This award is reserved for exceptional volunteer service and dedication to the NEO STC community.
- ◆ Christine Barger, Rookie Volunteer of the Year. Awarded for active participation in NEO STC as a new member.
- ◆ Lynn Nickels and Janean Voss, Academic Relations, Committee of the Year. Each year, one committee is identified for its exceptional contributions to the community; the Academic Relations Committee

earned this distinction for its extended student outreach efforts this year.

- ◆ Carrie Cianciola, Ginny Haas, Ashleigh Petts, Claudia Thompson, and Janean Voss, NEO STC Volunteer Recognition Award. This award recognizes extended volunteer efforts and active participation during the year.

Incoming NEO STC President's Vision For 2015/2016

Brian Smith, Incoming NEO STC President, introduced himself to the group and gave a quick overview of his goals for the coming year. Among these goals were a stronger focus on social media and managing one's personal branding and presence. He is looking forward to another outstanding year!

Election Results

Following the awards ceremony, incoming NEO STC President's introduction, and the presentation by Giau Buu, the votes for 2015/2016 NEO STC Board positions were counted. Nineteen members of the NEO STC community voted, which was a quorum of the NEO STC membership.

The vote was unanimous for the 2015/2016 candidates for the open board positions of Vice President and Secretary. There were no candidates for Treasurer at the time of the election, but the position has since been filled.

The board identified below will serve in their respective roles from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016:

- ◆ Brian Smith, NEO STC President
- ◆ Jill McCauslin, NEO STC Vice President
- ◆ Tricia Spayer, NEO STC Treasurer
- ◆ Claudia Thompson, NEO STC Secretary
- ◆ Lisa Mileusnich, NEO STC Immediate Past President

Newsletter Drawing Winners

A big thank you goes out to all who provide articles to this newsletter. Part of this thank you included being eligible for a drawing for a \$50 gift card.

Congratulations are in order to the two lucky winners of the drawing as announced at our May banquet – **Janean Voss** and **Angie Dianetti**.

Please check back soon to see the latest on any future promotions and gift cards.

Thanks are also in order to our NEO STC board for approving this drawing as a way to give back to our members.

In the Spotlight: Brian Walters

By Lynn Nickels

Join me in re-welcoming Brian Walters. Brian has been a member of NEO STC and STC for about 10 years, but has been a continuous member for the past five. Currently an information developer at Rockwell Automation, Brian has worked in technical fields for many years.

Brian wrote user manuals and online help for Magnetic Resonance Imaging systems and service documentation for Computed Tomography systems for Philips Healthcare. He also has written technical documentation for software Computer Numerical Control for Manufacturing Data Systems.

In his time as a NEO STC member, Brian has attended the Content Management System presentation by Molly Barrett and the SharePoint presentation by Kathleen Ruggeri.

He obtained a Bachelor of Science in Journalism in 1994 and a Masters of Liberal Studies in Technology with a concentration in Written Communication in 1997 from Eastern Michigan University.

Brian enjoys photography, golf, music, and watching live music. Please join me in re-welcoming Brian to NEO STC!

Talk of the Town

Ashleigh Petts recently moved to Fargo, ND, and said "I'll be working on a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture at North Dakota State University." Huge thanks go out to her for her work with NEO STC, including her involvement with *Lines & Letters*. Let's all send her best wishes with this new adventure.

Lynn Nickels was named the NEO STC Volunteer of the Year. This is because of her many achievements including work as our *Lines & Letters* co-editor, supporter of many academic relations activities, and presentations that included the one to NEO STC on Powtoons. Congratulations are in order for sure.

SPECIAL SECTION: STC SUMMIT 2015

STC Summit: A New Fellow's Perspective

By Bob Young



As I approached the stage to receive my Fellow award, one prevailing thought crossed my mind: How fortunate I have been to be a member of NEO STC. Reaching the pinnacle of one's STC career does not happen without the caring support of others.

This especially applies for this former ink-stained sports writer. My professional growth as a tech writer evolved over time thanks to the dedicated professionals that comprise our organization. There are countless individuals I could thank for each footstep along the way.

Ironically, the three steps to the stage were symbolic of my journey from writing about the exploits of athletes to the interaction of plant machinery. Standing on the stage flanked by incoming STC president Bernard Aschwanden and outgoing STC president Kit Brown-Hoekstra with my name projected on screen was tremendously exhilarating and humbling. And seeing the smiles on the faces of the NEO STC contingent and Rockwell Automation co-workers re-enforced feelings of how fortunate I've been to be surrounded by the best in the business.

These are small steps by themselves but can lead to giant strides with teamwork:

Step 1: Soak up the knowledge of other professionals around you, and be willing to share in return. We have so many talented members in NEO STC. Pick up the Summit program and you'll see that three of our members participated in the Leadership program for incoming officers. Each person was hand-picked to share their experience serving on a particular chapter

committee, such as finance, awards and recognition, and sponsorship.

And, there were three NEO STC members who were selected to present a seminar! I had the pleasure to hear some of these presentations, including one where I overheard an attendee state "this is so good. We should be taping this." Bravo to our presenters!

Step 2: Network. My present position at Rockwell is due to my involvement with NEO STC colleagues. I've learned about software, writing tips, and ways to resolve challenges on deadline from the friendly conversations at meetings, social events, and conferences.

Step 3: Be active in the chapter. My leadership skills have been honed by serving on various committees. I was apprehensive to serve as president, but that experience helped strengthen my organizational, time management, and speaking skills. Be willing to challenge yourself and help a committee that will test your mettle. It's worth it!

I reluctantly choose not to name individuals in this article who helped pave my path. You know who you are and I salute you. Our chapter is successful because of the pooling of talent, and the sacrifice of many to help. That's why it was a fitting ending at the Summit ceremony when all the NEO STC attendees took to the stage for a group picture in honor of NEO receiving the highest chapter Award of Distinction.

In closing, for everyone who helped me reach this humbling "stage" of my career, thank you and God bless. I look forward to seeing each of you climb the steps to receive Fellow honors.

STC Summit: First-time Impressions

By Tom Lavelle

This was my first time attending an STC Summit, in addition to being a first-year member. I felt the Summit was worthwhile and well structured. The presentations that I attended were interesting and gave insight into current industry standards. The 45-minute time limit for the presentations was good for keeping the attendees engaged and interested. The refreshment breaks between sessions also helped to keep things from becoming monotonous. The breaks provided networking opportunities and a chance to interact with vendors. The speed networking event that was introduced this year was a great way to meet different people in the industry.

My only suggestion for improvement next year would be to shorten the closing meeting. After talking to previous Summit attendees, I got the impression that they liked the closing meeting because it brings a definitive conclusion to the Summit, as opposed to having it fizzle out on the last day. I would suggest keeping the closing remarks and raffle drawings to 15 minutes and allowing the closing keynote speaker 45 minutes instead of the 90-minute period allotted. The closing keynote speaker was engaging, but 90 minutes is a long time to sit in a room at the end of the Summit.

Would I attend an STC Summit in the future given the opportunity? I would say yes; there is definitely value in going. The Summit provides a means of learning about current industry standards, numerous opportunities to network with other professionals in your field, and a glimpse of what the future holds for technical communicators.

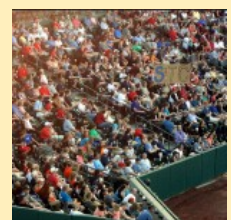
Summit/Banquet Enjoyed by NEO STC Members

By Amy Vogt

The Summit was fun this year and it was so nice that it was close to Cleveland. We had so many there from NEO STC! Many of us volunteered at the host table, so it felt like we always had a central gathering place.

They changed the banquet this year so that it was more inclusive and included it in the cost of your registration. Instead of a sit-down dinner, they passed appetizers and three courses of food in stations. It was really nice!

It's funny ... getting my Associate Fellow plaque is a blur for me. I was just trying not to trip when I went up on the stage.



Photos by Tricia Spayer

STC Summit: Infinite Possibilities – Closing keynote

By Julianne Forsythe

Remember when crayons and a sheet of paper could unleash your creative spirit? Remember the excitement of flipping open that box of 64 dazzling colors and letting your creativity spill onto that paper? Now think of today. Do you feel that same excitement and creativity waiting to burst out—on the job, at home, wherever you are? I know I don't, and chances are you don't either. We get wound up in the details of meeting deadlines and commitments, and just getting through the day that we don't give our creative spirit the chance to run free.

Denise Jacobs—Speaker, Author, and Creativity Evangelist at The Creative Dose—inspired me with her “Infinite Possibilities” closing keynote at the 2015 STC Summit. She provided a refreshing reminder that creativity is not something you have or don't have—it's something you choose. And “choosing creativity... puts you on the path of having infinite possibilities in your career, creating a clear path to a future where you can not only be awesome, but also do meaningful work.”

Creativity is not about trying or effort, it's “more like breathing,” according to Jacobs. We all breathe, but just as an athlete conditions to develop his breathing and performance, we can do the same to enhance our natural creativity. She encourages us to adopt a “growth mindset” to discover our infinite possibilities.

While Jacobs offered much insight into creativity and far too many valuable nuggets of information to summarize in this article, here are a few thoughts that resonated with me



Adopt a beginner's mind. Be inquisitive. Infants and toddlers approach the world with an innate passion and drive to absorb all that the world offers. As adults, we need to rekindle this passion to explore beyond our limits.

Be willing to fail. Our inner fears feed our inner critic, which can shut down creativity. Learn to silence your inner critic. Don't be afraid to take chances.

Cultivate your creative flow. When we learn to balance existing skills with new challenges, we reach our flow. Relying only on our skills can generate apathy and boredom. Too many new challenges produce worry and anxiety. Just the right balance arouses curiosity and energy while still letting us feel in control.

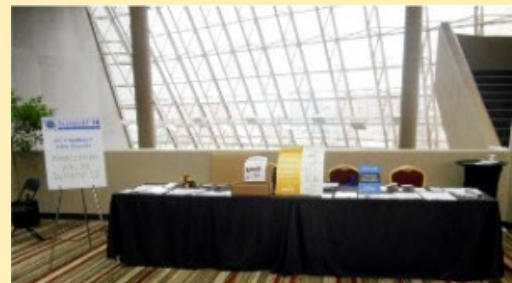
Have a healthy disregard for the impossible. The possible is often there, waiting to be found.

Jacobs' closing keynote has challenged me to rediscover my creativity. What a fitting call-to-action to conclude an idea-packed STC Summit! I look forward to her upcoming book, *Banish Your Inner Critic: 26 Effective Techniques for Unleashing Productive Creativity*. You can find her [Summit presentation online](#). Visit [her website](#) to learn more.

STC Summit: Hosting in Columbus

Article and photos by Tricia Spayer

As many of you know, NEO STC was the host chapter for the STC Summit in Columbus. Even though many of us did not know much about Columbus, we had an enthusiastic group of volunteers to make the host table a success.



I wish to thank committee members: Tom Embaugh, Bob Young, Heidi Wood, and Jill McCauslin who attended conference call meetings and helped brainstorm our operation. Thanks also to Char Djordjevic-Smith and Colleen Price who attended meetings early on, spayer01 but had to drop out when they found out they could not attend the Summit.

It was more than a year before the 2015 Summit that we started gathering intel from the Phoenix chapter, who hosted the Summit in 2014. Based on Phoenix's experience and lessons learned, our host chapter determined things to sell that screamed Ohio, and brainstormed a fun evening event.

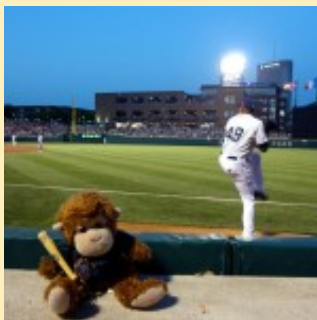
Excellent articles from Lynn Nickels and Annie Kerr helped 'sell' Columbus to potential Summit attendees. These articles were published in Intercom several months before the Summit.

We also had help at the host table from: Amy Vogt, Dodds, Lisa Mileusnich, Julianne Forsythe, Carrie Cianciola, and Brian Smith. Thanks for providing us with breaks!



So what did we sell? Buckeyes, of course! Yum!! This delicious treat, from North Canton's own Harry London company, was quite a hit with attendees. Many Summit attendees were able to bring home enough buckeyes for their whole teams. What better souvenir of Ohio than some buckeyes?

As for our fun event, congratulations goes to STC Fellow Bob Young who used his contacts with the Columbus Clippers to organize this highly successful event. The STC office reported that this was the highest-attended extracurricular activity (for which tickets were sold) that they'd ever seen at the Summit. Our 'Take Me Out to the Ball Game' event had 85 – count 'em – 85 people who joined us for a Columbus Clippers game on June 22!



We had a fantastic time at this game, complete with 10-cent hot dogs! The Clippers made a fantastic effort in the 9th inning to nearly tie the Norfolk Tides, but ultimately lost 6-5. But not without an exciting finish!

The biggest thanks goes to Tom Embaugh, who ordered the buckeyes for us and gathered all the Columbus brochures, maps, and info for the attendees. He attended the Summit solely to work at the host table, so he was quite busy helping attendees find places and things. We could not have operated the table without you, Tom!

The host table was a lot of work – and busier than I expected during the Summit. But it was great fun and I'm glad to have been a part of it.

Engage Blog Readers with Storytelling, Titles, More

By Jeanette Evans

What are ways to engage blog readers? Here are three ideas that could help.

- ◆ Tell an engaging story.
- ◆ Write a great title.
- ◆ Use humor.

Telling an engaging story can be a challenge. Adding a human element can help. For example, when talking about a product, put in a personal story about its use. A personal story about its use. A personal story about me could be that to date I have made more than 1000 posts on various blogs. [How to Evoke Emotional Responses from Digital Storytelling](#) has more ideas.

Titles are something we should all write carefully as a title impacts the click rate and pulls in the reader. A title with 81-100 characters improves the click through rate according to [How to Write Better Titles Using Data-Driven Strategies](#).

Using humor in a blog is something Lynn Nickels recommends in her Writing Technical Blogs article (in the April 2015 issue of *Lines & Letters*). Did you hear the one about the [comma splice who walks into a bar, it has a drink, and then leaves](#)