

**SSA CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**  
**SSA Board of Director's Meeting**  
**March 2-3, 2018 Reno, NV**  
**Submitted by: Ken Sorenson**

Thanks to the Excom members, Board members, committee chairs, committee members, and others who volunteer their time and service on behalf of the SSA!

I continue to believe that our biggest challenge is promoting growth in SSA's membership and this is where I am focusing my efforts. It may be wishful thinking on my part, but I'm seeing some positive signs in our membership numbers.

My priorities remain the same:

- 1) improved communications between clubs,
- 2) improved club websites,
- 3) more club CFGs and improved pilot training,
- 4) increased emphasis on cross-country training and flying,
- 5) more youth involvement,
- 6) improved local marketing by clubs and commercial operators,
- 7) strengthened ties with EAA,
- 8) developing a business plan for the SSA, and
- 9) increased funding of clubs and the SSA through member donations and planned giving.

Detailed reports on the financial status of the society will be presented by our Treasurer, Richard Maleady, and our SSA Foundation Chairman, John Godfrey. My understanding is that the SSA's financial condition is healthy.

Safety continues to be a top priority. The Soaring Safety Foundation, headed by Richard Carlson, provides many excellent safety-related resources and services to the membership. A strong and persistent emphasis on safety is critically necessary to the health of the sport and the SSA. One of our challenges is to keep this topic in front of the membership in a fresh, meaningful, and constructive manner. One of the methods that the SSF is using to do this is to present monthly articles in *Soaring* magazine. These have been excellent and encourage the development of a strong safety culture within our sport.

Chris Schrader, Region 6 director, is leading the charge on our growth efforts as Chairman of the Growth & Retention Committee. He will report separately on his activities. A major piece of his news will be the recent successful development of promotional videos to promote soaring and to promote the funding of SSA junior/youth programs.

John Godfrey, as our SSA Foundation Chairman, is working on developing stronger SSA Planned Giving and Fundraising programs. John will report separately on this. The SSA is already beginning to see promising results from John's efforts.

As reported at the last SSA Board meeting, we had two recent major contributions to SSA's youth flight training scholarships from Pat Costello and from the estate of Dennis Purduski. These contributions prompted a very successful re-energized and reformatted package of youth scholarships and have also prompted more individuals to make scholarship donations. The details of the youth scholarship program will be reported on separately by JP Stewart, our Junior/Youth Committee Chairman.

The SSA insurance programs brokered by Pat Costello are stable and provide a valuable member benefit.

*Soaring* magazine continues to present interesting and informative articles and columns thanks to the excellent work by our editor, Eric Bick.

The Google Discussion Group for clubs and commercial operators that we started in December 2015 continues to be an effective communication tool. Providing the ability for clubs and commercial operators to share challenges and solutions is one of the many ways that the SSA supports its membership. Membership in the Google Group continues to expand as club leadership changes and we add new leadership members to the group. Interestingly, the retiring leadership members stay involved in the group as well.

Courtesy of Melanie Nichols, wife of pilot Steve Nichols, the SSA currently offers a web-based system which offers club website templates. The system is complete with tutorials and assistance to create a new and modern website. The new websites are "mobile friendly" and the website development service is free! This is an SSA member benefit that is not being adequately utilized. We should all be working to persuade clubs which have "weak" websites to take advantage of this tremendous SSA member benefit.

A new on-line CFG training course was developed last year by Russell Holtz, [www.gliderbooks.com](http://www.gliderbooks.com). The course is excellent. Rhonda Clerkin and Russell will be hosting a panel discussion on glider pilot training at the Reno Convention.

Retention! Once we have a pilot hooked on cross-country flying, there is a much better chance we'll have them for the long term. Cross-country training resources should be available from the SSA for use by clubs and commercial operators in seminars, training camps, and ground schools. The information is already "out there" from previous seminars and camps but needs to be assembled into a central location, organized, and then promoted. Mitch Hudson has taken ownership of this project as the Chairman of the Cross Country Training and Development

Committee. Mitch will be hosting a working session at the convention to help clubs get started with cross country training.

A recent and very promising development on the cross-country training effort is David Lessnick's offer to organize a series of SSA webinars on cross-country flying techniques. David has been an active EAA member for many years and made extensive use of the EAA webinars for his airplane maintenance and flying activities. He sees an opportunity for the SSA to offer soaring-related webinars and archived presentations to help pilots progress into cross-country soaring. This is a great idea! We expect to have more information available at the Board meeting and at the convention.

Participation in OLC is another means of promoting cross-country flying and Director Billy Hill has been enthusiastically and effectively leading the charge on the OLC front with an excellent series of monthly articles in *Soaring* magazine.

The Club Advisors program which we launched last year is underway thanks to the efforts of Jim Callaway and Darrel Watson. Jim and I had a very enjoyable and productive visit at the Black Forest Soaring Society in Colorado. Darrel had a good visit with the Tidewater Soaring Society in Virginia. Each day-long visit requires a significant effort by both the advisors (preparation, time, and travel) and the club (arranging for the right people to be available for the visit so that an extensive survey can be completed). I believe that this program has great potential to help the SSA grow and to benefit our members. We need additional volunteer advisors.

We continue to develop our collaboration with the EAA, including participating in their Young Eagles program. Director Geoff Weck has been leading this effort and will report on its status.

AOPA has an excellent "You Can Fly" initiative underway which includes starting more flying clubs, converting "Rusty Pilots" into active flyers, improving flight schools, and youth outreach. AOPA employees, "AOPA Ambassadors", travel around and promote these programs. I recently discovered that a local friend/CFIG/Tow-pilot is an AOPA Ambassador. We have begun informal discussions to explore the possibility of AOPA/SSA collaboration. I hope to have more to report at the Board meeting.

There's a lot going on. Thanks again to everyone for your help.

Ken