

ESA History (cont.)

States and chapters control the projects and programs that they adopt in the areas of education, service, and association. While most participate in international projects, they also develop activities to suit the interests and desires of their specific membership.

Here is an overview of the general educational, service, and association programs that are promoted to the membership through Headquarters, the International Council, and the ESA Foundation.

Education

During the early years of ESA, the educational program was very specific and focused on a week-by-week study program for the series of books entitled "The Writings of Mankind." The members purchased these books, and individual chapter members were responsible for preparing lessons according to a standardized study guide.

Today, most chapters have an educational chair who outlines a yearlong plan of study for the chapter. The topics are chosen to suit the interests of the membership, and the members take an active part in the preparation of study materials. Chapters are asked to report their educational activities to the state educational chair and are encouraged to enter their programs in state and international award competitions.

Educational ideas and resource materials are kept on hand at ESA Headquarters. A listing of the topics for the Top Ten Educational Programs is distributed at International Convention, and the top 20 programs are displayed along with entries for the Association of the Arts.

The ESA Foundation has an active scholarship program for youth and for older men and women who are planning to return to school. Scholarship information and applications can be obtained from the ESA Foundation page on the website or the ESA Foundation Director.

Leadership seminars are also available to the membership for additional training. These seminars are conducted for officer training and for personal development. These meetings are organized and promoted through ESA Headquarters.

Note: The educational programming needs of the membership are often intertwined with the philanthropic projects and leadership activities that are more often associated with the service and association aspects of ESA. As a result, many chapter programs focus on learning more about the needs of others. The follow-up projects that result provide ESA members with hands-on learning experiences where their knowledge is transformed into actions that help others.

Service

The right to be of service is an important current cornerstone of ESA membership. Members develop their personal skills, conduct educational programs, and get together for fun and friendship in the pursuit of the knowledge that will assist them in serving others. They meet the needs of their families, friends, and the community at large through the shared attitude of service.

Chapters are free to choose and implement projects to serve their communities. While most chapters do support efforts to raise funds for the international projects, most chapters sponsor additional activities to supply funds and services close to home. Many state councils also

designate state projects that have particular appeal to their members. These state projects are voted on by the state membership.

To assist the membership in meeting goals for state and international projects, specific support systems have been established.

Most chapters have a designated philanthropic chair that serves for the year and reports all chapter service activities to state and international chairs. The philanthropic chair may also serve as the general project chair for specific service projects for the chapter. In most cases, special chairs are assigned for major philanthropic undertakings, and the philanthropic chair coordinates these efforts to achieve a balanced service program for the year.

Upon receiving a vote of approval by the membership, the state council endorses a state project for state chapters to support during the year. In some cases, states endorse one of the international projects to serve as the state project as well. However, many states have additional projects where chapters do additional fundraising and provide additional service hours for programs that are of particular interest to the state membership. In some cases, the states have a longstanding relationship with their state project. In other cases, the states vote upon new projects annually. Again, the choice resides with the state. Through the years, all of the states have chosen to support the international projects on a continuing basis.

Again, the two international projects are: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and Easter Seals. Each year, fundraising goals for each of these projects are set. In addition, state goals are set for each of these projects.

The organization for the implementation of fundraising activities varies for these projects at the international level. Both of the projects have members who serve as senior and junior chairs at the international level. They serve as members of the general board of the International Council and serve on a rotation basis with the junior chair automatically assuming the function of the senior chair in the subsequent year. These chairs are appointed by the international president and are charged with the responsibility of promoting the project within the organization.

The ESA for St. Jude, which is located at ESA Headquarters, also provides additional staff support for the direction of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital activities within ESA. The international co-chairs plan activities with staff personnel who provide training for state chairs and who provide additional direction and event coordination throughout the year.

ALSAC, the governing body of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, provides financial support for training, event counseling, and for development of special ESA promotional materials to support the efforts of the membership.

Easter Seals works directly with the volunteer chair from the International Council. Coordination of events is decided on a year-by-year basis.

Easter Seals provides training for the international chair and provides transportation and lodging for the International officer who attends the annual corporate weekend.

All of the hours and money that are reported to the international philanthropic chair count toward the grand total of philanthropic contributions each year. This includes all of the work done for local, state, and international projects. While ESA is very proud of the service records that have been reported on this basis, it also recognizes that this does not accurately reflect all of the contributions that have been made by ESA members and chapters. Since only reported dollars and hours are reflected in this report, an additional twenty percent probably could be added each

year and still be short of the complete total. (ESA members will be quick to tell you that they do not serve others for credit, and many chapters still regard the reporting system as taking credit.)

In summary, the right to be of service is a charge that ESA members take seriously. The amounts raised note that the education and training that they receive in the process make them capable fundraisers and social servants. In many cases, this has meant career opportunity for participating members.

Association

While education and service provide the tangible program content of the ESA experience, surveys indicate that friendship or association is the major reason individuals choose to join and remain in ESA. The association with like-minded, goal-oriented, caring people is the glue that holds the organization together. The chapter network provides an exceptional support group for members of all ages. The constant encouragement, empathy, and sympathy of fellow members provide strong motivation for members to develop their individual talents.

ESA has developed several award and recognition programs to assist the membership with learning more about themselves and their place in the organization. Through these programs, individuals and chapters receive recognition and commendation for their activities and learn how to enhance the quality and scope of their ESA network. Essentially, these programs involve two areas: awards, and membership development & retention.