

Hello ABANA Affiliate Members,

My name is Bruce Woodward. I am a new ABANA Board Member from Ohio and your new Affiliate Liaison member. I am the new kid on the block. Actually I am no kid. I am one of the gray beards but I still swing a mean hammer. One of the silver tops who, based on ABANA's survey, make up well over half of the blacksmiths in the US. My Board candidacy was based on attracting new people into blacksmithing. Evidently there are a lot of blacksmiths out there who feel the same as I do and took the time to vote for me. I thank you for that. Presently there are many very talented young smiths but not near enough. The veteran and established smiths are the core and stability of our affiliate groups. However attrition is taking far too many dedicated smiths lately. Local and international smiths who had once given so much of their time and efforts to the continuation and advancement of blacksmithing and asked for so very little in return. They asked us to just "pass it on". Well, as the man once said, "it is time to stand up and be counted". Our past and present ABANA Presidents Chris Winterstein and Rome Hutchings have said to find something you care about and work for it. I believe your rewards will be great.

With the economy of the world going into the pits, money is extremely tight for everyone. At the November ABANA Board Meeting of this year, the Board was very concerned with fiscal responsibility. We tried to cut costs where ever and whenever possible without drastically cutting services. Such as, you will notice a change in packaging and mailing of the Anvil's Ring. Even though we have slightly altered the AR, the ABANA Board is very protective of our publications. They are, along with the ABANA Conference, our flagships and our window to the world.

With the economy sour, it is very important, now more than ever before, for blacksmithing to be in the forefront of the general public's thoughts. Every blacksmith demonstration, every blacksmith exhibit, every blacksmith article is so important to remind the potential blacksmith customer that "Yes we can do your project and Yes we can do it well and Yes we will take only our share of what money is available".

We all know how much time and energy and expense goes into efforts to attract prospective blacksmiths from the general public, often with rather discouraging results. However there are a few groups, like the Boy Scouts through their Metalwork Merit Badge Program, who already have a beginning interest in blacksmithing. An interest that with encouragement and nurturing could grow into a lifelong passion. This program is an open door for blacksmithing to 3 million Scouts and 1 million adult advisors. Some of you are already certified Boy Scout Merit Badge Counselors or you have demonstrated at Scout events. I applaud you. However there is room for many more counselors. If this appeals to you, contact your local Boy Scout Council. Again, you may find it very rewarding. I would like to know just how many of our affiliate members are BSA Metalwork Merit Badge Counselors. If you are a counselor please send an email or letter to me stating also your affiliate and your local BSA council.

ABANA Board Member Kim Saliba has recently resigned from the Board for serious health reasons. Her energetic support at the past ABANA and CanIron Conferences will be greatly missed. We wish her Godspeed and safe journey.

ABANA has a number of new programs for its members this year such as health insurance. Check it out on our web site or contact ABANA's Central Office.

ABANA will also have a great Conference for all in June 2010 at Memphis, TN. The Conference is indeed ABANA's Window to the World. We mean to do it right. World renowned demonstrators, environmentally friendly tent camping, fiscally sound business workshops, universally acclaimed Affiliates Area, tantalizing tailgating, etc, etc. Details to follow in future installments.

For the past year, the ABANA Affiliate Letter has been written by Paul Boulay. He left some pretty big foot prints for me to follow in, however with Paul at my elbow for guidance and to keep me out of trouble and with your suggestions, we will do just fine.

Please stay in contact, Bruce Woodward

ABANA Affiliate Liaison Member
Bruce Woodward
6374 Lake Road West
Madison, OH 44057
woodwardiron1@roadrunner.com

ABANA Central Office
15754 Widewater Drive
Dumfries, VA 22025-1212
abana@abana.org