

KEEPING YOUR CHAPTER THRIVING

Hi, I'm Cari Class, Chapter Leader of Santa Cruz -1. And I'm so happy to be here. I have the honor to be a part of three thriving, energized chapters in Santa Cruz, California lead by Cheri Lippmann, Sally Bookman and myself.

I started my chapter in July of 2007 so I'm coming up on 6 years. That same passion for what we're doing as an organization, which just rocks my world and gives me a deep sense of purpose in my life, is no less vibrant today than the day I started!

I'm going to share some of the things we have done in our area that's kept DFW interesting and intriguing both for us as leaders but has also kept our member's engaged and super charged. I have members who've been attending since the very beginning with me—they show up, every month, and are present. That's some longevity.

I think the secret sauce to creating successful chapters where the load is shared by many, is allowing the passion you feel for DFW to flow through you. Your enthusiasm will ignite enthusiasm of your membership.

You're only one person, but if you plant that seed in your members, they become the mouthpiece for the organization and your chapter.

I loooove DFW. DFW has changed my life and left an indelible mark on who I am as a person and the way I show up in the world.

It's opened my eyes to both the plight of those living in poverty, and inspired me with the absolute innovation and determination the women and girls I have "met" though our meetings.

I see the world differently now. And I've been able to steward others in my community to understand the same things I have come to know.

Educate a girl, empower a woman and we really can change the world. This is such a powerful truth!

When I walk into a room of my DFW members, it's like old home week. We are like-minded, kindred spirits. A good portion of my own friend base now comes from DFW folks. Just like being at this conference, it's like walking into a room of sistas—I know that you share my passion and enthusiasm for DFW, I can feel it bubbling up!

- It is my hope that you will get three or more takeaways that you can implement in your chapter to fuel the fire and keep your membership thriving. Don't think you need to do all the suggestions—they're just that, ideas.

- The beauty of DFW is that we have
 - a. the foundation of superior program selection—done for us,
 - b. the support of excellent educational materials,
 - c. and most importantly, the autonomy to create meeting styles as we see fit that resonate with our own members.

That autonomy in and of itself is a huge catalyst for unleashing creativity in our leaders. Today we will all benefit from hearing about what others are doing.

- We have a unique format in Santa Cruz, we have a single newsletter/meeting announcement email that all three chapters share.
- Folks can RSVP for their meeting of choice from the one announcement. But members do gravitate and bond to a particular group—they are very loyal. Each group has a very different feel. At the same time folks are free to float and cross-pollinate between meetings depending on their schedules and the meeting location. And then we do get together for tri-chapter meetings, but I'll go into that later.
- We have 700 women on our email list. Some might get the announcements for a year before they attend a meeting. Others simply read it, but don't attend.
- It depends on if the goal for your chapter is growth—I know there are some closed groups. But, it seems you can't sustain your chapter unless there is a percentage of newbies attending each month. We have an average of 3-6 new folks each month, at each meeting. Some stick, some don't, but enough do that our meeting numbers stay even and in slow growth mode.

ACTIVITIES

- We've found Meetup is a great way to get the word out to your community. We started doing Meetup in Jan of last year. We have 92 Meetup members. 72 are new to DFW, the other 20 were existing members who just like to sign up for their meetings via Meetup and also enjoy the additional activities that we offer through that venue.
- We all realize we like spending time together so much, we wanted to organize social events outside of our meetings. Through Meetup we've done outings to Shakespear Santa Cruz at a discounted rate, Happy Hour at a restaurant where a percentage of the proceeds go back to our local homeless shelter. This serves to answer that question we've all been asked, "do you contribute locally". And the answer is "Well,

as an organization our focus is the developing world, but as individuals we do a LOT to benefit our community”.

- We participated in the 1 Billion Rising, V-Day event that was held all over the world—in our area it was held Feb 14th of this year.
- Cheri spearheaded an event surrounding the film screening of Girl Rising in our community with a meal in an Afghan restaurant beforehand. We took over the entire restaurant—they closed it to serve just us! We had 45 women show up for the dinner then attended the film screening. Cheri felt a sense of connection with Malala and thought Afghan food would be a good tribute before the film.
- We had a table at the movie theater to promote DFW along with other local women’s rights organizations. After two completely sold out screenings of Girl Rising, the theater ran the film for a full week.
- We do have a Santa Cruz Facebook page and post our meetings each month, but we’ve found Meetup a more effective way to actually get folks to meetings.
- Our local DFW chapters plug in to other like-minded events within the Santa Cruz community. We had an information table at the screening of Miss Representation a film about how women are negatively depicted in the media with a break out sessions afterwards on how we can change that dialog in our community through mentoring our girls.
- At community events we hang our banner and talk to passers by about DFW, hand out business cards and have a sign up sheet for people to get on our email list.

Since Cheri took the reins of Santa Cruz Chapter 3 in 2011, she has been an unstoppable dynamo and has organized these amazing events and programs—

- a.* This month we launched our very first Tri-Chapter picnic. We held single meeting in June instead of three. 74 women attended and we raised \$1,450 for Breaking Ground. We had someone donate a nice gift, so rather than asking for more donations, (we already tap our members a lot and just came off of the Women Challenge fundraiser). Everyone who donated to the program received a ticket for each \$10 increment of giving to win the prize. This time, it was a give back for the continued generosity of our members.
- b.* Cheri ordered books from Starfish One by One. Members purchased them and they were then donated to each and every primary school and public library in our entire county, totaling 35 books.
- c.* We also collected 50 phones for maternal healthcare in the Republic of Congo through the Hope Phones program that DFW sponsored. People loved that—

providing a good way to get rid of cell phones and benefit someone else. Members took up collections at their work places.

- d. Cheri organized ordering items from Maya Works and set up a lovely display table at each of our three meetings where we sold \$780 worth of goods for Maya Works. Members got to see first hand the quality and beauty of the goods these women are making.
- e. Since so many new folks visit us each month that know little about DFW, she plays the *Making a Difference* segment during their opening *social time* at her meetings. She tries to play it every few months.

SPEAKERS

- Use the speaker list DFW puts out if you are lucky enough to have someone from the organization in your area.
- If you don't have anyone from the organization near you, call an ethnic restaurant to find speakers from the country of origin. You'd be surprised how receptive folks are once you describe the organization and what we are doing. I've had restaurant owners put me in touch with amazing native speakers.
- Or call your local college and see if they have an ethnic studies program with students from the countries we are featuring.
- Cheri organized a fellow from Sengal, **Ibou N'gom** who comes from a long line of Griot's (a storyteller—a role traditionally passed down through the generations). He is also a drummer and dancer and lead us in a native song and dance at our recent meeting in April featuring CREATE, based in Sengal.

MEETING TOOLS

- We recently set up a member table for business cards and business promotion—this makes members feel like they have a “voice” yet does not take time away from DFW. Visiting the table is completely voluntary. Cheri's made this announcement at the June meeting where we had the table set up:
 - a. “We know our primary reason to come to DFW is to serve and support our impoverished sisters in our global community, but we believe a natural extension that comes from gathering like minded women is the desire to support our DFW sisters in our local community too.”
- We put a sticker on a new attendee's nametag so others know they are new. We ask that members draw out newbies to ensure they are included during the meeting. Check out the table where Cheri put out an arsenal of meeting tools. We put a sticker on volunteer nametags and during announcements acknowledge their contribution and service.

- Order a scarf, bracelet or something from the crafts made by the featured NGO. Gift it to a member, picking a name out of a hat.
- Sally ordered a Maya Nut tree when we featured Maya Nut Institute. One of our members ordered Maya nut flour and made cookies, another made a cake.
- We celebrate birthdays, those of our own chapter and those of our members.
- A fun thing I picked up from going to Cheri's meeting is after announcements and introductions of new attendees and the affirmation, we ask "who is having a birthday this month?" Someone almost always raises their hand, and then they get to lead the food line. It's a simple but special thing to do to acknowledge our members.
- I encourage the use of sign up sheets for tasks—***share the load***. I learned this from going to Saratoga chapter meeting. Our sign up sheet has areas for host homes, presenters, photographer, newsletter recap writer and greeters.

FUNDRAISERS

- In December we host a Tri-Chapter meeting and do a big push for the annual appeal. We start collecting gently used and donated gifts in September. Just after Thanksgiving we have two big basket making sessions where we assemble all of the donated goods into themed baskets, which are raffled off at our December meeting. We have 80 women turn out for this meeting and we raised over \$1,500 for that month's program Girl Determined and \$3,420 for the annual appeal, up 27% from the year before. Fundrasiers start in Oct and Nov and we usually take in an additional \$200 each month.
- I think the greatest achievement about this event aside from the funds we were able to raise, is the feedback we got from our members. Emails flooded in after the event with the same sentiment, "*Not only was it a lovely, well- organized event, but you could feel the love in the room*". That is the highest praise we could get.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Get a co-leader, Get a co-leader, and did I mention, Get a co-leader
- Groom your successor. The success of your chapter depends on it.
- Engage your members. If they are not stepping up or volunteering through the sign up sheet, call them on the phone and ask directly for the help you need.
- The way I look at it is it's not an inconvenience, but spreads the joy and ensures active, engaged members.
- It has been so gratifying to witness how plugged in our members are as they all chime in to address questions asked by newbies during the presentations. They fully grasp the tenants of DFW, how we work, and the thought process behind our positions.
- The Santa Cruz chapters have fully engaged, committed, full-throttle members who love helping out and are continually introducing new folks to DFW. They have a sense of ownership and place and loyalty to their chapters. **Belonging is a basic human need.** As an organization, we have the capability to fulfill that need through our chapters.

In January I had the privilege to hear Lynn Twist, author of *The Soul of Money*, speak at a luncheon event put on by AFP. Lynn also founded The Hunger Project and Pachamama Alliance both of which we have sponsored.

Her presentation was amazing, but in closing allow me to share a few Pearls of Wisdom from her talk:

- She hates the use of the word non-profit because it says what we are NOT. She prefers "Social Profit" but profit can be spelled PROPHET, so she likes to refer to organizations such as ours as SOCIAL PROPHETS.
- When talking about organizations she said. "Create a culture that people want to be a part of". And I believe that is exactly what we have done with DFW.
- The people you admire most ARE THE STAND they've taken. They have relinquished just a "point of view" and move into vision. A Stand creates a feel that people can relate to and understand.
- And lastly, everyone, please stop a moment, BREATHE and take this in—
"Be inspired, stay inspired and inspire everyone along the way."

Thank you so much, I'm proud and honored to be a part of this movement we are creating.