

# THE STATUS AND FUTURE of the SGAA Stained Glass School

by C. Robert (Bob) Markert, Director of the SGAA Stained Glass School

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At last summer's SGAA Conference in Kansas City, I was named the new Executive Director of the SGAA Stained Glass School. Jerome Durr, my predecessor, served as director of the school very ably for the last seven years. He led the SGAA Stained Glass School in expanding the pre-Conference class program and welcoming both members and non-members into those classes

Jerome, along with our President, Jack Whitworth, also oversaw the purchase of our first permanent property, which is located in Raytown, Missouri. We now have a beautiful two-and-a-half acre plot of land, on which we will build a permanent teaching facility and permanent Association headquarters, museum, and archives. Those two actions have greatly advanced our SGAA Stained Glass School and Association goal of making the SGAA the primary teaching facility for art glass in North America.

We have now the very real opportunity to advance craft training in the glass arts and to certify the knowledge and skills of those who attend the SGAA Stained Glass School. It was with great excitement that the first three workshops held on-site at the SGAA's property were given during the 2010 Annual Summer Conference. The door is now open for many more to come.

I have formed a new Board of Trustees to help guide the SGAA Stained Glass School in these new endeavors; this Board will approach our needs and future growth with wisdom

and creativity. We are currently in the process of creating lists of classes and qualified teachers, as well as determining class goals and requirements. Once these are in place, actual classes will be designed, keeping in mind the needs of both the students and of current or future

bringing in recognized leaders from around the world in the stained, decorative, and architectural art glass fields to offer workshops and seminars at the facility. We welcome suggestions for making the classes meaningful and worthwhile.

We are particularly excited about the longer classes because they give us the opportunity to have actual continuing-education hours that can be applied to the hourly skills areas requirements as found in our certification program for Craftsman and Journeyman. These classes will allow member studios, especially the smaller ones, to offer training to employees who are working toward certification when the studio itself has neither the time nor equipment and tools to complete a particular skills set.

Possible lists of classes and teachers are being gathered, class goals and requirements are being assembled, and programs are being created, all with an eye on the future and possible member needs. One future goal includes promoting academic relationships with colleges and universities who are interested in pursuing glass as a new degree area.

We are working toward building a new body of skilled, certified artisans by tapping the resources of the young. High schools, especially those with an emphasis on trade skills, are a wealth of potential students looking to start a career in glass and art. As the steward of the ancient tradition of glass, we have the mystery and aura that surrounds our craft to offer as incentive to the young of our communities who look at the art and



employers. We are also working to structure relationships with colleges and universities that are interested in offering stained, decorative, and architectural art glass as courses of study in their institutions.

The SGAA Stained Glass School is hoping to expand during this coming year into offering longer and more intensive workshops. We are investigating programs as long as three to five days. Offerings over the next couple of years will include a variety of study areas, such as painting, design, restoration, and bench and shop craft skills. Long-term goals for expansion include

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the craft of our field and consider making it their own.

It is up to us to be creative in finding ways to excite a whole new generation of artists and craftspeople in what it is that we do for our world. We create a unique environment of lasting beauty within the buildings in which we live, work, and pray. Our skill and imagination touches millions of people every day and helps shape their thoughts, attitudes, and views about this world we live in. It is that sense of poetry, mystery, and the importance and value of meaningful work that can so capture the imagination and interest of young people, especially of college age. I remember in my own youth that I wanted to do something that made a difference in my world.

The concept of the latent and inherent sense of art and beauty; the need for meaning and value; and the boundless

energy, vision, and enthusiasm of youth are all available to us. We need only to broaden some of our definitions, alter some of our attitudes, and rethink some of our concepts about our youth and the vision of our own future as an organization and a craft. We are challenged to allow a new image of the future to unfold.

We have embarked on a new adventure with the forming of a new Headquarters Building Fund. It is important that we work to see our own goals met for glass in America. We help by selling and buying puzzles, now and into the future. We support the dream by personal and studio donations to help put one brick on top of the other. Our support will help the fundraising efforts of grants and funding agency donations. Our activity, hopefully, will become contagious and draw in new members.

What a journey we are on! Our trade — our craft — has been a blessing to us, individually as well as collectively. I feel that it also has been a blessing to our communities and our country because we are in the business of making this world more beautiful than it was before we caught this virus we call glass, which strikes us to our very hearts. We all know the value that we provide. I want us to find a way to build that value more visibly, concretely, and powerfully into the SGAA and its Stained Glass School. Just as we attempt to produce work of beauty, of spirituality, of hope and fidelity, we can produce that in others. That endeavor will carry us into the future, and we shall continue to be people of light captivated by glass.

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