

10th Anniversary Celebration—A Great Ten Years

By TJ Fox, Membership Committee Chairman

On Sunday, December 5, 2010, we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our chapter with a great meal, reminiscences, and awards. Over 70 members and guests took part in the celebration. If you were there, I would be surprised if you didn't leave with good memories and a full stomach.



The celebration was the brain-child of Ray Kirkwood. He broached the idea at an Executive Committee (EC) meeting. Some felt it was an extravagance, but Ray persisted and the EC and membership approved. Planning the celebration became the responsibility of the Membership Committee—Drew Jacobs, Linda Lanoue, Diana Rushing and myself.

We chose a date close to the date of the last class session of our first training class in 2000. We wanted a central location and decided on afternoon rather than evening for the event. We decided to hold the event at the Bauer Exhibit Building at the Calhoun County Fairgrounds in Port Lavaca, where many of our training classes have begun.

We had decided that a “covered-dish” was out—we’ve enjoyed many as a Chapter through the years, but this was to be a special occasion. We needed a caterer, and we wanted something other than Bar-B-Q and beans, the “normal” banquet meal in the Texas Coastal Bend. Carol Emerson, with TICA Catering in Aransas Pass, offered to feed six of us a demonstration meal before we hired them. What was one more sacrifice for the good of the Chapter? As everyone who attended will attest, the food was great.

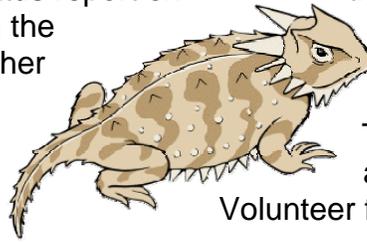
Now we had to come up with a program and decorations for the celebration. We discussed centerpieces for the tables and decided on photos and activities. Kris Kirkwood took this as a challenge and made almost a 100 centerpieces featuring photos of Chapter events and interesting historical facts about the Chapter.

To entertain members before the meal, we featured exhibits about Chapter volunteer activities—phytoplankton monitoring, turtle patrol, rat patrol, and others. Kris developed a slideshow featuring members and activities. A Class of 2000 scrapbook by Arlene Ehrlich was enjoyed by many.

After consuming a wonderful meal, we all set back as Ray Kirkwood introduced our invited guests. Those in attendance were Doc and Martha McAlister, Norman Boyd (Steering Committee) and his wife, Cathy Wakefield (Steering Committee and Instructor), David Clayton (past Chapter President) and Sonny Arnold (Assistant State Coordinator for TMN).



Ray asked Sonny Arnold to give us a status report on state organization and what to look for in the future. There are currently 41 chapters with another 3 in the process of forming. He also passed around the first 2011 given out—a fine little buff-and-brown commonly referred to by most of us as designed by Jan Redden, TMN chapter.



the Texas Master Naturalist future. Sonny reported that 3 in the process of forming. recertification pin that will be Texas horned lizard, a “horny toad.” The pin was Volunteer from the Gideon Lincecum chapter.

Obviously, having someone talk about Mid-Coast Chapter history was a must, and as a member of the first class, they made me do it. I talked about the Steering Committee and their work to get the chapter started. I told at least one occurrence from each of our eleven training classes and recounted outstanding events from the more than 75,000 volunteer service hours members have given to their communities since the Chapter began.

To make it a truly memorable event, we decided to recognize Doc and Martha McAlister for their years of service to the Mid-Coast Chapter by designating them as honorary members and presented them with badges and plaques. Their response after the celebration stated: “To the whole Mid-Coast Chapter: thank you for the privilege of being honorary members of a group we admire and enjoy. Ten years ago the Master Naturalist program seemed like a good idea, and it has amply proven to be a great idea. Master Naturalist training programs continue to be one of the highlights of our year.”



A second award opportunity presented itself when, at the end of October, Ray Kirkwood surpassed the 5,000 hour mark. Kris records his hours, so it was possible Ray would not be aware he had reached that level. That proved to be the case. We took him completely by surprise and for once, Ray was speechless. He becomes only the 19th Texas Master Naturalist to achieve the 5,000-hour level and the first in our Chapter.

It was truly a memorable day. I'm looking forward to our twentieth anniversary celebration

After the celebration, I learned that our own John O'Connell conceived the idea for the first multi-county chapter, which would become the first chapter on the coast. He also originated the idea of a hybrid curriculum featuring classroom and field activities in the same session and got approval from the state. We still use that class format today. As you may know, John participated in the original class, earned his certification, and has since remained a loyal member and our tireless Chapter Advisor.