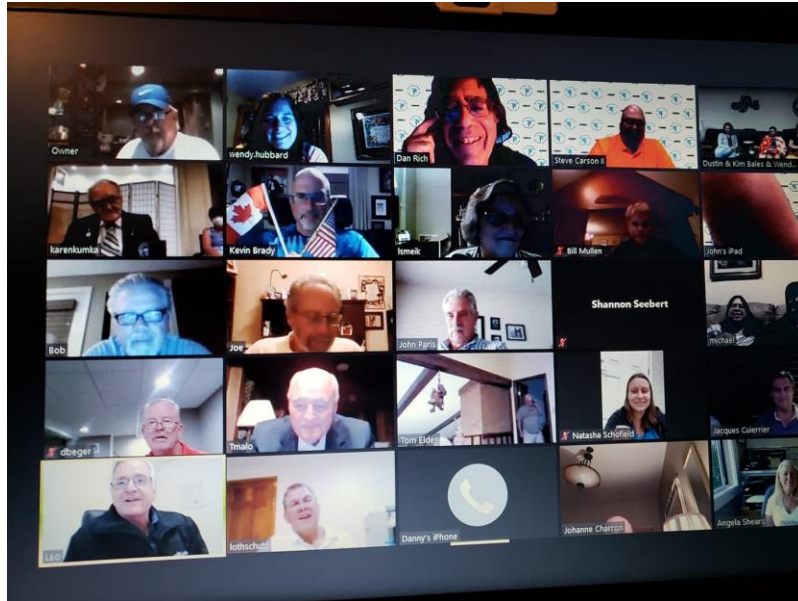


## Blue Goose Holds Historic Virtual Convention Awards Night

By Dan Rich, MLGG

As so many aspects of our professional, personal, educational, and social lives have changed from the restrictions of COVID-19, Blue Goose saw the opportunity to adapt as we held a Virtual Convention and Awards Night on Tuesday August 25, 2020.



The event was held as a Zoom meeting with members participating from 67 different locations in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Many of those entering the meeting were in a group setting, such as our friends from the Quebec Pond, where PMLGG Marc Thurber, Sylvie St. Amour, Louis Pearson, Vincent Malouin, Eric Demers, and Jacques Cuierrier assembled. So how many Ganders actually watched the proceedings? Our guess is about 80.

As guests logged in for the 7:30 p.m. Central Time start, they were greeted by a welcome screen adorned with colorful balloons, streamers, confetti and the Blue Goose logo.



MLGG Dan Rich opened the ceremony by welcoming everyone to “a Blue Goose evening that is unlike any evening in our long 114-year history. First of all, we hope that you and your family are doing well and staying safe and healthy.”

We wanted to get together with all of you, because we miss you, and we were unable to see you all in Hartford just a few weeks ago. We missed your fellowship, we missed seeing your smiles and hearing your laughter, and we missed the feeling we get when we all assemble every summer at a Grand Nest Convention.

Since we weren’t able to make new memories in Hartford a few weeks ago, I thought it would be a great way to kick off our meeting by taking a look back at some memories from our last five conventions.”



As the opening bars of Rare Earth’s 1971 song “Celebrate” started up, we saw a slide show of over 60 photos, each representing a memory from our last five conventions – Indianapolis 2019, Edmonton 2018, Savannah 2017, St. Louis 2016 and Baltimore 2015.

Dan reported on his year in office and “share(d) with you all of the hospitality and fellowship you extended to Sue and I during the first half of the year.”

He spoke of the highlights - October visits to a Louisiana Pond meeting and to Charlotte for a Blue Goose PLRB reception, December visits to the Michigan Pond’s Holiday Party and the National Capital Pond’s Night for Charity, and a February visit to Cincinnati for their Monte Carlo Night.



Most Loyal Grand Gander – Dan Rich -Hartford

“And then the month after Cincinnati, we all learned a new word – coronavirus, and we also learned how precious our health and how fragile our ways of life are. I watched with a broken heart as Pond events on both sides of the border were cancelled. Those cancellations included my planned visits to Regina and Fargo and Quebec. It also included the cancellation of the Grand Nest Convention in Hartford, which would have been just a few weeks ago.”

Dan spoke of where we are now, some five months later, as “our two nations are cautiously reopening, but our health and welfare and public safety are still very much in jeopardy.” Ponds were urged to follow State and Provincial guidelines and do everything possible to ensure safety as plans are finalized for 2020-2021, whatever they might be.

The evening transitioned into the segment where we gave recognition to our Ponds through the presentation of awards. Each award was introduced by a Grand Nest Officer with some personal remarks before each award.

Grand Guardian of the Nest, Steve Carson reflected on his first year in office before presenting the Membership Award. His first year on Grand Nest was “interesting and definitely not what I expected”. He joked that he would “have an extra year to improve on his first year.”



Steve told us that the Membership Award is for the greatest percentage increase in membership and that the 2020 award goes to the Cincinnati Pond with a 43% increase.

Next up was Grand Wielder Terry Maloney to offer some remarks and present the Regional Challenge Award and the Regional Growth Awards.

Terry wished everyone good health and reminded all of the Grand Nest’s April message to offer financial assistance to any Ganders and their families that were experiencing a financial hardship, Terry thanked the Ponds for their continued communication with the Grand Nest and spoke of the creativity he’s seeing as Ponds invent socially distant and virtual events and spread the message that the Honorable Order is still alive and well.

The May mailing to the Ponds went out, and he urged the Ponds to (at a minimum) at least provide the Memorial List and an updated Pond Officer list.

Terry also acknowledged the long service of the Regina Pond’s Cas Pielak who was retiring and passing on the Wielder’s torch to a successor.

Grand Wielder of the Goose Quill -Terry Maloney, Wisconsin



The Regional Challenge Award is given to the Region with the highest marks in four membership criteria and the overall largest increase in membership. Terry announced that the winner of the 2020 award was the Canadian Region.

The next awards were for the Pond within each region that brings in the largest number of new and reinstated members as well as the highest percentage of new and reinstated members during the year. Here are the Growth Award Winners for the year:

**Central Region**

Most new and reinstated members with 23 new members – Cincinnati Pond  
Best percentage increase with a whopping 43% increase – Cincinnati Pond

**Southern Region**

Most new and reinstated members with 14 new members -Texas Pond  
Best percentage increase with a 23% increase – North Carolina Pond

**Canadian Region**

Most new and reinstated members with 30 new members - Quebec Pond  
Best percentage increase with a 16% increase - British Columbia Pond

**Eastern Region**

Most new and reinstated members- 20 new members - National Capital Pond  
Best percentage increase - 15% increase - National Capital Pond

Our next award was developed and presented for the first time in Baltimore in 2000 to honor PMLGG Gordon F. Crowther, one of the great stalwarts of charity in Blue Goose history. The Gordon F. Crowther Charity Award is an international award that goes to that Pond that served so graciously in not only charitable donations, but in the dedication of their time in service to others, as well as other charitable activities such as collections of food, clothing or toys, or the giving of scholarships, etc. In other words, to exemplify our precept of charity.

When this award was established it was also noted that Honorable Mentions could be recognized.

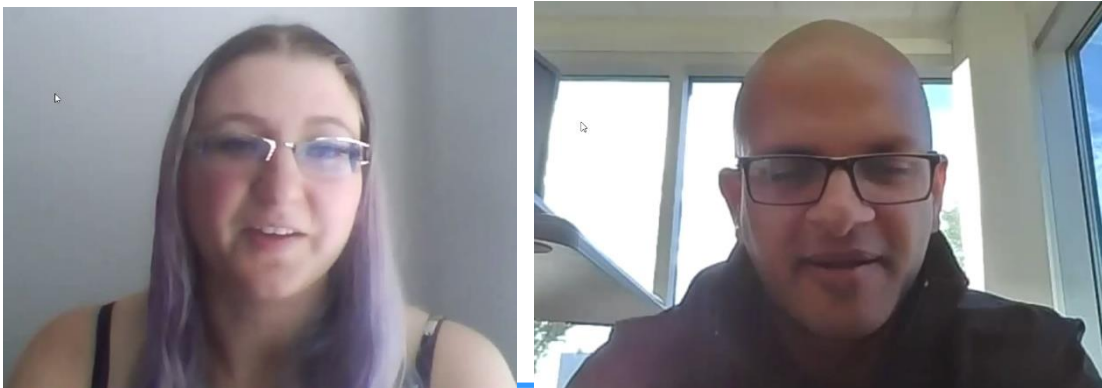
The Charity Awards were presented by Grand Supervisor Linda Meik, who first expressed her joy at “how wonderful it was to see everyone’s face” and “how attentive everyone was.”



Linda remarked that despite the effects of the pandemic, we had an outstanding year of charity. Twenty-four Ponds reported cash donations in excess of \$325,000, goods donations in excess of \$77,000, scholarship awards in excess of \$9,000, and over 1,700 volunteer hours. Linda analyzed this year’s reports and looked at our active membership across the Order and calculated that each active member donated an average of \$195 this year. She also did a 6-year study and reported that we collectively donated over \$1.5 million to charitable causes across North America.

Linda thanked her Committee from the Edmonton Pond, who were on the committee by virtue of having won the award the previous year. Two of the committee members, Lindsay Schroeder and Rakeesh Bandaru were on the call and announced this year’s winners.

**The Community Service Award** honors a Pond’s volunteering of their time and services to a local charity. Lindsay announced the Peace Garden Pond as this year’s Community Service Award winner. Their Pond members dedicated 900 volunteer hours to charitable causes in their local communities.



Lindsay Schroeder and Rakeesh Bandaru -

**The Charity Fund Award** is awarded to a Pond that include all of their membership in fund-raising efforts to financially support local charities. Lindsay announced that this year's winner was the Cincinnati Pond.

**The Scholarship Award** recognizes the Pond that provided one or more scholarships to a deserving individual or individuals. Rakesh announced that this year's Scholarship Award went to the Michigan Pond who awarded four scholarships.

Lastly, we turned to, as Linda called it, "the glorious award" **The Gordon F. Crowther Award** for overall excellence in supporting charity. Together, Lindsay and Rakeesh announced that this year's winner of the Gordon Crowther Award was the British Columbia Pond.

The next award looks at the work many of our Ponds have do to develop or upgrade their website. Our websites tell the story of Blue Goose and promote our mission of 'giving back.'

The **Communications Award** was presented by Grand Custodian of the Ganders Wendy Knizek, who was visiting with Kim and Dustin Bales of the Manitoba Pond.



Grand Custodian Wendy Knizek,- British Columbia      Dustin and Kimberly Bales -Manitoba

Wendy told us her committee felt there were multiple ways in which Ponds and/or Puddles communicate with their members. This year's award for the Pond which had an outstanding communication strategy was the Virginia Pond.

PLMGG Kim Bilbrey



Our Final Award of the evening was presented by Past Most Loyal Grand Gander Kim Bilbrey, who first offered some personal remarks.

Kim told us that she "misses all of you" and how great it was to at least see everyone virtually. She wished everyone good health and extended a virtual hug to all.

Our final award of the night was Gander of the Year, in recognition that among our 35 Ponds spread across the USA and Canada, we have some outstanding Ganders who continually go above and beyond the call of duty for not only their Pond, but the organization as a whole. This Grand Nest

Special is meant to recognize those of you who have done more than your share to keep our beliefs and traditions alive.

Kim presented the “Gander of the Year” award to 102-year old Past Most Loyal Gander Ralph Wild of the Manitoba Pond, who presumably is the Honorable Order’s oldest Gander. He joined the Manitoba Pond in 1958 and has been a member for 62 years. Ralph was in the meeting and said a few words of greeting as he accepted the award. He was resplendent in a suit coat, tie and Blue Goose pins and medals. What an inspiration he is to us!



Gander of the Year - Ralph Wild, Manitoba

MLGG Rich acknowledge our other Grand Nest Officers who have dedicated their time to the welfare and betterment of our organization. Judge Advocate Lorena Kohlruss could not be here tonight, she is busy with a trial, but she gives her regards and reports there are no issues before the Constitution and By Laws/Jurisprudence Committee.

Grand Nest Historian and PMLGG John Bishop thanked all the Ponds who contribute to their own Pond’s history and reminded us that “we create history every day including today”. He wondered how many people out there have lived through two Coronavirus pandemics, as our Gander of the Year has? He is looking forward to receiving words and images from our Ponds to document their ongoing histories.



GNH and PMLGG John Bishop, Nova Scotia



GKGGE Joe Lothschutz, Michigan

Grand Keeper of the Golden Goose Egg Joe Lothschutz thanked everyone for joining us and congratulated all of the evening's winners. He urged us all to keep up the good work and hoped we can all see each other again next summer.

PMLGG Rich closed the meeting by asking us to remember what it feels like to be together as a group, and remember the *"fun, smiles, camaraderie and fellowship"* we share when we get together. He urged us to make sure this feeling doesn't disappear because of COVID-19. *"We have to keep Blue Goose going in 2020 and 2021"* and *"we don't want to give people the idea that Blue Goose is doing nothing"* or stagnating. We need to hold events in any way we can and make sure we promote those events.



PMLGG Bill Olson. National Capital

That concluded the scheduled events, and an Open Forum discussion followed, kicked off by PMLGG Bill Olson who led us through a prayer calling for peace and better times for all.

We also had three other PMLGGs in attendance - Joe Coccia, John Paris, and Guy Charron. All three thanked the Grand Nest for tonight's presentation and their consistent communication and sharing of news during the hard times of the pandemic.

Grand Supervisor Linda Meik expressed our gratitude to Manitoba Gander Keith Phillips for sharing Ralph Wild's story with us and helping him be a part of tonight's historic event.

We chatted with PMLGG Paris about the Utah Pond and with Angela Shears of the BC Pond about the Whistler Convention



ABOVE L to R -PMLGGs John Paris (Utah), Joe Coccia (Michigan) and Guy Charron (Quebec)





-Angela Shears (British Columbia) and Leo Fluitsma (Australia Gander At Large)

The evening ended with an entertaining conversation with Australian Gander at Large Leo Fluitsma who was initiated at the Milwaukee Convention in 2006 and presented an Australian flag to Terry Maloney. It was an unexpected pleasure to see him and chat with him, and was a perfect ending to the meeting.