

WILLIAMSON COUNTY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

WCABA NOVEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

www.wcaba.org

2024 Club Officers:

PRESIDENT: Shannon Montez
president@wcaba.org

VICE PRESIDENT:
Nancy Kunschik
vicepresident@wcaba.org

MEMBERSHIP: Shirley Doggett
membership@wcaba.org

PROGRAM: Linda Russell
program@wcaba.org

NEWSLETTER: Jimmie Oakley
newsletter@wcaba.org

SECRETARY: Phil Ainslie
secretary@wcaba.org

TREASURER: Barbi Rose
treasurer@wcaba.org

HISTORIAN: Matt Ludlum
historian@wcaba.org

PAST PRESIDENT: Phil Ainslie
pastpresident@wcaba.org

LIBRARIAN: Chris Huck
librarian@wcaba.org

SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR:
Jimmie Oakley
scholarship@wcaba.org

QUEEN CHAIR:
(vacant)

WEB ADMINISTRATOR:
Rachel Glass
webmaster@wcaba.org

DIRECTOR AT LARGE:
Ken Browning

DIRECTOR AT LARGE:
Ann Bierschenk

MEETING ON 3rd TUES. ONE WEEK EARLIER!
>> ELECTION of OFFICERS <<

3rd TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024 @ 7PM Hewitt Room

PROGRAM: 2024 Scholarship Recipient Reports
Speakers: Alys Brice & Riley Casey

November will give our scholarship recipients an opportunity to report on the success of the program they have been in since being selected last February. Please come and hear and see the journey (not much different than your own) as they started out in the spring and where they are now. This will be a chance to relive the early days of your beekeeping experience and enjoy their success.

With Introduction by Jimmie Oakley Scholarship Prog. Chair

PROGRAM: Options for Winterizing Your Bees
Speaker: Randy Oakley, Scholarship Program Mentor
Winterizing your hives can go a long way in getting the bees through the cold months and better prepare them for what happens to them in the Spring. Explore winterizing techniques that will help you and help your bees.

We would certainly enjoy your presence at the next meeting on November 19th (**third** Tuesday), but if you can't, then tune in to broadcast virtually via "Zoom".

If you are planning to join from an iPhone or iPad, be sure to download this application first: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zoom-cloud-meetings/id546505307>

We look forward to seeing you there Tuesday night @ 7PM!
GT Library - Hewlett Rm- 402 W 8th Street Georgetown 78626

Topic: WCABA Member Meeting (and Beekeeping 101)

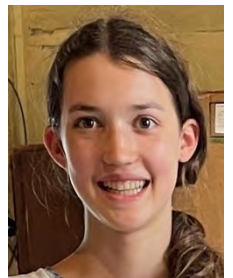
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82475068933?pwd=aHRiRjc3bS9kYXJGS2g5THVpOEx2UT09>
Meeting ID: 824 7506 8933. Passcode: 909659

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82475068933?pwd=aHRiRjc3bS9kYXJGS2g5THVpOEx2UT09>



Alys Brice

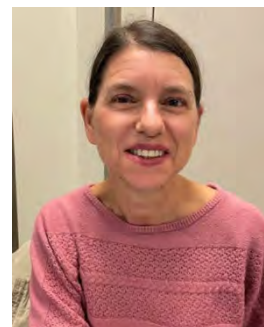


Riley Casey

Time Flies...

a note from your President

Although it's not even mid November, some of you may have already celebrated your Thanksgiving dinner with friends or family. The year has flown by. It's amazing how quickly time has passed. It seems like yesterday that we were preparing for our spring delivery of Nucs and firming up our order for the spring. As we near the end of the year, it's nice to reflect on where we are as a club. Our board has striven to provide each of you the tools you need to properly care for your hive. For each meeting, we want to ensure that you are being taught what is needed for each part of the year. Because we have a lot of new beekeepers in the spring, our goal is to make sure each of you understand what's needed for your hive. If you're a newbie, you're still trying to figure out why a big box is called a "deep" and why the small box is called a "super". If you get it wrong, its ok. It took me years to use the right terminology.



Shannon Montez - President

Our meetings are organized by season and at the beginning of the year, we try to teach you everything you need to keep your bees. While we can't teach you everything, what is taught gives you a good baseline so that you're brave enough to come pick up your Nucs. After the spring delivery of Nucs, we move on to what happens when you actually have a hive to maintain. For many new beekeepers who are hesitant to spend the money on a second hive, we highly recommend 2 Nucs. This is always a good start and provides a comparison. It's a lot easier to tell if one is bad if you have a second hive to compare.

Mid-summer, we start to educate each of you on the more technical aspects of beekeeping. Although you may have never heard of the Varroa mite, not one meeting passes that this pest is not discussed. In the fall, we talk about preparing your hives for the freeznado that we may encounter. Then come January, we start all over. For many of you who are old hats at beekeeping, we hope that we are providing speakers who can still teach you about beekeeping. Through the years, we've worked hard to bring speakers who can provide the most recent data on topics that interest you. Issues such as pollen patties, hive split, honey tasting, etc. This year we even tried "speed" beekeeping. If you missed this meeting, it was a great way to ask questions on a variety of topics. This format seemed to go really well and one that I'd like to see happen again.

As our club continues to bring in new members, I want to encourage you to get involved. If you have questions, please ask. If you know the answer, don't hesitate to provide it. We get so many requests for mentors and have not figured out a good way to fulfill this need. Because our club is run by volunteers, it's often more difficult to provide the one-on-one mentorship that some feel they need. We hope that the Q&A at our meetings provides the answers you need. If you have topics you'd like us to discuss, please let us know. If you know of a good speaker, share their information.

Our club exists because of our members, and I'm grateful to be a part of such a wonderful organization with friends I've made throughout the year. As you prepare for Thanksgiving, I believe we have much to be thankful for. I want to remind everyone that we just have one more meeting left this year and it's moved up one week because of Thanksgiving. If you're not able to make the meeting, I hope that you enjoy the holidays with your families and loved ones and hope to see you next year!

Shannon

Scientists Have Figured Out How Honeybees Learn Their Waggle Dance Moves

Contributed by Phil Ainslie

What is a waggle dance?

Astonishingly, honeybees possess one of the most complicated examples of nonhuman communication.

They can tell each other where to find resources such as food, water, or nest sites with a physical “waggle dance.” This dance conveys the direction, distance, and quality of a resource to the bee’s nestmates.

Essentially, the dancer points recruits in the correct direction and tells them how far to go by repeatedly circling in a figure-eight pattern centered around a waggle run, in which the bee waggles its abdomen as it moves forward.

Dancers are pursued by potential recruits, bees that closely follow the dancer, to learn where to find the communicated resource.

Longer waggle runs communicate greater distances, and the waggle angle communicates direction. For higher-quality resources such as sweeter nectar, dancers repeat the waggle run more times and race back faster after each waggle run.



Making mistakes

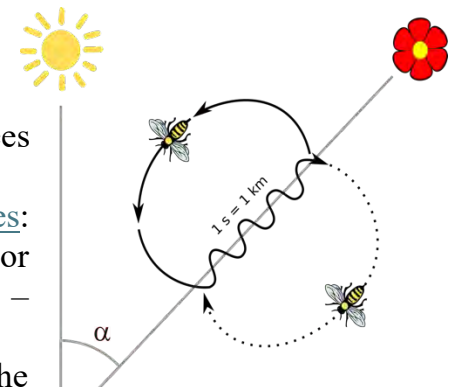
This dance is difficult to produce. The dancer is not only running – covering about one body length per second – while trying to maintain the correct waggle angle and duration.

It is also usually in total darkness, amid a crowd of jostling bees and on an irregular surface.

Bees, therefore, can make three different types of mistakes: pointing in the wrong direction, signaling the wrong distance, or making more errors in performing the figure eight dance pattern – what researchers call disorder errors.

The first two mistakes make it harder for recruits to find the location being communicated. Disorder errors may make it harder for recruits to follow the dancer.

Scientists knew that all bees of the species *Apis mellifera* begin to forage and dance only as they get older and that they also follow experienced dancers before they first attempt to dance. Could they be learning from practiced teachers?



The waggle dance - the direction the bee moves in relation to the hive indicates direction; if it moves vertically the direction to the source is directly towards the Sun. The duration of the waggle part of the dance signifies the distance.
insert credit: Wikipedia

A ‘forbidden’ bee experiment

My colleagues and I thus created isolated experimental colonies of bees that could not observe other waggle dances before they themselves danced.

Like the ancient experiment described by Herodotus, these bees could not observe the dance language because they were all the same age and had no older, experienced bees to follow.

In contrast, our control colonies contained bees of all ages, so younger bees could follow the older, experienced dancers.

We recorded the first dances of bees living in colonies with both population age profiles.

The bees that could not follow the dances of experienced bees produced dances with significantly more directional, distance, and disorder errors than the dances of control novice bees.

We then tested the same bees later when they were experienced foragers. Bees who had lacked teachers now produced significantly fewer directional and disorder errors, possibly because they had more practice or had learned by eventually following other dancers.

The dances of the older control bees from colonies with teachers remained just as good as their first dances.

This finding tells us that bees are, therefore, born with some knowledge of how to dance, but they can learn how to dance even better by following experienced bees.

This is the first known example of such complex social learning of communication in insects and is a form of animal culture.

Dance dialects are about distance.

A mystery remained concerning the bees that had lacked dance teachers early on. They could never correct their distance errors. They continued to overshoot, communicating greater distances than usual.

So, why is this interesting to scientists? The answer may lie in how distance communication could adapt to local conditions.

Food distribution can be significantly different in different environments. As a result, different honeybee species have evolved different “[dance dialects](#),” described as the relationship between the distance to a food source and the corresponding waggle dance duration.

Interestingly, these dialects vary, even within the [same honeybee species](#). Researchers suspect this variation exists because colonies, even of the same species, can live in very different environments.

Suppose learning a language helps bees cope with different environments. In that case, each colony should have a distance dialect tailored to its locale, passed on from experienced bees to novices.

If so, our teacher-deprived individual bees may never have corrected their distance errors because they acquired a different distance dialect on their own.

Usually, this dialect would be learned from experienced bees. Still, it could potentially change within a single generation if their environmental conditions altered or if the colony swarmed to a new location.

In addition, each colony has a “dance floor,” or the space where bees dance. This [complex terrain](#) may help the dancers learn to navigate it better over time or by following in the footsteps of older dancers.

These ideas remain to be tested but provide a foundation for future experiments exploring cultural transmission between older and younger bees.

This study and future studies will expand our understanding of collective knowledge and language learning in animal societies.

James C. Nieh, Associate Dean and Professor of Biology, [University of California, San Diego](#)

Practical Experiences in the Bee Yard

Goldenrod is usually our best fall forage crop. Bees feed heavily on the plentiful Goldenrod flowers and can collect nectar and pollen to supplement their winter stores. With essentially no measurable moisture for the past month, I did not know whether my area would see a Goldenrod bloom. By the first week of October, the unmowed pastures and low spots in the creek bottoms did begin to become yellow with this fall's Goldenrod crop. If you did not see a good Goldenrod bloom in your area, you may need to feed early and often to help your bees store enough food for winter. When feeding for storage, use at least a 2:1 sugar/water mixture. It would not hurt to make it even thicker. The thicker syrup requires the bees to do less work to evaporate the water content and allow the cell to be capped.



Stanford Brantley

By **NOVEMBER**, most of the work in the apiary has been done. Now is the time to evaluate the condition of the hive bodies of your active hives. Small cracks in the wood can be repaired with water-based putty or DAP to keep them serviceable for another year.

Dead-outs you have stacked behind the garage or honey house can be cleaned and prepared for use next season. Old wired wax frames can be scraped and made ready for installing plastic foundation. Based on my years of experience, let me share a tip with you – before you start grabbing one of those stacked hive bodies for cleaning, be sure to check for any late swarms that may have decided your stack of boxes looked like a good place to start a new colony! Also, be alert for wasp nests and spiders. Taking just a moment to look may save you some discomfort.

It is also a good time to do another mite check. The hive's bee population will diminish to its lowest level as we move into winter. It becomes easier for the Varroa mite to overwhelm the reduced population and cause the hive to fail. If your mite check shows more than three mites per hundred bees, treat your hive. Follow label directions and when the directed treatment time is up, repeat the mite check. If your mite level still exceeds three mites per hundred bees, repeat treatment using a different miticide.

If you follow my column, you know I frequently reference mite checks and treatment. The first many years of my beekeeping experience the biggest pest was the Small Hive Beetles. Varroa was unknown. The arrival of Varroa changed the way we inspect and protect our hives. Several years ago, the general Varroa guideline was to check your mite levels twice a year. Now the information seems to indicate you probably should check your hives every two months. A positive side of doing frequent mite checks is that you see the state of the hive (brood pattern, laying space, stores) before an issue becomes a problem.

I recently assisted a fellow beekeeper inspect a hive. It was a double brood hive with two extracted honey supers on top of a queen excluder. The top brood box was packed with capped and open honey and several frames of pollen. When we removed the top brood box, we found the bottom brood box was mostly packed with honey, pollen and open cells of nectar. There was very limited space for the queen to lay. We found only scattered capped worker cells on several frames. The hive had plenty of bees but probably would not have made it to spring because of very limited space for the queen to continue to lay. We put one of the extracted honey supers between the two brood boxes to give the queen free space. Ten days later, we re-inspected the hive. The super we had placed between the two brood boxes contained eggs, larvae, pupa and a few capped worker cells. The queen was actively laying and the hive should survive the winter.

The Texas Beekeepers Association convention is scheduled for November 15-16 in Austin, Texas. I encourage all beekeepers to attend. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn the latest information in bee research, products and practices. You will also have an opportunity to vote on individuals nominated to be the TBA leaders for 2025.

2025 Nucs & Queens Procurement Announced

submitted by Gary Bible

The Williamson County Area Beekeepers Association will again offer bees and queens to club members in 2025 through our Bee Procurement Program. The Executive Board voted to provide 5-frame nucs with a queen (not marked), and an additional order of queen bees (marked & clipped) for purchase by current club members.



Gary Bible

The **5-frame nucs** originate from Merrimack Valley Apiary's Evergreen Honey Company in Louisiana, currently managed by Wes Card. The nucs are advertised to consist of a "laying" queen that has already been accepted by the hive, 3 inner frames containing brood in all stages, 2 outer frames containing honey, pollen and adhering bees, delivered in a sturdy wooden nuc box with full entrance. The queens from Evergreen will be VSH (varroa resistant) produced in their program and should provide a hardy, productive colony that overwinters well.

The **queen bees** for individual purchase will come from Bee Weaver Apiaries in Navasota, Texas and are advertised as bred from a hybrid of bees chosen for their mite resistance, high honey production, and healthy population. These queens will be marked (blue) for ease of finding and help in swarm control.

Order Forms with current pricing will appear in the December Newsletter and orders will be accepted immediately for the 2025 season.

Our Bee Procurement Program has been a benefit provided to the membership for over 20 years and has become a hallmark service to our club members. The program has drawn many new members to our ranks because of the attractive pricing and the assurance of obtaining bees in an ever tightening and competitive market. For this reason, the club is requesting you limit your order to 6 nucs per total family, and a limit of 4 nucs total for new members (2025) to the club.

Orders will be taken by mail and at the club meetings through February 28th for as long as the supply last. Each order must be on the official/club Order Form, be filled out completely, and be accompanied by the appropriate remittance (check or money order) in order to be accepted. All orders will be acknowledged by a confirmation email and added to the Queen & Nuc Order Matrix by the Procurement Coordinator.

Because of the need to track and match all orders with remittance and delivery of product, there will be no individual transfer of ownership of nucs and/or queens. Cancelled orders will be handled by the coordinator with refunds and resale of the product to members on the Wait List.

Most likely the pickup/delivery process for nucs and queens in the spring will mirror what took place at the Bost Farm since April of 2020, with drive-thru pickup most likely. Time will tell, so be flexible in your expectations and schedule as that time approaches.

Direct your inquiries to:

Gary Bible – WCABA Bee Procurement Coordinator
512-923-0410 or email glbible@austin.rr.com

WCABA Scholarship Recipients Sell Honey at Arts & Craft Fair

Submitted by Jimmie Oakley

The Recipients from the 2024 Ed Wolfe – Robert Bost Memorial Scholarship Program sold honey at the 28th Annual Arts & Craft Fair held on November 2&3 in Sun City, Texas. The honey sales help support the program in the coming year and more importantly offer the youngsters an opportunity to practice the art of selling their product and talking to the fair goers about bees and their experiences in beekeeping. This year's scholarship recipients are Alys Brice and Riley Casey, both from Georgetown, Texas. Helping to fill in the gaps in scheduling was last year scholarship recipients, Annabella Su of Georgetown, Justine Peterson of Austin and Gigi Muniu from Liberty Hill.



WCABA Honey Booth in patio area at the Fair

Jimmie Oakley, Scholarship Program Chair, set up the Honey Booth on Friday evening at Sun City so everything was ready to go on Saturday morning when the Fair opened. The Honey Booth contained the table display of various size containers of honey, the banner identifying the program, educational posters showing the bee's life cycle, and an observation hive with live bees which always attracts a lot of attention from the public.



Booth located same place as last year, Great

The weekend event was a huge success as the scholarship recipients and a family member took part in the booth assisting in this important learning part of the program. Other club members also worked in the booth to help cover the time it was operational during the two-day event.

Riley Casey and her mom had signed up for the morning shift on Saturday and was immediately thrown into the fast pace of the opening hours of a very popular area craft fair. Honey sales were brisk in the first two or three hours of the morning with one and two-pound containers being very popular. The girls had customers to greet, product explanation and purchase suggestions, money to take and change to make, and you didn't want to forget to offer the customer a bag for their purchase. A lot to learn and a short time to get it. Riley did an excellent job and quickly mastered the skills to handle booth activity including the credit card sales.



Riley Casey makes the sale at the Fair

Annabella Su and her mom, Crystal, graciously filled in the midday shift and continued to record brisk sales and satisfied customers. Annabella was able to turn over responsibility for the booth as the new team of Justine Peterson and her dad, Scott, took over in early afternoon. With the live bees in the booth there was opportunity to engage the visitors in conversation about bees and beekeeping in addition to selling honey in support of the scholarship program.

Alys Brice and her dad came in late afternoon having signed up for 3-5 PM shift. Again, there was a slight learning curve as the customer meeting and greeting was turned into educated and happy customers as foot traffic dropped off somewhat in the late afternoon.



Kristen & Riley Casey'24 and Annabella & Crystal Su '23 work in the booth on Saturday

Arts & Craft Fair (con't)

Sunday morning required special support from adult club members to cover the opening of the honey booth by 11:00 AM. Shannon Montez volunteered to cover the early time and Susan Kruger followed up at 1 o'clock till Mr. Oakley and the scholarship recipients could get there in the afternoon. Gigi Muniu and her sister, Bella, came in on Sunday at 3PM to fill out the remainder of the time the booth was open and helped pack up. Sunday was a slower day, but nevertheless sales were strong enough to deplete all but 4 of the one pounder's, a couple of quarts and a dozen 2 #'ers left in inventory. A very successful sales weekend.



Shannon Montez opened on Sunday and Susan Kruger relieved her



Alys Brice'24 and Justin Peterson'23 meet for first time working in the booth at the Fair



Annabelle & Justin show visitor the bees in the observation as Scott and Crystal look on



Gigi Muniu'23 takes care of happy customer on last day of the Arts & Craft Fair at Sun City

In Conclusion...

With selling honey, and taking money, explaining about bees, and showing off the bees in the observation hive, the youngsters and grownups put to use the knowledge and experience they have gained working with their bees this year. Congratulations all on another good year at the Arts & Craft Fair. *Jimmie*



Casey Family Time at the Fair: Noah, Kristen, Riley, Aubrey, Cora June, and Hanna Casey

WCABA Honey on Display at the Texas State Fair

by Jimmie Oakley

As noted each year during the clubs Honey Tasting and Judging in September, National Honey Month, honey judged on the local level goes to the State Fair of Texas to be displayed in the Texas Beekeepers Association Honey Booth for the full run of the Fair. This gives a lot of exposure to the beekeepers in our area and the kind of quality honey produced here.

When the 2# containers of honey get to then Fair it is place on the shelves by TBA booth people. Dodie Stillman took the judged honey to the Fair this year and kindly pictures most all of it for the record. It all added to the effectiveness of the display. Congratulations to all that enter the judging.

WCABA Honey displayed on lighted wall in booth



WCABA Judged Honey going to the Fair



3rd Place White Ribbon to Jimmie Oakley WCABA

In honey judging at the State Fair the WCABA Taster's Choice" winner garnered a Third Place (white) ribbon. Congratulation to our club for a good showing in this state wide competition. JO

2025 WCABA Officers

Slate of Officers nominated to serve WCABA for 2025

Nominations Committee: Shannon Montez, Shirley Doggett, and Jimmie Oakley.

President – Shannon Montez
Vice President – Sean O’Neil
Membership Director – Shirley Doggett
Program Director – Nan Helmke
Editorial Director – Jimmie Oakley
Secretary – Phil Ainslie
Treasurer – Barbi Rose
Historian – Matt Ludlum Past
Past President – Phil Ainslie
Director at Large – appointed
Director at Large – appointed



Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the meeting.



Watercolor of Gaillardia pulchella (Indian Blanket) by Jane Bost, daughter in law of Mary Bost, former Newsletter Editor (30 years).

Membership Report: Shirley Doggett

November 2024

New Members: *

Jerron Knutson.

Austin

Renewing Members

Susan Robison.

Nolanville

Nancy and Jerry Kunschik.

Taylor

Vicky Kennedy

Burnet

Mary Cameron

Leander



Shirley Doggett - Membership

***New members-** please remember that Texas Beekeepers Association still gives one-year free membership to those people that are new to beekeeping. Let me know if you are interested in this.

Anyone wanting to renew their membership for next year feel free to pay at the November meeting - particularly if you wish to order nucs for the Spring 2025. You can also mail it to me at Shirley Doggett, 400 County Road 440, Thrall TX 76578. Some people pay through the financial institution in the same way they pay their bills. Payments will also be collected in the early part of 2025. New members that have joined late in the year are already good for 2025. If you have a blue name tag you are paid up for 2025.

Best Wishes for the holidays and New Year

Shirley

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

WILLIAMSON COUNTY AREA BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Dues \$20.00 per year - individual or \$25.00 - family membership

New Member / Renewing Member

(circle one)

Date: _____

Name: _____ Amount: \$ _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ e-mail: _____ (please print)

To save postage cost may we send your Newsletter via e-mail? Yes [] No []

Instructions: print, fill out, and bring to club meeting , or mail with check to:

Mrs. Shirley Doggett - Membership - 400 C. R. 440 - Thrall, TX 76578

WCABA Executive Board Minutes from September 2024

Phil Ainslie - Secretary

Attending: Phil Ainslie, Shirley Doggett, Sean O'neal, Barbi Rose, Jerry Kunschik, Ann Bierschenk, Shannon Montez, Nancy Kunschik, Matt Ludlum, Jimmie Oakley.

The meeting opened at 7:05 pm. The minutes from July were approved.

- Membership:
 - Shirley Doggett reported needing help with the membership checking and name tag procedure, which includes filing and organizing the name tags each month. Previously, Nancy Kunschik had taken the name tags home to file the documents. Shannon will announce the need for help at the next meeting to see if we can get a volunteer to take over for Nancy.
- Barbi Rose covered the treasurer's report, and the board approved it. Barbi stated that the 501c3 is back on track for approval.
- Program report: Linda Russell said she will not be the program chair next year. Shannon proposed that Sean O'Neal become the program chair, and Sean accepted.
- Heritage Park crazy ant invasion:
 - Jimmie Oakley reported crazy ants are invading the park and can destroy a colony. He stated that diatomaceous earth can help reduce the numbers, but the ants can overcome that in time. He said no scholarship hives will be at the Heritage Garden this year.
- Community Beekeeping education:
- Chris Doggett gave a program at a Jewish school with about 125 attendees. Sean O'Neal will present at a Young Master Gardener Club and the Classical Academy.
- Board officers for 2025: Jimmie Oakley and Shirley Doggett will be on the Board election committee. Shannon Montez stated that she will not continue as president of WCABA in 2025. She has been president for four years.
- WCABA spring NUC program: Gary Bible will continue facilitating the NUC program for 2025.
- Club dues: The membership fee will remain the same. November and December 2024 renewals will be posted as 2025 members.
- TBA auction and table setting: Shirley Doggett will purchase an auction item. The board approved a \$200-300 amount for the item.
 - The theme for the centerpiece will be "BELIGHT." No decision was made for a member to assemble the centerpiece.
- Website: Sean asked the board members to review the site and make suggestions. He provided a link for the board to do so.
 - There was a discussion regarding the webmaster as an elected board member. The board concluded that the position is to be a voluntary board-approved member.
- Conventions: The TBA convention is on Nov. 14 and 15. Jimmie Oakley volunteered to be the WCABA delegate. The Hill Country Fair will be held on the first weekend of November.
- Miscellaneous:
 - The membership was happy with the BIG location for an alternative site. The board approved using the BIG site as an alternative location in the future.
 - Matt Ludlum reported some complaints about the coffee at the last meeting not being hot. Matt will follow up on that issue.