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By John Dunn, Publisher, StampNewsNow.com

Stamp Collecting Present.

Let's turn to a group that is having fun in Stamp Collecting Present. While I was obtaining information for an ad for the annual Charpex show, to be held July 30-31 in Charlotte, N.C., I asked the Charlotte Philatelic Society Treasurer, Glenn Silverman, about their club meetings, which, as it turns out, are extremely successful. With that, I asked about what they are doing so I could pass it along, and here are some of the highlights of our conversation:

They hold their monthly meetings on the first Sunday of the month at 1:30 p.m. I realize it is not always possible to find a venue on a Sunday afternoon, or a Saturday as another option, but, if at all possible, if you are holding your meetings on a weekday evening, or worse yet a weekday afternoon, you are making it harder for working folks—“live wires”—to attend.

They are fortunate in being able to hold their monthly meetings in a smaller room in the same facility as their annual show, the Central Piedmont Community College, easily accessible to members of the community, including those who attended the annual show.

That annual show acts as a feeder to the club meetings. One interesting aspect was that if someone comes to Charpex with a collection to sell, the first effort of the club is to encourage them to continue the collection rather than sell it.

The annual dues are just \$10, making it easy for a newbie going to Charpex to sign up as a club member. Even if it is just \$10, that represents a personal commitment on the part of the new club member to attend at least one club meeting.

The activities at the monthly meetings include a 45-minute presentation, an active auction, refreshments, and door prizes. An afternoon meeting also allows more time for activities, with a typical meeting lasting three hours. Evening meetings put pressure on finishing, even if it means cutting short activities and casual socializing.

Attendance is typically around 45 participants, with people coming from as much as two hours away. The weekend afternoon time also enables collectors of all ages to attend.

Here's the most important aspect: the emphasis at the monthly meetings is to have fun. For example, there is NO business meeting.

The success of the Charlotte Philatelic Society, Charpex, and the monthly meetings didn't just “happen”. No surprise, it is the result of a positive attitude and effort on the part of an active Board. My own contact, Glenn Silverman, was as enthusiastic as anyone with whom I have had the pleasure of working. As a result, our discussion led to ideas that I can pass along here to other club officers and show organizers.

If you want to turn a new visitor into a regular member of Stamp Collecting Present, make sure your shows and meetings are not mired in Stamp Collecting Past, and that you are providing newbies with an experience that will enable them to lead us into Stamp Collecting Future.