

WHAT DOES TSCA DO?

John Weiss, TSCA Membership Coordinator

Occasionally over the years I get a question from one of our members or potential members asking a basic question: Why should we be members of the national TSCA; what do our members get from their association with TSCA? It's a good question, and I'll try to answer it here.

First, TSCA is and has always been a TOTALLY volunteer-staffed and member-driven organization. We have NO paid staff. Even the officers and Council who do all the grunt work in membership fulfillment, magazine publishing, and Gardner Grant reviews are unpaid (and still pay their regular dues to boot!). Since it is an all-volunteer organization, we are limited by the willingness of our members to do all the required work, and any other perceived desired or "needed" work.

Second, as long as I have been in TSCA (since 1997), the national organization has left local governance to the individual chapters, and has not tried to direct them in how to develop or administer their programs. As a result, the chapters are very diversified, ranging from informal, messabout-only chapters like Puget Sound and Oregon Coots, to those with significant local youth-development and community-boatbuilding projects like John Gardner and Crystal River, to those closely associated with larger organizations like Buffalo Maritime Center and Michigan Maritime Museum.

So, what DOES the national TSCA do?

Primarily, we provide a center point for organizing local small-craft clubs & organizations and providing them with a national identity. The community we represent is small by any measure, and without a national identity the various local groups would likely drift into isolation rather than provide mutual support. I believe our relative influence in the small-boat community is increasingly important as large museums like Mystic Seaport and other commercial organizations are less willing and able to provide financial support to small-craft programs.

We offer organized, INSURED shoreside and on-the-water boating activities for members and their guests. We have contracted with The Gowrie Group for event liability insurance for all TSCA chapter activities. As part of that effort, we have become organizational members of US Sailing, through which the Gowrie Group offers this exclusive, affordable insurance. While the cost is a significant part of our dues – approximately \$5 per member per year, it alone has not caused any dues increase to date.

We provide financial support to our chapters and other organizations to help sponsor boat festivals and other public activities.

As a recognized non-profit educational organization, TSCA provides local chapters with the IRS 501(c)(3) "umbrella" to keep the tax man at bay when it comes to donations & dues. Because of the diversity of chapters noted above, that may not be important to the BMC or St. Augustine chapters (who have their own non-profit umbrellas), but has been VERY important in supporting the community-focused efforts at JG and Lost Coast (where prospective donors want the tax deduction for their donations), and at least incidental in other chapters.

Visibility of the national organization is provided to our members via our quarterly journal, The Ash Breeze. The full color magazine is professionally edited and published, curated from stories contributed by our membership and friends. The editor acquires and selects the stories and assists the writers when possible to maintain the high standards of this member driven publication.

Because of the editorial delay inherent in a quarterly publication, we have moved a lot of the administrative writing to our web site. Again, since it is maintained by volunteers with limited time and experience, you may not find a weekly rotation of new and exciting pictures, but important events and announcements are posted usually within a day of receipt. Chapter sites are, again, maintained by chapter webmasters without interference from the national organization.

One of the most underused but potentially most useful services we provide is via our support forums on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TSCA.group/>) and our older – but still well-populated – groups.io forums. A wide range of knowledge and experience is available via the various national and chapter forums. While you may have to sort through more messabout announcements than you might like, answers to most members' questions are usually answered within a few days, at most.

Our web site, along with link exchanges with other similar organizations, brings in MANY questions from people outside TSCA, many of whom are potential TSCA members. I field phone calls from around the country and e-mail inquiries from around the world on a regular basis. A significant number of them have come from our link on the ACBS (Antique & Classic Boat Society, the powerboaters' analog to TSCA) web site. Apparently it is often easier to get good and timely information from TSCA members than from the MUCH larger ACBS membership! Most of those inquiries I redirect to other TSCA members via Facebook, the forums, and/or e-mail. I cannot remember a single inquiry in 20+ years about some little-known boat (including some classic powerboats) that has not brought at least one valuable piece of information to the requester via TSCA.

Among our relationships with other organizations is a Cooperative Agreement with BoatUS, the national boating lobby. That agreement brings our members a reduction in BoatUS dues and towing services (simply cite Cooperating Group #GA84393B in your application/renewal) and access to several services such as their speakers' bureau, which can be useful for chapter meetings.

TSCA was born in response to concerns over adverse legislative proposals in the 1970s that would have effectively legislated homebuilt boats out of existence. Our IRS 501(c)(3) status makes it more difficult to do any overt lobbying, but our members have been able to respond to several local legislative challenges on the chapter level. Chapter organization is much quicker and effective in these cases, but spreading the word through the national organization is essential to keep boaters in other areas forewarned. While we are relatively small and insignificant in national boating politics, we now have at least a couple personal relationships at BoatUS that let our voice be heard on national issues.

Last, but certainly not least, we administer the John Gardner Fund which grants money to [usually] smaller organizations and individuals for small-boat projects, who might not otherwise be able to get funding for projects of historical significance and/or community value. Our grant money is only limited by the willingness and ability of our members and friends to donate to the Gardner Grant Fund (professionally, independently, and efficiently administered by the Maine Community Foundation); and the ability of grant requesters to present a reasonable case for their projects.

I hope this answers the question for you and for people you know. If not, just ask us, and we can provide more detail.

-- John Weiss, TSCA Membership Coordinator
Membership@TSCA.net or 425-361-7758

Rev. 15 Feb 2023