



## The TxSGS Awards Program Benefits Societies, Grandkids, and More

by Sandra Crowley

As genealogists, we are impacted by volunteers from the day we begin our research. It is thanks to individual and society volunteers that we have books in library collections that index, transcribe, and abstract records. It is because of these volunteers that much of this printed information is now being made available online, with thousands of records being added every day.

Volunteers, individually and as part

of a society, take pictures of tombstones at cemeteries and post them online; transcribe or abstract probate, land, and other records; and transcribe vital records into online databases and help scan the images.

All of this is part of the “pay it forward” mission of many societies to help future generations. They appreciate knowing that the work they are doing is having an impact

on their society and the genealogical community.

It is important to recognize this impact and show our appreciation for their achievements. One way to do this is through the TxSGS Awards Program. Each year, TxSGS presents a number of awards in recognition and appreciation of the dedication and commitment exhibited to the genealogical community by individuals and societies in Texas. These awards in-

clude writing awards for professionals and non-professionals, website and newsletter awards for societies, and recognition of volunteers.

In addition to providing valuable resources for those researching their family history, there is also a benefit for the societies that participate each year.

“The TxSGS Awards Program has been instrumental in transforming my society,” shared Susan Ball, President of the San Angelo Genealogical and Historical Society. First introduced to the awards program at a ‘Partner Society Sharing Session’ held by John Wylie in 2009, SAGHS was in the process of publishing a book on marriage records. The society submitted the book for award consideration and was pleasantly surprised by their first-place finish. “It must have been ‘beginner’s luck,’” Susan laughed. “The overall submissions for book awards have gotten substantially better since then—our first effort wouldn’t place in the top three if we were to submit it now.”

That first experience with the Awards Program encouraged SAGHS to submit more of their work for awards consideration. “I use the TxSGS Awards Program to honor the volunteers in my society,” Susan explained. “I think our Webmaster and editor do an excellent job. Submitting their work for awards consideration is a tangible indication of my high regard for their efforts. I also encourage authors who write for our journal to submit their articles in the manuscript category.”

SAGHS has, at one time or another, won a prize in every category in which they’ve submitted an entry, including Grand Prize for a book on divorce records. However, they submitted their journal *Stalkin’ Kin in Old West Texas* for years and won a

prize only if there were three or fewer entries. “Each year, the editor and I would sit down with the first place quarterly and journal and ‘turn them inside out’ to learn why they were chosen first and see how we could apply those lessons to our journal,” explained Susan. SAGHS is a mid-sized rural society with about 175 members and the society doesn’t have access to high-quality magazine layout programs or the ability to pay for a professional to manage layout. According to Susan, “Our journal is a 100% Microsoft Word product. We were convinced we’d never place higher than third, but we kept working on improving its appearance and content to the best of our ability.” Apparently the effort paid off, because *Stalkin’ Kin in Old West Texas* placed first this year in

---

“...The TxSGS Awards Program has been instrumental in transforming my society.”

---

Category VI: Official Periodicals of Partner Societies / Journals. “I was so stunned, I was in tears,” she confessed.

“I think every society should submit their work for consideration,” confided Susan. “All it costs is the time to collect and mail the material, plus a little postage. For that tiny investment, you show your society that their efforts are worthy of award consideration at a state level and you interest your volunteers in embarking on a path of constant improvement. It’s a great publicity tool in the society and the community as well.”

Grandparents and parents have a tool for passing the ‘genealogy bug’ to their elementary, intermediate, or high school students through the Student Project competition. These project entries may be part of a

school, library, genealogical society, or museum initiative but must be sponsored by a partner society or a TxSGS member; the student does not have to be a TxSGS member. A great summer activity, each of these age-appropriate projects include creating a four-generation pedigree chart with family group sheets. What could be better for a child than winning a cash prize of \$100, \$75, or \$50 for a fun summer project with Grandma or Grandpa?

Entry is open to both societies and individuals for books (Family History, References, and Books Published by Partner Societies) and websites. Society volunteers may be nominated for “Volunteer of the Year,” which provides a cash prize to both the winner and the nominating society. In the manuscript and column categories,

individuals can submit articles or columns written in 2015 or 2016. Societies may submit journals, quarterlies, and newsletters as well.

None of these awards would be conferred without tremendous effort by the Awards Chairman, Bill Buckner, and his Awards Committee. As Genealogy Center Manager for the West Waco Library and Genealogy Center in Waco, Texas, and a person who works with genealogy materials every day, Bill is imminently qualified to guide the Awards Program. Bill also chairs the Book Awards Committee for Categories I, II, and VII. Mic Barnette, Library Associate for the Genealogy Department of the Dallas Public Library, chairs the Category VI Awards Committee for Official Periodicals of Partner Societies. Randy Whited, TxSGS President and IT professional, chairs the Website Awards committee. Darwin Gilmore, a retired educator and school administrator, chairs the awards

committee for Student Projects.

TxSGS is currently searching for a Manuscript Awards Chair. In the interim, direct inquiries to Bill Buckner at [billb@wacotx.gov](mailto:billb@wacotx.gov). Manuscript entries should be held until a Manuscript Awards Chair is announced; watch the TxSGS website for news and instructions on submitting manuscripts and columns.

According to Bill Buckner, "Over all, the awards are designed to encourage our membership, including our partner societies, to continue to publish in the field of genealogy and historical research. The spirit of competition throughout the years has produced some truly fine publications that benefit present and future family historians."

## TxSGS Writing Award Categories

Descriptions of each category, recognition award, and financial award may be found on the TxSGS website at [www.TxSGS.org/programs/awards-grants/](http://www.TxSGS.org/programs/awards-grants/).

- Category I—Books by Non-Professionals
- Category II—Books by a Professional
- Category III—Manuscripts
  - Manuscript by a Non-Professional
  - Manuscript by a Professional
- Category IV—Family Periodicals by an Individual
- Category V—Columnist Award
- Category VI—Official Periodicals of Partner Societies
  - Newsletters
  - Quarterlies
  - Journals
- Category VII—Books Published by Partner Societies
- Category VIII—Student Projects
  - Elementary Grades 4-6
  - Intermediate Grades 7-9
  - High School Grades 10-12

## Other Awards

**Volunteer Award**—nominated by a Partner Society to recognize one of its members. One winner will be selected and receive a \$50 cash award plus a plaque. The partner society that nominates the winner will also receive \$50.

Judging criteria include 30 points for genealogical or historical research, 35 points for service to the society, 10 points for service to the community, and 25 points for service to the local or genealogical library. Submit entries to Randy Whited, TxSGS President, at [president@txsgs.org](mailto:president@txsgs.org).

**TxSGS Fellow**—recognizes an individual that made significant contributions either to TxSGS over a period of several years or made significant contributions of state-wide impact on the Texas genealogical community. Members of TxSGS should submit letters of nomination that include: a short biography, details of the individual's genealogical accomplishments, contributions to TxSGS, contributions to the Texas genealogical community, and any other significant details to support the nomination. Submit entries to Randy Whited, TxSGS President, at [president@txsgs.org](mailto:president@txsgs.org).

**\$1,000 Student Scholarship**—awarded to a student that plans to major in history, government, library science, or education. Applicants should be high school seniors or enrolled in college. The application process, delineated at <http://www.txsgs.org/programs/awards-grants/scholarship/>, includes an application letter, a resume, a certified transcript, recommendation letters, and a 500-word essay on "The Importance of Family History." Submit entries to Randy Whited, TxSGS President, at [president@txsgs.org](mailto:president@txsgs.org). ★

## Submitting Entries to the Awards Program

Entries in all categories must be received no later than 15 Sep 2016. Bill Buckner, Awards Chair, encourages participants to mail their entries early to make sure they arrive by the deadline and to follow the entry guidelines on the TxSGS website at <http://www.txsgs.org/programs/awards-grants/writing-awards/>. Partner Societies and members participating in the Awards Program must be members for the full year of 2016; memberships can be paid as late as the deadline and applied retroactively. First- through third-place cash awards will be presented during the Awards Banquet at the TxSGS Annual Conference. All books entered in the competition will be donated to the Texas State Library & Archives Genealogy collection in Austin or another library whose collection is open to the public. In addition to the awards in each category, a grand prize and \$400 will be awarded to the best overall entry in the book competition, regardless of the category.

