

## **YOUTH REPORT FALL 2010**

After a steady decline, the number of youth members is increasing by leaps and bounds, thanks to some very active Youth Chairs – Linda Ridlon of Region 1, (17 youth members) Lorraine Nicholson, of Region 14, (20 youth members – 12 new and more coming plus a possible CIP or 2!), Jean Morris of Region 18, (19 youth members and a NEW CIP with 16 kindergarteners!), and Cynthia Wade of Region 22, (14 youth members). The majority of the decline over the past few years was mostly due to the age of the youth members and the decline in CIPs. New requirements for the STAR testing program nationally has decreased the flexibility teachers have in the classroom. But we are bouncing back, and my challenge to all AIS youth members to sign up ONE new youth seems to be reaping results!

Many of the new youth members did not receive their Youth Handbooks in a timely manner, mostly due to the failure of the MemSec's computer, I believe. Tom has been very timely notifying me of new youth members, but the ones for July and August did not reach me until mid-September. Hopefully the new computer will alleviate this problem.

John Jones has suggested that ALL youth members receive the new “e-membership” that we are developing at no cost. I do not think this is in the best interests of AIS. Yes, we do want to encourage youth members, but I believe a modest charge of \$10/year for Youth E Membership would not be viewed as ‘too much’ when you consider all the benefits. Currently the majority of youth members do not subscribe to the Bulletin/“Iris”. Paying \$1 more for the “e-membership” when they would receive the Iris Register database as well as the online version of “Iris” is a bargain. And youth members of the same family could benefit while still paying for the “No Bulletin” minimum \$5 fee, with only one member having an ‘e-membership’.

As to the question regarding the Youth Protection Policy in regard to Facebook pages that some affiliates are beginning to feature – I still strongly believe that publishing photos of AIS Youth Members on the internet where access is NOT limited to AIS members is asking for trouble. However, in order to encourage youth participation, something is needed other than just a

dry listing of youth activities, awards, etc. If possible, pictures submitted by AIS members of youth activities in many regions (a montage or slide show) “AND APPROVED BY THE AIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS” could be placed on the internet for all affiliates using Facebook or other internet media, so that individual Youth members would not be singled out or identifiable. This could include photo contest pictures, convention awards, show photos and awards, community activities, etc. Youth members who have their own Facebook pages would be excluded from this policy, but the responsibility would be entirely theirs, and not under the jurisdiction of AIS. I may sound like an alarmist to many, but just look at what has happened with the terrorism of teens and the suicides of many via Facebook and Twitter. I do not want our Youth members to be subjected to ANY unwanted or unacceptable behavior.

We have some absolutely terrific youth members who deserve recognition for their accomplishments, and encouragement from all of us, but not at the expense of their safety.

Cheryl Deaton, AIS Youth Chair