

2014 Fall Youth Report

As of October 24, 2014, there are 339 youth members enrolled in the AIS Youth Program, including one in Europe. There are 8 CIPs (Classroom Iris Projects), 3 in Region 18 - Missouri, 4 in Region 14 – Northern California, and 1 in Region 15 – Southern California & Arizona, totaling 141 members: 43 in Region 18, 71 in Northern California and 27 in Southern California. Most of the youth members pay a \$5 fee which just about covers the expenses. At this time, in order to encourage youth enrollment, I do not suggest raising the fees, but it could be a consideration in the future. Most elementary school CIP members belong only for a year or two, and then once they change classes and teachers, they drop out.

We are currently holding the annual Coloring Contest, the Ackerman Essay Contest, and a contest to design a new cover for the youth newsletter, The Iris Fan. I am excited by the responses I have received from the youth members all over the United States, and Andra, who is from Romania, enthusiastically entered the AIS Photo Contest!

There is a group of parents in Region 14 who wish to enroll their children in a CIP at a private elementary school that already has a 5th grade CIP, but expressing privacy concerns, they do not wish to provide their childrens' full name and birthdate. There were privacy concerns expressed by the parents of the 5th grade CIP, but after reading our Youth Policy Protection Guidelines, the parents enrolled their children, providing me with full names and birthdates (CIPs generally use the school or teacher's address, not the home address of the youth members). According to the parents, having their childrens' names/birthdates out there is like "giving someone permission to hurt their child". These parents want to enroll their children under 'false' names for the entire class; i.e. Jane Smith, Henry Smith, etc. In discussion with Veronica Johnson, our legal advisor, and Michelle Snyder, our insurance chairman, using false names would render the AIS insurance invalid for these individuals and would possibly cancel the AIS policy completely for falsification of information. Veronica suggested that the parents of these children sign an affidavit attesting that their child is a minor, but providing the child's full name. I have a draft form for the AIS Board of Directors to consider if they wish to change the policy. I am not suggesting that these children are trying to 'fraudulently' benefit from the \$5 membership fee, but every youth organization requires names and birthdates in order to participate. I understand that most of these children are 1st and 2nd graders, but due to our current policy where the Youth member provides their birthdate, we would need to change policy to allow these parents to use this form.

I was told that “the rules as they read now have served AIS well in the past, they do not serve AIS now. Just like ‘paper everything’ is obsolete, so are some of the rules of yesteryear. Hopefully we can all work together to get AIS back to a growing community not one dying of old age.” Many think that our guidelines are outdated what with the internet, twitter, Facebook, and other forms of social media, but I would rather error on the side of caution than have one of our youth members harmed. Since the names and birthdates are secured by myself and the AIS MemSec, I do not see the need to change our policy, but will open this issue for discussion.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Deaton, AIS Youth Chairman