

Welcome to Connecticut. I greatly appreciate the efforts you have all made to be here and trust that you will experience New England hospitality while visiting.

The USWCA, as evidenced by all of you participating today is going strong. We have a new logo designed by Casey Kremer and Nancy Wilhelm and a new website ready to launch that will serve as a platform for wider communication to member clubs, potential members and the world at large. We are seeing this weekend the progress made to date and the potential for the future. Nancy and Casey have made a herculean effort here and should be commended.

I love this organization; the friends that I have made across the country are in many cases like true sisters to me. The bond that we all share whether from going on a tour together, being reps on a USWCA committee or curling against each other in national bonspiels from year to year are strong ones and, they are evident to those around us.

That which is one of the greatest benefits from participating in this organization is also one that our detractors hold against us; “a clique of women who just put their friends on tours, reps who attend events and don’t let others in the club participate, women stuck in the past of curling”. Untrue yes but, when mouthed often enough these complaints begin to take on a life of their own.

How do we combat this when women across the country question, “Why is our club in the USWCA? What do they do for me?” How do we place ourselves in a position of strength for the coming years as our sport stands on the threshold of explosive growth with this undercurrent?

We need to expand the services which we offer member clubs, to broaden our attraction to the women who are now coming into the sport. Do we need to think outside of the box? Yes, but we also need to take the ‘box’ that we have built and strengthen and enlarge it. You will hear from many of the committees today of new services and new efforts being brought forward and other new projects being considered. We need to amplify what we are doing and do more for a broader group of women. That is what I have asked many of the committees to focus on and I think we are making great progress.

We enter this curling season with the knowledge of a pending spotlight on the sport we love so much. We know, from the experience of the past Olympics, the interest and waves of potential new curlers that will descend upon our clubs across the nation. We have been forewarned and now must work to be forearmed!

To address this need, Nancy Seitz presented a program yesterday on club preparation for Olympic-sized interest. Loraine Waybourn and her Communications committee have additional items to help clubs raise the level of awareness of curling in your area and have teamed with

membership to produce a pamphlet that I think will spark a good bit of activity. Ann Robertson's women's development fund group is evaluating a project that would both heighten the visibility of the USWCA and reach those women athletes looking for something more.

With all of this activity going on communication and responsibility becomes critical. We need to keep the ball rolling (or stone moving) once we return to our clubs. We need to talk to each other and bring our ideas forward. We are volunteers yes, but, we represent the women of our clubs and as such this 'volunteer effort' has a greater responsibility than if we were donating our time to any number of good efforts. We need to commit to doing the work of the USWCA, promoting it in our clubs and moving forward- especially this year.

We meet again in February just prior to the Olympics. We do not have time to leave that which is not completed yet until February, we need to move quickly and be ready to go. We need to help our clubs be ready for the Olympics, and we need to be a more dynamic organization. We need to position ourselves as a sports organization for the future. Soon we will each step onto the ice and sweep away the unwanted pounds gathered in the off season. I ask that each of you continue your committee work and thoughtfulness as to our goals throughout this Fall & Winter; that you 'sell' the USWCA in your clubs and at other curling activities, that you speak with the women of your clubs about what they'd like us to be and that we all 'keep in touch' as we move forward.

This February as we wrap up a number of items discussed today and prepare for a new season let it be apparent that we are becoming a more cohesive and dynamic organization who are in touch with each other and with the larger curling community of women.

As I said, I love this organization, I know you do too and we have the tools to make a significant impact on curling in the United States so, let's do it!