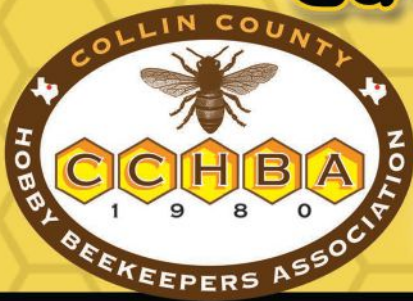


# Texas Bee Club Stresses Education and Youth Involvement

## Part II - Conclusion



New club logo designed by  
Bill Zimmer, CCHBA member

by MARY AND BILL WEAVER

***To run Collin County (TX) Hobby Beekeepers Association's highly successful Youth Scholarship Program and Club Queen Program requires large a "field force" of committed volunteers, who also happen to love beekeeping themselves. The complex club structure and interactions that make everything come together successfully can best be understood by showing you what a few more of the members are "up to."***

**K**urt Kauffman found his personal niche for "Giving Back" to the club soon after he began attending in 2008 as a beginning beekeeper. Although his travel time is 1 ¼ hours each way, once Kurt attended his first meeting, he never stopped.

"The club has a lot of expenses. I'm a landscaper designer and nurseryman, and I decided to bring a bee-friendly plant to a meeting to see if the club would like to auction it. Blake Shook said, 'OK,' and all of a sudden I became an auctioneer for the first time in my life!"

The plant auction soon evolved into a raffle. Kauffman has brought one or more nectar- or pollen-producing plants a month for club raffles ever since. "If I occasionally miss a meeting because I am out of town, I can count on the Legoretta family to cover for me."

He also takes orders in January for fruit trees, from both members and non-members, to raise money for the club. "As a nurseryman, I can buy them at wholesale prices. I supply them for \$16 a tree for a wide variety of fruit trees, now including fig trees, which were very popular. This year, I sold 143 really fresh, bare root trees, delivered in February for immediate planting, and donated about \$1358 after the cost of the trees to the club for their programs."

Soon club members asked Kauffman to begin writing an article about a bee-friendly plant each month for their "Beeline" newsletter. With a degree in Landscape Horticul-

ture, he was well-prepared for the job. "I've concentrated on plants that are tough and dependable in our climate."

Right now Kauffman, who has a thriving business with 15 employees, has 7 hives

and is on the call list for swarm catching. "I keep one hive at my conference room window. Customers can watch the bees come and go as we work out landscaping plans. I show the hive to children, who are very interested in the bees."

"Before I began attending CCHBA, I had never thought about bees in my landscaping business. Now I'm seeing bees and other pollinators everywhere."

### **Marketing Unique Honey Products and also "Selling" Beekeeping**

Bill Zimmer, current club vice-president, started attending CCHBA 8 years ago, when he needed bees to pollinate his young blueberry bushes. Now retired, he and his wife Susan, who also loves beekeeping, have built up their operation to 47 colonies. Their home yard has 350 blueberry and blackberry plants, a variety of fruit trees, and three varieties of lavender for the bees to work.

A former marketing manager for a large corporation, Zimmer enjoys developing and marketing new products. In addition to the usual liquid and creamed flavored honeys, the Zimmers offer some very popular new honey products. Zimmer relies on customer feedback in fine-tuning how these are made.

He planted three varieties of lavender, and has worked to develop a lavender-infused honey that is popular for use in tea and in cooking. "I fill about 25% of a 5-gallon pail with dried lavender sprigs [dried for 4 weeks]," he explained, "then add honey, and set it in the sun to infuse for one to two



**Kurt Kauffman, landscaping and nursery business owner, who raffles off a bee-friendly plant at each meeting to raise money for the club's scholarship and queen funds.**





**Bill Zimmer and his dogs in front of a planting of lavender. The flowers are eagerly worked by his bees, and when cut and dried the herb is used in his popular Lavender-Infused Honey. (See article).**

weeks. The amount of time depends on the lavender variety and the amount of flavor my customers tell me they want.” His lavender-infused honey is then strained before being bottled. It sells well at the local farmers’ market and to customers who come to the farm.

Zimmer is also growing rose bushes on drip irrigation with the intention of experimenting with rose petal-infused honey. “After it’s infused you can just leave the rose petals in the jar, and spread the honey on your toast, rose petals and all,” he explained.

The Zimmers’ brand name for their honey, “Texas Gold” also reflects his good marketing instincts, as does their label. Other products made and sold by the Zimmers include blueberry and blackberry honey jams. “Customers appreciate that the jams are made without white sugar,” he commented. The fruit is cooked until it has the texture Zimmer is looking for—“some of the blueberries will still be whole. Customers like that.” Then he turns off the kettle and adds the honey. The honey itself is not



**Zimmers’ bottled blueberry jam sweetened with honey showing well-designed, attractive label.**

cooked. “Some customers buy a whole case at a time.”

Like other club members, Bill and his wife Susan, who first claimed she would never work bees but now is as enthusiastic about beekeeping as Bill is, appreciate the club enough to look for ways to “Give Back.”

Bill now serves on CCHBA’s Board as well as being club vice-president. One of his duties is to line up speakers for the second half of each meeting. Board members feel strongly that having nationally known, top-notch speakers from outside the club on a regular basis is vital to educating their membership.

“We need to pay their transportation and lodging,” explained Board Member and Treasurer John Talbert. “But we make that investment because people in the club need to get the opportunity to hear diverse ideas about beekeeping. If you talk to the same people all the time, you just get the same answers.”

Zimmer takes this responsibility for providing good programs seriously. But it turned out to be not as difficult a job as he had feared. “When I called potential speakers, I soon learned that all I had to do was mention John Talbert’s name and all of a sudden I had their attention. John Talbert’s work has given our club credibility.

“So I’ve been able to bring in speakers like Dr. Larry Connor; Tim Tucker, the president of The American Beekeeping Federation; a member of the tech team of the Bee Informed Partnership; a member of the Pollinator Stewardship Council; an expert on top bar hives; and a speaker who presented at the Texas Beekeepers Association on how to grow the nematodes that can control the larval stage of the small hive beetle.



**Susan Zimmer with some of their handmade, stenciled hives in one of their apiaries, shaded against the TX heat. Susan plans to take the new TX Master Beekeeper Certification next year, as husband Bill did this year.**

Sometimes, too, Zimmer makes use of the wide-ranging beekeeping expertise in the club. He will pick a topic, then ask several qualified CCHBA members to each speak on the topic for 15 minutes.

Zimmer also uses his position to add fund-raising opportunities to events. “I used the club’s 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration to raise money for our scholarship program, in addition to celebrating the club’s 35 years and honoring the original members,” he explained.

#### **“Giving Back” as Club President, in Addition to Building His Own Beekeeping Business**

The current Club President and his wife, Russell and Lisa Dittfurth, had their first contact with CCHBA when they found a



**Bill Zimmer, left, with Tim Tucker, president of ABF, one of the nationally known speakers Zimmer, as vice-president of CCHBA, lined up for a club meeting.**



**CCHBA Honey Queen Hope Pettibon with club President Russell Dittfurth, preparing to select the winning ticket for a club fund-raising raffle.**

swarm on a tree in front of their home. “A club member, A.P. Warne, came over in answer to my call to explain to us what to do with it.

“He also told us about the club, and made sure we got registered for John Talbert’s beekeeping class that started the next January, 2012. Since February 2012, we haven’t missed a meeting unless we were out of town,” Lisa continued. “At the end of John Talbert’s class, all we could think about was how many hives can we have by next year?”

“We have 21 hives now, with 20 coming back from earning almond pollination fees in California on Skip Talbert’s truck,” she told me last February. “We bought 10 more nucs from a 15-year-old club member who was one of our scholarship students. We also bought some queens. We’re hoping to have 50 hives by fall.”

Both Dittfurths currently have full time jobs, but they’re thinking ahead. Ten years away from retirement, they would like to have a beekeeping business set up by the time they retire. “That would make retirement more fun and interesting,” Lisa commented. “We both love working with the bees.”

“Everyone says we’d need a truckload,” said Russell. “We’re looking at doubling our hives every year.” “But we’re taking it one step at a time,” Lisa cautioned.

In 2013, Russell became Club President (for a maximum of two years under club rules.) “There’s always someone ready to step up and volunteer for whatever needs to be done,” said Lisa. “It’s so different from other groups I’ve been part of. But the club tries to use new people when they can, so the older members don’t get ‘burned out.’

“Besides we’re drawn to give something back to the club. We have the benefit of the years and years of experience that went into

forming the club that others have put together. The club is like a close-knit family. Everyone is eager to share what they know and help each other. The car is already rolling and we’re hopping in and keeping it rolling. We’re just trying to steer in the right direction.”

As Russell said, “We don’t have to push it. That would take the fun out of it. I want the general meeting to be fun for everyone, so everyone has a good time.”

But fortunately, as far as steering in the right direction is concerned, Russell still has some of those older club pioneers for guidance and counsel, and he frequently asks for their view and ideas. “We want to protect what they started. We feel thankful that we can care for CCHBA right now, and thankful that we can contribute to moving it forward.”

#### **Working as a Director of TBA— “It keeps me young!”**

Besides helping her husband with the Club, Lisa has taken on the responsibilities of a Director in the Texas State Beekeepers Association. She represents 4 clubs. “I try to meet with each club once a quarter. (One is a 3 ½ hour drive, so I’ve been talking with them on the phone.) She is also working with John Talbert to start a new club in her district. “I have no idea how many clubs John has started over the years,” she commented.

“There’s constantly something going on, especially when you’re tapped in at the state and national level. That helps to give our club a focus. I’ve learned so much by volunteering and talking with beekeepers in other clubs. It keeps me young!” she added.

#### **“The Beeline,” a top quality club Newsletter**

“I thoroughly enjoy editing ‘The Beeline,’ our club newspaper,” said Pat Scott. “I was excited when the opportunity became available. We have regular contributors of articles. Becky Bender, our club’s ‘plant lady’, writes each month about bee-friendly flowers that will be blooming in the next month. Kurt Kauffman writes about the flowering shrub, tree, or plant from his nursery that he’ll be auctioning off at our next meeting. The President and Vice-Pres-



**Newsletter editor Pat Scott (l) and Carole Booth. Carole gave this book to Pat in thanks for her help on Carole’s Power Point presentation.**



**At club’s 35th anniversary celebration, Carole Booth giving Power Point presentation to honor the club’s founding and older members.**

ident send in what they’ve been doing and what has been happening in their hives.

“Melody, our librarian, recommends new books that have become available, or books that answer beekeeping questions members have asked. The Queens and Princesses send in updates on what they’re doing. We have an area for paid advertisements, and I write updates on upcoming special events.

“I try to use photos and color and graphics to make the newsletter look interesting and attractive so club members will keep reading.”

Pat has also started writing articles herself, for the first time in her life. “I’m only a third-year beekeeper, but I write about things that interest me. Right now I’m working on an article about my top-bar hive.”

At present, Pat and her husband Wayne look forward to greatly expanding Pat’s beekeeping. “I’m ready to retire from my full-time job, and we’d like to retire from the daily care of the cattle on our farm. My husband helped me to build a small honey house. I’m looking forward to ‘retirement’ with a lot more time to work the bees.”

#### **Two Club “Pioneers”**

Charlotte Davis was one of the “pioneers” of the club. “My husband Hollis and I were members from the time the club was very small,” she said. Charlotte was a school-teacher, teaching special needs children. “I taught a unit on bees every year. The children loved it. Their attention spans were short, but when I could find something really interesting like bees, they would stay with it.”

Later Charlotte and Hollis donated their considerable collection of bee books to the fledgling club library. “I was never an elected official, but my husband and I helped out wherever we could.”



Over the years, Charlotte and Hollis helped to interest quite a few folks, both young and old, in beekeeping. "One family had three sons. We helped them to get started. Bees give teenagers a sense of responsibility," she stated. "Either they look after their bees or they'll lose them."

Charlotte is now 87 and Hollis is 91. There came a point a number of years ago when they could no longer take care of their bees. "Club members came to help us with them, some driving as much as 100 miles," recalls Charlotte. "Finally we gave them to John Talbert to keep with his bees. But every year since, he has brought back to us the honey from what he calls 'our' hives."

"I believe the club is so successful, in part because of the good leadership, and in part because the members are very caring people who go out of their way to help. John Talbert would never turn somebody down, even at midnight."

### The Plant Lady

CCHBA members recognize talent in fellow members and encourage its use. The Club "Plant Lady," Becky Bender, RN, was a certified Master Naturalist who gave fascinating talks about bee plants.

Club members asked if she would write a column on bee-friendly flowers for their newsletter, but she was hesitant. "I wasn't sure I was qualified." A long-time club member, Judy Buckner, encouraged her to give it a try. Becky did, and her columns are beautifully written and filled with interesting details and close-up photos.

Texas Beekeepers Association took notice, and Becky is now writing a column every other month for their publication, which has her studying more about plants Texas-wide. Now all TBA members can benefit from the results of Judy Buckner's encouragement. Besides writing the columns, Becky is a popular speaker at bee clubs, bee schools, and TBA conventions. Her message is simple: "Plant for your bees, but before you tear out already existing vines, small trees, shrubs and flowers to plant something else, take a close look at



Becky Bender, the club's "Plant Lady," who now writes columns about bee plants for the TBA, planting in her garden.



Becky Bender, CCHBA's "Plant Lady," (in background, right) teaching children about bee plants at the Texas Beekeepers Association Bee Plant Exhibit.

what's already there. Sometimes you'll find some real native jewels. We have beautiful native prairie species that are well adapted to Texas droughts and soils."

Becky has beautiful "Wildscaping" at her home, which was on the local garden club tour of seven homes! She is on the Board of CCHBA and keeps seven hives. (Check out her website, [www.budsandthebees.com](http://www.budsandthebees.com))

### A "Honey of a Club Library" at CCHBA wins Librarian 2 awards

Melody Seida seems to be a perfect fit for her work as club librarian. "We have a large library. Every month, I bring to club meetings over 100 books, many DVD's, as well as educational materials needed for

teaching," she explained casually, as though carting all that stuff around would be an ordinary, everyday occurrence for anyone.

"There is no permanent place to keep the library in the building where the club meets," she continued. Melody has a very efficient way to get all the library materials to meetings. She brings them in several tubs, which are rolled into the building on a large cart. "Worker Bees" (AKA scholarship students) help to roll the cart in and get everything set up. Melody also brings a folding book shelf, since she noticed that it seemed to be difficult for members to look through stacks of books spread out on a table. The book shelf makes it easier for them to scan quickly to see what books are available.



Club members checking out books. Melody Seida, club librarian, center. Gloria Lloyd to her left, is helping.

“The library keeps a list of what club member have to buy and sell in a three-ring binder,” Melody continued. “The members make contact with each other directly, and the person who writes the listing is responsible for updating it.”

Because the club has lost some books and materials in the past, Melody keeps a section of hard-to-replace books marked with an “R” in a special reference section to be loaned out only during the meetings.

To check out books, a person must first become a club member (so Melody has all their contact information) and also must have returned for a second club meeting. If books are not brought back, Melody has gone to considerable lengths to find and retrieve them, but this new system minimizes problems that came with a previously used self-checkout method. The club has shown its appreciation for her work by awarding Melody the “President’s Award” twice.

“The library also has a ‘free’ area containing extra bee magazines members bring in; pamphlets; resource sheets for new beekeepers; and lists of books that are recommended reading for ‘newbies.’

“Our family got involved in the club through their Student Scholarship Program with our daughter Rachael,” (who later became 2005 National Honey Queen,) explained Melody. Another daughter, Melissa, also a scholarship student, today is pursuing a degree in the culinary arts. She encourages the use of honey in recipes.

Melody will catch swarms, and plans to obtain her Master Beekeeper certification through the brand-new Texas program. She also enjoys going to schools and “teaching about the history of beekeeping, the importance of pollination, the biology of honey bees, and how to act around bees.”

Interested bee clubs may contact Melody for her write-up about how to start and manage a successful club library at [librarian@cchba.com](mailto:librarian@cchba.com).

### Creators of Patent-Pending Bee Removal Strips are also Long-Time Club Supporters

Club members Shirley and Horacio Acevedo learned beekeeping from an elderly man in El Salvador who kept a hive on the metal roof of his house. “We were so im-

pressed with what he was doing,” recalls Shirley. The family lived in El Salvador while Horacio helped his employer, Texas Instruments, set up a new plant there.

Shirley, and Horacio joined CCHBA in 1990. Horacio was vice-president, setting up programs for club meetings. Shirley was a past President and for a time she chaired both the local and state Honey Queen programs. “Although it was a very busy time, it was a fulfilling role for me,” she recalls.

“I drove the queens to most events. We wanted the queens to arrive fresh and not tired from a long drive. We tried to schedule the state queens for 50 events a year, and the local queens generally went to events outside the county also. It’s expensive for a club to have a Honey Queen. Even schools did not often make a donation back to the club for expenses, although we let them know that we appreciated donations.”

Currently, Shirley is the “go to” person for items that members want to contribute to the raffles that help to raise money for the youth programs. She and her husband are quite busy just now using their knowledge of beekeeping in their own bee removal business. “We’ve done bee removal, since 2000, and started our business, Ace Bees, in 2005, working mainly in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.”

All of their children have participated in CCHBA and in the business, which is unique because they have developed and use “bee removal strips” for which Horacio has a patent pending. Ace Bees guarantees customers that all the bees and the queen will be out of their home or structure within 48 hours after the bee removal strips are in place.

“The strip does not kill the honey bees, and we feel it gives the bees the best chance of survival, like a ‘swarm’ when the weather is warm. Neighboring bees will rob out any honey that was in the hive. Often there is no need to go into the structure to remove the hive. Our customers usually follow my husband’s recommendations on whether follow-up is needed. Because he is an electrical engineer, he is very handy. When we have to take apart a building to remove a hive, he does not take apart something he cannot put back together.”

Their oldest daughter Monica constructed their website [www.acebees.com](http://www.acebees.com),

which is an excellent example of a website for a bee removal business. It is informative and educational, as well as attracting potential customers to Ace Bees.

When on the job, Shirley and Horacio usually work together. They take the time to explain what they are doing and why, and in general, act as ambassadors for honey bees. One customer remarked that they made the bee removal at his home seem like a Discovery Channel learning experience.

Another customer commented that “they even figured out that what I really wanted was to suit up and join in the fun,” which he did. “I ended up with two quarts of honey, which I removed from the comb, strained and filtered, following Shirley’s suggestions.”

Ace Bees is licensed by the state and fully insured. The whole point of their business is to prevent honey bees from being destroyed. “Extermination is not the answer,” states their website, and it explains why.

“Whenever possible [unless the bees are among the about 10% of those we remove that are Africanized,] we move the colonies to an apiary on our farm,” said Shirley.

### Kid-Friendly Meetings

Kurt Kauffman, the professional nursery owner/landscape designer mentioned earlier, was struck when he first visited the club by the number of kids and families. “I thought beekeeping was for older people,” he said.

He soon figured out the reason for the club’s attraction to families with children. “The key thing that makes the club work so well is the structure that is in place. The library is part of the structure. The Youth Scholarship Program and the Club Queen Program are part of the structure. So is the newsletter, which keeps members informed, as does the Yahoo Group. “Also, each meeting has a structure that is kid-friendly.”

One thing you will not find at club meetings is a discussion of business. Club business is saved for Board meetings, held once a month on a separate night. The Board meetings by themselves can sometimes last for two hours. Any club member is welcome to attend board meetings and vote on any issues that come up.



(l) Horacio Acevedo and grandson Austin check hives at home. (r) Horacio Acevedo with swarms in bird houses that he removed from customers’ properties as part of his bee removal business. The swarms will soon be settled in hives at his home yard.



But, as John Talbert puts it, "Everybody is busy. It is our responsibility to use the time at meetings to maximize the education we provide our members. We can have over 20 visitors at one monthly meeting. We want to keep them coming back, and we want to help our members be successful beekeepers."

In the format of CCHBA meetings, visitors are introduced. Next the president gives the announcements, including coming events; the queen and princess give their updates; and at most meetings, a few scholarship students tell the club about what they have learned so far. "Then we do 'Bee Talk'" led by either 2011 Texas Honey Queen Kaylynn Mansker or her brother Matthew, now a full-time beekeeper. "Those Manskers are fantastic at leading 'Bee Talk' in front of 200 people!" commented vice-president Zimmer.

'Bee Talk' is an expansion of the hive management tips for the upcoming month that are printed on the club calendar, with plenty of time for questions. "Members really appreciate this time for hearing about what's happening in each other's hives," commented Zimmer.

The Break, a highlight of the meeting, is for fellowship, informal discussions and socializing, particularly important in a club that includes many home schoolers. Food is a highlight of "The Break." "Members bring something to share, or may contribute to a collection for occasional store-bought snacks," explained Lisa Dittfurth.

"When I have time, I make a triple batch (12 pounds) of a honey-crunch snack mixture with a caramelized sauce. It's almost always gone by the end of the meeting. The Queen and Princess typically bring snacks made with honey."

A drawing for a door prize and the monthly plant raffle follow immediately after The Break, and help to get everyone in their chairs again. For the door prize, each person who signs in to get a machine printed name badge automatically gets a ticket to enter the drawing. For the bee-friendly plant raffle, each ticket costs \$1, so everyone can participate (and contribute to the Youth Programs) at the level he or she is able. The carefully chosen speaker completes the meeting.

Families are encouraged to bring their children to the meetings, which start at 6:30. "We try to close by 8:45 or 9:00."

#### Fund Raising

Fund raising is serious business at CCHBA, because of the expenses involved to support their various programs and outside speakers. Last year, the Youth Scholarship Program alone cost \$8,600.00. "Swarm patrol beekeepers often give all or part of the fees they receive to the club. There are also member donations and remembrance donations."

The club periodically plans auctions to raise funds. At the club's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, tickets were sold for \$5 each to raffle several pollen analyses to be performed at Texas A and M. The analyses normally cost \$60 per sample, and many members bought several tickets for this money-raiser. "It's not unusual to raffle an item during a monthly meeting to add to the Youth Program coffers."

After the Christmas Banquet, which is an "organized pot-luck," a full-fledged auction is held with the services of a professional auctioneer, who donates his time to auction items donated by members. Many of the items are bee-related.

The Club Calendar is another "fun" fund raiser. Prizes are given for the best bee-related photos selected to be in the calendar, a challenge to photographers both young and old. Bee supply companies and local businesses buy ad space in the calendar. Each month includes a timely list of beekeeping tips for that time of year. Five hundred calendars are printed, and they're sold for \$10 a piece.

This year the club's annual August Honey Contest will have a fee of \$3 per entry, except for current Scholarship Students. The entry fee will enable the club to purchase a Hanna Color Analyzer and a MISCO digital refractometer, "which will improve our standards for honey judging, and better prepare our members to compete at the State and National level."

#### Club Members Active at State and National Level

CCHBA has produced numerous officers and Board Members of ABF and the Texas Beekeepers Association. A sizeable contingent from the club attend ABF Conventions and TBA activities. Club members provide about 3/4 of the volunteers to man TBA's award-winning stand at the 24-day State Fair of Texas. John Talbert was responsible for establishing a black jar honey contest at the State Fair, which had previously had contests for jellies and jams and pickles, but not honey.

#### CCHBA's "Spin-off" Beekeeping Businesses

The club has been responsible for inspiring numerous serious beekeepers to become sideliners, as well as several commercial beekeepers, including Blake Shook, a former Youth Scholarship Student, Janet and Jim Rowe, and John Talbert, who was introduced to beekeeping when he was invited to attend a CCHBA meeting by a co-worker in 1985. Talbert now runs his commercial operation with his son Skip, who is also a member of CCHBA.



At club's 35th Anniversary Celebration. Founding members of CCHBA, current Board members, and current Club and Texas State Royalty: back, John Talbert, Barbara Corbin, Wyvonna Brackeen, Collin County Honey Queen 2015 Hope Pettibon, club vice-president Bill Zimmer, club president Russell Dittfurth. Front row -Collin County Honey princess 2015 Hannah Mansker, Carol Martens, Carole Booth, Texas Honey Queen 2015 Tabitha Mansker.

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