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How to tap into the gourd spirit of others? In addition to reading The Tendril regularly and participating in IGS events, consider joining the American Gourd Society. My membership had lapsed and I am enjoying the benefits of my reinstated membership, some of which are listed below by AGS president Bob James. First and foremost, however, the AGS has a BLOCKBUSTER magazine with great color photography and tips for all ages and a wide variety of techniques. Says Bob:

- 1 - you have joined with the national group of the best folks in the world, gourd lovers
- 2 - the AGS has supported and published results of health information on gourd working
- 3 - the AGS represents you to the world, having worked with China, France, and Canada societies
- 4 - the AGS represents you nationally, supporting movies, newspaper articles, TV shows, and more national activities in the works
- 5 - the AGS provides web space to your chapter if they need it
- 6 - the AGS website is a wealth of information on working with gourds
- 7 - the AGS will provide information to anyone who wants to form new chapters; this is available nowhere else
- 8 - you have access to experts about gourd problems across the nation who are ready to help you
- 9 - communication between chapters significantly improves the quality of your chapter activities and shows
- 10 - the AGS board developed standard judging rules that significantly improve the transparency of gourd competitions
- 11 - the AGS sponsors the Jim Story award for national recognition of excellence in growing gourds
- 12 - the AGS is producing a pamphlet to be made available to everyone to help get the word out
- 13 - AGS book sales gives you access to many books on gourd growing and gourdcraft

Bob believes the AGS is not a service you purchase. People do not join to "get" the benefits. They join a club, where everyone helps each other. "That is our strength and why the American Gourd Society will be here for a long time. We are united by a love of the gourd and a desire to spread the word."

If you can participate in nothing else, you can enjoy The

Gourd Magazine by AGS. For example, this quarterly always features a Kids Korner that has recently has a painted penguin project and a Native American pear gourd project.

A Gourd Decorating Contest is featured by theme. Past ones have been "Decorative Painting", "Clay Embellishments", "Cutwork and Fretwork," and, next, "Patriotic Gourds." The July 15 deadline for the fall issue will feature "Beadwork Embellishment" and the winter issue (due October 15) will be "Winter's Beauty" (anything that portrays the feel of winter). To enter the competition, you merely mail a quality photo and the prize is a free year's membership to AGS and multiple copies of the issue that features the winning photo.

In every issue is "In The Garden", written by Karen Hundt-Brown, President of the Michigan Gourd Society, with helpful tips and good photos. There are also articles about big and interesting gourd happenings all over the country, and colorful photos of winning gourds in festival competitions. Recent issues have included an article on making gourd masks at an elementary school with photos of final products. Chess Anyone? There was a wonderful photo article on a unique gourd chess set and wood chess board/storage box.

There are always articles on growing and harvesting gourds by the past president of the Alabama Gourd Society Glenn Burkhalter. In addition to articles on Growing Healing Gourds In Idaho, on green cleaning a gourd, gourd pests and gourd toys there are instructions on making a "Peyote and Netted Gourd", "The Beaded Gourd for Novice and Above", "Embossing Gourds Tutorial", and artist Robert Rivera. There are great ads and full page colorful ads for upcoming festivals across the country as well as gourd supply vendors.

I like knowing I am a part of organizations whose purpose is education and instruction of all things gourds. These include the Indiana Gourd Society and the American Gourd Society. Both keep you up-to-date and for \$15.00 per year for each, you'll enjoy a lot of healthy family entertainment. AGS membership requires a check for \$15 for the annual membership, which includes 4 issues of the magazine, to AGS, PO Box 2186, Kokomo, IN, 46904. For the Indiana Gourd Society, the \$15 membership fee should be mailed to membership secretary Pat Moore, 691 W. Veach Road, Bloomington, IN 47832.

You'll be glad you joined! Happy Gourding!!

