



# ON THE LOOKOUT

From the  
**National Chairman**  
**Keith A. Argow**  
Vienna, Virginia  
Summer 2012

## **IS FFLA STUCK ON A PLATEAU? YOU CAN'T LOOK OUT TO THE FUTURE FROM A FLAT PLACE ... WE OF ALL PEOPLE OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THAT!**

There is little question that FFLA is successful in our missions of visiting and recording lookout sites, restoring aging structures, staffing lookouts both as paid and volunteers, and enjoying the company of "lookout enthusiasts" in all 50 states. We are definitely devoted to mountain tops, or high fire towers where the land is flat. Why then, would we be content to have an association whose membership numbers are flat? To put it bluntly, we do not have enough people to keep up with the accelerating decline in active lookouts or historic structures. As we saw during our field trips at the last two national board meetings (Georgia and Mississippi), we can expect to lose many more lookouts than we save in the next five years. It doesn't have to be that way! Our efforts to expand our outreach in the last ten years have not been equal to the need. We have a choice here: get ready for the future or gradually decline. We are we not attracting members? It is quite simple really. We didn't ask! Every year we put out thousands of brochures, but somehow we don't close the sale.

### **WE DO BEST WHAT WE LOVE**

There is no doubt that FFLA members love lookouts! We enjoy the challenge of saving and restoring a lookout. We enjoy planning annual meetings and gatherings to get acquainted and share stories, pictures, and each other. We enjoy the local programs provided by the host chapter, and especially the road trips and hikes to lookouts.

What we don't like is the sometimes dreary business of running an association. This fact of FFLA life was driven home by huge effort required to revise our bylaws over the last two years. When the final vote was taken just before the 2012 annual board meeting in January we really

had to scramble to get the 75% "yes" votes needed for the second reading. Significantly all those that voted did vote "yes". There is a problem here!

Every FFLA Director (according to the job description) is responsible for periodic contacts (Email is fine) with all their members. The chapter directors have a responsibility to maintain a list of all the standing lookouts in their chapter area including an annual record of staffing and maintenance (or lack of it). Additional duties include media outreach, recruiting new members (sometimes by hosting special events at lookouts), and maintaining formal contact with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) who by law must review and approve the removal of every historic public building before it is taken down. As a group our Directors are the Policy Board for FFLA. Perhaps the most important duty of a Director is submitting their annual chapter report of chapter activities for posting on our website: [www.ffla.org](http://www.ffla.org). Some of these are illustrated with pictures and are outstanding. Yet, sadly, some of our directors do not even file their annual reports. At this writing those "delinquents" have had 7 reminders from Webmaster Bill Cobb! Those directors who are tardy are easily identified on the web site.

### **LOCAL CHAPTERS, LOCAL CHAPTERS, LOCAL CHAPTERS**

As Congressman Tip O'Neal once said: "All politics are local." The basic real estate axiom is: "Location, Location, Location." Combine these two together and we have a winning combination. "Location" represents a specific lookout or group of lookouts whose protection and sponsorship will appeal to new volunteers. "Local" refers to the Local Chapters that were authorized in recent years. There are now 13 of them, see p. 3. We could easily have 50 or more. The huge benefit of local lookouts and chapters is the publicity and new members they attract. Among these folks are our future leaders! Consider this: more than half of our directors and officers have been on the job for 20 or more years! Four of our officers are of that vintage. Even a fine wine sours with years. FFLA is not as vibrant as it can be on this plateau! WRITE ME, WRITE ME, WRITE ME NOW! [Argow@cs.net](mailto:Argow@cs.net).

Have I started you thinking? I surely hope so. Please go to your computer right now and send me an email. Tell me what you think you can do for lookouts and/or FFLA. Share ideas of what might work. But please step forward.....even if you make it clear you are not comfortable in a job role. We need YOU to give us your ideas.

**Keith A. Argow**  
CEO/Chairman of the Board  
[argow@cs.net](mailto:argow@cs.net)