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Artists' groups pool ideas to make the most of their talents

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By [sandy illian bosch](#) | STAFF WRITER

Along with brushes, canvases and paints, there is something else artists have plenty of, yet never enough. Creativity is best when shared, and so a group of local artists have decided to pool theirs to see what good might come of it.

The Alliance of Fine Art, a nonprofit, professional association of art organizations in Illinois, has long supported artists in many ways, the most recent of which is through the newly formed President's Circle.

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Frank Tumino, president of the Elmhurst Artists' Guild, hopes to tap the creativity of other guild presidents for ideas about how to improve his group's gallery.

(Doings photo by Steve Johnston)

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The Elmhurst Artists' Guild uses a portion of the Elmhurst Art Museum as a showcase of its members' work. By working with other area guilds, the group's leaders hope to make the most of their gallery space. (Doings photo by Steve Johnston)

That's just one example, Tumino said, of the help the 11 member guilds can get from each other. He has ideas about how the gatherings can help his group, too.

"I'd like to learn more about securing grants for our organization," he said. He also wants to hear his fellow artists' ideas about how to improve the Elmhurst guild's gallery space at the Elmhurst Art Museum.

They'll get the chance to help when the meeting moves to Elmhurst sometime in the future.

"We've decided to meet quarterly," Tumino said. Each meeting will be hosted by a different member guild, giving everyone a chance to see how their fellow members live and work.

The gathering of area guild leaders was the ideas of Dianne Martia, outgoing president of the Elmhurst Artists' G

"There were issues I knew were common among other art leagues," said Martia, who has taken on the position o Circle.

On June 16, the presidents of all 11 member organizations gathered at a hotel in Oak Brook to share their ideas and to help each other be the best they can be.

Called the Art Summit, it got people thinking, said Frank Tumino, president of the Elmhurst Artists' Guild. The initial meeting, which Tumino and other members hope will be the first of many, amounted to a brainstorming session. Each representative talked about ideas and goals for his or her organization, and for the President's Circle.

"We were able to help each other just by talking," Tumino said.

They found that each group faces different obstacles that the others could help them overcome, and strengths the others could draw from.

"One group was having trouble with their meeting place," said Tumino. The cost of renting the public space was taxing to the small group of local artists. But using tips and strategies offered by fellow Guild leaders, that group was able to renegotiate.

"They're not charging them," Tumino said.

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Those issues include increasing membership, fundraising and marketing -- all of which are important to the Downers Grove Arts Guild's president, Nancy D'Agostino.

"It was fantastic," D'Agostino said about the initial meeting. "I think this is going to be a great way to strengthen these communities."

The Downers Grove guild is one of the oldest but one of the smallest guilds in the area, D'Agostino said. She hopes the Presidents Circle will help her come up with ideas to increase membership and exposure in the community.

"We're pooling our ideas to present a way to get more people involved," she said. "We want people to know we're serious."

"It's all about networking," said Laura Lein-Svencner, a Darien artist and a member of several area artists' guilds. For the groups as well as individual members such as herself. Lein-Svencner teaches and conducts workshops to improve better communication between local guilds, she'll have heightened exposure, and perhaps new opportunities to show their work.

Although the concept of the Arts Summit and the Presidents Circle is simple, it is surprisingly new.

"I don't think we had ever sat down face to face to talk to each other," Tumino said.

The next meeting will be held in December in Naperville. Members of the Alliance of Fine Art are Elmhurst Artists League, Addison Art Guild, Downers Grove Artists' Guild, Lemont Artists' Guild, Midwest Collage Society, Naperville Art League, Ridge Art Association, Town and Country Art League and West Suburban Artists' Guild.

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