

Chapter Profile: Illinois Chapter

March 31, 2010

Recently, we spent time with **Crandon Gustafson, IIDA**, President of the **Illinois Chapter**, to learn more about what's going on in his Chapter.

DesignMatters: How do you ensure working well together as a Board?

Crandon Gustafson: This board cooks. Literally. With the exception of yours truly, everyone on the board knows, and has fun with hands-on food preparation. This cooking thing manifested recently in a group kitchen session, with our counterparts at the local ASID chapter, organized by our immediate Past President Melissa Dicaire. Everyone, it turned out, knew how to enjoy each other's unique personality and bring a sense of humor to the proceedings. It naturally follows that we work well together as a Board.



Crandon Gustafson, Michele Rust, Chris Kennedy, Nick Luziotti, and Cheryl Durst at the 2009 Chicago Leaders Breakfast

DesignMatters: What about the Illinois Chapter are you most proud of?

Crandon Gustafson: I'm so proud of our Members' commitment to continuing education and professional development. It's as if every Member in Illinois recognizes the need to maintain current knowledge and skills, in order to be the best possible designers for their clients and the public. Our VP of Professional Development, Pam McClelland, maintains a full schedule of diverse educational offerings. Coming out of the downturn, our Members are better prepared than ever to meet the new challenges of "working smarter."

I'm also extremely gratified that the Illinois Chapter will be honored in May with the Founder's Award given by the Illinois-based not-for-profit Designs for Dignity. D4D's mission is to provide design services to deserving organizations that would not otherwise be able to afford professional fees. The Illinois Chapter shares D4D's vision, and looks forward to future opportunities to support it.

DesignMatters: What is your favorite Chapter event of the year?

Crandon Gustafson: Stitch, our annual fall runway fashion show, is my favorite Chapter event. Creativity-stretching design challenges like couture made from building materials, combined with interior-designer-diva-models, make this a great party. We sell it out and have to turn people away every year, and every year the lion's share of the revenue from the event goes to a charity. Our Chicago City Center and its Chair, Christine Hart, start working on the following year's Stitch shortly after the finish of the event, fine-tuning and improving it, so everyone looks forward to it.

DesignMatters: What are you looking forward to in 2010?

Crandon Gustafson: It will be hard to beat 2009, because we made so much progress with things like a new website format, newsletter brand and chapter logo under VP of Communications Jessica Statz. President-Elect Amy Stinson is developing a great vision for 2010. Our GRA efforts will be strong and well-coordinated by our VP of Government & Regulatory Affairs, Dan Bassano, beginning with a Capitol Day with legislators in Springfield on April 21. Michele Rust is busy lining up table sponsors for the Leaders Breakfast, where we'll be honoring Gensler Midwest Region Design Director Carlos Martinez. Our newly-revitalized City Centers are coming on strong. And I'm looking forward to meeting the newest Illinois Chapter Members at our new Members' night April 8, organized by Emily Erickson and our Membership Committee.

DesignMatters: What's the future of the Chapter?

Crandon Gustafson: Students! We love them. They bring energy to our events, they're learning at a rate we should all envy, and they participate alongside our professionals in events like Stitch and Sketchtoberfest. We're lucky to have a hands-on VP of Student Affairs, Andrew Benner, and very active Student Representatives Jody Carmany and Jill Mayers. Another source of pride in our Chapter in the last year is that we've begun supporting students with an award, named for Student Member Michelle Roberts who was so well-liked but left this world way too soon.



DesignMatters: Just for fun, what is the one thing that Crandon Gustafson can't live without?

Crandon Gustafson: Our Chapter Administrator, Christine Glatz. Truly.