



From my first cave trip, I was “hooked,” and caving became an important part of my identity. For those of you who are reading my name for the first time, here is a little bit about me. I’m a Life Member of the NSS and the Vice-Chairman of the Paha Sapa Grotto. I’m from West Virginia, but I’ve lived here in South Dakota for 10 years. I’m a hydrologist, and I’m lucky enough to manage and protect caves as part of my job. I’m a project caver who has worked on many of the large exploration projects of the West (including expeditions in Jewel, Wind, Lechuguilla, and Ft. Stanton Caves). I’m a person of action, and high energy. Finally, I’m the father of a very young caver. At age 6, my daughter already loves caves

and the caving community. Working to ensure that our organization is as relevant for her generation as it is for mine is what drives me to seek a position as a Director of the NSS.

Talking to members around the country, the same problems are mentioned often. Our membership numbers are decreasing and our average member age is increasing. There is a hard question that we need to provide a clear and truthful answer to, “What is the benefit of being an NSS member?”

When I became vice-chairman of our grotto, we had to find that answer. We had to take a hard look at ourselves to be sure that, when someone interested in caves came to our group, they would find an organization that they could be proud to join. Since then, we’ve accomplished many things: we’ve updated our online presence, hosted multiple cave rescue classes, begun an extensive dig project, reconnected with lost members, mapped the 200th and 150th miles of Jewel and Wind Cave, respectively, and spearheaded the creation of the new, nine-cave Dark Canyon Cave Preserve. Through these efforts and other small endeavors, our grotto has quadrupled its membership. The answer to our problems was, and still is, to **do big things, and let people know we are doing them!**

The NSS is a larger, more complex organization than any individual grotto. It is already doing exciting things across the nation. As a director, I will find ways to improve the lines of communication between each grotto and the national organization. I will look to find ways to communicate the merits of belonging to the NSS to the many thousands of grotto members who are not yet NSS members. I will seek new ways to connect grottos that are in decline to those that are experiencing great success, and to spread these efficiencies across the NSS, benefiting the entire caving community. Stronger grottos make a stronger NSS.

It should be the purpose of every grotto, and the NSS itself, to foster an environment that will give people the opportunity to get “hooked” on caving, the same way it happened for each of us. By increasing our public presence, we are able to educate more people in responsible caving, conservation, and survey; this in turn improves our organization’s relationships with land owners and management agencies. Every new caver finds their own passion and their own niche in the organization. The convergence of both old and new cavers who are passionate about conservation, exploration, scientific endeavors, recreation, and restoration give the NSS its strength and substance. I believe that to continue to be a leading organization in these diverse fields, we have to continually improve, and make advances to meet new needs. As a director I will be a consistent voice for this improvement, with a constant eye to the future.

I will be a director who is always available to our membership. I’m one of the most enthusiastic people you will meet, and I firmly believe that every problem has a solution. If you have any questions about me, have a great new idea, or just want to talk about caving, feel free to shoot me an email. Thanks for your consideration, and I look forward to representing you on the NSS Board of Governors.