

Good Afternoon Ladies & Gentlemen, Members of Neerlandia

As the Acting President, it is my pleasure and honour to open the 43rd Annual General Meeting of Dutch Society "Neerlandia".

Again, it has been a tough year for the Committee. Much to our regret we had to accept the resignations of Ad Libregts and Pieter Leeftang during the year while Robert van Straalen advised us that he will not stand for re-election. But we were fortunate to have Marion Dreijer and Gerry Creemers who were appointed until this AGM.

Those members who will make up the new committee are committed to make the new year a good year.

As the finances will be presented and explained to you by our Treasurer, I will go to membership.

Membership

Membership is what keeps a Club alive, a club without members is destined to disappear. And although we are losing members due to natural causes, we have seen new members coming in this year. These new Dutch are predominantly Expatriates whom we have found through Social Networking like our own FaceBook page and our newly developed website. We regularly communicate through email. And, much to my pleasure we also work very closely with the Consulate when it comes to circulation of events and functions organized by Neerlandia.

The End of Month Drinks have grown from a quiet get together of predominantly existing members to a happening where 80-100 people visit the Club to catch up, have something to eat and drink and to basically connect with each other.

The Children's Paradise has proven to be a wonderful idea since some children urge their parents to visit the Dutch Club as they want to play the computer games that we now provide.

Serving behind the bar we also find younger faces on those Friday nights and some have offered to work behind the bar during the private parties that can be held at the club house.

Now more so than in the past you will see young and old Neerlandia members working together during functions be it in the kitchen or behind the bar. And that is really what it is all about.

I fully understand that some of the older members find it harder to come to the Club to enjoy what is on offer. Many of those members decided over time to not renew their membership. I would urge you to not do that: even if you are not physically able to get to the Club, your support keeps the Club running and with the Club comes the shop and the sales of Dutch liquor from the bar.

And also, if you cease to be a member, you miss out on all the news that you can read in the Neerlandia Magazine.

Summarizing Membership, we currently have 406 members divided into 71 ordinary, 24 associate en 311 concession. As you will appreciate, we will need many more new members to guarantee a future for the club. And that is what the committee is working at.

Maintenance & Improvements

Maintenance of the building is a continuous concern and like on any older building, you will notice that we will be spending more money on the maintenance and upkeep of the building. Not only due to the age of the brick and mortar, but also because Neerlandia does not have the volunteers anymore to do the work that is required. Hence we have to call for and pay for trades people to fix what needs mending whereas previously some of this was done for free.

As an example, we have contracted a gardener and you will have noticed, the front garden is neat and tidy and the result of his hard work is that we now have an attractive looking front garden. Obviously the garden is not finished, like any garden this is an ongoing project.

More big maintenance jobs are scheduled for the next few years.

During the Busy Bee Friday mornings, most committee members are walking around doing odd jobs and to give the building an extra clean. Obviously, you are more than welcome to give us a hand and have a coffee with us on those Friday mornings.

Other improvements that come to mind are the new flat screen tv and the blue ray player in the lounge and 2 dry bars and 8 barstools, the latter are especially used during the End of Month drinks. For the office we bought a new computer, which makes working “upstairs” so much easier and faster.

With people living longer and independently, DACWA, our tenant, is growing rapidly. Consequently DACWA applied for more space and that was given by extending their downstairs office by 1 meter.

We got new table tops in the mainhall, for which we started a fundraiser called “Adopt a table top”. This fundraiser has proven to be very popular as we managed to get all the table tops paid for by you, the members.

The Shop

Twice per year 2 people would spend a full day to do a manual stock take. It was therefore decided that the Club should buy a cash register. Not only would this register show a daily over view of the stock, it would also give an overview of the turnover of products in the shop. That information could be used to decide what stock to buy. Of course, like any change, we encountered some teething problems but soon we all got the hang of this miracle machine and before too long we will have forgotten about the times that we used pencil and paper to add up.

While talking about the shop I need to mention Alex who was so unfortunate as to suffer a fall when on holidays last July. Committee members and the volunteers took it upon them to manage the shop during Alex’ absence and I would like to say a special thank you to those involved.

Many of you, who frequent the shop, will have noticed that next to the old favorites, the shop is carrying new, additional Dutch products. We are always on the lookout for new products and I encourage you to try these for yourselves.

The Magazine

Much to our relief, Pieter Leeftang was interested to stay Editor of the magazine after his retirement from the Committee. With more time on his hands, I can imagine that putting the magazine together is even more enjoyable now. For those who are not aware of this, you can receive the magazine as a PDF file sent to your email address. Apart from the practical advantage, you will also have a magazine in full

colour which makes reading an even greater pleasure. If you wanted to receive your electronic copy, please let Pieter know.

Social

Although the older members are frequenting the club less, and despite the fact that the new members have different expectations of a club such as ours, we are constantly trying for new functions and events that may attract patrons to the Club and that may encourage people to become members. Therefore we started with Melbourne Cup Lunch which will this year be held for the third consecutive year; we also had a very lively and very orange Koninginnedag celebration during the EoM in April. We tried to organize viewing of the Europa Cup Football but that proved too costly and too involved. However, we are looking forward to 2014 when the World Cup Football will be played in Brazil as we will be able to show all the Dutch football matches, that is, if Holland qualifies.

In closing

I dare say that the committee has worked beyond the standard hours. We have such a small committee and there is so much work to be done to keep the club running to everyone's satisfaction. In saying that, I would like to thank the volunteers who are always willing to help out; the committee would not be able to operate without your never ending energy. And on this note, yes, we welcome anyone who offers a bit of time to assist us when we need assistance.

Other than that, I would like to thank the Committee and all of you for the encouragement, advice and general kindness that I have received, especially since I have taken over the Presidency from Pieter Leeflang.

I would like to say a personally thank you to Pieter for his guidance and wisdom.

I am looking forward to the task ahead and I am looking forward to your unconditional support for the Committee sitting in front of you.

Thank you all