



# NASPA Bulletin

The monthly news bulletin of the North American SCRABBLE® Players Association

## April 2009: Vol. I, No. I

### The Story So Far

by Chris Cree

December 4, 2008: Hasbro has decided to get out of the SCRABBLE® club and tournament support business. We are on our own.

The first thing that we needed to do was to come up with a name. After much discussion, "North American SCRABBLE Players Association" (NASPA) was chosen in a near unanimous vote by the NSA Steering Committee.

OK, simple. Well, not exactly.

We needed to establish a corporation: a separate legal entity. Should this be a "for profit" corporation or a "not-for-profit" corporation? The former is much, much easier and considerably less expensive to form, but the long term benefits of a NFP corporation seem to be the best way to go.

What type of NFP? I had *no* idea there were different types. Section 501(c) of the IRS code lists many, many different types of NFP designations, each with their own list of criteria and projected timeline for governmental certification.

A friend of mine runs a 501(c)(3) and I spoke to him about setting up such a corporation. He said he gave his attorney \$22,000 and let him have at it and got it done in record time: three months. He shared with me all of his corporate articles, by-laws and all of the other paperwork involved. It fills a ring binder.

I then sought legal advice from a recommended attorney. He is proud of his time, but I received a lot more advice and knowledge. Finally, I figured the only way to do this would be to do it myself with whatever help I could find and try to avert thousands of dollars of legal fees.

Then, out of nowhere, a SCRABBLE player, Dallas Johnson, emailed and said that what he does for a living is establish not for profit corporations and if we were leaning that way, he would be glad to contribute his expertise. Holy Mother of Pearl!

After much discussion, Dallas recommended a 501(c)(7), the typical NFP for organizations with membership.

But, back to the top. NASPA is a catchy name and I felt that nominative use laws would protect us just in case anyone wanted to challenge the use of the word "SCRABBLE" in our name. However, just



Addressing the Dallas Open Town Hall: Steering Committee members Steve Pellinen, John Chew, Chris Cree and Mary Rhoades (photo: Sherrie Saint John)

to be on the safe side, we established North American Word Game Players Association as the corporate entity. Then, we filed the necessary documents with the State of Texas, the County of Dallas and the federal government to operate under the assumed name of North American SCRABBLE Players Association — NASPA was born.

Then, an entity must get certification from the Internal Revenue Service for its not for profit status. That requires eleventy-billion pages of documents and \$750 just to make the request!

I went to Bank of America to open the checking account and stuck a little money in there and waited for the checks and deposit slips before doing the filing.

In the meantime, we had the Dallas Open here in town and at our Town Hall meeting, Sam Dick-Onuoha asked, "When can we start signing up for NASPA?" "Well, NOW!" People starting queuing up and an impromptu staff of Sherrie Saint John, Mary Rhoades and others started accepting membership payments. The vote of confidence was pretty cool. As of this report and in the two weeks since we said we would accept memberships, we have received about 200! Thanks, guys!

Back to the governmental stuff: I re-  
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### It Takes A Village...

by John Chew

As the proverb says, it takes a village to raise a child, and NASPA has been lucky so far to have a virtual village of volunteers helping to raise it. We started off with 17 members on the NSA Steering Committee (SC), chaired by Chris Cree and myself: Brian Cappelletto, Joe Edley, Ira Freehof, Matt Hopkins, Robert Kahn, Katya Lezin, Seth Lipkin, Mad Palazzo, Steve Pellinen, Mary Rhoades, John Robertson, Sherrie Saint John, Debbie Stegman, Alan Stern and David Weiss. After the SC set our initial course and made a few important decisions — what to call ourselves, and how to raise operating funds — we established several working committees, chaired by SC members.

If you want to help run NASPA, please contact the chair of one these working committees to volunteer your services.

- The Budget Committee (chair: Steve Pellinen) drafts NASPA's annual budget.
- The Canadian Committee (chair: John Robertson) is responsible for matters affecting only Canadian players.
- The Championship Committee (chair: Chris Cree) organizes major SCRABBLE championships.

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## The Story Continued

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ceived our checks. North American Word Game Players Association c/o C. Christopher Cree (they left out the "P"). Oh well, I'll attend to that later.

Our first check: wouldn't you know it, to the IRS for \$750. Check number 1001. I started to fill it out. My hands started shaking. What is going on here? I literally couldn't put the pen on the check. Most of us have written plenty of checks for amounts larger than this, but *this* check was important. Come one, CC, let's go. OK, pay to the order of IR... oops, you don't make checks out to the IRS anymore, it is the US Treasury. OK, scratch that out. Great, first check with a scratch out, better initial it. U.S. Treasury. OK, now write in the amount — seven hundred fifty & no/100. OK, now, write that amount in the little box — 1001. Geez. I had written the check number in the box for the amount.

VOID!

Check number 1002 has been issued and sent to the U.S. Treasury for \$750 to request certification for not for profit status.

I will let you know when we hear from them.

According to psychiatrists, there are five stages to dealing with grief or trauma. These stages are:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

I would say that losing millions of dollars of Hasbro support over the past 20 years is pretty traumatic. Hence, we have seen each of the steps manifested in our membership. Reality is setting in. Most members seem to have quickly reached acceptance. "I want to play. What do I have to do?" For others, it is a different path.

There are exceedingly talented people giving hundreds of hours of uncompensated time to get this organization off the ground. Most particularly, John Chew and Mary Rhoades. Without these two people, this would not be happening at all. John has created the NASPA website (after purchasing the domain name [www.scrabbleplayers.org](http://www.scrabbleplayers.org)). His work there is simply amazing — please check it out.

Mary is handling another daunting task. I asked myself, "Who are our customers (members) and managers (directors)?" Mary's work and the work of her committee has been astonishing.

In addition to that, we are working on the organization of the National SCRAB-

BLE Championship in Dayton, Ohio, August 1-5.

Though we were offered until the end of 2009 to operate within the NSA, we opted not to stretch out the process. Who wants to die a slow death? Who wants the bandage taken off little by excruciating little? Take the darn thing off. Let it hurt fast and let's get it over with. We would prefer our autonomy anyway and let us just move on.

To that end, July 1 is the switchover date. The NSA is working exceedingly well with us. They are doing all they can to help us in this transition. Amongst other support, they will be giving NASPA all of their NSC inventory — the signs, paperwork, etc. Hats off to John and Jane Williams not only for this, but for the incredible feat they performed each and every year for 20 years, operating on a year-to-year contract basis with Hasbro to keep the NSA alive. Each of those 20 years, they basically had to start from scratch and resell the deal and in those 20 years, they had to do the sales pitch to many different people as Hasbro execs moved within and without the company and there was often a different person in charge, some a more difficult sell than others.

In a further show of support, Jane and John signed up early and are NASPA members AA000001 and AA000002 (Jane is first!)

John Chew and I wished to honor Mary Rhoades and assigned her NASPA member number CM000001. Thanks for everything, Mary. Oh, by the way, BACK TO WORK!

I could type for a few more hours but will stop here for now. John Chew and I will hold a Town Hall in Boston. I will then be in Portland, Albuquerque, and probably Hartford, Austin and then Reno and will get with those Directors and Organizers to try to schedule Town Halls in each city.

I know you have your questions and concerns. John Chew, myself and all of the Committee heads will do our best to answer and allay them.

Sincerely,  
Chris Cree  
NASPA Copresident

## Join NASPA Now!

by John Chew

If you purchase your NASPA membership this year at the regular annual rate of US\$30, it will be valid through December 2010. Your NASPA membership is acceptable now for playing in sanctioned tournaments; but, as of July 1st, you must be a NASPA member to keep playing.

## Village People

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- The Club Committee (chair: Mary Rhoades) deals with officially sanctioned SCRABBLE clubs.

- The Marketing Committee (chair: Ira Freehof) promotes the association and its activities.

- The Membership Committee (chair: Mad Palazzo) deals with the needs of NASPA members.

- The Newsletter Committee (chair: Joe Edley) will be responsible for the association's newsletter and its print and online editions.

- The Tournament Committee (no chair yet) deals with officially sanctioned SCRABBLE tournaments.

- The Web Committee (chair: John Chew) deals with the development and maintenance of the association's online presence.

## Your Questions

by John Chew

Chris Cree, Mary Rhoades and I are spending at least two hours a day answering questions from the thousands of people affected by the change from the NSA to NASPA. Many of them are the same questions (and get the same answers), but every day brings in at least one gem, along with one touchingly generous donation or offer of help. If you want to know more about what's going on, please visit our web site first and its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page before e-mailing NASPA.

Recently, we've had a huge number of questions about the participation fee that takes effect on July 1st. I'll quickly go over the details here, as it's something that affects all of us. Right now, the NSA charges a rating fee of US\$1.00-1.75, which covers the cost of having someone oversee the rating system and maintain and develop the rating software. The NSA also receives a budget well into six figures for the expenses it incurs for the rest of its daily operations. As of July 1st, the NSA will stop charging the rating fee, and NASPA will begin levying a new participation fee of US\$0.50 per player per rated game. This should cover both the cost of running the rating system and much of the cost of running NASPA. Tournament organizers will have to either raise entry fees (by \$4.50 for a 12-game event), or deduct a like amount from the prize fund, and should update their flyers to reflect the change.

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