



# SWEET STUFF

NIBA NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2020

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Allen

Happy New Year! I hope everyone's holidays were fun. The new year brings hope to beekeepers. Maybe you hope that your bees are alive and just clustered up eating the honey they saved for the winter. You might have hope like me: even though my bees died, I hope the lessons I learned will benefit the bees I buy this spring so they'll live through next winter. I hope most of you still have live bees, and that during our latest warm spell you were able to check and maybe add some pollen or sugar to sustain them through the rest of the winter.

As the new President of NIBA, I'd like to thank **Dave Hill** for his years of service to us beekeepers. Dave has helped the club in so many ways – some of which members might not even realize. Dave pulled the trailer to get the bees from our supplier in Wisconsin, helped at many events, and fielded many emails and phone calls about swarms, just to name a few. Personally, he taught me about running a timely meeting, which isn't always easy. He also created the tradition of our getting to know each other by members giving a brief bio on why they became a beekeeper. Dave

was a quiet leader - he didn't need to be the focus of what was going on in the club, but allowed those that were responsible for completing a task to do it without interference. He gave us plenty of support and let us know if you needed more help he was there. Dave's leadership helped to advance the club to where it is today, and we are all grateful!

While we plan to continue many of the things we've been doing, we plan to make a few changes in the upcoming year. For one, we're going to take past volunteer opportunities and form committees to attract more volunteers. We hope this will help to break up responsibilities so that no one person is responsible for all of them. We need as many people as possible to optimize our impact, so please consider serving on a committee or volunteering this year.

The single day events we have now are *Gardenfest*, which is held at McHenry County College April 4<sup>th</sup>, *Green Living Expo*, which is held at McHenry County College November 2<sup>nd</sup>, and possibly an educational event at Farm and Fleet in the near future. We also have *Ag*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, January 10, 7pm

McHenry County College  
Room A211

8900 US Hwy 14, Crystal Lake

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Friday, February 14, 7pm

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*Expo*, which is a daytime educational event at the fairgrounds April 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>. *Ag Expo* is a lot of fun teaching groups of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders about beekeeping. And of course, we have the *County Fair* in July/August. So many opportunities!

Our snack ladies have retired, and I'd like to thank **Donna Taliaferro** and **Jan Magyar** for their years of dedication making sure we had snacks and drinks at our meetings. It is a lot of work, and we appreciate all of it! Obviously this leaves a void, so we are seeking two individuals to serve on the snack committee. If anyone is interested, please let me know - otherwise please know that we will no longer be serving snacks and drinks at our meetings.

Another exciting thing we are doing this year is having club hives at several locations! The

hives will be maintained by managers and will be used by mentors to teach members about beekeeping. Each will also have a Broodminder system so we can closely monitor them and collect data to help keep our members informed with information specific to our area's conditions. All the managers and mentors will do everything the same way and because of the Broodminder, we'll be able to compare how hives managed the same way can differ in honey output and overwintering. We hope everyone is able to benefit

directly or indirectly from this program.

**PLEASE NOTE: Our meeting location is changing! Starting this month, we will meet at McHenry County College in room A211, which is across from the library. The A Building is at the end of the building where the Lucas Road stoplight is. Just go in the main entrance, go straight down the hallway you enter and room A211 is down on the left. I really think you're going to like the space in which we'll have the meetings.**

I'd like to recommend to the members, take a look at [Honey Bee Health Coalition](#). There are some great interactive tools for us to use in the Varroa mite fight.

Here is the agenda for this Friday's meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance

Old Business

New Business

Bee order update

Possibly a Speaker from the ABF Conference or the video

The Monk and the Honey Bee.

Looking forward to seeing you on Friday, Jan. 10, at 7pm.

Here is the link to the [2020 NIBA Membership Form](#). Please note, memberships renewed after February 29<sup>th</sup> will be assessed a \$5.00 late fee. Also, if you check that you want a paper copy of the newsletter mailed, the cost is \$10.00, and they will be black and white.

Here is the link to the [2020 Bee Package Order Form](#). You must be a current NIBA member to place an order. Orders are due by March 15, 2020.

## A ROYAL PARTY!!

Larry Kregel



OK, you are a beekeeper. Is it time to learn the ins and outs of raising a honeybee queen? Think about joining me at McHenry County College for the class "Seven Ways to Raise a Queen." (Course code NHG S83 010) Yes, there are seven ways... and even more. Each of them engineers the necessary elements and provides the encouragement to the workers to make a new queen. In this class we talk about the requirements for developing a good queen in your home apiary.

When you see your newly raised and bred queen laying a beautiful brood pattern in your hive, it will confirm... I am a beekeeper. It is a fun and interesting challenge for beekeepers of any level or style.



WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
**Continuing Education—Spring 2020**



# BEEKEEPING



**Beekeeping 101**

**Larry Krengel**

The demand for bees for pollination is up, so there's no better time to learn about bees and beekeeping. We'll cover bee biology, modern beekeeping techniques, construction of hives, and how to acquire bees. Keep bees for the fun of it, as a sideline job, or to help your garden and orchard.

Fee: \$59

Course Code #	Day	Date	Time	Location
NHG S38 011	W	2/5-2/26	7-9:20 p.m.	A112, MCC

**Seven Ways to Raise a Queen**

**Larry Krengel**

The number of small-scale beekeepers is increasing, and the demand for locally raised queen bees is growing. Purchased queens are often raised in areas of Africanized honeybees or come from migratory bee operations where dangerous viruses are exchanged. Gain information and seven simple methods of raising healthy honeybee queens. With a few insights and a small amount of equipment, the backyard beekeeper can raise locally adapted queens from bee stock with a great record of winter survival, good temperament, and excellent honey production.

Fee: \$25

Course Code #	Day	Date	Time	Location
NHG S83 010	W	3/4	7-9:20 p.m.	A112, MCC

**Beekeeping Field Study**

**Larry Krengel**

This short course will provide practical, hands-on instruction for installing, manipulating, and inspecting colonies of bees. The class will meet in a bee yard, so appropriate clothing and bee equipment will be necessary. Spring is the time to start with bees, and this course will walk you through it step by step. Learn what you need to know to start out right with your bees.

Fee: \$59

Course Code #	Day	Date	Time	Location
NHG S39 006	S	4/11-4/18	10 a.m.-Noon	Off-campus, TBA



[www.mchenry.edu/community](http://www.mchenry.edu/community) | To register, call (815) 455-8588 (use course code # when registering)

For more information, contact Tricia Johnson at (815) 455-8717 or [tjohnson935@mchenry.edu](mailto:tjohnson935@mchenry.edu)

General noncredit and community education program information | (815) 455-8758

## MEET YOUR BOARD



Hello everyone! My name is Angie Garrod, and I am honored to be the Secretary of the Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association! My husband and I reside in the Richmond/Spring Grove area and I work at Wauconda High School as the Administrative Assistant to the Athletic and Activities Directors. We have two children. Kara, our oldest, is currently working towards her Masters in Sports Management at Concordia University. Dustin, our youngest, was married in 2018 and is an account manager for a company in East Troy, WI. In spring of 2016 I began learning all I could about chickens. Wait - what?! Chickens? Yes, Chickens! I just wanted a couple of backyard chickens. Unfortunately, at that time, our town would not allow us to have backyard chickens. Stomp, stomp, pout, pout!! Fine, I am putting in a beehive! My entire family thought I was crazy but, four years later, learned what a fun and rewarding experience beekeeping can be. I hope to meet many of you at our upcoming meetings and look forward to the many exciting things happening within NIBA over the next year. Wishing everyone a very happy, healthy, and safe New Year!



Happy New Year, fellow beekeepers! My name is Stephanie Slater and I live in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. I've been a small hobby beekeeper since 2016 and am currently a member of both the Walworth County and the Kenosha/Racine Beekeepers Clubs, and the Wisconsin Honey Producers Association, in addition to NIBA. When I'm not in the bee yard, I'm an Administrative Assistant at Gateway Technical College. I'm an avid concert-goer and also spend a lot of time canning during the summer and fall. I grew up on a dairy farm and have 10 brothers and sisters, but I'm proud to be the first beekeeper of the family. Much of my family thought I was "nuts" when I first mentioned my interest in keeping bees, but now they all think it's pretty cool. I'm looking forward to getting to know many more of you in the coming year as I serve as NIBA Director. 2020 is going to be a great year, with the ABF Conference kicking it off right in our back yard. I look forward to talking with you this spring about our high over-winter colony survivals!



Hello, fellow beekeepers, and Happy New Year! My name is Marianne Hill. I'm the editor of NIBA's newsletter, Sweet Stuff. My husband is past-President Dave Hill, and we live in Woodstock. We share six adult children (with three spouses and one significant other) and 10 grandchildren. They all live nearby, and they keep us busy! 2½ years ago, I retired from my job as Operations Manager with a financial services corporation. And I haven't regretted it for one day. Dave is the reason I'm even into beekeeping. One of our "first dates" was extracting 10 or more supers of honey, which I had never seen done before. I was impressed and intrigued. That was six years ago. I have since enjoyed every aspect of beekeeping and meeting all of you wonderful beekeepers. (If you would like to submit anything for the newsletter, please let me know at [newsletter@nibainfo.org](mailto:newsletter@nibainfo.org).) Looking forward to a fabulous kickoff to the Roaring 20's and the new beekeeping season.

(More to come!)

## CHORES OF THE MONTH - JANUARY

John Liebinger



### ***What's happening in the hive?***

December provided an unusual start to winter. A number of days with temperatures in the mid and upper 50s and then one day sneaking into the 60s!! Yikes. I hope brood rearing didn't start prematurely. Under these weather conditions, colonies tend to eat through their stores at a faster rate. On the plus side, December provided an opportunity for checking and adding emergency feed. It also allowed for numerous cleansing flights and provided a peek into the early winter status of your colonies. Beware, though, it is early and there is a lot of winter to go yet. Anyway, we are now in 2020 and the weather looks like it started to normalize. Hopefully, we will not be experiencing a lot of fluctuations in temperatures and the bees can cluster tightly and remain that way for a good while.

#### **So, here's what's going on:**

The bees will be clustering to maintain colony warmth for the next several months. Slowly working their way up the hive, they will be consuming the food that they have stored away specifically for this time. There are heater bees at the inside of the cluster that will be producing heat and the bulk of the rest of the workers will be surrounding them, maintaining layers of insulation to minimize loss of that precious heat. Some of those outer bees will perish and fall to the bottom board. Undertaker bees will periodically push the bodies to the front of the hive (possibly blocking off hive egress at the bottom entrance). The bees will slowly rotate from the colder outside layers of the cluster to inner layers to warm up. This will continue throughout the winter. The cluster itself will also very slowly migrate around the hive in an effort to stay near stored food. They are in survival mode.

### ***For All Beekeepers, it is time to:***

***This is not the time to be breaking into the hive bodies and disrupting the seals or the winter cluster.***

However, if you didn't do this in late December, you may need to open the top for a quick food inspection or emergency feeding. A mild winter like we have had so far, generally allows the bees to be a little more active in the hive. The result is they consume more of their stores. Be aware that they may need additional emergency feeding.

**Periodically walk out to your hives and take an external look at them.** Remove snow from around the entrance and look to see that there haven't been any pests causing a problem (as best you can without opening the hive).

**Make sure you have an upper entrance/exit and it is clear of snow and debris.** It helps with ventilation and it is an easy egress point for bees to take cleansing flights in the winter. Sometimes the lower entrances get plugged with ice or snow and even with dead bees.

**If you have been a conscientious beekeeper** throughout the 2019 season and have monitored and controlled varroa mites, left the bees with sufficient stores, ended the year with healthy bees and a young queen (less than a year old), you have provided your bees with the chance of thriving in Spring 2020. Still no guarantee, but you have tilted the odds in their favor.

### ***Some odds and ends to keep you active and engaged this winter:***

**Melt down beeswax.** During this time, excess comb, bits, scraps and older wax from frames can be melted down to form blocks of beeswax for future use.

**Make beauty products.** Lip balms, lotions, creams, salves, and scrubs are all fun things you can learn how to make, use, gift, or sell.

**Make candles.** The beeswax that was melted down can be turned into homemade candles.

**Research new techniques.** Beekeeping is a field that continues to grow. New hives, alternative feeding methods, and integrated pest management techniques are always adapting and improving.

**Repair and replace old hives.** This is a great time to repair honey supers, build new deeps, and replace worn frames and/or foundation. It's also time to assemble new hives.

**Prepare for spring splits.** Most hives that come out of winter with strong numbers should be split (or they may split themselves, i.e., swarm). Learn how to make splits and what equipment is necessary.

**Build a swarm box.** Be ready to catch a swarm this spring with this fun project.

**Train new beekeepers.** Volunteer to share your experiences to help train new beekeepers.

### ***Start preparing for the 2020 season:***

Pay your association dues for 2020.

Renew your annual Apiary Registration with Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Clean up any deadouts that you have experienced this season.

Continue to increase your knowledge of bees and beekeeping:

- Read and study about bees and beekeeping.
- Attend beekeeping meetings.

- Increase your knowledge of local plants and trees. Learn about the relevance of Degree Days..
- Form a small group of beekeepers to meet for lunch and talk bees.
- Inventory your equipment, tools, and supplies.
- Set aside some money - for replacement or expansion bees, new/replacement equipment and supplies.
- Order your bees if needed. Nucs? (Highly recommended for new beekeepers without drawn comb.) Packages?
- Review your 2019 season (and your notes) for successes and opportunities.
- Think about and set new goals for 2020. What do you want to accomplish this year?

### General Info

Download the forms to register your bees with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Insects/Bees/Documents/beekeep.pdf> (Ctrl+Click link)

## *Spring is just ahead. There is a new beekeeping season on the way*



### HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU!

Larry Kregel



My ancestors were Vikings. That might be why I have had a deeply buried desire to make mead. Mead is billed as being among the oldest fermented beverages. The Vikings had no idea what fermentation was, but mead is said to have been among their favorite drinks. Battles were fought over mead and mead, said the Vikings, fueled the thinking of the scholars and the writings of the poets. It is powerful stuff!

Now it was time for me to do homage to my Viking ancestors... to make my first batch of mead. I bought an old wide-mouth stone crock from an antique shop back in November. Its two-gallon capacity gave me plenty of space to make a small batch – a gallon of water, three pounds of honey, and some fruit. I used a handful of blueberries and a few red grapes.

It is now five weeks later, and my brew now tests out at 9% alcohol content. I have just decanted it into a small-mouth gallon jug with an airlock on top. There was not quite enough room in the new jug for the content of the crock... darn... I felt compelled to have a small glass of the “green” mead. It tasted good.

The airlock on the jug is showing bubbles. A good sign, I think. The advice on the internet suggests waiting a year to let the mead mellow before drinking. I don't know if I will really wait that long. Do you think the Vikings waited a year?



## 2020 NIBA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President – Tom Allen  
tallen122@yahoo.com  
Vice President – John Leibinger  
jleibinger@aol.com  
Treasurer – Ralph Brindise  
rbrindise@att.net  
Secretary – Angie Garrod  
angiegarrod@gmail.com  
Director – Al Fullerton  
adfhoney@gmail.com  
Director – Marcin Matelski  
marcin@chicagobees.com  
Director – Stephanie Slater  
stephanie.d.slater@gmail.com

Program Chair – Larry Krengel  
Webmaster – Terri Reeves  
Newsletter Editor – Marianne Hill  
Club Extractor Coordinator – Randy Mead  
Club Raffle Coordinator – John Leibinger  
Snack Coordinators - ??

### Website and Newsletter Submissions

[www.nibainfo.org](http://www.nibainfo.org) – The Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association website. A wealth of information is available. Contact board members via email, download the membership form, access copies of the newsletter. Terri is asking for your pictures, stories, etc. to have them highlighted on the web page! [reevestherese@att.net](mailto:reevestherese@att.net)

This is YOUR newsletter. Please feel free to contribute. Or let us know if you have any topics you'd like to see covered. [newsletter@nibainfo.org](mailto:newsletter@nibainfo.org)

### Membership Has Its Benefits!

- By Randy Mead

Did you know that your membership in NIBA includes the opportunity to rent a club honey extractor? We have two to choose from. Rental is \$10 for a 3-day rental. \$20 (\$10 for rental and \$10 deposit) is due when you pick up the extractor.

Schedule a pick up time, extract your honey and return the equipment in 3 days. The \$10 deposit will be returned if the extractor is clean.

To reserve a date, contact Randy at [rmeadtoys@gmail.com](mailto:rmeadtoys@gmail.com).

### Are you on Facebook? So are we!

Search for Northern Illinois Beekeepers Association. It's a closed group, so you need to request to join—but we're happy to approve your request.

We're an active and knowledgeable group. Lots of questions and answers about the Fall season and preparing for winter, robbing, etc. And LOTS of pictures!

Join the fun today!

The queen marking color for  
2020 is BLUE.