

## THE ONGOING NEED FOR COMPETITION STEWARDS

Hello,

I've spent a lot of time thinking about the need for good stewards for our competitions at the games. As I reflected on my own family's experiences as volunteer stewards for the piping and drumming competitions, I realized how much it unexpectedly enriched each of our lives.

Though highland festivals have been a part of my life since I was very young, the first games that my husband, children, and I attended specifically to observe the pipe competitions were held at the Celtic Festival of Southern Maryland in 2001. At the time, we had no idea how important the job of stewarding was. We presented ourselves to Helen Harlow in the piping registration tent and volunteered to help. All four of us were happily led to the competition field armed with clipboards, score sheets, pens, and detailed instructions from Helen on what a steward's functions and responsibilities are for competition.

My son Matthew was a young aspiring piper who wanted to get a close-up view of a competition before he stepped onto the field as a competitor himself. Matthew was inspired and encouraged to compete from that point on, and continues to steward when we need him. Lauren, then only 11, who thoroughly enjoyed stewarding for Jimmy McIntosh and fearlessly stood her ground as steward at the time, continues to steward as well. In addition, as the years rolled by, her stewarding experience got her thinking about what competition would be like for her as a fiddler.

My husband Terry, who was not a piper at the time he was stewarding, caught the piping bug from Matthew and began taking informal lessons. Terry also spent many hours observing Matt's lessons and band practice with Dr. Ray Scott with the Eagle Pipe Band. I soon found my American-Hungarian-Italian husband in his kilt marching around the front yard practicing his march and piobaireachd competition tunes. In fact, I seem to recall a day when my dear husband looked at me and profoundly proclaimed, "Don't get any ideas, Sarah, you'll *never* see *me* in a kilt!" I just smiled and said, "That's fine, dear." Never say never. I too, would never have considered the idea of competing on fiddle had I not been so involved in Matthew and now Terry's endeavors in competition piping.

We learned so much about competition through our experiences as stewards. At every games, we see good stewards, mediocre stewards, and many times, simply not enough stewards. It is important for the success of the competitions to have stewards who understand the world of competition, have an interest in piping and drumming and especially have read the rules before hand (if you haven't read them yet, download them from the EUSPBA site and read them often).

I would encourage every piper and drummer involved in the games to consider volunteering some time as steward. Family members may also consider volunteering. Any solo competitor could offer time after his or her competition to steward. For those band members who do not compete in

the solo competitions, but attend the games with their competition band, stewarding would be worthwhile and widely appreciated.

It would be nice to see a higher percentage of EUSPBA members than community service members among the ranks of volunteers.

The games need your support more these days than ever. Many are struggling just to put on the event, always wanting for more volunteers to make it less burdensome and, hopefully, more successful. Please volunteer some time to help at the games you attend, especially in the stewarding area next season. If we are lacking in volunteers at the games I'm working, you will see me visiting your band tent to solicit your volunteerism.

Sarah Brenzo