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SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY: THE CWRT OF COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA

By Carol VanOrnum

The CWRT of Cobb County, Georgia, strives to embody the spirit of Southern Hospitality. Members and visitors alike descend the grand staircase in the Atlanta/Marietta Hilton Hotel and are immediately welcomed. A special table is manned by a member to greet visitors and guests, and to provide information about the mission of the Round Table. The visitors are encouraged to provide contact information in order to receive news and information of forthcoming events. Another table displays the member nametags. The Round Table recognizes that a simple nametag serves as an effective “icebreaker” to encourage conversations among the members and guests. A visit to the Raffle Table is the next stop to view the display of prizes that will be awarded at the

meeting. One free raffle ticket is given to members and visitors for a drawing of Civil War books, done at the end of the meeting. Additional tickets can be purchased, proceeds of which go to the general operating support of the Round Table.

This strategic stationing is a collaborative effort orchestrated by President Angela Schneider. “I want to create a welcoming environment and make everyone feel that they are valued for taking their time to spend the next hour and a half with us. And if I see someone I don’t know, I make a point of welcoming them.”

As the meeting convenes, visitors and new members are encouraged to introduce themselves and to share a bit about who they are or why they’ve chosen to attend. No one is ignored. No one is rushed. All are welcomed.

The winner of the raffle drawing generally receives a gift card to dine at a local restaurant. Once or twice a year, the Round Table holds a “BIG” raffle. The prizes are usually of greater value, such as a cannon ball, Civil War paintings, or other Civil War related items.

Many of the members are published authors, speakers,

and/or own Civil War collections. To take advantage of that resource, there’s a “mini” speaker, someone who can share their relics or knowledge for 5 minutes or so, which bears a similar resemblance to a “show and tell.”

Each month, members and guests are treated with a special lecture from a distinguished historian. These speakers come from all over the eastern U.S. and are scheduled two years in advance by Michael Shaffer, a Civil War author and founding member.

The Leadership team continues to explore opportunities outside of the regularly scheduled meetings in order to promote camaraderie. A bus trip to the Civil War sites at Resaca, including sites related to the Georgia Military Institute, is currently being planned, trusting that the bus trip and the tour will provide the opportunity for everyone to visit and get to know one another better.

Angela credits the coordinated efforts of the “phenomenal” Board to connect all these efforts together to create a truly hospitable and welcoming experience for all who descend the staircase.

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