

***The Loose Bead Society of Greater Milwaukee***  
***Membership Business Meeting***  
**November 21, 2016**  
***New Berlin Public Library***

The November, 2016 business meeting included a preview by Maureen Bartz, VP-Special Events, of what the 2017 Retreat will include. Some of the new features are a Friday afternoon class, a marketplace on Saturday evening that will showcase all the featured teachers that wish to participate. There will be no evening classes at this retreat. The buffet lunch will return and a hot breakfast will be served in the restaurant but is not included in the retreat fee nor in the guest room cost. The Starbucks station in the hotel lobby is gone but hotel desk staff will have plain coffee available for guests. Retreat booklets were available for pick-up by members in attendance.

A Community Service Coordinator is still needed to fill the vacant position.

Cindy Collins, VP-Programming, asked members to bring a sample of their recent work to December's meeting which will include a 'table talk'. The December event will be the traditional holiday gathering with cookies – members are asked to bring a dozen, plated and ready to share – coffee, door prizes, and other surprises. Member Mary Hottinger is coordinating the cookie donations.

Program: "My Story is Your Story" with Irina Miech

The final of the four "Spotlight on Vendors" programs was dedicated to Irina Miech and Eclectica Bead Store. Irina, a self-described 'metals girl' began her talk by stating that "my story is your story". She began her life-long adventure in metalwork when her father brought home scraps of wire for her to play with. Soon she had baskets and bracelets lined-up in her home. (They are now displayed in her youngest son's room.) Her family came to the United States when she was 13 from what was then Russia. Her parents discouraged her from pursuing an art degree but she took a few metal working classes in college anyway and then traveled after graduation. A visit to Morocco propelled her into beginning to sell her work seriously. When commissions began coming in she decided to open a jewelry store in Waukesha (1993) in what was once a taxi stand. When people began asking where she got her beads, etc. she recognized a need and expanded into a bead store moving to the Brookfield location in 1997. There the store has grown and transformed over the years. Initially it was very difficult to find quality tools and supplies but now the options are endless with more books, teachers, techniques and beads becoming available every year.

Irina has also discovered a love for teaching and writing. What began with writing a few articles in 2006 has expanded into more than ten published books with her next one ready in spring 2017.

Irina emphasized the importance of her interactions with LBS members and other customers. She finds feedback from buyers energizing and suggested members might find feedback on their jewelry from friends helpful in developing their personal style. She also encouraged members to share feedback in the suggestion box in the store and promised a new series of classes that will return to 'the basics' in early 2017. Irina selects 99 percent of the gems displayed at Eclectica at the Tucson show and through supplementary trips throughout the year. The next new thing at Eclectica is the Very Important Beader (VIB) club. Members were encouraged to sign-up through text for special offerings and an optional birthday club. Find details at the store next time you shop.

Meeting summary written by Carol Surges