

FOCUS ON GROUPS

For this issue, our Focus on Groups page is spreading a wider net and speaking not to just one group but three. With in-person meetings not possible in many parts of the world, we asked you how you're keeping in touch with your beading buddies. How are you using technology to facilitate a social connection and, most importantly, what have you been up to in recent months? We spoke to big groups and small, local and international, to get a good cross-section of ideas for members to draw from in planning their own socially-distanced meetings until we can all be together again.

Barbara Goodbun – Berkshire, UK

Berkshire Beaders usually meet in Reading every Monday night, but as situations evolve so do Barb, Giulia and the rest of the group. They first started up an e-mail newsletter sharing what members had been up to in lockdown and photos of what they'd been working on. Then they dipped their toes into video-chat via Zoom and found it actually gave them the freedom to meet more often, so they're up to a session a week now. There's about nine people in each session and, while most people have some beading on the go, members are welcome to join for a chat if they're not in the mood to bead.



Lissa Atkins – New Jersey, USA



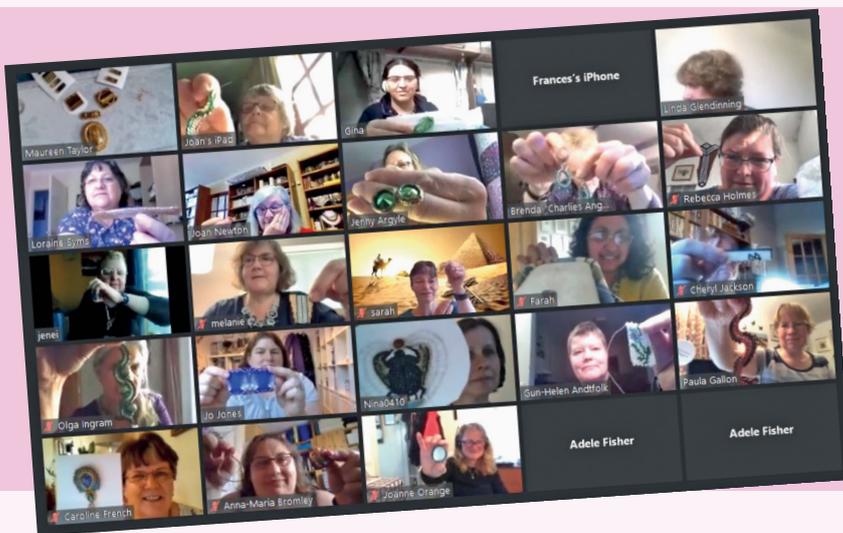
South Jersey Bead Society (SJBS) are normally bursting at the seams with events for their members to enjoy at their monthly meetings; classes on beading and jewelry-making techniques, a holiday party, a 'white elephant' sale, raffles, fundraising auctions; it makes us exhausted just thinking about it.

by offering taster sessions to members so they could familiarise themselves with the platform. Then it was all systems go with their weekly beading get-togethers. A fifteen-minute chat from a guest speaker drawn from their own ranks kicks things off, followed by an open session - people can drop in and out of as needed, with the whole thing rounding out at about two hours. The host of the meeting keeps things ticking along, usually one of the most tech-savvy members, and they ensure everyone gets a chance to take part in the discussion and ask questions when they need to.

SJBS' ideas for other ways to keep in touch include instructor-led classes via Zoom, members-only white elephant sales via Facebook, sharing videos of techniques and stitches, and a secret-Santa style arrangement to mail little bead-related gifts to members.

Marilyn Rogers – Hampshire, UK

Yateley Beaders have been running for over twenty years, so they weren't going to let a little thing like a global pandemic stop them from having their eagerly awaited workshop with Beverly Ward in May. They fired up Zoom and, as a group, learned to make a French Beaded Flower under Beverly's expert tutelage. Why rely on YouTube tutorials, when you can have a real tutor and all the knowledge and experience they bring with them? Lots of members took part, there was all the usual beady chat and exchange of ideas, just as if they were all still in the Yateley WI Hall together.



If you're not part of a beading group yet, why not take a look at the Guild website to find one in your area? You could have a whole nest of fellow beaders on your doorstep and not even know it!