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# Group Effort: Growing Your Skills in a Camera Club

*Featuring* KEVIN ARMSTRONG, CLYDE BERGER, DARIN REED & FRANK SPOSATO



© Kevin Armstrong

The benefits of belonging to a camera club are well known to club members, and easily understood by non-members. A camera club provides the opportunity to pursue your passion for photography in the company of like-minded folks. You can share photo tips and techniques to advance your skills and profit from the evaluations and critiques of peers and professionals. There are also practical matters as well as creative ones, as members routinely share their experiences with, and opinions of, imaging hardware and software.

We were thinking of camera clubs recently because we heard that the Huntington Camera Club on Long Island, New York, celebrated the 25th anniversary of a program that sets them a bit apart. It's their annual High School Competition, in which students at Long Island high schools are invited to compete for prizes and,

perhaps more important, achieve recognition for their imaging skills and vision.

We talked with Kevin Armstrong, a club member since 1989, who guesses he's held every executive and board position, including two stints as president, about the contest and the club's ongoing vitality.

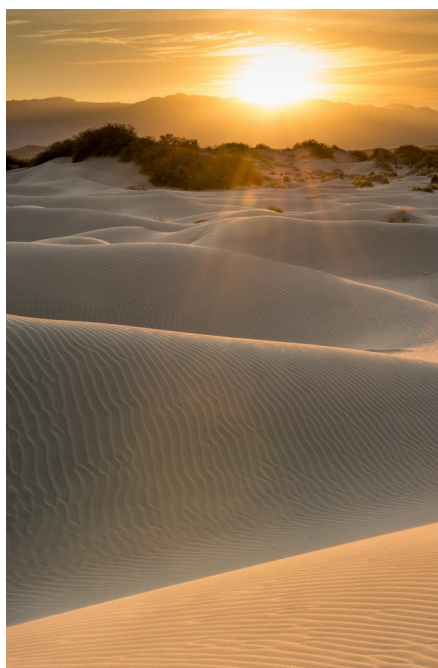
"We work the contest through the schools' teachers," Kevin says, "and we provide the teachers with the contest's categories so that they can work those categories into their photo courses if they wish."

Past categories have included "patterns," "old and new," "portraits," "landscapes" and "humor." The 2015 contest marked the 25th anniversary with a reprise of the first contest's categories: "wheels," "portraits" and the "open" category that's offered each year. The club also added a new category: black-and-white. "A lot of the teachers wanted that category," Kevin says, "in order to separate black-and-white from the many manipulated creations that are submitted." The first place winner in each category received a camera donated by Nikon, who sponsors the contest.

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© Darin Reed

The Huntington Camera Club is the largest on Long Island, with 120 members ("and growing," Kevin adds) and a full slate of activities.

The club's year of activities matches the school year and features a monthly competition among members and weekly meetings that provide a healthy educational component. "Our competitions are really about the opinions of peers, and the opportunity to learn from them," Kevin says. "We also have outside speakers come in, including professional photographers, but the club has such a wealth of talent among the membership that we often have members presenting

programs on areas they specialize in."

There's also an informal club within the club. "The Sunday Shooters Club meets most Sunday mornings at a local diner," Kevin says, "and decides where to go to shoot that day. There's a group of regulars who do it every week, but everyone is invited to join in. They might go to the city to shoot the skyline, or to the Bronx Zoo or the Planting Fields [on Long Island]. There are also a lot of welcoming organizations on the island for them. Some of the local nurseries invite them, for example."

Active in community events and projects, over the years club members have documented historic homes in the area, displayed their photography at the Huntington Arts Council, worked with the Heckscher Museum of Art and created and produced a "week in the life of Huntington" project.

Kevin attributes part of the club's success and energy to members' early adoption of digital photography. "Digital stoked interest in camera clubs in general," he says. "More people got into photography once it went digital because they could control the whole process." The benefit of club membership came into play when people realized it was better to travel together along the digital learning curve. "Camera clubs helped them take control of the process," Kevin says. "First they learned to use the cameras and the software, and they experimented with the best methods of doing things. Then the photo-art end of things came along—altering and manipulating images."

Individual club members get involved in the community as well. Kevin and two other members, Clyde Berger and Darin Reed, are photography instructors at the Sunrise Day Camp, a camp for children with cancer, located in Wheatley Heights, NY. Here, too, Nikon's in the picture with support for camp programs, camera equipment donations for fundraising events and, perhaps most notably, the creation of the photography program at the camp, held in the Nikon Photo Cabin, My Picture Place, which is on the camp's grounds.

It's likely that the Huntington Camera Club exemplifies the best that camera clubs can achieve: active and vital participation by members; an eye on the next generation of image makers; and visibility and service within the community.

You can check out the club activities, members' images and the photographs of student finalists in the high school competition at HCC's website, [hccny.org/web](http://hccny.org/web).

The accompanying photos were provided to us by Huntington Camera Club members Kevin Armstrong, Clyde Berger, Darin Reed and Frank Sposato.

***Are you a camera club member? If so, let's hear from you. What have you gotten from membership? What have you contributed? And upload your favorite photo from a club outing, excursion or competition.***

*Featuring*

**KEVIN ARMSTRONG, CLYDE BERGER, DARIN REED & FRANK SPOSATO**