Photo Contest Judging Tips

- Start by gaining an understanding of the month's theme. A quick web search of the theme will bring up images and other information.
- When reviewing images, try to be objective with your critique.
- Use comments that include words like "to me, in my opinion, I feel, I see, I think…"
- When offering suggestions for improvement, use words like "may, might, consider…"
- Avoid words like "always, never, must, should…"

Top 10 Evaluation Criteria

IMPACT / STORYTELLING / CREATIVITY

1. Impact: Does the image evoke an emotion no matter how subtle?

2. Storytelling: Does the image tell a story of some kind, deliver a message or evoke the imagination?

3. Creativity: Does the image convey a different point of view? Is it original and fresh? Does it use aperture or shutter speed in an unusual way, show something you have not seen before or something familiar done in a creative way?

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE / FOCUS / COLOR / LIGHTING

4. Technical Excellence: How is the overall quality of the image? Consider how technically well done the aspects like the focus, depth of field, exposure (ISO, aperture, shutter speed), camera handling, white balance, noise, etc. are executed.

5. Focus: Are the focus and out of focus areas appropriate for the desired effect?

6. Color: How do you see the color being used or not being used effectively in the image? Do the colors work together to evoke feelings?

7. Lighting: Is light being used effectively to enhance the image, sets tone and mood?

COMPOSITION / CENTER OF INTEREST / SUBJECT MATTER

8. Composition: How are the subjects in the frame arranged? Does the approach used (lighting, posing, capture, presentation) work effectively together? Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing depending on the intent of the image maker.

9. Center of Interest: Does the image display a point of interest to which your eye is drawn? There can be primary and secondary centers of interest.

10. Subject Matter: Does the image represent the contest theme?