

Forward Thinking

by Clem Wehner

“How can I repay you for all you have taught me?” she said, after I had answered yet another question in her quest to understand lighting. I told her to repay me by “paying it forward”—teaching someone else the things she had learned. As a photographer and teacher, I find many opportunities to help others learn what I have learned from others.

There are many ways to do this. Help a friend understand how to take better pictures, help a club member master a technique, give a presentation to your fellow photographers, teach at your club or organization, volunteer to be a mentor, write an article for a magazine or web site, or just become someone that other photographers know they can turn to when they need help.

As all teachers know, when you teach something you learn it better than you ever could as a student. The process of explaining something organizes your thoughts, clarifies things, and solidifies them in your memory. Try this—attempt to explain something that you just barely understand yourself. You’ll stumble a little, search for words, and try to find examples to illustrate your points. All of a sudden, a light will click on in your head, and it will all become clear to you. What’s more, it will be fixed in your mind forever. It really works! I use this technique all the time when I’m a little confused by something I’m trying to learn.

This phenomenon is one of the joys of teaching, not to mention the great feeling of helping others, and the appreciation you get in return. In the bigger picture (pun intended), helping other photographers will serve us all and will keep our organization viable and a great resource.

Teach someone something- you owe it to those who taught you, and it feels so good!