

## Chapter 4: Communications

Information about your section and the Green Mountain Club, for section members and the public, may use different forms: a newsletter, the Internet, local newspapers, radio and television, and local bulletin boards. Scope and style of that information varies greatly according to section needs and the personality of the section newsletter editor/publicity chair. This communication job provides many opportunities for personal expression and fulfillment. It promises lots of fun for a high-spirited volunteer.

Below are suggestions for using the various communication tools. As you choose your preferred communication media, keep in mind that not everybody can be reached by e-mail or the Internet. A section newsletter on paper is still the surest way to reach your audience.

### Section Newsletter

Your section's newsletter is your voice to your members. Create a unique format that can be easily and immediately recognized by section members. Use the newsletter to its full potential by listing your outings schedule, section news, and Long Trail happenings.

<b>Looking for a Sample Newsletter?</b>
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Call the GMC office or contact other section newsletter editors to have them put your name on their mailing lists.
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### Suggested Format

- Computers are marvelous tools for home publishing. Learn about available software or recruit help from an interested volunteer to edit and arrange newsletter text.
- Minimize work by always using the same template and recurring logo or header on the front page.
- Use a format that makes xeroxing copies easy to do.
- Make the newsletter a self-mailer by including an area with a return address and space for a mailing label on the back panel. Talk to your local post office to find what works best in their machines.

### Suggested Contents

- Include the section's outings schedule, past trip write-ups, and photographs.
- Print the section's annual report; include section officers and how they can be contacted.
- Publish president's and director's reports, nature stories, book reviews, news about members, and information about the GMC and Long Trail.
- Insert a form for new members to use to join your section and for current members to renew their membership (renewals and membership fees can also be paid directly to the GMC headquarters and some sections prefer this method).
- In addition to a detailed outings schedule, an insert card could be included listing only outing titles and trip dates that members can use as a handy reference to post on their refrigerators.
- Use the newsletter as a tool to recruit volunteers for tasks and officer positions. List volunteer jobs such as newsletter helper, website designer, school presenter, or hike leaders.
- Try to coordinate the outings schedule with the *Long Trail News* schedule so that section hikes are listed in the club-wide quarterly, which has a circulation of 6,500 printed (13,000 readers assuming 2 people per issue). The *Long Trail News* submission deadlines are January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1.

### Internet

For many people the Internet has become the communication tool of choice. How can you put your section online? Find a member who is computer savvy who can advise you, provide starting help, and trouble shoot your online operations.

- **E-mail** is being used by more and more GMC members every day. E-mail is a terrific tool for fast communication among section leaders and volunteers. Establish a member e-mail directory and use e-mail addresses whenever possible. E-mail letters do not use paper (conservation!) and are cheaper and faster to send.
- Create a section **website** — an effective way to recruit new and younger members! Suggested website content may include an attractive design element, an introductory page (what the section does), sub pages including the section newsletter and outings schedule (most likely they are already in a computer file), maintenance and trail information, membership information and solicitation, dues, and section history. Recruit a section volunteer (or a local school's computer class) to design a website and host it. Find a volunteer who is willing to accept and respond to e-mail inquiries.
- Create **links** to the main club's website ([www.greenmountainclub.org](http://www.greenmountainclub.org)) and other section web pages.

### Media

Use local media to advertise your section. Coordinate all media contacts by the section. It is good policy and avoids duplication as well as confusion to have one designated section member for all media contacts. Become friendly with editors and writers of your local newspapers, radio, and TV stations. Send them complimentary copies of your newsletter.

**Newspapers** are always looking for information to print. Establish a relationship with a writer to whom you can send calendar announcements and press releases.

- Have your outings schedule printed. Consider, however, how much information your section wants to provide: Administrative meetings or “members-only potlucks” are often omitted from general public listings. Make sure your outings leaders have a clear understanding of what information will be published. Some volunteers do not want to have their telephone number released through the media.
- Write mini articles about special outings or trail projects in need of participants; local newspapers often are willing to publish these types of stories if the article is well-written and ready for publication.
- Advertise for special events such as your annual meeting or if hosting a James P. Taylor Winter Series event. Provide a boxed advertisement and ask your local paper if they will print it for free.
- Provide general GMC informational articles to local free circulars to help make your section and the Green Mountain Club name more visible.
- Consider recruiting volunteers for special trail projects using the classified want ads. People looking for employment opportunities may be willing to volunteer on the trail for a day.

Local **radio** stations may or may not do free public service announcements. Advertise your annual meeting, hike and trail work outings, and special events. Offer to have a section member be a guest on a talk show about the Long Trail.

Local **cable** stations also do free public service announcements on their community calendars. Have upcoming outings aired on a daily basis.

For the more motivated: Contact local **television** stations and locally produced shows such as “Across the Fence” and offer to be a guest or provide information for a Long Trail story.

### Traveling Display

The GMC has an easy-to-use traveling display that is available to sections. The display usually comes with a box stocked with current club literature to hand out at special events.

Section history and current activity information can also be displayed at special events such as your annual meeting or a Taylor Series presentation. Find a longtime member to create and keep scrapbooks and photo albums. Old-timers have lots of stories to tell, and keeping track of section history (see Chapter 10: Section History and Archives) assures their active participation.

- If possible set up a display at your annual meeting, at section-sponsored slide shows, and at new members' meeting.
- A display put up for a set period of time is often welcome at local malls, outing stores, and storefront windows. Make sure there is adequate supervision to protect the display and replenish handouts.
- Take a display to local organizational meetings such as PTA or Rotary meetings.
- Attend special Earth Day (end of April) or National Trails Day (first weekend in June) events in your area.