



Chapter Newsletters and Related Information

(A Helpful Guide for GWRRR Chapter Newsletter Editors)

What the “Handbook” Suggests

(as quoted from the Officers Guidebook: Section D, Pages 8 & 9)

Newsletters let Members and Officers know what’s going on. Newsletters range from a few paragraphs on a single sheet of paper, to hefty little booklets, complete with advertisements, put out by a newsletter staff. But, no matter how plain or fancy, the central purpose of its existence is to be a communications medium for and to, the Members.

Chapter participants cannot be charged an additional fee to receive a monthly newsletter; nor should Members be solicited for a contribution to receive a newsletter. Newsletter costs should be charged off as an operating expense to the Chapter, and paid for from the Chapter operating funds. It should be available to all interested Members.

The format you choose will probably undergo some experimenting if you follow the typical pattern, but the “heading” of the newsletter, whether it’s at the top of a page or on the front cover, must have the **Chapter name, or initials and the GWRRR logo of our Association** on it to indicate that it is a GWRRR newsletter. Your **Region, District and Chapter Letter Designation** should also be visible, along with the month and year. Other graphics and information can be used to “pretty it up” and individualize it.

Ads may be sold with proceeds deposited into the Chapter operating fund and earmarked for the newsletter’s publication. A charge of \$5.00 per issue for a reproduction of a business card is not unreasonable, but that can be worked out according to your local “market.”

The Newsletter will provide you an opportunity to “talk” with the Members on a one-to-one basis. Information passed down from National, Region and District **should be included** for the edification of the Members, and to assist them in understanding the concept, goals and workings of GWRRR. Other contributions will come from trips, experiences, anniversaries, etc.

Newsletters will **NOT** be used as platforms for personal tirades or “politicking” for, or against, a particular “cause.” All Chapters within a District are encouraged to exchange complimentary newsletters with copies sent to your District, Regional and the Home Office in Phoenix.

Most Chapters find a monthly or bi-monthly distribution satisfactory. Sometimes, Chapters “piggy-back” their information with a “Sister-Chapter” or participate in a District publication for more efficient resources.

(The above information can all be found in the Officers Guidebook. It gives a great overview of what a newsletter is, should, or can be. The following are some additional comments and information we would like to share, regarding Chapter Newsletters.)

More Comments and Suggestions

First and foremost - You don’t need to be a literary genius to put a good newsletter together. You don’t have to have the talented skills of a graphic designer. You don’t even have to have a *state-of-the-art* computer. What you do need is the **desire to communicate** with your friends, to share (at the very least) GWRRR related news and event information. Any other little tidbits of interest are extras, which not only help to keep the interest of your readers, but also lets them know that you’re willing to take the time, and make the effort, to share.

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Speaking of time—we won't steer you wrong here—putting a newsletter together takes a lot of time and effort. You can find yourself working very hard at doing this and even find yourself sometimes wondering why. Being the Editor is one of those (seemingly) “thank-less” jobs. You may get feedback when it's good and you may get feedback when it's bad. As long as you get any feedback on your Newsletter, though, you'll know that, at least it is being read.

Other times you may feel “stuck” and just not know what information to share. If/when this happens—call one of your peers, call your COY, or your Chapter Educator. Ask them to provide you with an article to share with the Members. Better yet, ask your Members if they have anything they'd like to share. (Of course, asking and receiving are also two totally different occasions. All you can do is try, and sometimes try again.)

Miscellaneous

Here are a few simple steps to follow and *rules* to regard, when putting together a Newsletter:

1. **Review, review, review.** Always have your Chapter Director(s), or in his/her absence, the Assistant Chapter Director(s), review the Newsletter before you publish it to your Members. This not only helps by offering a new set of eyes to help tidy up, but also to protect you from inadvertently publishing misinformation. We **ALL** make mistakes. Having someone else read your news before you send it out to the “world”, is a great way to get first hand feedback and gives an otherwise lost opportunity for rewriting something.
2. **No Soap-Boxing.** As stated in the Officers Guidebook, never allow the Newsletter to become your personal soap box. Your opinions are your own and are not always shared by your peers. (If you do have an opinion, bring it to your Chapter Director or your next meeting. This allows those who are hearing it, an opportunity to reciprocate and give their own opinion.)
3. **Personal Information.** It is normal, in many Newsletters, to publish phone numbers and addresses of GWRRA Staff Members. If, for some reason, you do publish this type of information for and/or of the Members in your Chapter, do so wisely. Many people consider this information to be personal and private.
4. **Be Informed.** If (you're a Newsletter Editor and) you are not receiving newsletters from other Chapters, ask your Chapter Director to give you a copy of what he/she gets or better yet, have them request that you be added to the other Chapters' distribution lists. Seeing what other Chapters do is a great way of getting ideas and of getting other GWRRA information, to share. It also offers ideas and maybe even ways of improving your own Newsletters. (It is also OK to ask the other Chapter Newsletter Editors, themselves, to add you to their lists and they should ask the same of you, if they're not already getting them. They want to receive and share information, as much as you do.)
5. **Be Up-to-date.** As you will discover, trying to keep mailing lists and contact information straight and up to date, can be an awesome chore. Always remember that as much as you will want people to keep you up to date, you also need to keep them up to date, so be sure to keep your own contact information current. Also, if/when you “retire” from doing the newsletter, let your Editor peers be aware of it. They can remove you from their lists (unless other “arrangements” are made) and then add the next Editor. Also, if you are having a tough time keeping your Member/Mailing lists up to date, it might be beneficial to you to hand out (either at your Chapter Meeting, via the Newsletter, or both) a Member Information form. Have them available at all times. It will help you to gather new Member information as well as maintain changes to current Members.
6. **Copy and Paste.** If you see something published in another newsletter - feel free to share this information, especially if you think it will benefit your Members. The contents of all GWRRA newsletters is intended to be shared with anyone and everyone in GWRRA.
7. **Chapter Directors Are NOT Always Newsletter Editors.** In many cases, it is the Chapter Directors who put together the Chapter Newsletters. This seems logical as they are the ones who (usually) get first hand

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information about what's "happening". If you are acting as Director and Editor, consider handing off the Editor position to one of your Members, especially if you have a willing and capable volunteer. You already have (more than) enough responsibilities. This will help to alleviate some of your work load and will also give an opportunity for someone else who would like to get involved.

If you still prefer to (or need to, because of lack of participation) do the "news" yourself, ask someone to at least take minutes at your meetings. You will want to share this type of information with your members (especially those who, for whatever reason, may not always be able to make it to the meetings). When you're busy running the meeting, it's hard to remember all that is being done or said.

On another note, we all prefer that the Members come to meetings to get their information, rather than expect to read it all in the Newsletters. It is this type of camaraderie and these gatherings, that makes GWRRA what it is. Sometimes, though, we just need to re-assure the Members that we really do want them to know what is going on, that we understand you can't make it to EVERY meeting, and that we really do want to "Share the Wealth".

8. (If being the Editor becomes too much of a chore, step down and let someone else take a shot at it because of this last but probably most important step, of all...) **HAVE FUN!!**

Resources

"What's this?" (you say)...

"How can I put State, Regional, and other information into our newsletter if I haven't yet gotten any from my own District?"

One of the greatest things about being a Member of GWRRA, when you really think about it, is that we're ALL HUMAN. All Newsletter Editors base their information on that which is also handed down to them. As much as we all want to be prompt, courteous and well-informed, sometimes deadlines just don't work the way we want them to. One of the most difficult things about how this path/line of communication works, is that everyone has their own schedules, regarding GWRRA. Some meetings are held early in the month and others are later. As a Chapter Newsletter Editor, you will want your Newsletters to act as:

- A reminder of when your next meeting is,
- An overview of the last meeting, and
- A prelude of what's to come.

By all means, if you haven't received District, Regional, or National news, don't let this prevent you from getting your own newsletter out. If this information wasn't available at the time of publishing your own news, just be sure that the contents get brought to the members attention at the next meeting and then put the information into your following month's Newsletter. Granted, some of the news is time related and "expires" - but, not all of it. Just do the best that you can; that's why you took the position in the first place.

The Web

The Web is a great tool for getting Newsletter ideas. Go to your friendly search engine and do a search on Newsletters, motorcycles, or even cooking. There is a whole world of information available for the taking and for the sharing. Also, visit the Massachusetts District web site at <http://www.graphicsapplied.com/gwrma>. As District Newsletters become available they are posted to this site. There, you will also find a copy of this document, a sample *Member Information Form*, and (as soon as it is finalized) a *Master Ride Schedule for Massachusetts* and it's Chapters. Share ALL that you can, because even if it doesn't seem so - it will be appreciated.

"Thank you, for getting involved and for wanting to share." - from the GWRRA MA District Staff and Newsletter Editor