

Chapter Newsletters, Reading Between the Lines

We all understand that the very best way to know our Chapters is to personally visit each one when they hold their monthly gathering. When we do exactly that, we have the opportunity to extend our hand and congratulate the Chapter Director and other Chapter Officers for presenting a good experience for all the Members or we might need to extend our helping hand to show the Chapter Director how to improve the overall experience for our Members or maybe some of both.

As we all know, the reality is that this type of opportunity is limited by proximity, weather and time constraints on most of us.

However, there is a “Plan B” available to all of us. Regardless of physical location or weather, etc. almost daily, our computer screens bring that particular Chapter to us, in the comfort of our home, at a more convenient time. It is known as a Chapter Newsletter (online)

Even though many Newsletters have different appearances, they all can carry some great information that will help you to know them in many ways.

Let’s start with the Cover Page – are they filled with “pride”, good logos, Chapter ID, location, date and time for the next gathering, contact information for the Chapter Director, core team, etc. (phone numbers and email addresses) Does the Chapter have a theme, mascot, banner, etc.?

On the TEAM/staff listing, are all of the key positions in the Chapter filled? Does anyone have more than one job title? Be on the lookout for chapters with open positions, particularly the Assistant Chapter Director. This one is critical as that may indicate limited support for the CD, but specifically there is no one ready to fill the position. If both the husband and the wife have different jobs for an extended time frame on the Core Team, the next step usually is “Burn-out for one or both.

Take a moment and read the article from the CD. Is it upbeat, informative and positive? This one editorial contribution usually sets the “tone” for the entire Chapter! Do we have articles from the Core Team, especially the Educator, MEC and ACD? Are the articles original or are they from the “file” or other newsletters? Any articles from any Members at all?

Please study the activity calendar. Is this an active Chapter, is it a riding Chapter or a social-only Chapter. Our CD’s need to serve both “Masters” – the “Riding Master” and the “Social” Master. Are there lots of different types of events on the calendar? Even other Chapter and District, Region, National and local activities could be listed. Does the Calendar look like FUN just waiting to happen? Look at any pictures displayed. Are they having FUN? What type of activities, number of participants visible? Are Members wearing their vests at gatherings? Chapter shirts?

Are there any mentions of COY, IOY, CHOY or any other recognition opportunities present? How about the spirit of the Chapter? Is it visible between the lines or not at all? Are there birthdays, anniversaries, both personal and their GWRRA anniversary shown? Any notes of humor evident? Are there any local merchants advertising in the newsletter? Is there more advertising than newsletter? Is the Chapter in touch with their local community?

Did you notice any invitations or solicitations in the Newsletter for the Chapter Members to take part in mileage contests, travel programs, other Chapter visitations (plaque or mascot abductions) Chapter Fund Raisers, District or Region rallies or events?

Has the Newsletter Editor included several different flyers/registrations for upcoming Chapter, District, Region and National events or rallies? Any Chapter can “piggy-back” on the activities of any other Chapter. Most Chapters would love to share the FUN with other Chapter members.

Are there any reprints from any other Chapter, District, Region, or National Newsletters showing a connection between this Chapter and the rest of the Association? Is there a Membership Application for GWRRA?

What is the message that this Chapter Newsletter is carrying to all of its Members? Would you want to join this Chapter based only on what the Newsletter offered? If this newsletter does not excite you, what does it offer a new or potential member? When you “read between the lines” you will understand all the strengths and weaknesses of this Chapter. The rest is up to you to coach, mentor and train.

Remember that as an Officer, you have the experience, knowledge and training to assist this Chapter in need. You also have a great TEAM/staff available who also is standing ready by your side to assist as well. All of us have been around long enough to know what we need to do to help our Chapter Directors, now we just need to share our knowledge and experience with them (just like someone did for us in that same position!)

We thank you in advance for all that you do in your position to help serve our Members.

Happy New Year to all,

Ray & Sandi