



BERKSHIRE CHAPTER

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS

How to Advertise Chapter Trips

July 21, 2019

Introduction

Volunteer trip leaders, especially new ones, often ask “Where and how can I advertise/promote my upcoming chapter trip to maximize turnout?” It’s a great question! This document offers some tips and suggestions. In addition to what you find here, we encourage you to speak to experienced trip leaders in your activity area, both inside and outside the Berkshire Chapter. Many activity committees have developed unique, time-tested ways to reach and engage AMC members who might be interested in participating in posted activities.

The Activities Database (“ActDB”)

The required method for advertising chapter trips is by posting an official trip listing in the Activities Database (or “ActDB”). ActDB postings appear on the Club’s official website, [outdoors.org](https://www.outdoors.org). At present, the ActDB is the only Club-supported mechanism for advertising trips to members as well as the public. The public entry point for ActDB searches is here: <https://activities.outdoors.org/search/>

As a mechanism for driving turnout, the ActDB varies widely in effectiveness. Your success may depend on whether your particular activity type already has developed a large group of followers who are sufficiently internet savvy and engaged to routinely visit [outdoors.org](https://www.outdoors.org) and scan the listings. Effectiveness of ActDB listings also depends on the communication skills of the trip leader(s) who post the trips. Some are better than others at writing appealing and informative trip listings.

Still, the ActDB is there for you, so make the best use of it! Use your listing to “sell” your trip. Obviously, be sure to address the key questions:

- WHAT – what participants will do, what they will see, what gear they will need
- WHERE – where the trip will take place
- WHO – who the trip is most appropriate for (skill level, experience)
- HOW – how long the trip will last

But don’t just give the “facts” in a dull, neutral tone. Rather, highlight the enjoyable aspects of the trip—the scenic views, the wildlife, the camaraderie, etc. Include a pretty picture of the region of your trip, and also include leader bios which emphasize their skills and experience, their passion for leading AMC trips, etc. Also, it never hurts in the description to relate the trip somehow to AMC’s mission of protection, enjoyment, and understanding: <https://www.outdoors.org/about/mission>

Committee-Specific Email Lists

AMC activity committees are semi-autonomous. In addition to using the ActDB, each committee develops its own strategies for advertising and promoting upcoming trips. Many committees maintain a



BERKSHIRE CHAPTER

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS

private email list so that they can send periodic emails to anyone who has indicated interest in the past of being notified of upcoming events.

The Berkshire Chapter's internet service provider provides us with a free "mailman" discussion list service so we can freely set up new email lists for committee use. For example, the Bicycling Committee has set up an email list called "amcbkriders". The way this works is as follows: Messages addressed to amcbkriders@lists.amcberkshire.org are distributed to all the list members. People can self-subscribe (and unsubscribe), or they can be added to the distribution list manually by the list administrator. Typically, the committee chair(s) and/or their designates serve as administrators for the committee's email list. Administering the e-mail list is not hard, though there's a bit of learning involved, and a fair amount of comfort and proficiency with computers is required.

To learn more about email lists, contact your committee chair(s), or write to communications@amcberkshire.org.

Chapter Monthly Email Blast

Once per month, the chapter's communications team composes and sends an "email blast" that goes out to all chapter members who have provided a valid email address to the AMC Membership Department. The AMC strictly limits the amount of material that can be included in these blasts in order to reduce the likelihood that members will unsubscribe, and encourages chapters to emphasize items of chapter-wide interest (like skills training sessions and member socials) rather than individual upcoming trips.

Still, we occasionally find ways to use email blasts to highlight a handful of individual trips, of which yours could be one. If you're concerned about turnout for some reason, consider contacting the communications team at communications@amcberkshire.org to ask about including a note about your trip in an upcoming chapter-wide email blast.

Email blasts typically go out on or about the first Friday of each month. If you have an item you would like included in an upcoming e-mail blast, contact the communications team. Because the communications team does not have the resources to write all the material themselves starting from a blank page, you should plan to submit draft text yourself, on the order of a few sentences. At a minimum, you should include a link to the official trip listing on the ActDB, and also an appealing photograph to accompany the item. The communications team will edit your material for length, style, and consistency with other items, and handle all formatting.

Here are three examples of items from recent e-mail blasts:

Potluck Dinner and Speakers!
Saturday, May 11, 6:00 p.m.
Second Congregational Church, Westfield MA



BERKSHIRE CHAPTER

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS

Join us for a potluck dinner. Meet new people, reconnect with old friends, share food and learn more about Chapter activities. A presentation on "Wildlife of the Berkshires" will be given by Jim Pelletier. You won't want to miss this dynamic speaker who tracks and photographs wildlife in the Berkshires! In addition, hear long-time environmentalist biologist Cynthia Boettner from the Silvio Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge speak about invasive European Water Chestnuts. Click here [link] to learn more.

Appalachian Trail Project Schedule Posted

Join a Trail Project!

Our A.T. Committee has posted this season's project schedule--check it out here [link]. The schedule covers work between April 14th and Oct 18th. Opportunities are as diverse as maintaining the A.T. Corridor boundary, to monitoring endangered plants, to more traditional trail and overnight site maintenance. All A.T. Project work parties require advance registration with the leader listed in the schedule. These projects are also listed on the club's outdoors.org site under Volunteer Opportunities [link].

Wilderness First Aid

Saturday, May 18 thru Sunday May 19

Noble View Outdoor Center, Russell MA

Prepare for the unexpected with this fun, hands-on introduction to wilderness medicine. If you like to take short trips relatively close to medical resources, work at wilderness camps, enjoy weekend family outdoor activities, or recreate outdoors, this course is for you. You'll learn the Patient Assessment System, how to provide effective first aid treatments for injuries and illnesses common in the outdoors, and how to make appropriate evacuation decisions. SPOTS FILL FAST, SO REGISTER RIGHT AWAY! [link]

PLEASE DO NOT send a one-line e-mail to the communications team saying something like, "Please put in an item about my upcoming hike on Mt. Tom. Thanks." That's not helpful, and places the entire burden of researching the activity, collecting a photo, and drafting the text, on someone else. Follow the examples above and provide a brief **title**, **date and time**, **location**, and **brief description**.

Facebook

The chapter has a Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Appalachian-Mountain-Club-Berkshire-Chapter-173257052722077/>. It has acquired a very large number of followers, though the impact of chapter Facebook postings on event turnout is far from clear. Still, it isn't hard to do, and appropriate Facebook postings maintain and enhance the perception of the AMC and Berkshire Chapter as vibrant organizations with lots of interesting things going on. It may even be possible for the chapter to pay some money from time to time to "boost" postings to reach wide audiences.

If you're interested in using Facebook regularly as a venue for posting items about upcoming trips, contact the communications team at communications@amcberkshire.org. Once again, the



BERKSHIRE CHAPTER

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS

communications team really does not have the time and resources to post items for all trips, events, and activities. Rather, the communications team will help interested committee chairs and/or individual trip leaders to post items themselves, by granting them posting privileges on the chapter's Facebook page.

MeetUp

The Chapter has a MeetUp group: <https://www.meetup.com/BerkshireAMC/>. As a platform for advertising chapter trips, MeetUp has pros and cons.

On the plus side, MeetUp is free and widely used. As of mid-April 2019, the chapter's MeetUp group had about 2200 members, and data showing that a handful of new people join the group every week. So every trip posted there potentially reaches a large audience of people who have self-selected to be members of our group.

The major downside is that MeetUp has its own RSVP mechanism. People expect to be able to RSVP for a posted MeetUp and then just show up. But we do things differently. We screen participants in advance to make sure that they have the equipment, basic skills, and health/fitness to participate safely and comfortably. As a result, to use MeetUp effectively you need to (a) write the MeetUp description for your trip in such a way as to alert people that they need to contact the leader in advance to register, and (b) respond to each person when they RSVP, making sure they are aware of the screening requirement, since many people just don't pay enough attention and think that RSVP'ing in MeetUp is sufficient. The other downside of MeetUp is that there is no automated way at present to "export" or transfer your ActDB listing to MeetUp. Rather, you have to enter your MeetUp listing manually, as an additional step. So it involves some extra work.

If you want to try posting events regularly on MeetUp, contact the chapter's communications team—they can grant you "event organizer" privileges once you create your own MeetUp account and join the chapter's group. This is the same model as we have for Facebook—communications cannot handle MeetUp for everyone, because that would be too time-consuming. Rather, communications wants to help committee chairs and individual trip leaders learn to post new events on MeetUp themselves.

Chapter Website

The Berkshire Chapter maintains its public website at: <http://amcberkshire.org/>. The work is done by the communications team. The website is primarily intended to be a source of general information about the chapter, with pointers to other online resources. It is not intended to be a direct source of information about upcoming trips, but we do use the website to post event notices when they are of broad interest (similar to what we would put in a monthly email blast).

A good way to use the chapter's website is to maintain member engagement. DURING a trip, take some pictures and obtain participants' approval to post the pictures on our website. AFTER the trip, write a short news article about what happened, where you went, how much fun everyone had together. Send a good photo or two, plus the article, to the communications team. They'll get it posted appropriately. This supports our general goal of messaging to our members as well as the public that chapter activities



BERKSHIRE CHAPTER

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS

are fun, that normal people go and enjoy themselves, etc. This contributes to a long-term strategy of audience/participant development.

At least for now, updates and maintenance of the chapter website require some heavy-duty technology skills, and so we don't generally give out the necessary administrative privileges.

Closing Remarks

Those are all the commonly used, cost-free ways to advertise and promote chapter trips and events. Less frequently used methods include classified ads in local papers, masslive.com, etc. Have any good suggestions? Send them to communications@amcberkshire.org for inclusion in the next update of this How-To guide!