



Sierra Nevada Unit, WBCCI

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SNU re-organization

In 2002 the Sierra Nevada Unit went through a period of re-organization. The unit membership and participation had been declining for at least five years. Many of the original members were either no longer involved or getting to the point that driving and towing a trailer was no longer feasible. The Unit began holding lunches rather than rallies. Leadership for the Unit became stagnant, a rotation amongst two couples. Efforts to infuse the unit with new ideas and new people were met with pessimism and lack of support. No efforts were made to promote the Unit or its activities.

In 2002, three things happened that began a shift from the past to a new and hopefully bright future. The first was the inclusion of a newer member on the nominating committee. This member helped nominate another new member for President of the Unit. His election was contested by some of the older members when he began to initiate new ideas and try new techniques to encourage participation in the Unit. Things came to a head at a meeting in the fall of 2002 when the revised bylaws were presented to the Unit for a vote. The vote was unanimous in favor of the revised bylaws. The disgruntled members at that time chose to discontinue their participation in the Unit.

The remaining members, then began the task of deciding the fate of the Unit. Again, the unanimous decision was to continue outings with our Airstreams in whatever form we could. Once this was decided the other pieces started falling into place. The process of rebuilding the Unit included the following ideas and concepts.

Get back to the basics. When the Unit got to the brink of dissolution, the remaining three active members of the SNU decided they liked camping together and wanted to continue outings in their Airstreams. They believed that the glue that held them together was the Airstream and that the purpose of an RV club should be outings in the RV. They essentially focused on what being a member of WBCCI is all about as outlined in The Wally Byam Creed and the Four Freedoms developed by the club founder, Wally Byam. They hoped that by returning to the original purposes of the club, by scheduling and holding more rallies and less luncheons that others might eventually be encouraged to join them.

Review and revise. The SNU members then took a look at their bylaws and figured out what needed to be done to keep in compliance with WBCCI policies and the requirements for a non profit organization. They revised their bylaws with these elements in mind, in a way that was more in line with the resources and needs of a significantly, though temporarily downsized organization. The SNU members looked at their rallies and figured out ways to hold these events in a manner that fit the Unit's resources and interests and took advantage of the unique opportunities in the Unit's territory. They realized that consistency and reliability was important. They determined to hold scheduled rallies and other events regardless of whether there was two participants or ten.

Roll up your sleeves and focus on the Unit. Although many of the problems were long standing and known at various levels of WBCCI, it became apparent that it was up to the unit to decide its own fate and to take the steps necessary to change its future. Once the three members agreed the Unit was worth revitalizing, they worked together as a team to carry out the work needed to run the unit. Although they elected officers to board positions as outlined in their bylaws, everyone chipped in and carried out the necessary tasks based on their own interest, skills, and abilities regardless of what title they might have.



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Promote your unit. The two major decisions the Unit made during its reorganization were to hold rallies and to continue to publish its newsletter. The Unit Newsletter became our primary promotional tool. Anyone who was referred to the Unit as a potential member was sent a copy of the newsletter and added to the mailing list for at least one year. The Unit sent an information packet with cover letter to all the RV dealers in the area. Other promotional materials were developed and a packet was created to send to potential new members. In addition, the Unit determined that it should submit Public Service Announcements to all local and area newspapers announcing our rallies and other events. These PSA were directly responsible for at least six new memberships and over a dozen contacts from potential members. The PSA's also led to an editorial column in one local newspaper and a feature article in another. The Unit was also provided a pro-bono section on a hobby website managed by Unit members.

Focus on your goal and your reasons for keeping the Unit viable. Think outside the box. Do what you need to do to make things work for your unit even if it isn't part of the established system. The organizational resources that are available are aimed at large and established groups. Small or struggling Units are usually left to fend for themselves. Listen to your members and your potential members first and foremost even if their input doesn't fit in with traditional ideas and concepts. As an example, the standard response for a failing Unit is to merge or fold. The SNU felt that for a number of reasons, including resources, geographic location, and interests that neither option was acceptable. After an initial period of low membership levels, the Unit now boasts a healthy and growing number of active members. Reviving and rebuilding the Unit has proved to be a benefit to WBCCI as well as the Airstream owners in its territory.

The revitalization of the Sierra Nevada Unit was the result of the dedication and efforts of the remaining members. The growth of the Unit over the last three years is a visible and tangible result of their beliefs in the basic concepts espoused by the Founder of WBCCI. They depended on themselves to support their own efforts. They created the ideas and resources needed to assist the Unit develop into a viable entity that encouraged others to join the efforts and participate in the group. Now they are reaping the rewards of their persistence and patience. The best reward of all is the enthusiasm of all the new members and seeing them enjoy the Unit outings in their Airstreams.