

WBCCI Region 7 New Member Mentoring Program

A mentoring program can help retain members, increase participation, improve member satisfaction and reinforce safe RV practices. Many new Airstream owners join the Wally Byam Caravan Club so they can socialize with experienced Airstreamers and learn the skills of Airstream travel.

A mentor is an experienced and trusted friend or adviser. A mentor relationship usually involves an individual or a couple coaching new members to help them learn the technical, organizational, and social culture of Airstream and WBCCI.

Mentoring is designed to help new members rapidly become a comfortable part of the group; otherwise, experience shows many will feel disconnected, somewhat unwelcome, and will eventually drift away. Steps outlined below provide a framework for mentoring. Mentors will have their own ideas to implement the program in the way they find most comfortable, keeping in mind that the goal is to help new members quickly feel a part of the group.

When a new member joins the unit, the membership chair:

- Has a conversation with the new member to explain the mentoring program.
- Collects enough information to get an idea of which experienced member might be a good match for the mentor relationship. For example, the chair might look for mentor and new member matches based on geography, profession, Airstream model or other common interests.
- Asks an experienced member to take on the mentor responsibility. The mentor will stand with the new member when they are welcomed into the unit with a green new member ribbon. The mentor name and phone number will be attached via a sticker to the back of the new member badge.

The unit membership chair matches a mentor volunteer with a new member as soon as he/she joins the unit. The membership chair may ask other members to help complete some checklist items with the new member. It is the mentor's responsibility, however, to make sure all checklist items have been completed in a timely manner.

A primary role of a mentor is to help the new member feel welcome and remain knowledgeable about all events and activities. A first step for the mentor is to listen to the new member to find out their interests, expectations of the unit, and past RV experience. Active listening will provide the cue for how much mentoring the new member wants. When dealing with a couple, one person may seem enthusiastic and assertive while the other person may seem cautious and low keyed. One person may be active and talkative while the other person is reflective and matter of fact. The mentor should be prepared to adapt to this relationship.

Most conversations will probably evolve from at least three themes: Social, organizational and technical. Here are some ideas for each:

Social

- Personally escort new members around for introductions. New names can be hard to remember, especially when there may be a dozen or more.

- Explain the details of the rally. Invite them to join you at meals and other functions and activities.
- Explain how the happy hour works with the snacks. Escort the new member to their first couple of happy hours so they know the when, where, and what of the social hour. Explain the policy restricting smoking and pets from happy hour.
- Give details about the excursions and take them with you in your vehicle or encourage another experienced member to extend the invitation. This time together can be a great opportunity to get to know another couple of Airstreamers.
- At appropriate times talk about common rally and caravan courtesies—pets, generators, gray water, name badges, etc.
- Help the new member to feel welcome and wanted. This responsibility is held by all unit members, not just the mentor. Every experienced member should feel obligated to help the new member.

Organizational

- Ensure that the new member receives name badges, a unit directory and activity schedule, a unit constitution and bylaws, a newsletter and anything else specific to the unit.
- Explain the unit board meeting. Invite them to the unit meeting. In advance, tell them what to expect at that meeting.
- Initiation is a special ceremony where new members are inducted into the unit. Explain the green ribbon and encourage new members to wear it. Initiation is not a requirement of becoming a member; however, this can be a fun-filled way of officially greeting new members. The mentor should stand with new members when they are initiated.
- Make sure the new member is introduced to all the officers and committee chairs. Briefly explain the duties of the officers and chairs.
- Talk about the website and make sure the new member has the website address (where they can access the newsletter).
- Explain the process of advance reservations and rallies. Ensure they have the dates and locations for upcoming rallies. Point out the reservation deadline.
- Explain to them that within a few weeks they should be getting the *Blue Beret* magazine, trailer numbers, national directory, etc.
- Tell the new member about the WBCCI website and the information located there.
- Talk about the Code of Ethics and Wally Byam's Creed; both can be found on the WBCCI website.


Technical

- Technical expertise of a new RVer will possibly be less than that of an experienced RV traveler. Some people like to learn by doing, while others like someone to show them. Offer your help, but do not be too pushy about it.
- Go over the process of hitching up, unhitching, parking, leveling, hookups, etc. if the Airstreamer is new to pulling a camping trailer or driving a motor home. If geography allows, offer to rendezvous with the new member for a two-trailer or motor home caravan to the next rally.
- Tell the new Airstreamer about the "maintenance" section on the WBCCI website, which has dozens of good articles on technical basics.
- Talk about the importance of safety and demonstrate it in your own conduct.
- Tell the new member about the rally and caravan equipment lists, which are in the directory.

- Some mentor activities may overlap with responsibilities of the membership chair. Repetition is good. A mentor has the opportunity to demonstrate grace and patience in helping a new member become part of the Airstream family. Most important, be of good cheer and have fun!

Credit to Harold Higgins and the Northern California Unit for this program

WBCCI Region 7 New Member Checklist

New Member Names:		
Phone & Email:		
Coordinating Mentor:		
	Assigned Name	Date Complete
<p>Meet with new member(s) (Membership chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learn background, other hobbies and interests. ● Listen to what they hope to get out of the WBCCI experience. ● Explain the new member mentoring program. 		
<p>Governance and documentation (Mentor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review governance documentation. Tell new member where to find this written information. ● Explain induction ceremony and their participation. ● Explain green ribbon. ● Invite new member to attend the unit board meeting. ● Explain what happens at the unit board meeting, 		
<p>Unit events and calendar (Mentor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a calendar and a recent copy of newsletter. ● Go over the calendar with the new member. ● Talk about the upcoming rallies and events. ● Explain rally registration (use the next rally as an example). ● Explain the difference between unit rallies, region rallies, caravans, international rallies, etc. ● Explain how the social hour works. ● Explain how meals usually work. 		
<p>Parking and hookups (Mentor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain how parking occurs at rallies. ● Introduce new member to the parking chair. ● If the new member has trouble backing, ask if they would like coaching on this skill from an experienced member. ● Ask if the new member wants coaching on electrical, water, propane, sewer, television hookups. Give the new member a copy of "Equipment to Level and Hook Up." ● Ask if the new member wants coaching on leveling and stabilization. ● Review hitch safety. Offer to inspect their hookup for safety. ● Give the new member a list of the "Important Items to Carry." ● Explain CB radio, channel 14. 		

Pre-Departure Walk Around (check list)

It is very important that anyone is not distracted while they are hooking up or unhooking.

To promote peace of mind while traveling, consider your own personalized RV walk around inspection check list. It should not take more than five minutes and must be simple so that it can be followed under the most harried of circumstances. To ensure you don't miss anything, write it on a card no larger than a playing card and stow it in your wallet or another easy retrieval location. Here is an example:

Lower walk around: Turn on the ignition key and left turn signal. Walk to the left and visually check the hitch hook up (pin is in place and breakaway cable is not restricted), both ends of utility disconnect, that wheel chocks are stowed and that the stabilizer jacks are up. Kick the back of each roadside tire with your heel to note any pressure differential (including tow or towed vehicle), check that all storage area doors are secure and that the left turn signal is flashing. Head up the other side and check the curbside tires (as above) and the step. Finally, check that the propane has been turned off.

Upper walk around: Turn on the right turn signal and parking lights. Walk to the right and check that all running lights are working, all awnings are properly stowed, the door and all windows (including outer window shades) are secured, all vents and hatches (including the bathroom) are closed, the right turn signal is working and all antennas are down. Finally, check rear view mirrors for clarity.

If something is not right, fix it before leaving. Activate manual brake controller as you start to roll. A slight tug should be felt.

Check hitch platform and hitch ball occasionally to see that neither is loose or cracked.

This short car/trailer list is not meant to take the place of a detailed safety inspection that may be needed for your particular rig (car-trailer and/or motor home-toad).

Important Items to Carry

Emergency and spare equipment (suggested minimum list)

- Good spare tires and changing equipment for both vehicles.
- A working flashlight and a LED headband light (handy for changing a tire at night). Extra batteries.
- Two traffic cones for daylight and three or more flares for night or triangle reflectors.
- ABC type fire extinguisher (in addition to one in your trailer).
- Roll of paper towels.
- Bottle of window cleaner.
- An assortment of 12-volt fuses and light bulbs for both vehicles.
- Duct tape.
- An assortment of basic tools.
- A first aid kit.
- WD-40 or silicone spray.
- Anti-bacterial hand cleaner and rags.
- Spare hitch security pins.
- A ground sheet.
- Work gloves.
- A hitch locking device. (Do not padlock your rigs together. In case of a fire in either the car or trailer you might want to disconnect in a hurry.)

- A set of tire chains that have been tried on for fit (winter passes). This suggestion may vary depending on the type rig you have.
- Cell phone, charger and phone numbers.
- Trailer Life Directory of campgrounds.

Equipment to Level and Hook Up

To level a motor home or trailer

- Wood blocks, wedges or poly blocks for side-to-side leveling (pull trailer onto wedge; if something goes wrong, the trailer will roll away).
- Wood blocks, an aluminum or poly jack stand to level front to back (a metal jack stand provides a ground in the case of lightening).
- Wheel chocks to prevent trailer from moving after unhitching.
- A portable electric drill to raise and lower stabilizer jacks. (Do not use stabilizer jacks to level the trailer as you will distort the frame and may not be able to shut or lock the door.
- A four-way bubble level. (Level the refrigerator.)

To handle fresh water

- Fifty feet minimum of 5/8 inch potable water hose(s). (Suggest one 25 foot, two 10 foot and one 4 foot offers more flexibility for various situations.)
- An external water filter (optional).
- A water pressure regulator (to protect your inlet hose).
- Two or more 5/8 inch metal water "Y's" (at least one without shutoffs).
- One water thief (to fill your water tank from a non-threaded faucet).

To handle wash water

- Two sections of 3/4 inch green or gray waste water hose with the male fitting cut off (one 6 foot and the other 25 foot; use only where permitted).
- One waste water holding tank or container with a vent tube (vintage trailers).

To handle black water

- Two sewer hoses with fittings (one 5 foot and the other 10 foot to 20 foot).
- A box of rubber gloves.

To connect to an electrical outlet

- A polarity tester.
- At least one 50 amp to 30 amp adapter (a combination of cords that will give you 50 foot each).
- One 25 foot 3-wire extension cord (preferably 10 gauge and 30 amps; multiple outlets are a bonus).
- A surge protector to shield appliance circuit boards (optional).
- Switch off circuit breaker before plugging into post.