

REGION ONE SUMMER NEWS

Bard Fuller Region President

I am glad to see so many Airstreams out enjoying the wonderful rallies, rendezvous, caravans and byways of North America this summer. The Region 1 Rally on Cape Cod was fabulous with 80+ rigs enjoying the entertainment, seminars, crafts, the outstanding lobster-clambake and more. Save the date of May 16-19, 2024 for next year's Region 1 Gathering conveniently located close to the world famous Brimfield Flea Market in central Massachusetts.

Congratulations to Per Hamngvist of the New England Club who will be the ACI treasurer for 2023-2025.

As most of you know, Airstream Inc. and Airstream Club International are two distinct entities. We do, however, have many common goals and objectives. Over the past year, both parties have discussed these common bonds. Recently, Airstream Inc. has announced that it will encourage all of their new Airstream buyers to join Airstream Club International by offering to pay for an "Airstream Club Explorer Membership". This membership will last one year and give all the benefits of the club except for the printed copies of the Blue Beret.

What does this mean for our local clubs? The potential for new membership is significant, if not monumental. Even if only 50% of new Airstream buyers would try our club that would mean our local clubs would be doubling in size in less than three years. We need to be ready to welcome and engage this new potential membership influx. We will need more and larger rally opportunities. That will be a challenge. Unfortunately, the northeastern US and eastern Canada do not have a growing campground infrastructure. It has become harder and harder to find commercial campgrounds that will allow our clubs to reserve blocks of sites. Should we be able to obtain such an opportunity, large deposits or even full payments for all these sites can be due months ahead of time. Most of our state/provincial campgrounds are overly competitive to book and some are restrictive in their pet policy and social alcohol policy. Also, they can be financially restrictive for out-of-state residents.

Todd Brink, our Membership Chairperson for Region 1, has been actively working through these and other concerns. He will be the one to engage with potential new members to help guide them to an appropriate local club as well as potential local club functions that would have the capacity to accept additional participants. At our annual Region 1 meeting Todd challenged our local clubs to look outside the box of traditional rallies being held at full service campgrounds. Let's look at some boondocking sites, fairgrounds, local town plots or even urban sites. The New England Airstream Club was very successful with a Newbies Rally this past spring. This may be a model for engaging with future new Airstreamers.

Change is inevitable in our world. The Blue Beret, our club magazine, is a tradition and a popular membership benefit. Airstream Club International will be making changes to the Blue Beret soon. With sharp increases in paper costs, fewer print advertisers, a second increase in postal rates this year (and even higher Canadian postage), it is only appropriate to rethink the value of the printed Blue Beret. We know that local activities are searched, nearly exclusively, through the ACI website or through local club newsletters, which are also frequently found on the internet. Activity listings can be outdated or incorrect due to the deadline of press time. A recent national survey of membership indicated that most people read the Airstream Inc. remarks about the industry, the President's Message, how-to-do articles and general camping interest articles.

This past June HQ experimented with an Airstream Club blog which has had very good reviews. A blog format could feature the most read parts of the Blue Beret. Please check out blog.airstreamclub.org and tell me what you think. I know the desire for a continued print form of Blue Beret is still present and must be balanced with budget constraints. So it is likely that the club will continue with a quarterly print publication, a monthly online blog issue of the Blue Beret and a free online directory which would be available in print form at cost for those that desire the traditional print format.

Lets us embrace Wally's words: "Let's not change for change, sake let's only make improvements."