

BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY: GROWING & USING A MAILING LIST

WHY DO WE NEED A MAILING LIST?

- ✓ **A good mailing list reflects the strength of your organization.** If you can keep track of the people you contact, and increase the number of people you reach, you can demonstrate that your group represents an ever-increasing number of people.
- ✓ **A large mailing list means more helping hands.** Not everyone you contact will get involved with your projects, but the more names you have, the better chance you have to get some help.
- ✓ **A large mailing list can help to raise consciousness about your group.** The more often you send people notices, the more often they will think about you.

BUILDING YOUR MAILING LIST

- ✓ **Start with current members.** Ask members of your group for their personal mailing lists first. This is a good place to start getting names of people who might get involved.
- ✓ **Ask your community board for help.** Your community board may have a list of names and numbers of local interested groups to give to your organization.
- ✓ **Use events to build your list.** All events are chances to build membership. Be sure to have a table at every event with some sort of sign or logo present identifying your group. Make sure everyone signs your sign-in sheets when they arrive. This not only provides you with a record of who came, but also gives you important contact information for the future.
- ✓ **Trade lists with other groups.** Some of your group's current members may belong to groups that have larger databases. These groups may be willing to help you out by contributing parts of their list. To add these names to your own mailing list, send out a letter to the other group's mailing list that includes a self addressed envelope. Ask people to send their information back to you, letting you know if you have permission to keep their address on your list.
- ✓ **Make sure your information is current.** Once you start to accumulate names, you should be sure to keep your list up to date. Sending materials to out-of-date addresses only wastes time and money. A database should be constantly edited for changes in contact information.
- ✓ **Keep track of database numbers.** You can use the increasing size of your database as leverage for your group. If you are applying for grants or approaching elected officials for support, it can be particularly helpful to show how numbers have been increasing to reflect the growth of your organization.

BUYING A MAILING LIST

WHY BUY?

- ✓ Your group feels it has exhausted its current mailing list and wants to reach out to new people.
- ✓ Your group is planning a big event and you want to invite many more people than are on your group's mailing list.

WHAT KIND OF LIST?

- ✓ **One-time use:** less expensive, but can only be used once. A mailing list company will provide you with a list of names, with the condition that you will only use these names/labels once. Often, companies will check up on clients by inserting a "dummy" address somewhere in the list that gets sent to someone in the company. (That way, they can be sure that you don't use the list more than once.)
- ✓ **Multiple-use:** more expensive, but can be used numerous times. If you are planning on using the list more than four times within a year, it may be worthwhile to buy the multiple-use list. However, you should remember that people's contact information changes frequently, and in order to insure accuracy you need updated information.

WHAT FORM?

- ✓ Mailing list companies can organize their data in multiple ways. Often groups target particular zip codes, but you can also target income levels or other categories.
- ✓ The data itself comes on computer disk, and is compatible with most spreadsheet and database software (check with the company to be sure).
- ✓ You can also order pre-printed address labels, but this can add to the cost.

WHERE TO GO?

- ✓ *Partnerships* uses Lists Unlimited, which is locally based. Our contact there, owner, Victor Karter has offered our groups a special rate of \$35/1000 addresses for a one-time use. He has also lowered the minimum purchase price from \$200 to \$150. Furthermore, he will provide free consultation for special services such as demographic targeting. Have your outreach coordinator contact Victor on your behalf.

PUTTING OUT YOUR MAILING

Sending out thousands of pieces of mail is a huge undertaking. Following are some tips to make the process cost-effective and time-efficient:

HAVE A MAILING PARTY

One of the cheapest and most enjoyable ways to get a big mailing done is to have a mailing party. Get a local businessperson to donate food and drink and hold the party at a local church or a member's apartment. With a large group helping, even a large mailing won't take very much time.

TO BULK MAIL OR NOT TO BULK MAIL?

Bulk mail (also known as Standard Mail) can save money on very large mailings (at least 200 pieces). Obtaining a bulk mail permit is a lengthy and somewhat cumbersome process for a small group, so bulk mail is not for everyone. To do a bulk mailing you must:

- ✓ Be a non-profit organization incorporated with the State of New York and on file at the IRS;
- ✓ Obtain a bulk mail permit. This costs \$150 if you want to use an indicia or imprint; if you use a meter or special pre-cancelled stamps, there is no cost. However, there is an annual fee of \$150 for the permit, which you must pay up-front.
- ✓ Sort your mail. Class A mail must be pre-sorted by zip code—at least the first three digits.

WHAT ARE THE RATES?

First-Class rates for letters are 37 cents per piece, 6x4' postcards are 23 cents per piece and larger postcard sizes are 37 cents per piece. Bulk rates (with permit) for letters are 23.5 cents per piece; Postcards are 11 cents per piece.

***Please check with the United States Postal Service for detailed and updated information as rates are subject to change.**

WHAT ABOUT MAILHOUSES?

Mailhouses are places that specialize in sending out large amounts of mail for a fee. You can provide addresses for the mailhouse on disc or via e-mail in a spreadsheet or word processing document. The mailhouse will take care of the actual mailing process. Service fees will include:

- ✓ Data processing of your mailing list
- ✓ Printing name, address and barcode; sorting and delivery to post office

Postage is charged in addition to mailhouse service fees. It is calculated according to the applicable rate per piece.

A sample 5,000 piece postcard mailing would approximately be:

- ✓ \$150 for data processing
- ✓ \$200 for printing addresses and sorting
- ✓ \$550 for postage (based on 11 cents bulk rate for postcards)

Total: \$900

Prices vary from mailhouse to mailhouse. Please call for price quotes.