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To: thunderhead@thunderheadalliance.org

If you can't read the newsletter below, you can view it online at: <http://www.thunderheadalliance.org/WeatherReport/WeatherReport0703.html>



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THUNDERHEAD TAKES ON SOCIAL EQUITY FOR OUR MOVEMENT

Thunderhead has made social equity one of our top priorities as our organizations begin to see the vast numbers of people who do not yet relate to our movement. The people who show up for bicycle and pedestrian gatherings, whether for fun or for urgent advocacy, represent only a fraction of the populations (i.e., cultures, income levels, ages and abilities) who will eventually benefit from improved bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Also, there is a great concern that our efforts often benefit mostly white, affluent and able bodied people, certainly not a cross section of North America and certainly not the population that needs these accommodations the most! These two issues, of course, go hand in hand as our initiatives are simply not seen as pertinent to diverse groups of people or the majority of our population.

Last fall we began pulling together a diverse working group of Thunderhead leaders and partners who had offered their expertise for addressing this issue. Currently, our Social Equity Working Group has nearly 20 members representing African American, Latino, disabled, senior and low-income communities. After a few roundtable discussions at Thunderhead gatherings and two very productive conference calls, working group members have guided us towards the most effective first steps for Thunderhead to take in our long-term effort to connect our movement with the rest of North America:

Bikes shops for distressed neighborhoods: Working group members immediately pinpointed the lack of bike shops in distressed neighborhoods as one of the key issues preventing diverse and low-income populations from choosing bicycling for transportation and fun. Even if they can acquire a bike somewhere else, they have no convenient place for repairs.

NEXT: Thunderhead is already underway with our Community Bike Program as we begin our program guide. This includes partnering with the National Bicycle Dealers Association (NBDA) to ensure for-profit bike shops are seen as vital partners. Because of the working groups' level of urgency on this matter, we will step up these efforts including replicable models of successful community bike programs in distressed neighborhoods that are partnering with NBDA shops and Thunderhead organizations.

Messaging: With every working group discussion it was clear that messaging is at the heart of this issue. From ads and commercials depicting bicycling as only for rich white men flying off cliffs or racing, to the stereotype of bicyclists in movies as losers and dorks, we all agreed we've got a tremendous mountain to ascend. And messaging doesn't stop at bicycling. Walking too is seen as a crazy thing to do for the vast majority of Americans who look out their doors at killer speedways.

NEXT: While we'd love to do a socially equal Thunderhead movie where the bicyclists and pedestrians are the heroes, our resources reality kept the working group focused on creating a replicable model for Thunderhead leaders that shows successful ways of connecting with diverse populations through free safety equipment, riding and walking with them, tapping Safe Routes to Schools initiatives even to guide the parents, and eventually inviting these potential catalysts to help connect the Thunderhead org with even more folks from their community.

We also discussed the importance of three key elements that could be folded into these and future programs:

- **Catalysts** from diverse communities as well as government officials who can translate the value of bicycling and walking and teach Thunderhead leaders how to connect with people in these communities.
- **Model scholarship programs** that avoid common mistakes with scholarships, but engage prime catalysts for this effort by ensuring they can attend key events.
- **Community centers** and other neighborhood gathering spots as vital communication centers to reach people in distressed neighborhoods.

Our Social Equity Working Group has now graduated from offering their expertise entirely to Thunderhead, into our [Mutual Aid program](#) so they can now focus on working with each other to solve this problem in their own communities. The first [Social Equity Mutual Aid](#) call will be in late April. Please email David Hoffman if you would like to take part: david "at" thunderheadalliance.org.

COMPLETE STREETS CORNER: COMPLETE CAMPAIGNS FOR COMPLETE STREETS!

by Dominic Liberatore, Complete Streets Campaign Coach

Imagine the following scene:

Staffers in a congressional senator's office are busy answering the phones as fast as they can while marking tallies on wall charts. So many calls are coming in that the senator has had to bring in an extra staffer to assist. All of the incoming calls are focused on the same issue.

Sounds like a scene from the movies. Only, it wasn't. I witnessed this several years ago while working on a campaign unrelated to this flurry, and began to wonder: How did such a flood of citizens from this state all of a sudden finding their collective, organized voice? It turns out that there was a powerful advocacy organization that was working with phone technology to proactively mobilize their supporters, thus delivering this coordinated, organized voice.

After this inspiring encounter, I researched this technology and the resources needed to plug it into any campaign. I look forward to helping leaders of Thunderhead member organizations add these technologies to their advocacy toolkit, especially as our National Complete the Streets Campaign picks up speed. If you would like to learn more about topnotch proactive advocacy tools to advance your complete streets campaign(s), visit:

http://www.databasesystemscorp.com/pspolitical_action.htm

This is a wonderful system that I adapted for my former employer. As you will read, we were very successful at pushing our policy agendas; the phone bank system was the reason! If your campaign is ready, I can help you do the same thing.

Also, don't forget about the recent congressional study indicating that email advocacy campaigns are becoming less viable due to increasing pervasiveness and spamming, etc. Read more about it here:

http://www.cmfweb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=63&Itemid=55

Are you ready to proactively mobilize your constituents today?

Please call me with questions or further ideas on this exciting advocacy technology, Dominic J. Liberatore, Thunderhead's Complete Streets Campaign Coach: (614) 204-4268, or email me: [dominic "at" thunderheadalliance.org](mailto:dominic@thunderheadalliance.org).

MEMBER NEWS: RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

[Have you seen it?](#)

Last month Thunderhead unveiled our vastly improved [Resources Library & Member Services](#) area of the website, and we're very pleased to report that it is being heavily utilized. The newly upgraded area of our website has a wealth of materials for the board and staff of our member organizations. The [Resources Library](#) is constantly growing - all thanks to your constant requests for materials and resources as well as your contributions. Here is a very brief overview of what you'll find:

- **[Starting an Organization](#)** - the most important stuff you should know when you're just starting out!
- **[Campaigns](#)** - materials for designing and running successful campaigns!
- **[Board Materials](#)** - a great place to start to make sure your board is healthy and strong!
- **[Managing & Staffing an Organization](#)** - sample job descriptions, handbooks, workplan samples, budget samples - to name just a few!
- **[Membership](#)** - growing and retaining your membership - great resources!
- **[Talking Points](#)** - links and resources for most of the commonly asked questions in the bike/ped movement...
- **[PLUS](#)** - Mutual Aid, Conflict Mediation, Organizational Health Exams, Executive Coaching & Consulting, and Accepting Credit Cards

This is just a sample of the several hundred individual links and documents that you'll find in the [Resources Library & Member Services](#) area.

And YOU can contribute, too! Take a few moments and look over all of our materials and offerings; please send us materials that you want to share with other Thunderhead member organizations! We'll credit your organization for any materials that are submitted and posted.

Thunderhead welcomes news items from our member organizations based on each month's theme. Please send your suggested item (maximum 300 words) to: [david "at" thunderheadalliance.org](mailto:david@thunderheadalliance.org). We will publish the most inspiring story and list the web links of other contributors within that month's theme. Next month's theme is **Important legislative wins**.

ORG TIP: INCREASE YOUR ORG'S VISIBILITY ON THE WEB

When you do a search through a web-based search engine like Google, the top items that are returned in your search results are almost always advertisements. Top placements for search engine results are highly coveted, and often have placement fees associated with them. Your organization can get one of the top spots in Google's search engine without having to pay for placement by applying for a Google Grant. These grants are available to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations.

You can apply for a Google Grant here: <http://www.google.com/grants>

To see an example of how this service works, go to Google: <http://www.google.com> and type in the search words "bicycling in pittsburgh". Thunderhead member organization Bike Pittsburgh will be the top hit. Your org could be the top hit, too. Apply online today!

Remember: many people out there don't know about your organization; they don't know your organization's name or mission. What they do know is that they're looking for resources related to bicycling and walking - so if they enter a search for "biking in Bethesda", "walking in Washington", or "bike advocacy Albuquerque", they'll likely find you at the top of the list!

There is another way in which you can boost traffic to your website: meta tags. These are words placed in web pages which are "invisible" to people

who view your page, but are picked up and indexed by search engines. Make sure that the person who maintains your website puts meta tags on all of the web pages; it's easy to do. Typical meta tags for bicycle and pedestrian web sites might include: bicycle, pedestrian, advocacy, safety, bike, ped, commute, community...

This monthly Thunderhead Alliance Weather Report is for the leaders of our member organizations and our supporters. The Thunderhead Alliance, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the only coalition of state and local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations working in unison to break down the barriers to safe bicycling and walking in North American communities. Find more info at: www.thunderheadalliance.org.

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