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(CREATIVE, CATCHY, COMPELLING)

# WAYS TO MARKET YOUR CHAPTER

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This article is the second in a series on helping chapters build their membership and become more active conservationists in their communities. The first article, which focused on conservation project ideas for chapters, appeared in the Winter 2008 issue of *Outdoor America*. Electronic reprints are available on our Web site at <http://www.iwla.org/chapters>.

## 1. REACH OUT TO THE MEDIA

Be sure that reporters at your local newspaper, magazine, television or radio stations know about your chapter and its activities. The simplest way to reach the media is through press releases. A press release should be within one-page, should summarize the activity or news, and should provide contact information for a designated chapter member. Press releases can be sent either electronically or through the mail. When you send the release, consider addressing it to the outdoor news desk. Outdoor writers tend to cover issues related to hunting, fishing, camping, and other outdoor recreation. Some League chapters have had great success reaching out to outdoor writers. The Fremont Chapter in Ohio, for instance, has established a relationship with the outdoor writer at the *Toledo Blade*, a newspaper with more than 125,000 readers. As a result, they have gotten good coverage of their annual litter cleanup and other activities.

Invite local reporters and photographers to your chapter events, so that they can get to know the members and their activities firsthand. Also consider submitting an op-ed to a local newspaper. Several of our chapters published op-eds about the federal Farm Bill in local papers last year. Or, it can focus on something more local, such as threats to local streams, wetlands, or forests. Sign the op-ed as a chapter representative and include contact information for readers who want to join your cause.

Finally, consider advertising in the form of event announcements in newspapers or public service ads.



## 2. PROMOTE YOUR BRAND

A brand is more than a name—it's an identity that is associated with a name or logo. The League's brand is signified by our green and yellow bust. The logo has been around for more than half a century, and in some communities that have large, well-established chapters, our logo is almost as recognizable as a Nike swoosh. But chapters that are newer or smaller have to work harder to raise their brand's profile.

The easiest way to promote the logo is to ask members to display their IWLA decal on their vehicles. Membership decals are mailed annually with each renewed chapter member card. Some chapters, such as the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chapter in Maryland, have made customized decals that include the chapter's name beneath the logo. Some other Maryland Ikes at the Wildlife Achievement Chapter took their use of the logo one step further. They posted their logo on a roadside display at the town's entrance, alongside signs for groups like the Rotary Club and American Legion. The League's national office sells 18- and 30-inch reflective aluminum roadside signs for this and other purposes.

Does your chapter have a prominent sign displayed at its entrance? A clear entrance sign helps people find your chapter and raises curiosity among people who drive by—maybe even prompting them to learn more and join.

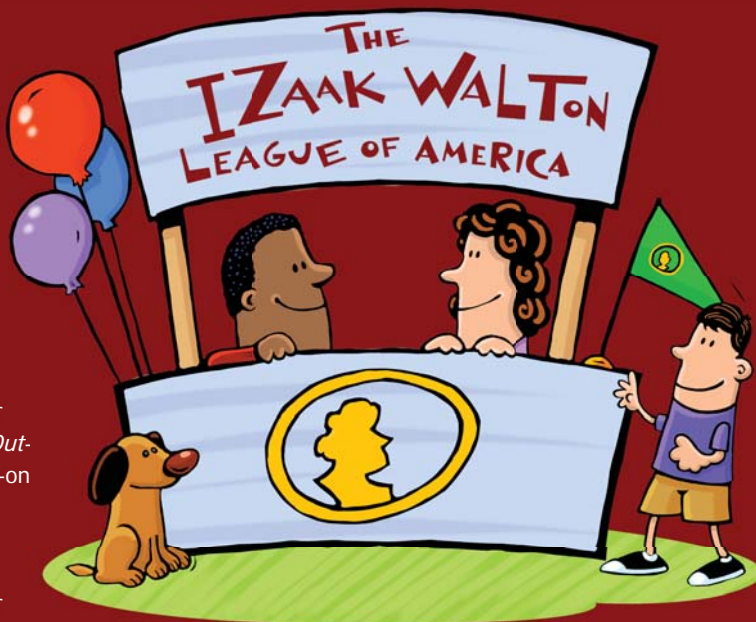
Create merchandise displaying the logo, such as hats, shirts, mugs, shooting vests, patches, pens, or pamphlets. If you don't have the time to create your own gear, tap into the national headquarters' line of merchandise. We offer a dealer-direct program that allows chapters to purchase hats customized with their chapter name at a discounted bulk price. Call (800) IKE-LINE (453-5463), ext. 208, for more details.



### 3. PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY EVENTS

Rather than waiting for prospective members to come to you, go to them. Community festivals, flower and garden shows, county fairs, Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrations, and other outreach events can introduce your chapter to thousands of locals in a single day or weekend. County fairs are popular traditions in most parts of the country, and there are usually opportunities for groups like the League to host booths at them. In addition, many states and regions host outdoor sporting shows that draw folks who are already predisposed to be interested in your chapter's mission. You can even sponsor your own outdoor show, which is what the Norfolk-Chesapeake Chapter in Virginia does each year, successfully drawing in the community.

Many show promoters offer waived or discounted exhibitor fees for nonprofits. Booths can be staffed by volunteers from the chapter. You'll need some basics, such as a tabletop display, a banner or flag containing the League's logo, and plenty of handouts that includes your membership information, chapter brochures, membership-at-large brochures (for those who don't live near your chapter but still want to support the League), and copies of *Outdoor America* magazine. Consider having some hands-on element at the booth, such as touchable nature displays, particularly if you're aiming to attract families to join your chapter. Contact the national headquarters, and we will either provide you with materials or help you develop some.



### 4. HOLD AN OPEN HOUSE

People often drive past a chapter's property, see the League's logo on a sign, or notice the League's name in the newspaper or other media without knowing what we do. A great way to introduce the public to the League is to hold an open house event at your chapter, where curious neighbors can visit the property and learn more about it and your mission.

An easy hook for hosting an open house is to tie it to a national awareness program such as National Hunting and Fishing Day (September), National Boating and Fishing Week (June), or Earth Day (April). These events are more likely to draw like-minded conservationists and families to events that focus on the outdoors and conservation. In addition, each of these programs are coordinated nationally, which means you can tap into a large network of calendars, Web sites, and other tools that promote them. You can also partner with nonprofit groups that run youth programs, such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, or the Boy Scouts of America, to host youth-oriented events.

Get the most bang for your efforts by making the open house a must-attend affair. For example, in September the York Chapter #67 in Pennsylvania will be hosting a weekend-long open house, featuring natural resource experts, outdoor product and wildlife art displays, trout fishing for kids, archery and airgun shooting, concession food sales, special raffles, and a \$5 per car admission. They are expecting hundreds, maybe thousands, of locals to attend. That's a lot of potential new members.





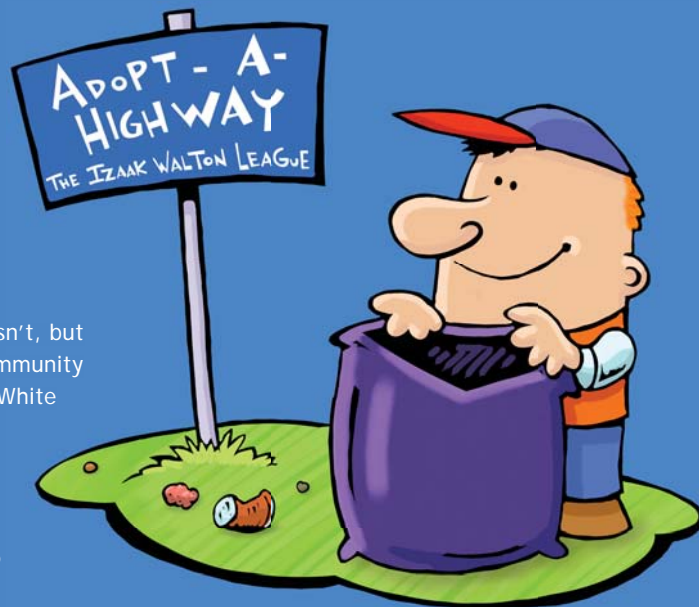
## 5. ADOPT A LOCAL HIGHWAY OR STREAM

Most everyone has seen those Adopt-a-Highway signs along the roads. It all started in Texas, when an employee for the Texas Department of Transportation grew frustrated by the state's lack of funding for litter cleanups. The state turned to nonprofit groups, with their networks of volunteers, to fill the need. Today, thousands of volunteer groups adopt stretches of highways all across the country. In exchange for their efforts, the groups are recognized by name on roadside signs, which are produced by the various state transportation departments. It's a great way to promote your chapter's involvement in the community.

Some states have created similar programs for streams and rivers.

In Iowa, the Department of Natural Resources has an Adopt-a-Stream program. Although litter cleanups are a major part of the program, the department also encourages groups to conduct water quality monitoring of their adopted streams using techniques such as the League's Save Our Streams program. Years ago, the Linn County Chapter in Iowa adopted a five-mile stretch of the Cedar River. They enlist the help of other groups and citizens in the area to monitor water quality and pick up litter. They then send reports to state and federal agencies, which use the data to assess the river's health.

Not all states have Adopt-a-Stream programs. If yours doesn't, but you'd like to adopt a stream anyway, you can still let the community know about your effort through your own signs. In fact, the White Oak River Chapter in North Carolina, which made its own "Don't Litter" signs for its river cleanups, sells the green and yellow signs with the League's logo to other chapters for a small fee (\$15 per sign; \$120 for 10). If your chapter is interested, contact chapter member Al Fox at (252) 393-7315 or [gafox@ec.rr.com](mailto:gafox@ec.rr.com).



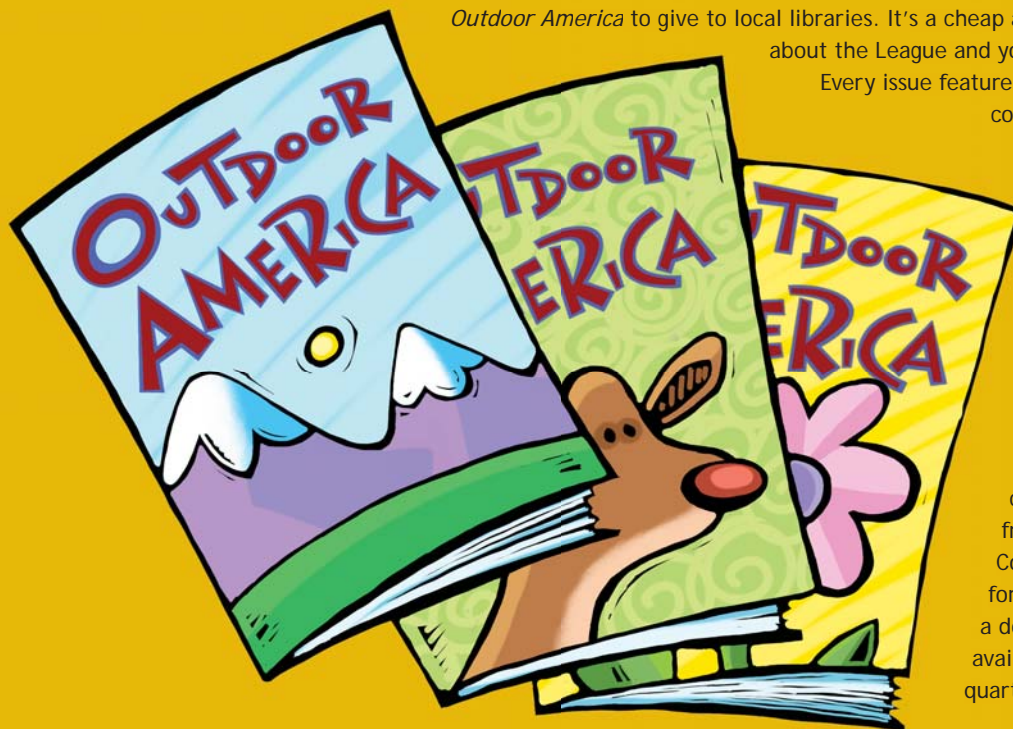
## 6. SPONSOR LIBRARY SUBSCRIPTIONS OF *OUTDOOR AMERICA*

For years, the League has allowed chapters to purchase discounted subscriptions of *Outdoor America* to give to local libraries. It's a cheap and easy way to get word out about the League and your chapter in the community.

Every issue features news about Ikes doing good conservation work at the local

and national level, so each subscription will educate your neighbors about the conservation issues that are important to us.

Library subscriptions cost \$5 per library, and will say "Compliments of the *your chapter's name*" on the back cover. Currently, about 250 libraries across the country receive subscriptions from chapters. The Jefferson County Chapter in West Virginia, for instance, sponsors about half a dozen. Subscription forms are available from the national headquarters by calling (800) IKE-LINE.



## 7. GET ONLINE

No other innovation in the last 25 years has changed the way we communicate with each other more than the Internet. Its speed, low cost, and almost limitless capabilities allow the League to reach new audiences efficiently and effectively. More than three-quarters of all Ikes use the Internet, and the public is increasingly turning to the Internet to learn about conservation.

In addition to the League's Web site, [www.iwla.org](http://www.iwla.org), many League chapters and divisions have their own Web sites. The Minnesota Division, for instance, maintains [www.minnesotaike.org](http://www.minnesotaike.org). The site lists the chapters in the state, contact information for each, membership information, officers, meeting dates, and news about important conservation issues. It also links to electronic copies of the division's newsletter as well as to specific chapter Web sites, such as [www.breckenridgeikes.org](http://www.breckenridgeikes.org). There, the Walter J. Breckenridge Chapter gets into more specifics about its own programs, meetings, newsletters, and membership information. Each of the sites provide links back to the national Izaak Walton League Web site, and similarly, the national site provides links to all chapter and division Web sites at <http://www.iwla.org/chapters> (if your chapter's Web site is not listed in our chapter search page, be sure to let us know).

Make sure that your Web site contains the League's logo and name prominently displayed throughout its pages. The League is currently developing a "Web site kit" that will provide any chapter with the materials it needs to get a basic site up and running. The kit, which will be available later this year, will make the process easy for even novice computer users.

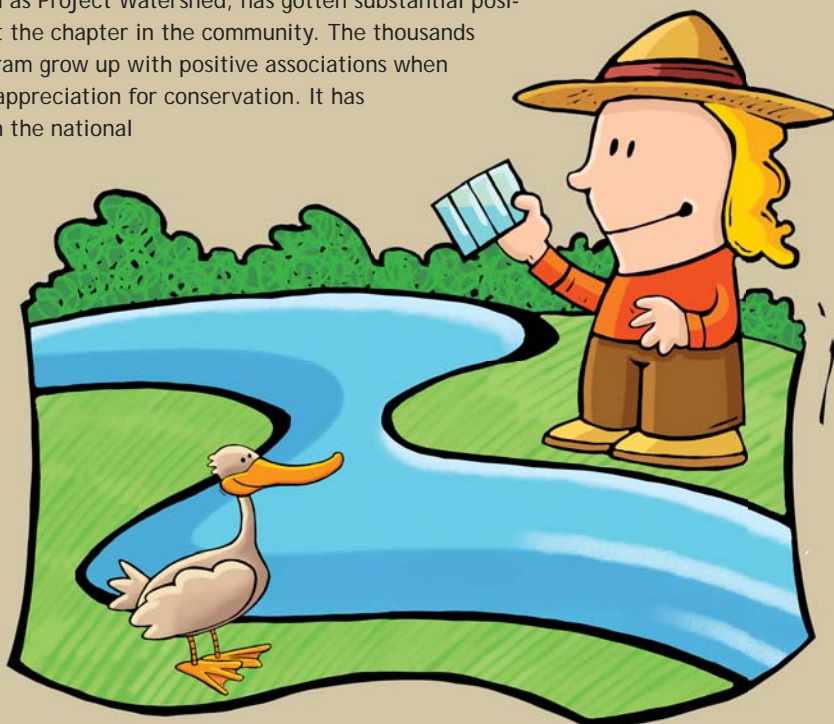
One other option for establishing an online presence is to tap into the new "social networks" such as Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace. Sites like these are not just for young people to socialize. They allow people or groups to post free content—everything from text to pictures to videos—promoting your chapter, its facilities, and its conservation activities.



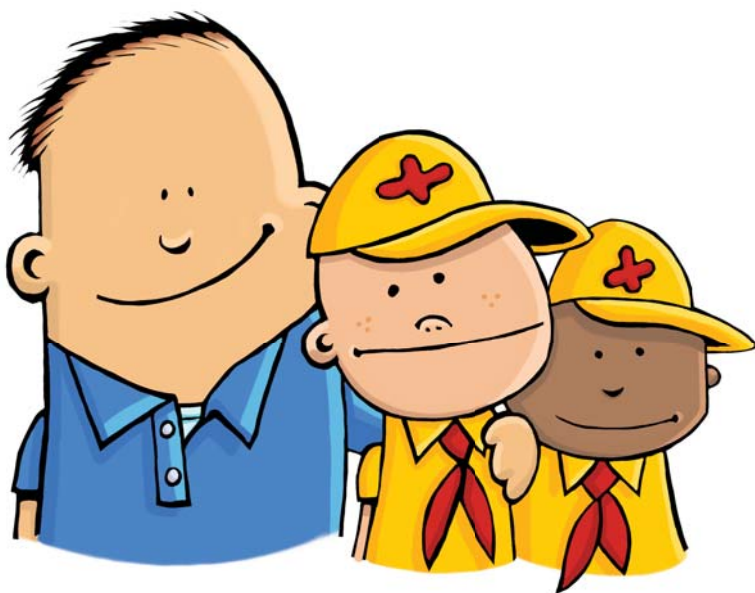
## 8. DEVELOP AN ONGOING CONSERVATION PROJECT

For more than 15 years, the Central New York Chapter has been getting community volunteers and students into local streams several times a year to conduct water quality monitoring using the League's Save Our Streams techniques. The effort, known as Project Watershed, has gotten substantial positive media coverage and raised awareness about the chapter in the community. The thousands of students who have been exposed to the program grow up with positive associations when they hear the League's name, as well as better appreciation for conservation. It has been so successful that the chapter worked with the national headquarters to secure funding for a part-time staff position. None of it could have happened without dedication to the League's mission and a cadre of volunteers.

Whether it's a stream monitoring project or something smaller, like an annual litter cleanup, simply having an ongoing conservation project at your chapter can go a long way in raising the profile of your chapter in your community and attracting new members. Get ideas for projects by reading the stories of other chapters in every issue of *Outdoor America*, talking to local natural resource agencies about what kind of volunteer needs and opportunities exist in your area, or visiting the chapter section of our Web site, [www.iwla.org/chapters](http://www.iwla.org/chapters).







## 9. SUPPORT OTHER LOCAL CHARITIES

Sure, the League itself is a charity, but we can also work to support other charities in our communities—not only for the principle of it, but because collaborating with other groups can raise the visibility of our own cause and create long-lasting partnerships.

Many chapters already partner with groups like the Boy Scouts of America, allowing scouts to hold meetings at chapter facilities or even use the property to conduct conservation projects like tree plantings and trail maintenance. Some chapters rent their clubhouses to groups like National Rifle Association and the National Wildlife Turkey Federation for banquets and other events.

Supported charities don't always have to be directly related to conservation. For example, the Arlington-Fairfax Chapter in Virginia hosts an annual Crush'n Clays shooting event that raises money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. They have raised thousands of dollars over the last 10 years to benefit sick children, and people in the community are aware of the chapter's positive role in this charitable effort.

## 10. ESTABLISH AN "IZAAK WALTON" NAMESAKE

The city street that leads to the Sunshine Chapter's property in Pierre, South Dakota, is named Izaak Walton Road. The former chapter grounds of the Loudoun County Chapter in Leesburg, Virginia, are now a public park called Ye Olde Izaak Walton Park. A Minnesota state natural resource agency recently changed the name of a stream near the Bush Lake Chapter to Izaak Walton Creek, in recognition of the chapter's continued work to restore the stream and adjacent wetlands.

These are just three examples of chapters that have worked with local governments to establish an Izaak Walton namesake in town. These landmarks become part of the community and serve as a tribute to the local chapter and its positive influence. Many chapters have been able to get streets, buildings, parks, and other fixtures named after them. In 1992, the Fairfax County government in Virginia even designated April 22nd Izaak Walton League Day, "urging all citizens to recognize the contributions of this organization to the County's way of life and expressing the Board's appreciation to those citizens who are active members of this organization." When people in your community start wondering who Izaak Walton is and why his name is posted on the sign, you can be ready with an answer and a membership brochure.

