

Volunteer Handbook

Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride.
~John F. Kennedy

[T]he bicycle will accomplish more for women's sensible dress than all the reform movements
that have ever been waged.
~Author Unknown, from Demerarest's Family Magazine, 1895

Emergency Contacts

- Chris Turner (President): 907-306-8683
- Shop Hotline: 907-258-6822 (OTCC)
- Police, Fire, Ambulance: 911
- Diamond Self Storage: (907) 248-1840 or (907) 245-0396

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Introduction

This booklet has been designed to assist volunteers at Off the Chain Bicycle collective. It contains information to help you run and work at the shop, participate in meetings, and take part in other activities that Off the Chain sponsors. If you have any questions while volunteering this should be the first place you look for an answer.

Community collectives and collectives are unique institutions. Due to the egalitarian (ideal) nature of the organizational structure, all of the collective members are not only responsible for running Off the Chain, but also for sharing power, and communicating their needs in a constructive and collective manner. The membership of the collective is ultimately responsible for every aspect of Off the Chain.

Have fun!

Mission Statement

Off the Chain is a low cost, volunteer run bicycle collective open to the Anchorage community. Off the Chain strives to increase bicycle ridership, awareness, and safety through community service and education.

Principles of Off the Chain

- Our common goals should come first, personal differences should be set aside.
- Board positions and Managers are the servants of the Membership.
- Off the Chain will not lend its name or endorse any outside enterprise without unanimous approval of the board; though, we may work with other groups to achieve our mission.
- Off the Chain is nonprofessional; however, we may employ workers to administer business aspects of the collective.
- Off the Chain operates with the minimum level of organization possible, we strive to be transparent. Committees may be formed to fulfill a specific function.
- In order to avoid public controversy, Off the Chain is an apolitical organization. Off the Chain will not endorse specific candidates, but may publicly support certain bills or measures with the support of its board and 75% of voting members.
- In order to emphasize the non-hierarchical nature of a collective, all members of Off the Chain should remain anonymous when addressing the press.

Donations

We accept all bikes and parts, regardless of their condition; we do this in order to encourage all bikes to be recycled. When accepting a bike donation, place a tag on the bike that includes the date of donation, your initials, and what triage level the bike is at. If the bike is at the “Fixer” triage level then make sure to assess the bike and list specifically what needs to be repaired on it.

Trading

We maintain a strict “**No Trades**” policy. We do this for two reasons. The first is to remove the incentive for laundering stolen bikes at our shop. If someone trades a stolen bike to our shop, it can lead to legal problems for the person who ends up with the bike. The second reason we do this is to discourage “cherry picking”. If you would like a part that you don't need, that is available for sale, please donate an amount equal to the fair market value of that part to the coop.

This policy applies to everyone so that we don't have to discriminate against any one person or group of people.

Triage

Off the Chain grades donated bikes according to a 3-level scale.

- Fixer – Bikes that need a tune up or repair before use. Please make sure that the tag on this bike has a list of what needs to be fixed.
- Ready to Roll - Bikes that are safe, functional, and ready to be ridden. This doesn't mean good enough for you; it means you would feel comfortable giving it to your grandmother.
- Stripper – Make every effort to strip for parts and recycle unusable metal.

Money

Off the Chain accepts monetary donations. If you would like to make a cash or check donation please place it in the donation container in the shop, give it to the shift manager, or to the collective's treasurer. If you would like to make a /debit/credit card donation, talk to the shift manager on duty about using the credit card reader.

Receipts

We can offer donors receipts for tax deduction purposes. Provide a donation receipt from the receipt book to the donor to fill out, including the the estimated value of the donation.

Money

Pricing

Off the Chain operates on a donations-only basis. This means that we don't have a set price for any item that we have not purchased; most items that we sell are on a “pay what you can” basis. Prices that are listed on for-sale items are a suggested price that was set with shop operating costs, wholesale cost, and shipping costs in mind. If you are not sure about the price of an item, consult the pricing rubric posted on the wall of the shop. Please consult with the shift manager on duty if you think that the price on the rubric is not appropriate to the part or the customer. The Shift Manager has the final say on all prices.

Handling

When small amounts of money (less than \$20) are donated to the shop they may be put in the donations jar. This jar will be emptied by the shift manager after each shift. When money is removed from the donation box at the end of a shift, it should be placed in a bank envelope and taken directly to the bank and deposited.

Mark an entry in the financial ledger for all end of shift deposits. The ledger is the spreadsheet on the desktop screen of the very old computer on the desk in the office.

Shop Use Rate

In order to pay rent, and cover other expenses, Off the Chain has an hourly shop rate. This rate is to be paid, on a voluntary basis, by everyone while they are using the shop. The current rate will be posted in the shop. People who use the shop are responsible for keeping track of their own time, and depositing the correct amount of money in the donation container prior to their departure. This rate is a *suggested* rate only.

Shop Positions

General Manager

Duties include implementing new policy decisions and making sure that the wishes of the coop membership are implemented.

Board Positions

Board positions are held for a time of one year.

President

The person who holds this position is in charge of overseeing the general direction that the collective is taking.

Vice-President

The person in this position is in charge whenever the president is unable to attend the the president's duties.

Secretary

The person in this position is in charge of documentation for the shop. If you hold this position you will need to take notes at meetings and post them to our website, as well as keep a paper record accessible at the shop. You will also need to maintain the volunteer hour records and other shop documentation.

Volunteer Coordinator

The person who holds this position will be tasked with wrangling volunteers! If you hold this position you will need to schedule volunteer hours to ensure that all shifts are covered, contact all volunteers with shop hours on a weekly basis to remind them of their hours, and make sure that there were no problems during the previous week. This person is also in charge of helping new members to get involved. As a volunteer run organization, this might be the most important board position. It's probably also the hardest and most time consuming.

Outreach Coordinator

This position is, to a large extent, the public face of the collective. The person who holds this position should be responsible, good at talking to people, and good at communicating what the shop is for and how it runs. If you hold this position you will be in charge of collective events that happen that are not regular shop-hours, though responsibility for individual events can be delegated to other willing volunteers. Examples of outreach events are: community bike tune-ups, Boys & Girls Club work, and clinics. This person is also in charge of advertising and letting the community know what the shop is about.

Treasurer

This person handles financial considerations related to the shop. If you hold this position you will need to monitor Off the Chain's finances and keep financial records. You will also need to report our financial status regularly at shop meetings.

Member at Large

This person is responsible for overseeing major projects in the shop. Such projects might include building new benches work benches, changing the layout of the shop floor, moving piles of donated bikes between storage and the shop, organizing the delivery or pick up of large donations, etc. This person is also responsible for monitoring the Off the Chain's inventory of tools and consumables, and for ordering replacements when necessary.

Membership Levels

You are a member of Off the Chain collective when you say you are. There are 3 levels of membership. To become a Lead Member, or a Committed member you must fulfill the requirements of each of these levels for a time of 30 days, you become a member at the end of the 30 day time period. Membership at a specific membership level remains in effect for 30 days from the last week that the requirements for that level were fulfilled. 4 hours of volunteer time over the course of 2 weeks may be substituted for attendance at 1 volunteer meeting.

Lead member

Lead members are responsible for volunteering a shift of 4 hours per week - they help to maintain the space. Attendance at 2 meetings per month is mandatory. After volunteering consistently for one full month the Lead member gets the following privileges:

- May checkout the key, and use the shop during off hours
- Buying parts at 10% over wholesale
- Used parts that you need, may be taken for free
- Used parts that you don't need, may be purchased at a low price (use discretion and don't be a hog)

If you use the shop during off hours, please make sure to clean the shop when you are done and vacate the shop at least 15 minutes before the start of the next shop hour.

Committed member

Committed members work at least 8 hours a month, either as an apprentice/aid to the core mechanics on a weekly basis, or by doing odd tasks from the chore list regularly. Attendance at 2 meetings per month is mandatory. After volunteering consistently for one full month the committed member gets the following privileges:

- New parts at 35% over Wholesale
- Used parts that you need , may be taken for free.
- Used parts that you don't need, may be purchased at a low price (use discretion and don't be a hog).

Impromptu member

Impromptu members are people who ask if they can do some work for that day, usually as a trade for shop use/assistance, and necessary used parts (and occasionally a new tube). The member is referred to a list of chores, and the value is determined by the mechanic.

Shop Equipment

Tools

Every tool in the shop has a specific place where it belongs. There are several tool zones and each has a different color. There are labelings on the board for where each tool belongs for that zone. The tools are color coded, please make sure that you put tools back in their correct location and zone when you are done.

- There are specialty tools located at the manager's station. Please ask for permission before using any of these tools.
- Be careful using the tools as they can break easily. Use the right tool for the job. If you don't know how to use the tool ask the shift manager.

If you break a tool, don't panic! The purpose of the shop is to be a place of education and part of the education process is learning how to use tools. Please tell the shift manager what tool you broke, and write the name of that tool on the to buy list that is posted in the shop. Please keep the remains of the broken tool, and place them in to-be-fixed box located in the storage room – sometimes the tool can be salvaged with a little welding or TLC.

- There is also the “to-go” tool set contained in the portable toolbox. This set can be used for remote activities such as community bike tune-ups, don’t remove any tools or items from this toolbox.
- No tools are to be taken home by ANYONE.
- Spare tools are located in the storage room in the large tool box. When there are no more spares of a tool an order should be made.
- The computer in the shop has a spreadsheet that lists all the tools in the shop, complete with images, names.

Supplies

In order to be a more sustainable enterprise, Off the Chain tries to minimize our use of consumable supplies. Please consider your use of paper towels, grease, plastic silverware, chemicals, etc., before you use them. If we run out something place the name of the item on the to-buy list posted in the shop. If you need this item immediately you may purchase it and have the shop compensate you. Consult the shift manager before you do this. Make sure to handle all shop money according to the directions in this handbook.

There are typically two containers that are used for hand cleaner (orange-pumice soap). The newer one, stored in the supplies cabinet, contains full strength cleaner. The older one contains 1:5 solution of water to cleaner. When the solution needs to be refilled please fill it to this ratio. When the new (full strength) bottle is empty, it should be used for the solution and the old bottle can be recycled.

Parts

Every part has a specific location, if you don't know where a part goes put it in the to-be-sorted box. If you are looking for something to do put parts away that are in this box. This is a great way to learn where everything goes.

Shop Bikes

The shop has bikes and trailers that may be used by committed members for short-term personal use. Please place your name, date, contact phone number on the check out tag.

Project Bikes

Please feel free to work on your personal projects during any time that the shop is open and you are not facilitating open shop hours. Freak bikes and art bikes fit in well with the theme and the atmosphere of the shop – have fun!

We will not store or save any bikes. We will also not take any money prior to you being ready to take the items you purchase. We will not take any responsibility for any items left at the shop. You are responsible for your own belongings.

Volunteering

Shift Manager

The shift manager is responsible opening and closing the shop at the scheduled time. The person in this position should be an accomplished mechanic and capable of making decisions regarding the day to day operations of the shop. This person will help answer technical questions and guide others in repair and the proper use of tools.

Shift Assistants

Shift assistant may be any volunteers covering a shift other than the Shift Manager. These volunteers are encouraged to assist community members who come into the shop as much as they are able. This involves greeting and helping to diagnose the needs of shop users, and helping with repairs if the volunteer and shop guest are both comfortable. Volunteers are always encouraged consult the one of the posters of to-do tasks on the wall, to pick their own project to do for the shop while volunteering, or to ask the shift manager what needs to be done. Some of the work that Off the Chain might ask of volunteers may be dirty or tedious, but it is all valuable to the collective. We are too busy to waste our volunteers' time with work that doesn't need to be done.

All volunteers

You will assist community members in their bike business, i.e. showing how to repair broken bikes, giving practical advice and offering bike enthusiasm. You will also be working on community bikes in need of repair and maintenance. Don't forget to have fun. If you start to feel like working at the shop is drudgery then consider why you are volunteering here. Sometimes burn-out strikes when we least expect it. It's better to work fewer hours, and be more productive, than to work more and hate it!

Sign in

All volunteers and community members must sign-in prior to doing any work at the shop.

Access Code Policy

The combinations to both the internal and external shop locks are restricted to Committed Volunteers. In emergencies, or to cover a shift that would otherwise not be covered, the codes may be given to a volunteer who does not meet the requirements to be considered Committed. If you need to use the shop during off hours, contact a Lead Member and have them chaperon you.

Running the Shop

Opening

1. Unlock the front door, and prop it open (in warm weather).
2. Turn on the lights.
3. Sign in.
4. Turn on the computer, and stereo if you want music.
5. Check the voice mail. Dial 258-6822 (OTCC) and press * then enter our code: 2811. Respond to any messages appropriately, or write them down so that the appropriate person gets them.
6. Clean up any trash, or projects that were left out. Make a note in the sign-in log of any messes or other things of note.
7. Make sure that there are no missing tools.
8. Put the open sign in front of the shop.

During

We are all responsible for running the shop.

- The shift manager is responsible for making on the spot decisions while the shop is open.
- While you are repairing “Fixer” bikes keep a list on the tag that is attached to the bike of what repairs you have done and any additional issues that you encounter.
- Remain aware of new arrivals at the shop. Greet everyone as they arrive, and inform them about the nature of the shop and membership. Refer newcomers to this handbook if appropriate. Find out their needs and give them an estimate of how soon they can expect assistance.
- Let newcomers know to ask for assistance before using unfamiliar tools. All threading/facing (cutting) tools, headset installation tools, pin spanners, chain breaker, and cassette lock ring removers are to be used only after training.

- Used Parts are priced on a “pay what you can” basis. Please advise people who need parts the approximate value of the parts that they need. Direct them to deposit what they can in the donation container. Most parts will be priced in the \$5 to \$30 range. Remember: “pay what you can” doesn't mean that the parts and labor are free – unless you can't pay for them.
- New parts are priced as affordably as is possible while covering Off the Chain's costs. Consumables such as cables, housing, and new chains are priced as marked.
- We do not accept IOU's.
- We do not buy parts or bikes from walk-ins.
- We do not offer consignment.
- During slow times when there are no community members to help, you can strip bikes, repair fixer-uppers, sort parts in the to-be-sorted bin, clean the shop, or perform any other useful job for the shop.
- Shop hours are for working with community members and Off the Chain bikes. It's not volunteering if you're working on your own bike.
- Please follow and set an example of the shop rules.
- Love your neighbor and be kind and respectful to all who come into the shop.

Closing

1. Clean up any parts and trash that have been left out - both inside and outside the shop.
2. Bring in the signs and lock the exterior door.
3. Empty the donation box and enter the shift totals on the ledger (see above).
4. Turn off the computer.
5. Sweep the floor.
6. Sign out.
7. Lock and close the Shop door.
8. Make sure that the shop door is locked and closed.
9. Double check that the shop door is closed, **seriously!**

Distributor Accounts and Wholesale Parts

One of the benefits of volunteering at Off the Chain is access to discounted bike parts and supplies via our wholesale accounts. If you would like to place an order talk with the treasurer.

When you are prepared to place an order make a list of the parts you would like. This list should include part number, quantity, brief description, cost per group of same-items, and total cost. You will need to pay the net cost of your order plus 20% to the treasurer before the order is placed. Depending on what is ordered, there may be slight recalculations of shipping costs when the order arrives. Parts may not be taken until the treasurer or another officer has sorted the order and said that it is ready to be distributed.

Shop Rules

- No violence or intimidation, this includes racist or sexist behavior. You will be asked to leave if you violate this rule. If you see someone acting like this, it is your responsibility to stop them; **ask for help** if you need it.
- **No drugs may be used at the shop – this includes alcohol.** Breaking of this rule is grounds for immediate and permanent removal from the shop.
- Leave the shop cleaner than when you arrived.
- Put items back where they belong.
- Be respectful of everyone in the shop, we all have a right to be here.
- If you have a question about bikes or parts, speak with the shift manager or a lead volunteer.
- The shop is to be locked and the lights are to be shut down upon exiting.

Communications

- Website: www.offthechainak.org
- Phone: 907-258-OTCC
- Mailing Address: Off the Chain Suite W-15, west end of Mat-Maid building, Anchorage, AK 99503

Regular Meetings

Meetings are held on a weekly basis at the shop. Typically, meetings are held in the evening at a time that is convenient to everyone, meeting times will be posted in the shop, listed in the voicemail (258-OTCC), and posted on the website (offthechainak.org). Decisions are made by a 75% majority of the members who are present and vote. If you are not present then you may not

vote. Only Committed Members and Lead Volunteers may vote at meetings. Off the Chain will have food for attendees so that no one goes hungry. Feel free to bring food, but don't feel obligated.

One person will be the moderator of the meetings. This person will start the meeting, call on people when they raise their hand, and keep the meeting on track. We try to keep meeting times to about one hour. At the beginning of the meetings everyone should introduce themselves. The moderator will then ask for the names and topics of everyone who has old business. Old business will then be considered. At the end of old business the same process will be repeated with new business.

Please raise your hand to make a comment, and only speak when it is your turn.

Annual Meetings

Once a year, Off the Chain hosts an annual meeting. At this meeting yearly business is handled. This includes:

- New officers are evaluated and elected by secret ballot
- Long-term goals of the shop are discussed
- Achievements from the previous year are presented

Please plan on attending this meeting as we hope to have 100% member attendance. This meeting is a potluck, so bring some food.

Problem Meetings

If a member refuses to follow the recommendations in this handbook, or otherwise defies the wishes of the membership of the shop, a meeting may be held that includes all officers (80% for a quorum) and lead members (any who wish to join). The person that the meeting is about is not welcome. At this meeting the people present will decide what the best course of action is. The member in question will then be presented with a document that contains:

- Reasons for the disciplinary action
- What action the membership wishes to take
- Steps that the member may take to solve the problem

Everyone makes mistakes now and then, and we all go through hard times; this meeting should be a last step. It should only happen when all other avenues have failed.

Clerkships

At this time Off the Chain has no paid positions – we are completely volunteer run.

Classes

Off the Chain hosts Biking 101, and Biking 201 classes as part of our Memorandum of Understanding with the city. At a minimum, these classes will be put on once a year; however, they may be put on more often. Check with the Outreach Coordinator to find out when the next class is. Classes will also be posted on the calendar located on the website.

Special Events

Special events are highly encouraged. If you are interested in scheduling an event please contact the Outreach Coordinator. Events must be scheduled during non-shop hours, and be approved at the member meeting at least 7 days prior to the event. If you need people to help out at the event, contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Minors

- A person under 18 may not buy or be given a bike. A parent or guardian must be contacted prior to transferring a bike to a minor. A phone call is an appropriate means of contact.
- There must be at least 2 adults in the shop if there is a person under 16 in the shop. Parents or guardians are preferred.
- Children do not get free bikes, unless warranted by special situations.

Build-a-Bike Policy

Rationale

Off the Chain's original plan to get bikes into the hands of the people of Anchorage consisted of the lend-a-bike program that stipulated a 3 month bike loan in return for a \$30 deposit. This program was successful in getting people on bikes, but was difficult to administer due to cash being tied up in escrow and paperwork tracking. Approximately 75% of borrowed bikes were not returned. The need for a simpler program was obvious.

The Build-a-bike program was born to address these issues. It provides the same service as the lend-a-bike program, but allows people to keep the borrowed bike at the end of the 3 month period. This also prevents people from taking advantage of the shop by borrowing a bike with a

high retail value, providing a \$30 deposit, then never returning the bike.

It is important to keep in mind that all bikes sold are for the purposes of education on bike use and maintenance. We should not compete with local bike shops. If a person is not willing learn how to tune up the bike they are about to buy, they should be referred to a local bike shop.

Details

- We do not loan bikes
- All bikes have a 3 month return policy (100% money back, minus cost of repairs)
- There must always be at least 1 bike priced at \$30 in the shop. If need be sell the lowest priced bike at \$30.
- Work is paid at \$10/hour credit.
- A maximum of \$50 shop credit may be used toward the purchase of a complete bike. There is no limit on the amount of credit used towards parts.
- Bike prices may be adjusted at the discretion of the shift manager (please be transparent and honest).
- Shop hours worked cannot be refunded in cash - these are volunteer hours.
- A purchaser may combine volunteer hours and cash.
- All volunteer hours used toward the purchase price of a bike must be credited prior to the purchase of a bike.
- We want you to learn, more than we want your money.
- We don't buy bikes to refurbish.
- High-end parts may be sold for fund raising purposes. Try to sell locally before selling online. We do this to pay expenses, and lower the prices of bikes and parts.

Pricing Bikes

- The cost of bikes should be very affordable since the goal is to give people knowledge and confidence to ride their bikes, not make money. We should make sure to cover our costs, and only our costs.
- The Shift manager is responsible for setting the price of a bike, keeping in mind the components and time that have been put into the bike.
- Feel free to question the price of bikes.

When Selling a Bike

1. Fill out a bike-sale receipt form.
2. Make sure that purchaser name, date, bike make, bike model, bike serial number and price are included.
3. File the receipt in the receipt folder (blanks should be in the folder).
4. Give a paper receipt to the purchaser.
5. Put money in the money bag and record the transaction in the log.
6. Make sure the customer understands the return policy.

Target Audiences

The following list is made of the different types of people who off the chain makes an attempt to consider with the build-a-bike policy.

- Person who has walked a long distance to the shop who needs a bike, has no money, can't return due to time constriction.
 - This person can tune up a waiting bike and purchase it on the spot (with volunteer time).
- College student, has money, has no time.
 - If the person does not want to spend time working on their bike they should be referred to a local bike shop.
- Children who come in, need bike/parts. No money.
 - The parent needs to be contacted, if appropriate furnish a bike and put the kid to work!
- Average working person, restricted money/time.
 - May mix volunteer hours(learning to tune up their bike) and money to pay for bike.
- Person who wants a bike fixed for them. Has money, no time. Trying to get a bargain.
 - Send to local bike shop.
- Person with money and time who wants to build up a “cherried” bike.
 - This person may come to the shop and work on their bike, purchasing parts from us or the local shop.
- Carp
 - Always welcome in the shop.
- Single parent with kids, no money/time wants a bike for their children.
 - If the situation warrants the shop manager may give the children bikes.
- Tourist who wants to rent a bike for the season.
 - Send them to a local bike-rental shop.

Training

If you would like to be trained in a specific aspect of bike related work, or if you would like to train people in an area of expertise that you have, talk to the Volunteer Coordinator. The Coordinator can coordinate a training session and connect the appropriate members.

How to Get Involved

There are different ways to become involved within Off the Chain.

- You can call the hotline 907-258-OTCC (6822).
- Show up to our weekly meeting.
- Visit our web address (www.offthechainak.org) and get on the message board.
- Show up during shop hours and ask the Shift Manager what you can do.
- Sort and put away parts from the to-be-sorted box.

References

- http://www.bikecollectives.org/wiki/index.php?title=Bicycle_Church_H_andbook
- http://www.bikecollectives.org/wiki/index.php?title=SLC_Bicycle_Collective_Volunteer_Manual
- http://www.bikecollectives.org/wiki/index.php?title=Fort_Collins_Bike_Coop_Volunteer_Manual

Revision History

31 August, 2008: Initial Revision

11 September 2008: Release 1.0

14 September 2008: Release 1.1

15 April 2009: Release 1.2 - Added Shop Use Rate, Build a Bike policy, and minors. Removed lend-a-bike. Updated communications.

Winter 2013/14: Release 1.3 - Fixed typos, deleted old material no longer relevant to make policies more consistent.