2018 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

Board of Directors
Communications Committee
Somewhere in the world right now as you read this at least one Warmshowers host and a touring cyclist are sharing a story and maybe a meal. A cyclist somewhere is gratefully nestling down into a warm, dry bed, while listening to a raging thunderstorm outside; thanks to the generous hospitality of a new friend. A Warmshowers host somewhere is grateful they can do it, their reward being the satisfaction of paying forward because someone has done the same for them.

I have always been amazed at the generosity of those who have hosted me as Warmshowers hosts. I have kept in contact with some of those hosts for years afterwards. I think that a Warmshowers host is proof that the world contains many many decent people despite the gloom and doom that I read in my news services every morning.

During 2018, we on the Board have discussed strategic directions, how to fend hackers off of the website in an age when it is easy to be targeted, how to stabilize a complicated site with over a 100,000 users, how to better communicate what we are about, how to more efficiently answer the many many questions we are asked, how to raise funding to keep this all going and how to improve our financial budgeting, and all this with mostly volunteers and one paid part time staff member.

We are looking forward in 2019 and 2020 to having a stable site, allowing people to access our database in the ways that are most accommodating to them, having data on the site that lets touring cyclists access data that is reliable and enhancing our revenue generation and partnership opportunities.

Yes, there is a lot of work that can always use more hands, and sometimes it can seem overwhelming, but we never lose focus on the WHY we are doing this. And the WHY is simple. We facilitate human connection and friendship for people who pedal and those who generously support them.

A special thank-you for all who donate their homes, their time, and their funds. You are building a world of a million stories of connection. Thank you.

Len Bulmer
Welcome to our overview of the Warmshowers Strategic Plan for 2019-2021. We have considered the responses we received from over 11,000 members in 2018 to our membership survey, conducted an in-depth review of our internal operations and have considered our own Board’s extensive experiences as touring cyclists and hosts.

VISION

Our long-term VISION is for a future where everyone, everywhere, views Warmshowers as THE community for touring cyclists and those who host them. We want to make a million positive connections possible.

MISSION

Our MISSION is to facilitate and promote safe and free reciprocal hospitality for the world-wide touring-bicycle community.

We are a community that VALUES inclusivity and diversity. We treat each other in a welcoming and respectful manner. We are passionate about cycling and supporting each other.
STRATEGIC GOALS

Technology
Provide technology platforms that allow the most people the easiest access to our information. We will explore supporting apps as well as continuing with our website.

Ensuring the information on our platforms is seen as being reliable for both cyclists and hosts. We will endeavor to better categorize those who are available to host and those who support the community in other ways.

Explore rating systems that better reflect the experience of those who are hosts and guests.

Communications
Be more outward looking and transparent in our communications to the community. We will provide quarterly updates on our decision making.

Communicate consistently via newsletters and on social platforms organizational news, challenges, changes and improvements.

Provide platforms for our community members to tell the rest of us about their stories and connections.

Strategic Alliances
Grow strategic alliances with other cycling stakeholders throughout the world. We want to bring the passion and benefits of our community to as many people as possible.
STRATEGIC GOALS

a three year plan forward

Operations
We will continue to operate in an efficient and effective manner. We will strengthen our volunteer management practices and celebrate those who volunteer for us. We will continuously examine our staffing levels. We will be very conscious of getting the biggest impact we can for the money we spend.

Finance & Fundraising
We will examine the potential for financial sponsorship opportunities that are respectful of our community. We will develop a longer-term revenue generation plan that will allow us to grow in a measured fashion.

Recognize & celebrate the contributions of our hosts.

Trust & Safety
Continue to have the safety of our users as our priority. We will examine different rating systems that allow for more nuanced feedback for users to access.
We receive most of our income from donations from our community. A major fundraiser is held each year in April, and this year $47,518 was received from this campaign. Our community also provides donations throughout the year, bringing the total for the year up to just over $130,000.

Administration costs were kept to an absolute minimum at $4378. Most of the cost comes from maintaining our software and systems delivered through our website. Unfortunately, at $41,630 our costs were a little higher this year for tech due to an unprecedented level of attack by spammers; at one point we were receiving 500 spam attacks per hour. With the help of our tech support partner, we are able to successfully counter these attacks, and further upgrade our systems, to improve the integrity and security of our data.

Warmshowers has a part-time contract Executive Director who runs the operation. Unfortunately, Seth Portner left us in March 2018 to pursue other business interests. We were fortunate in securing the services of Tahverlee Anglen at that time to continue the work supporting our community. There are no other paid staff; all other functions are provided by volunteers, including the Board members.

We ended a successful year with a surplus of $20,416 which brought our year end cash position to $88,819.
COMMUNICATIONS

Warmshowers currently has several communication methods. Our primary goal is to keep all users up to date with current Warmshowers technology, share stories from the road that celebrate and inspire reciprocal hospitality and share with the community the exciting growth of Warmshowers around the world.

- On Facebook we have a Warmshowers Facebook PAGE -- public and open to the world. Facebook.com/warmshowersfoundation/.
- We also have a PRIVATE group for registered users. This is the place to share your stories ask questions of other hosts and cyclists. Facebook.com/groups/Warmshowers.org/ (26K members).
- We just joined Instagram in 2018 and are sharing stories from the road of cyclists and hosts. We are just under 4k followers and growing daily.
- WarmShowers Forum - this is another great resource for connecting with other WarmShowers users. The WS Forum is hosted on our website and open to all registered users.
- Email Newsletter is sent out to all registered users at least quarterly, but typically more often. We accept stories from the road at: storiesfromtheroad@warmshowers.org.
- The Warmshowers help desk is designed to provide assistance for technology challenges. It is important to read all FAQ and be sure to follow all instructions and wait times before accessing the Help Desk. The Help Desk is monitored by volunteers and is not available 24/7.
Warmshowers adds 50-200 new users every day
With Hosts in 175 Countries

And cyclists riding around the world...
Our hosts and cyclists, making personal connections, building new understandings and relationships around the world is the heart of Warmshowers. We facilitate all of this through technology. The growth of Warmshowers and the ability of so many of us to connect with each other happens because of the Warmshowers.Org website and apps.

With over 135,000 users registered on the Website, technology is one of the biggest focuses for the staff, board and volunteers. Up to date information, working maps, and usable apps are all pieces of a well functioning platform. Like the growth of the organization, our technology has had to evolve and change over the years to meet the needs of users and adapt to an ever changing world of tech platforms.

This year we continue to assess our website and make improvements that will make it more friendly to use for those of you accessing it on mobile devices. We are also looking to make changes that will allow tourers to better see if hosts are available.

We face more fundamental challenges too—earlier this year your ability to use the site was disrupted because of a hacker attack. Our apps also came under attack and were off-line for several weeks. We are assessing how to best support the apps so they are there when you need them. We will be asking for your input soon as to the most important functions you want to see on the apps as part of that process.

There are two things we never forget.

1. This all works because of the generosity of our wonderful hosts who open up their homes and hearts.
2. The technology side especially also works because we receive generous financial donations from our entire community, amazingly sometimes from the very hosts who have already given so much.

All of you is why this works.

If you are not available to host for some period of time for whatever reason, please mark yourself as unavailable. It is a big help to people who are touring. Thanks.
TRUST & SAFETY

We like to think that all Warmshowers guests and hosts are kind, generous and friendly people. Warmshowers guests and hosts report positive hosting experiences over 98% of the time. However, you are ultimately responsible for your personal safety and security, both as a guest and a host.

SAFETY TIPS

Here are a few tips to keep your Warmshowers experiences positive:

Guests and hosts should keep each other informed about any change in plans. If you need to cancel any plans previously made, tell the other party as soon as possible.

Guests should mention any hosting issues that are important to them. For example, if a guest is allergic to cats or does not like to be around large dogs, they should mention that in their profile to avoid an uncomfortable experience.

Hosts should include in their profile any restrictions they have. For example, if you don’t accept guests that arrive after dark or need guests to leave the house by 8am the following day, mention that in your profile.

Guests and hosts should discuss expectations about meals and kitchen privileges. Hosts should consider providing profile information about whether they offer meals to guests. Guests may want to mention any food allergies or dietary restrictions they have so a host doesn’t prepare a meal the guest can’t eat.

Trust your gut. If you are uncomfortable with a prospective guest or host for any reason, don’t agree to host or stay.
Hello Warmshowers users both near and far, I’m very excited to join the team! I am so inspired by the cyclists that are touring and the hosts that are supporting those touring, a true reflection of the nature of humans to connect with one another over the shared passion of feeling the wind in our faces while pedaling. This community is amazingly unique and the connections that are formed and the memories shared, is just a beautiful thing.

It is an honor to bring my experience in organizational management and my deep passion to make a positive impact around the globe, to the Warmshowers community and support each of you on your cycling journeys.

Most of my work is behind the scenes. Ensuring that the organization is operating smoothly from processes in our technology to facilitating donors and communications, to supporting the board in their priorities, sharing stories in our social media accounts and responding to your messages and requests. I’m always right here with you, in the background, rooting for you and ensuring we have the resources needed to keep our technology available to you.

When I’m not working on Warmshowers projects, you will find me hiking in the mountains with my pup, enjoying being a mom to two college aged kiddos, developing audio projects, or collaborating with business and non-profit partnerships. I strive for happiness and joy in all things I do.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Board Chair**: Len Bulmer: Volunteer Committee & Technology Committee; Aurora, Ontario, Canada
- **Vice Chair**: Lance Bickford: Finance Committee & Partnerships Committee; Auckland, New Zealand
- **Secretary**: Stephanie Verwys: Communications Committee; Portland, Maine, USA
- Ken Francis: Users Committee; Long Beach, California, USA
- Bruce Squire: Trust & Safety Committee; Gilbert, Arizona, USA
- Donna Price: Communications Committee & Partnership Committee; Stillwater, New Jersey, USA
- Rich Hoeg: Technology Committee; Duluth, Minnesota, USA
- Remi Laurant: Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- Stephanie Kavrakis: Volunteer Committee; California, USA
Communications Committee

Ensure that the organization’s marketing and communications are developed and maintained in a manner that is responsive to users’ needs in an effective and efficient manner within the directional framework of the organization’s Strategic Plan. Ensure that communications are clear and consistent throughout the organization with users, partners, funders, and the public.

Technical Committee

Ensure that the organization’s electronic website and applications are developed and maintained in a manner that is responsive to users’ needs in an effective and efficient manner within the directional framework of the organization’s Strategic Plan. Ensure that data held by the organization conforms with regulatory requirements, including confidentiality and retention.

Revenue Generation and Partnership Committee

Develop a donor-centered organization that ensures that resources will be available to the organization for it to carry out its Strategic Plan. Ensures that the organization leverages partnership opportunities to further its strategic mission of providing connection for those who cycle and those who support them.

Volunteer Management Committee

Ensure that the organization appropriately manages volunteers in identified roles in support of the organization’s strategic plan.

Finance Committee

Ensure the organization is financially viable and meeting its fiduciary and compliance responsibilities.

Trust and Safety Committee

Ensure the organization appropriately manages its platform and information to allow users to make reasonable decisions and take appropriate action to protect their own safety and security.

Users/Hospitality Committee

Screen new users for appropriateness with the WS community. Identify trends in new users and changes in the WS community. Identify gaps in hospitality. Identify deficits in reciprocity of users.
Reciprocal Hospitality at Work

STORIES FROM THE ROAD

When I decided to become a Warmshowers host to reciprocate the generosity my daughter received on her tours of New Zealand and Europe I knew to expect some interesting travelers. But never did I expect to house three Italianos at once, complete with an emotional reunion of sorts.

When Vincenzo, the train driver from Turin decided to join his friend Rosario (also from Turin) who is travelling around the world, in Australia for one month he never expected to meet an old friend at my place.

But that is exactly what happened. When I opened up my garage to show Enzo and Ros my 1970 Fiat 850 Sports Coupe there were tears from Vincenzo to see the same model car his family drove when he was growing up. Different colour, mine was red his blue. But most importantly made in Turin.

Jen Laurie, Wollongong, Australia

My name is Lane Hakel and way back in 1981, a friend and I road coast-to-coast. Our bikes did not have wooden wheels, but this was obviously well before anything as helpful as Warmshowers was around. While it was a long time ago, it was not before generosity of spirit had been invented and on several occasions on our trip we were simply invited to stay in people’s homes even if that home was an oil well drilling rig in eastern Wyoming. It was wonderful.

Fast forward forty years. For the past several years, my wife, Heidi, and I have enjoyed paying the kindnesses shown to me back to cyclists today. Over seven years we’ve hosted about fifty people. I’m guessing this is more traffic than most people see through their Warmshowers participation, but it is helpful that we do live about two hundred yards off of Adventure Cycling’s Northern Tier route.

This is the story of one of the night that I like to think of as The Perfect Storm: Warmshowers edition. Four summers ago, we were contacted by by two different groups of riders for the same night, one heading East and the other heading West. That was a new one for us and sounded like fun, so we said "Yes!" to both. Improbably, on the day of their arrival, two more groups contacted us on short notice, one headed east and another headed north. Obviously the answer was, "Hell yeah!" Four separate groups of riders, all arrived on the same day. 14 people! It was an absolute blast. All 16 of us were swapping stories, encouragement, route advice, dog warnings, and everything else late into the night. My wife and I ordered the pizza, lit the fire, and sat back and enjoyed the energy and excitement this "perfect storm" created. It was awesome, and it is my favorite cycling memory.

Lane Hakel Astoria to Boston ’81 Heidi and Lane Warmshowers ’12
A STORY OF RECIPROCAL HOSPITALITY  Leonardo Pavone, WS User

My wife and I hosted a bunch of cyclists last summer (usually Warmshowers has very little activity on winter here in Ireland), Alex and Raphaella from Vienna, Justin from Canada, Yuri and Kate from Moscow. All were really good experiences that enriched us quite a lot.

The reciprocal hospitality story we had with Yuri and Kate was this: We hosted Yuri and Kate in Dublin twice during their Irish tour, when they just arrived in Ireland and before leaving the country after the tour. But the second time it was only my wife, I couldn't see the guys that came over from Russia, because I was in... Russia :)

I happen to be a football fan, and that week Argentina was playing for the FIFA World Cup in Russia, far away in Kazan, and there I was following my team. The guys at my place and I on their homeland!

Three days after that match they left Ireland, and I was in Moscow for two days to get my flight back to Ireland. AND, I spent the night in Yuri’s and Kate’s place for sure! It was totally unexpected but great to see them again!

Yuri and Kate in the photo, Yuri and Leo having dinner in Moscow, and the chocolates and homemade jam they gave me as a present!
Thank You to the Hosts & Cyclists

Warmshowers doesn't work without a network of incredible people willing to welcome strangers into their homes. Thank you to each and every host that has helped touring cyclists -- from a warm shower, to a meal to a pick up or rescue from the road. Your service to the cycling community is profound. You have changed bicycle touring with your openness.

Thank you to the touring cyclists that share their stories of the road, that inspire hosts and families with their tales and keep building new friendships around the world.

You are how we achieve our Mission & Vision.
May the Wind Be In Your Favor

SAFE JOURNEYS FOR 2019 & BEYOND

WARM SHOWERS