

Your Chapters New Website

First, the Domain Name...

There is much involved with the design and development of a website. The first thing you'll need is a "domain name". This is a name that can be easily found on the internet by typing it into the address bar, it is also known as the URL or Universal Resource Locator. The District's "domain name" is www.argwrra.org. The best domain name will be one that names your organization. You may have to choose from a variation if the one you want is already taken. The yearly fee for a domain name varies from around \$7 to \$25 a year. Your domain name needs to be renewed yearly in order to keep the name and the site that goes with it - and there are many companies on the internet just waiting to grab your domain name should that happen, and then sell it back to you - for big bucks! Make sure this doesn't happen to your chapter.

A few of the Domain Name sellers are:

www.dotster.com, www.godaddy.com, www.buydomains.com and www.internic.net

As an alternative you can elect to use a sub-domain of the District's domain name. This works differently. If you elect this option then your "domain name" will include the District's domain name. For instance, you want to use www.chapter-xyz.org but that name is taken. You can have the District host your domain name for you. Your domain name would then become: "chapter-xyz.argwrra.org". This type of domain name is called a sub-domain since it is added to the parent domain.

Something you need to know about a sub-domain is that you cannot take your sub-domain name with you if you move to another service. If you owned the primary domain name you can take it wherever you want, it is yours. Since the sub-domain contains the primary domain name as part of your domain name then you do not own it and cannot take it with you if you decide you want to host it yourself.

The District will provide the sub-domain service at no charge because it cost us nothing. A sub-domain takes effect immediately but it can take up to 72 hours for a primary domain to take effect.

Then the "Host"...

Your domain name points to your web host. You will need a place to host your web site. The web "host" provides the place where your website resides. The District offers hosting to its chapters for a fee of \$50 per year. We will, at your request, also set up a sub-domain at no extra charge. See the above discussion on sub-domains. The District Webmaster administrators the site and can provide a personal level of support that just is not available from a large company.

Next there is the Design and Development of the Website...

Websites are designed using a variety of coding languages. One of the main ones is called "html." Here is an example of what the html coding looks like:

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<p align="center"><font color="#990000" size="2">Copyright 2009 Arkansas District Gold Wing Road Riders Association. All rights reserved.</font> </p>
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On a web page, the above code would appear as:

Copyright 2009 Arkansas District Gold Wing Road Riders Association. All rights reserved.

Graphic elements are used, creating a unique look to the website with a colored or textured background, including a masthead, buttons and bullets, photos and various other design elements. Finishing touches might include a counter, email links, a contact list or a form.

You will need to create the web site. There are a number of options here. I cannot begin to tell you all of the options but here are a few ideas. You will need to be creative or find someone to do it for you. Take a look at help.argwrra.org. There is a lot of software to get you started. It is by no means all inclusive; you will want to look around and find software that you like and speaks' to your needs.

You can select from WYSIWYG Software (What You See Is What You Get). You may want to use software you already have. Microsoft Publisher will work although I have never used it to write a web page, it has the ability. If you are familiar with it, you may want to give it a try. In times gone by "REAL PROGRAMMERS" used Notepad. It will work but you must really know your stuff to do very much. You can use Google to fine web authoring software. There is a lot out there.

Learning to program a web page isn't all that difficult. A good place to start might be at W3Schools.com. There you can learn almost everything there is to know about programming a web site. You may want to start at the Learn HTML button in the upper left portion of the intro page. Take your time and work your way through the site. The course is free and if you wish you can take a test at the end and receive a diploma. Taking the test cost \$95.00 but it is totally optional. All of the information is free for the taking.

Here's How to Get Started...

Here's what you'll need:

1. A preferred domain name.
2. Basic information about your chapter: Name, address, phone #, etc.
3. A description of what you are offering on your website (meeting place and times, services, rides, information, photos, graphics, etc.)
4. A list of what you'd like to include on your website.
5. Software needed to write the web page and then a FTP (File Transfer Protocol) Program to upload your web site to the server. Some software authoring packages include the FTP program as part of the complete package.

Once the website is designed, you will then "upload" the site to the Internet. It will then be "live" for anyone to visit. That is what the FTP program is for. I will provide the information needed for uploading and help you get connected.

I will be happy to help guide you to the right software. The software you choose will determine the look and feel of your web site. It will help or hinder your development depending on what software you choose. There are just so many choices and options out there that I could not begin to discuss all of them.

Submitting to Search Engines...

The next step will be to submit your site to the various search engines so it can be easily found through keywords or phrases, in addition to your actual website address. I will offer to work with you to develop a list of "keywords" and to create "metatags" - invisible to the viewer, but important to the search engine 'bots and 'spiders' - the automated programs which will 'read' your site, and then list it in the search engine according to the appropriate categories.

Ready to get started?

Contact me via email: webmaster@argwrra.org or (501) 940-1933 and I will help you get started.