



## Welcome to Leader Lines

In this edition of LeaderLines, a monthly eNewsletter written especially for Mountaineers volunteer leaders, we discuss climbing as an Olympic sport, some tips on communicating with angry volunteers, and introduce the consultants performing our risk management review. As always, all of this applies to *someone* but we don't expect everyone one to be interested in all of it. Take a look and see what applies to your unique role in The Mountaineers - or your life in general.

[I welcome your suggestions for future story ideas](#) and thank you for all the ways you support our mission.

**Chris Williams,**  
Leadership Development Manager

---

## Climbing becomes an Olympic Sport in 2020

As a Mountaineer volunteer, you may be asked about the addition of climbing to the Tokyo Olympics. In an attempt by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to "[take sport to the youth](#)," five new sports will be added: skateboarding, surfing, karate, baseball, **and...sport climbing**. The popularity of these sports with youth was a major factor in adding them, and the International Federation of Sport Climbing cites growth statistics indicating that approximately [35 million people participate in climbing worldwide](#) up from (25mil in 2013) and that [1,000 people enter climbing gyms for the first time EVERY DAY](#) in the US.

The exact nature of the climbing competition [has not yet been determined](#), but will involve the three disciplines of [Lead, Boulder, and Speed](#). Mountaineer Board Member and former AAC President Steve Swenson discussed the growth of climbing [at our first Leadership Conference](#), and it remains a prime opportunity to enhance our program offerings to attract new members. Today, more people enter the climbing world through sport climbing than any other discipline and they often come to us with a remarkable set of climbing skills already.

As we carry out our mission to help people "learn about and enjoy" the outdoors, remember your activity committees have tremendous latitude and freedom to develop innovative programs to cater to potential new members. If you have an idea how to incorporate skilled sport climbers into Mountaineers programs - let us know! Your committee can create programs to bring more people into the fold and ultimately serve as volunteers. We need your ideas and innovation to remain as relevant innovators. Contact your committee and share your good ideas! Make sure to also keep tabs on the [progressive climbing education](#) project that is underway.

---

## Tips on What NOT to do with an Angry Volunteer

As a volunteer leader, you're (sometimes) put in a position to deal with another volunteer's complaints.

You presumably deal with complaining in your everyday life too. [This VolunteerMatch.org blog](#) came across my inbox and seemed worthy of sharing:

#### **DON'T:**

- **Smile at an angry volunteer:** it can be perceived as condescending.
- **Tell an angry volunteer how they feel:** you risk them arguing with your assessment.
- **Push a solution:** they may have their own ideas and want to argue with you more.
- **Take over the conversation:** give them time to calm down before sharing your own story. It ensures they will have said everything they wanted to say.

#### **DO:**

- **Use a neutral expression and attentive body posture:** show that you're listening with an open mind.
- **Use empathetic, neutral phrases:** "I can see you're passionate about this" is better than "I can see that you're really angry."
- **Lead a person towards their own solutions:** "What do you think should be done in this situation" is better than "I know what you should do."
- **Elicit details about their complaint:** "Tell me more about that" and "what happened next" will get you more useful information and show that you are listening.

After dealing with thousands of conflicts, both inside and outside of the Mountaineers, I've learned most problems escalate because some of these strategies are abandoned when conversations get emotional - it's human nature. We can all work to model these skills in the future. I guarantee that our programs will thrive and grow because of it.

---

### **Risk Management Review**

In mid-July, we signed a contract with Outdoor Safety Institute (OSI) to conduct a risk management review of Mountaineers programs. They'll be reviewing paperwork and documentation, speaking with volunteers and staff, looking at equipment, observing activities, and more. [Check out our blog](#) to learn more about the goals of this review and your role in helping to affirm our ongoing commitment to safety.

---

### **Quick Hits**

- **How Relevant is Outdoor Leadership to the Workforce?** One industry titan thinks it's highly relevant and useful to developing business leadership skills in a way that no other form of education can replicate! Learn what the [co-founder of Netflix thinks](#).
- **Group Dynamics:** A significant number of safety incidents show how group dynamics can contribute to an error in tactical judgment. Millions of pages - literally - have been written about this subject. One of the largest companies in America recently studied it and concluded that improving outcomes relies most on one simple concept - being nice. For insights into how the best teams perform, [read more here](#).
- **The "dirtbag" image is not actually very "counter-culture":** From the perspective of one Asian-American man, the idea that "dirtbag" climbers are "non-conformists" was strikingly at

odds with the reality that, in his experience, they were typically all "well-adjusted, heterosexual, cis white men - the absolute pinnacle of privilege." In spite of his success in the sport, he often felt excluded from a cultural perspective and feels that climbers of color, LGBTQ, and women need to get more active in climbing (and, I say, all outdoor pursuits). [An important perspective to consider.](#)

- **Change of plans with your trip?** When the weather decides that your trip just isn't going to work, remember that you can edit the activity and change the "route/place" in your trip listing. If you do this before the trip, the feedback survey that gets sent out afterwards will be updated as well and your participants will be more likely to respond. Just go into the activity and "edit" it. There is a link to "Change Route/Place" in the "Route/Place" tab. As always, [many helpful tips are listed in Leader Resources.](#)
- **Safety Committee Blog Posts:** Great things to [think about, learn, or remind ourselves about here.](#) If you have a contribution, write up a blog. [As a leader, you have that power!](#)
- **Putting Volunteer Experience on Your Resume:** [Consider these tips for how to best incorporate your volunteerism on a resume](#) when applying for a position. Good stuff - you deserve the credit!

### **Stay Safe Out There!**

**Miles and Elevation:** This year our members have travelled **106,261 miles** in Mountaineers programs (that's just 9000 miles away from our total in all of 2015), and have accumulated **31,276,299** feet of elevation gain (2 million short of last year with 3 months to go).

**Leader Badges Issued:** This year, you have issued **187 new leader badges. In all of 2015, only 200 were awarded.** Just like our combined distance, the pace is picking up, indicating increased Leadership Development across the organization. Great work, however, **the growth of membership is still outpacing the growth of leaders necessary to support those who are joining.** Signing up for certain trips will continue to be difficult until we re-establish a higher ratio of leaders to members than we have now. We thank you for these efforts to grow the organization though; this is a great "problem" to have!