

Achilles[™]
INTERNATIONAL



**MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS
HANDBOOK**



Chapter Handbook

Our mission is to enable people with all types of disabilities to participate in mainstream athletics, promote personal achievement, enhance self-esteem, and lower barriers to living a full life.

Achilles has chapters in communities throughout the world. Each of our local chapters are founded and run by dedicated volunteers who generously give their time and energy to recruit members, volunteers, organize workouts, and secure funding.

All Achilles chapters within and outside the U.S. operate as affiliates of the Achilles International organization. While each chapter may find a variety of ways to recruit, publicize, and support themselves, all chapters are administered under the same guidelines and all have the same mission: To enable people with all types of disabilities to participate in mainstream athletics in order to promote personal achievement, enhance self esteem, and lower barriers to living a fulfilling life.

Chapter Charter Agreement

The first step in starting an Achilles chapter is to register with our headquarters in New York by completing a Chapter Charter Agreement. This form provides us with the required information to enter your chapter into our database and defines the headquarters/chapter relationships.

A copy of this agreement is provided at the end of this booklet. You can download a pdf of the agreement from our website, at www.achillesinternational.com/chapters, or you can phone 212-354-0300 to request a copy.

You will be required to list your chapter name on the agreement. The naming convention for chapters is as follows: "Achilles International, _(name of your city or town)_ Chapter" or "Achilles, _(name of your city or town)_ Chapter". If there is more than one Achilles chapter in your city, you can localize the name further, i.e.: "Achilles, _(name of your city or town – East Side)_ Chapter"

Once your chapter has been registered with headquarters, we will send you Achilles t-shirts, which we distribute to all new members. The t-shirts are a good way to enhance a sense of community among members and volunteers. They also serve as a visible identity for the Achilles organization.

Please keep in mind that Achilles International is the sole owner of the organization, name, and logo. Use of the Achilles name is subject to the approval of the organization. Use of the Achilles logo is subject to logo usage guidelines, which can be found in the Chapters section of our website.



Attracting Members and Volunteers

There are many ways to let people know about your chapter. Word-of-mouth is one of the most powerful ways. Tell your friends and family about Achilles and ask them to spread the word to their friends. Find out if there are runners clubs in your area and speak to the leadership of those clubs. If they have an online message board, ask if you can post a notice about Achilles there.

Send information about the club and workout dates and locations to local newspaper and magazine calendar and events sections. Also, contact sports writers and feature editors of your local media and pitch a story about Achilles to them. If you are just starting your chapter, make that the focus of your story. Talk about the need for disabled athletes to be able to participate in mainstream sporting events. Discuss the benefits of sports activities to people with disabilities including; building strength; building confidence; generating a sense of accomplishment and confidence; and inspiring them to strive for more.

If your chapter has already been established, use some of the inspirational stories of your members and volunteers to pitch your story to the media. Achilles success stories are the best endorsement of the value of the organization.

When members and volunteers join your chapter, please do the following:

1. Each member and volunteer must register with Achilles by filling out a membership or volunteer information form. These forms allow both the chapter and the international organization to track the size of our membership, geographic dispersion, and communicate with them. The forms can either be filled out online on our website, www.achillesinternational.com, in the Members and Volunteers section, or downloaded as a pdf from the same web address and mailed or faxed to the national office. If the downloaded form is used, please retain a copy of the completed form for your files.
2. Once the member or volunteer has joined your chapter and registered with headquarters, you can send them a welcome package. This consists of:
 - a. An Achilles tee-shirt
 - b. A welcome letter written on Achilles letterhead and including the days and times of your workouts
 - c. Contact information for you, chapter officers, and other members and volunteers
 - d. Information on upcoming races or races in which your chapter regularly participates

Note: New member/volunteer packages can also be sent from the NY office. These packages include more detailed information on the national organization. For more information, contact the main office at 212-354-0300



Creating an Online Presence

Several chapters have created their own websites in order to communicate to their members as well as market the organization to potential members, volunteers, and sponsors. If someone in your chapter would like to create their own site and one of your members has the skills and time to help, contact the main office at 212-354-0300 for information on site graphics, brand messaging, and format. All chapter websites will follow the same naming conventions, i.e., the Achilles International name, an underscore, and then the chapter name. So the Philadelphia chapter would be: www.achillesinternational_philadelphia.org (or _phila.org, or _philly.org).

Chapters can also use the “Pages” application in Facebook to create an online presence. This is not only less expensive than a site, but it is immediately searchable and visible to the very large Facebook universe. Facebook “Pages” allows for some site customization through simple html-like programming, and users can customize their Facebook URL, which looks like this: <http://facebook.dj/yournamehere>. Chapters would follow a similar naming convention for their Facebook URLs, i.e., using the Philadelphia example again: http://facebook.dj/achillesinternational_philly.

If you are inclined to use other social media to communicate and recruit, please adhere to the same naming conventions as for your website and/or facebook page.

Select a Chapter Captain

The chapter captain will be the primary communication contact between your chapter and the New York office. This person will be responsible for ensuring that member and volunteer forms are sent to headquarters and that we’re notified of member information changes when they occur.

The Captain is the person who will sign the agreement with headquarters. If the Captain is replaced, the agreement must be re-signed by the new Captain.

Aside from electing or appointing a Chapter Captain, there are no other internal structure requirements. The chapter can opt to elect or appoint other officers and determine terms limits for those positions.

Email

It’s a good idea to set up a chapter captain’s email account that is separate from your personal or business email. This is so that chapter communications won’t get lost within your other emails and so that, should the captain of the chapter change, the account can switch over to the new person. You can create this account for free using any one of a number of free email options, such as a Gmail account with Google or a Yahoo email account.



Chapter Reports

Chapters are required to file quarterly reports to headquarters. These reports should include any changes in chapter leadership or contact information, updates on programs, races and activities, member and volunteer news, and clippings for or links to photos and media coverage. There is a chapter report form template included in the back of this booklet, and a digital version of the template can be downloaded from the website in the Chapters section.

Make sure you keep copies of your filed reports so new members and chapter leadership can build upon your achievements.

Scheduling Workouts

Create a regular workout schedule. Once or twice a week, one evening, one weekend day, is the most common schedule.

Determine the best date and time for your weekly workout/meetings, when most people will be available, especially your Chapter Captain(s), who should be there most of the time. Allow 1-2 hours for total workout time.

Always start your workouts with WARM-UPS – a series of stretching and breathing exercises led by a member or volunteer to relax the neck, shoulders, arms and legs according to what's appropriate for everyone's ability. Two or more people constitute an official workout, rain or shine.

Picking a Meet-up Location

Your meet-up location should be conveniently located for the group. Many chapters look for runner-friendly businesses to become their sponsor and meet-up spot. Ideally, they could offer a meeting spot that offers parking, storage, and posting of upcoming workouts and events.

Running gear stores can be a great location. You might offer to promote them in your marketing materials in exchange for having them list you on their website and in-store bulletin board. They also might offer discounts on running shirts and jackets, in addition to spreading the word on their website, bulletin board, and check-out counter! Offer to email them information about your group for use on their website. Try to create reciprocal value for them, for example send them photos of members of your chapter wearing running gear purchased from their store.



Financials

Raising Money

Look to your local community for sponsorship money. Find businesses that would be willing to support your team in exchange for cross-promotional opportunities such as putting their business logo on the back of your Achilles tee-shirts, including their name in your press mentions, and including their name and logo on your website. You can also do research on the Internet for local foundations or non-profit organizations that makes grants to programs for people with disabilities.

You can also request in-kind donations, which can cover items such as transportation, shirts, food, or water.

Banking

Set up a chapter bank account for your chapter's funds. You might also consider getting a Visa Debit card for charging team expenses such as airline tickets, race fees, and team apparel.

Document all of your expenses. Over time, this will help you determine your budget needs, which will give you a target for fundraising. Achilles headquarters can help you estimate a budget for your first year.

Find out if your state will extend the tax-exempt courtesy for expenses directly related to Achilles chapter activity. For example, we have tax-exempt status in Florida, yet the California tax code does not offer tax-exemptions for our type of non-profit.

Races

Watch your local papers, check the Internet, and contact local running shops for upcoming run/walks that your members can participate in. Contact the race director if you don't see a category that fits your needs. For example, one chapter saw a race they wanted to participate in, but it didn't have a category for walkers. They contacted the director and told him about their Achilles group and the purpose and benefits of the organization. The race director agreed to make a new start time and category for the Achilles members. He also awarded medals to all the Achilles participants.

Achilles International will help you acquire any special equipment chapter members might need for races or marathons. To inquire about types of equipment and availability, please contact Joe Traum, Equipment Director, jtraum@achillesinternational.org

We can help provide tee-shirts to chapters at no cost, or a reduced cost, depending on quantity. If a chapter wants to create their own tee shirt, for example to accommodate a sponsor's logo, the design must be approved by Achilles headquarters. Achilles members and volunteers must wear Achilles tee shirts for all races.



The ING New York City Marathon

Achilles will assist with entry fees, but because of our own budget demands, we are only able to do so for a limited number of chapters. Be sure to make your requests early. Please note that preference will go to chapters who have filed the most complete and timely quarterly reports.

Chapters are responsible for their own funds for transportation and accommodations, so be sure to start early to raise money to send your participating members to New York. You should plan for a 3-4 day stay.. At least one person from each chapter should be present to attend the Friday afternoon Achilles Chapter Development Session.

If you don't have enough funding to cover all members who want to come to NY for the marathon, send your best representatives, and start building your sponsorships now for next year.

Have Fun

Enjoy other activities as a team. One of the most powerful features of Achilles groups is the sense of community, camaraderie and support that is generated. Plan group activities outside of the context of running, such as going out to dinner once a month, going bowling, or seeing a ball game.

By spending time socializing in the community, you'll help to educate others about disabilities and illustrate that our similarities are much greater than our differences.