

# Inform And Activate Your Own Pro-Family Network Without Leaving Your Home!

A few years back, legislation was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives that threatened to give the government more control over private and home education in this nation. Several Christian and policy groups saw that this bill could have a devastating impact and began a nationwide effort to contact people who would be adversely effected.

From national offices, calls were made to state leaders who passed information to local offices. Within hours, phone chains and fax and e-mail networks were activated.

The reaction was immediate and overwhelming. Soon, elected officials at all levels of government were hearing from constituents voicing their concern. Phones rang off the hook. Fax machines printed out messages. Letters poured in by the thousands.

Legislators realized how their constituents wanted them to vote on this issue, and the measure was defeated.

## “THE BRITS ARE COMING!”

The concept of the grassroots information network is not new. Think about the early days of the American Revolution. At a crucial time, Paul Revere received a message about enemy troops and quickly passed that information on to neighboring communities.

Paul Revere was part of a communications network. While seemingly primitive by our standards, the goals behind Revere’s actions were the same goals that encompass a grassroots information network today:

- 1) informing people about controversial issues in a timely manner;
- 2) motivating your friends and neighbors to take action;
- 3) mobilizing people to respond quickly on critical issues;
- 4) unifying independent groups on issues of common concern;
- 5) creating opportunities for practi-

cal involvement in current issues.

These goals encompass the essence of grassroots activity. While they may seem lofty, these goals are easier to attain now than ever before!

## YOU CAN DO IT TOO!

Like Paul Revere, you can effectively rally citizens to respond during a time of crisis through a phone/fax/e-mail network.

Such an information network provides a simple vehicle for making an immediate impact. And it is the key to winning most battles—especially those that require mobilizing support at the grassroots level in a very short time frame.

And best of all, a phone/fax/e-mail network requires minimal commitment from those involved. People can take part at little or no cost and without expending a lot of energy or time.

Remember, if each church member, coalition member, or neighborhood leader would do one thing a week—vote, write/call about an issue, visit an elected official, etc.—that would be over 50 actions a year! That makes a difference!

## HOME-BASED ACTIVISM

Another aspect of information networks that makes them so doable is that you never have to leave your home to make an impact! You don’t have to ride around the neighborhood on a horse like Paul Revere, yelling the news in the middle of the night. With cellular phones, computers, and fax machines, it is easier than ever and can cost very little to gather and share information.

But don’t think everything has to be “high-tech” to be effective. Sometimes simpler is better.

Often people get so enamored with the “gadgets” that they forget to remember the purpose of a network—getting the right information to the right people in a timely manner so

action can be taken.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Where should you begin when building a grassroots information network? You only need three things: a network, a medium, and a message.

**Launching your network.** Getting your network started is as easy as opening your personal address book. Friends and family are a great place to start.

*Continued*

## TESTIMONY A Vision to Grow

If you said that Anna Mae French does not strike you as a political activist, you would be right—for most of her life. That all changed when she saw an invitation in her church bulletin to attend an “issues awareness meeting.” She admits she was completely oblivious to America’s cultural decline at the time; still, she made a commitment to attend the meeting.

One week later, Anna Mae sat in the church choir room learning of the horrors of the abortion industry, the deterioration of Christian liberties, and the progress of the homosexual movement in America. At that point, Anna Mae vowed to become actively involved in restoring America’s culture.

Though a novice in the political arena, Anna Mae held a firm belief: “I knew that I only needed the truth—that was my best weapon—but I needed a way to get the truth in front of other people.”

While continuing to attend her church’s issues awareness meetings, she decided to take it a step further. Anna Mae created a network of phone numbers and mailing addresses. List in hand, she began calling and alerting group members of the next meeting and absent members to what they missed. As her network grew, so did the church’s issues awareness meetings.

As technology proliferated, Anna Mae began to use her fax machine and,

*See Testimony on back*

Your network may be made up of individuals in a small Bible study group or the members of a Sunday school class. The network can be extended to other groups as well.

**Finding the right medium.** Next, you need a medium. Since most people have a phone, start there with a simple telephone chain. The leader starts the message by calling three or four others. They in turn call three or four who call others.

Fax machines create excellent citizenship networks (see guidelines below). If you have access to e-mail, a similar system can be set up between individuals by sending information via the Internet. This has the advantage of going right to a person's desk rather than sitting on a fax machine.

**Setting guidelines.** No matter which medium (or media) you choose, be sure the lines of communication are clearly defined:

- 1) Who is responsible for contacting whom and in what time frame?
- 2) What happens when someone can't be contacted?
- 3) Who determines what items are passed on?

## FAX NETWORK TIPS

Here are some specific tips to help you launch an effective fax network:

- 1) The leader should have a fax machine that can store programmable phone numbers.
- 2) Interested activists should be encouraged to get a fax machine or set up fax software on their computers.
- 3) Program your fax or computer fax to make fax calls at night, thus avoiding peak business hours and saving you time sitting in front of a fax machine.
- 4) Fax clear copies—preferably originals.
- 5) Fax on a regular schedule (weekly) unless there is an urgent issue.

- 6) Limit faxes to two pages.
- 7) Only the fax leader should distribute faxes to the entire network.
- 8) Divide your list into two groups: direct fax lines and shared phone lines. Shared phone lines must be called prior to sending the fax.

There is one important tip for e-mail networks: Use the "bcc"/"blind carbon copy" feature when you send the e-mails, so your members names and e-mail addresses will not be revealed and their privacy will be protected.

## WIDENING YOUR CIRCLE

If you want to reach beyond your own circle of friends or organization, these are some simple steps you can take.

**Identify like-minded groups.** Open up the Yellow Pages and begin calling churches and other groups that may share your concerns on issues such as education, crime, right-to-life, taxes, pornography, homosexuality, and parental rights. Ask to speak to the pastor or spokesperson. Tell him or her what you are doing and ask if he or she would like to be a part of your network.

**Become a good networker.** Whenever you are at a gathering, be quick to identify people who may be interested in your network. Carry a sample of your latest communication. Swap business cards and offer to include them in your network.

**Other guidelines.** As you build your list, remember these points:

- a) Be sure to get correct spellings of all names of contact people.
- b) Ask for fax numbers and e-mail addresses right away.
- c) Provide a phone number for feedback and/or phone/address changes.

## FINAL POINTERS

No matter what form of communication your network takes on, it is crit-

ical to establish a few guidelines:

**1. Clarify the goal of each communication.** What do you want to accomplish? If you are asking people to pray, say so. If you want them to take action—such as write a letter or call a politician—make the request clear. And be sure all information (phone numbers and/or addresses) is double-checked before releasing it on the network. Proper documentation assures that your information is accurate and gives credibility to your fax network.

**2. Keep each news item simple and direct.** Complicated items get garbled. People will be more likely to relay the message immediately if it only takes a moment. Simple requests always get a better response than complicated ones.

**3. If appropriate, list a phone number or address where more information can be obtained.** People with a greater interest in any topic may want to do more, and by directing them, you further the cause.

**4. Send the phone numbers/addresses/e-mails of elected officials, Congress, the White House, etc., each time you request that your network take action.**

## READY, SET, GROW!

Remember—phone/fax/e-mail chains are almost organic in their nature. How they develop and evolve is beyond anyone's control. Your network will always be changing, so do not be disheartened if there are seasons where the network loses members. As issues come and go, your network will grow accordingly, and like the watchmen posted on the wall in biblical times and Paul Revere in our own nation's history, you can play a key role in alerting others to critical issues.

*Contact the CENTER FOR RECLAIMING AMERICA for more information about how to establish your own network.*

*Testimony from page 1*

later, an e-mail network, to distribute news and announcements. Now, once a week, Anna Mae and the moderator of the group compile the week's pressing issues, advise members of an appropriate action to take, and e-mail the information to the network. Anna Mae claims it is essential to keep it simple: "People lose focus when you provide too much information."

Most importantly, Anna Mae advises, "Make sure that the people in your network are taking action. Information will not restore this nation; action will."

The issues awareness group, born from her church's initial group of six, has grown into a thriving network of hundreds. Anna Mae French's passion and perseverance has awakened many citizens from their apathetic slumbers, and now they, too, are engaging in America's cultural battles.

The CENTER FOR RECLAIMING AMERICA is an outreach of Coral Ridge Ministries. Our goal is to connect citizens like you to vital resources so you can reclaim your community for Christ. For more information, contact us:

Phone: (877) 725-8872

Fax: (954) 351-3325

E-mail: [cfra@coralridge.org](mailto:cfra@coralridge.org)

Web: [www.reclaimamerica.org](http://www.reclaimamerica.org)

Address: CENTER FOR RECLAIMING AMERICA,  
P.O. Box 632, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302