



PUBLIC RELATIONS HANDBOOK

Prepared for the Multiple District 19 Council of Governors

Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

Public Relations is an ever-changing endeavor. New media means new techniques and new customers. Lions Clubs need to relate to a different, younger audience.

This is not an all-inclusive handbook. This is to be a starting place. Public Relations Chairpersons need to be creative and adaptable.

PR involves all forms of communication – from writing new releases and distributing promotional flyers, to talking to friends, family and co-workers. Equally important are actions, such as wearing a Lions lapel pin or marching in a parade.

Good public relations – informing the community that your club is building a park, conducting a vision screening or collecting eyeglasses – will foster community support.

Public relations can even support your club's membership efforts. People want to belong to a successful and reliable organization. By actively promoting your club and its programs, you'll be projecting a positive image in the community and showing that your club is worth joining.

PUBLIC RELATIONS CHAIRPERSON'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Though PR is every Lion's responsibility, the PR Chairperson is in charge of the following:

- Communicating information about your club to the community, including the media.
- Keeping your club aware of the PR efforts and results.
- Providing information to LCI about outstanding Lions programs and activities by using the "Submit a Story" on LCI's web site (www.lionsclubs.org)

To get started:

- Set Goals – review your club's previous efforts. Evaluate what worked, what did not and why.
- Determine a PR Budget for the year – effective public relations programs can be done on a limited budget. Be sure to budget for ongoing public relations efforts and special events.
- Plan Ahead – planning and timely execution are vital for your public relations efforts.
- Create a Timeline – determine how and when you will promote your club and when you will start publicity for your club's special events. But be flexible – newsworthy activities may come up during the year.
- Discuss Your Plan – meet with your club president and the chairpersons of your club's various events and projects.
- Be Persistent – keeping your club visible in the community isn't something that will happen overnight; it takes time.
- Keep a Record – note to whom and when you sent news releases and who used them. Save articles about your club. Include the publication's name and issue

date on the clipping. Record broadcasts of interviews and other radio and television coverage, and share it with your club.

- Inform Your Club – report regularly on your publicity efforts and results at club meetings. Write articles about public relations activities for your club newsletter. Explain how your club benefits from good public relations

IS IT NEWSWORTHY?

News offers information about activities or events are of interest to, affect or involve the public, such as the dedication of a new Lions Park. Some projects, although worthwhile, may not be “newsworthy”. To determine what is newsworthy, ask yourself, “Would a non-Lion find this interesting or useful?”

Public Service Announcements gives information about a specific topic to help or assist the public, such as describing the warning signs of diabetes or encouraging volunteerism.

Decide what activities are unique and may be of interest to the media. To be considered newsworthy, they should be about timely events or activities that:

- Enhance your local community (parks, school programs).
- Involve the general public or other community groups (fundraisers, eyeglass collections).
- Perform a public service (vision/health screening).

Read local newspapers, watch television news programs and listen to a variety of local radio stations to get a feel for what is likely to be covered by your news media.

Get involved early in the planning of Lions projects to determine their PR potential. The following are examples of club activities with possible news value:

- Service projects aiding community groups, such as disabled, elderly or vision impaired.
- Eyeglass recycling / Sight Night / Recycle for Sight
- Programs for youth / Scholarships / Peace Poster Contest
- Special fundraising events / club anniversary / major donations
- Lions Clubs International Foundations (LCIF) grants / disaster aid
- Club elections / volunteer recognition / Melvin Jones recognition
- Holiday projects

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

Create a media list by compiling the names of newspapers, radio and television stations in your area, along with mailing and email addresses and telephone numbers. Call each media outlet to determine the editors or reporters to whom you should send information about Lions activities. Verify the spelling of names and ask about deadlines. Also ask how they want to receive information, such as by email, mail or fax. In general, information should be sent to the following:

- General assignment editor at small daily or weekly newspapers
- Community events reporters at large daily newspapers

- News and/or public service director at radio and television stations

Every Lions news story will not be published or broadcast. Local newspaper editors and the news director of a radio or television station decide which stories will be printed or broadcast each day. Be persistent. Continue to look for good stories and angles that make Lions stories newsworthy.

SHARING THE MESSAGE

Use a combination of the following PR tools and resources to share your message with the media and community members.

Club Fact Sheet

A club fact sheet will provide background information about your club to reporters. Include a fact sheet with all new releases. You can also use fact sheets as handouts during community events.

News Releases

News releases answer six key questions in the first two paragraphs: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Subsequent paragraphs should provide additional information in descending order of importance. Simply written and fact-filled releases are more likely to be published.

To increase the chances that your releases will be used:

- Be sure that it is about a newsworthy event.
- Keep paragraphs and sentences short, limiting them to a single idea.
- Use quotes to enhance basic information.
- Include the name of the appropriate contact person at the top of the page along with a daytime telephone number and email address.
- Follow a standard press release format (see example release at the end of this guide)
- At least two weeks before your event, distribute news releases to editors, reporters and news directors on your media list who cover your particular type of story.
- If you have a major story, follow up with each media outlet one week before the event. Offer to answer questions and outline photo opportunities. Be positive and enthusiastic in explaining why their audience would be interested in your story.

Call your local media outlets to suggest a feature to a reporter or editor in a situation when a news release might not tell the story well. Get a reporter interested in covering a story, such as the importance of volunteers in your community rather than covering a specific event or activity.

INTERVIEWS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

An appropriate club spokesperson should be prepared to provide accurate information with enthusiasm and confidence. Following are tips for successful interviews:

- Know your facts. Be ready to expand upon the who, what, when, where, why and how stated in media material.
- Prepare Key Message Points. Rather than answer a question with a simple “yes” or “no,” use the interviewer’s question as a bridge to your key messages. Practice answering likely questions prior to an interview.
- Give Short, Clear Responses. Mention your main points early in the interview in a few brief, clear sentences. If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to find out the answer and follow up immediately.
- Mention Your Club’s Name Often. Avoid saying only “I” or “we.”
- Watch What You Say. Never give “off the record” comments.
- Dress Appropriately. Always wear your Lions pin. For television, avoid pinstripes, white shirts, loud prints and too much jewelry.
- Smile. Be conversational. Let the reporter see that you enjoy being a Lion.

POST-EVENT PUBLICITY

Report the results of your programs and fundraisers to the community through the following:

- News Release – prepare a brief, one page news release highlighting the project’s results. Include photos.
- Letter to the Editor – write a thank you note to the community.
- Display Advertisement – placing a small ad thanking the community for its support. Many publications offer non-profit discounts. Some will even donate unsold space free of charge.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)

PSAs are brief (10 to 30 seconds) messages aired at no charge on radio and television stations as a community service. They must benefit the community, not just your club.

There are PSAs available to Lions Clubs International and samples are attached to this publication.

When writing a PSA, brevity and clarity are of the utmost importance since at the most you have 10 to 30 seconds to communicate your message. Messages about preventing blindness, serving youth, fundraising events that benefit the community and public events sponsored by your club are appropriate subjects. PSAs need to:

- Get the listener’s attention.
- Show how listeners will benefit from doing what you suggest.
- Tell listeners where to go, what to do, when to do it and where to call for more information.

Contact the news or public service director at your local television or radio station to learn the station's scheduling and format requirements and if they can assist you with production. Often stations have a reduced production rate to non-profit organizations.

PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION

Public access stations air PSAs, run video of club activities, post club events on community bulletin boards and have club members participate in community talk shows. Contact the public service director at your local cable station regarding program opportunities.

VIDEO PROGRAMS

Video programs are available at LCI's website suitable for use on public access television. Use them when you meet other community groups. These are available at *Lions News Network* on the LCI website.

WEB SITES AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Websites and social networking sites are excellent ways to let people know about your club. Use e-Clubhouse to create a club website with easy-to-use templates and free hosting from LionNet. Once created it is important to keep your website updated and to include the site in your publicity materials.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace and Twitter are excellent for promoting Lions Clubs. Ask a member comfortable with social networking to create and regularly manage club's pages on these sites. Include contact information, photos from recent projects, a statement of purpose and a list of upcoming events.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING VIA EMAIL

- Write carefully. Once you send an email, you can not take it back or make it disappear.
- Use upper and lower case text. Using all uppercase letter means SHOUTING and can be offensive.
- Do not leave the Subject Field blank. Some computers are programmed to put this directly into the junk mail and delete it.
- Sending a group of people the very same email – list all recipients email address in the BCC field (Blind Carbon Copy). Each recipient will get a copy of the email while their email address remains invisible to any other recipient.
- Never give out phone numbers or personal information without knowing you are communicating with a reputable party.
- Always start your email with "Hello", "Hi", "Dear" or whatever you are comfortable with.

- Spell check, proof read for errors, capitalize sentences and use appropriate punctuation and grammar.
- Always send emails with “Thank you,” “Sincerely”, “Best Regards” or a similar phrase.
- Sign your messages.
- Reply promptly.
- Never put anything in an email that you don’t want the world to know about.

ADDITIONAL PUBLICITY IDEAS

There are many ways to tell your community about your Lions Club and activities. If your club is sponsoring a community event:

- Ask to have information posted on your community website or message board.
- List your club in local phone books and community directories, along with a contact and phone number. Keep this information up-to-date.
- Put information about your club in “Welcome to the Community” packets offered by local agencies or the Chamber of Commerce.
- Invite community organizations to present information about their activities at club meetings and offer to present information at their meetings.
- Display local Peace Posters at a library or community center.
- Ask government and school district newsletters to include information about your club, especially if you are involved in a community or school project, such as the Peace Poster Contest, a vision or diabetes screening, building a recreational center, etc.
- Place a highway sign or marker outside your community. Keep it in good condition.
- Donate a subscription of the LION Magazine to your local library.

Your donations
help us help others



Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho



It's great to be
a Lion!



Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho



We Serve



Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho



We need you



Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho



Lions at work...



Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho



**We're in your
community**



**Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho**



**We put
sight first**



**Lions Clubs of British Columbia, Washington
and Northern Idaho**



For Information Contact:
(Name)
(Phone Number)
(Email address)

For Immediate Release

**(WINNER’S NAME) WINS LOCAL COMPETITION IN
LIONS INTERNATIONAL PEACE POSTER CONTEST**

(City, date) – (Winner’s Full name), a **(grade level)** grade student at **(school name),** has taken the first step to becoming an internationally recognized artist by winning a local competition sponsored by the **(Name)** Lions Club.

(Winner’s last name)’s poster was among more than 350,000 entries submitted worldwide in the annual Lions International Peace Poster Contest. Lions Clubs International is sponsoring the program to emphasize the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

“(Quote from winner describing the poster or his/her inspiration for the poster),” the **(winner’s age) –** year-old from **(city)** said. The poster was selected for its originality, artistic merit and portrayal of the contest theme, **(contest theme).** The judging was held on **(Date)** at **(location).**

(Club name) Lions Club President **(club president’s full name)** said **(he/she)** was impressed by the expression and creativity of the students at **(name of school or youth group).** “It is obvious that these young people have strong ideas about what peace means to them. I’m so proud that we were able to provide them with the opportunity to share their visions.

“(Winner’s last name)’s poster will advance through the district, multiple district and international levels of competition if **(he/she)** is to be declared the international grand prize,” **(Club president last name)** said.

One international grand prize winner and 23 merit award winners will be selected. The grand prize includes a cash award of US\$5,000 **(or your country’s cash equivalent),** plus a trip for the winner and two family members to the awards ceremony at Lions Day with the United Nations. The 23 merit award winners will each receive a certificate and a cash award of US\$500 **(or your country’s cash equivalent).**

“Our Club is cheering for **(winner’s first name)** as **(his/her)** poster advances in the competition, and we hope that **(his/her)** vision will ultimately be shared with others around the world,” **(club president’s last name)** said.

Locally, **(winner’s last name)** and **(#)** other students will be honored for their participation by the **(name)** Lions Club on **(date)** at **(place).**

View past international grand prize winners at www.lionsclubs.org. Lions Clubs International is the world’s largest service club organization with more than 1.3 million members in approximately 45,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas around the world. Since 1917, Lions Clubs International have aided the blind and visually impaired and made a strong commitment to community service and serving youth throughout the world.