

- Gather events information, etc for parish bulletin, submit to parish office
- Check obituaries for members, family members, share with Council
- Author, print, and mail/email letters, invitations, etc to members, others as needed
- Send SMA cards to members/survivors of members upon death of family member or member

## **THE MECHANICS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICITY**

### **Defining Target Markets**

Reaching the right people with the right message is critical to a successful public relations/publicity program. First, look at the subject of your message. As you develop your media list (see section titled “Developing and Maintaining Media Lists” for details), you can match your target audience to an appropriate media outlet. The media can tell you who their audiences are.

### **Distribution**

Distributing news and feature releases can be done in several ways:

#### *Hand-Delivered*

This is an effective personal touch and will help to foster a good relationship with key media contacts.

#### *Email*

Most editors and reporters have distinct personal preferences on how they receive news releases. A reporter may have an email address, but strongly prefer to get a time-sensitive release via fax or another “paper” form.

#### *Mail Distribution*

If you mail your news releases, send them first class and address them by name to a specific contact. Call the media outlet for the name of the individual to whom your release should be directed.

#### *Electronic/Web Site Distribution*

There are professional services that specialize in distributing news releases directly to media newsrooms via electronic wire or the internet. If you have any activity that is particularly timely or important, and has interest beyond your local community, this vehicle can be useful. These services can also be useful in electronically tracking the release after it has been published to a publication or posted to a media website.

#### *Social Media Presence*

If a council member or members is active on social media sites it may be helpful for them to “tag” or mention local news providers when mentioning upcoming, news-worthy events online from time to time. It may be possible to encourage someone from the news organization to “follow” a council feed if such an option exists on a particular platform – keeping in mind that members should be aware that any of their online discussions on the platform would be more likely to be seen by members of the media.

### **Timing**

Your council should use publicity for two main purposes: (1) to announce forthcoming events in order to ensure full participation by members and the public, and (2) to inform members and the public about the accomplishments of the council and the Order.

Proper timing of your release can make the difference in getting media coverage. Know what the deadlines for each publication are, at the same time, keep in mind that, because virtually all outlets have a digital component, there may be two sets of deadlines, or perhaps no real deadline at all.

You should schedule your release about an upcoming event so that the media has it in hand about two weeks prior to the event or activity. After getting the name of the right editor to contact, follow up with phone calls closer to the time of the event.

For releases that pertain to new members or officers, or the results of fundraising or other activities, plan to get the release to the media as quickly as possible and no later than two days after the event or activity.

### **Developing and Maintaining Media Lists**

A key component in any public relations effort is an up-to-date and accurate media list. To develop this list, consult Google or other Internet search engines for a listing of all newspapers; magazines; and radio, television and cable stations. Also include church and state council bulletins and diocesan newspapers on your list.

For newspapers and their websites, the right contact is usually the city editor or religion editor.

For television, radio and cable stations, the news or assignment editor/director is the proper contact person. Public service announcements should be sent to the public service director.

Note: The pastor may also be aware of fellow parishioners or neighboring parishioners who work for media organizations and who may be more amenable to covering or forwarding positive stories about the Church and associated organizations.

### **Establishing Media Relations**

After you develop your media list, the next step is to get personally acquainted with your contacts. Keep conversations short and to the point.

Always remember these guidelines when contacting a member of the media:

- Identify yourself, your organization and the purpose of your call (to introduce yourself and your role as public relations representative for your Knights of Columbus council).
- Editors and broadcasters work on deadlines, so always ask if the timing of your call is convenient or when it would be best to call back.
- Always be appreciative of the time you are given. Once you have established a basic relationship, continue to touch base with your contact from time to time. Don't become a bother, as editors and broadcasters are busy.
- Remember that your story is competing with many others for limited space and you will not always succeed in attracting coverage.
- Send a note thanking contacts for the help they have given your council.

### **Media Materials Guidelines**

Written media materials that require the least amount of effort on the part of the editor have the best chance of publication. This is increasingly the case as most traditional news sources are cutting staff and new, online media sources typically have very few staff members. When sending any written materials (including press releases, photo releases and media alerts) to an editor or broadcaster, there are certain guidelines which you must adhere to.

### **Feature Stories Guidelines**

Unlike “hard news” stories, which typically focus on concrete data (names, numbers, specific events, etc.), feature stories tend to concentrate on the “human interest” of personalities and personal relationships.

A feature is typically offered as an “exclusive.” This means that you offer it to only one media outlet at a time (as opposed to press releases, photo releases and public service announcements, which should be sent to multiple media outlets simultaneously).

If the first outlet declines, then you may offer it to another, and so on.

To interest the media in writing or producing a feature story on your event:

- Write a short synopsis of the idea and call a specific media outlet to discuss it.
- Send the editor a letter with your synopsis.

## **COUNCIL WEBSITE AND MONTHLY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER**

### **Monthly Council Newsletter**

The council newsletter gains membership support of activities and stimulates interest in the Knights of Columbus.

Appoint an editor for the council bulletin who is organized, can administer a project and has a feel for what is newsworthy. His duties include contacting council officers and committee chairmen to obtain items of interest, soliciting advertisements, writing editorial copy and overseeing the layout of the publication.

When developing articles for the council newsletter, apply the same guidelines used for photos, features and press releases. Send a copy of your newsletter to the Supreme Council Department of Fraternal Services, 1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510-3326.

Suggestions for appropriate content:

- Features and press releases developed for local newspapers and magazines
- Announcements of planned council events
- Special notices on council business such as elections, etc.
- A regular column by the grand knight
- Information received from the Supreme Council, such as a Knights of Columbus film being aired on television or a new membership recruitment incentive
- A chaplain’s column

- Reports from the Service Program directors on scheduled activities
- Excerpts of speeches by visiting dignitaries
- Calendar of coming events
- Listings of birthdays, anniversaries, deaths, congratulations, etc.
- Membership campaign promotions
- A Knights of Columbus insurance column written by a general or field agent
- Notice of First, Second and Third Degree exemplifications
- Reprints from Knightline of news stories and programming ideas that would be of interest to all members

The format of the council newsletter will depend on your budget and the amount of content you have available. Make your newsletter look as good as possible. In developing a “layout,” keep the following in mind:

- Be sure to indicate the council name, number and location in a conspicuous place in your bulletin.
- Do not try to put too much information on a page — it will be difficult to read. Be sure to leave plenty of “white space” (blank space) around articles and artwork.
- Do not use more than two different typefaces. The use of many different styles creates a confusing look.
- Photographs and artwork help develop reader interest. Be sure that the photographs and artwork relate to a nearby story, and that any photo is clearly captioned.

### **Council Website**

Many councils now maintain internet homepages. These can be found easily, and they offer many ideas that your council may want to adopt or modify for its own use. Domain and hosting websites, allow you to create and maintain your own website at little or no monthly charge and with relative ease.

Once you have created a council website, keep it fresh with updated material and promote its address through all of your public relations materials. Be sure to include it with the council telephone number, mailing address and email address wherever they appear — especially on council news releases. You can include links to the Supreme Council, state council or other nearby council sites.

Prior to publishing materials from another site or any source, you should request permission from the source and include attribution.

### **Advertisements**

Many councils finance their entire publication through the acceptance of carefully chosen advertisements. For purposes of editorial and financial planning, obtaining ads from a specific group of advertisers who pay a flat fee in exchange for publication in each issue throughout a fraternal year is more efficient than trying to sell individual ads on a monthly basis.

When arranging advertisements, please be advised that fraternal publications are prohibited from accepting advertisements that are directly or indirectly related to the sale of financial products and services, which are also offered by the Knights of Columbus.

Furthermore, Section 162.24 of the Laws of the Knights of Columbus prohibits members from using their membership in the Knights of Columbus to promote the sale of any financial products and services other than the financial products and services offered by the Knights of Columbus.

Additionally, Section 162.11 prohibits members from using the name and emblem of the Knights of Columbus in connection with “any business, or social, or other enterprise, without permission of the Board of Directors.” This section prohibits, among other things, the use of the name and emblem of the Knights of Columbus in connection with the promotion of any financial products and services other than the financial products and services offered by the Knights of Columbus.

Lastly, members engaged in the sale of financial products and services shall not be eligible for the office of financial secretary in his council. If a member becomes so engaged while serving as financial secretary, he should inform the Supreme Knight immediately c/o Office of Financial Secretary.

### **Fundraising for People with Intellectual Disabilities**

Members of the Knights of Columbus do a great deal to assist people with intellectual disabilities. When reporting on these initiatives, there are some important guidelines to follow. Council bulletins, committee reports, posters and flyers, press releases and everyday speech should be accurate and considerate when referring to people with disabilities.

The following are some DOs and DON'Ts of language:

- DON'T use terms such as “the retarded.”
- DON'T identify the person as a label (e.g., “the wheelchair bound”).
- DO put the person before the condition — “people with intellectual disabilities” is probably best.
- DON'T refer to all people with intellectual disabilities as if they were children. Adults with intellectual disabilities should be spoken to and about as adults. A newsletter article which would normally refer to its adult subject as “William C. Smith” should not refer to an adult who has intellectual disabilities as “Billy,” or otherwise treat him as a child.
- DON'T use negative terms like “victim of,” “afflicted with,” “suffering from,” “unfortunate,” and so on when describing an individual with intellectual disabilities. Say someone “uses a wheelchair” rather than saying he “is crippled” or “wheelchair-bound.”
- DON'T imply disease when speaking or writing about someone with intellectual disabilities. He or she is not “sick” and you cannot “catch” the condition.

### **Providing Coverage of Children**

Attention should be paid to all relevant regulations regarding the sharing of personal information or the picturing of individuals under that age of 18 in published materials – particularly online. See local diocesan safe environment standards and, depending on the subject of the material, possibly even the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) for more detailed regulations in this regard.

### **HOW TO RECOGNIZE A NEWS STORY**

Information sent to news sources should describe local, timely, newsworthy events that appeal to a broad audience or a specific audience segment.

Following are samples of council activities that may interest the media. Do not feel limited by the items in this list, as there are bound to be other activities unique to your council and community that would interest the local media.

- Charitable activities such as Coats for Kids distributions, Food for Families collections, support for Special Olympics or Habitat for Humanity
- Awards presented to members or to the council, and awards the council presents to others
- Number of new members recruited during a membership drive
- New officers
- Basketball Free-Throw Championship, “Keep Christ in Christmas” art contest, Substance Abuse Awareness Poster Contest, and Soccer Challenge
- Senior citizens programs
- Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP)
- Fundraising projects for people with intellectual and/or physical disabilities
- Unusual or extensive church renovations
- Student loan programs, scholarship winners
- Hands-on assistance to families that have suffered personal disaster
- Support for members of the military and their families
- Council awards presented to “Family of the Year” and “Knight of the Year”
- Local results of Annual Survey of Fraternal Activity
- Financial contributions to community agencies
- Major anniversaries or related activities
- Almost anything that is superlative: biggest, smallest, latest, newest, oldest

Keep in mind that in nearly all jurisdictions an increasingly large segment of the population may not have any working knowledge of the Catholic faith or religion in general. Make certain that stories are written in a way that is accessible to the public, recognizing that the news story itself may be an opportunity for subtle evangelization.