Public Relations Handbook

The American Legion

Table of Contents

Section 1 Public Relations Basics 2

Section 2 PR Tools 7

Section 3 Who's Who in the Media 17

Section 4 News: What Is It? How Do You Make It? 27

Section 5 The News Release and Media Advisory 32

Section 6 Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds 43

Section 7 Successful Public Service Approaches 45

Section 8 Advertising: Sometimes It Makes Sense 58

Section 9 Message Points: Key to Telling the Legion Story 64

Section 10 Interviews: Bountiful Variety – Unlimited Opportunity 69

Section 11 Planning Special Community Events 74

Section 12 Partnerships and Sponsorships 76

Section 13 National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) 78

Section 14 The Speech 82

Section 15 Copyright and Trademark Information 90

Section 16 Community Relations 93

SECTION **ONE**

Public Relations Basics

What if your American Legion family hosted a large civic event and only your members came?

Chances are, the person in charge of Public Relations didn't have this handbook. The people who needed to know about it probably didn't get the word -- or if they did, they weren't convinced of the benefit of the event. Or maybe they just disagreed with the whole concept and decided to stay home. Whatever the reason, effective Public Relations would have played a deciding factor in the success of your event.

What Is Public Relations?

As the term implies, Public Relations (PR) requires that you relate to the public in some manner. The question is, "What is a 'public' and how do we relate to it?" Several 'publics' require our attention as PR volunteers. These include but are not limited to:

- Our members
- The media
- Local and national elected officials and decision-makers
- Local community members
- U.S. citizens in general

You can narrow it further to specific target audiences, such as participants in The American Legion programs and recipients of our support and charitable contributions.

HOW you relate to the public depends on which public it is and what your message is.

In a nutshell, Public Relations is primarily about *IMAGE*. And every member of The American Legion plays a role in communicating our image to the various publics to which we relate. The positive and negative things seen and heard at every level of the organization affect peoples' perceptions of what The American Legion is and what we stand for. Perception is reality for most people.

The familiarity and reputation of its name are two of the greatest assets of any product or organization. In modern advertising terms, it's called "branding." It's the first thing you think of when you hear a name. For instance, what is the first thing you think of when you hear the word "Cadillac"? Do you immediately think of luxury and quality? How about "McDonald's" or "Yugo"? Now apply the same exercise to "The American Legion." Just remember that your perception will be different than everyone else's, because your image of a product or organization is based on your experiences and knowledge.

SECTION **ONE**

Public Relations Basics

An organization's image is based on the character, integrity and total performance of the organization. It consists of every contact the organization has with its various publics. It is a composite of:

- The organization's history in dealing with people
- Internal attitude toward members
- External attitude toward community responsibility and involvement
- News releases and other dealings with the media
- Internal and external publications
- Institutional advertising

What is the image of The American Legion today? It depends on which public you ask. To the media in general, we are the largest veterans organization in the world and are considered to be a reliable source of information relating to veterans issues. In some local communities, The American Legion has no image because no community programs are conducted. In other local communities, members of The American Legion are champions of social issues and pillars of the community. Each public's perception is their reality.

Responsibilities of a Post PR Officer

Public Relations representatives might have any number of titles in corporate and government circles. Public Affairs, Communications, Publicity, Marketing, Media Relations and several other like titles may be used. As discussed in this book, all these roles are combined into your job description as Public Relations officer or volunteer for your post or department.

In many ways, the Public Relations function is the most important function at any level of The American Legion. It is our job to inform, enlighten, persuade and convince our many publics of our beliefs, events and goals.

Your first responsibility should be to determine your image in your community, if you don't already know. And you should constantly review your organization's standing on the image meter. Ask media representatives how they perceive your organization when you talk to them. Talk to your community leaders and to your post's neighbors. Talk to your members – not just the ones who are always there to help, but the members who seldom show up for meetings or events. Find out why they don't show up so you can begin to change their perceptions about the post and get them involved.

Your primary responsibility now will be to alter or maintain the image of your post and/or The American Legion and to communicate your various messages to each of your many publics. Based on your knowledge of what your image is, you can better focus your message(s) to achieve your goals, whether it be to garner support for a veterans issue or convince members to support a post function.

SECTION **ONE**

Public Relations Basics

Our assumption in preparing this handbook is that you, the post, district or department PR officer, will be responsible for the following primary tasks:

Internal Information

Notify your members through newsletters, flyers and other means of what is going on at your post, as well as passing on local and national policy and program issues of importance to all members. Don't assume that just because your members pay their dues every year that they understand what The American Legion is all about. Keeping our members informed of ALL of the issues is critical to keeping them motivated and active at all levels.

External Communications

Whether you are inviting members of your community to attend a ceremony or function at your post, having a membership drive or participating in one of our national campaigns, you may need to reach people who are not members of your post. This may involve coordination with one or more media outlets in your community and doing whatever is needed to reach those people.

Community Relations

As good citizens of your community, your post members should ask to be represented at various civic functions or meetings. While the Post Commander will most often be the point of contact for civic and community functions, the PR officer should be the one to advise the commander on specific issues and will act as spokesperson on occasion.

Media Relations

Why won't your local newspaper run your story about the fish fry you're having this weekend? What is that TV reporter doing outside your post with the photographer interviewing your members? How did that story get printed without me (or the Post Commander) knowing anything about it?

Effective media relations mean that you and the various media in your area have a good working relationship. It's a mutual relationship based on trust and honesty. They call you when they need answers on veterans' issues, and you know who to call to provide a local angle to a national story regarding The American Legion.

Good Public Relations begin with the Post Commander establishing policies and practices that are ethical, honest and in keeping with the public interest. Then the PR officer can take those policies and practices to the public for acclaim, understanding and, if need be, for clarifying any misconceptions.

The Post PR officer is expected to provide four basic services:

Advice and Counsel

The PR officer should advise post officers of the PR impact policy decisions will have on the media, on the community and on members.

Communications Service

The process of letting the members and the public know about events and policies via newsletters, booklets, speeches, news media, good citizenship, example and other means.

Public Relations Research

Identifying, evaluating and communicating information of community or world events to the post leaders and members who would help the post manage its affairs better.

Public Relations Promotion

A variety of programs and activities designed to gain acceptance for the post among members and within the community.

Continuity Is Critical

Public Relations requires development of relationships with various officials, media representatives, and Department and national staff members. It's critical to have some form of continuity in your efforts to maintain these relationships. In a volunteer organization, it's difficult to saddle one individual with this much responsibility for an extended time. As an alternative, try to spread the responsibilities to several individuals, allowing them to specialize in various areas.

At the very least, maintain a comprehensive PR manual at your post/district/department to provide continuity for each person assuming the responsibilities. The book should include contact names, deadlines for various media, submission procedures for articles or public service announcements (PSAs) and a contact history for various individuals to include what was discussed, etc. (See sample contact sheets in Section 3.)

Planning

Quite often as we plan events, we will know where every table and chair will be placed and exactly when everything will happen to the minute. But publicizing the event always is done at the last minute.

Because much of what we do in The American Legion is cyclical, creating an annual calendar should be the first step in the planning process. You also need to make sure PR is on the agenda for all planning meetings. Each aspect of the event should take into consideration the impact on Public Relations as it applies to all of the areas discussed above.

SECTION **ONE**

Public Relations Basics

Using this PR manual as a guide, you need to develop a publicity plan based on deadlines and submission requirements for the various media you intend to use. Back-time the submission dates to ensure plenty of time to get the word out.

For special news events and campaigns, your plan should include an objective statement and a detailed outline on how you intend to reach your target audience(s) with your message. What is your goal and how do you intend to reach that goal? How will you know you've reached your goal? Take advantage of the many products available from National Headquarters, such as speeches, message points, etc.

Documenting

As an event or media campaign develops, document your activity and the results. This is done not only for you, but also for the person in charge of next year's event. Document anything you think might be useful for planning future events, including:

- Helpful contacts not listed in your manual.
- Missed opportunities or things you WISH you had done.
- Which media attended your event and/or reasons others gave for not attending.
- Things that went right AND things that went wrong, including the reasons why.

Evaluating

As part of the documentation phase, make sure you provide an honest evaluation of how you think the event turned out. Whether it's a media event or a post holiday party, take the time to ask some hard questions and provide honest answers.

- Did I reach the target audience with my message?
- Although my message was included in various media, did I reach the people I needed to reach?
- What was the reaction to the message? Did it cause people to react and/or take action as I intended? Why?

Conclusion

When you have everything documented and evaluated, make sure someone else knows about it. Share your plans and evaluations with others. Mentor new members and bring them in to help you so you will have some continuity for next year's event(s).

For many reasons, Public Relations can be considered the single most important function within your post, district or department. Every member is involved in it, most without even realizing it. Public Relations will have an impact on everything you do at your post, and everything you do at your post will somehow impact Public Relations.

SECTION **TWO**

PR Tools

This handbook is intended to give you the basic tools and ideas to work with regardless of your level of experience and responsibility in The American Legion.

Can you imagine a plumber trying to fix a leaky faucet without tools?

Or a dentist filling a cavity without a drill and instruments?

The use of PR media tools in executing a post Public Relations strategy is just as crucial. Armed with an array of ad slicks for print media distribution, television spots designed to promote the latest programs of The American Legion and public-service radio spot announcements on compact disc, a post can easily reach out to media outlets in the area and successfully market these products. Getting placement means public outreach, education and image enhancement for The American Legion post, its programs, and its services to veterans, their families and young people in the community.

What Are PR Tools?

Public Relations tools are stand-alone, camera or broadcast-ready materials that can be taken directly to media for publication or broadcast. They promote The American Legion, its programs, membership, latest advocacy campaigns and patriotic holidays. They are professionally produced by the national Public Relations commission office and are available FREE upon request in quantities needed by each post.

Whether the PR tool is print or broadcast, space or time is left open for post contact information. For example, a 60-second radio spot might leave 10 seconds of music only at the end (no announcer's voice) in which the local station announcer, or post spokesperson, can add, "For more information, call American Legion Post XXX at 222-2222." Printed ad slicks will have white space to add the post or contact name, address, telephone number and other pertinent information.

Why Use PR Tools?

Every newspaper wants to publish the best, most professionally produced and eye-catching ad. Every electronic media wants the same for their medium. The Post Public Relations officer who can provide such a product enjoys a distinct advantage over others who may approach a media outlet with just notes scribbled on a piece of paper. Additionally, a professionally produced product is the end result of extensive research, editing and polishing of message points in compact, efficient packages.

American Legion PR media tools use advanced digital-editing techniques, professionally experienced talent, gifted writers, wide-ranging musical arrangements and sound effects. State-of-the-art graphics enhance television productions. The television spot available free to American Legion posts would typically cost more than $10,000 to produce by a regional production facility. A professionally produced CD of a variety of 30- and 60-second public service announcements costs between $6,000 and $10,000, depending on studio time, talent fees, production technician hours, music license fees, CD packaging materials and complexity of different production elements. American Legion media products are all produced at The American Legion's own in-house, state-of-the-art, digital production facility at National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The Public Relations staff has worked profession-

ally as writers, broadcasters and editors for both the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service and commercial stations and newspapers. Thus, PR materials can be developed and distributed on a continuous basis to meet the emerging issues of American Legion advocacy in addition to the perennial requirements of membership recruitment AT NO COST to the post.

The Message Is Local

All PR media tools are available free to American Legion posts, districts and departments. They are designed to maximize post community information. Radio and television spots can have post contact information added at the bottom of the screen; ad slicks can include post contact information, enabling readers, viewers and listeners to respond directly. While each PR media package includes some tools that provide national toll-free or online information, posts are encouraged to use the localization features for maximum community impact and response.

Variety

What is good for the goose may not necessarily be good for the gander. Some radio stations will readily air 60-second public service spots, while others may not accept any more than 30 seconds in length. The media products available for your use are designed to include a variety of sizes, lengths, formats and themes to accommodate nearly every type of print or broadcast station or cable system. The Public Relations officer can approach program and public-service directors armed with confidence and a full media tool kit to fit virtually any media requirement. Written copy for radio spots is included with each CD to enable stations that prefer to produce their own spots with their own announcers to use Legion materials.

Marketing

No PR media tool can be effective without getting it printed, broadcast or distributed. While mailings to local media with a cover letter signed by the Post Commander may work, that correspondence becomes just one of hundreds received by the station or newspaper. The tried-and-true, most successful method to get American Legion public service materials placed on a broadcast schedule, short of paid advertising, is through personal contact with station directors or editors who have cognizance over the schedule or layout of the publication. Section 7 discusses marketing techniques in detail.

Bottom line: nothing is more effective than establishing amiable face-to-face relationships with area media executives.

Print Media

In this section you will find a background information sheet and significant dates in the history of The American Legion for use in developing a post media kit. Every post should have at least five media kits on the shelf, ready to be given to reporters who may show up at the post on short notice. These materials should be augmented with another background information sheet listing the specific accomplishments of your post, including ongoing projects.

Ad slicks are available from the national Public Relations office on a variety of Legion programs. They can be previewed on The American Legion website at **www.legion.org** under public relations. Use available blocks of white space on ad slicks to insert a contact name, post number and telephone number along with any specialized message that might be appropriate. While the ad slicks are designed primarily for use in publications, both internal Legion newsletters and commercial newspapers, creativity is key. For example, some posts have added contact information, made 1,000 copies and placed them on the windshields of cars in shopping malls as handbills. Because most shoppers may not be veterans, this is a hit-and-miss technique. But if just five new members sign up, they can become active volunteers. Others have used the one column-sized ad slicks to reproduce and pass out as bookmarks at recruiting booths and area schools. Many post the slicks in windows of area businesses, the post office, train stations, etc.

Legion-specific clip art has been developed for use in post newsletters and advertising campaigns. Examples follow in this section. Art is updated periodically to reflect new themes of the organization as needed. Ideas for future development are always welcome.

Message Points

Every post should maintain a set of American Legion Message Points. They provide talking points for virtually every issue of The American Legion as authorized by National Executive Committee or National Convention resolutions. They are sound-bite-sized and extremely useful in preparing for interviews with local media on veterans issues, national defense and the programs of The American Legion. They can be downloaded from The American Legion Web site under Public Relations, ordered by phone at (317) 630-1253 or by e-mail at **pr@legion.org**. Section 9 includes a discussion of how to use them for a variety of media opportunities.

Proclamations

Preparing a proposed proclamation for the mayor or county executive significantly increases the probability of having it signed and ready for use on an appropriate holiday. Positive news coverage can be garnered through use of proclamations to recognize veteran-oriented holidays and activities. On the following pages are suggested proclamations for The American Legion Birthday, Children & Youth month, Flag Day and Veterans Day. Using these as a guide, proclamations can be crafted for nearly any occasion or event. Try to get a draft to the mayor's office at least 30 days prior to the event.

Below is an example of an Ad Slick and how it is intended to be used. Ad slicks can be obtained by contacting The American Legion Headquarters PR division or by visiting the website: **www.legion.org**.

The following two documents are included for you to duplicate and use in develping your post's PR materials.

- "Significant Dates in the history of The American Legion" sheet (two-sided document)
- The American Legion "Background Information" sheet (single-sided document)

SIGNIFICANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

March 15-17, 1919 – The American Legion is founded in Paris by members of the American Expeditionary Force.

May 9, 1919 – Caucus meeting in St. Louis adopts "The American Legion" as the organization's official name. The Legion's draft constitution is approved, and so is its preamble, which begins: "For God and Country, we associate ourselves together…"The preamble, with its heartfelt dedication to freedom and democracy, is still recited today at official gatherings of The American Legion.

June 9, 1919 – The National Executive Committee of The American Legion adopts the Legion Emblem.

Sept. 16, 1919 – The U.S. Congress charters The American Legion.

Nov. 10-12, 1919 – The American Legion convenes its first annual convention in Minneapolis

Nov. 10-12, 1919 – The American Legion's Constitution and Preamble are adopted at the convention in Minneapolis.

Nov. 10-12, 1919 – The American Legion passes resolution supporting the Boy Scouts of America. Today, the Legion is the chartering agency for more than 1,700 Scouting units that involve 64,000 youths.

Nov. 11, 1919 – Delegates to The American Legion's first annual convention in Minneapolis vote 361-323 to locate the Legion's National headquarters in Indianapolis rather than Washington, D.C.

Aug. 9, 1921 – The U.S. Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the Veterans Administration is created as a result of efforts by The American Legion. Today, the Legion continues to lobby for adequate funding of the department of Veterans Affairs.

June 15, 1923 – The first "Flag Code" is drafted during a conference called by The American legion in Washington, D.C. The code eventually was adopted by Congress in 1942. Today, the Legion is at the forefront of efforts to gain a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration.

July 17, 1925 – American Legion Baseball program is created. Today, more than 60 percent of professional baseball players are graduates of The American Legion Baseball program. About 89,000 high-school-age youths play on Legion-sponsored teams each year.

1931 – Membership in The American Legion increases to more than 1 million veterans.

June 23, 1935 – The first American Legion Boys State is convened in Springfield, Ill. To help youths gain an understanding of the structure and operations of American government. The first Boys Nation was organized in 1946.

June 1, 1938 – The final round of The American legion's first annual National High School Oratorical Contest is held in Norman, Okla. Today, more than 25,000 high school students from around the country compete annually in the contest designed to develop a greater understanding of the U.S. Constitution. Winners are awarded thousands of dollars in college scholarships.

Sept. 19-21, 1942 – The American Legion's charter is amended to allow veterans of World War II to join the organization.

Dec. 15, 1943 – Harry W. Colmery, past national commander of The American Legion, writes in longhand on hotel stationery the first draft of what will later become the "GI Bill of Rights," the Legion's greatest single legislative achievement. Today, the Legion is at the forefront of efforts to improve benefits for this nation's newest veterans, those who've served during Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

June 22, 1944 – The GI Bill is signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt.

May 29, 1946 – A $50,000 grant from The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary is presented to a small, struggling organization -–The American Heart Association – to inaugurate a nationwide program for the study of prevention and treatment of rheumatic heart disease.

Aug. 28, 1946 – Legion membership surpasses 3 million.

Sept. 1, 1949 – The first World War II veteran is elected national commander of The American Legion.

May 4, 1950 – The American Legion votes to contribute funds to the field of mental health with the provision that the three major mental health organizations then in existence be amalgamated into one. They accepted this provision and the National Association for Mental Health was born.

Dec. 28, 1950 – Korean War veterans are approved for membership in the Legion.

July 9, 1954 – The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is formed. Since that time, the foundation has awarded $4 million to youth-oriented organizations and projects designed to help America's children.

Sept. 1, 1966 – The American Legion voices great concern over the fate of POW's in Vietnam. Today, the Legion continues to press for a full accounting of POW/MIAs and has formed a special group from among the nation's major veterans organizations to take the lead on this issue.

May 1, 1972 – The American Legion presents a $1 million check to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund toward the construction of "The Wall" in Washington, D.C. The Legion, which had solicited donations from its members, eventually became the largest single contributor to the project.

Aug. 26, 1982 – The American Legion presents a $1 million check to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund toward the construction of "The Wall" in Washington, D.C. The Legion, which had solicited donations from its members, eventually became the largest single contributor to the project.

July 21, 1983 – The American Legion announces its sponsorship of an independent study on the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans. The results of "The American Legion-Columbia University Study of Vietnam-era Veterans" were presented to Congress in 1989.

Aug. 25, 1983 – The first Korean War veteran is elected national commander of The American Legion.

Sept. 8, 1988 – The first Vietnam War veteran is elected national commander of The American Legion.

Jan. 1, 1989 – The new Department of Veterans Affairs, elevated to cabinet-level status, begins operations. The American Legion had fought hard for the V.A. to become a cabinet-level department, arguing that veterans - as an important segment of society - deserved representation in the highest councils of government.

Oct. 16, 1989 – A longstanding objective of The American Legion to improve adjudication procedures for veterans' claims is achieved as the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals begins operations. Most of the provisions contained in the law creating the court originally were included in the Veterans Reassurance Act, which was written by the Legion and introduced in Congress in 1988.

Aug. 2, 1990 – The American Legion files suit against the federal government for failure to conduct a congressionally mandated study of the effects of Agent Orange on the health of Vietnam veterans.

Oct. 11, 1990 – The Family Support Network is formed by The American Legion to assist the families of military personnel deployed during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in the Middle East. The Network stepped in to help in a myriad of ways, from offering financial assistance to mowing lawns to babysitting to providing a sympathetic ear. Today, the Legion's Family Support Network continues in existence to assist America's newest veterans, particularly with employment, as they return to civilian life.

Oct. 30, 1990 – Veterans of Lebanon, Grenada and Panama hostilities are approved for membership in the Legion.

June 15, 1991 – The American Legion's first Junior Shooting Sports National Air Rifle Championships are conducted at the Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs, Colo. Each year, more than 600 high school students enter the annual contest, which is designed to teach gun safety and marksmanship.

Dec. 3, 1991 – Veterans of Desert Shield/Desert Storm are approved for membership in The American Legion. Today, the Legion continues to press for improved educational and medical benefits for Gulf War veterans.

April 5, 1993 – The first class of recently discharged veterans begins training in Sterling, Va., for eventual placement in well-paying jobs in the construction industry. The landmark training and job-placement program is a joint effort by The American Legion and the Laborers' International Union of North America to assist veterans returning to an uncertain job market.

Aug. 24, 1994 – The American Legion announces creation of the Citizens Flag Alliance, a coalition of organizations and individual citizens, to work for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration.

Sept. 24, 1994 – The American Legion announces partnership with the Smithsonian Institute's Air and Space Museum to develop an exhibit for the bomber Enola Gay, which dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Previous museum plans had drawn intense criticism from veterans, scholars and the public.

Jan. 30, 1995 – The American Legion announces Legion's acceptance of a scaled-down exhibit "without political commentary" for the Enola Gay, ending the greatest controversy in the Smithsonian Institute's 149-year history.

July 20, 1995 – SJR 31 passes Senate Judiciary Committee in a 12-6 vote.

Oct. 1, 1995 – The American Legion forms its Persian Gulf Task Force to enhance TAL's service to America's newest generation of wartime veterans, thousands of whom suffer from illnesses linked to their service in region.

Sept. 16, 1996 – The American Legion awards a $20,000 postsecondary scholarship to each of the 10 inaugural Samsung American Legion high school scholars.

June 11, 1997 – The American Legion National Emergency Fund surpasses the $1 million mark in cash grants given in 1997 to flood victims who belonged to The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. Most of the grant recipients reside in the Ohio River flood plains of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana as well as in Red River-flooded areas of Minnesota and North Dakota.

Sept. 3, 1997 – The American Legion presents its first ever National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award to Cpl. William T. Rhodes of Huntington, Pa., during its 79th National Convention in Orlando, Fla.

March 28, 2000 – The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion donate $2.7 million to the World War II Memorial Fund. By the end of the year The American Legion family donation had grown to more than $3.4 million.

Sept. 5, 2000 – The American Legion presents the first "Spirit of Service" Awards to active duty service members for their off-duty volunteer activities. Recipients: Petty Officer Annette French, USN; Sergeant Evella Smith, USMC; Sergeant Laura Jernigan, USA; Marine Science Technician Second Class Corey King, USCG; and Staff Sergeant Billy Fly, USAF.

Aug. 28-30, 2001 – The American Legion passes resolution to rekindle the Blue Star Service Banner Program.

Sept. 12, 2001 – The American Legion reactivates the Family Support Network following terrorist attacks.

Oct. 10-11, 2001 – The American Legion creates September 11th Memorial Scholarship Fund for children of military members killed in active duty on or after September 11, 2001.

The American Legion

For God and country

★ MEDIA RELATIONS OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
☆ (202) 861-2700, Ext. 1312 ☆ Fax (202) 861-2785
Web Site: www.legion.org

The American Legion

"Still Serving America"

Since its founding in Paris in 1919, The American Legion has been an advocate for America's veterans, a friend of the U.S. military, a sponsor of community-based programs for young people and a spokesman for patriotic values. Nearly 2.8 million members make it the nation's largest veterans group, with about 15,000 local "posts" in most communities and six foreign countries. Membership is restricted to men and women who served in the U.S. military during an official period of conflict.

Recent American Legion Victories for Veterans

A more than $4 billion increase in veterans health care spending combined for Fiscal Years 2000-2002.
A permanent cost-of-living adjustment for disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
VA disability compensation for Vietnam veterans with diabetes exposed to Agent Orange.
VA benefits for children with spina bifida whose parents are Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange.
By lawsuit and legislation, restored VA's "duty to assist" all claimants for VA benefits, reversing a court ruling.
Lifetime access to Department of Defense medical treatment and discount pharmaceuticals for military retirees.
A federal law mandating that VA creates a special treatment category for veterans who need long-term nursing care.
Military pay raise of 4.1 percent and national defense spending of more than 3 percent of GDP in FY-2003.
A special monthly allowance to get our financially strapped troops off "food stamps."
More than $150 million in annual federal investment in scientific studies on Gulf War illness.
A federal law making it easier for Gulf War veterans with undiagnosed illnesses to receive VA benefits.
VA compensation and health care for Gulf War veterans who have contracted Lou Gehrig's disease.
Tougher veterans-preference laws to protect veterans' federal-advancement opportunities.
A federal law mandating Department of Defense cooperation in military funeral honors for deceased veterans.
Planning for the construction of six new national cemeteries.
A Legion-sponsored Sept. 11 Memorial Scholarship Fund for the children of troops killed during the war on terrorism.
Along with the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion, donated more than $4 million to help build the National World War II Memorial. Fought for federal approval of its Rainbow Pool site on the National Mall.

Historic Contributions

Wrote the original GI Bill in 1944 and has successfully lobbied for increases in Montgomery GI Bill funding.
Provides free, professional assistance -- for any veteran -- in filing and pursuing claims before any administrative or judicial body of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Conducts weeklong inspections of VA medical facilities conducted by trained Legion staff members.
Advocates a GI Bill of Health to give military retirees, Medicare veterans and their families access VA health care.
Strongly advocates adequate funding for training, equipment and quality-of-life improvements for the troops.
The first veterans group to identify "Gulf War Syndrome."
Through joint research with Columbia U., helped service members suffering from Agent Orange and radiation exposure.
Assists families of deployed active-duty troops through the Family Support Network, (800) 504-4098.
Spends more than $25 million annually on programs benefiting young people: American Legion Boys State, American Legion Boys Nation, National High School Oratorical Contest, Junior Shooting Sports and American Legion Baseball.
Largest collective donor of blood to the Red Cross: about 100,000 pints yearly.
National Emergency Fund awarded grants totaling more than $3 million since 1989 to help victims of natural disasters.
Authored original "flag code" under federal law and has advocated recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in U.S. schools.
Founded Citizens Flag Alliance to advocate passage of a flag-protection constitutional amendment.
Provides honor guards at civic events and for the funerals of countless veterans.

For More Information
Indianapolis Headquarters: Joe March or Lee Harris (317) 630-1253 [E-mail: pr@legion.org].
Washington Office: Steve Thomas, (202) 861-2700, Ext. 1312 [E-mail: sthomas@legion.org].

Suggested Proclamation

The American Legion Birthday

WHEREAS, The American Legion was formed in 1919, shortly after the termination of World War I hostilities; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans united by a common bond of continued service to God and country; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion will observe the (number) anniversary of its founding, March 15-17, as an organization comprised of nearly 3 million men and women who have served their country with honor during one of the wars since the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, By giving meaningful service in conjunction with the theme "Still Serving America," Legionnaires have made significant contributions to American thought and deed; and

WHEREAS, Endeavors of The American Legion, which strengthen our freedom and perpetuate our free institutions, characterize this gigantic fraternity of service as one of the great bulwarks of the American way of life; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has achieved its position of high esteem through programs of service to community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Such programs have become an integral part of (city or county, state); now, therefore

I (full name and title) of (city, county or state) do hereby proclaim the week of March (Sunday through Saturday of week of March 15-17) 200#, as American Legion Week, and do call upon all citizens, companies and organizations to join with me in commending the good works of this organization as an expression of appreciation for the wartime and peacetime services of our Legionnaires. They are truly "Still Serving America."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

Suggested Proclamation

Children & Youth Month

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its founding in 1919, has devoted much of its talent, effort and resources to improving conditions for our nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, The Americanism, Children & Youth programs of The American Legion provide settings that permit children to realize and to achieve their full potential; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires have labored unselfishly to achieve this goal through their untiring effort, dedicated leadership and devotion to the overriding principles of these benevolent programs; now, therefore

I (full name and title) of (city or county), (state) do hereby proclaim the period of April 1 through April 30 as The American Legion Children & Youth Month, and call to the attention of all citizens the good works of the men and women of The American Legion.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

PR Tools

Suggested Proclamation

Flag Day

WHEREAS, the first official flag of the United States was adopted by an act of Congress dated June 14, 1777; and

WHEREAS, June 14 was designated National Flag Day by an act of Congress dated August 3, 1949; and

WHEREAS, Congress has requested an annual presidential proclamation designating the week in which June 14 occurs as National Flag Week; and

WHEREAS, on December 8, 1982, the National Flag Day Foundation was chartered to conduct educational programs and to encourage all Americans to pause for the Pledge of Allegiance as part of National Flag Day ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, Flag Day celebrates America's symbol of unity, a democracy in a republic, and stands for our country's devotion to freedom, to the rule of all, and to the equal rights for all; now, therefore

I (full name) (title) of (city or country) in the state of (state) do hereby proclaim June 14, (year) as Flag Day in (city or county) and do urge all citizens to pause for the Pledge at 7 p.m. (EDT), to recite along with all Americans the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag and nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

Suggested Proclamation

Veterans Day

WHEREAS, Veterans Day has its origins in the armistice which brought World War I to a conclusion at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918; and

WHEREAS, the Allied victory in World War I affirmed the strength of great nations acting together for high purposes; and

WHEREAS, the people of the United States caused through their elected representatives the designation of November 11 as a federal legal holiday, which in 1954 became officially known thereafter as Veterans Day; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Day continues to be celebrated and commemorated with solemn observances in honor of all Americans who have served their country in times of war and conflict; and

WHEREAS, the courage, honor, sacrifice, and dedication which veterans of the United States armed forces have displayed in the cause of justice, freedom, and democracy are most worthy of recognition; now, therefore

I (full name), (title) of (city or country) of the state of (state) do hereby call upon all citizens to commend America's veterans and observe with solemn pride November 11, (year) as Veterans Day and to take part in as many ceremonies and events as possible to honor these men and women.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the official seal of (name of city, country or state) on this (number) day of (month), (year).

(Full Name)

(Title)

SECTION **TWO**

PR Tools

Media Campaign Kits

Complete media kits available from the National Public Relations office include a campaign-specific planning booklet, ad slicks, a television VHS spot video and a radio PSA spot CD. Ongoing campaign kits available free include:

- The Blue Star Service Banner and Flag Program
- "A Day to Remember," annual remembrance program of the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on America
- The American Legion Family Support Network

Campaign-specific media kits will be developed as needed to address breaking veteran and national security issues of importance to The American Legion. All are designed to facilitate ease of post participation with fill-in-the-blank news releases, letters, editorials, speeches, milestones, event planning, etc.

Radio Public Service Announcements

PR radio media tools include two formats: written and produced. Written copy included in Section 7 simply needs to be retyped, filling in the blanks with the appropriate local information and post contact, placed on post letterhead and marketed to area radio stations. The spots can then be read by the station's on-air personalities when no commercials are sold for the time block. Additionally, a radio station may turn the copy over to the production department to add music, sound effects or multiple voices. The produced version would then be placed in digital memory for use during the normal PSA rotation within the station's broadcast day.

Produced radio-spot packages are available on CD, including:

- Membership, including women and minority, recruiting
- American Legion Programs & Issues
- Patriotic Holidays
- Blue Star Service Banner
- "A Day to Remember"

Membership recruiting spots may or may not be accepted as public-service announcements by stations. Since a fee is charged for membership, some stations consider these spots advertising and require payment for broadcast. Section 8 will address the best methods of approaching this technique of reaching out to the community. Other stations will air The American Legion membership spots once they are aware that The American Legion is a tax-free 501(C)-19 veterans service and patriotic youth-oriented organization.

As with all products, each CD contains spots with music beds at the end for post contact information.

Television Public Service Spots

The current inventory of television PSAs includes:

- Blue Star Service Banner (three 30-second PSAs)
- Membership (two 30-second PSAs)
- "A Day to Remember" (one 30-second PSA)

Spots are provided on a VHS videotape or DVD for use in presenting to television stations and cable systems. Professional BetaSP format tapes of higher quality can be sent directly to the broadcast facility by the National Public Relations office when a commitment to use is provided to the post. This service is free to the post or the broadcast facility.

Videos

- *Good PR Equals Membership Success* (Length: 15:54) — American Legion Public Relations training video. It highlights all available PR tools and covers marketing, use of appropriate media, interview tips and basics of good post Public Relations strategy and planning. This is an excellent video for the entire post or the Public Relations committee.
- *America's Veterans* (Length: 23:00) — A video for school students about veterans, Veterans Day and military service to America. Comes with a teacher's guide and volunteer presenter's outline.
- *Reconnect* (Length: 14:16) — A motivational video for post showing on reaching out to younger, active duty veterans.
- Others as required, including National Convention highlights, instructional videos on Legion programs, Protect Our Flag, etc. Contact National Public Relations for a complete listing.

PR media tools produced by The American Legion Public Relations Commission Office have no copyright restrictions. Maximum use and reproduction is encouraged.

Suggested Speeches

The National Public Relations Division office writes prepared public remarks every year for the following observances:

- American Legion Birthday, March
- Memorial Day, May
- Flag Day, June
- Veterans Day, November

SECTION **TWO**

PR Tools

Each speech can be read without modification or used as a basis to adapt for delivery to specific audiences as appropriate. These speeches are normally available about four weeks in advance of the day. You can download them from **www.legion.org** or request them via mail.

Stock speeches also are available by request from the Public Relations office for the following special events and programs:

- Dedication of a New Post Home
- Women Veterans
- Presentations to Civic and Community Groups about Legion Programs
- "We Call Ourselves Legionnaires"
- Americanism
- Flag Retirement Ceremony
- POW/MIA
- Our Preamble

Legionnaires frequently called upon to provide remarks are invited to add their names to the speeches mailing list to automatically receive them as they are written and distributed.

PR Tools On The Internet

As media technology evolves, so does the ability of The American Legion to provide media tools directly to Legionnaires via the Internet. Nearly all American Legion media tools can be downloaded from **www.legion.org.** Radio and television spots can be viewed or heard and immediately ordered online. Compact disc technology enables Legion radio spots to not only be top digital broadcast quality, ready for airing by radio stations, but also played on personal computers or "boom boxes."

Even American Legion ad slicks are available on CD, enabling post photos to be interchanged for those already on the slick and copy to be adjusted or edited for local requirements.

As your American Legion national staff produces new media products, your suggestions and comments are always welcome. The PR staff stands ready to answer any questions on PR media tools or conducting your community Public Relations campaign.

All American Legion PR Media Tools are available FREE upon request. Call (317) 630-1253.
E-mail **pr@legion.org**. Write to The American Legion Public Relations Office,
P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

SECTION **THREE**

Who's Who in the Media

The list of job titles in today's media seems to take your breath away. How do you know who is the right person to contact when you have a story to tell?

Talk to the receptionist who answers the phone. Remember the old axiom from our military days: you get the best information from the people who answer the phones and do the work. It's still the same today and it works with any company, anywhere.

Just pick up the phone and call the newspaper, radio, television station or cable system main number. Ask the person who answers to whom you should send a news release to or who you should speak with to suggest a topic for a talk show. Ask that person to cut through the "red tape" by simply giving you the information. Get the correct contact person's name, phone, fax and e-mail information. Armed with that information, you can begin the communication process.

Every media operation is different. That's why you want to work with the people closest to doing the story, not upper management. Still, understanding where some of the division lies in a media operation can be helpful. So consider the following:

Daily Newspapers

- ***City Editor*** – Probably as high in the working chain as you want to go. This is generally the individual who makes reporter assignments for local stories. He or she also is the person who edits the stories.
- ***Reporter*** – A great place to start. Besides being told what stories to write, reporters have a responsibility to suggest stories. If you can convince a reporter your story is important, you are ahead of the game.
- ***Editorial Page Editor*** – An individual who works separately from the newswriting side of the business. This individual helps develop editorial positions of the newspaper, etc. When you want to place a guest editorial written by your commander in a newspaper, this is where you will most likely be directed.
- ***Op-Ed Editor*** – An individual who selects the commentary and opinion pieces that appear on the page opposite the editorial page in most papers, thus the name "op-ed." Sometimes a column written by your commander can be used as an op-ed piece.
- ***Letters to the Editor*** – Generally one individual in the editorial department handles the selection of letters. Most newspapers also have information on how to submit letters to the editor via mail, fax and e-mail. Never overlook the potential of a short, to-the-point letter reinforcing the positive community perception of our organization.

Weekly Newspapers

- ***Editor*** – Weekly papers have just a few staff members to handle all the jobs, so don't be surprised if the person who answers the phone also is the person you need to speak with. In the weekly newspaper business, the editor is a Jack or Jill of all trades.

SECTION **THREE**

Who's Who in the Media

Television Stations

- ***Assignment Editor*** – The person who is the big traffic cop for stories. This is the person who assigns reporters and videographers to cover a story.
- ***Reporter*** – The person who does the work, talks with people, tries to find contacts and gets the job done. Once you have been handed from the assignment editor to a reporter, you can usually make future calls directly to the reporter.
- ***Community Affairs Director*** – The individual who coordinates all the station's activities in the community. If you were looking to establish a partnership (Section 12) with a station for a special event, this is probably the person you will be told to contact.
- ***Public Affairs Director*** – The individual who produces and often hosts station programs that tackle issues of interest to the public. If you have an event you want to promote, this is who you will most likely work with.

Radio Stations

- ***News and Public Service Director*** – Unless you live in a major city, the individual hired as the news director is generally also doing the job of the public service director, hosting or producing a taped weekend radio talk program of community interest and more.
- ***Promotion Director*** – The individual who coordinates appearances by on-air personalities at events and develops other relationship projects to increase listener participation and awareness of the station.
- ***Continuity Director*** – The individual who schedules the time of all commercials. At smaller radio stations this person may also schedule public service announcements.

So remember, talking to the top person in charge is seldom where you want to start. Don't try to figure out who to call; let the workers help you navigate the maze of job titles.

Media Contact Sheets

Regardless of whom you end up talking with you need to use a Media Contact Sheet to keep the people and the stories straight. Your Media Contact Sheet can be as simple as a 5"x8" card or as detailed as a computer database. Take a moment to review the sample Media Contact Sheets on the next few pages and decide how you can use either of them or if you want to create your own.

If you are comfortable maintaining a computer document you will find a template for that Media Contact Sheet at **www.legion.org/pr.htm** or create your own on your computer.

Regardless of your choice of Media Contact Sheet formats, never lose sight of the real key: **keep a written copy**, not something simply stored on a computer. Think of it as insurance for when the hard drive fries. Better yet, think of it as preparing the way for the individual who will take over your Public Relations officer duties someday.

SECTION **THREE**

Who's Who in the Media

It will take some time and effort to develop media contacts but the work will pay long-term dividends for your post and community. By keeping a written Media Contact Sheet, your efforts will provide continuity. As you learn little gems over time, jot them in the "Notes" area. For example, a media outlet tells you what stories it is interested in covering. Make a "note." Then let them know of those stories and not the other stories. Your time is valuable, so don't spend it and your post's money sending news and information a media outlet does not want.

As a Public Relations officer, your efforts to build relationships with local media will go a long way toward strengthening the image of the organization.

Who's Who in the Media

Media Contacts

MEDIA CONTACT

Media Name:

Mailing Address:

Street Address:

City, State, ZIP

Contact Name(s):

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Note:

MEDIA CONTACT

Media Name:

Mailing Address:

Street Address:

City, State, ZIP

Contact Name(s):

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Note:

Media Contact Information

Company:		Media Type:	
Circulation/Audience:			
Remarks:			
Deadline Information:			
Special Requirements:			

Contacts

Contact 1			
Name:		Title:	
Address:		Business Phone:	
		Home Phone:	
		Cell Phone:	
		Pager:	
		E-mail:	
		Fax:	
Remarks:			

Contact 2			
Name:		Title:	
Address:		Business Phone:	
		Home Phone:	
		Cell Phone:	
		Pager:	
		E-mail:	
		Fax:	
Remarks:			

Contact 3			
Name:		Title:	
Address:		Business Phone:	
		Home Phone:	
		Cell Phone:	
		Pager:	
		E-mail:	
		Fax:	
Remarks:			

Media Contact History

Company:		Media Type:	

CONTACTS

Date	Legion Representative	Details of contact, outcome

Sample Form In Use – Electronic Media

Media Contact Information

Company:	WTFO	Media Type:	Television Station
Circulation/Audience:	#3 station in market. Mainly 18-36 year old.		
Remarks:	FOX affiliate. Morning news program from 7am – 9am. No midday. Evening news at 6pm and 10 p m		
Deadline Information:	Community calendar items due by noon the day before airing.		
Special Requirements:	Video = BetacamSP or DVCam formats. Graphics can be PhotoShop or EPS.		

Contacts

Contact 1			
Name:	Joe Headline	Title:	News Director
Address:	123 WTFO Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	206-555-4321
		Cell Phone:	206-555-5678
		Pager:	866-555-8765
		E-mail:	jheadline@wtfo.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Is very interested in promoting veteran's issues. Contact him between 11am and 2 p.m. He's too busy with newscasts at other times.		

Contact 2			
Name:	Jane Smith	Title:	Public Affairs Director
Address:	123 WTFO Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	206-555-1234
		Cell Phone:	206-555-1234
		Pager:	206-555-1234
		E-mail:	jsmith@wtfo.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Handles all of the PSAs for the station and is a good contact for discussing special promotions and sponsorships.		

Contact 3			
Name:		Title:	
Address:		Business Phone:	
		Home Phone:	
		Cell Phone:	
		Pager:	
		E-mail:	
		Fax:	
Remarks:			

Sample Form In Use – Media Contact History

Company:	WTFO	Media Type:	Television

CONTACTS

Date	Legion Representative	Details of contact, outcome
12/06	D. Mercier	Called Jane Smith about becoming a media sponsor for next year's Memorial Day event. Set up a meeting for 12/17 to discuss.
12/10	Lee Harris	Notified Mr. Newsman via fax and e-mail regarding the Santa visit to the children's ward at the hospital. Invited him to send a photographer and reporter. Will follow up tomorrow by phone.
12/11	Lee Harris	Called Mr. Newsman regarding the visit. He will send a photographer but no reporter. I am to meet the photographer at 9 a.m. tomorrow at the station.
12/12	Lee Harris	Event went very well. Used 20 seconds of video on the 6pm news. Showed Legion members in background.
12/17	D. Mercier	Meeting with J. Smith at station. She will present our proposal to station owners in January.

Sample Form In Use – Print Media

Media Contact Information

Company:	The Daily Circular File	Media Type:	Daily newspaper
Circulation/Audience:	13,000 general circulation		
Remarks:	The only newspaper in the area. Morning delivery.		
Deadline Information:	Ads must be in 3 days prior to issue date. News deadline is generally 3 p.m. prior to pub date unless it's BIG news.		
Special Requirements:	Ads must be camera-ready. No electronic files accepted. Standard column width.		

Contacts

Contact 1

Name:	Joe Headline	Title:	News Editor
Address:	123 News Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	Not available
		Cell Phone:	206-555-5678
		Pager:	None
		E-mail:	jheadline@dcf.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Likes to have advance copies as soon as possible. Do not send him editorial copy. He'll throw it away.		

Contact 2

Name:	Jane Smith	Title:	Publisher
Address:	123 News Drive Anywhere, OH 12345	Business Phone:	206-555-1234
		Home Phone:	206-555-1234
		Cell Phone:	206-555-1234
		Pager:	206-555-1234
		E-mail:	jsmith@dcf.com
		Fax:	206-555-9128
Remarks:	Contact for all editorials, letters to the editor, etc. Husband is VFW member and she will favor their events, but works with us.		

Contact 3

Name:		Title:	
Address:		Business Phone:	
		Home Phone:	
		Cell Phone:	
		Pager:	
		E-mail:	
		Fax:	
Remarks:			

Sample Form In Use – Media Contact History

Company:	Daily Circular File	Media Type:	Newspaper

CONTACTS

Date	Legion Representative	Details of contact, outcome
12/06	J. March	Called Jane Smith about becoming a media sponsor for next year's Memorial Day event. Set up a meeting for 12/17 to discuss.
12/10	S. Thomas	Notified Mr. Newsman via fax and e-mail regarding the Santa visit to the children's ward at the hospital. Invited him to send a photographer and reporter. Will follow up tomorrow by phone.
12/11	S. Thomas	Called Mr. S regarding the visit. He will send a photographer but no reporter. I am to meet the photographer at 9 a.m. tomorrow at the station.
12/12	S. Thomas	Event went very well. Page 1 of Local section with photo and short article. Showed Legion members in background.
12/17	J. March	Meeting with J. Smith at station. She will present our proposal to station owners in January.

SECTION **FOUR**

News: What is it? How do you make it?

Definition Of News

Random House Dictionary

- A report of a current event
- A report on current events in a newspaper or on radio or television
- Such reports taken collectively

American Heritage Dictionary

- Recent events and happenings
- A report about recent events
- New information

Oxford Shorter Dictionary

- New things, novelties (1565)
- Tidings, new information of recent events; new occurrences as a subject of report or talk
- A newspaper

"It is better to be making the news than taking it; to be an actor than a critic." —Winston Churchill, 1898

A key element in conducting an effective American Legion post Public Relations program is establishing your post as an authoritative news resource for media. Sure, there will always be an ongoing need to publicize programs and events conducted by the post, but much more can be done to enhance the image of The American Legion in your town.

First of all, understand the definition of "news" from a media perspective. It must be breaking; of interest to a large number of people; be a significant event, disaster or controversy; affect a lot of people's wallets; or be emotional and heart-rending. Post fish-frys, bingo nights and dances, while important to members, are not news to reporters. The Secretary of Defense or Secretary of Veterans Affairs announcing deployments or cutbacks in health care is national news, yet both stories will likely have a direct impact in your town. That's where your post enters the picture.

Become a real source for breaking news in your area.

How do you do that? It's easier than you might think.

As an organization, The American Legion passes resolutions every year that guide the legislative lobbying efforts in Washington. Issues range from veterans affairs and a strong national defense to Second Amendment rights, flag protection, secure borders and safety programs for children. Several hundred standing resolutions at any given time represent the official position of The American Legion.

As the chief spokesperson for The American Legion, the National Commander promotes Legion ac-

tivism by using the resolutions to testify before Congress and discuss the Legion's advocacy in these areas with national media.

When a national news story breaks on an issue covered by an American Legion resolution, the National Public Relations Commission distributes a news release providing the National Commander's reaction and call for action, if appropriate. News releases are posted immediately on the national Web site at **www.legion.org**.

Here is where your post can become a news resource in your community.

When a national story breaks in Washington, the mainstream media rushes to cover it. The major networks, wire services and cable news channels all converge on the "newsmakers." Interviews and soundbites are included in both print and electronic stories.

For every breaking national news story, reporters in newsrooms in your hometown are scrambling to find a "local angle" to the national story. A Post Commander or Post Public Relations officer can satisfy that requirement and become a local newsmaker, thrusting the post into the community eye as an authoritative voice on major issues affecting the lives of folks in the neighborhood. Taking action to get out The American Legion position not only demonstrates the pro-active advocacy of the organization, but it lets local elected leaders, veterans and their families know that your post is making a difference for the better in your community, state and nation. Positive visibility will enhance membership, organizational influence and community support.

How To Piggy-Back on Breaking National News

Promptness is crucial to success in being a community newsmaker. It is important to contact local media newsrooms as quickly as possible following the national event. Here are the steps to follow:

1. When you see or hear of a breaking story, check out the national Web site. Download and save The American Legion news release from **www.legion.org**.
2. Write a paragraph or two using quotes from your Post Commander supporting the Legion position. Cite any specific actions your post may be taking in support of the story – calling local congressional representatives, starting a petition drive, etc.
3. Insert the information into the national release and print it on post letterhead.
4. Fax or e-mail the post release to your contacts in newsrooms of area newspapers, radio and television stations. Be sure to include a post contact name and telephone number for reporters to call if they want to set up an interview.
5. If conducting an interview after sending the release, advocate The American Legion position on the issue and inject personal experiences. If the story is about VA health care, discuss your personal observations about a local VA health-care facility that supports the Legion advocacy position on the issue.

You have just provided your area media with a reason to do a story of local impact on a breaking national story and established your post as a credible newsmaker in the community.

Here is an example of a national story localized:

VA health-care system backlog sparks action by The American Legion

WASHINGTON (Dec. 11, 2002) – Prompted by a growing number of complaints about lengthy waits for initial doctor visits at Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers across the nation, The American Legion is launching a national program to gather personal stories about these complaints.

"We are launching the 'I am Not a Number' campaign to help lawmakers understand that behind the growing pile of statistics are real veterans who are hurting," said Ronald F. Conley, national commander of the nation's largest veterans organization. "In a mailing to every American Legion post across the nation I am asking our members to help identify those men and women veterans in their communities who have been waiting more than six months for their first medical examination at a VA medical center."

(CITY) American Legion Post XX is among the first to reach out to area veterans. "I ask every veteran here in (CITY) who has been waiting way too long for an appointment to call me at the post and fill out a form that we will send to Washington," Post Commander (NAME) said. "You don't have to be a post member. All veterans who have waited to see a doctor at the (NAME) VA hospital over six months need to take part in this. Our lawmakers need to see the faces of their constituents and realize we are indeed not just numbers."

Reports indicate more than 300,000 veterans are waiting for primary-care appointments in VA health-care facilities all across America. "Some have been waiting months. Some have been waiting a year or more for an initial appointment to see a doctor. Their health care is being rationed due to inadequate funding and a failure by our nation's leaders to fulfill their obligations to those who fought for our freedom," Conley said.

VA predicts another 600,000 veterans will enroll in its health care system in 2003. By the end of next year, the system's patient load will reach nearly 5 million. If that happens without widespread change in the way the system is perceived and funded, the backlog will grow even worse.

"The American Legion is an advocate for veterans, the VA health care system and for everyone of the dedicated men and women who toil within the system every day," Conley said. "But the bottom line is that there simply is not enough money. Only by making funding of the VA healthcare system mandatory, instead of discretionary, can we be assured our nation's heroes will receive the care they so richly earned in service to their country."

--MORE--

"VA Health Care" 2-2-2-2

With more than 15,000 local posts, The American Legion's goal is to identify as many "backlog" veterans as possible and present the personal side of the problem to the nation's lawmakers early next year. Each post is receiving an "I Am Not a Number" booklet with information on the effort and forms for veterans waiting for service to complete. All of the information is also available on The American Legion's Web site, www.legion.org.

Veterans wishing to participate can call Post XX Commander (NAME) at (NUMBER) or visit The American Legion Internet Web site at www.legion.org.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

Now, with two localized paragraphs in the story you are ready to print the news release on post letterhead and get it to your media outlets. Because it takes two pages for the story you use the "--MORE--" and portion of the headline with page number - in this case "2-2-2-2" - so newspaper staff can be certain they see all information, especially if pages get separated.

Post News Conference

If your post plans to conduct a specific event or action in your community based on a national news item, you should consider conducting a news conference. For example, an announcement that your post is launching a local campaign to join a national effort provides an excellent platform for a news conference. The "I Am Not a Number" campaign was able to get media attention to help inform veterans of the Legion effort in the community. Posts that conducted news conferences increased their visibility and received forms from area veterans, many of whom joined their posts.

News conferences should have a definite message. They should be visual for the television media (use props), and include major participants (mayor, youth champion, etc., as applicable.) Issue a media advisory (Example found in Section 5) announcing the news conference. Be prepared to answer questions after reading a prepared statement. Dress in a business suit, wear your Legion cap and have The American Legion emblem positioned behind you.

Conduct the conference mid-morning. The best time is around 10:30 a.m. This gives assignment editors and crews plenty of time to get to the post and ample time to return and edit the story for the evening news. If your stations have noon newscasts, you may want to conduct the conference at 9 a.m. or 9:30 a.m.

Do not conduct a news conference unless you have a major event, action or campaign to announce that will impact the community.

SECTION **FOUR**

News: What is it? How do you make it?

Pitching News Stories

Now that you have written and assembled a news release you are only halfway done. Do not fall into the "Fax into Oblivion" syndrome. Sending the release blindly to a listed fax number of the TV station and sitting back waiting for a phone call will most likely not yield any calls. Successful Public Relations practitioners know exactly who to call to "pitch" a story, confirm receipt of the faxed news release and verbally add additional information. Section 3 has a detailed discussion. Radio news stations might very well record an interview when you call and use the sound-bites over a series of newscasts throughout the day. So be prepared with message points before you place the call.

The importance of personal contact with media reporters, editors and assignment editors cannot be over-emphasized. Unless you talk with a known contact in the newsroom, chances are high that your fax may be ignored or placed in "File 13" by a passing station intern. Call, identify, confirm and follow up on news releases and advisories. Eventually, media will have you in their contacts file and will be calling the post when stories break in areas of Legion expertise. Remember, every time the post appears in the paper, a Legionnaire is interviewed on television or the name is heard on the radio, people learn more about The American Legion and your post.

How To Avoid Negative Coverage

- Ensure that the local media have one point of contact for your post — preferably the Public Relations officer, Post Commander or Post Adjutant as appropriate.
- Take whatever steps are necessary to avoid unannounced media interviews in the bar area of your post facility. Don't perpetuate the stereotype of veterans sitting around telling war stories while drinking. Have reporters set up appointments in advance with a post spokesperson.
- Always conduct interviews in the post meeting room with The American Legion emblem in the background. If the reporter wants to talk with a number of veterans, have them in the room. Brief them on the Legion's message points on the story the reporter is working. During good weather, an interview outside the post with the Legion emblem in the background is appropriate.

Winston Churchill was right. Become a newsmaker in your community and your post will reap dividends in service, community support, membership and public recognition.

SECTION **FIVE**

The News Release and Media Advisory

An old axiom says, "All politics is local." It's true. Apply that thinking to your Public Relations efforts at the post, district and department. ***Local*** news attracts ***local*** media attention. As a key member of The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans organization, the Post Public Relations officer must use the ***local*** angle to gain maximum coverage.

In each case, ***local*** refers to your community and neighborhoods. What The American Legion family does in Washington may or may not be of interest in your community. You can make it more interesting to ***local*** media by taking a news release issued by National Headquarters and ***localizing*** it for your media.

Localization of a news release is easy to do. Section 4 has a detailed discussion. The greatest advantage to ***localizing*** the story is creating in your hometown media employees' minds the understanding that when it comes to key issues to veterans and their families, they can always turn to The American Legion for the ***local*** angle.

Creating a ***local*** story from a story on The American Legion Web site is easy and a great tool.

Yet, at times you will need to inform the news media of a unique event or program your post is conducting. In such cases you can write a complete news release or issue a media advisory.

You won't find a set formula that tells you whether to use a completely written news release or an abbreviated page called a media advisory. Use the format you are most comfortable in providing. In the research stage of developing either a news release or a media advisory you still need to answer the basic journalistic "five Ws and the H": who, what, where, when, why and how.

When writing a news release, you must determine which of the five questions is the most important to answer and use that as the lead. All six of the questions should be answered in the first two paragraphs of a news release. The remainder of the release will provide details.

As the Post Public Relations officer, one of your biggest writing challenges will be to look at the news release through the eyes of a non-member. Approaching the story from that perspective will help you determine what is most important. It will seldom be your post or commander. It most often will be students, community, etc., as your focal point.

Here's one way to look at it: when you have a contestant in the High School Oratorical Contest in the State Finals, the high-school student is the most important part of the story – not the Post Commander or The American Legion. The media cannot tell the full story without mentioning The American Legion and your commander, but they should not be the lead of your story. The focus would naturally be the student.

Having that mental picture also will help you if you choose to use a ***Media Advisory*** as your means of communicating with the ***local*** people on your ***Media Contact Sheet.*** The simplicity of a ***Media Advisory*** makes it a favorite of many volunteers and even those in the media. It answers the five Ws and the H. It provides a bit of background material. Then they write their own story. When you are dealing with larger media outlets, this should be a successful way to work with them. After all, their reporters are trained to write stories; you might as well let them put their training to use.

The News Release and Media Advisory

Media Advisory

Here's a sample ***Media Advisory*** based on the contributions of your post to the community in the past year. The statistics for this advisory would come from your Consolidated Post Report.

Suggested Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY
***(Community),* local organizations benefit from generosity of veterans, their families**

WHO: The citizens of *(community)* and members of (list key organizations).

WHAT: Benefited by programs and cash contributions conducted by *(Full name of your post).*

WHEN: *(During the past year.)*

WHY: Post *(###)* members are committed to serving veterans, their families, the children of our nation and the community.

WHERE: *(Street address of your post)*

HOW: *(Using highlights from the Consolidated Post Report list the major programs, events, contributions, etc., amount of money spent or given and number of people helped.)*

BACKGROUND

(Full name and number of your post) was chartered in (month and year) to serve veterans, their families, and the children and citizens of (community). As members of the nation's largest wartime veterans organization, Legionnaires and members of the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion (if applicable in your community) believe in volunteerism and the importance of being a positive influence for the next generation of America's leaders. That is why members and their families place a special emphasis on serving others while taking care of our own. It is a common bond of service that spans the generations.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

Use of a ***Media Advisory*** in this case lets the news reporters and editors know the scope of your post's community service and provides them the opportunity to develop several approaches to a story.

SECTION **FIVE**

The News Release and Media Advisory

Letting media know about the financial and service impact of The American Legion family in every community is an important tool. Even if they do not publish a story, you have planted a seed of information in minds that just may help them remember The American Legion when looking for a special holiday story angle, etc.

The American Legion in your community must be perceived as contributing, active and involved. Keeping your community good deeds in front of them is a big step in making all citizens aware of what you do and why you do it.

The decision to use a ***News Release*** or a ***Media Advisory*** is entirely up to you. Whatever your decision, keep trying. No one in Public Relations at any firm or organization bats 1,000. The key is to be persistent. Develop your ***Media Contact*** list. Keep it current. Send information that is newsworthy to your contacts. Over time, your efforts will be rewarded.

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - The American Legion Birthday

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

Still serving *(Community)* after all these years –
That's The American Legion

The American Legion will observe its *(ordinal number)* birthday, and Legionnaires of *(Community)* plan a celebration of this significant milestone, Commander *(Full Name)* of *(Name of post)*, Post *(No.)* announced today. Since its founding in 1919, The American Legion has served veterans their families and the children of the nation. That legacy of service continues today through programs such as (list two or three of the biggest community programs in which your post is involved).

(Insert full details concerning your post's birthday celebration. Include the names of keynote speaker, distinguished guests, highlights of the program, special recognition planned, etc.)

The program in *(Community)* is part of a celebration at the more than 15,000 American Legion posts located throughout the United States and in many parts of the free world.

The American Legion was responsible for the creation of the original GI Bill, used by millions of veterans to obtain assistance in education and home loans. The organization was instrumental in the passage of legislation creating the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Today The American Legion continues to work for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from desecration; securing mandatory funding for adequate operation of the Veterans Affairs Medical facilities; and operates a Family Support Network for families of active duty military personnel and members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Additionally, the work of The American Legion to support the nation's youth continues to grow, as more young people are involved in Legion-sponsored programs. The Boy Scouts of America, American Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports and the National High School Oratorical Contest are just a few examples of how The American Legion continues to strive to provide a solid foundation on which the youth of America may grow.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

SECTION **FIVE**

The News Release and Media Advisory

After reviewing this suggested news release, you should have spotted the second paragraph in which to insert the five Ws and an H information for your event. Using this suggested release gives you the benefit of linking the national impact of The American Legion with the ***local*** impact of your post and an event to honor the members.

In the remaining pages of this section you will find a variety of suggested news releases ready for you to retype, add your important ***local*** information, and distribute them as appropriate. It will give you another opportunity to create a ***local*** angle to a national story.

The suggested news releases that follow are just that – suggestions. They are designed to help you succeed as a Public Relations officer. Use them as a guide. Put the five Ws and the H information in the story and you will soon find yourself exceeding all your expectations.

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - Americanism Month (February)

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

Month for presidential tributes, love creates opportunity to preserve American traditions

February is a busy month for presidential birthdays and expressions of love. It's also a month for remembering hospitalized veterans and focusing on this nation's cherished traditions which can influence future generations.

February is "Americanism Month" for members of *(full name and number of your post)* in *(community)*. To celebrate this time Legionnaires and members of American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion (if applicable) are conducting a program to help young citizens understand some of the most cherished traditions of the American way.

(Full details of your post event)

"The members of our American Legion family invite everyone to attend and bring their children and grand children," *(full name of post commander)* said. "Following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, and the uncertainty of the future, helping our fellow citizens understand our nation's foundation is something we feel is important," *(last name)* added.

Founded in 1919, The American Legion's commitment to the nation's veterans, their families and all children has not dulled over the decades. "Veterans develop a bond of serving others while in uniform, so it is only natural for us to continue that service through volunteerism after our military days," *(last name)* said.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - Children & Youth Month (April)

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

Well-being of children
takes center stage in April

While every day of the year children should receive special attention the members of *(name and number of your post)* in *(community)* are planning a special event to help area children and their families in April.

"To The American Legion family April is Children and Youth Month," *(Full name),* commander of Post *(###)* said. "We are taking the initiative to ***(briefly state what you are going to do)***. We do it because we believe children are America's most precious natural resource."

(Provide all the remaining details of the event here)

For more than 80 years The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion have devoted hours of volunteer time and donated millions of dollars in support of programs and activities which benefit the nation's children and youth.

In *(community)* these volunteers have *(list examples of post/unit/squadron projects and contributions in support of children and youth in the past year).*

"As Americans, we need to remember amid the problems we face daily the one constant that will make or break this nation is our young people. They are our future, and our dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow rest in their hands," *(commander's last name)* said.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - Memorial Day

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

Modern Memorial Day ceremonies prove bond formed in military service spans generations

A tradition, which dates back more than 150 years, continues to bring veterans and families together in *(community)*. The tradition: decorating the graves of America's war veterans, known now as Memorial Day.

"The members of *(full name and number of post)* understand that bond and tradition, that is why we are *(briefly highlight your activity)*," *(full name)*, post commander, said. "We hope many citizens of *(community)* will join us in remembering those who died for our freedom."

(Insert full details of your Memorial Day program here. Keynote speaker, special music, public participation opportunities, etc.)

"The veterans we pause to remember on Memorial Day are the patriots who left their homes and families when their country called. They gave the last full measure of devotion in defense of our freedom. We are committed to keeping the memory of their sacrifice alive for generations to come," *(last name)* said.

Formed following World War I, The American Legion continues to work for all veterans their families and the children of the nation. The largest wartime veterans organization has 2.8 million members in nearly 15,000 posts around the globe.

Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868, by Gen. John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was first observed on May 30, 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - Flag Day

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

(Community) veterans, families prepare to salute 'Old Glory'

On a day to celebrate the American flag, members of (name and number of post) also will honor "Old Glory" in a special ceremony.

(Insert full details of your ceremony: who, what, where, when, why and how. Be sure to include the name of your community and words that help citizens understand they are welcome.)

The American flag was authorized by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777, but commemoration of this significant event was slow in its development.

The Stars and Stripes first flew in a Flag Day celebration in 1861 in Hartford, Conn. The first national observance of Flag Day came on June 14, 1877, 100 years after the original resolution establishing the nation's symbol.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - Veterans Day

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

Veterans Day observance
reflects history, current events

Veterans Day, the annual time for remembering the end of World War I and the brave Americans who served in the "war to end all wars," also draws from the news headlines of the day.

"What we now call 'Veterans Day' began as 'Armistice Day.' It is historically significant that this day continue to be observed on the month, day and hour that the guns fell silent in World War I 11 a.m., Nov. 11, 1918," (Full Name), commander of (full name and number of post) said.

While the day has strong historical roots, current events continue to add meaning to the day. "Today, thousands of Americans are serving in uniform. They sacrifice in the war on terror and in hundreds of locations around the globe so we may remain free. They, too, are veterans," (last name) said.

To mark Veterans Day in (community) ***(insert all the local information at this point. Focus on answering the five W's and the H).***

The American Legion is the nation's largest wartime veterans organization. Founded early in 1919, the delegates to the first National Convention in Minneapolis broke from business sessions to parade down a main street in a heavy snowstorm at 11 a.m. Nov. 11 to mark the anniversary of the armistice.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

The News Release and Media Advisory

News Release - Post Annual Report

For Immediate Release *(Date issued)*

(Community) benefits on many fronts
from (full name and number of post)

When the members of (full name and number of post) extend a hand of friendship or assistance to those who live in the (community) area, they make an impact. The annual report of Post (number), submitted to the national organization, will be combined with thousands of others to give The American Legion some measurement of the extent of the services provided by the nation's largest veterans organization.

For Post (number) the report includes (dollar amount) in direct aid to needy veterans, and an additional (dollar amount) to the voluntary services program.

(Full name) commander of Post (number) notes that contributions are not restricted to cash. "Besides the money donated to various organizations, we sponsored (number) of young men and women to American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, supported our American Legion Baseball team, as well as volunteering more than (number) hours to the VA medical center," (last name) said.

(At this point you should include information on other community projects: number of units of blood donated, scholarship funds or savings bonds for Oratorical, Junior Shooting Sports or other activities. Don't omit the unique things members of your post undertake to help the community).

As a federally chartered organization, The American Legion must submit an annual report of its activities and programs to Congress. The national organization's report represents the compilation of the summaries turned in by its thousands of posts.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home).*

SECTION **SIX**

Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds

Serving as a Public Relations officer for The American Legion is a challenging undertaking. Often you become frustrated because your news releases are not used and you feel your message is important.

That's a good time to consider writing a letter to the editor or a guest editorial for the local paper.

Your local newspaper's editorial page is another opportunity to excel in telling The American Legion story. A newspaper's editorial gives the position of the publication's editorial board, a panel comprised of those responsible for the content of the various sections. Similarly, an op-ed or letter to the editor from a Legion official states the position of The American Legion on an issue.

Every newspaper has its own guidelines for submission of letters to the editor and op-eds. Heed those guidelines which specify the ideal word count, manner of submission and author background. Ensure also that a letter or op-ed is consistent with American Legion policy if someone expressly representing The American Legion, such as someone who uses his or her American Legion title after the name, submits the piece. (Example: Jane Doe, Commander, American Legion Post 00, Someplace, USA.)

It is advantageous to use the editorial page. First, it is a relatively unfiltered means of telling The American Legion story, free from the risk of having your most eloquent statements left out of a regular news story. Second, it is proactive, a way for you to take The American Legion message to the newspaper instead of depending on someone to assign a reporter to cover the organization. Third, the letter or op-ed identifies The American Legion in terms of the organization's legislative agenda, one of the most important considerations that prospective members might have.

Most newspapers require letters to the editor and op-eds to be exclusive submissions. They don't want to publish something another paper prints the day before they do. Keep these efforts exclusive to the newspaper you want to work with.

Letter to the Editor

Generally, a letter to the editor is approximately 200 words long and responds to an item published in a previous edition of the newspaper. It's short and sweet.

The letters most likely to be published follow a simple structure. The first paragraph states the position of the organization vis-à-vis a perspective revealed in a previous article. The middle section explains the key message points that reinforce the lead paragraph. The final paragraph either reiterates the lead paragraph or gives an "action statement" that explains how The American Legion will address a situation. Use American Legion resolutions, news releases and the Message Points found on The American Legion Web site, **www.legion.org**, to verify your facts.

An easy way to send your letter to electronic media in your congressional district, a tremendous asset when the letter's topic is pending legislation is to simply click on the icon on The American Legion's Internet homepage for the Legislative Action Center.

Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds

Once you open the Legislative Action Center, click on Media Guide. Plug in your ZIP code or any other pertinent information. You will get e-mail links to media in your area, perhaps even an avenue through which you can send your letter to the local newspaper. It's just a matter of cutting and pasting to share that same letter with other media and with your member of Congress.

If you take this route, include something on all versions you send to electronic media that explains you submitted the following letter to the editor as a representative of The American Legion and would welcome the opportunity to assist a reporter in developing a piece on the issue. Who knows? Other media might take you up on the offer.

Op-Ed

Op-ed is short for "opposite editorial," a piece that makes a point, regardless of whether the topic has been covered in a previous issue. It is rarely more than 700 words. An op-ed follows the same structure as a letter but uses more facts and figures to make its point, much the way a regular newspaper column does.

Avoid cliches. However, a memorable quote from a historical figure is a good thing. Stay on your message. Do not fill your precious space with arguments tangential to your main point.

To ensure you have your facts correct, rely on the same resources as you would to write a letter to the editor: resolutions, news releases and message points.

Linking the point of your op-ed to a patriotic day, while using your American Legion title in your byline, might enhance the likelihood of being published. For instance, an editor might be more receptive to an op-ed on the flag-protection constitutional amendment just prior to Flag Day. Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Independence Day and American Legion Birthday are opportunities both to satisfy an editor's need and to explain to the general public -- including members and potential members -- The American Legion's advocacy.

For a column on The American Legion Birthday, pull out a copy of your annual Post Report and glean whatever statistics you deem impressive. On or about March 15 to 17, you have a tremendous opportunity to market an op-ed dealing with The American Legion community service about which most people may know little.

Before you sit down to write, contact the newspaper's opinion or editorial page editor to determine whether he or she would consider your op-ed. Meet the deadline.

If you simply want a bit of inspiration for your own op-ed, visit **www.legion.org**, click on Public Relations and review the latest news releases. You'll find what is "hot" and how the issue is being made. Simply take that information and put it into a straightforward bit of writing from your heart.

SECTION **SEVEN**

Successful Public Service Approaches

By Bill Perkins
President, The Perkins-Nichols Media Group, Indianapolis

Radio or television coverage for your post and/or its activities can be one of the most effective means of improving awareness in your community.

While radio and television stations are first and foremost moneymaking organizations, most have a very real interest in relating to the communities they serve. Such community involvement helps them build listener interest and loyalty, and they know that building audiences is important to their commercial success. Getting their attention for a not-for-profit campaign is not easy — not impossible, but not easy.

While all broadcasters devote some "public service" time to local organizations and nonprofit causes, the number of organizations seeking support far exceeds the amount of available time. Organizations ranging from the Girl Scouts to local churches to the Cancer Society routinely flood stations with requests for help in publicizing their efforts with public service announcements (PSAs).

Success comes most to those who have thought through their approach and best make their "case" to the station.

PUBLIC SERVICE SCRIPTS: The sample public service announcements in this section can be adapted to meet the needs of your individual American Legion post.

FACT SHEET: Equally important is a concise fact sheet that helps station personnel understand your post's place in the community, why you are important as an organization and why the current subject should be of interest. This approach helps you convince the station that your material is of interest to its listeners. It also can provide information for station announcers to insert as "liners" — brief mentions as they talk with their listeners, as differentiated from full 30-second or 60-second PSAs.

> For example: Who are you? A simple listing of facts such as how many members, location and history (since the post was founded) provide some context for your message.
>
> What? Subject, i.e. an event, open house, parade or display.
>
> When? Dates and times.
>
> Where? Location.

WHO TO CONTACT: Most large stations have public-service directors to whom materials and or calls should be directed. In small stations, the continuity director will handle public-service spot placement in available spot locations after the paid commercials have been scheduled.

In all but the largest stations, a letter or call directly to the station manager also may be appropriate. If you or someone in your post is personally acquainted with the manager or another executive at a station, a letter or call soliciting help may be an advantage. A good word from management will usually move you much higher on the public service director's list of PSA candidates.

Offer to deliver scripts personally and, if needed, to have a member of your post available to record announcements for the station. Some stations like to have well-known members of the local community on the air with this sort of effort. Others prefer to have all announcements delivered by their own staff.

Finally, offer to make your service officer or other knowledgeable individual available to the station for programs that discuss VA benefits, etc.

Paid Advertising

If you have even a small advertising budget, a paid commercial schedule will guarantee coverage and offer substantial leverage for your attempt to gain public service spot coverage.

In this case, we suggest you approach a station sales manager with a modest approach: "We have an important public service message to get out to the community. But we know you have far more not-for-profits looking to you for time than you can possibly accommodate. Would it be possible to get some effective coverage out of a very limited budget such as $_____?"

Continuing, you might say, "We understand that different stations find a variety of 'ways to help' organizations like ours. We've heard of stations that build a special spot package for a good cause, which includes a number of bonus spots, while others build an advantageous spot package for the cash schedule and put our public-service spots into a good spot on the PSA list. How could you help us?"

Frequently — not always, but frequently — this approach will help you break through the attention barrier, getting you on the air and getting your post the additional public awareness you seek.

What follows are sample radio public service announcements for you to retype, inserting the correct local information Then give a new approach a try.

Radio Copy

Simply follow these steps to place public service announcements on stations in your area:

1. Retype the copy, putting the appropriate local information where indicated. Be flexible and open to changing the copy to make it fit station needs, etc.
2. Consider who you want to hear your announcement and which station's listeners would likely be your target. Perhaps you will work to place different announcements on different stations to properly target your message. The same message can be carried on more than one station. Do whatever it takes to make your American Legion post visible in your community.
3. Rehearse your sales pitch. Before you call the station, rehearse what you will say to the public service director to convince her or him that you need their help in promoting your service or community contributions. You may have only 60 seconds to tell your story — be prepared to do it.
4. Call the station and ask for the name of the public service director. Be certain you get correct spelling of the name. Then ask if you can speak with that individual. Set up a personal appointment if possible.
5. Make your sales pitch.
6. Be prepared to provide someone from the post to visit the station to deliver the scripts and perhaps record the announcement. Stations often seek the voice of a local citizen to deliver the message because it enhances the station's local service image.
7. If you are turned down this time, don't think you can never approach the station. Ask if another time of year is better to have the station use your message.
8. Regardless of your success, ask if you can provide a guest for a public affairs program to discuss one or more issues. For example, if you are trying to place the public service announcement about your service officer, offer to have the service officer be a guest on a program to discuss VA benefits, etc.

Successful Public Service Approaches

Sample Radio Scripts

"Need-a-Lift?"

60 Seconds
(155 words)

THE COST OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION JUST CLIMBS HIGHER!

EVEN A SCREAMING HEADLINE ABOUT THE CONTINUING INCREASES DOESN'T GET YOUR ATTENTION — UNTIL YOU OR YOUR CHILDREN FACE THE AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGE.

IF YOU THINK YOU CAN'T AFFORD COLLEGE — "THINK AGAIN. "

COUNTLESS SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS OR LOANS FROM PRIVATE CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT ARE AVAILABLE — IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK AND HOW TO APPLY.

I HAVE A SUGGESTION — TURN TO AMERICAN LEGION POST ___*#*___. THAT'S RIGHT — TALK WITH ___*town*___ LEGIONNAIRES.

THEY HAVE A PUBLICATION LISTING SOURCES OF COLLEGE MONEY. IT'S CALLED "NEED-A-LIFT?" YOUR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR SHOULD HAVE A COPY. IF NOT, CALL POST ___*#*___ AT ___*phone #*___. TELL THEM YOU WANT TO LOOK THROUGH THE "NEED-A-LIFT?" PUBLICATION.

CALL ___*phone #*___. FIND MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP YOU CHOP THE COLLEGE EDUCATION COST DOWN TO SIZE.

"NEED-A-LIFT?" — AN EXAMPLE OF AMERICAN LEGION DEDICATION TO THE FUTURE LEADERS OF AMERICA.

# # #

Sample Radio Scripts

Service Officers

60 Seconds
(168 words)

TWENTY-SIX MILLION AMERICANS ARE MILITARY VETERANS. THEY'RE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE EARNED BENEFITS BECAUSE OF THEIR SERVICE AND SACRIFICE.

YET, TOO MANY AMERICAN VETERANS DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR BENEFITS ARE — OR HOW TO CLAIM THEM.

ARE YOU A VETERAN WHO NEEDS TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR BENEFITS? ARE YOU GETTING WHAT YOU EARNED BY YOUR SERVICE? DO YOU NEED HELP WITH A VA CLAIM? IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS, YOU NEED TO TALK WITH AMERICAN LEGION POST ___*#*___ SERVICE OFFICER _____*full name*_____. HE/SHE IS READY TO HELP YOU — AT NO COST.

CONTACT _____*first name*_____ BY CALLING _____*phone #*_____. THAT'S _____*phone #*_____.

IF YOU'RE A VETERAN — IF YOU NEED ANSWERS ABOUT YOUR EARNED BENEFITS — YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO PICK UP THE PHONE AND MAKE THE CALL. AMERICAN LEGION POST ___*#*___ SERVICE OFFICER _____*full name*_____ IS READY TO HELP YOU. CALL HIM/HER AT _____*phone #*_____.

HELPING VETERANS IS WHAT THE AMERICAN LEGION IS ALL ABOUT. WE'VE BEEN DOING IT SINCE 1919. HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

# # #

Successful Public Service Approaches

Sample Radio Scripts

Youth Programs

60 Seconds
(166 words)

HERE'S A QUICK QUIZ FOR YOU. WHAT DO GOOD CITIZENSHIP, SELF-RELIANCE AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING HAVE TO DO WITH AMERICA'S VETERANS? (PAUSE) TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF AMERICAN LEGION POST _____*#*_____ IN _____*city/town*_____ THE ANSWER IS — EVERYTHING.

GOOD CITIZENSHIP IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF EVERY AMERICAN LEGION YOUTH PROGRAM. YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD OF THEM — WITHOUT ASSOCIATING THEM WITH THE NATION'S LARGEST VETERANS ORGANIZATION.

AMERICAN LEGION BOYS STATE AND BOYS NATION, THE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST, JUNIOR SHOOTING SPORTS AND AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL.

OTHER PROGRAMS SUCH AS SCOUTING, MCGRUFF "TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME" AND SUICIDE PREVENTION ALLOW THE AMERICAN LEGION TO JOIN WITH OTHERS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE RIGHT HERE IN _____*city/town*_____.

IF YOU'RE A VETERAN WILLING TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO THE YOUTH OF _____*city/town*_____ — GIVE US A CALL. _____*phone #*_____. THAT'S _____*phone #*_____. ASK FOR _____*full name*_____ AND TELL HIM OR HER YOU'RE READY TO HELP.

HELPING AMERICA REMAIN STRONG THROUGH VALUABLE YOUTH PROGRAMS — THAT'S THE AMERICAN LEGION.

# # #

Successful Public Service Approaches

Sample Radio Scripts

Post - Community Support

60 seconds
(148 words + selected text — do not exceed 170 words)

WHEN BAD NEWS IS THE FOCUS — GOOD NEWS IS OVERLOOKED. THAT'S A SHAME. HERE'S SOME GOOD NEWS FOR _____*city/town*_____.

A GROUP OF PEOPLE HERE DOESN'T WANT TO MAKE HEADLINES — BUT IT CERTAINLY DOES KNOW HOW TO HELP. THESE MEN AND WOMEN HAVE:

*(DONATED _____**units**_____ OF BLOOD)*
(CONTRIBUTED SCHOLARSHIPS WORTH $$$)
(GAVE $$$ TO COMMUNITY CHARITIES)
*(GAVE ____**#**____ STUDENTS SCHOOL AWARDS)*
(SPENT $$$S FOR SCOUTING, YOUTH SAFETY, ETC.)
(THESE STATS AND/OR OTHERS AS APPROPRIATE FROM CONSOLIDATED POST ACTIVITY REPORT. BE SELECTIVE AND EDIT ITEMS TO ACHIEVE TIME.)

WHO ARE THESE VOLUNTEERS? THE MEN AND WOMEN OF AMERICAN LEGION POST ____*#*____ RIGHT HERE IN _____*city/town*_____.

SINCE _____*Year Post Charted*_____ THESE PROUD AMERICAN VETERANS HAVE BEEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES. IF YOU'RE A VETERAN AND WOULD LIKE HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR _____*city/town*_____ IN THE 21ST CENTURY — GIVE _____*name*_____ A CALL AT _____*phone #*_____. THE UNIFORM IS GONE — BUT THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE REMAINS STRONG FOR MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION. CALL _____*name*_____ AT _____*phone #*_____. _____*city/town*_____ NEEDS THE ON GOING SERVICE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION.

# # #

Successful Public Service Approaches

Sample Radio Scripts

American Values

60 Seconds
(166 words)

RIGHT HERE IN _____*city/town*_____, WE HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF PRIDE IN OUR COMMUNITY — IN THE AMERICAN FLAG THAT FLIES AT COUNTLESS HOMES AND BUSINESSES — AND IN OUR COUNTRY.

A SPECIAL BREED OF PEOPLE HERE IN _____*city/town*_____ NOT ONLY SHARE THIS PRIDE — THEY DO THEIR BEST TO SEE CORE VALUES PASS ALONG TO A YOUNGER GENERATION.

THEY'RE THE MEN AND WOMEN OF AMERICAN LEGION POST ____*#*____. THAT'S RIGHT — THE AMERICAN LEGION.

THE NATION'S LARGEST VETERANS ORGANIZATION HAS FOSTERED AMERICAN PRIDE SINCE ITS FOUNDING MORE THAN 80 YEARS AGO. RIGHT NOW, THE LEGION CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE WHAT IS RIGHT ABOUT AMERICA. LEGIONNAIRES ARE COMMUNITY LEADERS IN PRESERVING AMERICAN VALUES.

CAN LEGIONNAIRES HELP YOUR YOUTH GROUP LEARN AMERICAN PRIDE AND VALUES?

CALL _____*full name*_____ AT _____*phone #*_____. LET LEGIONNAIRES FROM _____*city/town*_____ HELP YOU. CALL _____*phone #*_____ — WE'LL HELP YOU INSTILL THE PRIDE AND VALUES NECESSARY IN THE LEADERS OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

# # #

Membership #1

60 Seconds
(157 words)

BASIC MILITARY TRAINING — REMEMBER THOSE DAYS? MARCHING EVERYWHERE. EXERCISING. HURRY UP AND WAIT. SURE AM GLAD I DON'T HAVE TO MESS WITH THAT STUFF ANYMORE.

I DO MISS THE FEELINGS OF TEAMWORK AND ACCOMPLISHMENT I HAD IN THE SERVICE. AT WORK IT SEEMS EVERYONE IS INTERESTED IN GETTING AHEAD — AND THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE.

THEN I MET A GROUP OF VETERANS WHO HELPED ME FIND THAT OLD FEELING OF TEAMWORK. THEY'RE THE MEN AND WOMEN OF AMERICAN LEGION POST ___*#*___ IN _____*city/town*_____. WE'RE NOT MARCHING IN FORMATION — WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER FOR VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE CHILDREN OF _____*city/town*_____.

IF YOU'RE AN ELIGIBLE VETERAN LOOKING TO ENJOY THE SENSE OF SERVICE, YOU ARE NEEDED IN THE AMERICAN LEGION TODAY.

CALL US AT _____*phone #*_____. LET US TELL YOU WHAT WE DO FOR OUR SCHOOLS AND ___*city/town*___.

YOU'LL FIND A ROLE TODAY — MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR TOMORROW.

# # #

Membership #2

60 Seconds
(162 + variable info-words)

WHEN I CAME BACK FROM THE GULF SOMEONE ASKED ME TO JOIN THE AMERICAN LEGION. I SAID, "NOT ME — I'M NO FLAG-WAVER."

WELL, I'VE GOTTEN OLDER SINCE THEN AND I'VE LEARNED THAT THE AMERICAN LEGION IS THERE TO FIGHT FOR ALL VETERANS' RIGHTS.

THE AMERICAN LEGION WAS THE FIRST TO TELL US GULF VETS TO GET A GOOD PHYSICAL BEFORE WE GOT OUT, JUST IN CASE HEALTH PROBLEMS CROPPED UP. THEY WERE RIGHT. HERE IN _____*phone #*_____ MEMBERS OF OUR POST ARE DOING WHAT THEY CAN TO HELP VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND ALL OUR CHILDREN.

JUST LAST YEAR THE MEN AND WOMEN OF POST ___*#*___:

(In the next few lines use only what is applicable to your post and will fit within time restraints)

*(DONATED _____**units**_____ OF BLOOD)*
(CONTRIBUTED SCHOLARSHIPS WORTH $$$)
(GAVE $$$ TO COMMUNITY CHARITIES)
(GAVE ____#____ STUDENTS SCHOOL AWARDS)
(SPENT $$$S FOR SCOUTING, YOUTH SAFETY, ETC.)
(THESE STATS AND/OR OTHERS AS APPROPRIATE FROM CONSOLIDATED POST ACTIVITY REPORT. BE SELECTIVE AND EDIT ITEMS TO ACHIEVE TIME.)

SO, IF YOU'RE A VETERAN CALL _____*full name*_____ AT _____*phone #*_____. HE'LL/SHE'LL BE GLAD TO TELL YOU MORE ABOUT WHAT WE DO.

CALL _____*first name*_____. YOUR LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ARE UNLIMITED AS A MEMBER OF POST ___*#*___. AS FOR BEING A FLAG-WAVER — WELL, I GUESS I AM.

# # #

Membership #3

60 Seconds
(154 words)

IF YOU'RE A VETERAN OF WARTIME SERVICE THERE ARE MANY REASONS TO BELONG TO THE AMERICAN LEGION. IT'S A SOUND VALUE FOR A FEW BUCKS.

AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERS ENJOY BENEFITS SUCH AS:

A DISCOUNT EYE-WEAR PLAN — A DISCOUNT PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM —

A SUBSCRIPTION TO AN AWARD-WINNING MAGAZINE — HOTEL AND RENTAL CAR TRAVEL DISCOUNTS — POSSIBLE FINANCIAL AIDE FOLLOWING A NATURAL DISASTER — AND MUCH MORE.

WHEN I RETURNED FROM THE PERSIAN GULF, I JOINED THE AMERICAN LEGION BECAUSE IT IS MAKING SURE OUR HEALTH CONCERNS ARE HEARD BY THE GOVERNMENT.

THAT'S JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. IF YOU'RE A VETERAN AND WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THE AMERICAN LEGION HERE IN _____*city/town*_____ IS DOING — GIVE US A CALL. CALL _____*phone #*_____ AND TALK WITH _____*name*_____. THE NUMBER AGAIN: _____*phone #*_____.

CALL TODAY — THERE IS MORE TO THE AMERICAN LEGION THAN MEETS THE EYE.

# # #

Sample Radio Scripts

Membership #4

60 Seconds
(129 + variable words)

HERE ARE A FEW WORDS FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE TIRED OF FANCY PRODUCTIONS. THIS IS A NO-FRILLS COMMERCIAL.

THE AMERICAN LEGION IS INVOLVED IN _____*city/town*_____ — HAS BEEN FOR FOUR GENERATIONS.

IF YOU'RE AN ELIGIBLE WARTIME VETERAN, YOU COULD TAKE A LEADING ROLE IN HELPING US SERVE MORE VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE CHILDREN OF _____*city/town*_____ IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

(AT THIS POINT LIST SOME OF THE PROGRAMS INVOLVING SCHOOLS, VETERANS AND THE COMMUNITY. AT LEAST FOUR OR FIVE PROJECTS YOU WOULD LIKE POTENTIAL MEMBERS TO BE AWARE OF.)

NOT ONLY CAN YOU HELP RIGHT HERE IN _____*city/town*_____ — YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD ENTITLES YOU TO COST SAVINGS PROGRAMS FOR EYEWEAR AND FOR PRESCRIPTIONS.

CALL _____*phone #*_____ TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION. THAT'S _____*phone #*_____. FOUR GENERATIONS OF VETERANS HAVE STOOD FIRM FOR YOU — NOW IT'S OUR TURN TO STAND FIRM FOR THE FUTURE.

JOIN THE AMERICAN LEGION!

# # #

Want to have these radio commercials custom-made for your post — FREE?

Write to:

The American Legion Public Relations Division,
P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

Provide the necessary names, phone numbers, etc., for the commercials and we will produce the spots and send them directly to the radio station account executive on audio cassette, digital audio tape or via e-mail.

This is a new service. Please allow three weeks for delivery to the station.

SECTION **EIGHT**

Advertising
Sometimes It Makes Sense

As a nonprofit veterans service organization, The American Legion conducts veterans and community-service programs that can be publicized for free with public service announcements in both print and electronic media. Newspapers and broadcast stations frequently donate space and time to free activities that benefit their audience. This service is offered voluntarily on a case-by-case basis as a public service as space and time allow. Clearly their priority is to "sell" the space or time commercially to bring in revenue – the reason they are in business.

There are a number of reasons to consider purchasing media advertising, even if you are successful in placing post program information as public service material.

Membership in Corporate Community

By doing business with local media, you establish a relationship as a respected corporate entity. It is clearly easier to open doors within the newspaper or broadcast station when your post is on the list of advertisers. Promoting a Legion news story or publicizing a veterans event may be easier when there is an established positive business interface.

Visibility When Needed

Purchasing advertising puts you in control. Your American Legion message will run exactly when you want it for as long as you want it. For example, a post could advertise for new members in time to process them well in advance of deadlines to qualify for appropriate awards. Promotion of the Oratorical Contest could solicit young students to apply in time to enter post competition. "Need-A-Lift?" booklets could be promoted in consonance with the time of year students and parents are seriously looking at colleges for graduating seniors. Whatever American Legion program or service a post may want to promote, running an ad in a newspaper or a spot on radio and television lets you select your audience when and in what media you choose.

Maximum Outreach

When you buy broadcast time, you can select the exact programs, radio station format and time of day to send your message. While a free public service announcement may not cost your post a penny, it may air at 3 a.m. when most folks you need to reach are sound asleep. If you buy time, you can select the exact personality and program you want the spot to run on and the specific time window to run it. Clearly, a radio spot about the benefits of joining The American Legion will reach a maximum audience during the morning or afternoon drive time when most people are going to or returning home from work in their vehicles.

Advertising
Sometimes It Makes Sense

Target the Audience

Buying advertising enables narrow selection of the intended audience based on intent and budget. A post reaching out to young, active-duty military personnel can use rock or hip-hop format radio stations during the times when most are commuting to and from the nearby base or post. Looking for mid-grade NCOs and petty officers? Consider country and adult-contemporary radio stations. If older veterans are the targets of a current campaign, examine the possibility of advertising on talk, oldies or country format radio stations and the local newspaper.

Campaign vs. Targeted Advertising

When Procter & Gamble sells soap, it launches a media campaign to reach the maximum number of consumers to sell the highest number of bars of soap to make the maximum number of dollars. It does this by determining the best period of time to "saturate" consumers with its message. Then, it buys a blitz of advertising on television, radio, cable systems and newspapers that make it impossible to not see or hear the message within a two- or three-week period. For manufacturers, advertising campaigns pay off because consumers respond by buying products that more than pay for the cost of advertising.

Unless your post is unusually large or is enjoying the proceeds from a rich benefactor's multi million-dollar estate, the full-blown campaign approach is probably not a viable option to reach out to your community.

Targeted Advertising

Selecting one or two media outlets at a time to carry your post's message is a more practical and economic approach to advertising. It enables a message to be tailored specifically to the intended demographic at an affordable price for a measured period of time that can be analyzed for effectiveness and future use.

The key to effective advertising is maximum repetition of the message. The more often readers, viewers or listeners receive your message, the more prone they are to take the action step in your message.

What is the Best Medium in Which to Advertise?

Each media has advantages and disadvantages based on the type of message and audience you want to reach.

SECTION **EIGHT**

Advertising
Sometimes It Makes Sense

Television

Allows highly defined selection of audience. Station sales representatives can tailor advertising based on your post's objective. For example, if recruiting young, active-duty military women is your objective, you would not choose advertising during an ice hockey game. Looking for younger male veterans? Don't put Oprah Winfrey as your first choice. You would do well to consider televised sports coverage or spots during the sports section of the local newscast. Television buys you a large number of viewers for your message. The potential downside is relatively high cost per spot.

Cable

As with local television stations, you have the high degree of selectivity of programs. The advantage of advertising with a cable system is a much broader range of programs and a significantly lower cost. Cable advertising executives can tailor a schedule to get your message to the widest number of the folks that you need to reach and usually are willing to assemble custom packages to suit your requirements.

Radio

Radio stations can provide some of the best advertising bargains for reaching out to specific audiences. As a rule, AM radio stations tend to feature news, sports, religious and talk formats with loyal audiences. Many cover veterans affairs, national security and social issues on a regular basis. FM stations tend to be formatted according to types of music and entertainment.

Radio advertising can be affordable, depending on the size of the station's audience, power of its transmitter and signal reach. Obviously the smaller the station, the lower the cost of advertising. Spending post dollars with the local "mom and pop" station in town will be affordable but must be weighed against the message and who you are trying to reach. If promoting American Legion "Need-A-Lift?" booklets is the goal, this would be a good selection. If recruiting young veterans is the objective, another station with a rock or hip-hop music format might be more appropriate.

When considering radio advertising, become familiar with all the radio stations covering your area. Select those you think might be best for your message, then meet with station sales executives. Be prepared to ask plenty of questions about their track record, personal recommendations and expected results.

Radio executives can offer a variety of specials, including two free spots for every one purchased and discounts for length of time spots are run, as well as different time periods during the day. Cost can range from $2 a spot with small stations up to several hundred dollars for spots on clear channel, 50,000-watt stations that transmit over several states.

Metro Traffic

Found in most mid- to large-size markets, Metro Traffic provides rush-hour traffic reports to a good number of radio stations serving the city or metro area. Sponsors "buy" individual traffic reports by the week. A common purchase would be 180 reports over a two-week period on a number of different stations. The advantage is being able to reach out to virtually all target audiences during peak hours with the undivided attention of commuters. The reports can include all format stations. Each report includes a "brought to you by The American Legion." The report ends with a 10-second trailer such as the following:

OPEN: This report brought to you by The American Legion….

(Report on traffic)

Closing messages:

#1 If you're a military veteran, you know there's strength in numbers. Join The American Legion of the 21st century. Become a Legionnaire. Call Post # at (number).

#2 Serving men and women in uniform – today and tomorrow. There's a place for you in The American Legion. Join today's American Legion. Call (number).

#3 Today's military is the best ever – and you need the best pay and technology. We believe you should have it. Join the nation's strongest voice for a strong military — The American Legion on the Web at (post Web site address).

#4 Active duty or retired – you need to be a member of The American Legion of the 21st century. Continue the legacy of the American veteran. Become a Legionnaire. Call (number).

#5 Military service builds a common bond – The American Legion continues that bond for the future. Find your role in The American Legion of the 21st century. Join on the Web at (post Web site address).

#6 Duty. Honor. Country. Legionnaires share that commitment with you today. Won't you share that commitment with us? Become a Legionnaire. Call (number). Start making a difference for tomorrow – today.

#7 The world is a dangerous place. The service and sacrifice of active-duty and retired military members deserve the best benefits. Become a Legionnaire and help fight for your rights. Call (number).

#8 Want to get involved in American Legion Baseball, Boys Nation, High School Oratorical, youth programs and health care for veterans? Join today's American Legion. Call (number).

In keeping with the old adage "you get what you pay for," metro traffic is highly effective but relatively expensive. As an economic alternative, consider approaching one radio station of your format choice that does traffic reports and request a traffic sponsorship with their station alone.

Advertising
Sometimes It Makes Sense

Newspapers

Placing an ad in newspapers can also reach specific audiences, depending on which section the ad is placed, the size (full page to small column) or insert (a postcard or membership application). Weekly newspapers are more cost effective. Daily newspapers more expensive depending on area served and size of circulation.

Consider neighborhood sections in major metropolitan dailies.

Advertise in the section that best reaches your target audience – sports, gardening, cooking, national news, neighborhood news or even the obituary section. Cost will vary according to placement, size and frequency.

Specialty Advertising

Billboards offer long term, high visibility for The American Legion message. They offer the advantage of frequent repetition of the message for commuters who see it several times a day. Cost will vary depending on location (more for placement on high volume arteries), size, lighted or electronic board, and length of showing. One month is an industry standard, but all lengths are negotiable.

Regional publications such as pennysavers, city magazines and local corporate in-house newsletters offer additional exposure at widely varying ad rates.

School newspapers and broadcast stations sometimes offer opportunities to advertise. Check locally for advertising opportunities to reach your ads on Legion youth programs.

The Internet offers thousands of opportunities to advertise, including annoying "pop-up" ads that may do more harm than good. As a method of reaching out to veterans within range of your post, use of this medium is not recommended. Internet advertising is expensive because it reaches a worldwide audience.

Bottom Line: Cost vs. Expectations

American Legion posts don't sell widgets or framistans, so the direct result of advertising goes frequently unmeasured. Depending on the number of phone calls, membership applications or Web site hits immediately following ads or spots promoting them, success can sometimes be immediately determined. At other times, results will be purely subjective, merely enhancing the image of your post in the community.

SECTION **EIGHT**

Advertising
Sometimes It Makes Sense

A post advertising campaign can run anywhere from several hundred dollars to tens of thousands, depending on the media selected and length of run. Regardless of your budget, advertising will enhance your post image, improve relations with local media, and expose The American Legion to both veterans and the general public.

As with all American Legion Public Relations techniques, advertising is not a requirement. It is but yet another tool in the box of telling The American Legion story and reaching out to your community. If your post can afford it, try it — but ease into it. Like investing in the stock market, immerse your post slowly into advertising. You might just find it more successful than expected.

National American Legion Advertising

The question frequently is asked: why doesn't National Headquarters conduct a national campaign to advertise for members?

The answer: money. As a nonprofit, member-based organization, money from dues is primarily directed to fund the programs of The American Legion. A three-week national advertising campaign to saturate newspapers and television networks would cost literally millions of dollars. While a small amount of funds is reserved for advertising with targeted media such as the *Army Times*, *Navy Times*, *Air Force Times* and *Marine Corps Times*, the focus of the National Public Relations Commission is the production of camera-ready and broadcast-ready media products for use by posts in their local media relations program. As a grassroots organization, each post is the heart of The American Legion. Each post with its unique personality and programs needs plenty of members to best serve its community.

While the objective is to obtain news coverage and place American Legion media materials as a public service, the cost of advertising locally, if necessary, is within reach of most posts.

The National Public Relations Commission stands ready to assist American Legion posts with recommendations, suggestions and pre-produced media products that can be used in both public service campaigns and local advertising efforts. Suggestions on the development of new and unique media tools promoting The American Legion are always welcome.

SECTION **NINE**

Message Points
Key to Telling the Legion Story

The fear of public speaking ranks near the top of human fears. It's natural to be cautious when a news reporter wants to interview you or a member of your post's leadership. Overcoming the cautious feelings, however, provides you a prime opportunity to tell The American Legion story at home. Understanding a few key principles and putting "message points" to work for you will take the process from one of uncertainty to one of meaningful direction.

The Interview

Before you do an interview, make certain you have a story to tell. If you do not have a message to tell readers, viewers or listeners, forego the interview. Why? Because simply answering the questions without having a story to tell, means The American Legion's message is relegated to whether the reporter asks the "right question."

Subordinating the message of The American Legion to the assumption that the reporter knows the history of the organization fails to serve the best interest of the reporter, who wants all the facts. Moreover, simply answering questions with one's own opinion fails to serve the best interest of the organization.

Take into account that nearly every conceivable interview topic gives a representative of The American Legion an occasion to point out the organization's position. The message of the organization is information that, frankly, a reporter might find integral to telling a story.

The American Legion's positions on issues are taken from resolutions passed by delegates to the annual National Convention or by action of the National Executive Committee. The American Legion has many positions on many topics that determine the legislative priorities of the organization. Getting them understood and reported is a challenge that local post officers can help meet. Once reported, the story also clarifies the organization's credibility on a given issue and answers the central question of a potential member of The American Legion: "What does The American Legion stand for?"

If a reporter asks about the viability of today's Montgomery GI Bill benefits, it is important to point out that The American Legion wrote the original GI Bill.

If a reporter asks about the qualities of American Legion Boys State delegates, it is not out of line to explain that the advancement of Americanism is the reason The American Legion conducts a Boys State program.

What if the interview topic is the war on terrorism? As one explains The American Legion's support for eradicating terrorism, it is remiss to dodge the organization's position on the use of U.S. forces. You do not have to wait to be asked directly about an American Legion position; this is relevant and important information.

How do you ensure that the important facts are included in the interview? Study message points prior to the interview. And, during the interview, "stay on message."

Message Points
Key to Telling the Legion Story

The National Public Relations office maintains a package of message points on all major issues of The American Legion. They are updated annually to accommodate resolutions passed by delegates to the National Convention.

Use these message points to prepare for interviews or reactions to related news stories. Message points are available free from the national Public Relations office or may be found on The American Legion Web site, **http://www.legion.org/our_legion/ol_depts_posts.htm**. (The messages points are not publicly highlighted on The American Legion Internet pages but are found on the "Our Legion" Department and Posts page.

Properly used, message points make it possible to handle interviews by reporters for newspapers, radio and television stations. They also save the day when it comes to appearing as a guest on local talk-radio programs or television public affairs programs.

Staying On Message
National Security Deputy Director Mike Duggan gives a 2002 interview with the Armed Forces Radio and Television Network in regard to American Legion support of military funeral honors for deceased veterans.

Most of us learned at a young age that when asked a question, answer it and don't wait for another to be asked. Just sit down. If we were asked another question we followed the same process: answer and sit down. A diagram of such a conversation would look like this:

Q, A. Q, A. Q, A. Q, A.

We call this a "Question-Answer – Question-Answer – Question-Answer" dialogue. In this situation the individual asking the question has complete control.

But when an individual is being interviewed, you must go beyond simply answering the question. The individual being interviewed seeks to take control of the interview with the use of information from message points. To take control you simply answer the question and then add the relevant position of the organization. This is not being deceptive. This is "staying on message," making certain that facts we deem fundamentally important to the interview are not overlooked.

SECTION **NINE**

Message Points
Key to Telling the Legion Story

This technique serves the best interest of the media and The American Legion. A diagram of this type of interview would look like this:

Q, A.A.A. – Q, A.A.A. – Q, A.A.A.

We call this a "Question-Answer-Answer-Answer" dialogue. You take control. You answer the question and then bridge to your message points.

Here's a transcript of a portion of an interview on CNN's "Showdown: Iraq" program that aired 12:30 p.m., EST, Oct. 31, 2002. The American Legion assisted CNN in finding two Gulf War veterans, one opposed to a then-potential war in Iraq and the other in favor of it.

American Legion Legislative Director Steve Robertson was in CNN's Washington studio. Eric Gustafson of Veterans for Common Sense was in a studio in Madison, Wis. The moderator was Wolf Blitzer.

Robertson took control of the interview by explaining the organization's position on the use of U.S. troops, even though he was asked merely to react to Gustafson's remarks. Robertson knew his message prior to the interview. He had stated The American Legion's support for the war on terrorism prior to the excerpt. He answers Blitzer's question. But Robertson does not stop there; he adds an essential American Legion message, which is highlighted in boldface. His message is not an opinion. His message comes directly from a National Security Commission resolution approved by delegates to The American Legion National Convention.

BLITZER: You were there, Eric, during the Gulf War. What did you see and what did you do that convinces you now is not the time to, quote, finish the job, supposedly?

GUSTAFSON: Well, I mean, it's a very different situation. In 1991, I was involved in an operation with the U.S. military as part of an international coalition to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. I mean, this was a case when you had one U.N. member state invade another U.N. member state. The very U.N. charter had been violated, and it was the right thing to do.

In this case, we are the ones that could be violating the U.N. charter by deciding that we will overthrow a sovereign government.

BLITZER: Steve, what do you say about that?

ROBERTSON: First of all, when we got on the plane to leave [in 1991], I didn't think there was a troop that got on the plane that didn't think we'd be back. It was just a matter of time. But I think there are three very important things that have to be done. **Number one, we have to have clear objectives of what we're trying to achieve; number two, we need the support of Congress and the American people; and number three, which is probably the most important, we have to have a withdrawal strategy: how are we going to back out?**

BLITZER: All right. We will have to, unfortunately, leave it there. Steve Robertson and Eric Gustafson, thanks to both of you for joining us.

ROBERTSON: Thanks.

GUSTAFSON: Thanks.

This Q-A-A-A approach will work for every media encounter post Public Relations officers and others are called upon to handle.

Remember: the only reason you or your representatives are consenting to the interview is because you have a message to tell. Before the interview begins, know your message points. Then work to get your message points in the interview by taking control.

Bridging

What would happen if you were involved in an interview about a major event at your post? You were prepared with message points in mind but were never asked the question to give you the opportunity to "get on message?" Taking control becomes natural when you understand a few tricks of the trade.

Seldom will a reporter ask you the "right" question. That is where the simple process of "bridging" comes into the picture.

Bridging is used to move from your quick answer to the question into the first of your message points. Bridging is as simple as moving from the answer to the question with a phrase. Some examples:

"The real issue here …"

"Yet, it's really a case of …"

"What is important …"

"That is just the first step …"

With practice you will soon learn how to take control without regard to the question asked.

A common misconception is that you only need to make your point once. In fact, the more you make the same point the better chance your message point will be aired on radio or television or printed in the newspaper. Interviews that last 15 minutes or more demand that you make your point over and over again because only a brief part of what you say will make it to the story.

SECTION **NINE**

Message Points
Key to Telling the Legion Story

Flagging

The technique to make it easy for a reporter to remember your key point is known as "flagging". Think of flagging as a way of telling your best friend the most important point of a issue. When you've covered a lot of information over 15 or 20 minutes of interview, flagging will help the reporter sort out the key point – quickly.

Many times an interview will end with the reporter asking if you'd like to say something that hasn't been covered. That's the perfect time to "flag" by reemphasizing the most important point. The simple phrase: "Yes, if you only remember one thing in looking at this issue … remember …"

An opportunity to "flag" will often arise earlier in the interview, and you can do it by using strong phrases such as:

> "There are many facets to the problem – but what you must remember is …"
>
> "The most important fact to remember is …"
>
> "It all boils down to …"

Flagging always leads to your most important message point. By returning to that point several times in the interview you help the reporter understand what is important.

In every interview situation you will find *you* know the central issue better than the reporter. That is why the media has come to you or a post member. You are the experts. You understand the "human" impact of the issue. Take advantage of this position by helping the reporter grasp the complexity of the issue – make it obvious to them what is most important. They get an understanding of the issues and then report the "message points" that you make certain they absorb.

Message points, as explained earlier in this handbook, may be obtained from the National Public Relations Commission or from The American Legion Web site.

SECTION **TEN**

Interviews

Bountiful Variety – Unlimited Opportunity

Taking advantage of a media interview is perhaps the best way to tell The American Legion family story. It's important to recognize that interviews come in different varieties to meet the needs of various media. The one common denominator of all the interviews is the use of message points (Section 9).

When you look at specific interview opportunities they can include:

- Newspaper
- Talk radio
- Radio news
- Radio public affairs
- Television news
- Television public/community affairs

Newspaper

Newspaper reporters present the largest interview spectrum of all media. They can call you for a quick comment on a breaking news story. They can call and visit you for a feature story on a program or activity. They can even rewrite your news release or media advisory. No matter the angle, your objective remains unchanged: tell your story by using message points.

When a newspaper reporter calls for the reaction of local members of The American Legion to something current and relevant you must learn the facts and check to see if National Headquarters has issued a statement and posted it on the Web. If so, this information becomes the basis of your message points. If not, use your best judgment. If you don't feel comfortable answering questions, politely decline the interview.

On the other hand, if the issue is about veterans health care or illness among groups of veterans, The American Legion has a history of pressing the government to do the right thing. As a strong veterans advocate in your community, you enhance the organization image by helping the reporters with the local aspect. Here your message points become the history of the organization and your post and, if applicable, how your post service officer can help others.

Talk Radio

Talk radio is a news resource that shouldn't be overlooked. Talk radio is a powerful advertising medium that attracts listeners who pay attention. It serves the basic need for connection with the community and develops tremendous awareness. Talk radio is a great opportunity to get ideas across with a minimum of effort.

Talk radio has many advantages. You are not misquoted. You can do radio interviews from any phone, anytime, anywhere. You'll have captive audiences of thousands – even millions of listeners depending on the show.

SECTION **TEN**

Interviews

Bountiful Variety – Unlimited Opportunity

The growth of talk radio over the past 23 years has been phenomenal. In 1980, the United States had 75 talk radio stations. Today, more than 1,400 are broadcasting. Talk radio is still booming. Local talk radio will always be open to program ideas about veterans issues. The American Legion cannot overlook local talk radio as a way to reach the general public with its message. When the opportunity arises, talk radio also welcomes callers to express diverse views. Again, just calling the show in progress to comment on a guest or an issue puts you in position to communicate an important 'message point.

Often talk radio can be contentious. That is the way talk hosts like to work because it brings out both sides of issues. Mix in telephone callers and you can end up with people who disagree with you and challenge you. There is a way to deal with this aspect and it makes it less stressful for you. Do not get drawn into a argument with another guest or callers. Talk with the show host only, address your answers to that person and never refer to the other guest or caller by name. This simple technique keeps your appearance on a professional level and you stay on point.

- If the caller or other guest says something you know is wrong, say so in a straight forward manner and then bridge to your message point: "That is simply an incorrect statement. The most important fact to remember is …"
- Remember the bridging technique when someone gets off in left field, simply return to your message point: "The real issue here …"

You won't often encounter these controversial talk show events. The bottom line in doing talk radio shows: if you don't think you'll be able to get your message points across in a professional manner, decline the offer.

Radio News

Radio news interviews are generally the easiest to handle. They are most often done via telephone. They take only a few minutes. Because of the repetitive nature of radio news, this interview may be included in newscasts for more than 24 hours. If your interview sticks to the key message points, the story will be told. Preparation for a radio news interview is easy: spread your message point notes on the table for quick and easy reference and take control from the beginning.

Radio Public Affairs Program

Besides talk radio nearly every station airs one or more public affairs programs. These are generally recorded in advance and deal with an upcoming community event or ongoing issue. When you look to communicate your message, these programs are an open door to the community.

Contacting the station's public affairs director to learn how you can suggested a topic and a guest is the first step. Once the recording session is set you just take your message points with you. When you sit around the table for the interview, spread your message point pages out so you can quickly find the right notes. Then put the techniques of Section 9 into action.

Interviews

Bountiful Variety – Unlimited Opportunity

Television News

When television crews are involved there is a tendency to forget that the Post Public Relations officer and others still retain control. They come to your post home as your guests. Take them to your finest room for the interview. The social center of your post is no place for these crews. Again, rely on your message points to provide the foundation for telling your story.

With television news you will know the topic of the interview before the crew shows up. This provides time to study your message points, clean up a location for the interview and put your best organizational foot forward. If the interview is conducted with the subject seated at a table, spread those message points out in plain view. Don't be shy about referring to them before you start to answer the question. The interview tape will be edited – pauses will not hurt.

Television Public Affairs

Again, this is a program recorded in advance. As a guest, The American Legion representative will be seated in a chair or on a couch on the set designed to look comfortable and welcoming. Doing one of these programs is an excellent opportunity to add credibility and community acceptance to your efforts. If the set will handle the discreet placement of your 'message point' notes where you can see them easily, then have them available. However, for this type of program you are there to talk about your message and you should not require access to them to answer every question and bridge to your message points.

Let Media Know of The Local American Legion Source

You and other key members of your post are ready to be interviewed. You have a story to tell. The next step is to let those in the media know about you. Let's consider an effort to become a guest on a local talk show for a specific example. Just keep in mind the idea will work for every other interview opportunity as well.

Fax a media advisory (sample at end of section) to the producer of the show. Make a follow-up call to the radio station. Ask to talk with the producer of the show. Express your interest in being a guest, either in the studio or over the phone. It may be live or pre-recorded. Emphasize the useful and interesting information that you can provide their listeners. Set a date and time and be certain to be early and fully prepared.

SECTION **TEN**

Interviews

Bountiful Variety – Unlimited Opportunity

Appearance

Regardless of the interview situation, always wear The American Legion cap for a photograph or television interview. If the interview takes place at your American Legion post, an ideal location would have The American Legion Emblem or the U.S. Flag as a backdrop, most likely in the meeting room of the post home.

When appearing on a television public affairs program you should dress professionally. With modern digital equipment, few colors cause problems. The two major colors to avoid: red and white. Without getting into technical jargon, red will change the color temperature of your skin as it appears to a television camera. White will tend to make your face look darker. A light blue shirt or blouse will look better, and the technical crew at a television station will appreciate your thoughtfulness.

As for patterns or texture in clothing, problems develop with herringbone or similar weaves. The television camera will often create a distortion: tightly placed pattern lines may appear on the screen as a wavy effect. Solid colors work best.

The best way to summarize the idea of your appearance for television: think of it as presenting the image of yourself and our organization in a way that others will sense your professionalism. Someone who sees the story or show might make a decision to join based on what the organization stands for and the professional appearance of those who represent your local post.

The Interview Advisory

What follows is a sample media advisory seeking to put someone from your post on radio, television or even in a newspaper feature story. These can never be a fill-in-the-blank effort because each media "pitch" is different. Look it over. Adapt it to your needs. Send it to the appropriate media contact and stay at it until you 'tell your story.'

Sample Talk Radio Advisory

Place on post letterhead with all fields completed.

MEDIA ADVISORY ***(Month) (Date), 200X***

Legionnaires Fight for Service-Disabled Military Retirees

WHO: Wartime veterans at American Legion Post *(Number)*

WHAT: Available to discuss the organization's fight for "concurrent receipt" legislation to invalidate Uncle Sam's unjust, 100-year-old practice: Most military retirees, with disabilities related to military service, receive a cut in their retired pay from the Defense Department equal to their disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Service-disabled veterans who retire from civilian federal agencies receive full retired pay and disability compensation.

WHEN: Today through the balance of this Congress. Available live between *(Time)* a.m. and (Time) p.m. for taped or live phone interviews.

WHERE: *(Post Address), (Post Phone Number)*

BACKGROUND

Congress established a special pay from the Defense Department for service-disabled military retirees either awarded the Purple Heart or who have sustained service-connected "disability ratings" of at least 60 percent during combat, combat training or otherwise hazardous duty. This special pay makes up for disability compensation stripped from the retired pay of some 30,000 military retirees. Meanwhile, in the 108th Congress, the Legion continues to fight for legislation to correct the injustice faced by hundreds of thousands of additional military retirees who have service-connected conditions.

Founded in Paris in 1919 by a group of World War I veterans, the 2.8-million-member American Legion, author of the original GI Bill, is the nation's largest veterans organization. For information on American Legion programs and advocacy, visit us on the Web: *(post Web site)* / **www.legion.org**.

-30-

CONTACT: *Jane Doe, (888) 555-1212 (office) or (888) 555-1212 (home), (e-mail).*

SECTION **ELEVEN**

Planning Special Community Events

The success of any Public Relations project requires an effort to increase the awareness of The American Legion family in the local community. Throughout this handbook, tools to handle the challenge have been provided in step-by-step fashion. Now it is time to take the individual pieces and blend them together to create a Public Relations campaign of which you can be proud.

In recent years, posts, units and squadrons have joined together to create special local events supported by a cohesive Public Relations effort. Using planning materials provided by the National Public Relations Commission staff, volunteers led communities in "A Day to Remember" on Sept. 11, rekindled the Blue Star Service Banner program and successfully located thousands of veterans needing VA health care during the "I Am Not A Number" campaign.

Using the basics drawn from these specific efforts successful local events can be conducted using available volunteer resources. Let's look at the various elements of organizing a special community event.

Step 1: Recognize the potential for an event and gather key planners for a meeting.

Step 2: Write a mission statement. This will keep everyone focused on the mission throughout.

Step 3: Develop an outline for the actual event. Answer 5 W's and the H. Put it in writing.

Step 4: Contact other organizations, civic leaders, etc., to invite their participation and support.

Step 5: Seek sponsorship (Section 12).

Step 6: Seek student participation (if appropriate).

Step 7: Begin Public Relations efforts:

a) Write a proclamation (if appropriate) for mayor or other civic leader.

b) Contact television public affairs director seeking promotional support (Section 3).

c) Contact radio public affairs director seeking promotional support (Section 3).

d) Advertise (Section 8).

e) Develop event script. (Step by step, by time, approach to the event. Provides words for the master of ceremonies and timing estimations to keep event flowing. This event script is prepared by the Public Relations volunteer working with the entire organizing committee.

f) Issue news release(s) (Section 5).

g) Issue potential guest editorial by your Commander/President (Section 6).

h) Issue media advisory (Section 5).

i) Make final phone calls to media news desks (Section 3).

Step 8: Conduct event.

Step 9: Conduct post-event meeting of key planners. Discuss good and bad aspects. Prepare for future.

Planning Special Community Events

Certainly this is a simplification of the process. Yet, following these nine steps over a period of several months, you will be successful. Never forget this is a post-coordinated event for your community. The entire event management is not the responsibility of the post Public Relations volunteer. Other members of the post and your community *must* be involved. In modern management terms it is called getting "buy-in." You want to have others "own" this event. With a team that "owns" the event, your potential for success is greatly multiplied.

How far in advance should you begin the event planning process? That depends on your individual situation. It is generally best to allow some five months of preparation for an event. Sometimes permits are needed from the community. These take time. The sooner you begin the overall planning, the more success the Public Relations effort will have and the more members of the community you will attract.

Remember: the success of any Public Relations officer requires an effort to increase the awareness of The American Legion family in the local community. A major community event, influenced heavily by The American Legion family, is an important part of creating an image that, in turn, makes membership recruitment easier.

SECTION **TWELVE**

Partnerships & Sponsorship

Challenge: Your post does not have unlimited funds to conduct special events.

Solution: Strike a partnership or sponsorship arrangement.

Concept: Share the overall event program with your partner or sponsor. They help with big-ticket items and members of The American Legion family provide volunteers to make it work.

You can not watch or listen to a major sporting event today without hearing the name of the "sponsored stadium." We have 3Com Park, the RCA Dome and Qualcomm Stadium. Then you have the Busch Series and Winston Cup auto racing. Don't forget the Bank of the West Tennis Tournament and the Buick Open Golf Tournament.

Clearly, building partnerships and sponsorships is what it takes for a successful event in this day and age. True, you are not working on the scale of these events. But the idea is the same. You look to create a mutually beneficial arrangement with a local company.

For an event that will not take large cash outlays, seek a partnership with a local newspaper, radio station or television station. Letting them have their name associated with the event gives you a partner in promotion. It's a trade-off that benefits both the media outlet and The American Legion family.

If the event will need several thousand dollars in underwriting support, seek a sponsorship with a local business. The possibilities are endless. Use your imagination and then go after the sponsor just as you would a new member: ask.

In making a sponsorship work, you need to consider the budget needed for the event and the amount of exposure you and the sponsor will obtain. Then together work out the details. How you name the event will take discussion. Consider all possibilities.

With a partnership or sponsorship you might end up with an event that has a title with the name of the sponsor. Or you might have an event brought to you by a partner and The American Legion family. Just be sure to keep your partner or sponsor family-friendly.

If you want to pursue funding support from national companies with local outlets (Wal-Mart, Pep Boys, Circuit City, Best Buy, Lowe's, The Home Depot), you will most likely need to obtain a form from the local store manager. Then submit the form with all the details of the event, etc., and then see if you get a piece of the pie. These are not impossible sponsors, but you will probably have a higher success rate if you focus on local and regional businesses.

If the first, second, third and fourth potential sponsor or partner declines, simply keep on looking. With persistence and perhaps an inside contact through members of the post, unit or squadron, you will make a connection.

In all your years of volunteer work, you realize that you feel good when someone offers a word of thanks for your effort. The same holds true for your sponsors and partners. You could not organize an event that impacts hundreds or thousands of your fellow citizens and veterans without the support of your sponsors and partners. Publicly make that support known before, during and after the event.

Partnerships & Sponsorship

Finally, never lose sight of the mission statement from Section 11, Planning Special Events. That is the purpose of the event: fulfillment of a mission for The American Legion family. The sponsor or partner will "buy in" to the event much quicker and help meet the needs if they feel connected to the mission.

If much of this discussion on partnerships and sponsorships seems vague, that's for a good reason. There is no right way to find a partner or a sponsor. There is no right company for a given event. The right solution can only be found through local contacts and hard work.

The result will be a well-organized event with a suitable budget and a media partner to help bring out the citizens. It's a winning combination.

SECTION **THIRTEEN**

National American Legion Press Association (NALPA)

The National American Legion Press Association (NALPA) is an association of editors, writers, business managers, historians, Public Relations officers and staff personnel who are members of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and other subsidiary organizations.

Founded in 1923 as an adjunct to the Legion's early publications committee, NALPA was established to facilitate communications, from the national organization to the post level, within The American Legion. Through a network of active members, NALPA fulfills the mission by encouraging idea exchanges among members; promoting the development of local communications; advancing training through information dissemination; enhancing professional development; promoting the Legion's goals; and acting as a voice of the association's membership.

We like to think of NALPA as the image-makers of The American Legion, and we strive to let people know what The American Legion is – especially on the post level.

NALPA is a professional association of Legion Public Relations officers, editors and staff members of publications who come together to enhance their trades. Through local publications, NALPA encourages posts and departments to promote The American Legion objectives to the membership. All members hear about the national agenda from National Headquarters' publications and mailings, but many don't always know what is happening in their own back yards. A well-done post newsletter bridges that gap.

We have found that posts with newsletters have a more active membership that is greater in numbers. When people get that post information in their hands, they know what is going on in their area and can share it with potential members, as well as take action to make a difference for veterans and their families.

Post newsletters also assist older veterans who can't get out much. This might be the only communication they have with the post. They, like everyone else, deserve to be informed about what is going on.

NALPA's association with the National Public Relations Division and *The American Legion Magazine*, has made it easier for the average NALPA Legionnaire to keep up-to-date on the happenings of The American Legion if he or she is a NALPA member. In recent years, belonging to NALPA has created extra perks through the national organization. *The Dispatch* publication is offered to NALPA members at a cost of only $6. That's a saving of $9 off the annual subscription rate. This is especially beneficial to members of the Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion who belong to NALPA.

NALPA conducts an annual "Best Papers" contest with categories for the best competing publications in The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and other affiliated organizations.

National American Legion Press Association (NALPA)

The annual "Best Papers" competition provides NALPA with an avenue to recognize local publications that go the extra mile to inform their members. The competition is open to publications of all sizes. Awards are given in various categories, including editorial, typeset and tabloid. Competition categories are:

1. TABLOID
   Typeset, printed tabloid-sized newspaper of four or more pages. Winners in each subcategory will receive the Mary B. Howard Plaque.
   A. Department Publications B. All Other Publications

2. TYPESET
   Typeset, letterpress or offset publication (other than tabloid) of one or more sheets/pages. Winners in each subcategory will receive the Emerson O. Mann Plaque.
   A. Department Publications B. All Other Publications

3. SINGLE SHEET
   Photocopy publication from typewriter or word processor copy of one sheet, or both sides. May include preprinted "shells" for masthead or cover. Winner in each subcategory will receive the Al Weinburg Plaque.
   A. Department Publications B. All Other Publications

4. MULTIPLE SHEET
   Photocopy publication from typewritten or word processor copy of two or more sheets/pages. May include preprinted "shells" for masthead or cover. Winners in each subcategory will receive the Jack R. C. Cann Plaque.
   A. Department Publications B. All Other Publications

5. COMPUTER GENERATED
   Offset or photocopy publication of one or more pages from computer generated copy. May include preprinted "shells" for masthead or cover. Winner in each subcategory will receive the George W. Hooten Plaque.
   A. Department Publications B. All Other Publications

6. EDITORIAL
   Must have appeared originally in an American Legion or member publication within the contest year. Winner in each subcategory will receive the William E. Rominger Plaque.
   A. Department Publications B. All Other Publications

Papers and editorials submitted must have been published between May 1 and April 30 of the contest year.

Editorials are judged on headline and lead arousal of interest; clear, concise and imaginative writing; research and grasp of subject; and timely and appropriate objectives suitable to publication.

Awards are presented at the annual NALPA Banquet in the National Convention city just prior to the formal convention sessions.

SECTION **THIRTEEN**

National American Legion Press Association (NALPA)

Department Press Associations

A department press association is just as vital and necessary as the department itself in the set-up of The American Legion organization.

A department press association can tie all its papers together for the purpose of mutual helpfulness. It can encourage its editors to exchange papers. It can supervise existing publications to help improve effectiveness. It can carry on an active campaign, post by post, to create new publications. It can publish its own monthly newsletter, designed to help post publications through suggested material, suggested editorials, and by calling attention to various programs and events that posts should publish. It should spearhead the yearly Legion membership drive by seeing that all its post publications use all printed methods to stimulate these drives.

A department press association is a subsidiary of the National American Legion Public Association (NALPA), and wherever possible, collects national dues at the same time it collects department dues. NALPA dues are sent to: The American Legion Public Relations Division, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Include with your check a transmittal list of names and addresses of those covered by the payment. NALPA membership cards will be mailed at the close of the National Convention.

It is suggested that a department press association meet at least twice a year: the department convention and Mid-Winter Conference are considered the best times. A Public Relations and Publicity Workshop should be conducted at each meeting.

A department press association can make yearly awards to the best publications as an incentive to increase effectiveness, as well as an award for a job well done. The suggested time to make these awards is at the annual meeting in conjunction with the department convention.

It is suggested that the close of the fiscal year for a department press association be at the time of the annual department convention. Yearly reports should be made at this time, and officers should be elected for the coming year. The president should appoint a nominating committee and an auditing committee at least two months prior to the annual meeting.

A department press association can be organized even though only two or three post publications are in the department. The prime purpose of a department press association is the creation of new post publications.

Increased membership is needed to carry on programs and ensure the future of The American Legion. The lion's load of work is often left to a loyal few. We need a rebirth of ideals and ideas. Department press associations, with initiative and determination, can lead the way to a greater American Legion that will more effectively represent the majority of America's veterans.

Twenty-one departments now enjoy the presence and assistance of NALPA. Each of these associations takes on a local name to reflect the department's overall image. For example, the New York department has the name, "New York State Legion Press Association (NYSLPA)".

SECTION **FOURTEEN**

The Speech

The invitation has been acknowledged. You have agreed to address a civic group about The American Legion. Now you are unsure what to say or how to pull everything together.

Everyone is nervous before getting up in front of an audience to make a speech, even a professional. Just remember that you are the only one who knows what you are going to say. That's why the audience came to hear you. If you forget a part or you say something that doesn't come out exactly as you planned, only you know it.

So relax. Serving The American Legion as a speaker should not be the most difficult challenge of your life. Instead, it is the opportunity to tell others the Legion story from your perspective – what The American Legion does and why it does it right here in your hometown.

This section of the Public Relations Handbook gives the basics. Couple this information with your knowledge and experience and The American Legion story will unfold.

Speaking before a group of interested citizens is the most effective way to tell The American Legion story. You can more effectively interact with each of the audience members because they can see and hear you. You are able to observe the audience and can react to their feedback and modify your comments accordingly.

Your speeches, audience and subject matter may require the use of a verbatim manuscript or may just require notes to jog your memory on main points. In any case the goal remains the same: tell your story.

Remember to talk to the group as though it is a living-room conversation. Pick out several people around the room and concentrate on them as you speak. Verbatim speeches tend to make the speaker distant, formal, authoritarian, and not real or likeable.

It's best to use "message points" (Section 9) and your own short notes to help you be received as warm, friendly and, most of all, human.

Successful speechmaking depends upon two things: preparing the speech and delivering the speech. Both are equally important. Failure to perform either properly will result in a less than effective speech.

You wouldn't think of driving a high-power race car or take part in a ski-jump competition unless you knew something about it, trained and properly prepared. That's why you just can't expect to stand up before a group of people and "wing it."

- You must prepare and research your subject.
- You must organize your material.
- You must rehearse.

The first step in preparing your speech is to define your purpose. Why are you speaking? To inform? To entertain? To inspire? Write down your purpose in a clear, simple, declarative sentence. Make certain you understand your purpose completely.

Next, define your audience. Know as much as possible about who will hear and see you. Is it an all-male or all-female audience? Are both men and women present? Who are they? Do they represent a particular group or segment of the community? Does a current issue bring them together? What do they have in common? What do they already know about The American Legion family?

Usually the person who invited you to speak can answer those questions.

Once you have defined your purpose and assessed your audience, you can select your subject or topic. Sometimes the person who requested you to speak will suggest the topic. Normally, the choice of a specific topic will be left up to you.

In selecting your subject, a good place to start is to review your own qualifications. What is it that makes you an appropriate choice as speaker? Regardless of your subject, you can and should draw your speech from your own life and experiences – experiences as a leader of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion.

Do not expect your entire speech to be based on what you already know. Research your topic using the resources of your local library, American Legion post or American Legion Auxiliary unit, as well as the national organization. Talk to those who may be more experienced in the subject than you. Use their input along with your research and your own experiences.

Your subject should fit the audience and appeal to its interests and experiences. The choice of language, vocabulary and structure should be appropriate to the audience and the occasion. Carefully selected examples the audience will readily understand. The result will be a speech that appeals to the wider audience on many levels and will be more enjoyable for everyone.

Tailor the length of your speech for the occasion. Lengthy after-dinner speeches are inappropriate. A keynote address for an event is often expected to be a bit longer, since it is considered to be the major address" among several others. Always include enough information to make your audience understand and appreciate the knowledge you have given to them. But avoid providing so much information that they cannot react to it or are worn down or bored by the sheer volume of the material.

As a general rule, most speeches should be no more than 15 to 20 minutes in length.

The best approach is to avoid attempting to cover an entire subject in detail. Instead, select a specific aspect of the central subject. Try to address that central subject by making three main points.

With your purpose and topic clearly in mind, it's usually a good idea to set down the two or three main points you plan to make in rough outline form. The idea of the outline is simply to help you organize all your thoughts into their proper place. Write one- or two-word phrases or "bullets" to describe the main points. For each of those main points, do the same for information to support them.

Don't worry about the opening or closing right now; just build a framework of the main body of information you want to present. Only with this research and outline can you move on to actually writing your speech.

SECTION **FOURTEEN**

The Speech

When you begin to write your speech, remember to use the statement of purpose and outline as your guide. Then prepare your speech by starting at the end. That's right: decide how you want to end the speech. Do you want them to take action, to do something? Do you want them to know something they didn't know before? Do you want them to feel inspired or uplifted? Or do you just want them to feel good and have a smile on their face?

Now say the words you want to say at the end of your speech aloud. Make your final pitch, your major appeal, your big finish. You could end with a story, a quote or a challenge. But say the words aloud.

Then stop. Before you go any further, take a 3x5 card and write down exactly what you said, just the way you said it. Then toss the card on your desk or in the middle of the floor.

Next, refer to your outline. Look at one of the "bulleted" points you want to make. Let it remind you of what you know about that part. Then talk about that particular point aloud, as if you were telling someone else what you know in a casual, over-the-back-fence conversation.

Stop again. Using another 3x5 card, write down exactly what you said, just the way you said it, about that part. Toss that card down too.

Giving a Speech
Past National Commander Robert S. Turner uses a visual aid during his speech.

Keep doing that. It's called talking your speech. Do it in segments instead of sitting down and writing it all at once. Illustrate the main points by use of examples, similes, metaphors, personal stories, anecdotes and startling statistics. Avoid too many facts and figures. Make what you are saying come alive for each member of the audience.

When you've covered your three main points, gather up all the 3x5 cards you tossed around the room or desk and arrange them in a logical order of presentation, with your ending as the last card.

Now, think of a good way to open your speech. It could be as simple as one succinct sentence that states your theme and why it is important. You want to get the attention of the audience right away and make them want to hear more. Your opening should be a one- or two-minute introduction that heightens interest in you and your subject.

SECTION **FOURTEEN**

The Speech

A good way to begin a speech is to tell a story, perhaps about someone or some event that leads into the what or why of your subject. A good, personal anecdote is often effective. This technique helps the audience identify in a personal way with you and what you are about to say. A quote from a famous person or document is another effective way to set the stage for your subject.

Some people use humor to begin. Be cautious. Most people can not tell jokes very effectively. And you can never be sure your joke will not offend someone. Unless you are a master storyteller, it's best to leave the humor to the comedy clubs.

Your opening is usually the most difficult part of preparing your speech. But when you have decided how to start you will have written your speech from end to beginning by talking it.

Before the day of your speech, rehearse it. Practice it again and again until you are familiar with its content and with the most effective pace for delivery. Rehearse on your feet in a relatively large room in front of another person, if possible. You may also use both a tape recorder and a mirror to properly gauge your total presentation. Remember when you are comfortable with you, the audience will be comfortable as well.

Once you reach the program site, check over the facilities: room size, your position relative to the audience, the acoustics, the microphone, etc. Do this long before you actually give your speech. Then, when you are introduced you will be ready to knock 'em dead.

As you speak, look directly at your audience. Establish eye contact at the outset, and constantly re-establish it by looking up from your notes. Eye contact with the audience is especially important at the beginning and conclusion of your speech, so know the opening well. Don't memorize it, but know what you plan to say and say it. The same holds true for your big ending.

In fact, reading a prepared text or reciting a memorized speech usually leads to a dull presentation. Talking to your audience, using notes or "message points" on cards, makes for an effective one-to-one delivery.

During the body of your speech, keep your movement at the podium to a minimum. Too much movement distracts audiences. If you move away from the podium and microphone, you will need to adjust your voice level to accommodate the increased distance, unless you have been outfitted with a wireless microphone.

While excessive movement can be distracting, gestures can enhance your presentation. By using your face and eyes, you can express the finest shades of meaning that your words alone can not convey. The nod, the frown, the smile and the raising of an eyebrow can impart additional information of use to the audience. Practice controlling your movements and facial expressions until you are in complete control and can use them to your advantage.

Remember: gesture to your audience, not to yourself, just as you speak to your audience and not to yourself. Be definite. An effective gesture is firm and direct, not a flinch. Effective gestures are forms of communication. They are purposeful and should be directed at the audience.

SECTION **FOURTEEN**

The Speech

Just as you wouldn't surprise your audience with inappropriate gestures, don't surprise yourself with elements of your speech. Know the proper pronunciation of difficult names and words. Use proper pronunciation, but be sensitive to colloquialism and local places, names and customs.

When you take this structured approach to your speech from concept to your final closing at the event you are maintaining control. Just as with "message points" for an interview, control is what you have and what you want to keep.

It takes some time, but you can handle the challenge.

- Prepare in advance.
- Keep a positive attitude.
- Show enthusiasm.
- Tell The American Legion story in a way only your experiences can express.

Points on your written words:

- Use 18-point type.
- Double space.
- Underline your key points.
- Don't carry sentences from one page to another.
- Don't staple pages together.
- Don't keep your pages in a binder.
- Number your pages.
- Leave a decent margin on the left side for your last minute notes or directions, i.e. smile, emphasize this point, etc.
- Avoid organizational jargon and acronyms. Keep it simple, concise and conversational.

Many people use on-line resources to find quotes and other information for a speech. A word of caution: check the source. Many stories and quotes can not be validated, yet they gather lives of their own via the Internet. If you're not confident of the source and validity, don't use it.

For those who use the Internet, learn to use the "Urban Legend" site. Many of the stories that circulate on the Web are validated or debunked on this site. The URL is: **http://www.snopes.com/index.html.**

For those who are interested in some validated quotes for a speech, consider any of the following. In all cases of using a quote, you must be sure to credit its source.

The Speech

"Depend upon it, the lovers of freedom will be free." – Edmund Burke

"Freedom suppressed and again regained bites with keener fangs than freedom never endangered."
– Cicero

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it."
– Thomas Paine

"The ground of liberty must be gained by inches." – Thomas Jefferson

"We are not to expect to be transplanted from despotism to liberty in a featherbed."
– Thomas Jefferson

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserved neither liberty nor safety." – Benjamin Franklin

"Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honor steady to a common end, and prefer the interest of mankind to any narrow interest of their own."
– Woodrow Wilson in war address to Congress on April 2, 1917

"All we have of freedom, all we use or know – this our fathers bought for us, long and long ago."
– Rudyard Kipling

"The world has never had a good definition for the word liberty." – Abraham Lincoln

"All that makes existence valuable to anyone depends on the enforcement of restraints upon the actions of other people." – J.S. Mill

"Liberty exists in proportion to wholesome restraint; the more restraint on others to keep off from us, the more liberty we have." – Daniel Webster

"Communism is the corruption of a dream of justice."
– Adlai Stevenson in a speech at Urbana, Ill., 1951

"You can see things, and you say, 'Why?', but I see things that never were and I say, 'Why not?'"
– George Bernard Shaw

"It is an unfortunate fact that we can secure peace only by preparing for war." – John F. Kennedy

SECTION **FOURTEEN**

The Speech

"The real democratic American idea is, not that every man shall be on a level with every other, but that every one shall have liberty, without hindrance, to be what God made him."
– Henry Ward Beecher, "Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit," 1887

"Freedom – no word was ever spoken, that has held out greater hope, demanded greater sacrifice, needed to be nurtured, blessed more the giver, damned more its destroyer or come closer to being God's will on earth. And I think that's worth fighting for, if necessary." – Gen. Omar N. Bradley

"I believe that if we think clearly enough, plan carefully enough, and work tirelessly enough, we can both save freedom and secure peace." – Dwight D. Eisenhower

"We view our nation's strength and security as a trust, upon which rest the hope of free men everywhere." – Dwight D. Eisenhower

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and success of liberty." – John F. Kennedy

"The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it." - John Stuart Mill

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated."
– Thomas Paine

"For those who fight for it, life has a special flavor the protected will never know."
– Unknown defender of Khe Sanh in Vietnam

"Democracy is not a static thing. It is an everlasting march." – Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Patriotism is not a short frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime." – Adlai Stevenson

SECTION **FOURTEEN**

The Speech

"Democracy can not lose in open competition with rival doctrines. It can lose only by default. It can lose through the fears of its people, through their failure to trust in it. The power of democracy is the power of uncensored knowledge, or unregimented minds, or resolute action based on a realistic understanding of a realistic world." – Gen. Omar N. Bradley

"A thoughtful mind, when it sees a nation's flag, sees not the flag only, but the nation itself; and whatever may be its symbols, its insignia, he reads chiefly in the flag, the Government, the principles, the truths, (and) the history which belong to the nation that sets it forth."
– Henry Ward Beecher, "The American Flag"

"The noblest motive is the public good." – Virgil

"Things that the flag stands for were created by the experiences of a great people. Everything that it stands for was written by their lives. The flag is the embodiment, not of sentiment, but of history. It represents the experiences made by men and women, the experiences of those who do and live under the flag." – Woodrow Wilson

"And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." – John F. Kennedy

" … the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war." – Gen. Douglas MacArthur

"We seek peace, knowing – as all ages of man have known – that peace is the climate of freedom. And now, as in no other age, we seek it because we have been warned by the power of modern weapons that peace may be the only climate possible for human life itself." – Dwight D. Eisenhower

"There never was a good war or a bad peace." – Benjamin Franklin

"If we desire peace, one of the most powerful institutions of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war." – George Washington

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." – Thomas Jefferson

SECTION **FIFTEEN**

Copyright and Trademark Information

Trademarks and service marks are valuable assets of any organization. They are very valuable to The American Legion family. The marks of The American Legion identify the programs and services of The American Legion and distinguish them from those of other service organizations. The marks of The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion also assure our members and the public that the programs and services sponsored in conjunction with the marks meet the high standards and values for which The American Legion family is known.

Following the guidelines in this section will help protect the marks and prevent public confusion as to whether a service or program is actually sponsored by The American Legion family. These guidelines are excerpted from the publication: "Name and Emblem Identification System Manual and Style Guide."

On Sept. 16, 1919, U.S. Congress incorporated our organization and named it "The American Legion." A formal "corporate name" is the official legal designation of a company or organization. Corporate names should always be spelled out in full. Standard typeface should be used and the same type style and letter case, all capital letters or initial capital letters followed by lowercase letters, must be used throughout the name.

Examples:

Correct	**Incorrect**
THE AMERICAN LEGION	the American Legion
American Legion Auxiliary	The AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
Sons of The American Legion	Sons of the American Legion

A "trade name" is the name under which an organization promotes itself to its members and the public and under which it conducts business. In some cases, the trade name may be the same as the corporate name. In other cases, it may be a shortened version. Use initial capital letters or all capital letters for all of our trade names.

Examples:

Correct	**Incorrect**
The American Legion	the Legion
THE AMERICAN LEGION	the AL
American Legion Auxiliary	the Auxiliary
Sons of The American Legion	the Sons

Copyright and Trademark Information

A "trademark" or "service mark" is a word, name, symbol or device, or any combination of these, adopted and used by a person, company or organization to identify its products or services and distinguish them from the products or services of others. If the mark is used to identify a product, then it is a trademark. If the mark is used to identify a service, then it is a service mark.

The following are service marks of The American Legion:

The American Legion

American Legion Auxiliary

Sons of The American Legion

The American Legion Magazine

The American Legion Citizens Flag Honor Guard

Boys Nation

Girls Nation

The following are trademarks of The American Legion:

The American Legion Emblem

American Legion Auxiliary Emblem

Sons of The American Legion Emblem

The American Legion Magazine Masthead

The American Legion Baseball Emblem

SECTION **FIFTEEN**

Copyright and Trademark Information

Our trademark and service mark rights have been acquired through many years of use in connection with our programs and services. Our marks have become well and favorably known throughout the United States and in many foreign countries through long and continuous use and through extensive national and local media coverage. They represent substantial goodwill, which is an extremely valuable asset.

Service mark and trademark rights may be jeopardized by internal misuse and by unauthorized use by outside sources. Every member of The American Legion plays a vital role in preserving, protecting and enhancing our marks.

Because The American Legion was established by an act of Congress, Congress gave The American Legion the sole and exclusive right to have and use that name in carrying out its purposes.

The National Executive Committee has issued guidance as to use of the Emblem in Resolution 71 as amended. If a local post or department wishes to use the Emblem on an item to be manufactured locally, a letter of request must be sent to the National Adjutant of The American Legion. The letter must state who will perform the duplicating (the name of the salesman is insufficient), the name of the product and the exact amount being ordered. Authority to duplicate is granted for the specific number. Additional quantities require new authority. Products must be of U.S. manufacture.

Similar guidance has been issued for all other trademarks and service marks of The American Legion.

As a volunteer Public Relations officer, you fill an important role in preserving the protection of our name, our emblem and our public image. If in doubt, write the National Adjutant, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

SECTION **SIXTEEN**

Community Relations

Community Relations is the force multiplier for all that we do in The American Legion. Its dominant feature is personal contact which complements and reinforces all of our internal and external communication efforts as we tell the Legion story.

Some communication experts refer to this personal contact approach as networking. However, since The American Legion is well imbedded in the infrastructure of nearly 15,000 communities across America, networking is actually a tool of community relations. Other PR tools include internal communications and media relations. Personal contact is the method that amplifies our internal and external communications messages and programs of support regarding our veterans and America's core values.

Through personal contact with community entities, American Legion posts develop and carry out programs that earn understanding, acceptance and support of the Legion's role in providing service to veterans, their families and their communities. Likewise, we will garner respect and support of Legionnaires in communities wherever there is a Legion presence. A well-planned COMREL program can reap tremendous dividends for your post as others in your area actually help you achieve your goals.

Community Relations Objectives

The objectives of The American Legion's community relations are:

a. Increase public awareness and understanding of the missions, policies and programs of the Legion.

b. Inspire patriotism and encourage young men and women to serve in the military.

c. Foster good relations on mutually acceptable terms with the public that the Legion comes into contact with.

d. Attract eligible veterans to join The American Legion as we continue to serve America and our fellow veterans.

e. Maintain a reputation as a good neighbor, as well as, a respected professional organization charged with part of the responsibility for enhancing service to veterans and maintaining American core values.

Understanding the Needs of Your Community

Community relations vary from place to place. Each community or geographic area has its own character: structure, personalities, problems and organizations differ. Community relations is a local activity that must be tailored to fit local needs. No matter what the message is from the National Headquarters, Department or District levels, you have an opportunity to craft that message for understanding and acceptance at the local level. Whether it is holding a Reconnect event at the local Guard or Reserve unit, hosting a Blue Star Salute event on Armed Forces Day, or holding a town hall meeting about legal abuse by groups like the ACLU, you have an opportunity to infuse local character into the communication process.

SECTION **SIXTEEN**

Community Relations

Fact Finding: One of the great things about community relations is that it is a cost effective form of communication. You don't have to hire a marketing firm or a PR company to do an assessment of your post community relation efforts with the community. It is something you can do yourself.

You can visit the library or conduct research on the Internet to learn about your community's power structure, "movers and shakers," programs and needs. Here are some questions that you can review with your fellow post officers to determine what Legion programs need more emphasis in the community.

1. What are the needs of veterans in the community? Are their needs being met? Does the community know what the needs of the veterans are?
2. What is, and who are in, the power structure of the community?
3. What is the community's attitudes towards, and knowledge of, The American Legion?
4. What are the community clubs and organizations, and what do they do?
5. What are the mutual needs and interests of the community and The American Legion?
6. What is the past history of post-community relations?

Once you have answered these questions, you will have a better idea of how to tailor your programs for the community.

Who's Who in the Community

The different social groups in any given community are referred to as publics. There are both internal and external publics. Internal groups can include the members of your American Legion post, the Legion family and similar veteran service organizations. External groups can include: community organizations such as civic, trade, industrial, youth, ethnic, women, religious and educational; government entities at the local, state and federal level; professional organizations; civic leaders and others.

Here is a list of suggested publics that your post should be in touch with on a regular basis:

Chamber of Commerce: The purpose of the Chamber of Commerce is to provide assistance in promoting, starting, managing, growing and advocating your business. Members of any given Chamber of Commerce may have employees working for them who are veterans or they may be veterans themselves. Certainly, with today's war on terror and the increase demand for National Guard and Reserve forces, business owners and their employees may know of a co-worker or someone in their family who are serving.

Chamber of Commerce briefing..
Community Relations in action! Legion briefings to members of the local chamber of commerce on Legion messages and programs can garner community support and partnership.

Community Relations

The local Chamber of Commerce can be a great source of help in promoting Legion programs and an excellent resource to use in seeking partnerships with area businesses. Many might want to advertise your post newsletter; others might want to pay for refreshments at a Veterans Service Day. A local radio station may wish to partner with your post in holding a Blue Star Salute on Armed Forces Day. The opportunities are endless but can start with your establishing a relationship with your Chamber of Commerce. Other opportunities might include speaking engagements at Chamber luncheons and articles in Chamber newsletters about the services your post offers to veterans throughout the community.

It is highly recommended that Legion Posts become members of their local chambers. Often this membership is waived or set at a very minimal cost. However, the benefits are worth the investment. Many chambers will do a one-time mailing promoting the Legion to all chamber business members. You will receive opportunities to be part of the Chambers many functions and committees. Through such activities, the Legion is seen as a team player and a resourceful asset to the chamber itself.

Military Organizations: Active duty, National Guard and Reserve units provide a variety of opportunities for promoting the Legion through personal contact. The TS2 program (Reconnect, Family Support, American Legacy Scholarship program) is already in place and provides numerous suggested activities where the Legion and military units can interface. Don't forget about the local recruiters.

Legionnaires handing out Blue Star Banners to soldiers.
Legionnaires from the Department of Wisconsin are seen here presenting Blue Star Service Banners to members of the National Guard. Since The American Legion rekindled the tradition following the terroist attacks on Sept. 11 2001, banner presentations have brought communities and the military together to recognize our men and women in uniform who are serving proudly in the war against terrorism.

Public Service Organizations: Law enforcement agencies, firefighters, public sector work and utility companies tend to have a higher than average number of employees who are veterans or know someone who is a veteran. Putting them on your list of speaking engagements and mailing them your post newsletter are but a few ways to an ongoing relationship and to place the Legion name in their vocabulary.

Churches/Synagogues: Religious institutions perpetuate our belief in God and family core values. Seeking opportunities to involve churches and synagogues in Legion activities (in particular advocacy and children's' programs) are worth the time and effort. The church or synagogue bulletin is a great way to get announcements published about Legion programs and other messages. Fellowship sessions after service are also helpful in promoting Legion programs to include new post development, Family Support and children and youth programs.

SECTION **SIXTEEN**

Community Relations

Centers of Learning: All educational institutions, from pre-school to college, offer many opportunities for your post to convey our messages of support to our veterans and our commitment to a 100 percent Americanism. Many members who comprise the staff and faculty of any given school system are veterans. Add in parents, counselors and the vendors who do business with the schools and colleges, and you have a new audience to approach for support and participation in Legion programs.

Suggested American Legion Community Relations Activities

Although community relations programs and activities will vary from one community to another, the approach is usually the same. Legionnaires can incorporate the programs of The American Legion into three main activities: special events, community partnerships and information venues.

Special Events: A special event is characterized by its multi-lateral communications and coordination between the Legion and a variety of community agencies. The goal of a special event is of common interest of the community. In fact, community endorsement of the special event is manifested through active Legion and community participation. National holidays, troop support venues and recognition activities are just a few of the types of special events that warrant Legion and community common interest.

Some special event activities that Legion posts find very successful include the Blue Star Salute on Armed Forces Day, Veterans Service Days and 'Support Our Troops' rallies in support of Resolution 169. One post was revitalized when they combined a troop support rally with the presentation of Blue Star Service Banners. Key publics from the community were invited along with soldiers and their families. Local citizens brought photos of their loved ones in the armed forces that were displayed on a large poster for the entire town to see and to admire.

State legislators, local officials, police officers, business leaders and clergy joined the post in greeting these brave warriors and their families. As a direct result of this event, the seed was planted to start a local support group for the families of area soldiers deployed to the war on terror.

"Our efforts to bring the community together with our troops not only resulted in a local veteran support group being formed, but we also gained 28 new members for our post," James Brehio, Department Commander (MA) and member of Post 373 said.

Partnerships: By approaching various community entities (such as the Chamber, public service groups, etc.), you can find opportunities for mutual programs of support. These may range from participating in local parades to garnering support to start or revitalize a new post.

In 2004, the Department of the District of Columbia approached the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) regarding a program to provide mutual support to one another. The AFRH was looking for an opportunity to expand its community relations program to an on-site charter school and to provide increased activities for the residents – over 1,000 retired veterans. The Department membership team made an offer that the AFRH accepted.

The programs of veteran support and Americanism – children and youth became the schematic that would bring a much-needed service to local veterans and to the local school children.

Through the new American Legion post, Legionnaires with teaching experience provided a small cadre of tutors and instructors for the school. The charter school was able to move towards its accreditation much earlier than anticipated. And Legion services were provided to the residents of the largest veterans retirement community in America.

From parents to the Urban League, both the AFRH and The American Legion are viewed as good neighbors in downtown Washington D.C.

Conclusion: Through community relations, the American Legion become more than a news release, a canned speech or a letter to the editor. Community relation programs can breathe life into our image as Legionnaires and our commitment to veterans, their families and their communities. Be seen in your community; be known in your community. Reap the dividends of community relations as your post's force multiplier.

Public Relation Products

Description	Stock #
"RECONNECT" – "Who's Wearing My Uniform?" (14:16 minute video)	58-021
Our Best And Brightest; The National High School Oratorical Contest	
American Legion Baseball (18:57 minute video)	58 019
American Legion Mobilizes Nationwide Military Support Network	
Blue Star Service Banner Campaign (4 PSA'S - 97 Tracks)	
Blue Star Service Banner Television PSA's – Legion Family Version (3-30 second video)	
CARES Briefing To The National Executive Committee, May 8, 2002 (27 minute video)	
Fact Sheet – The American Legion September 11 Memorial Scholarship	
Fact Sheet: Gulf War Veterans	
Flag Retirement Ceremony	
Good PR Equals Membership Success 15:54 minute video))	58-026
How To Conduct The National High School Oratorical Contest (30:20 minute video)	
Key Message Points Of The American Legion	
National High School Oratorical Contest - Judges Briefing, (18:30 minute video)	58-027
POW / MIA op-ed (12 pages)	
Presidential Task Force On Improving VA Health Care Presentation To The NEC (29:22 minute video)	
Sales Techniques (15:20 minute video)	58-025
Suggested Address - The American Legion Birthday	
Suggested Address - Americanism	
Suggested Address – Our Preamble	
Suggested Address On Law And Order	
Suggested Remarks To Community & Civic Groups Regarding TAL Policies And Programs	
Suggested Speech - Flag Day	

Suggested Speech - Memorial Day	
Suggested Speech - Veterans Day	
Still Serving America 1919 - "We Call Ourselves Legionnaires"	
TAL Family Support Network – Support for our Troops	
The American Legion – Patriotic Holiday Announcements	
POW / MIA Remembrance Ceremony (3:41 minute video)	58 006
The American Legion Family - Blue Star Service Banner - Public Relations Campaign	
The American Legion Programs & Issues PSA Campaign (61 PSA'S)	
The American Legion Programs & Issues PSA Campaign	
The American Legion Today - This Is The American Legion (29 minute video)	
The American Legion's Key Message Points On National Security	
The American Legion Patriotic Holiday PSA / Booklet	
The American Legion Family Support / Legacy Scholarship PSAs	
The Speech - A Basic Guide To Public Speaking	
This Is The American Legion / The American Legion Today	58 014
What If There Was No American Legion? (4:33 video)	58 004

The public relations tools listed here are provided free. Order them online at pr@legion.org or call (317) 630-1253 Print materials can be downloaded from The American Legion Public Relations Division website at www.legion.org.