

ZonComm E-NEWSLETTER
Zonta International District 5
January-March 2009

INTRODUCTION TO ZONTA PUBLIC RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS

The goal of Zonta's public relations and communications program is simple: communicating our mission to advance the status of women. However, that can be difficult to accomplish, so the purpose of this newsletter is to make Zonta's ongoing public relations campaign less complicated.

The ideas and suggestions contained in this newsletter have been taken from Zonta International, my own marketing communications experience, and various PR references. This information is intended as suggestions only, so choose the tools or ideas you think will work best for your Zonta club.

Public relations efforts are designed to create awareness, understanding, support, and cooperation – both internally and externally. Zonta's internal audience consists of members and club, district, and international leaders. Our desired external audience includes potential members, current and potential donors, government and opinion leaders (at local, national, and international levels), media, potential speakers, and service recipients. An effective public relations program will attract new members because they are familiar with Zonta's successes, and attract donations and support from other organizations because they know about the work we do.

Zonta's public relations and communications committee responsibilities include media relations (press releases), creation of communications tools (web sites, brochures, newsletters, effective e-mail programs, and special event promotions), club liaisons to other organizations, club signage, promotional products (including Zonta International's online store), and archives and history (club records inform members how traditions were formed and identify the key players in the club's development). The PR and Communications Committee should develop a comprehensive plan and relevant material to create awareness of your Zonta club using appropriate forms of news media. To accomplish this, the PR Committee needs to be kept informed about Zonta projects and achievements at the club, district, and international levels in order to promote knowledge and understanding both within and outside of Zonta. You need to use every available opportunity to promote Zonta's name and work in the community, especially in connection with Amelia Earhart Day (January 22), Zonta International Rose Day/International Women's Day (March 8), United Nations Day (September 21), and Zonta International Day (November 8).

PR is not simply free advertising; its value far exceeds that. An effective public relations program promotes member pride and participation in Zonta achievements in addition to external name recognition. In your capacity as a PR writer, you need to act as the special correspondent for each news outlet that deals with your club's interests. As such, you must integrate the requirements of the specific publication and media outlets with the desires of your Zonta club. It is important to understand how to make an average, everyday type of story newsworthy and to present the facts of your story in a form that concentrates on interesting news angles (without advertising hype). You have to think like a journalist in order to track down all the elements of your story and then convey the information to your intended audience. You want the media to publish either your version directly or - more likely – their version as explained by you and your press release.

Your target audience is the reader of the newspaper or magazine; you need to define it. Is it a technical audience of a trade or professional journal, or is it one of the many audiences of the Sunday newspaper? It may be both and everyone in between. But first you must convince an editor to use your release. You will do this by having a worthwhile item (one the editor thinks is newsworthy) and by writing in news style.

Research various media outlets to determine which ones are appropriate for your Zonta club's needs - find out which publications like what kind of story. Discover each publication's format submission requirements (i.e., what style – AP, etc.), in what format (i.e., if submitted electronically discover what software programs are compatible with theirs for text and any accompanying graphics), and publishing deadlines. Most importantly, be sure to choose the correct publications for your intended readers (i.e., your target audience).

Build your list of media contacts with the use of a database or telephone directory. Record the names, addresses, and phone numbers of media companies. Contact each company and ask for the name of the editor for e-mail addresses and fax numbers, and then record them for your files.

If you do a good job, by writing your press release in news style you will have done much of the editor's work, saving rewriting and copy editing time. Editors appreciate that; they too are overworked. News writing is not ordinary writing; it is as factual as possible – more factual even than reports. News writing focuses on the 5 Ws and an H: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How. The answers to these questions will compose most of your story. These are the facts, the news.

For writing press releases, you need to know how to write a news lead, how to write in the inverted pyramid format, and how to avoid editorializing. While there is much more to news writing than these three concerns, being aware of these will allow you to write effective press releases.

News stories do not have introductory sentences. They begin with the most important facts – generally, the Who and What. Those facts are your lead. Write your lead as a brisk, active sentence. I recommend having a hook in the lead in order to grab the reader's attention. Get a hook if you can, but it's better to have a straightforward business-like lead than a cute come-on with out-of-date slang because few papers will print it, and most editors will throw the release away without reading beyond it.

Inverted Pyramid

Writing in the inverted pyramid format means that you begin with the most important point in the lead, and close with the least important point. You are writing an information piece, not a feature. The news release has no introduction and no conclusion. Stop when you run out of information.

If you want to lengthen your press release in an effort to get a longer article published, add background material at the end of the story – the history of your organization, previous accomplishments and service projects, etc. Because the least important information is at the bottom, if your story must be shortened it can be cut from the bottom like all news stories, paragraph by paragraph. No one needs to take time finding a paragraph that can be deleted.

PRESS RELEASES

Press or news releases are reports, written in news style, about a service, product, or event that has been, is being, or will be offered or sponsored. Press releases put information about your organization and its products or services in front of the public. Your goal in writing a release is to have it become a news story, a feature, or a community notice.

In general you are more likely to get the release into a newspaper or magazine than onto radio or television, but don't ignore radio and TV. Radio and television coverage is relatively rare because of the limited time in those media. Your preliminary press releases should encourage editors to become interested enough to cover the event or to run a feature highlighting your story.

In addition to creating stories, press releases keep editors informed of potentially important stories. Papers will seldom run a release about a conference being planned, but the release alerts editors to watch for other stories or to cover the event themselves. Then conference participants, main speakers, and distinguished guests may receive actual news coverage.

Since press releases are tied to news or potential news and depending upon your announcement and the publications you want to alert, you can send out press releases in a nearly continuous stream. Send out a press release at each milestone. The possible occasions are endless. Some organizations turn every holiday or special interest week into an occasion for a news release. And on slow news days, some of these releases will be printed and some turned into features.

The press release is the most common form of media communications. It is usually a one- or two-page announcement written in the form of a news article, complete with a headline. In fact, some publications will publish a press release verbatim, although most editors will edit or revise the piece or choose not to use the release at all.

When writing media materials, strive to be as informative as possible. Always include relevant quotations from key people involved in the story. (Note: Be sure to get permission first from the person you want to quote in your press release.) If available, testimonials and comments are very effective. Editors and journalists are looking for facts, newsworthy claims backed up with specifics, and quotations they can use in their stories. Work to make their job easier and give them what they need.

Types of Press Releases

1. **Announcement Release** – This is concerned with brief details about such subjects as a change of address or a new member. Trade publications often feature short announcements on who's moving to what organization. All that is usually required is a few lines of detail: who's moving from where to what position and with what responsibility.
2. **Background Notes** – Another kind of press release is a support piece that is not usually for publication. It provides useful details about technical aspects or historical points related to the main release. Typically, background notes may feature previously published articles, research figures, brochures, and company reports. It could also include biographical details.
3. **Technical Release** – This is often longer than the usual one-page, one-sided main release. It does all the additional technical homework for an editor or journalist so he can write a complete and accurate account of how a particular product or service developed.
4. **TV or Radio Release** – Finally, you may be required to write a special press release for TV or radio. If this is the case, remember to:

- a. Write as people speak
- b. Sentences need to be crisp
- c. Information needs to be distilled to its simplest points
- d. Wherever possible try to include at least one quote that encapsulates the entire message within 10 seconds of *talk time*. If that quote promises broader repercussion, all the better. This type of quote is often called a *sound bite* and is usually an edited highlight from a recording.
- e. If you wish to produce an audio release for the radio, find out what type of format the recording should be on.
- f. Always submit an accompanying letter with a broadcast release, explaining what the release is about, how it is relevant to an audience, and where to contact you for further information.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Getting Started

Having trouble getting started? The following process works for me, so it might help you as well.

Brainstorming with other Zonta members for PR-worthy ideas often produces great results with the added benefit of encouraging member participation.

1. Once you've decided upon your subject, get the main idea on paper (or computer) – don't worry about how it sounds yet – just get the idea (however rough) in writing.
2. List all the points you want to make – an outline may work best to get you started.
3. Begin putting your thoughts, ideas, and points into somewhat cohesive sentences and paragraphs until you get them into a format that flows – again, do not worry at this point about grammar, spelling, or punctuation for a first draft.
4. Review what you've got so far and re-word as needed. Start working on grammar and punctuation.
5. Take a break for a few hours (or more if needed, but usually it's harder to get back into the right frame of mind if you wait too long). Then re-read what you've written so far and revise as needed. Use your computer's spelling and grammar checker. (Note: Many of the software computer and grammar checkers are not always correct; i.e., *its* and *it's* are often incorrectly used. Quick Tip: Use *it's* if you can substitute *it is* in the sentence and it still makes sense; otherwise use *its*.)
6. Take a break whenever you feel frustrated and come back to it later. Re-read everything you've written so far and make any changes you feel are necessary to improve the content. Then check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation again.
7. If possible, have at least one other person review what you've written so far. You know what you're trying to say but others may not. Letting another person review and give you feedback or ask questions points out weak spots and can generate more ideas. Trust your instincts, which will become more reliable as you gain writing expertise and receive feedback from others. You don't have to follow everyone's suggestions if they don't fit with what you want to say, but at least consider if they will improve the content and accuracy. Try not to become offended when others suggest changes. It's hard not to get your feelings hurt after you put in so much effort into writing the piece, but sometimes you just have to go with the flow and get over it!
8. Once your story sounds the way you want it, then submit it for review and approval to your Zonta club Board, PR committee members, and possibly other long-time members with expertise in the area of your story's subject matter for accuracy and completeness.
9. Once you've incorporated any suggestions that improve the story, edit it one last time before distributing to your intended media outlets.
10. In addition to the media, be sure to distribute the story or press release to your fellow Zonta club members (be sure to send a copy to me as your District 5 PR Chair!) and service organizations your club supports as well as other community organizations you interact with. Sharing publicity generated about Zonta with club members at local and district levels creates a feeling of excitement and fellowship. It

also serves to remind members about the details of the event or announcement to encourage participation and creativity of other district Zonta clubs.

Develop a proposed PR schedule, which is list of topics with assigned due dates. This will help keep you on schedule and you'll know ahead of time what your topics will be. Once you've developed your PR schedule, distribute it to everyone in your Zonta club requesting input and suggestions for more topics of interest to your club. It may turn out that you forgot about something very important to your Zonta club that needs to be publicized. It also takes some of the pressure off of you to constantly come up with ideas. And you'll find that the input you receive will also spur your creativity.

Don't let the PR schedule keep you from being flexible. From time to time other unforeseen projects and ideas will come up causing your PR schedule to change. Just try to go with the flow and don't stress out!

Press Release Format

The following guidelines will help you arrange the components of the story and tells you the preferred format most often accepted by the media. Every news story or press release is divided into three essential components: Headline, Lead, and Body.

From a press release angle, think of the headline as a calling card between you and an editor. It announces in one sentence what you have to offer. Direct all the words in a headline toward the subject features and benefits.

Once you have your headline, you have to hook the reader's (i.e., editor) interest with a lead paragraph. The main components of a press release lead are the 5 Ws: Who is doing What, When, Why, and Where. Start with a list of the facts. For print media you will need to write a press release incorporating the 5 Ws into the first paragraph. With a maximum of 60 words, your lead has to be sufficiently interesting and relevant for an editor to either read the rest of the press release or get a staff reporter to make further inquiries. Leads are fact-led. From a practical point of view, it is seldom possible to write a different press release for each publication. However, it is a good idea to target the story to a type of medium. In addition to giving you a theme for your story, it gives you assurance that when your lead is read it has a greater chance of working.

Editors look for stories they think will interest the most people. Desirable elements include:

- Change – how things will be different
- Tangible vs. conceptual results
- Proximity – the nearer the better
- Human interest angles
- Prominence (the rich and famous)
- Rare or unusual occurrences
- Action desired
- Timeliness

Next, move to the body of the release. There are various formulas for writing a coherent and logical press release. One of the best known is SOLAADS:

Subject
Organization
Location
Advantages
Applications
Details
Source

Now you have to consider the main thrust of your press release. Often the best stories are the human interest angles. Essentially the format for these press releases is similar to those for product- and service-based items.

- Show where the release comes from
- Use a strong headline, led by the person, features, or benefits
- Feature a strong lead-in
- Include further details
- Consequence/impact on the public
- Conflict, disagreement between groups or individuals
- Conclude with a human interest angle and closing hook
- Give more general information about Zonta

Be clear about your intended audience and write your press release to convince the media that this is important news to them. Always include a release date – the day you want the news to appear. Always include your name, telephone number, and e-mail address so the press can contact you with questions. Quotes add interest so consider putting a key phrase in quotation marks and attributing it to your president (after obtaining her permission, of course). Prepare a summary statement about your Zonta club to be included in every communication. Note the availability of any photographs and be sure to include photo captions (you may need to get photo releases, especially for non-Zonta people in the picture). Have at least two other people proofread your material.

Editors often take mere seconds to decide if the story is of interest or not. Try to avoid sending a press release which discusses something that has already occurred; editors work in the news business, not the history library. **However, keep in mind if your intent is to merely announce information after the fact where the general public is not welcome, that is acceptable.** For instance, if your Zonta meetings are not open to the general public, your intent may be to inform the general public with the goal of reaching interested readers who may contact you for further information and possible membership opportunities. Your press release should be tagged as an urgent matter; include *FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE* at the top of the first page.

Note: Never include the word *Exclusive* unless the story really is exclusive to one publication. If you want to get around this, you can always make your story exclusive to one publication and after that *Special* for another publication. (Specials may be appropriate for local papers who would want a particular regional bias given to the story or trade publications which wish to discuss a specific business angle.)

If the press release must continue onto a second page, write *-more-* and head the following sheet with a suitable follow-on line. Mark the end of a press release by typing. ##### or *END* at the bottom of the page. Conclude with contact details listed at the top of the press release (see example on page 7).



PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PHOTOS ATTACHED
Wednesday, November 26, 2008
CONTACT: Terri Purtee-Stein
(513) 697-8237; tps29@zoomtown.com

JUDGE MELBA MARSH KICKS OFF ZONTA CLUB OF CINCINNATI FOUNDERS DAY CELEBRATION

Cincinnati, OH – The Zonta Club of Cincinnati held their annual Founders Day meeting on Thursday, November 13, 2008 at the Vernon Manor Hotel. Zonta International Area 2 Director Pat Robey was on hand to help honor long-time member Grace Moore, Hamilton County Common Pleas Court Judge Melba Marsh was the featured speaker, and two Ann Rasche Scholarship Award recipients from Cincinnati State College were honored guests.

Judge Melba Marsh kicked off the celebration with a lively keynote speech about her eleven years as an assistant prosecuting attorney with the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office during Simon Leis's early reign as one of only two women prosecutors, where she tackled cases spanning the gamut of criminal prosecution through the Juvenile, Municipal and Common Pleas Court Divisions. In 1989 Judge Marsh was elected to the Hamilton County Municipal Court, where she served seven years prior to being elected to the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas. Judge Marsh graduated from the College of Mount Saint Joseph and earned a law degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Law.

Grace Moore, joined by two of her daughters and husband, was honored for her 27 years of membership in the Zonta Club of Cincinnati. Zonta Club of Cincinnati President Ellen Spaeth and Zonta International Area 2 Director Pat Robey presented Grace with a Certificate of Merit for her years of service to Zonta along with her favorite chocolate candy and the traditional Zonta yellow rose. In 1979 Grace was honored by the Cincinnati Enquirer as a woman of the year winner for her pioneering work in establishing the Share-A-Home concept in Cincinnati as an alternative to older people having to go into nursing homes before they needed the constant attention and loss of freedom. The Share-A-Home

-more-

program lasted 16 years and served more than 200 people. Grace joined Zonta in 1981 and worked on a great number of projects requiring volunteer devotion and participation; especially notable was Grace's work with the committee that created the history of the Zonta Club of Cincinnati's first 50 years involving much research and interviewing of long-time and past Zonta members. And she achieved all of this while raising seven children!

President Ellen Spaeth said, "The people featured in this meeting are excellent examples of the impressive women affiliated with Zonta. We are so pleased that Ann Rasche Scholarship Award recipients Christina Angel-Pyles and Marcia Smartt were able to join us for this special Founders Day celebration. Our members work hard to improve the status of women and have developed a great respect for and camaraderie with each other in working together to accomplish great things for women and their families in the greater Cincinnati area and around the world."

Local fundraising projects include their upcoming Joseph-Beth Booksellers Fundraiser on November 30. Past fundraisers include their annual Garage Sale Scholarship Fundraiser and Quilts for Change juried quilt shows, which benefited the Greater Cincinnati YWCA Women's Shelter, The Rape Crisis & Abuse Center of Hamilton County, and the Center for Peace Education's program to teach non-violent problem-solving skills to students, parents, and teachers at Chase Elementary School.

The Zonta Club of Cincinnati, part of Zonta International, is a service organization comprised of business and professional women dedicated to advancing the status of women worldwide through service projects, advocacy, education, and program funding. Zonta projects have included refurbishing a room at the Bethany House Women's Shelter in Cincinnati, and in the past has donated funds to help build an apartment at the Tom Geiger Guest House.

For more information about the Zonta Club of Cincinnati and how to become a member, send e-mails to info@zonta-cinti.org or visit Zonta International at www.zonta.org.

-END-

Press Release Quick Tips

- Try to get all your facts onto one side of letter-size paper.
- Print your press release on your Zonta club's letterhead.
- Double-space your text.
- Block your lead-in paragraph, indent the rest.
- Show where the news is from.
- Avoid underlining text.
- If there is more than one page of text, use the word *–more–* at the foot of the first page.
- Show the date distributed or make your announcement on the day – news is now, not history.
- Time distribution accurately to match a launch or special event. Research the publication's deadline for submitting events for coverage. For example, to submit a press release about an upcoming event to the local newspaper, the publication may require information submission two weeks in advance but for a monthly magazine it may need to be submitted at least four to six weeks prior to publication in order to get it to the printer in time to promote your event. When submitting the press release be sure to stress the date of the event; if it is published too early readers will most likely forget about it and if published too late, well then there's no point in even publishing the press release if your goal is to urge readers to attend the function but don't even read about it until after the event is over.
- Write your story from the top down (inverted pyramid). Editors edit from the bottom up.
- Concentrate on facts, not flourishes.
- Show who to contact for further information and how.
- Avoid obvious hidden advertising for products or services.
- Don't try to create a story when there isn't enough to make it a story worth printing. For example, I wrote a press release about our Zonta club's new member and officer installations last year where we honored a long-time member as well. However, I wanted to include more information about that long-time member than what was reasonable for that particular press release. So I decided to write a second, separate press release about several of our long-time members that have been honored along with their personal, professional, and membership information. Both press releases were published in separate articles by the local newspaper.
- Adapt the emphasis and style of a story to suit a media sector.
- If possible, follow up a press release with a phone call to see if the journalist needs any further details.
- Read and write your story as you think an editor would wish it to be received by his target audience.
- Demonstrate reliability and professionalism by double-checking spelling and using correct grammar and punctuation. Have at least one other person review it and then again edit your press release, re-read it one last time and then submit it. (Don't trust your computer's Spelling and Grammar Checker because it often makes mistakes; for example, it is almost always incorrect in the use of *its* and *it's* and in the use of *your* and *you're*.)
- Invest in good hard copies of a thesaurus and a full-size dictionary. Most computer programs also have a thesaurus and dictionary (i.e., spelling and/or language checker), although not as thorough as hard copies. When you're stuck for a word or don't want to use the same word over and over, use the thesaurus. A full-size dictionary is also more comprehensive and accurate than that on your computer's spell checker
- Use quotes only if they are relevant to the story. Be sure to obtain permission to use the quote.

PUBLIC RELATIONS RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM ZONTA INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

The following materials can be downloaded from the Zonta International Web site (www.zonta.org). Visit Member Resources.

- Zonta International/Zonta International Fact Sheet
- The Programs of Zonta International Funded by the Zonta International Foundation
- History of the International Service Program projects
- Biographies of Zonta International/Zonta International Foundation Leadership and Management
- Sample Press Releases
- Sample Newsletters
- Amelia Earhart Month Activities
- Zonta Rose Day/International Women's Day Activities
- Downloadable logos
- Downloadable photographs