

## **A PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDE FOR EASTERN STAR CHAPTERS**

### **MEDIA RELATIONS**

Achieving good media relations must be one of your top priorities. Recognize the vital role the media plays in providing information about community concerns and furthering understanding. The Order of the Eastern Star cannot ignore the new media. Poor media relations could lead to negative news coverage. Practicing good media relations is an on-going task, not a last minute effort when you are eager for news coverage.

Here are some suggestions to consider:

- Always approach the news media in a friendly and Professional manner, adapting to their needs and Procedures to help them help you.
- Respect editor and reporters' news judgment. Not all Eastern Star news is important enough to print or broadcast.
- Thank the editor and reporters for good coverage of Eastern Star news, but don't over do it.
- Discuss community concerns with news media personnel.

### **SOMEONE MUST BE RESPONSIBLE**

Good public relations start right at the top, with the Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron. They plan the activities and events that benefit our Order and the community. These events should be viewed positively by the public. If they are not publicized appropriately however, these worthy events will not promote the positive image of your chapter you need. Creating improved public relations is a task with which all Eastern Star members can assist, but it is recommended that each Chapter appoint a Public Relations Chairman and/or Committee to coordinate these functions. The person or persons assigned these responsibilities should be active in the Chapter, knowledgeable about the Community, and enthusiastic in the performance of these duties.

## WHAT IS NEWSWORTHY

Newspaper editors receive dozens of press releases every day. In most cases they do not have the space to print them all, nor do they have the time to read each one in its entirety.

As a general rule, editors look for stories that:

- Are of interest to a large number of their readers.
- Concern a large number of people within the community.
- Describe a special or significant event in the community.
- Are about something unique or out of the ordinary.

Local people should be brought to the editor's attention- highlight or attach a note. Some of the activities and events that merit newspaper publicity include:

- Community Service Projects
- Election and/or Installation of Officers (include a picture if possible).
- 25 and 50 year pin presentations.
- Visitation by the Worthy Grand Matron, etc.
- Special events (anniversaries of the chapter, visitation by district representative, Sister Chapter Night, etc.)
- Appointments of Chapter members to the District Office or Grand Office.
- Mother-Daughter Dinners.
- Recognition of someone or something within or without the Chapter.

## HOW TO PREPARE IT

The local news media are not likely to come to your Eastern Star Chapter for stories, so it is the duty of the Public Relations Chairman to write articles or prepare news releases and submit them to the local newspaper for possible publication. But even if you have a newsworthy story to tell, the newspaper may not accept it readily unless it is submitted in proper form.

Here are a few tips about news release forms acceptable to newspapers.

1. The release should be typed or printed by computer. Hand written releases invite trouble. Double space and use wide margins, and print on one side of a white sheet of paper.
2. Avoid long sentences and lengthy paragraphs. Keep it simple.
3. Send one copy, and save a copy for your files, just in case.
4. If you are publicizing an upcoming event, your release should be received by the newspaper one or two weeks in advance.
5. If you are publicizing an event that has already happened, submit the release as soon as possible after the event (the next Day for a daily newspaper).
6. Always put your name and telephone number on the top of the news release as the "Contact" so you may be called if there are any questions about the content.

## FACT SHEET

An effective way to organize information for the news media is to use a simple fact sheet. All facts related to your special event can be concisely and neatly presented. This fact sheet can be given directly to the newspaper. However it is probably more acceptable if the Public Relations Chairman uses it to help in preparing a news release in proper form. The fact sheet should always include the basic, "who, what, where, when and why" of news reporting.

Here is a simple fact sheet:

- **Who:** Jane Doe, Worthy Grand Matron (unless she is from your community, a picture of your own Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron will most likely to be used).
- **What:** She will make a special visit to Shining Star Chapter in Anytown.
- **When:** Wednesday, January 28, meeting begins at 7:30.
- **Where:** Meeting will be held in the Anytown Masonic Building.
- **Why:** Mrs. Doe, the Eastern Star Officer in the state, will install new officers of the chapter.

**Additional information:** Shining Star Chapter has been located in Anytown since 1944 and is the oldest fraternity in the world that accepts both men and women. More than 150 Eastern Star members from this area are expected to visit Shining Star Chapter to share in the evening's activities. Mary and John Smith will become the new Worthy Matron and Patron.

## NEWS RELEASE

The first paragraph of a news release should contain a summation of the major fact of the story. It is the traditional five "W's" of journalism. Subsequent paragraphs should fill in the details. This news writing style is known as the "inverted pyramid" style, with the important, meaty facts on the top. Facts of lesser importance appear at the bottom.

Here is a sample news release:

### **For Immediate Release:**

Mrs. Jane Doe, the presiding state officer in Ohio for the Order of the Eastern Star, will visit Shining Star Chapter in Anytown on Wednesday, January 28, to install new officers of the Chapter.

More than 150 Eastern Star members from throughout the four county area that comprises the Eastern Star Region are expected to attend the event. The evening will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Anytown Masonic Building. Mary and John Smith will become the Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron of Shining Star Chapter for the coming year. Other new officers to be installed include...

These examples have been made short and simple as a means of illustration. In almost all real situations, there will be quite a few additional facts and details available.

After the fact sheet or news release has been prepared, it **should be hand delivered** to your local newspaper. Never mail the news release without first making arrangements ahead with the contact person at the newspaper.

The Chapter's Public Relations Chairman or Committee should understand the specific procedures and requirements at the local newspaper. What are the deadlines? To what individual or department should the news release be delivered or sent? Should you call ahead, ask for a photographer, or send a picture with the news release?

Each newspaper has its own particular rules, procedures, policies and news interest. It is important for the Public Relations Chairman or Committee to make personal contact and learn the particular rules, procedures, policies, and news interests. It is important for the Public Relations Chairman or Committee to make contact and learn the particular requirements of your local paper before launching the publicity efforts for the Chapter.

You should be aware that the newspaper might rewrite and shorten your article. Don't be disappointed. Each newspaper has its own distinctive style for news stories and space limitations often will force an editor to capsule news items.

When your release does appear, don't ask for clippings. Additional copies may be purchased from the newspaper's circulation department.

If your news release does not appear, do not be disheartened. Please try to consider the newspaper's problems and limitations. Keep in mind that newspapers want to help, but the volume of possible news stories can be restrictive.

By all means, try again, and again, and again. Never stop!

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

The use of photographs can make any Public Relations effort even more effective. Photos can tell the entire story, or they can be used to supplement a news release.

Most of the smaller daily and weekly newspapers will accept pictures taken by an organization to accompany news releases. The larger newspapers may want to take the picture themselves and they may assign one of their staff photographers, if they are notified in advance that a news photo opportunity is available.

If you plan to take pictures for the newspaper yourself, make sure it is a clear and sharp photo. Most newspapers will accept black and white or color if submitted in a timely manner.

Some papers have policies limiting the number of people in a picture to just three or four. For an installation, for example, you might want to take a photo of the new Worthy Matron, Worthy Patron and Installing Officer. Always take several shots of each photo situation to insure a good picture.

There are an abundance of one-hour or one-day photo processing services. (Digital now) Take your film to one of these, pick the best shot and send it to your local newspaper promptly. Remember to prepare an outline or caption for the photo, even if it accompanies a news release. Identify each person clearly with full names, indicating "left to right."

## CHANCE OF SUCCESS

Many variables must be considered in planning a successful public relations program. If the event you are publicizing has a more natural news value, your chance of success will be greater.

This is a message to Worthy Matrons, Worthy Patrons, and other event planners. If you plan an activity that has general interest in your community, rather than only your own members, the public relations potential is enhanced. **Chapters should strive to plan some activities and events which impact on the community as a whole.** This will improve your opportunities for positive publicity. Remember the size of communities and newspapers make a difference in the type of news they cover. Your local or neighborhood weekly newspapers are the best sources for publicity. They are eager and anxious to get your news and to publish the names of local persons involved in your activities. The bigger the town, and therefore, the bigger the newspaper, the tougher it is to get an article printed. This should not curtail your efforts, but make you work harder. Even in large metropolitan cities, where the huge daily newspaper may not be interested in Eastern Star activities, there are usually a number of **neighborhood and suburban weekly newspapers** that would be receptive to your news story.

In small towns, you may even find your local radio and/or cable TV station willing to help with publicity. Call and ask about their deadline and guidelines too.

**DO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH YOUR LOCAL MEDIA-READ THE NEWSPAPERS,  
LISTEN TO THE RADIO, AND WATCH THE LOCAL TV STATIONS.**

**HOW CAN WE EXPECT OUR ORDER TO SURVIVE IF NO ONE KNOWS WE EXIST?**

This document is copied from the materials of the 2003 Membership and Public Relations Committee of the Grand Chapter of Ohio, Order of the Eastern Star.