

# PUBLIC RELATIONS

## *Handbook*



SERVING  
THE CHILDREN  
OF THE WORLD

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	The Role of Kiwanis Public Relations <i>page 1</i>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	External Public Relations <i>pages 2-6</i>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Working With the News Media <i>pages 7-12</i>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Beyond the News Media <i>pages 13-17</i>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Internal Public Relations <i>pages 18-20</i>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Assistance From Kiwanis International <i>pages 21-22</i>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Q and A <i>pages 23-24</i>

# Introduction

## The Role of Kiwanis Public Relations

In an earlier era, when the world seemed smaller and life simpler, Kiwanis was widely recognized in countless communities. It still is in many communities with strong and active clubs. But in recent years the communications media have expanded dramatically, and a growing plethora of worthy causes and special-interest groups have arisen to compete for the public's attention and support.

The role of Kiwanis public relations chairman is therefore more vital to a club's success than ever before. But if the communications explosion has made the job more challenging, it has also created more opportunities. There have never been as many ways to tell the Kiwanis story as there are today.

The goal of Kiwanis public relations isn't simply publicity, although publicity is essential to the success of club programs and service activities. The basic goals of Kiwanis public relations are twofold: to increase recognition of the Kiwanis name and to increase public understanding of Kiwanis' community-service role.

Such widespread public recognition of Kiwanis will benefit your club in a variety of ways. In the community, it will help to "pre-sell" prospective members and make it easier to solicit public support for Kiwanis service work. Within the club, it will help build pride in membership that leads to better meeting attendance, greater participation by members in fund-raising and service projects, and stronger retention. Thus the public relations chairman's responsibilities fall naturally into two categories: external and internal.



## Building Media Relationships

External public relations includes a great many activities. Every contact or communication between your club and nonmembers has a public relations dimension. But the most important function — at least the best known — is publicity.

Every club public relations program should begin with a media survey. Identify every newspaper, community magazine, radio and television broadcast and cable station, and community Web site that reaches your local audience. Then develop and maintain your own list of editors and news directors with addresses, phone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and useful information such as deadlines. Be aware of both news and public affairs programs, and don't ignore such routine features as event calendars and community bulletin board listings. Each publication or station may have several contact persons, one for each type of news you are offering them.

Then arrange to meet the city editors of local newspapers and the managers or news directors and assignment editors of radio and television stations. News people want, and need, to know the movers and shakers in their community. As the representative of Kiwanis, you qualify, so don't be bashful. And ask questions. Learn how the news media function and what kinds of stories will arouse the most interest.

In particular, seek to identify the individual who acts as "gate keeper" for each news operation. This is often a lower-ranked staff person who is nonetheless all-important because he or she screens incoming news releases and makes the initial judgment on which items are worth reporting.

The purpose of your personal visit is to find out how you can best serve the news professionals. Don't view your public relations job as the task of getting something from the editors and news directors; your function is actually to help them do their jobs.

Call for an appointment, and keep this get-acquainted session brief. Don't attempt to push stories on your initial visit, but instead find out how they want Kiwanis news provided to them. Do they want telephone calls in advance of your meeting or event? Do they want you to send them news releases? If so, before or after the event? Would they prefer news releases by mail, fax, or e-mail? Do they want pictures? Would they prefer a fact sheet so they can write the story? What are the daily or weekly deadlines?

Whatever they prefer, do your best to accommodate them. And remember, news people are busy. Furnish them with information that is really news. This is a genuine service they will appreciate, and you'll achieve better coverage because of it. Don't waste their time with poorly developed news

### **Kiwanis events and activities that qualify as news include:**

- Members who are “movers and shakers”.
- Important speakers at club meetings.
- Committee actions, provided they affect the community, not just the club.
- Service projects, both the announcement of new projects and progress reports on continuing projects.
- Elections — be sure to list all the persons elected, and make sure your information is accurate.
- Special honors won by the club or individual members.
- Stories originated from the International Office about Kiwanis International service programs, to which your club’s involvement can be added to provide a local angle.

releases or items that are merely puffery — publicity without substance. You will do a better job and avoid disappointment if you understand how news people decide on the amount of coverage to give an event. Generally, space or airtime will increase in direct proportion to the significance of your news to the audience that the newspaper or broadcasting station serves.

## **What Makes News?**

Routine meetings and social events involving only the club’s members will receive little or no attention, because they have no significance to nonmembers. The more significant your activity is to the rest of the community, the greater its “news value” and the more space or airtime it will receive.

The club’s greatest public relations asset is its commitment to community service. By their very nature, most Kiwanis service projects and the fund-raising efforts that help pay for them qualify as news. When a club helps a handicapped child to walk again, preserves a local historic site, or provides the fire department with new lifesaving equipment, the news value is clear.

Kiwanis community-service activities are veritable gold mines of news, feature, photo, and human-interest stories. The news is there — all you have to do is help news people find it.

Keep a calendar or “future file” of all coming activities and events of these types; plan PR actions in advance to maximize opportunities to tell the story.

## **How to Present Kiwanis News**

There are several ways to communicate Kiwanis news to the media. You can telephone the editor or news director (before the event) if the news affects the community. You can send a news release in advance by mail, fax, or e-mail (see “Using E-mail to Reach the News Media” on page 15). Keep your news releases short, preferably one page. Attach background information on Kiwanis. You can send a fact sheet about the event if you prefer that the newspaper staff write the story.

Your prior personal contact with news personnel will pay off when you call them or mail a news release. News departments receive many calls and news releases; each can receive only a brief scrutiny, and few result in significant stories. Since the editor knows who you are, your call or release will get more attention. You may even want to deliver important stories personally, at least to the “key” papers and stations.

However you choose to communicate your news, be sure that you inform all news media concerned. Don’t play favorites, especially if your story really has news value. In your role as public relations chairman, it is your duty to serve the press to the limit of your ability. And after all, you want to have your Kiwanis story used by as many of your local media as possible, to reach the maximum audience.

## 10 TIPS FOR SELLING YOUR STORIES

1. Use anecdotes, analogies and examples as storytelling tools.
2. *Get to the point. Start with your main point, not background information. When answering a question, state your message first, then give your reasons.*
3. Make it newsworthy. Focus on why the newspaper's or broadcaster's audience will care. Use surveys, trends, consumer benefits, even controversy to prove that your story is newsworthy.
4. *Be clear. Don't make reporters work to understand your story.*
5. It's a numbers game. Success is built on relationships. Build relationships and keep trying. The key is to win enough to be successful, and to win as many of the big ones as possible.
6. *Speak with care. Assume anything you say can and will be used in the story.*
7. If a reporter calls, understand the story the reporter is working on and gather your facts. Before you respond to a reporter's questions, you have a right to know what the story is about and what the reporter needs from you.
8. *Be positive. Don't repeat accusations or negative comments, even to deny or rebut them. Reporter's questions are seldom quoted. Your answers are.*
9. Don't guess or speculate. "What if" questions are dangerous.
10. *Avoid jargon and difficult-to-understand words. (There are many terms in Kiwanis that nonmembers won't automatically understand: Kiwanis Family, sponsored youth, Golden K club, division, etc.)*

— Jerry Brown, former AP reporter

Serving the press includes furnishing complete and accurate information about any event that really is news. It also means being available and responsive when they call you for information. When you do this, news people will feel they can depend on you, and that will often mean better treatment for your stories.

### Telephone calls

Remember, news people are busy and face deadlines. They must interrupt whatever they are doing to take your call, so be prepared to deliver your information concisely. Note down pertinent information as if you were preparing a news release in outline, and check the names and facts before you call. (See "Ten Tips for Selling Your Stories")

Since verbal communication is intangible and can't be referred to later, like written information, telephone calls are best used only for simple, brief items or as a means to alert reporters to a story. Then this initial call can be followed by written information in detail, if requested. If the story warrants it, you can also use your call to invite a reporter to cover the event. If one comes, you are virtually guaranteed space in the paper or time on the air.

### News releases

A news release should answer the questions: who, what, why, where, when, and how (see "News Release Basics" on page 5). News releases are written with the most important information in the first paragraph — the first sentence, if possible. Consider the nature of your story and decide: What is the most significant aspect from the viewpoint of the news media's audience? Begin with a statement of that key point.

Succeeding sentences and paragraphs then give additional information, answering the questions who, what, when, why, where, and how. Information should be presented in descending order of importance, so that if the editor must shorten the story to fit available space, it can be "cut" from the bottom up without destroying the story's sense.

News writing is stark. Sentences and paragraphs should be short, and everyday words must be used. Most news releases should be no more than one page long, double-spaced (one blank line between each line of text).

Triple-check names, spellings, numbers. News people hate to make mistakes. If the error comes from your careless news release, you'll never be trusted again.

Some routine stories take on interest and importance only if they include the names of local people. Names make news, so write your releases accordingly.

Plan to distribute news releases so all media can use the story on the same day. A release that is delivered in the afternoon, for example, can be used later that afternoon or evening by radio and television but will often be too late for evening newspapers. Therefore, the print media may not use the story. To avoid such problems, release a story at least a day early when possible.

When appropriate, plan to distribute your releases so they reach the news media on "light news days." Sunday is often such a day because there is

*"The moral test of a society is how that society treats those who are in the dawn of life – the children; those who are in the twilight of life – the elderly; and those who are in the shadow of life – the sick, the needy and the handicapped."  
– Hubert Humphrey*

little government or business activity to report. Ask editors which days are best for Kiwanis news.

## NEWS RELEASE BASICS

1. **Use the Proper Heading.** Okay, you've got news and you're going to write it up and send it out to the local news media. Generally, you'll want to place a bold "Press Release" across the top of your club letterhead. But if your "news" is really an invitation to the media to attend and report on your event, you might want to title it a "Media Advisory." And, if you know the media well enough to know where your news will fit, you can even go to the next step and title your release, "Community News from the Kiwanis Club of Anytown."
2. **Provide Directions.** Beneath the heading, add the suggested release date (i.e., For Immediate Release, or For Release January 14, 2001, etc.). Be sure to supply a Kiwanis contact name with day and evening telephone numbers and e-mail address (and be sure the contact person is someone who is well-informed about the news release subject).
3. **The Headline Sells.** Editors faced with a desk full of news releases look for something to attract their interest, so sell your news via the headline. Be concise and exciting, not mundane and predictable. Determine the most important news in the release and convey it in a one-liner that sells.
4. **The Five Ws and H.** Remember primary school composition? The necessary elements of the release are who, what, where, why, when and how. Account for them at the beginning of the release. Editors appreciate seeing the critical information on top.
5. **Quotes Add Spice.** Add a quote from the appropriate representative of your club to your release. If your news involves a second organization or a beneficiary, a quote from the other organization adds balance. Quotes identify a contact for potential interviews and lend credibility to the story. However, don't confuse the story by quoting too many different individuals. At least one quoted person is necessary, two are good, three is plenty.
6. **Just the Facts.** Next, add meat to the appetizers. You've got the readers' attention, so now reinforce the message with facts. Focus on how the news will have an impact on your community and its citizens.
7. **Finish Strong.** Leave a lasting impression. A very effective close is to use a profound quote from one of your spokesmen to reinforce a "live" feel to the story. Or, prepare a "standard" paragraph that provides additional information about your club, its history and mission, and a contact person. This information often will be cut so make sure your second to last paragraph can also make a good closing.

### Fact sheets

Fact sheets are outlines that present your news in the form of itemized facts. Fact sheets have two advantages. They enable you to include more information than you can get into a normal news release, and they permit news people to write their own stories rather than having to edit yours.

A better story may result from a fact sheet if it leads a reporter to look into

### **Letter to the Editor Tips:**

- ✓ Check the editorial page for instructions on how to submit letters to the editor.
- ✓ Communicate your message, but be as brief as possible. Read published letters to get a feel for how long your letter can be.
- ✓ Your letter should include a brief introduction about your club and its service to the community.
- ✓ Be clear. If you are thanking individuals or businesses, mention their names (and be sure to include the newspaper if it published even a small story about the activity). If you are seeking donations, make sure to identify a collection point and the times that items can be dropped off.
- ✓ If you are refuting an article, make sure to clarify whether your letter represents your club's position or your personal opinion.
- ✓ Offer a means of contact at the end of your letter.

your announcement and write the story. On the other hand, if a reporter is busy with other assignments, there may not be time to develop your story. In that case, a well-written news release might result in more coverage because it does not require extra time or work.

One standard fact sheet you can prepare is an outline of pertinent information about your club and Kiwanis International. Note how many hours and dollars the club has contributed to the community, what the club's most significant current and past projects are, when the club was organized, and how many members it has. Add background information on Kiwanis International — when founded, current number of clubs, members, and nations where Kiwanis is active, the current service emphasis, etc.

This standard background fact sheet can be attached to each of the news releases you distribute, included in press kits, etc. It will help to orient news people who are not familiar with Kiwanis and provides information that can be added to a story if extra space or airtime is available.

### **Deadlines**

The entire news business is structured around deadlines. At certain times, news gathering must stop and printing or broadcasting begin.

When editors and reporters are “on deadline,” they simply cannot stop what they are doing to talk by phone or in person. Identify deadlines as times not to talk to news people. Make your contacts as far from deadlines as possible, when news people are least busy and most able to give you their attention. And don't deliver a story five minutes before the deadline when it could have been done just as easily the day before. Return all calls immediately and provide additional information as soon as it is requested. These inquiries indicate media interest — capitalize on the opportunity. Respond quickly, cooperatively.

### **A letter to the editor**

If you want to control the information that is printed about your club and its activities, consider writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. A letter to the editor eliminates the need for a reporter and lets you speak directly to the newspaper's readers.

Letters to the editor usually take one of two forms, either responding to something previously printed in the newspaper or thanking the community for its support at the conclusion of a project or fund-raiser. A letter to the editor might also solicit community support for a Kiwanis goal, but such appeals could just as easily be placed in the news columns instead of the editorial page.

Scan the news and feature pages regularly. Often, you can respond to an article that is not specifically about Kiwanis by providing a Kiwanis point of view. For instance, you can respond to an article about infant health by explaining how your club sponsors “Young Children: Priority One” service projects.



## **Make Your Events Media Friendly**

As public relations chairman, you are your club's press liaison. Whenever a reporter appears to cover an activity, you should place yourself at his or her disposal and assist in any way you can, answering questions, pointing out those who should also be talked to, etc. If the reporter has brought a photographer, so much the better — and do offer to help.

A visiting news person is a guest — and a particularly welcome one! Genuine hospitality and sincere efforts to help the reporter get the story are the best possible “public relations.” And keep in mind that the reporter probably knows very little, if anything, about Kiwanis. So tell the news person — or better, show him or her — how Kiwanis fellowship and service work together to build better communities.

If the reporter leaves with an appreciative understanding of Kiwanis and a favorable impression of your club, better news stories are almost sure to follow. You will also have developed another personal “media contact” who may be of great value in the future.

If the reporter asks that a picture be “set up,” do it as quickly and efficiently as you can. Anticipate a reporter's requirements. Know the newsworthy people who are present, and be ready to ask them to assemble for a photo. Limit their number to three or four at most, however, and provide identification from left to right. Other dignitaries may be noted in the story if desired.

Suggest poses that make photos interesting. Action shots stand a better chance of being printed, as opposed to “line-ups” of people simply smiling at the camera. If you can, enliven a simple check or plaque presentation with interesting props or settings (for example, in the park where a playground or walking path will be built with the funds being presented).

Remember: the best time to tell the Kiwanis story is when a reporter is there to hear it. Be sure you are there to do the telling.

## **How About a Press Conference?**

Successful press conferences produce good news coverage. But the person to be interviewed must have something important and timely to say, something that cannot be said in a news release. Otherwise, a press conference will do more harm than good.

Most press conferences are conducted where the reporters are already gathered, such as city hall, or they deal with subjects that are covered by

*"The most important key to success in life, even financial success, is to develop a servant's heart, to become engaged in the human race and desire to benefit others." – Thomas Kinkade*

specialized reporters, such as sports and business. Otherwise, even professional public relations agencies with good media contacts find it almost impossible to get busy reporters and camera crews to gather at the same location at the same time. And there is nothing more painfully embarrassing for you and your VIP than a press conference that no reporters attend.

Another and often better approach is a media "walk-around." Inform all the news media about your interviewee and the important and timely things he has to say. Then arrange to bring the interviewee to the offices of each interested newspaper or broadcasting station at a pre-arranged time. A walk-around accomplishes the same thing as a news conference without the difficulty of getting all the reporters and camera crews to come to the same location at the same time.

## **Special Broadcast Considerations**

Above all else, television is visual. If you want to maximize your story's value for television, you must provide something interesting for the camera to show. TV is an action medium; if it moves, they like it.

Advance notification is an absolute must for television, since stations must schedule the use of a limited number of busy camera crews. Locations must be selected with accessibility, lighting, and grouping considerations in mind. If a speaker's lectern is involved, always have a Kiwanis emblem to place on its front! Publicize Kiwanis, not the hotel or restaurant where you meet.

If you are successful in arranging for television coverage, you or the special spokesperson for the event must be prepared for it. Television reporters are usually working on a tight deadline and are in a hurry. It is not unusual for the reporter to thrust a microphone at the spokesperson and ask a pointed question. When this happens, there is no time to grope for words or go into lengthy or rambling explanations. If a response isn't short (8-15 seconds) and to the point, it won't be used on the air. You should therefore formulate concise answers to expected questions in advance. There may be only 30 seconds to present the Kiwanis message, so answers must be honed to essentials.

It's also important to be poised, speak clearly, and keep eye contact with the reporter or camera. Shifting about, glancing here and there, and jumbling your words will make a very poor impression on camera and distract viewers from what you are saying. Don't lean into the microphone, instead let the reporter position it. Don't gesture often, but when you do, gesture slowly and with a purpose.

Finally, if a speech is being covered, make sure the speaker plans to say something that is timely and of interest to the general public. If the speaker doesn't say something that has news value, the story won't get on the air. Get a text of the speech in advance, if possible, and give it to the reporter so he/she can decide what part to shoot.

As with television, time is of the essence on radio. However, since radio is nonvisual, content — the words — is what counts.

*"A life not lived for others is not a life." – John Wooden*

Radio deals in immediacy and brevity. Stories are short and to the point, and generally only hard news makes it on the air. The exception is the announcement or completion of a major service project. Always be sure to point out the benefits to the community — how many people were reached, how a problem was solved.

Both radio and television stations broadcast various types of public interest programs as well as news. Be aware of these programs and the kind of topics they like to cover. A report or interview on one of these programs will receive much more airtime than during a news broadcast.

## **Public-Service Announcements (PSAs)**

Public-service announcements produced by Kiwanis International or by your club to promote a particular event may be accepted for broadcast at no cost during time allotted for such messages or during unsold commercial time. Usually, a designated member of the station staff is responsible for PSA scheduling. Determine who this individual is and work with him or her to arrange for free airtime.

Kiwanis International produces PSAs of professional quality that promote Kiwanis service concerns. Every club public relations chairman should arrange to have these messages broadcast or printed in the community as part of the overall efforts to keep the Kiwanis name and service objectives before the public. Information about current radio, TV, and print PSAs is available from the marketing and public relations staff at the International Office.

You can also produce your own local PSAs to promote your club's major service events and fund-raisers. These PSAs can be provided to both print and broadcast media.

Producing a local PSA for television requires considerable technical support, including videotaping and editing. The station may assist you, or you might convince an advertising or public relations agency to donate its services to help promote a worthy cause.

Radio PSAs are much easier to produce. The simplest approach is to provide the station with a script for one of its announcers to read. A rule of thumb is no more than 120 words for a minute (if the station will air a minute), 60 words for 30 seconds, etc.

Again, remember that broadcasting stations are in the business of selling time, not giving it away. Commercial time on local radio stations, in particular, can be surprisingly economical. If your club is conducting a major fund-raiser that brings in thousands of dollars, or a community event with a major budget, consider buying at least some commercial time. (Newspapers and broadcasting stations may offer nonprofit or "preferred" rates for this type of advertising.) The station management will appreciate your business and may be receptive to the suggestion that they broadcast a certain number of free public-service spots for each paid spot.

Print public-service ads for newspapers and magazines should be profession-

*"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor touched...but felt in the heart." – Helen Keller*

ally designed, either by the publication's own graphics staff or by a club contact in the graphic arts business. Broadcasting stations have blocks of commercial time, and the unsold time has to be filled, so commercial-length PSAs are common. However, newspapers can easily fill any available space with more news, so large, free public-service ads are rare. Much more common are paid public-service ads sponsored by local businesses, whose support is acknowledged in a portion of the space.

## **Special Events**

Most Kiwanis activities are newsworthy because they involve local people or have good "human interest" value. Sometimes, though, a bit of showmanship can multiply the publicity impact.

Special publicity events are hands-on activities that can be conducted for a variety of reasons, from performing service to gaining new members to raising funds. They are meant to motivate or entertain an audience to achieve positive results. Special events require extensive planning, but can generate far more publicity and goodwill than a collection of flyers, brochures, and press releases.

Special publicity events that are interesting, pertinent to the subject being promoted, and in good taste can achieve the desired publicity results without jeopardizing your club's community image. After all, the news media need a bit of showmanship too, and an appealing photo opportunity or unusual competition almost always will earn newspaper space and airtime.

Some of the clubs that participate in annual Peanut Day sales, for example, have conducted a "Little Miss Peanut" contest to select a little girl to serve as a symbol of Peanut Day. The winner represents the children who will benefit from the funds collected, which is pertinent to the purpose of the event, and the winner's picture has news value. In Chicago, a peanut-eating contest between the Peanut Day committee and an elephant attracted news photographers and television cameras.

In Georgia, a Kiwanis club gained publicity and public support for its agriculture project by running a "sorriest bull" contest. The animal judged "worst in the county" won the prize, while the contest dramatized the importance of good breeding and good feeding.

At a large Air Force base, Kiwanians and base personnel selected handicapped children from the nearby community to fill the various base administrative posts for a day, serving as "base commander," "base operations officers," etc. This "gimmick," if it was one, brought tremendous publicity, humanized the Air Force to newspaper readers, and helped to win even stronger support for Kiwanis Kids Day in the area.

The possibilities for special publicity events are limited only by your imagination.

*"If you ever need a helping hand, it is at the end of your arm. As you get older you must remember you have a second hand. The first one is to help yourself. The second hand is to help others."  
– Audrey Hepburn*

## **How to Handle Unfavorable Publicity**

Kiwanis clubs are in the public eye, and things may sometimes happen that do not look good in the news. Unfortunately, these are also the things that are newsworthy in the eyes of the public. Suppose, for example, that a child is injured during a Kiwanis Kids Day event. News? Of course it is. Will the resulting publicity damage the Kids Day program or the club's community standing? Not if you give all the facts to the news media as quickly and accurately as you can.

The best way to make a bad story better is to deal with it and move on. So don't avoid reporters' questions or ask the news media to suppress the story. The press will report the story because it is news.

The best thing you can do is to assist reporters in getting all the facts so the story will be fair and balanced. But be sure of your information — never provide conjecture just because the media has a need for information.

The worst things you can do are to speak before you have the facts or to place blame elsewhere when you know you share blame in an incident. Put the public's interest first, be open and honest, and cooperate with the media. Then assess what happened and improve your crisis communications plan in case something negative happens in the future.

If the story involves a personal injury, there is only one aspect you should refuse to discuss — the question of whether Kiwanis was negligent or at fault. The Kiwanis International general liability insurance program protects against legal liability judgments based on claims of negligence. Notify Kiwanis International and then leave the question of fault to the experts.

Also, since this liability protection does not provide medical benefits unless negligence is proved, do not say "we're covered" unless your club has taken out an accident policy with a local insurer for this particular event. The cost of our general liability coverage is based on the number of claims, so do not volunteer statements that may invite needless or nuisance lawsuits simply because an accident has occurred and "we're covered."

If properly handled, an unfavorable incident can be turned into a public relations asset. If you provide the facts quickly and accurately, the press will appreciate your help, and these contacts can lead to a closer working relationship in the future. And after all, even an unfavorable incident provides an opportunity to explain what Kiwanis is and the service goals for which the club sponsored the activity.

## **Show Your Appreciation**

Newspapers and broadcasting stations are commercial enterprises. Most of them give away thousands of dollars worth of free space or time to organizations like Kiwanis. So take a paid advertisement once in a while. It will build goodwill and say "thank you" in the best possible way.

*"May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion." – Thomas Jefferson*

In fact, a large annual thank you ad to the community is a great way to tell your club's story in your own words without the editorial middleman. With paid advertising, you're guaranteed coverage and prominent display. The cost might be underwritten by local businesses, which can be recognized in boxes down the side or across the bottom of the page. Be sure to ask about reduced ad rates for nonprofit organizations.

Working with the news media can be challenging but fun. If you are candid, cooperative, and constructive while working with news people in behalf of a good cause, you will find that they will more than reciprocate. Above all, don't try merely to "get publicity." Work toward definite goals that culminate in concrete accomplishments for your club and its programs. Public relations should be a key element in your club's overall marketing plan.



## Additional Opportunities for Exposure

The opportunities to raise public awareness of Kiwanis do not begin and end with the news media. There are countless other ways to create visibility for your club. The first rule is to always put the Kiwanis name on Kiwanis service. Kiwanis Park, Camp Kiwanis, the Kiwanis Toy Library, and the Kiwanis Hiking Trail are examples. In addition to these types of permanent service projects, always have large signs identifying Kiwanis and club marketing brochures to hand out wherever your club is working to serve the community or raise funds.

A club in Pennsylvania erected a community message board at a busy intersection with the club's name displayed prominently at the top. The message board raises funds by charging other groups to publicize their events, but every passerby sees the Kiwanis name every day.

Adopt-a-highway programs include roadside signs that identify the participating organization. Keeping a section of road free from litter is a good service project, but it also provides a permanent, high-traffic display of the club's name in a service context.

Your club should also be alert for opportunities in empty storefronts, lobbies, and shopping centers to present a display on Kiwanis and its services to the community and world. But don't put up a mess. Use professional signage and a well-designed layout of large photos to show Kiwanis and sponsored-youth groups in action.

Annual community festivals and parades offer many opportunities to reach the public. A Kiwanis club in Wisconsin marked the end of the millennium by enlisting 100 local citizens born each year from 1900 to 1999 to accompany the Kiwanis float in the town's annual Wild Rose Days Parade. The group, from a newborn infant to a 99-year-old woman, created a sensation and made Kiwanis the talk of the town.

## The Club Brochure

The single most important part of your club's public relations plan might be a brochure. An attractive club brochure tells your story to the community, stimulates membership growth, and generates contributions to your club. These marketing brochures can be distributed by each member to people he or she meets, included in mailings, displayed at local businesses, and passed out at service projects and community events.

A good club brochure can be printed on both sides of an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of

*"To ease another's heartache  
is to forget one's own." –  
Abraham Lincoln*

paper (using the 11" side as the width), then tri-folded. This provides six separate panels for copy. Suggested elements include:

- The Kiwanis International logo and your club name
- Where and when your club meets
- Your club's Web site address and Kiwanis International's Web address ([www.kiwanis.org](http://www.kiwanis.org))
- A club contact name with phone number, fax number, and e-mail address
- Color (either art or photos or both)
- A list of your major service projects
- An explanation of how your club benefits the community
- A description of your membership (who they are, where they're from, etc.)
- A list of the benefits of membership, such as "a feeling of satisfaction from associating with people who are as willing as you are to make this city an even better place in which to live."
- Examples of the results of your club's hard work, not the hard work itself
- Testimonials from influential members of your community and those who benefit from your service

Don't skimp on quality. Everyone who sees your club's brochure should immediately get the impression that it comes from a first-class, successful organization.

Get maximum mileage from your investment by avoiding quickly outdated information. And print a sufficient supply of brochures. Considering that the purpose of this brochure is to market your club's service and membership opportunities to the community, you can never have too many — provided they are distributed, not hoarded.

For samples of effective club brochures, contact the Marketing Department at International Headquarters.

## **Kiwanis and the Internet**

The World Wide Web is changing the world every minute of every day. The company you work for probably has its own Web site. It might conduct e-commerce. You might be utilizing the net to take college or continuing education classes, observe your children while they're at school or day care, conduct research, exchange family photos via a family Web site or e-mail, or to carry on a discussion with friends around the globe.

The Internet is immediate, and it's vast. Half of all Americans are now regular Internet users. In Western Europe, the rate is approaching 25 percent. The rest of the world also is "surfing the net" in increasing numbers.

This presents tremendous opportunities for Kiwanis clubs. Through the Internet, clubs can communicate with members, division and district offices, and Kiwanis International. They also can create a Web site to promote their message of serving the children of the world, stimulate membership growth, and even conduct service and fund-raising projects.

Kiwanis International has a Web site, [www.kiwanis.org](http://www.kiwanis.org), which is a tremendous

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## USING E-MAIL TO REACH THE NEWS MEDIA

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- ✓ Check to ensure that the recipient wants to receive information via e-mail.
- ✓ *Keep news release texts brief and include a direct link to a Web site that offers additional information on the topic, if appropriate.*
- ✓ Never use an attachment to provide text. Attachments are an invitation to delete the e-mail.
- ✓ *Keep your e-mail address book up to date.*
- ✓ Use blind copy distribution to avoid revealing your entire list to each addressee.
- ✓ *Do not depend entirely on e-mail. You'll still need to use fax or paper distribution for some recipients.*
- ✓ *Remember to provide your phone and fax numbers for inquiries.*

source of Kiwanis information. The Kiwanis Web site contains hundreds of pages ranging from news and featured service projects to organizational background information and links to other Web sites.

One very important link at [www.kiwanis.org](http://www.kiwanis.org) takes members to the Kiwanis On-Line Community, which offers chat sites and message boards, permanent e-mail forwarding services, Web site hosting, a “Yellow Pages” directory, and many other options that will assist members in maximizing their Kiwanis experience.

Clubs can advertise or post information on community sites sponsored by newspapers or other media, the chamber of commerce, or other local organizations. They can invite interested individuals to participate in club activities by registering on sites that list and promote volunteer activities.

In communities that don't have a Web presence, Kiwanis clubs can be instrumental in establishing a community network to promote local commerce, industry, schools, tourist attractions, places of worship, and, of course, service clubs.

The Internet also can be used to find information on subjects such as public relations, press releases, marketing, fund raising, nonprofits, associations, etc., simply by utilizing the search function on your Internet browser (such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator).

Every Kiwanis club should create a Web site. There are many software programs on the market that can help in this process. Many members of Key Club and Circle K are Web savvy and might be happy to help create and maintain a Kiwanis club site.

The Kiwanis International Web site offers tips and guidelines — as well as templates and logos — to assist clubs in the development of their Web sites. Look in the Resources area of [www.kiwanis.org](http://www.kiwanis.org); then click on the Webmaster Technology link. (And be sure to review the International Board policies regarding Kiwanis Web sites in the same area.)

Think of your club's Web site as a computerized brochure. Start by displaying the Kiwanis logo and providing a brief description of Kiwanis International. Then explain your club, its service projects and impact on the community, meeting time and place, a description of your membership roster, and complete contact information for prospective members.

Beyond that, consider adding photos of club projects; sponsored-youth programs sponsored by your club; the Young Children: Priority One initiative; the Worldwide Service Project to virtually eliminate iodine deficiency disorders; and any other information that explains the essence of Kiwanis and your club.

Make a commitment to keep the site current — this is really important. Post news regularly to encourage members and supporters to return to the Web site regularly. Promote the site whenever, wherever possible: on your club's letterhead, news releases, at service projects and fund-raisers, and in your

*"I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and I saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that service is joy." – Mother Theresa*

club bulletin. Including your club's Web site address on news releases is a quick and easy way for reporters to obtain more information about the club and its activities — but that information needs to be accurate and up to date!

Be sure to register your club's Web site with the International Office by e-mailing your Web address (URL) to [internet@kiwanis.org](mailto:internet@kiwanis.org). Kiwanis International has a webmaster on staff who can be reached via e-mail at [webmaster@kiwanis.org](mailto:webmaster@kiwanis.org). Consider this person a resource if you have Internet-related questions.

## **Make Some News**

You can get Kiwanis or Kiwanis-related topics in the news by associating them with the newsmakers. One of the best ways to publicize Kiwanis by "borrowing" news value is to sponsor a public forum, workshop, or conference on a topic of high public concern. Look at the recognition and goodwill the League of Women Voters attained by sponsoring US presidential candidate debates — without endorsing any candidates and while pursuing its organizational mission of getting citizens interested and involved in the electoral process.

Your club can do the same thing on a community level, not only with elections but with any other topic of public concern — local economic development, the need for a new community facility or service, care for elderly, teen program, drug abuse, etc.

The key to success is to do it right — invest the time and hard work necessary to make the event meaningful and productive. And then use every technique to show the Kiwanis name — publicity, stage setting, informative handouts, etc.

You can also make some news by conducting a survey or "straw poll" to assess community attitudes on an issue. If well-executed, results have strong news value and again associate the Kiwanis name with community affairs.

You can identify an issue on which your club can agree — this is essential. Then have a spokesperson appear as a Kiwanian to speak about the issue on a television or radio editorial segment. Select the member for delivery skill, not position in the club. Put your best "foot" forward.

You also can gain public recognition by helping other organizations accomplish their missions. During the Kosovo refugee crisis, a Kiwanis club in Connecticut sent a news release to the local media urging community residents to donate funds for the refugees to the American Red Cross. Checks payable to the Red Cross were collected at four Kiwanian-owned businesses. The Red Cross got the money, but Kiwanis got the publicity.

## **Little Things That Make Your Reputation**

Public relations isn't just publicity. In fact, all contacts with the public are

*"I cannot know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know is that the truly happy among you will be those who have learned to serve." – Albert Schweitzer*

"public relations." To ensure that each of these contacts helps to build the Kiwanis image is the responsibility of every Kiwanian from the club president to the newest member. Public relations is, as the military says, "an all-hands job."

Yet to make sure the job gets done, one individual — the public relations chairman — must be constantly aware of all facets of Kiwanis contact with the public. Your job as public relations chairman is one of the most important, and one of the most rewarding, in Kiwanis. Here are some of the "little things" you should insist on:

- ✓ Writing thank-you letters to speakers and all those who contribute time, effort, or money to Kiwanis activities. Present a certificate of appreciation, if appropriate. Certificates are popular and often are displayed on office walls. Certificates are a way of saying thanks and giving someone a promotional poster for your club. (See Kiwanis International Supplies Catalog for available certificates.)
- ✓ Arranging annual public expressions of appreciation to local news people for the help they render through their columns and broadcasts.
- ✓ Extending invitations to editors, station managers, mayors, school superintendents, and other public officials to visit Kiwanis meetings and get acquainted with your members.
- ✓ Writing letters of congratulations to newly elected leaders of other service, civic, church, and community groups.
- ✓ Writing letters of appreciation to public officials who perform their duties in an outstanding manner.
- ✓ Extending Kiwanis support to worthy community efforts such as the Red Cross, blood bank, Salvation Army shelter, etc.
- ✓ Extending real hospitality to every guest, whether Kiwanian, civic official, or reporter, who attends a Kiwanis meeting or event.
- ✓ Ensuring Kiwanis representation on important civic bodies such as the chamber of commerce, school board, Community Chest, etc.
- ✓ Maintaining Kiwanis road signs as well as signs designating the club's meeting place.

Every Kiwanis service project constitutes good public relations, whether it is publicized or not. In fact, publicity may not be desirable for some projects, when public notice might be embarrassing to recipients of Kiwanis' helping hand. However, no Kiwanis club can long maintain its reputation without a real commitment to community service. After all, what we do speaks louder than what we say — and what Kiwanis does is service.



## Good Internal PR Builds Good Kiwanians

All the publicity, the attention to “the little things,” and all the service projects in the world wouldn’t hold Kiwanis clubs together if Kiwanians didn’t enjoy being Kiwanians. But clubs do stay together and do constitute a force for good in the community because Kiwanians enjoy the fun and fellowship of Kiwanis membership. They relish the satisfaction of accomplishing something as a group and feel pride in “wearing the K.”

As public relations chairman, you must help the president and the members to keep Kiwanis enjoyable. This, in a nutshell, is “internal public relations.” It involves seeing that members wear the lapel button; that new members or guests are made to feel at home; that the Kiwanian who wins an honor is complimented on his or her achievement; that the Kiwanian who is ill is remembered with a card or visit; and that Kiwanis meetings are so well-planned, so well-run, and so appealing to the members that attendance, membership, and enthusiasm constantly run high!

Thus, while the public relations chairman is not directly responsible for meeting programs, new-member education, attendance, club bulletin, or service activities, the PR chairman’s concerns overlap all of these responsibilities to some degree, and he or she should tactfully make a positive contribution to all of them. Good public relations can’t make up for poor club administration or a lack of good programming, but it can enhance good activities.

Pre-induction training for new members, well-planned and dignified induction ceremonies, constant support of new members in their efforts — these are the keys to making new Kiwanians into Kiwanians for the duration, not just for today. Some clubs have pre-induction training for new members and their spouses as well, to make a team effort of Kiwanis membership. Whatever you do, emphasize getting new members off to a good start. This is the best internal public relations of all. (Information on new-member induction and education can be requested from the Growth Department at the International Office.)

## The Club Bulletin

As public relations chairman, you probably won’t edit the club bulletin. But you should do everything you can to ensure that the bulletin does the job for which it is eminently suited — keeping your club’s members informed and enthusiastic about Kiwanis. Offer suggestions for improving the bulletin or lend practical help if you think it’s necessary.

The club bulletin is your principle “news medium” for internal public relations, so its effectiveness is of direct concern to you as public relations chairman.

*"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love." – Martin Luther King, Jr.*

You should include the bulletin in all your publicity plans, just like external media, and contribute content that promotes your internal PR goals.

The club bulletin should be produced by an appointed editor who serves for at least a year. Frequent changes of editor invite poor continuity and ineffective content. The bulletin is a key ingredient in the overall success of a good club, and the editorship should be treated as an important assignment.

The bulletin should reach members before meetings, since it makes an excellent attendance reminder. It should include news, announcements of current and future meeting programs, social events, reports on service work, and recognition of noteworthy actions and achievements of individual members.

It should also contain "personals," including all the things this term implies: birthdays, weddings, births, illnesses, business promotions or job changes, changes of address, vacations and business trips, anniversaries, etc. These personals can ensure high readership for the bulletin if they are comprehensive, accurate, and in good taste.

A good bulletin doesn't have to be expensively produced to accomplish its purpose. In fact, most club bulletins today are produced on ordinary office duplicating machines. A specially designed masthead will add a touch of tone. If the bulletin is printed and the budget permits, good photos should be used from time to time to illustrate service projects, social events, and noteworthy individuals.

A well-written, timely, and regularly distributed bulletin can boost Kiwanis involvement and enthusiasm. Don't neglect this important tool for internal public relations. A club bulletin editor's kit is available from the International Office on request.

## **Kiwanis Road Signs**

The erection and maintenance of Kiwanis road signs is an important public relations function. Kiwanis road signs tell visitors that your town is a place where business and professional men and women are active and involved in community affairs. They also tell residents that Kiwanis is an important and permanent part of community life. Just as the Kiwanis member should be identified by the Kiwanis pin, the Kiwanis community should proudly display Kiwanis road signs.

Road signs should be located on all main highways close to the municipal boundaries. They should bear the community name and the club's meeting place and time. And they should be kept clean and bright — a tribute to Kiwanis and the community it serves.

Attractive plaques also are available to identify Kiwanis meeting sites. Don't miss this opportunity to place the Kiwanis name in a hotel or restaurant where it will be seen by countless passersby each day.

*"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill*

## **KIWANIS Magazine**

Our award-winning KIWANIS magazine has been recognized as the finest in the service club field. As the bulletin is to the individual club, so the magazine is to Kiwanis International, binding the organization together, informing and educating members, and promoting fellowship and service. Regular reading of KIWANIS magazine helps to make each member a better Kiwanian.

As public relations chairman, you should therefore encourage your club's members to read each issue. You can also use our magazine for external PR by providing gift subscriptions to local libraries, hospitals, schools, community officials, important guest speakers, etc.

## **Visits by Kiwanis Leaders**

An appearance by our International President, other International Board members, or the district governor can be used to create effective public relations, both externally and internally. Kiwanis is a very large and highly respected organization throughout the United States, Canada, and a growing number of other nations around the world. Accordingly, its International and district officers should be treated with the courtesy and flair appropriate to individuals who lead a major international organization.

All the publicity techniques outlined earlier should be employed to see that the news media are alerted to the visits of Kiwanis VIPs. If your club is hosting such a visit, work closely with your district public relations chairman to handle it properly and make the most of this public relations opportunity.

## **Special observances**

Establishing annual club observances such as a Kiwanis Newspaper Week, Radio Week, and Television Week should not be neglected by club public relations chairmen. Special club meeting programs during weeks chosen by your club are excellent opportunities to salute key individuals in your local news media. Take this opportunity to thank them for the good work their newspapers and broadcasting stations do for the community and, at the same time, build a greater appreciation for Kiwanis and a closer relationship that will enhance your public relations effectiveness.

Your club needs meeting programs anyway. Why not build on this need and establish a closer relationship with your local news media at the same time? Program suggestions for these club observances may be requested from the Public Relations Department at the International Office.



## Many Resources Available

Kiwanis International employs a marketing and public relations staff as one of the several important functions of the International Office. The staff has two principal responsibilities — to increase recognition of the Kiwanis name and understanding of our service role on a national and international basis; and to assist clubs, divisions, and districts to accomplish the same goals locally or regionally.

To accomplish the first responsibility, the staff maintains media contacts with the major print and broadcast wire services, leading publications, television networks, etc., calling attention to Kiwanis service activities and providing news stories and features that warrant national attention.

To assist clubs and districts, the staff produces a variety of print, audio, and video public relations “tools,” such as Kiwanis marketing kits, video documentaries, public-service announcements and advertisements, and billboards. These materials provide the local membership and public relations chairmen with high-caliber, professionally produced promotional tools that no club could create by itself.

The staff also distributes localized news releases based on Kiwanis International events and programs, which can be adapted for local use by adding details about your own club’s participation. Finally, the marketing and PR staff produces manuals (such as this handbook), activity kits, and a variety of other literature that provides how-to advice and information for the local public relations chairman.

## A Summary of Public Relations Aids

Here are some of the public relations tools from Kiwanis International that you can use to get the job done in your community:

**Kiwanis documentary:** From time to time, Kiwanis International produces a television program on Kiwanis and its service activities. Clubs can arrange to have such programs aired by local television stations and cable systems as public-service broadcasting.

**Public-service announcements:** Kiwanis PSAs invite public support for Kiwanis service objectives. Available for both radio and television, these PSAs can be aired on local broadcasting stations to boost recognition of Kiwanis and our commitment to service.

**Public-service print advertisements:** Similar messages are produced for

*"To leave the world a better place – whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or an improved social condition – that is to have succeeded. That only one life breathed easier because you lived – that is success." – Ralph Waldo Emerson*

use as public-service ads in major magazines and newspapers. Reproduction proofs are available to club chairmen for similar use in community newspapers, city magazines, directories, programs for community or sports events, etc.

**Billboards and posters:** From time to time, Kiwanis International sponsors or participates in public-service billboard campaigns to highlight service goals. The billboard paper sets are provided to clubs at cost, and you can arrange for display with local outdoor advertising companies at no cost or for the labor cost of pasting up the billboard paper. Posters also are produced to promote the same themes.

**Marketing brochure and pocket folder:** A large, full-color Kiwanis marketing brochure explains Kiwanis to nonmembers. It fits in an equally high-quality pocket folder. Both of these items can be used by public relations chairmen as the basis for a local press kit by adding a club fact sheet, news releases on club activities, etc.

All of these public relations tools can be used by local clubs to increase recognition of the Kiwanis name and understanding of our service objectives. Request complete information on currently available items from the Public Relations Department, Kiwanis International, 3636 Woodview Trace, Indianapolis, IN 46268 or by e-mail at [kiwanispr@kiwanis.org](mailto:kiwanispr@kiwanis.org).



### **How do I get to know the editors and news directors?**

Call, determine which persons are directly responsible for your type of news, and ask for a brief appointment. Tell them that you represent Kiwanis and will be providing stories about club activities from time to time. When you meet, ask how your information should be presented. Follow up by using observances such as Kiwanis Newspaper, Radio, and Television Weeks to invite editors and news directors to club meetings as speakers or guests.

### **Must all my stories be typed?**

Yes, and “double-space,” separating each line of text with a blank line so the copy is easy to read.

### **Where can I get a list of newspapers in my area?**

Most libraries have media directories that list every daily and weekly newspaper. Similar directories for various regions, states or provinces, and nations can be found on the World Wide Web.

### **Will newspapers return photographs?**

Some will, if you ask. But this is extra work and isn’t routine. It’s best to have all photos copied so they don’t have to be returned. Many stores that provide film-processing services now have copiers that provide photo-quality duplicates in less than half an hour. If for some reason you must have a photo back, tape your name and address to the back with your return request.

### **Will the editor save a clip of the story for me if I ask?**

Don’t ask. Buy a copy of the newspaper and do your own clipping. Remember, your job is to serve the editor’s needs: Don’t be a nuisance and ask for special favors.

### **Does it help to know the editor personally? Should I invite him or her to social gatherings?**

It always helps to know the people you deal with. Appropriate social occasions are useful in cultivating relationships. However, don’t expect preferential treatment for Kiwanis stories as a result of such relationships. Like the rest of us, news people have professional standards they must observe. A story that has real news value will be used regardless of who knows whom.

### **Should I submit photos I take myself, and if so, what kind?**

If you are a good photographer and no press photographer appears, you certainly can take your own pictures. They must, however, be sharp, well-composed, and large prints, 5” x 7” or 8” x 10”. Snapshots, Polaroids, or slides usually can’t be used; they just don’t reproduce clearly. If someone in the club has a digital camera, check to see if the newspaper can use digital photos, which don’t require processing and can be e-mailed to the editor immediately. If a digital photo can be used, determine the newspaper’s preferred resolution

*"Children must have at least one person who believes in them. It could be a counselor, a teacher, a preacher, a friend. It could be you. You never know when a little love, a little support, will plant a small seed of hope."  
– Marian Wright Edelman*

(75, 150, or 300 dots per inch) and graphic file format (tif, jpg, bmp, etc.). "Action" shots are most likely to be used. Avoid dull line-ups, handshakes, check or plaque passing, etc. Newspapers are swamped with such photos and they don't catch the reader's attention.

### **Can I use "pressure" on the news media?**

Don't try. Let Kiwanis stories stand on their own merit. News departments are separate from advertising and management, and news people are rightly proud of their independence. While you might possibly gain something once with pressure, in the long run you will earn only ill will for yourself and Kiwanis. It will cost you lots more than you gain.

### **Why wasn't my story used?**

There are many reasons. First and foremost, the story just didn't have enough news value for the public that the newspaper or broadcasting station serves. It's simply a fact that many of the things that you think are important as a Kiwanian don't have the same interest to the general public. Try again.

Or, news of higher priority filled all the available space or airtime that day. More frequently, and for the same reason, only a small fraction of your story will be used. That's why it's important to put the most essential information at the beginning, because the rest is often likely to be cut.

You may also have submitted your material in a difficult or unusable form. Illegible, incomplete, or poorly organized stories will often be set aside if the reporter has better stories on hand that don't require a lot of extra work to put them into shape.

### **Should I accept the support of commercial advertisers?**

Yes, if the support is tasteful and the ads do not imply any Kiwanis endorsement of the advertiser's products or services. Community-minded businesses have long helped to support worthy groups such as Kiwanis through advertisements in club bulletins, directories, and programs.

Businesses also have taken out paid advertisements in newspapers or on radio and television to encourage public support for Kiwanis service and fund-raising efforts, which helps to increase public awareness and participation.

These businesses benefit from the goodwill that such support creates, and there's nothing wrong with that. Kiwanis welcomes the cooperation of business in achieving community-service goals. However, the Kiwanis name or logo should never be loaned to a commercial venture to suggest Kiwanis endorsement.

S e r v i n g   t h e   C h i l d r e n  
o f   t h e   W o r l d



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