

Grand Lodge of Iowa

Press Release Kit

October, 2012

Dear Brother,

This Public Relations Kit has been prepared to assist you and your lodge in getting publicity and recognition for your Lodge. Public Relations are a very important part of getting Masonry, and your lodge recognized in Iowa. It is important for us to all put our best foot forward to get the “Good news out about what Iowa Masonry is doing”.

This effort will help increase awareness of Masonry, help increase membership, and help keep fellow brothers, as well as the community aware of opportunities and functions we are involved with.

Your Lodge should have a Public Relations program, in addition to the efforts that are already being done by the Grand Lodge for events, ceremonies, and recognition. Public Relations are the most effective when one or two members are assigned the task of Public Relations! This could be a great way to get a new brother or two involved in helping the Lodge and get their feet wet until they can get in the line!

Remember that you will want to use your Lodge Name and lodge number in any of your Public Relation items going out. Public Relations will help build stronger ties with your community, the partners you might be working with, increase awareness of the lodge, and help gain membership.

Planning Lodge Publicity:

More than anyone else, the individual lodge officers, and the membership are the front line of Masonry. When we are doing a public function, pancake Breakfast, or dinner, or public outreach project, we are in essence saying here are the Mason's, and XYZ Lodge # 000. These programs are fine and usually help keep Masonry in the Public Eye. Highly visible Mason's in action are one of our best investments.

But we are not always highly visible. Many of our activities are carried out in programs that the public is unfamiliar with, or in other places where the public doesn't see them. Often these activities are just as deserving of public notice as the more spectacular event. This is where the PR Unit of the Lodge comes in to the picture, especially in smaller town settings.

Things your Lodge can do to stay in the Public Eye:

1. Appoint a member to be the Public Relations Chairman. This needs to be a person that has a "Nose for the News", and a feel for taking advantage of publicity opportunities. Knowledge of a Camera, the internet, Facebook, would be helpful, but not necessary if he has another brother in the lodge that would work with him and together they have this knowledge.
2. A PR committee could consist of 2-4 brothers and the Chairman.
3. Invite an Editor or Reporter from the local Paper to talk to the PR Committee about what news is worthy and how it's written. Do the same with a news director from the local radio station. Ask them how they would like to have the news about your function "packaged" so that it meets *their needs*. It helps if all committee members are aware of what can and can't be done in terms of news of your event or lodge function.
4. Get to know all the news media in your area. Listen to the radio stations so you know what sort of programs and features they are doing. Then target those stations that can best help you and your lodge programs and functions. Look to the weekly publications in your area as an additional place to get publicity out.
5. Invite a reporter or photographer along to one of your events, dinners, or appropriate functions, outreach events, or a fundraiser for a local group. Help expose them to what Masonry is about!
6. Spread the word on your Lodge's Web Page, and Facebook site! Social Media today is where many of our future Mason's will be coming from, and this is the mode they are familiar with for rapid communication and awareness of what's happening in their area.
7. When preparing a printed item for the paper- always double space it and type it. List your name, phone number, and email address at the top.
8. Keep your sentences short and simple one-thought paragraphs. Avoid adjectives. Try to tell "Who", "What", "Where", "When", "Why", and "How" in the first or second paragraph of a news story or your posting on face-book or website.

9. Multiply the impact of your event or story with a photograph. Here are some ideas to help with that;
- Show Masonry in action, a photo with people doing something!
 - Stay close to the subject- photos usually are not taken too close!
 - Keep the number of featured people in the photo to five or less!
 - Identify the people in the photo and their title if appropriate, left to right and front to back!
 - Write a caption for the photo and mention what, when, where, and why, and how!
 - Tell a brief story in one sentence!
 - Never write on the back of a photo, attach written information on a sticker to the back of a photo, or attach the photo to a typed information sheet!
 - Keep the Lodge aware of what you are doing by sending a copy to them!
 - Look for other media newsletters, company publications, and bulletin boards to post your event!
 - Cooperate with other lodges and major Masonic functions to avoid a conflict with your event in timing- don't try to grab the headlines if a larger event is coming up!
 - If your material doesn't appear, find out why so you can do a better job next time!
 - Don't ask to have your story run as a favor
 - Don't do a press release/story merely for the sake of sending them in!
 - If you have a good program, it deserves to be told. By telling it you will earn the respect that brings new members to your lodge and functions!
 - Always follow up any coverage with a personal thank you note to the contact person you dealt with.
 - For exceptional media attention, thank the managing editor of the media outlet also. Be prompt in doing this, kindness and recognition will benefit your program many times over!

Guidelines on Press Releases

The following guidelines on placing news releases have been developed to improve your success rate in writing and placing information that will be published. Some of the media to target are:

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Community and business newsletters and bulletin boards
- Radio
- Television/Cable stations

A news release is the most common of all public relations tools. Basically, a news release is a document developed to communicate key information points and facts of when the news happened or will be happening, who to contact for additional information, etc.

Remember that editors and reporters receive thousands of news releases each week. Accuracy, clarity, brevity, timeliness, and newsworthiness are key criteria used by editors in selecting releases for print. A newsworthy release can be described as one that appeals to the broadest group of readers or viewers, offering the most information with the greatest sense of urgency! Often reporters or editors will rewrite your release to fit their style, so it's crucial to present the information as clearly and accurately as possible. The best way to do this is by following a method of organizing the material into an inverted pyramid. The inverted pyramid style of writing puts the most information at the beginning, followed by items of decreasing importance.

The Basics of a Press Release

- All news releases begin with a headline designed to attract the reporter/editor and to encourage them to read the rest of the release.
- The most essential information in the press release should be listed in the lead, the first paragraph of the release. Start with as many of the “Who, What, Where, When, Why, and how facts of the news items as possible.
- Most of the time the “Who”, the subject of the release, should include the name of the organization, and the name of an individual who is either the expert on the subject, or the contact person for the event.
- The “What” is the topic of the release? People are drawn more to the unusual, and so are reporters and editors. This can mean better, different, less expensive, unique, or beneficial to the community.
- The “Where” should follow the same rule as the what – unusual is generally more appealing than the usual.
- The “When” of the release is actually in two parts? The first being the date and time of the release, and the second is the date and time the release reaches the editor.
- The “Why”, of a release is to remember the cause and effect? A rule to borrow from advertising is that an organization shouldn't promote the features of its product or service, but rather the benefits to its customers, of the product or service.
- The “How”, of a news release can be addressed by answering for example, “how it will affect youth, or the program we are trying to work with, how it will affect the community, or how it will affect a new or prospective mason.
- The main body of the news release should include significant details that relate to the lead, including quotations and descriptions. All related but non-essential information needs to appear toward the end of the release. Generally the last paragraph provides overall information and statistics about the local Lodge, its purpose, areas served, number of members, location and meeting time. This is also a great place to put the contact phone number of the lodge and the Secretary of the lodge.

General Rules for a Press Release

- Always type the release- double-spaced and on one side of 8 1/2x11 inch paper with a 1 inch margin at the top bottom and both sides.
- Brevity is the key. Try to limit releases to one or two pages. Straightforward and concise writing style is the objective.
- If the editor has to choose between two otherwise equal releases, he or she will pick the one with the accompanying photograph. Make sure the photo is self-explanatory and interesting!
- Never split a paragraph at the end of a page.
- Type more at the bottom of a page when the release is more than one page in length.
- Number all pages.
- Type ### or “30 “to signify the end of the release.
- Clarity, accuracy, grammar, and neatness count. Don’t submit copy with typos, misspellings, or cross-outs. Verify all names, addresses, and facts before distributing the release.
- Avoid the use of clichés, jargons, or fancy phrases.
- Use first and last names on first reference. Use last names only on subsequent references. Include titles and descriptions, such as Master, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon, etc...

Public Service Announcements (PSA’s)

Contact local media outlets to find out what format they prefer. Because media stations receive news from a wide variety of sources, a public release is more likely to be accepted when certain guidelines are followed. You must know whether to supply copy directly to the station or to the services that furnish the station’s news. A phone call to the station will give you this information. Most stations will rewrite copy to conform to their requirements. That being said, here are some hints to remember when doing a PSA.

- Highlight (Use Cap’s, bold letters, or larger font) the areas you want to emphasize.
- Use one announcement per page.
- Type only one side of the paper.
- Double or triple space your announcement on 8 1/2x 11 inch white paper.
- Use type or fonts that are easy to read!

Sample Press Release

Contact: Name _____ Phone# _____

Release Date: _____

Subject: Masonic Installation of Officers for the year 2013 for Westward Ho Lodge # 001

Westward Ho Lodge #001 in Benton Heights, Iowa installed the new lodge officers for the 2013 calendar year on Saturday Jan. 19th, at 2:30 pm. There were 62 people in attendance for the event with Lodge members were joined by family members, and community leaders, to recognize the new officers and wish them well for the 2013 year. In addition the Lodge was thanked for their continued support to the community in outreach and fundraising efforts for the schools and Volunteer Fire Department. In addition three lodge members were also recognized for their individual efforts in lodge work and in member recruitment and received the Master Builder award from the Grand Lodge of Iowa. In addition four lodge members were recognized for receiving the “Ashler Award” for expanding their knowledge and growth in the Masonic Body. Westward Ho also received the “Lodge of the Year Award” from the Grand Lodge of Iowa for the most new membership growth in 2012.

Lodge members of Westward Ho Lodge have participated in numerous activities during the past year including:

- Pancake Breakfast for the Wind Row Elementary Schools new Playground Equipment
- Past Master’s Widow’s Holiday Basket program
- Caroling at the Shady Lane Care Facility
- A Dinner Outing for Residents of the Rand Masonic Home and the staff
- Spaghetti Dinner event for the Benton Heights Volunteer Fire Departments new truck
- Helped in building the new Capitol Bike path from Clear View to Benton Heights

Westward Ho Lodge meets every Monday at 6:00pm for Dinner, and their regular Lodge meeting follows at 7:00pm. For more information about the Lodge call John James, Lodge Secretary at 515-244-5431.

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Sample Press Release

Contact: (Name) _____ (Phone) _____

Release Date: _____

Subject: East Dale Lodge # 699

On (Date) members of East Dale Lodge #699 participated in the annual community outreach Spaghetti Dinner to raise money for the Allentown Voluntary Fire Department. Lodge members worked along side the Fireman to prepare a great meal that was complete with Salad, drink, and dessert.

The night was a success, and provided over \$5,000 for the Fire Departments new Ambulance. Guests that evening had the opportunity to meet Governor (_____) who stated “These men are showing us all that by working together with our neighbors, for a common cause, we can all benefit our community’s needs.

For more information on how you can be a part of East Dale Lodge contact (Name), (Title), at (Phone).

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(Attached Photo, example Caption)

East Dale Lodge Master (name) is pictured dishing up a plate of Spaghetti and Meat balls for Governor (name) at the fund raiser for the Allentown Fire Department on (date). This was the first time the Lodge had the Governor attend this event!

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