



AMERICAN LEGION
AUXILIARY

Serving veterans, their families and their communities

Public Relations

National Chairman ~ Virginia Nelsen

Public Relations

Plan of Work: Public Relations Committee

Mission Statement: To work collaboratively with all levels of the organization to create, implement and support a proactive communication network that advances the goals and objectives of the American Legion Auxiliary at all levels within the organization and to project our image and programs to our membership and the general public through all possible opportunities.

Public Relations Committee

National Chairman

Virginia Nelsen
Department of Nebraska

National Vice-Chairman

Loretta Shellman
Department of Wisconsin

Committee Member

Shirley Jones
Department of Illinois

Committee Member

Mary Williams
Department of New York

Central Division Chairman

La Veta Miller
Department of Kansas

Eastern Division Chairman

Darleen Strayer
Department of Delaware

Northwestern Division Chairman

Peggy Miller
Department of Wyoming

Southern Division Chairman

Betsey Lee Hodges
Department of North Carolina

Program Coordinator

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Public Relations

Public Relations - Outline

- I. Internal Communications**
 - a. Communication to members and promotion of programs
 - b. Effective use of National ALA Web site
 - c. Press Books

- II. External (Public/Media) Communications**
 - a. Use of ALA Brand and Emblem
 - b. Increasing awareness of the ALA
 - c. Department and Unit Web sites
 - d. National President's Department visit component

- III. Strategic Planning Initiatives**
 - a. Distribution of Strategic Planning Initiatives

- IV. Public Relations Awards**
 - a. Department Award: Public Relations
 - b. Department Award: Web site
 - c. Department Award: Press book
 - d. Unit Award: Program Emphasis
 - e. Unit Award: Community Display
 - f. Unit Award: Web site
 - g. Junior Public Relations Award

- V. Resources**

- VI. Annual Report Form**

Public Relations

Public Relation Goals for 2008-2009

I. Internal Communications (Auxiliary members)

A. Communication to members and promotion of programs

The Public Relations (PR) Chairman should be included in the planning of all programs and events. She should also be kept informed of everything the Department/Unit and leadership are involved in that could be newsworthy. It is the goal of the PR chairmen at every level to communicate program activities to all members.

Goal: Utilize all forms of communication and media to inform and educate Auxiliary members about new and existing programs. Effective and frequent communication keeps members informed, motivated and active.

Tactics:

1. Encourage all members to sign up for National e-bulletins
2. Establish Department and Unit e-bulletins to distribute information to members.
3. Encourage Department Secretaries to collect and create a member email list for Department distribution.
4. Utilize email list to send or forward information to members, i.e. National updates.
5. PR Chairmen should assist other Program Chairmen by providing promotional program materials, i.e. Department/Unit media kit and by helping to advertise and promote their events.
6. Create Department and Unit Web site(s).
7. Put Department and Unit newsletter on Web-site.
8. Department Chairmen are encouraged to post Department Plan of Work on the Department Web site.
9. Post all program applications and forms on Department Web site.
10. Inform Unit members how to obtain program information and brochures from National and Department headquarters.

B. Effective use of National ALA Web site

The National ALA Web site contains valuable and necessary information for Auxiliary members and specifically, PR Chairmen, within the "Current Member" section.

Goal: Educate Chairmen and members how to effectively use the National ALA Web site as a valuable information source and membership recruitment tool.

Tactics:

1. To navigate to the PR section on the National Web site, first go to "Current Member" section then click on "Public Relations," next go to the top navigation bar for specific PR tools and resources. Additional resources can be found under each individual program.
2. Encourage Junior members to teach Auxiliary members how to use the Internet and navigate the ALA Web site.
3. Setup an Internet lab at area conferences and meetings to show members how to use the Internet and the ALA Web site.

Public Relations

4. Cooperate with the American Legion to set up a "Computer Center" in each Post home for use by the members.
5. Promote the ALA National Web site as a membership benefit, recruitment tool and educational resource.

C. Press Books

In some Departments the Public Relations Chairman is also responsible for completing a Press Book for the Department President. (In some Departments this may also include making a scrapbook) Although the same person may be responsible for the Press Book and Public Relations, it is important to understand that these responsibilities differ from each other and should have separate distinct functions and individual purposes.

Goal: Present the President with a well-organized Press Book detailing her year of service.

Tactics:

1. Collect press releases from Department, Districts, and Units.
2. Submit Press Book for any Department or National awards.
3. Send in your best press releases for inclusion in the National President's Press Book.

II. External Communications (Public and Media)

A. Use of ALA Emblem and Brand

Goal: Promote the use of the ALA Emblem and Brand to build public awareness of our organization.

Tactics:

1. Incorporate the ALA brand into existing internal and external program and promotional materials.
2. Educate members and the public on the meaning and relevance of the Auxiliary emblem.
3. Educate and encourage Departments, Districts and Units to apply and design their promotional materials using the ALA emblem.
4. Encourage members to proudly wear and display the Auxiliary emblem, especially when representing the Auxiliary in their communities.

B. Increasing Awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA)

Effective relations and a visible ALA presence are based on strong, healthy and trusted relationships between PR Chairmen, Departments, Districts, Units, individual members, state and local media outlets, individual communities, military establishments and military support groups and resources.

Goal: Increase visibility and public awareness about the ALA programs, purposes, value and what the ALA offers to veterans, servicewomen and men, families, children & youth and local communities.

Tactics:

1. Encourage Departments and Units to create a Public Relation plan; Refer to the National Web site for template and instructions.

Public Relations

2. Increase the visibility of the ALA in our communities by providing information and guidance to Departments and Units to create their own media kits.
 - a) Distribute activities and statistics to local Chamber of Commerce, churches, schools, business owners, community groups', military establishments and military support organizations.
 - b) Include Department/Unit statistics, i.e. # of volunteer hours, \$ donated, major state or local community events the ALA participated in, ALA sponsored events, support to individuals or community needs, scholarship opportunities, etc...
 - c) Include information about Department/District/Unit Officers; Bio's, photos, contact information, special community or project involvement.
3. Include ALA membership information, application and benefits.
4. Include Web site information and Links when possible/available.
5. Include program information relating to local community activities and ALA contact information.
6. Whenever possible establish personal contact with media sources to share press releases, additionally, request them to post all releases on their Web sites and to provide links whenever possible.
 - a) Use media sources with Web sites as often as possible. Results often post quicker on a Web site than in the printed or recorded press.
7. Each Department should compile a list of media contacts for use by Districts and Units;
www.legion-aux.org/publicrelations/mediacontacts/index.aspx
8. Share examples or email pr@legion-aux.org for assistance.
9. Encourage members to speak about the ALA to other community organizations and recruit new members from their ranks.
10. Set-up displays and participate in community activities to promote the ALA and it's programs and to promote awareness and recognition for the local unit.

C. Department and Unit Web Sites

The Internet is currently the fastest growing method used by the public to seek out and gather information. It is quickly becoming the most popular and widely used tool available today. Departments and Units need to move actively forward to develop their own Web sites and use these sites to showcase and advertise ALA programs, Unit involvement and the impact that ALA programs and members have in their communities.

Goal: Effectively use Department and Unit ALA Web sites to promote the programs, products and services of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Tactics:

1. Provide Public Service Announcements (PSA's) and video clips for the Department Web site that Units can share with the community and that can also be viewed by visitors to their Web site.
2. Create an "Auxiliary in the News: section on the home page of your Web site. Reporters scan Web sites looking for stories.
www.legion-aux.org/pressroom/auxiliaryinthenews/index.aspx
3. Display your Department and Unit newsletters on the Web site to be viewed by the public.

Public Relations

4. Offer Links to Web sites related to the ALA such as The American Legion and Girls and Boys State programs, and Military Family Support Services and Organizations.

D. National President's Visit

The National President's visits should be highly publicized to focus attention on The American Legion Auxiliary, ALA Programs and their impact within your Department and to bring deserved recognition to the National President as the highest ranking officer of our organization.

Goal: Promote the National President's Department visit to current members, the community, all military establishments, potential new members and the media.

Tactics:

1. Arrange for the National President to be involved with a community or military based project.
2. Promote the visit through various types of media and post to Web site and Links.
3. Coordinate with National PR Chairman and National Staff to advertise the events and locations within individual Departments.
4. If space or room allows, invite all ALA members, Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion, military personnel and their families to participate at the event.
5. Publish articles and photos about the activities after the President's visit, using your Department/Unit media resources and be sure to send thank you notes or special recognition letters to all who participated or contributed.
6. Be sure to include all Juniors and former Girls State participants to continue/enhance their involvement and bring value to their membership.

III. Strategic Planning Initiatives

A. Distribution of Strategic Planning Initiatives and Information

Goal: Communicate Strategic Planning Initiatives and information and their relationship to ALA Programs.

Tactics:

1. Coordinate and update new initiatives to existing Plan of Work.
2. Notify Department/Units about new PR strategies that may impact their Department Plan of Work using the Web site and email distribution lists.
3. Encourage Departments/Units to distribute new initiatives and information to members as soon as possible using the most current and effective forms of communication available.

Public Relations

IV. Public Relations Recognition & Awards

A. Department Award: Public Relations

A citation plaque presented to the Department Chairman in each Division with the most outstanding **Overall Public Relations Program**. Copies of articles, newsletters, pictures of displays, events promoting the unit, speeches to other organizations, or any other examples of public relations may be included in the entry, including Web site URL. Entry must be typewritten in narrative form, not to exceed 1,000 words. Presentation may include copies of articles, newsletters, pictures of displays, events promoting the Unit programs, speeches to other organizations, or any other examples of public relations. All entries must be post marked by June 1, 2009 and sent by the Department Chairman to the National Chairman. Send to **Virginia Nelsen, 427 N. Main St. Valentine, NE 69201** or email to dvnelsen@hotmail.com

B. Department Award: Web site

A citation plaque will be presented to the Department with the best overall Web site. Web sites will be judged as follows: 33% each for design ease of use and content. Web site URL, web master name and full contact information constitutes an entry. All entries must be post marked by June 1, 2009 and sent by the Department Chairman to the National Chairman. Send to **Virginia Nelsen, 427 N. Main St. Valentine, NE 69201** or email to dvnelsen@hotmail.com

C. Department Awards: Press Book

Awards criteria: Press Books will be no larger than 12"x15". The first page of entry must include the name and address of Department and the Department Chairman and total departmental membership. Entry will include completed copy of the annual report, not to exceed 1,000 words, describing how PR was promoted in the Department, making references to the newspaper clippings included in the Press Book. Copies of articles may be used. A newspaper name and date should appear at the top of each article and articles should be placed in chronological order. Only Press Books with return postage will be returned. Send to the designated PR Committee member by June 1, 2009.

- **Department Press Book Award** for departments with less than 7000 members. Mail to: **Mary Williams, 2759 Ride St. Weedsport, NY 13166**
- **Ruby Ward Award** for departments with 7,001-10,000 members. Mail to: **Mary Williams, 2759 Ride St. Weedsport, NY 13166**
- **Elizabeth Lanson Award** for Departments with 10,001-25,000 members. Mail to: **Shirley Jones, 294 Illinois Drive, Rantoul, IL 61866-1823**
- **Betty Burdett Award** for Departments with 25,001-35,000 members. Mail to: **Shirley Jones, 294 Illinois Drive, Rantoul, IL 61866-1823**
- **Department Press Book Award** for Departments with over 35,000 members. Mail to: **Loretta Shellman, PO Box 128, 129 Hillside Ave Oconto Falls, WI 54154**

Public Relations

D. Unit Award: Program Emphasis

A \$50 award to a Unit Chairman in each division for the **three best published press releases**. NPR Vice Chairman will use these press releases in the National President's Press book. Entry must include three different articles, published in three different months (Nov. 1, 2008 – May 1, 2009) and highlight a different ALA committee. Send nominations to: **Loretta Shellman, PO Box 128, 129 Hillside Ave Oconto Falls, WI 54154**

E. Unit Award: Community Display

An award presented to the Unit with the most unique community display setup in any location other than an American Legion Post home. Unit should send a photo of the display to the **Divisional PR Chairmen** by June 1, 2009 with a narrative of less than 250 words, displaying where and when the display was used, and how and why it was created.

F. Unit Award: Web site

A citation presented to the Unit with the launch of a new Web site, created since September 1, 2008. Web sites will be judged as follows: 33% each for design, ease of use and content. Web site URL, web master name and full contact information constitutes an entry. All entries must be post marked by June 1, 2009 and sent by the Department Chairman to the National Chairman. Send to **Virginia Nelsen, 427 N. Main St. Valentine, NE 69201** or email to dvnelsen@hotmail.com

G. Junior Public Relations Award

A \$50 award to the Junior group (Department, District or Unit) for the best published press or media coverage for a Junior activity or project. Copies of articles, newsletters, pictures of displays promoting the event, or any other examples of public relations may be included in the entry. Send to **Virginia Nelsen, 427 N. Main St. Valentine, NE 69201** or email to dvnelsen@hotmail.com

Public Relations

V. Resources

The following resources listed direct you to programs and services related to the objectives of the National Public Relations Committee as related in this Plan of Work.

Resources provided through the American Legion Auxiliary:

Several types of materials and resources are available free for download on the Auxiliary website pages:

www.legion-aux.org/MO-Programs/PublicRelations/resources and
www.legion-aux.org/PublicRelations/PublicRelationsMaterials/index.

Some are:

- **Getting Started in Unit Public Relations** - This brochure is a guide for Unit PR Chairmen available.
- **Writing Tips** - Departments can order from National Headquarters. This brochure gives you clear, concise tips on proper writing to improve the professional look of your written work.
- **American Legion Auxiliary Public Relations Handbook**
- **ALA Sample News Release Template for Units**

HomeFront magazine and National News newsletter contain messages from the National President, Committee Chairmen, feature articles on issues of interest, best practice showcases, new programs and activities of Senior and Junior members. Both publications are free with membership.

Resources provided by The American Legion:

The American Legion Web site offers various points of information. See www.legion.org/whatsnew/publicrelations/publications.

To locate media contacts in local areas, use <http://capwiz.com/legion/dbq/media>.

Additional Resources:

- Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (available online/in bookstores)
- Wall Street Journal/Washington Post (keeps current on veterans issues)
- Wall Street Journal (subscription rate may vary)
- Washington Post (rates vary based on delivery location)

VII. Annual Report Form and Award Form

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

PUBLIC RELATIONS - ANNUAL REPORT FORM 2008 - 2009

Please complete and forward to Send to Virginia Nelsen, 427 N. Main St. Valentine, NE 69201

Department:	Report Deadline: June 1, 2009
Department Chairman:	
Address:	Total Number of Units
Members in Department:	Number of Units Reporting

Please Report Numbers Where Applicable

Media Form				
	List number of :	Department Level	Unit Level	Total No.
1	Interviews with reporters			
2	Articles published			
3	Letters to the Editor/Op-Eds			
4	Aired programs/interviews/event coverage			
5	Public television announcements			
6	Public Service Announcements (PSAs)			
7	Print advertisements			
8	Letters of appreciation sent			
9	Unit entries for Unit Program Emphasis Award?			
10	Unit entries in Community Display Award			
11	Other PR print material used			
	(please list various forms on back)			

Department Communications

12	Department Web site URL:			
13	Number of hits during year:			
14	Name of person maintaining Web site:			
15	List the Department e-mail address			
16	List Department publications:			
	1.			
	2.			
17	As Department Chairman, did you complete a Department Press Book?	Yes	No	
18	Did you submit the department press book for the National Press Book Award?			

19	Does your Department send out e-bulletins?		
20	Are Department Plan of Works on website?		
21	Did the Department create a fact sheet?		
22	Did the Department compile a list of media contacts to be used by Units		
23	As Department Chairman, did you develop a PR plan for the Department?		

Unit Communications				
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24	How many Units in your Department have:	Newsletters	E-Bulletins	Joint Post Publication

25	How many Units created a Unit fact sheet?			
26	How many Units created a Public Relations plan?			
27	Number of Units with a Web site			
	List URLs with Unit Name & Number:			

28	How did your Department promote the National President's Visit?

29	How did your Department/Units work to build the image of the ALA in your community?

30	What methods did you use to get information to your Unit members in a timely fashion?

Please submit additional details regarding other Public Relations Related projects or activities on the back of this form or a separate sheet of paper.