

PROMOTING 4-H ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Instructor- Susan Dudasik Lemhi County

Promoting your event and activities: There are plenty of inexpensive ways to promote your event, with the most popular being a flyer. When creating a flyer, there are a few things to consider: Make it pleasing and readable. Avoid using too many font styles or sizes. Keep it simple. List the basics: Who, What, Where, and Why. Also list a contact number and exact location of the event. Avoid using, Jimmy Bob's Barn or the church basement. Be specific.

Be creative with posters: Posters provide more room for creativity than a flyer. You can add photos or artwork as well as more in-depth information on the event. Be creative. Cut the posters into different shapes. If it's a bake sale, cut the poster in the shape of a large cupcake.

Use the local media: Don't hesitate to contact the local newspapers and radio and tv stations. You never know what will hit an editor's fancy. Don't think your club bake sale is too small for local coverage. Editors can't print or broadcast information about an event if they don't know its happening.

Writing a press release: You don't need to be a professional writer to create a simple press release. Basically all you need to include is Who, What, Where, and Why as well as a contact number and e-mail address. On the top of your release it should state:

PRESS RELEASE:

For Immediate release:

Contact person:

Make sure you submit the release at least two weeks in advance for a weekly publication and at least a month beforehand for a monthly. You might also want to phone the editor and let them know the release is coming. It helps to make personal contact since that editor might not be interested in the event but they might know another who would be. Many publications also offer free "Coming Events" sections.

Create a logo or slogan: With all of today's fancy computer programs, it's not hard to design a simple logo or slogan to use for your event or club. Make it simple but distinctive, then you can use it for all your promotional needs.

Business cards: As a 4-H member, everyone should have some type of business card with basically their name, address, phone, and e-mail. You never know when you will need them. Perhaps your County Agent can help you design some for your club and members.

Promotional goodies: Everyone likes to get a free "goodie." Just take a look around the room and see how many promotional items you can find. Your "goodie" can be anything from a tee-shirt or professionally designed product to a simple card with your club or event's information that has been laminated and has a pin or magnet attached to the back.

Think outside the box: Aim wide when looking for new places to promote. Don't ignore an opportunity because it's not directly related to your event. There are lots of promotional "angles" you can use. Be creative. Does your club do something unique? What makes it different from all the rest?

Working with the media: It's always nice to see your event in print so it helps if you have a good working relationship with an editor or reporter. Some of the fastest ways to have your press release trashed are:

Not having enough information or contact numbers: Editors don't have time to search for locations, dates or times. They also wouldn't waste more than a few phone calls to obtain information. Make sure the listed contact person is willing to quickly return calls. Editors are on deadlines and will often go with the story they can get the information on.

Poorly proof-read releases: Don't rely on spell-check! Have at least two people proof-read the release before sending it out. Make sure all names, dates and numbers are correct.

Don't meet deadline: Be sure you have the release into the paper at least two weeks prior to publication. If it's a monthly publication, it may have to be in two months prior. If your event is on March 1st, it needs to be published in the February edition. Plan ahead.

When someone from the press contacts you, return their calls promptly. Most likely they are on a tight deadline and need the info. Have some event facts or history for them. This helps create a more interesting story. Remember, they don't have to give your event free publicity! It's to your advantage to establish a good working relationship.

If you're lucky enough to have someone from the press attend your event, be prepared and help them as much as you can. If it's a big event, you might want to assign someone to assist with them. Remember, they have a job to do also. **Never expect them to pay to attend your event!** If they do a story on your event, they are basically giving you free ad space in their publication. Would you pay to promote someone else's event? If there's a meal included, that is different. As a courtesy you might offer the meal, but it's not required.

Try to accommodate their needs. If they are taking photos, try to grant access inside the arena or main area. If there are safety concerns, explain them to the reporter. Some media members can be overly persistent. Remember, when safety is involved, you have the last word! Especially around livestock! If the photographer isn't animal savvy, suggest they not use a flash during any performances.

Preparing a press kit: Having a simple press kit is a great aid for any reporter. It doesn't have to be fancy, just a few sheets of paper. A good kit will include a copy of the event flyer, press release and the names and proper spelling of the main participants. If there are guest speakers, include some background and contact information for them. Provide a list of contestant names and numbers. You might also want to design a press pass type badge so other event members can recognize and aid them.

After the event: It never hurts to follow up with a thank you note to any reporter who's covered your event. Just a simple e-mail thanking them for attending can go a long way in establishing a good relationship. Don't expect them to send you a copy of the article, but if they do, acknowledge that you received it. This is not part of their job and it's often done as a favor. A simple thank-you goes a long way and might help the next time you need an event covered.

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Information packet

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This packet is similar to a standard press kit. You can use any of the ideas included or add your own. A press kit is simply a packet of information designed to provide a reporter with basic information.

This kit contains:

Fact sheet on topics covered during class.

Ideas for working with the media.

Article with promotional ideas.

Sample of a press release.

A bio of the presenter.