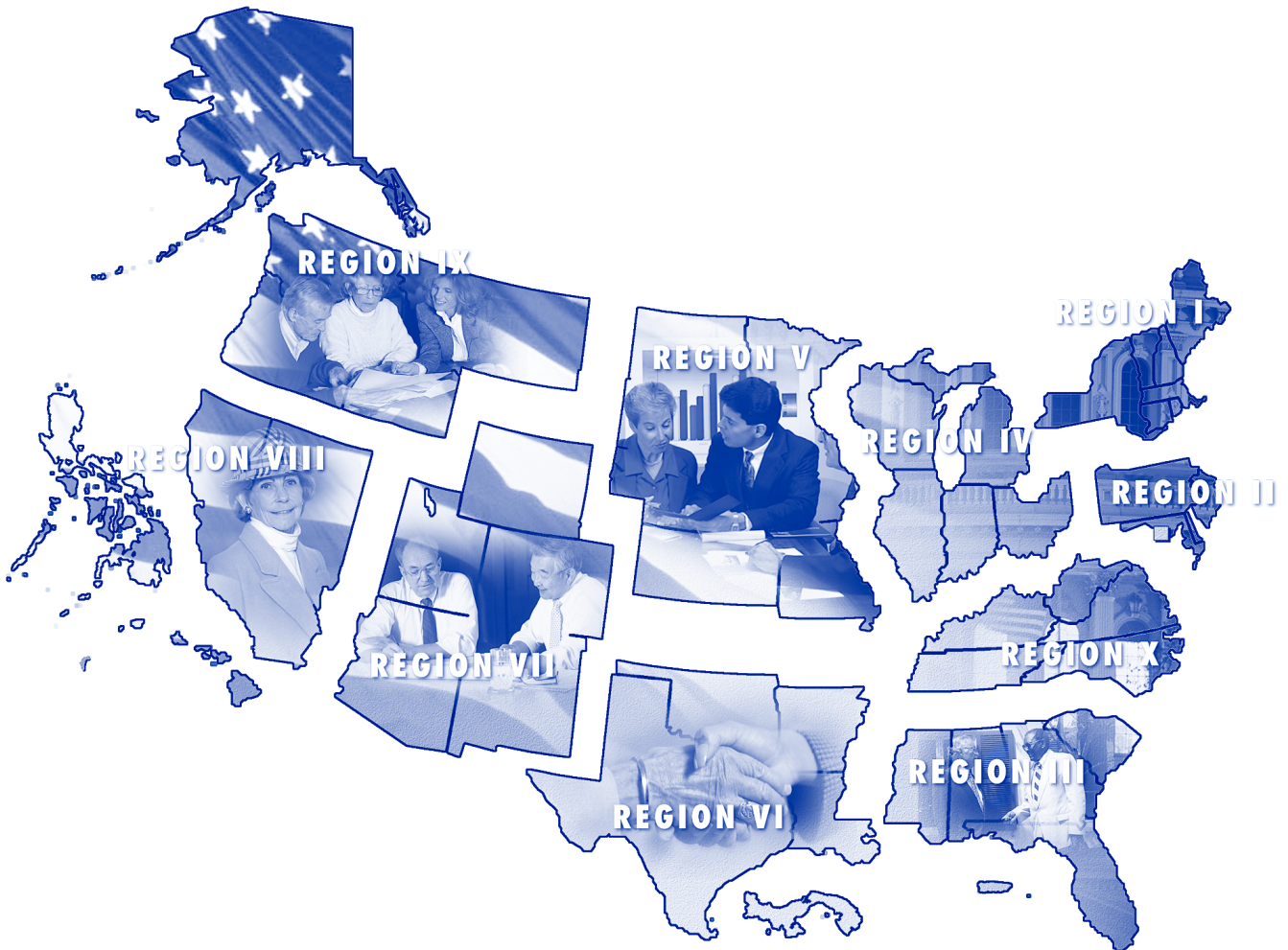


PUBLIC RELATIONS

H A N D B O O K

For NARFE Chapters and Federations



NARFE Public Relations Handbook

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NARFE Public Relations Handbook

Foreword

Public relations is essential for the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE). It is important for promoting membership and the NARFE message. It is important for increased understanding and support of NARFE's legislative agenda. It helps to shape the public's perception of federal retirees and current federal workers. And, public relations helps to increase awareness of the significant community service contributions being made by NARFE volunteers throughout the U.S. and around the world.

This revised edition of the NARFE Public Relations Handbook is designed to help those who are responsible for public relations in NARFE federations and chapters. For those of you with experience in public relations, perhaps this handbook can serve as a basis for strengthening NARFE's public relations capabilities. With your expertise and suggestions, NARFE's public relations network can be made stronger. For those NARFE members who may be new to the field of public relations and for those who want a readily available public relations reference guide, this handbook is for you. Your thoughts and suggestions are also important, since your work and your efforts will determine the success of NARFE's public relations efforts.

In partnership, working together, and with open lines of communication, NARFE's public relations network can be strengthened and it can achieve great things. This handbook is intended to create a foundation on which to build a successful public relations program.

Public Relations

INTRODUCTION

Clearly, personal contact is the most effective means of communication. The opportunity to tell someone about NARFE's purpose and benefits of membership face-to-face gives you a chance to personalize the message and, moreover, an opportunity to gauge reaction. The message about NARFE can be adjusted to accommodate the interests and even objections of the listener.

For instance, a federal retiree's voiced concern about annual membership dues can be addressed by a careful explanation of the affordability of NARFE membership and its many benefits, including *NARFE* magazine and NARFE PERKS. The federal retiree who is interested in legislative issues can be told in great detail about NARFE's involvement on Capitol Hill and in statehouses across the nation.

SUGGESTED PR OBJECTIVES

- ★ Protect the interests and advance the causes of Federal retirees and survivors in Congress.
- ★ Increase NARFE membership and revenue.
- ★ Build public appreciation for retired federal employees and their families.
- ★ Increase public stature for your NARFE chapter/federation as a community and issues leader and make known the contributions by members to their communities.
- ★ Inform local and state officials of NARFE's interest and positions on issues affecting your members.
- ★ See that newspaper, radio, and television editors understand the NARFE position on controversial issues.
- ★ Work with NARFE officers to teach Congress and the public that the well-being of public employees has a direct effect on the quality of government.

This personal contact can be extended and expanded. NARFE Retirement Service Centers provide an important public service and, in turn, provide an excellent opportunity to reach potential NARFE members. Conducting and participating in pre-retirement seminars (PRS), NARFE pre-retirement seminar leaders are reaching tens of thousands of potential NARFE members each year. The public service activities of NARFE chapters, such as the important contributions being made in the area of Alzheimer's Disease research, help to increase public awareness of NARFE, its involvement, and its message.

As the person responsible for your chapter or federation public relations program, you have the opportunity to further extend and expand the reach of NARFE, to strengthen communications among its members, and most importantly, you have the opportunity to promote NARFE's goals and objectives.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations was practiced long before it became a recognized profession and the object of much academic study. In Biblical times, it was Aaron, the brother of Moses, who may well have been the first public relations agent.

Known to “speak well,” Aaron was given the job of speaking on behalf of Moses. He was responsible for internal and external communications. Without the benefit of a mailing list, let alone a newsletter, Aaron promoted communications among the membership. Externally, Aaron worked with his association’s leadership to increase public awareness and to influence government policies that affected members of his association. Aaron helped his association attain their goals with his persistence, by using existing technologies, and a few miracles.

Welcome to the field of public relations. The philosophical hows and whys, along with the multitude of academic definitions, views, and theories, are beyond the scope of this handbook. However, your local library will likely have a number of books on public relations and an abundant amount of information to supplement the enclosed material. This handbook is more concerned with the rewards of persistence, identifying and using existing technologies effectively, and pulling off a few public relations miracles here and there.

The purpose of a public relations program is to achieve defined goals and objectives using effective communications tools and techniques. The goals and objectives may include earning favorable public recognition, promoting understanding, or encouraging action.

For NARFE, public relations is important for gaining and maintaining public understanding and support. It is essential for informing elected officials and for influencing legislation and policies that affect federal retirees. Public relations helps highlight the public service contributions being made by NARFE chapters and federations. Public relations helps to attract new members. Most importantly, public relations can help achieve the goals outlined in the preamble of NARFE’s constitution.

In order that the retired employees may receive from the Government of the United States remuneration to which their long and faithful service entitles them; to aid them in securing their rights under the retirement law; for the promotion of their general welfare; and to secure legislation perfecting the retirement law the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association has been formed.

PREAMBLE TO NARFE’S CONSTITUTION

Public Relations

THE “PUBLIC” IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

With the goals and objectives of a public relations program established, we must then consider where our message, information, and efforts will be directed. The “public” in public relations includes internal and external audiences.

Internal Public Relations

Internal public relations is targeted toward NARFE members. Public relations helps promote communications among the membership, chapters, federations, and NARFE National Headquarters. It provides important information on legislative positions, developments, and initiatives. It serves to promote public service activities and fellowship. In short, the internal public relations program encourages individual NARFE members to work together to achieve our goals and objectives.

The best means of communicating with our members is a chapter newsletter. The public relations officer may serve as the newsletter editor, or a separate member may serve in that capacity. In either event, public relations and newsletter publishing are related activities and should compliment each other in communicating NARFE messages.

External Public Relations

External public relations is meant for the general public, with special consideration given to targeted audiences. NARFE’s external public relations program seeks to generate favorable public recognition for federal workers and federal retirees. Beyond the general public, our external public relations efforts should include: potential members, elected officials, groups and organizations with shared concerns and interests, and the media.

POSSIBLE GOALS FOR NARFE CHAPTER/FEDERATION PR PROGRAMS

The following objectives and goals are simply to illustrate the kind of activities you might consider appropriate for your public relations plan. In each chapter and federation there are unique circumstances and individuals that might help advance the overall goals of the organization. Use the resources and talents that are available to you in your chapter or federation.

- Make a concerted effort to get favorable news items published periodically.
- Learn the needs, deadlines, and structure of your local newsroom.
- Develop working relationships with news directors, editors, producers, and reporters of print and electronic media.
- Develop story ideas around NARFE’s views on events and legislation affecting individual local members.

- ▶ Create opportunities for chapter and federation officers to address civic, business, religious and community organizations in your town. Urge chapter/federation members to wear NARFE badges. Use every opportunity to identify yourselves with NARFE.
- ▶ Respond to or assist your chapter/federation president reply to erroneous media stories and editorials.
- ▶ Invite your Senators, Representatives, and candidates for elected office to speak at your chapter/federation meetings. Send out releases and media alerts announcing the visits; in general, seek out press attendance.
- ▶ Study and use position papers, fact sheets, articles and other materials generated by NARFE headquarters, such as *Quarterly News*, Legislative Hotline, *NARFE* magazine and GEMS messages.
- ▶ Set up a NARFE display at fairs, community meetings, and in conjunction with special events, such as during Public Service Recognition Week.

The Multiplier Effect

NARFE's PR procedure calls for our members and officers throughout America to do as much public and media relations as possible in their own communities. Our members are best equipped to identify and respond to media challenges in their own communities, since they live there, know many local personalities and newsmakers, and are familiar with local issues. Furthermore, newspapers and broadcast stations usually show a preference for airing the views of community residents rather than those of professional spokespeople.

National Headquarters provides training, guidance and information to federations and chapters, who then spread the word in their communities, allowing more people to hear NARFE's message. Thus, the Multiplier Effect is an excellent use of NARFE's most important resources: our vigilant and energetic members. Of course, National Headquarters stands ready to handle challenging cases upon request from the field, as well as dealing with the Washington media and national publications.

In the following chapters, you will find information designed to assist you in developing a public relations program. Keep in mind that your audiences, internal and external, are equally important for achieving NARFE's goals and objectives. Finally, know that, as a public relations officer, you are providing an essential service for your chapter, federation, and for our association.

The Media

AN OVERVIEW

In our information-driven society, there is an abundance of messages competing for our attention. Nowhere is this more evident than in the media and related areas. Newsletters and direct mail, signs and billboards, newspapers and magazines, radio and television and the Internet are all vying to inform us, entertain us, or motivate us to buy, sell, borrow, or get involved. A quick trip across our radio dial or through our television channels provides a sampling of the many different ways information is delivered. As the person responsible for public relations, you will want to become familiar with the media and related fields. This knowledge will enhance your understanding of how the media works and, in turn, prepare you to make full use of available media to promote the NARFE message and membership in your chapter/federation.

The media is usually divided into two descriptive categories—print media and electronic media. The print media includes newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and other publications. The electronic media, also referred to as the broadcast media, includes radio and television, but can also include technologies such as video infomercials, satellite transmissions, computer-generated telephone calls, and online computer news and information services.

PRINT MEDIA

Newspapers

Holding their own against newer technologies, the local daily and weekly newspapers remain a vital source of news and information in our communities. Local newspapers play an important role in the development of a successful public relations program.



Regional & Specialty Newspapers

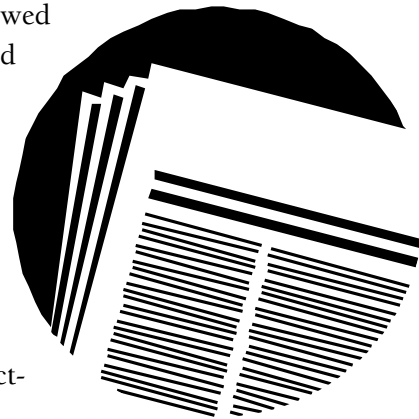
In many areas, there are newspapers devoted to regional coverage. These papers cover a larger area than your local newspapers but will usually have a page or section dedicated to information and news from your community. There may be a special page or section geared toward a specific audience, such as senior citizens or federal workers. Specialty newspapers would include those that target a specific group or community, such as the growing number of newspapers solely designed for retirees or the newspa-

per published for the local federal installation. Another useful, however often overlooked, publication is the local Buyer's Guide or Shopper's Guide. These specialty publications have a good readership, and while they may not accept news items like those sent to regular newspapers, they usually will have a "Community Bulletin Board" for meeting announcements and may provide Public Service Announcement (PSA) space for such things as NARFE Retirement Service Centers and NARFE Chapter or Federation-sponsored public service activities.

Newsletters & Direct Mail

In addition to your chapter or federation newsletter (which is covered thoroughly in a later chapter of this handbook), there may be newsletters published in your area which could be included in your public relations program. Newsletters published for communities, subdivisions, churches, government installations, and others should all be considered and viewed as potential vehicles for promoting the NARFE image, message, and membership.

While there may not be a great opportunity for a full-blown direct mail public relations campaign in your chapter or federation, you should be familiar with the tools and techniques, which can be effective even on a limited basis. For instance, a list of potential NARFE members can be compiled and a copy of the chapter or federation newsletter or a recent, appropriate press release could be directly mailed to them.



The Media

ELECTRONIC (BROADCAST) MEDIA



Radio

There are more than 10,000 radio stations in the United States. These stations vary in size, coverage, and programming. While there is an increasing number of stations adopting a “talk radio” format, many radio stations still feature music with consideration given to demographics, listener preference, and market segmentation.

Demographic considerations would include such things as age, occupation, sex, and household income. Listener preference helps radio stations decide on a specific format, such as classical, adult contemporary, country, oldies, or talk. Market segmentation considerations guide radio stations in establishing formats that set them apart from other stations in the area. For instance, if there is a radio station with a country format which has a significant segment of the local market, then other radio stations may want to offer alternative programming such as all-talk or adult contemporary music instead of going head-to-head with the dominant country station.

Knowing who is listening to a radio station helps advertisers decide on which station to buy time. The same information can help public relations practitioners when they are trying to identify which radio stations have the audience they are trying to reach.

For example, a talk radio station may have a listener profile which shows that 50% of its listeners are age 45 or older, 12% are retirees, 55% are male, and 45% are female. In the same media market, there is a radio station with a “Hot Adult Contemporary” format, with a listener profile which shows that 69% of its listeners are age 35 or younger, 34% are in high school, 45% are male, and 55% are female. Clearly, a Public Service Announcement (PSA) about a chapter-sponsored NARFE Retirement Service Center would be better placed and probably more readily accepted at the station with the talk radio format.

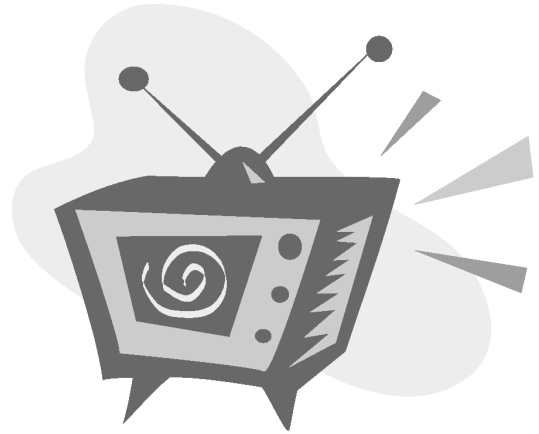
As you start to analyze and become more familiar with your media market, you will be able to identify which radio stations can help in your efforts to deliver the NARFE message and promote membership.

Television

There are more than 1,500 television stations and some 10,000 cable systems in the United States. Some television stations are affiliated with networks, such as CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, or FOX. The bulk of the programming on network-affiliated stations originates from the network and is not produced locally. However, network-affiliated stations usually have some locally produced shows, including news, weather, sports, and community/public affairs programming.

Independent television stations (those not affiliated with a major network) provide a clear alternative in program choices. The programs on these stations will vary from region to region, town to town. Where one independent station may feature old movies and reruns, another may focus on programs of interest to a specific group or groups within the community it serves. Examples would include the independent station in Maine which features some programs in French or the station in Florida which describes its programming as “religious in nature.” As with radio, becoming more familiar with the programming of your local television stations—network affiliates and independents—will help you identify which stations provide the best opportunities for promoting NARFE.

One of the most important developments in television has been the rise in the number of cable systems. More specifically, the increase in public access cable television and other community cable channels has created new opportunities for individuals and groups to produce and present their own television programs. In a later chapter, we will take a more detailed look at public access cable television and how it can be used as part of your public relations program



The Media

GETTING READY TO MEET THE MEDIA

Media relations is a key component of the job done by those responsible for chapter/federation public relations. Working from a list of the media and other appropriate outlets, you can communicate important information about NARFE, its purpose, and its legislative agenda. You can strengthen NARFE's identity by sharing news about your chapter/federation activities. And, through your media relations efforts you can increase and strengthen NARFE membership.

“The basics of establishing an effective communications program within the chapter can also be used to develop an effective external public relations program.”

While the newsletter may be the cornerstone of communications within the chapter/federation, a media relations program will use a variety of tools and techniques, including press releases, press conferences, media interviews, talk show appearances, letters to the editor, and media kits. The foundation of your media relations program will be your media contact list.

CREATING A MEDIA CONTACT LIST

The media contact list helps organize essential information. This list should include your local newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and other media-related outlets. This list should also identify key people at the media outlets, such as news editors, program directors, and others. The list can also include other publications and organizations. For instance, the local federal installation may have an employee newsletter or quarterly paper that you will want to include.

Information for the media contact list can be gathered from a number of sources. The NARFE home page, www.narfe.org, is one great source. After signing in as a member, click on the Legislation section, go to Legislative Action Center, and click Media Guide. Then type in your ZIP code. This will give you a list of media in your area. You can also go to the “Yellow Pages” in your local phone book. Under the headings of Newspapers, Radio Stations, and Television Stations, you will find basic information about your local media. A telephone call to the local media outlet can help you find out additional information. Another good source of information on the media is your local library. The reference sections of public and college libraries usually have media directories that provide detailed information. Media contact lists should be updated regularly to reflect changes in your local media market.

The media list information should be listed in a way that makes it easy to use. For example:

Anytown Clarion-Bugle
Reporter or Editor Name
Title (City Editor, Business
123 Main Street
Anytown, MD 01234
(301)123-4567
Fax (301)345-6789
E-mail address

These suggested press entries provide the essential information needed for creating a media contact list. From these entries, you can develop a mailing list for press releases and media advisories. In addition, you can develop a media telephone contact list for follow up calls, timely announcements, or scheduling changes. The media list can also include other important information, such as deadlines, notes about special public affairs programs, or special editions of the local paper.

The Media

Knowing the deadlines (when a paper goes to press or a radio/television news program makes final preparations to go on-the-air) helps to ensure that materials arrive in a timely and usable manner. Some daily newspapers have more than one deadline. There may be early and “Final” editions. Weekly papers will want materials two to three days before the paper goes to press. Radio and television news departments will want reasonable time to develop and produce news stories for broadcast. Information concerning the deadlines of particular media outlets is important and should be included as part of your media contact list.

An essential public relations tool, the media contact list helps organize the important information you need to develop a media relations program.



One of the most important tools for use in public relations is a media kit, also known as a press kit. The media kit provides reporters, editors, and other members of the media with basic background information. The media kit can focus on an organization, a specific issue, a public service activity, and a host of other subjects.

As you prepare to meet the media, you may find it helpful to design and develop a NARFE Media Kit that provides a basic overview of NARFE. This media kit can be used when you visit members of the media to introduce yourself as the person responsible for public relations for your chapter or federation. It can be used as an introduction piece for reporters and editors who are new to your area and not familiar with NARFE. And, it can be used to provide background when you or a chapter or federation officer is scheduled to appear on a talk show or at other public events. The media kit, providing basic background information, is suitable for many purposes. You may even want to put together several media kits so they are ready to go as needed.

With a media contact list to guide you and armed with a NARFE Media Kit, you are ready to meet the media!

CREATING THE MEDIA KIT

Consider including the following (not necessarily all of them) in your NARFE Media Kit:

- The “What Is NARFE?” brochure, which provides a brief and basic overview of NARFE.
- A copy of *NARFE* magazine.
- Information about the charitable activities with which your chapter or federation is involved.
- Facts and figures about the economic effect NARFE members have on their communities.
- Copies of recent chapter or federation press releases, newsletters, and other appropriate materials.
- Copies of newspaper or magazine articles about your chapter or federation.
- A list of national, federation, and chapter elected officials.
- Your name, address, and telephone number.

The media kit should be assembled in an orderly and presentable fashion. Some public relations officers find it convenient to assemble media kits in an inexpensive pocket folder notebook.

Who's Who in the Media

WHO'S WHO AT THE NEWSPAPER/ MAGAZINE/ NEWSLETTER

A typical daily paper with a circulation of 50,000 can have over 30 different editors, responsible for everything from agriculture to travel and all points in between. A typical weekly, with a circulation of just around 2,000, has just one editor.

Clearly, there are a variety of publications, differing in size, focus, coverage, and readership. In addition to daily and weekly newspapers, there are many regional magazines, buyer's guides, and newsletters that should not be overlooked as media outlets for your public relations materials.

As you work with your local media, you will gain an important understanding of who does what at any given publication. However, there are positions and job descriptions common to most newspapers, magazines, and newsletters.

Editors

Editors of newspapers, magazines, and newsletters are not unlike traffic cops. They oversee the flow of incoming information and direct it toward a suitable location—front page, back page, metro section, editorial page, lifestyle section, and, yes, even the wastebasket. While a small, weekly paper may have only one editor, larger papers have numerous editors. The *News or Assignment Editor* is usually in charge of the day-to-day news gathering operation. He/she sorts through the press releases, incoming faxes, and telephone calls and makes decisions regarding assignments for reporters. Other editors oversee specific sections of the paper. For example, the *Editorial Page Editor* is responsible for editorials and columns appearing on the editorial page. There may also be a *Feature Editor* or *Lifestyle Editor* who oversees the gathering and preparing of stories that would not be considered “hard news” but are of interest to readers.

Bureau Chiefs

Some larger papers may have community-based news gathering operations away from their main offices called news bureaus. Bureau Chiefs are responsible for a specific coverage area. The Bureau Chief will oversee and direct the news gathering efforts of reporters assigned to the bureau. The local Bureau Chief should not be overlooked as an important media contact.

Reporters

Reporters are the foot soldiers of the newspaper business. They cover the news events, conduct the interviews, and write the stories. While the news

Who's Who In The Media



editor and copy editor may rewrite the reporter's story before publication, it is the reporter's impressions, recollections, and note-taking that shape the basis for the resulting news story. A number of reporters, particularly at smaller papers and magazines, are generalists, covering any and all assigned news events. At larger papers, magazines and, particularly, specialty newsletters, reporters specialize in a particular subject or area. For instance, a larger paper may have a political reporter, a health reporter, and a reporter assigned to a specific area of the city. A newsletter that focuses on retirement living will have reporters and writers covering issues and topics of interest to its targeted audience—senior citizens.

As you get to know and work with your local media, you will be able to identify who is who, and what they do at your local newspaper, magazine, or newsletter. The appropriate media persons should be incorporated into your media contact list.

Also, don't overlook media outlets that are not usually included among the "mainstream" media. Buyer's Guides, church newsletters, and many other smaller publications can prove to be a valuable means of reaching potential and active NARFE members.

Who's Who In The Media

WHO'S WHO IN RADIO & TELEVISION

Radio and television (including cable television) can play an important role in your public relations efforts. The “electronic media,” as radio and television are known, provide a variety of opportunities to promote NARFE and its message. These opportunities will be discussed more fully in a later chapter. For now, let's look at who's who in radio and television. Just as with newspapers, the size of the radio or television station determines the number of people you will want to get to know and include on your media contact list.

General Manager

The General Manager oversees the operation of the radio or television station. In smaller communities, the General Manager may wear a number of hats and be involved in some or all aspects of the station's operation.

Program Director/Operations Manager

The Program Director, sometimes called the Operations Manager, is responsible for the programs aired and in some instances will determine which Public Service Announcements (PSAs) will be used.

Public Affairs Director

Some radio and television stations will have a staff person whose job it is to work with public service groups and non-profit organizations. This staff person, who may go by any number of titles, including Public Affairs Director, Public Relations Director, Public Service Director, or Community Affairs Director, will determine which PSAs are broadcast and, in many instances, will help groups and organizations develop PSAs, public service media campaigns, and community improvement programs.

News Departments

The personnel found in the news departments of radio and television stations will also vary based on size. Some smaller radio and television stations will not have a news department. However, do not overlook the media opportunities these smaller stations provide through public affairs programming (talk shows, community forums, etc.) and the airing of PSAs. A News Director will oversee the news operation of a radio or television station. At smaller radio and television stations, the News Director will be the main contact for your news stories. At larger radio and television stations, there will be an Assignment Editor who is responsible for assigning stories and directing the news gathering efforts of the reporters.

Who's Who In The Media

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Radio and television Reporters, like their print media counterparts, are the ones on the frontline, gathering the news, doing the interviews, and putting together the stories for broadcast.

This is an overview of the personnel and job descriptions of those found working at radio and television stations. However, don't hesitate to call your local station to pin-point just whom you need to talk to in a particular instance.

PUBLIC RELATIONS TELEPHONE DETECTIVE/ MEDIA CONTACT LIST BUILDER

TV Station Telephone Receptionist: Good afternoon. This is TV Channel 45-Alive.

PR Chair: Hello. My name is _____ and I am PR Chair for NARFE Chapter 26. Could you please tell me the name of your News Director?

TV Station Receptionist: Yes, her name is Charlene Metz.

PR Chair: Does your news department have an Assignment Editor?

TV Station Receptionist: Yes, his name is Tom Tyler.

PR Chair: There are times when our organization is interested in broadcasting Public Service Announcements. Whom would we need to contact at Channel 4 to discuss Public Service Announcements?

TV Station Receptionist: The person you would need to contact is Gloria Beech.

PR Chair: Finally, I notice that Channel 45 airs a "Community News" program on Sunday afternoons. Whom would we need to contact about participating on this program?

TV Station Receptionist: "Community News" is produced by Gil Halbbrook. He schedules guests for the program.

PR Chair: Thank you very much for your assistance. Good Bye.

News & Views

WHAT IS NEWS?

The news media plays an important role in our society. The information provided by the media helps shape our lives and our view of the world and the communities in which we live. This information can be useful, entertaining, and educational. It brings us in touch with human tragedies as well as human triumphs. It provides us with the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” we have come to expect from newspapers, radio, and television. This information is what we call “news.”

In the previous chapter, we looked at “Who’s Who” in the media, identifying key news media personnel and describing the jobs they do. For our purposes, the most important job they do is decide what will be included in the newspaper, be heard on the radio, or seen on television. So, the important question is, what does the media consider to be news?

The news media places a value on information. This “news value” will determine whether a story appears on the front page, is buried on page 14, or is not used at all. Taught in journalism schools and learned on the job, news value helps editors decide the importance of the story or information to their readers, listeners, or viewers. By becoming familiar with some of the criteria used in assessing news value, you can develop strategies for maximizing your public relations efforts.

HARD NEWS/ SOFT NEWS

“When a dog bites a man, that’s not news because it happens too often, but if a man bites a dog, that is news.” This classic definition of news, attributed to Editor John Bogart of the old New York Sun, is often used to differentiate “hard” news from what (for a better word) might be called “soft” news. Hard news would be “front page” material. It would be the lead story on the radio or television newscast. It would be the reporting of out-of-the-ordinary occurrences, events, or developments that have high news value or are of significant interest to readers, listeners, or viewers.

“Soft” news, on the other hand, does not have a high news value, but is included because it is informative, useful, or entertaining. Soft news would include “human interest” stories about interesting people, places, and things. It would include special features, such as stories about travel, food, and the arts. And, soft news would include meeting announcements, awards and honors, and community events.

News value can also be assessed based on a story’s potential public appeal.



The news editor must consider the public's interest in any given news story—national and local. The editor will sort through the many press releases, news wire reports, stories from the paper's reporters, and other information to determine what to include in a specific edition of the newspaper or electronic news broadcast.

**NATIONAL NEWS/
LOCAL NEWS**

Most daily papers will include a mix of national and local stories. Radio and television stations usually receive their national news from a network. (For example, the Mutual Radio Network or the NBC Nightly News.)

Local news is generally the focus of weekly and regional newspapers. The same is true for community-based radio and television stations that produce local news programs. The local news media will assess news value on the potential appeal of stories and materials to their readers, listeners, or viewers.

In some instances, a story which is national in scope will be "localized" to strengthen its appeal. For example, a national story about congressional action to close hundreds of military bases may be localized by including specific information on how this action will affect the local military base, including the civilians who work there.

It is said that the three most important considerations in real estate are location, location, location. Well, the three most important considerations for increasing news value, and your public relations success rate in the local media market, are localize, localize, localize.

There is a lot of competition for the limited amount of space and available air time in the local news media. Editors can only use a small percentage of the information they receive each day. Localizing your material and information helps increase its appeal, and in turn, its news value.

NARFE NEWS

Understanding the criteria used by the media in determining news value can help you shape and prepare NARFE-related stories and information for use by newspapers, radio, and television, particularly in your local media market.

Front Page/Lead Story opportunities for chapter or federation public relations chairs may be few and far between. However, do not overlook the opportunity to be included in a national story being "localized" by your news media. For example, if the editor of your local newspaper is planning

to run a national story about congressional action to reduce the deficit, which includes a proposal to cut the annuities of federal retirees, the editor familiar with the local NARFE chapter may well call you to ask for your comments on the proposal. The editor may also want to know how many federal retirees live in the newspaper's coverage area and how the proposal would affect them. Working with your chapter/federation legislative chair, you would be able to provide relevant information and NARFE would likely be included in the "localized" version of the story.

The bulk of your public relations efforts will not be hard news or, "stop the presses" journalism. Rather, you will be working to maintain a consistent presence in the media for your chapter/federation. This will include chapter meetings, public service activities, retirement service center news, and other chapter and federation events. This will be the bedrock of a successful media relations program.

However, a knowledge of the criteria used by news editors can help you assess the "value" of your news stories, and help you shape and prepare information for the media.

BEYOND THE NEWS

Beyond the front page, beyond the radio or television newscast, there are a number of opportunities to promote the NARFE message and membership. While soft news stories can provide a consistent presence for your chapter/federation, the opportunities that lie beyond the news "mainstream" should be considered when putting together a public relations program. A media availability inventory can help you identify and organize opportunities that go beyond the news. In Chapter 2, we talked about developing a media contact list to help identify and categorize the different media outlets in your area. The media inventory goes one step further and identifies the public relations opportunities that exist at each media outlet.

The local newspaper may have special sections or features that would be appropriate for NARFE-related stories and information. The local radio and television stations may have public/community affairs programming. And, the local cable television system should provide public access channels for use by individuals and organizations in the community. Developing a media availability inventory calls on us to look beyond the news and analyze the public relations potential of media outlets. A media availability inventory may include:

Letters to the Editor

The editorial page, one of the most-read sections of the newspaper, is an excellent forum for promoting the NARFE message. In many instances, an editorial written by a NARFE member has not only increased awareness and concern for a specific issue but has increased public awareness of NARFE's very existence, which promotes membership and support for NARFE's positions. Letters to the editor are excellent methods of responding to incorrect or slanted stories about federal retirees and their retirement benefits.

Special Newspaper Features & Sections

Many newspapers have special features and sections that focus on specific communities and neighborhoods in their coverage area. There may be a special feature that spotlights people, events, or activities. Smaller newspapers may even be receptive to a regular column written for federal retirees to talk about important federal retiree issues and concerns. A newspaper column for and about federal retirees would be extremely appropriate in areas where there are a large number of federal retirees.

Fliers & Brochures

Fliers, brochures, and posters are all good ways to promote NARFE and your chapter or federation. Start taking stock of all the places you see where other groups and organizations are placing their announcements and information, and determine whether NARFE materials could be put there as well.

Public/Community Affairs Programs

Local radio and television stations provide opportunities for community-based groups and organizations to discuss issues and events of public interest. By identifying and becoming familiar with the public/community affairs programs in your community, you can determine which ones should be included in your public relations plan.

Radio Talk/Call-In Shows

Talk radio programs provide a double opportunity for public relations practitioners. First, there is the opportunity to appear on the program. The chapter or federation legislative chair or other officer could be scheduled on a talk radio program to present a federal retiree's perspective on current events and issues. A NARFE public service activity could be featured. Or, a representative from the local NARFE Retirement Service Center could appear on a program to talk about services provided by the center and to

The Alliance for Community Media (ACM), formerly the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, is a non-profit organization which provides information and assistance with developing programs for public access television. For more information, write: Alliance for Community Media, 666 11th Street, NW, Suite 740, Washington, DC 20001-4542, (202) 393-2650. www.alliancecm.org

answer callers' questions.

Another public relations opportunity provided by talk radio is the chance to participate in the program as a caller. By participating in the program, the NARFE caller can increase public awareness about NARFE and the concerns of federal retirees. While some subjects may not lend themselves to NARFE's objectives and message, you should be alert to opportunities to interject a NARFE point of view.

Public Access Channels/Cablecast

Provided as part of local cable franchise agreements, public access channels provide an excellent public relations opportunity for NARFE chapters and federations to participate in existing programs or to produce their own "cablecast."

With public access, air time on a local cable channel is provided free of charge or for a small fee, usually on a first come/first serve basis. Production facilities and equipment, along with professional assistance, may also be provided. You can check with your local cable television company or the local governmental body that issued a franchise license to the company for detailed information. The franchise licensing agreement outlines public access channel availability and what services and assistance the cable company will provide.

In addition to public access channels, your local cable company may also have education and government access channels. These channels may also provide public relations opportunities for your chapter/federation.

These are but a sampling of the public relations opportunities that exist "beyond the news." By developing a media availability inventory for your community, you will be able to identify the appropriate opportunities to include for your use.

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The Press Release

THE PRESS RELEASE: HOW TO WRITE IT HOW TO USE IT

The press release is the most common tool used in public relations. Your release tells editors and reporters what news you have to offer and gives them the chance to weigh it against other demands for news space or time. Remember, though, a release is not the only vehicle for telling about NARFE and may not be the best one. (Check Chapter 4, “Beyond the News” and Chapter 9, “Community Relations” for other suggestions.)

A typical big city newspaper or TV station gets literally hundreds of releases every single day. An editor doesn't have time to do much more than give each one a glance. In many big city newsrooms, they may not even get opened. Reporters and editors say that they use only 2% of the releases they receive. Don't lose heart, though; they also say that 60% of news stories are suggested by PR practitioners. This means you have to create a “news hook”—show its importance—in the headline and again in the first paragraph or “lead” of your news release.

Content of the Release

Whenever possible, the first paragraph or lead should answer the five basic questions of a news story: Who, What, When, Where, Why. The headline on your release is nothing more than an abbreviated version of the lead. The paragraphs that follow the lead provide supporting details.

- The second paragraph should be devoted to developing the “news hook” of the story in a succinct, declarative way.
- If an individual is the subject of a release, substantiate his/her qualifications in the third paragraph by ranking them from most to least impressive.
- In the fourth paragraph, state the relevance of the individual or event to the NARFE chapter/federation.
- Include a final “boiler plate” paragraph on NARFE which identifies the Association and provides membership statistics both nationally and locally.

Pointers for Writing your Press Release:

- ✍️ Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. That's not always possible, but it's a good rule of thumb. One page is best, but no more than two pages, fronts only, is recommended.
- ✍️ Give exact dates of events. Use "Thursday, September 1, 2005" rather than "next Thursday" or "tomorrow." Check all days and dates on a calendar. Use a.m. or p.m.
- ✍️ If your news release concerns an upcoming event, include the address as well as the name of the place.
- ✍️ Give the town of residence for all the people mentioned.
- ✍️ Spell out numbers from one to nine; use numerals for 10 and above. Do not begin a sentence with numerals.
- ✍️ Check all names for accuracy and spelling. The first mention of a name is "John Smith of Newark." Subsequent mentions are "Mr. Smith," although the editor may delete the "Mr."
- ✍️ Attribute any opinions. For example, According to Mr. Smith, "The reluctance of the mayor to release funds is hindering the programs for the elderly."

Format of the Release

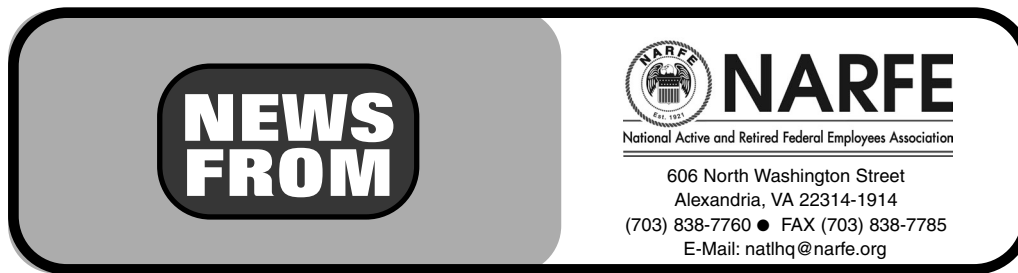
- Use your official chapter/federation letterhead for the release.
- Type the release, double spaced, fronts only.
- Type the headlines in capital letters.
- The text should have generous margins on both sides (NARFE uses 1"); center on the top and bottom.
- If you have a sharp, clear glossy photograph (black and white) that goes well with your story, include it. Carefully identify the photo and everyone in it (from left to right) on a second piece of paper (typed) and attach to back of photo with a single piece of scotch tape. NEVER WRITE ON THE BACK OF A PHOTOGRAPH, and never send Polaroids.
- Keep a copy of all releases filed in chronological order.
- Give the following information at the top of the page. It can go in either the left or righthand comer, but should be consistent:
CONTACT: John Roberts
(301) 123-4567 (office)
(301) 234-5678 (home)

This tells an editor or reporter whom to call if there is a question about your news. In the other corner type:

For Immediate Release: Thursday, September 1, 2005.

Before you mail or deliver your release, check spelling and typing for accuracy.

SEE SAMPLE RELEASE BELOW



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — September 1, 2005

CONTACT: John Roberts
(301) 123-4567 (office)
(301) 234-5678 (home)

**FEDERAL RETIREES TAKE LITTLE COMFORT IN BUDGET PROCESS:
NARFE CALLS ON LAWMAKERS TO “HOLD FAST” ON EARNED,
PROMISED BENEFITS**

Federal retirees can take little comfort in the fact that the Administration’s proposed budget for the coming fiscal year does not recommend cuts in their earned and promised retirement benefits.

“We know from experience that the congressional budget process can create cuts not even called for by the Administration,” said John Roberts, a Legislative Officer with the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE).

Mr. Roberts called on members of the House Budget Committee to “hold fast” against any congressional budget proposals which might diminish earned and promised federal retirement and survivor benefits.

NARFE, with some 1,500 chapters and almost 360,000 members, is the only association dedicated to protecting the earned retirement benefits of federal employees and retirees.

The News Conference

CALLING THE NEWS CONFERENCE

Before calling a news conference, analyze with key members of your chapter/federation the purpose for calling the media together and what it is that you want to say. It must be especially important and newsworthy. You might want to quickly disseminate facts about important resolutions passed at the federation/national convention, for example. If you are sure that a conference is the appropriate vehicle for getting out your news, there are some specific steps to take.

Time

If you have a choice, pick an hour which gives the greatest number of reporters a chance to prepare their stories before deadlines. Between 10 a.m. and noon is generally good.



Day

In general, Tuesday through Thursday is best. Try to avoid Mondays and Fridays and especially avoid weekends as most news organizations have reduced staff on Saturdays and Sundays. Be sensitive to the various holidays through the year, secular and religious. The overriding consideration, however, should be the day of publication that will best suit your objectives. It may be

preferable, for example, to obtain coverage on a slow news Saturday than risk no coverage by holding a news conference during a heavy news week.

Place

Find a place that is convenient to the press or important to the story. If there will be television coverage, make sure there will be room for cameras to move around. Hold the conference on the sidewalk in front of a respite center for Alzheimer's Disease patients if it would add the proper emphasis to a news conference focusing on Alzheimer's Disease.

The News Conference

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Announcement

Four to five days ahead, mail the news conference announcement so that editors will have time to assess the news value and assign someone to cover the event. The message (on NARFE letterhead) should include date, time, place, reason, and name/telephone number of NARFE contact.

The Day Before

Phone city editors, special reporters and news assignment editors at the radio/TV stations to remind them. This also gives you a chance to plug the conference and, without pressing too hard, get a feel for how many of them plan to attend. Decide who will do which job: who is the spokesperson; who makes the introductions and acts as master of ceremonies; who will help field the questions.

Media Kit (See page 13)

Contains the written material to give to the media including:

- A copy of the press release with the release timed to coincide with the conference.
- Glossies (5 X 7, 8 X 10) if relevant and if your budget permits. Be sure to tape the caption to the back of the photo. Remember: Never write directly on the back of a photo.
- The text of prepared remarks, if there are any.
- A fact sheet on your NARFE chapter and federation with information on the size of the chapter/federation, how much your annuities contribute to the local economy, the chapter and federation's volunteer efforts. NARFE National can help by providing the facts and figures.
- A fact sheet on NARFE National. You may use the "What is NARFE?" membership brochure and/or get a background sheet from headquarters.

A SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT

MEDIA ALERT: September 1, 2005

For information contact:

J.C. Brown, 123-4567

John T. Doe, president of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, will announce the results of an important new survey supported by NARFE at a press conference at the University Auditorium, 123 Main Street, on Tuesday, September 6, at 10 a.m.

The News Conference

The News Conference

Keep the presentation brief—perhaps 10 minutes. Allow plenty of time for questions. There’s an art to ending at the right time. You’ll note that questions will be slow in coming; a few people will start to leave; all signs that it’s time to wrap things up. At this point the spokesperson should thank the news people for coming, say that the conference is over and mention that the principals will remain for additional questions. Always have a sign-in sheet. Be sure that the last-minute arrivals sign in as well. Immediately following the conference, mail the press kit to key media representatives who were invited but were not present.

The News Availability

Consider also a different format—the news availability—in the place of a news conference. News availabilities are less formally structured and do not necessitate a general gathering of reporters. Instead, representatives of the media attend a news session at a time and place convenient to them. If, for example, your chapter/federation is involved in a story or if you are releasing an important study or report, you could schedule a news availability with spokespersons to give interviews about the report or story. If you have a program with a guest speaker of interest, you could have the speaker “available” for interviews after the speech. Logistics such as day, time, and announcement formats would remain the same as those for news conferences.

The Media Interview

Preparation is the key. Whatever your interview goal, first clearly define it in your mind and on paper. This will help you remember the main points to make and will keep you focused on these points during the interview. Focus on two or three points you want to make during the interview. Be sure to make them over and over. You don't have to avoid questions but your responsibility is to make NARFE's points quickly and effectively, then answer the interviewer's questions. The techniques described in this section work equally well for print or radio/TV.

There is evidence that a television viewer makes a decision about a speaker's credibility within the first 25 seconds. It is vital, then, to be prepared to speak easily and naturally, to know what is the most important message you wish to present, and then to do it. Here are steps you can take to ensure that you will appear to be a poised, confident, and experienced expert on the subject.

Find out as much as possible about the interviewer

If you are booked for a radio or TV appearance, for example, watch or listen to at least three or four shows to determine the interviewer's style, the kinds of questions asked, and whether he/she is bland or abrasive. For a print interview, read the reporter's column or some of his/her stories written for the paper.

Summarize your main points

With your objectives in mind, list the main points you want to make. Typing them on large index cards and going over them repeatedly is one way to sharpen your memory. If you're slated for a radio or newspaper interview, take the cards with you as a source of ready reference. Having them will prevent you from forgetting key points and will also help to relieve any anxiety. However, don't read the cards during the interview or try to remember what you want to say word-for-word. Memorize key phrases or sentences here and there. The surest way to make a TV/radio appearance dull is to sound as if you are reading. The goal is to sound as conversational, relaxed, informal and spontaneous as possible.

The Media Interview

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Give the interviewer information about yourself

Some interviewers find out as much as they can about their guests beforehand. Others do little in the way of homework. It is a good idea to send, in advance, a NARFE media kit (details are discussed in Chapter 2) and a short biography of yourself highlighting your activities, career and interest in the subject.

Anticipate difficult questions

Are there any questions the interviewer might ask that could embarrass either you or NARFE? Prepare for tough questions and be ready to answer effectively. Never get mad! It will reflect badly on you and NARFE and will not solve any problem. Any chance to effectively respond to a difficult question will be lost since the audience will see and remember only the anger and not the response.

Keep your audience/readers in mind

The interviewer will do this and so must you. Consider the type of station/readership, the time of day, the nature of the community, and the audience/readership attitudes toward the subject being discussed.

Prepare aids you will need

Will props help you achieve your objective and make your points more readily? Especially in the case of a TV interview, it's wise to check ahead of time with the program director and the show's producer. Props might be photographs, charts, and illustrations.

Build your poise and assurance

The best way to develop genuine self-confidence is to get to know your subject so well it would be difficult to stump you on a question or catch you in a blunder. Genuine self-confidence relaxes you and frees you from anxiety. Remember reporters, writers, and talk show hosts prefer short, terse comments that get across solid points. He/she then has the opportunity to either go on to another question or encourage you to elaborate on what was just said.

Level with the audience

This is a basic rule of interview procedure. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, say so. If you need more information, offer to get it. It's ok not to know the answer to every question. At the same time, you have to be careful not to exaggerate or slip in giving out sensitive information. If asked a question that puts you on the spot, you can explain that you haven't had time to examine the facts but you will be glad to make a statement when you do.

Talk, but do not monopolize

Guard against doing all of the talking, as any one-sided interview is usually boring no matter what the subject. On the other hand, you may have the opposite problem if you participate in a group interview and are confronted with a talk show monopolist. In this case fight fire with fire; don't hesitate to interrupt; try to get the interviewer's attention by signaling when you have something to say. Be extremely careful with this technique. It is easy to be perceived as bullying or domineering. Strive to be concise, polite, and professional in your delivery.



Responding to Negative Publicity

One of the most vexing experiences encountered by NARFE is the newspaper article or radio/TV program which portrays federal retirees as “fat cats,” accepts at face value erroneous information provided by others, or uses extreme and isolated cases to reach a wrong conclusion.

Often the adverse article contains elements of truth skillfully woven with elements of fiction and it is difficult to separate the fact from the fancy in framing a response. Reluctant to treat the same topic too often, editors are not always receptive to rebuttals (“We had something on retirement yesterday, sorry . . .”)

These and other factors have led many PR practitioners to the conclusion that attempting to respond to adverse articles or newscasts is probably the

least productive of all public relations initiatives. And yet, it must be done.

Your efforts can help turn around public opinion. Here are some suggestions:

“Immediately following the appearance of the offending article or broadcast, frame a response to the editor/station manager.”

Promptness is important

Immediately following the appearance of the offending article or broadcast, frame a response to the editor/station manager. It is best to respond by letter, but you may make a telephone call as well, especially if the piece was a radio or TV broadcast.

Deal in facts

All chapters receive the position papers and fact sheets from the National Office, and all NARFE members receive NARFE magazine. As a NARFE leader, you will also receive a copy of *Quarterly News for NARFE Leaders*. Use these materials.

Responding to Negative Publicity

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Make your point as clearly and briefly as possible

Remember that many readers/listeners experience difficulty in following a long drawn out explanation of a technical subject like COLAs, CSRS, or FERS.

Don't offend the editor, newscaster or talk show host

Appeal to them from the point of view that the article or broadcast contained factual errors which you would like to see corrected, then get to the point(s) you need to make.

Assume some readers saw/heard the original article/program, but others did not

Restate the erroneous points briefly, then respond to them.

Community Relations & Public Service

**COMMUNITY
RELATIONS
DO GOOD AND
TELL ABOUT IT!**

Chapters and federations are deeply involved in their communities. This involvement is reflected in the numerous public service activities undertaken by NARFE members, chapters, and federations. This great public service, this significant contribution being made by NARFE members in their communities, makes for good public relations.

First and foremost, NARFE public service activities are making a difference. The significant contributions made by NARFE members to Alzheimer's Disease research are nationally recognized. NARFE Retirement Service Centers are providing essential assistance to federal retirees, their spouses and survivors. NARFE members are involved in adopt-a-highway litter cleanup programs, they are visiting shut-ins, and they are volunteering time at hospitals and nursing homes. Where there is a need in the community, it is likely you can find a NARFE member involved.

NARFE public service activities go a long way toward achieving important public relations objectives. Public service helps increase public awareness throughout the community and among potential NARFE members. It helps NARFE gain and maintain public appreciation. And public service increases respect for NARFE, its message, and its membership.

Community Relations & Public Service



The potential news value of NARFE public service activities should not be overlooked. Newspapers, particularly weekly papers, will include news stories and photographs about significant public service activities. Local radio and television stations may be interested in having NARFE members partici-

partate in a public or community affairs program to discuss a public service activity. An invitation for members of the community to join with members of a local NARFE chapter in a public service activity might have some news value. Working with NARFE members involved in public



service activities, you can identify the potential news stories and assess their news value. **GREAT PUBLIC SERVICE CAN MAKE FOR GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS.**



Tips on Public Speaking

One of the greatest challenges for NARFE chapters and federations is that of maintaining positive public visibility. To answer that need, you should actively seek out opportunities to speak in public settings. Those who do so perform a valuable service for NARFE. All members are encouraged to work similarly, to seek out opportunities to place the name and good work of NARFE in the public spotlight regularly and vigorously.

There are millions of individuals who are eligible to join NARFE but haven't done so because they don't know about the organization. It is up to folks like you to help shape NARFE's identity in the most positive terms for those many individuals who are still in the dark. The truth is that people who could join us are everywhere. But if we fail to use the tools around us to deliver our message, they might as well be invisible.

We often hear from members who want to find new ways to tell their friends and communities about NARFE. It is our hope that this handbook will help members to do just that.

If you recognize that some retirees or near-retirees in your town don't understand what NARFE is all about, then you can work to inform them. One way to do that is to use your local business or social clubs, church or community groups, who often seek out speakers carrying important messages.

Letters sent to these groups from the chapter or federation can tip them off to the existence of worthy speakers from NARFE. The topics one might suggest are many. These might include NARFE's work through over three-quarters of a century. They might include noteworthy life stories and careers of chapter members, or community work done by NARFE volunteers. If the talk is well done, people will know more about NARFE. And that ought to trigger questions like, "How do I join?" (Of course, you or your speaker will be likely to provide the answer to that whether it is asked or not.) The key is to create within your chapter or federation a speakers' bureau, a pool of members who know NARFE well, and who are, above all else, enthusiastic. With knowledge and enthusiasm on their side, public speaking ability can become an acquired skill.

Tips on Public Speaking

TIPS ON PUBLIC SPEAKING

Preparation

Studious preparation beforehand will go a long way toward calming pre-talk jitters. You should know that stage fright is normal. The trick is to avoid the appearance of being nervous, which will put an audience ill at ease. Practicing beforehand enables a person to be more spontaneous because he or she will be that much more familiar with the material.

Tape Recording

Try it in advance. You'll find that, by listening to the playback, you can spot controversial or long words and eliminate them. Remember: little words work well. Also, mark your text for phrasing and emphasis. Use lively pacing. Varying the pitch and tone of your voice will create interest and credibility. And practice.

Videotaping

If you can arrange it, videotape your practice sessions. Work to project a confident, authoritative presence. Because "presence" is mostly a function of posture, pay attention to that. Keep your weight on the balls of your feet and do not shift or lean, but don't freeze either. Find your comfortable balance.

Hands

Use gestures only to accompany, underscore, or emphasize words, but only in a motion away from the face. Use one hand to mark your page, the other to move it aside when finished with it.

Smile

Do it to relax your face and your audience. Make eye contact. Rehearsal will make it easier to lift your eyes from the written page.

Grooming

Wear conservative attire to keep your audience's attention focused on the message. Avoid plaid jackets or ties, busy prints, or out-of-date clothing, all for the same reason.

Text

Type double-spaced and in large type if possible.



Tips on Public Speaking.....

Critique

Ask for one after each rehearsal and from friends after the final presentation. This will help you polish your skills. Do not take offense; perspective always changes with the viewpoint. You may also be relieved to know that some of the things you were concerned about went unnoticed.

Recon

Scout out the surroundings before the presentation. Check the size, acoustics, temperature, and the sound system (if there is one). Ask for adjustments to room temperature or sound system beforehand if you so desire.

Remember: If you are nervous about public speaking, you are in good company. An investment of time, energy, and practice will ensure that you will accelerate your development as an effective speaker for NARFE.

Chapter & Federation Newsletters

A newsletter is one of the best means to promote communications among the members of your chapter/federation. Sent to all members, the newsletter will communicate important information, share news about chapter/federation activities, and promote membership improvement and retention. The newsletter is designed for a specific audience – NARFE members and potential members.

TIPS FOR EDITING CHAPTER AND FEDERATION NEWSLETTERS

While how the information is conveyed is as important as what the information is, an effective chapter newsletter does not have to be an expensive project. Some of the best newsletters consist of just a single sheet (8½" x 11") typed on both sides and photocopied. Brief declarative sentences and descriptive headlines are recommended to enhance understanding and interest. Listed below are some guidelines.

Check your facts! Make sure the information in your newsletter is accurate. Check for spelling, especially of members' and national officers' names.

Standard Information

Regardless of whether a newsletter is two or more pages in length, certain "standard" information should be in each issue, such as:

- Names of chapter officers accompanied by their titles and telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
- The name and telephone number and e-mail address of the editor.
- A calendar of upcoming chapter events (next 2-3 months).
- Names of senators/representatives along with their local and Washington addresses and telephone numbers and their e-mail addresses.

Check your mailing lists! Are you mailing to deceased members? Don't send more than one copy to HQ. It will be circulated through NROs and Senior Staff. Be sure you have current national officers' names.

Headlines

Liberal use of headlines (heads) is important. This practice enables the reader to quickly and easily absorb the sense of the news, thereby allowing him or her to focus on items of most interest. A lack of heads can discourage a person who reads slowly or has either limited attention span or time.

Visit the Bulk Mail Section of the local post office for rules on mailing your newsletter. Or visit [USPS.com/businessmail101](https://www.usps.com/businessmail101).

President's Column

It is a good idea to lead off the text with a president's column, which should be clear, concise and oriented to the most important chapter business. The message could be a report about an important recent event, a policy meeting, national news or correspondence received concerning an issue of broad membership interest. It is best if you refrain from discussing vacations or home renovations or other topics not of general interest.

Chapter & Federation Newsletters

Here are some ideas for items you might want to include in your chapter newsletter:

- Local/chapter news
- “Hats Off” section, congratulating local members
- Minutes of the last meeting and/or reports from committees
 - NARFE-PAC
 - Treasurer
 - Membership
 - Sunshine Committee
 - Alzheimer’s report
- Editorials/commentaries (keep them non-partisan)
- Member profiles (e.g. Mystery Member of the Month)
- Reports/commentary from chapter/district/federation district/chapter/national officers
- Legislative/political reports
- Service officer info
- Clippings of interest
- News from Headquarters
- Calendar of events
- Member prospect name forms
- Chapter history tidbits
- Health tips
- Poems, quotes, anecdotes, jokes (in good taste) and trivia questions
- Photos

(You don’t necessarily need to include all of these components; you might want to vary your newsletter from time to time.)

Identify Writers

If “I” or “we” is used in the body of an article, make sure that the writer is first identified.

Cover Pertinent Issues

Federation and national issues should be regularly covered in chapter newsletters.

Consistent Design

Strive for consistency in design so that readers may readily refer to sections of primary interest to them. As an example, you may choose to start each issue with the president’s column followed by the legislative report and the service officer’s news. You can enclose upcoming meeting details and similar important subject matter in a box. See NARFE Web site for design ideas and boilerplate design: www.narfe.org. Click on Chapter and Federation Development Section. Scroll down on right to Newsletter Tips and Templates.

Tips for Layout

- A double-column layout is easier to read than a span of page-wide type.
- If there is more material than will fit comfortably on both sides of an 8½” x 11” sheet then try a piece of 11” x 17” paper folded horizontally. You can easily enlarge this format by adding an insert.
- A newsletter designed as a self-mailer saves envelope expense. On the lower quarter of the back page imprint the chapter return address, preferably in the upper left-hand corner. (Usually the editor’s address is used.) The remaining space is reserved for an address label and postage. Staple along the bottom.
- Either underline important dates and times or type them in caps for purposes of easy reference and emphasis.

Advertising

Some chapters have found that selling small ads for local businesses in their newsletter can help with the cost of publishing the newsletter. Before you take this step, however, check with the postmaster where you mail your newsletter to make sure you are within Postal Service guidelines.

Copyright

Any article or story disseminated by NARFE Headquarters may be re-produced, with attribution. Some chapters like to re-produce articles from other sources. Generally, this may be done without violating copyright regulations if the source is credited.

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The Internet

The advent of the World Wide Web revolutionized mass communications. The world now has a new medium at its fingertips, a medium that facilitates communication between computer users anywhere in the world, at any time, with a few strokes of the keyboard or a simple click of the mouse.

In addition to the traditional use of newspapers, radio, and television, the Internet offers another viable medium for companies, organizations, and individuals to convey messages, relay information, and solicit responses via web sites on the Internet. NARFE HQ has taken full advantage of this opportunity by posting www.narfe.org several years ago. In 1998, NARFE HQ dramatically enhanced the design and capability of the Web site, affording visitors to the site the ability to access the various departments of HQ, view recent press releases and legislative efforts, and relay any questions or suggestions potential members and members may have. In 2003, the NARFE Web site was split into “Members Only” and “Guest” sections.

The objective of our Web site is threefold: first, to inform the public of who NARFE is and what our objectives are; second, to update and inform our members on key legislative issues, press releases, retirement and annuity news and advice, and other administrative information; and third, to attract and solicit potential members.

In addition to NARFE HQ’s Web site, some NARFE regions, federations, and chapters have independently established their own Web sites. The sites are similar to the NARFE HQ site in that they provide important information, but with a local touch. Members and non-members alike can access information on dates and times of local NARFE events and chapter meetings, messages from chapter/federation officers, list of chapter/federation officers, legislative information, and NARFE background facts. These Web sites assist in achieving name recognition for our association, and allow visitors to the sites the ability to access information in a short amount of time with little effort.

We wish to stress the benefits of posting such sites. You should talk with your chapter/federation officers and members about posting a Web on the Internet if your region/federation/chapter has yet to do so. If you research the topic, you will find that there are many companies that provide such services for a nominal fee. You may even find companies that allow users to establish a Web site free of charge.

Chapter 13

Afterword

This handbook ends where it began, with an emphasis on how important public relations is to the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE). NARFE public relations volunteers are essential if we are to achieve the fundamental goals and objectives of our association.

With an understanding of the fundamentals of public relations, along with some effective tools and techniques, you are now prepared to develop a public relations program for your chapter or federation. The Public Relations Department is prepared to offer you the support and assistance you need to develop and maintain a public relations program.

As was said in the beginning of this handbook, “In partnership, working together, and with open lines of communication, NARFE’s public relations network can be strengthened and it can achieve great things. This handbook is intended to create a foundation on which to build a successful public relations program.”

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*The NARFE PR Handbook
is a publication of:*



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