



Public Relations for the Local Legion Family Summary

Midwinter Conference 2026

Slide 1 – Title Slide: Public Relations for the Local Legion Family

This slide introduces the overall subject of the presentation: how public relations (PR) can and should be used at the local level by American Legion Family organizations to strengthen reputation, visibility, engagement, and membership. The session is framed specifically for **local Posts, Auxiliary Units, the Sons of the American Legion (SAL), and the American Legion Riders (ALR)** working together as a single Local Legion Family (LLF).

The presentation is positioned as practical and action-oriented, focused on what local leaders and members can realistically implement.

Slide 2 – Welcome to Midwinter Conference 2026 / Presenters

This slide identifies the presenters and establishes their credibility:

- **Bob Shappell, USAF (Ret.)** – Tri-member, Wisconsin American Legion College Dean, National American Legion College Faculty, National Executive Committee, ALA Department National Security Chair.
Contact: BobShap@aol.com
- **Natalia Genovesi King** – American Legion Auxiliary Department PR Chair, 2nd District Chaplain, Ozaukee County 1st Vice, Unit 288 2nd Vice, Wisconsin Legion College Graduate. Contact:
KingGenovesi@gmail.com

The slide emphasizes that the presenters bring experience across multiple Legion Family branches and at local, department, and national levels.

Slide 3 – Overview

This slide outlines the major topic areas covered in the session:

- The Local Legion Family
- Local reputation
- PR tools
- Internal PR and communications
- External PR
- Local media
- Social media
- Community visibility, involvement, and engagement

This roadmap signals that PR is broader than media relations and includes how members interact with each other and the community.

Slide 4 – The Local Legion Family

This slide defines the scale of the Legion Family in Wisconsin:

- 480 American Legion Posts
- 336 Auxiliary Units
- 139 SAL Squadrons
- American Legion Riders organized by district

The key concept introduced is that **all Legion-affiliated entities in a community together form the Local Legion Family (LLF)**, regardless of internal structure.

Slide 5 – We Are a Family

The LLF is compared to a **family business**:

- Members are interconnected
- Success depends on cooperation
- In many communities, the Legion is one of the oldest organizations in town

This analogy is used to reinforce shared responsibility for reputation and sustainability.

Slide 6 – The Importance of Cooperation

This slide explains that most community members do not understand the differences between Posts, Auxiliary, SAL, and Riders. Instead:

- The public forms opinions about “The Legion” as a whole
- One group’s behavior affects all others

A key message: **There is only one local reputation, not four separate ones.**

Slide 7 – LLF Dysfunction

This slide addresses reality directly:

- Some Posts and Units do not cooperate
- Some branches rarely interact
- In some cases, relationships are strained or nonexistent

The slide poses the implicit question of *why* this occurs and sets up PR cooperation as part of the solution.

Slide 8 – Key to Success: Cooperation

PR is identified as a practical area where cooperation is achievable. Benefits include:

- Reduced duplication of effort

- Elimination of conflicting information
- Improved community reputation
- More opportunities to explain Legion Family missions

PR collaboration is presented as a low-risk, high-reward starting point for rebuilding relationships.

Slide 9 – Building a Good Reputation

A two-step framework is introduced:

1. Be good at what you do
2. Be known for your purposes and values

The slide emphasizes that good work alone is insufficient if the community does not know it exists or understand why it matters.

Slide 10 – What Is Reputation?

Reputation is defined as:

- **Perception** – how others see the organization
- **Reality** – what the organization actually does and believes

The goal of PR is to align perception with reality by clearly communicating:

- What we do
- Why we do it
- Our goals and values

Slide 11 – Post/Unit Reputation

This slide highlights the following:

- Communities change
- Membership changes
- Reputation evolves over time

Past reputation (positive or negative) may not reflect current reality. However, local perceptions strongly influence how the **entire National Legion Family** is viewed.

Slide 12 – Discussion

Participants are prompted to consider:

- The true relationship between their Post and Unit
- The level of cohesiveness and personal relationships
- Why those conditions exist

This slide encourages honest self-assessment.

Slide 13 – Discussion #2

This slide focuses on external perception:

- How does the community view your LLF?
- How do you know?
- How can you verify assumptions?

It introduces the idea that perception should be measured, not guessed.

Slide 14 – Target Audiences: Who Are They? (Part 1)

Key audiences include:

- Veterans and active-duty service members
- Recently separated veterans
- Guard and Reserve
- Families of veterans and service members
- Potential Auxiliary and SAL members

The slide emphasizes tailoring messages to each group's needs.

Slide 15 – Target Audiences: Who Are They? (Part 2)

Additional audiences include:

- Youth and young adults
- Community leaders and partners
- Volunteers
- Donors and sponsors
- Policymakers

The message is that PR must be strategic, not one-size-fits-all.

Slide 16 – Target Audience Success

This slide introduces core principles:

- Clear, audience-specific messaging
- Choosing the correct communication channels

Different audiences require different approaches.

Slide 17 – Target Audience Success (Continued)

Key practices:

- Use real stories and testimonials
- Show real impact
- Maintain consistent communication
- Build partnerships

Consistency across the Legion Family is emphasized.

Slide 18 – Target Audience Success (Continued)

Additional practices:

- Gather feedback
- Train leaders and members on messaging

- Make participation easy
- Measure results

PR is framed as an ongoing improvement process.

Slide 19 – Using PR Tools

This slide reminds participants that:

- Members are also a target audience
- Internal and external PR use different tools

PR is described as a toolbox, not a single tactic.

Slide 20 – The PR Tool Puzzle

This slide visually reinforces that effective PR requires multiple, coordinated tools working together.

Slide 21 – Our Members: Our #1 PR Tools

Members are identified as the most powerful PR asset:

- Their words
- Their actions
- Their visibility

Wearing Legion branding at non-political community events is encouraged.

Slide 22 – Our Members: Our #1 PR Tools (Continued)

This slide emphasizes reaching inactive members through:

- Calls
- Texts
- Emails

Even inactive members can be ambassadors if informed.

Slide 23 – Newsletters

Newsletters are presented as:

- A core internal PR tool
- Also, usable externally

Best practices:

- Highlight individual members
- Be forward-looking
- Encourage sharing with the community

Slide 24 – Printed Material

Despite digital tools, paper remains effective:

- Flyers
- Posters
- Banners
- Bulletin board postings

Especially effective for local businesses and community spaces.

Slide 25 – Internal PR / Communications

Internal PR goals:

- Clarify mission and goals
- Help members understand their role
- Encourage positive word-of-mouth

Visible, approachable leadership is stressed.

Slide 26 – Why Is Internal PR Important?

Key outcomes of strong internal PR:

- Higher engagement
- Better retention
- Increased volunteering
- More recruitment

Internal PR is directly linked to membership success.

Slide 27 – Use a Variety of Internal PR Tools

Different members prefer different communication methods:

- Phone
- Email
- Text
- Newsletters
- Social media

The slide stresses flexibility.

Slide 28 – What Is External PR?

External PR is defined as outreach to:

- Community
- Prospective members
- Media

It builds visibility, credibility, and trust.

Slide 29 – External PR Actions

Key actions:

- Build relationships with local leaders
- Ask how the Legion can serve

- Invite them to events
- Clearly explain Legion programs

Slide 30 – External PR Actions (Continued)

Additional actions:

- Recognize supporters
- Partner with civic groups
- Aligning events with community activities

Slide 31 – External PR Tips

This slide introduces “humble bragging”:

- Share successes truthfully
- Highlight growth, participation, and achievements

These stories shape community perception.

Slide 32 – External PR Tips (Continued)

Focus on visuals:

- Photos and videos
- Action-oriented imagery

Co-promotion with partners is encouraged.

Slide 33 – What Is the Local Media?

Defines local media:

- Newspapers
- Radio
- Television

Media is framed as a community partner.

Slide 34 – What Is the Local Media? (Continued)

Includes:

- Community newsletters
- Online platforms
- Social media groups
- Niche publications

Opportunities exist beyond traditional outlets.

Slide 35 – Know Your Media & Prepare Effectively

Key guidance:

- Know who covers what
- Respect deadlines
- Provide clear information
- Make coverage easy

Slide 36 – Build Long-Term Relationships & Benefits

Strong media relationships lead to:

- Increased visibility
- Greater trust
- Easier future coverage

Slide 37 – Online PR Resources

Wisconsin resources:

- www.wilegion.org → Resources → PR Toolkit
- www.amlegionauxwi.org → Programs → Public Relations

Includes templates, flyers, and social media guidance.

Slide 38 – Online PR Resources (Continued)

National resources:

- www.legion.org – pamphlets, speeches, marketing templates
- www.legion-aux.org – PR committee resources

Slide 39 – Social Media & Its Uses

Introduces platforms and their purposes:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- X (Twitter)
- YouTube
- LinkedIn

Each serves different audiences.

Slide 40 – Social Media Importance & Practices

Why social media matters:

- Awareness
- Engagement
- Reputation
- Cost-effectiveness

Best practices include consistency, visuals, and responsiveness.

Slide 41 – Facebook for the LLF: Pages vs Groups

Explains:

- Pages = public-facing digital front door
- Groups = member interaction and coordination (may be private).

Slide 42 – Social Media Strategy & Engagement

Focus areas:

- Define goals
- Coordinate across the LLF
- Plan content
- Monitor engagement
- Professionalism and consistency are emphasized.

Wisconsin American Legion College - <https://wilegion.org/legion-college>

Register for Classes Now!

American Legion Auxiliary PR ZOOM Chats -
<https://www.amlegionauxwi.org/publicrelations>

Next Chat – January 28, 2026 – 630 PM – 8 PM

Special Guest - American Legion Rider State Director, Corey Doehrmann

Slide 43 – LLF Websites

Why websites matter:

- Central information hub
- Professional image
- Recruitment tool

Essential features of being a Legion Family member are listed.

Slide 44 – LLF Websites (Continued)

Best practices and hosting option:

- www.legionsites.com
- Cost: \$249 first year, \$199 annually

Includes ten email addresses and support.

Slide 45 – Community Visibility, Involvement & Engagement

Visibility is described as the most effective PR tool when reputation is weak.

Word-of-mouth remains powerful.

Slide 46 – Visibility

Encourages regular attendance at community events while wearing Legion branding.

Slide 47 – Community Visits

Promotes face-to-face engagement with:

- Businesses
- Schools
- Civic groups

Focus on value to the community.

Slide 48 – Community Activities

Suggests displaying community contributions via boards, reports, or brochures.

Slide 49 – Subtle Education

Show members volunteering through newsletters and social media.

Visibility reinforces community care.

Slide 50 – Subtle Education Results

Corrects misconceptions that Legion organizations only serve veterans.

Strong LLFs are seen as community assets.

Slide 51 – Engaging the Community

Key steps:

- Identify needs
- Promote programs
- Collaborate across the LLF
- Use digital tools

Slide 52 – Engagement Activities

Recommends annual events in five categories:

- Member-centered
- Veteran-centered
- Family-centered
- Children-centered
- Community-centered

Slide 53 – Using PR to Unify Your LLF

Group discussion prompts:

- How to cooperate better
- Pilot programs
- Reputation improvement strategies

Slide 54 – Final Thoughts

Participants are asked to identify one actionable takeaway to implement.

Slide 55 – Feedback

Requests evaluation of the session and suggestions for improvement or future topics.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Interested in Attending? Email the Committee Chair
kinggenovesi@gmail.com



WWW.AMLEGIONAUXWI.ORG/PUBLICRELATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS ZOOM CHAT DATES

FOR THE LEGION FAMILY

630 PM - 8 PM, Wednesdays

September 24, 2025

October 29, 2025

January 28, 2026

February 25, 2026

April 29, 2026

TOPICS TO INCLUDE

Social Media Hashtags, Sharing Your Story with the Community, Branding, PR & Membership Go Hand in Hand, SMART PR Campaigns, Event Marketing & Post Event Strategies, Cultivating Relationships & Collaborations with Local Businesses, Newsjacking, Maximizing Your Social Media Impact & Engagement, Etiquette, Poppy Day