

PUBLIC RELATIONS CHAT #1 – NOVEMBER 29, 2023 ON ZOOM

TOPIC – ASSESSING YOUR UNIT IN THE COMMUNITY

DISTRICTS 1,2,4,6, AND 8 REPRESENTED

Facilitated by Bob Shappell and Crystal Shaw

Discussed the purposes of PR Chat sessions

- Learn about PR best practices, share ideas, and learn from each other
- Make PR more realistic and effective at the Unit level

What comes to mind when you think of Public Relations

- Methods to build and improve the Unit's reputation in the community
- Shareable knowledge – going beyond what we know
- What can we do to get our name out and recognize more who we are and what we do
- Think of the local Legion Family organization as a family business. Many posts/units are among the oldest organizations and businesses in the community

Generational issues in PR

- Just as we get new generational members into the Units, our community gets new generational members every year -- are we reaching them?
- We need to educate members more to make them confident in community speaking and who we are. If they aren't confident how can they effectively spread the word or mission?
- Consider "Give back" events, where a unit finds a way to give back to the community in time, effort, volunteerism, or a special event

Partnership PR

- Visit other organizations and their events
- Volunteer to help at other events
- Chamber of Commerce may be good source in your community
- Partner with your post and split cost to build a good relationship that can benefit both
- If you do not have your own facility, or it is very small, partner with a local business or organization that has an adequate facility and make them an equal partner in the event
- Veterans Day dinner open it up to public, have something to draw in community band or event, then a special presentation during dinner with poppy princess or maybe BGS attendee to bring new knowledge to the community of more things we are about

What does the community think of us?

- Talk to people while out and about and ask what they know about the Legion and ALA
- Work with another group - watch and listen to what they have to say
- Visit local business owners and get their opinions
- Go to events like local school sporting events wearing Auxiliary gear to support them
- Volunteer with the other organizations or help run a concession stand
- LED message boards are effective if you can afford one
- Put “Did you know?” messages on boards and posters, and not just events. Ex. did you know we have scholarships etc.

Misconceptions

- They think we are VFW, old folks sitting around drinking
- A social club for old people
- All we do is help veterans
- Kids and teachers don't support us

What is the relationship between your unit and post?

- A successful post acknowledges the benefit of the Auxiliary
- Auxiliary donates to the Legion
- Some don't even want to talk to each other
- Some work well as a whole family and help each other at all events
- The first step to a successful PR program is to create a positive relationship among your local Legion Family

How to make a better relationship

- Invite leaders to each other's meeting
- Have a mediator maybe both post and Auxiliary – share a passion for making things better
- Hold regular Commander / President meetings to make sure on same page
- Joint planning meeting w/post for upcoming year events and where support will be needed
- Pre-determined goal setting where funds are going to can lead to more generosity at events
ex. Badger Girl state, homeless vets, Camp American Legion

How is relationship and cooperation within your unit?

- Get to know your members, call the ones who do not attend meetings
- Visit them, send a card
- Our actions will show them whether we care about them and their membership
- Unit President must make sure information gets passed on to all members.

How can we adjust this?

- Display info on a table or board for all to see
- Train people how to use the Department website where all the information is
- Ask all members for their inputs on what the Unit can do better or differently
- Facebook for those who have it, keep it updated – use Facebook as a way to communicate with your members who don't attend meetings

How we are seen and how the community feels

- Revitalization and continuous branding efforts
- Go out wearing the brand mark, be courteous, be helpful
- Community service and visibility in the community help get our name out the fastest
- Hold fun projects and events that attract community, they then want to hear what else we do

How do we get motivation

- For the stagnant units - Uplift them, be supportive
- Help them find something they enjoy, embrace and motivate
- Support don't assume, include everyone's opinions, don't be afraid to ask questions
- Reach out get to know members in other units

Was this Useful?

- Overall, the attendees said the session was useful, and that units should be encouraged to have a representative attend future PR Chats
- PR Chats will be held the last Wednesday of each month from January to June. The Chats will run from 6:30-8:30. Members may attend the entire session or drop in anytime during the session to listen and/or participate. Members of the PR Committee will be available in the chat room the entire 2-hour period each month. If members wish to continue talking past 8:30, we welcome that enthusiasm and will remain engaged.
- The general topic for the January 31 session will be PR TOOLS - HOW TO BEST USE THEM TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS, PROMOTE, AND MARKET YOUR UNIT.