



American Legion Auxiliary Public Relations – Zoom Chat #3 (01/28/26)

The goal of this presentation was to celebrate the power of public relations in strengthening connections across the Legion Family. By focusing on visibility, storytelling, thoughtful planning, and consistent engagement, participants explored how every interaction, whether with veterans or communities, can highlight the incredible work our volunteers do every day. Strong public relations was framed not just as a tool, but as a way to ensure the Legion Family's mission, impact, and volunteer spirit are recognized, supported, and carried forward.

Attendees discovered how structured, goal-driven PR efforts can make a real difference. Special guest American Legion Riders Director Corey Doehrmann added a personal touch, sharing his experience as the Director of the Riders and detailing the process by which the Riders' fundraiser, "Cruise for a Cause," has become incredibly successful over the years.

This included a brief overview of the American Legion Riders 2026 *Cruise for a Cause – Family First-26*, scheduled for June 26–28, 2026, which supports veterans, children, and American Legion family programs. State Director Doehrmann discussed the mission of the American Legion Riders and emphasized the importance of collaboration, strong communication, and empowering committees to lead effectively. Additional event details, registration, and updates will be shared online, with the ride open to the public.

The Zoom chat included a segment titled "10 Tips to Turn Events into PR Powerhouses," which focused on building effective event public relations by first defining the event's goals and purpose, then developing a PR plan to support attendance, revenue, sponsorship recognition, and community awareness. Best

practices were shared for creating strong PR tools, using compelling photos, and messaging to generate “don’t miss it” interest, and leveraging partners and sponsors to expand reach. The discussion also emphasized proactive pitching, strong event-day execution, post-event coverage, and after-action reviews to strengthen future events.

Using S.M.A.R.T. campaign planning, the Zoom chat session walked through practical steps: setting clear, measurable objectives; keeping communications fresh and relevant; nurturing relationships with media partners; and evaluating what works. A detailed example campaign illustrated how careful planning, community engagement, and volunteer referrals can come together to achieve recruitment and outreach goals—and do so in a way that feels meaningful and intentional.

Social media was highlighted as a powerful way to connect, share, and inspire. The 5-3-2 content approach offered a simple framework for balancing curated content, original organizational updates, and personal stories that bring the Legion’s mission to life. This approach encourages authenticity, builds trust, and fosters genuine engagement, all while avoiding overly promotional messaging. Complementing this, content calendars were presented as a practical tool to maintain consistency, align with key initiatives, and make the most of important dates and campaigns.

Above all, the session reinforced that strong public relations is purposeful, measurable, and ever evolving. By blending clear goals, compelling storytelling, strategic media use, and thoughtful planning, Legion Family units can amplify their impact, strengthen community bonds, and inspire others to join in their mission. With intentional PR, every story shared, every event hosted, and every connection made becomes a step toward a stronger, more connected, and more recognized Legion Family.

We were honored to have Bob Shappell, Dean of the Wisconsin American Legion College, present information on courses that all Legion Family members can benefit from, especially those interested in social media and public relations, which can help our Local Legion Family build a stronger PR base. (Information follows below).

The PR Committee hopes that this presentation serves as a call to action. Please remember to embrace your roles as Unit/Post/Squadron storytellers, leaders, and

champions of the ALA and American Legion Family brand so that our mission resonates in every community.

PR Team Introduction

- Led by Natalia Genovesi King (Department Chair), with Jenna Smith (presenting) and Julie Deleeuw on the committee, and Bob Shappell as Of Counsel.

Please Send Us YOUR Contact Information (Stay Informed!):

- **Please send us the following:**

Name

District

Unit/Post/Squadron #

**State, if other than WI*

Email Address

Interested in Requesting a Visit?

To request a visit from the Department President, Sue Hembrook, or from any Department Chairperson, please fill out the "Department President/Chairman Visit Request," which may be found at: www.amlegionauxwi.org/forms

Stay Up To Date & Follow Us on Facebook

- **Web Address:** www.facebook.com/groups/aladepartmentofwipr/
- **QR Code for Facebook Page:**



- While you are there, check out our post: **"Seven Days, Seven Ways to Serve & Inspire."**

Let's make our stories shine all week long. Each day has its own catchy theme. Pick one, snap a photo, and inspire others to support our veterans and communities.

Have questions or feedback?

Share your thoughts on new topics, valuable takeaways, and how we can keep elevating ALA's public relations impact. Let's keep the momentum going and make every member's engagement opportunity count.

Purpose and Importance of Public Relations

Why Public Relations Matters to the Legion Family

- Public visibility ensures volunteer efforts are recognized and supported.
- Awareness enables:
 - Veteran and family outreach
 - Membership growth and volunteer recruitment
 - Fundraising and donor engagement
- PR complements direct outreach by:
 - Highlighting existing impact
 - Sharing success stories
 - Strengthening community trust and relationships
- A strong PR strategy positions the organization as:
 - Relevant
 - Credible
 - Mission-driven

Special Guest Spotlight

Corey Doehrmann, American Legion Riders State Director

American Legion Family Involvement:

- Henry F. Gumm Post 486 (member since 2008)
- Over 11 years of leadership within ALRA of Wisconsin
- Former ALRA State Vice President and long-time District 2 President/Director

- Active member and leader in the Sons of the American Legion

Military Service:

- U.S. Air Force Security Police (Active Duty, 1989–1994)
- Air National Guard, Security Forces (1994–2010)
- Served in Korea, multiple U.S. bases, and activated post-9/11
- Retired as First Sergeant after 20+ years of service

Cruise for a Cause – FAMILY FIRST 2026 Dates - June 26-28, 2026

Cruise for a Cause, 'Family First-26', The 2026 Cruise for a Cause will be held June 26-28, 2026.

The three-day ride will raise money for the National Legacy Run - Veterans & Children Foundation, WI American Legion Auxiliary - Badger Girls State program & WI Sons of the American Legion - Operation A.L.F.

Director Doehrmann discussed the mission and focus of the Legion Riders, emphasizing their support for veterans and their families through events like the upcoming Cruise for a Cause. He outlined the promotional strategies, including community outreach and sponsorships, and highlighted the importance of collaboration within the American Legion family.

As a leader, he advised that it is important to put together a team of people with wide-ranging talents and skills and then let the committee do its work. One of the biggest problems that most leaders struggle with is whether you're putting a group of people in charge of something, and then you try to micromanage everything that they do. You lose all of the benefits of having the wide-ranging talents and skills on that team. Ensure there's strong dialogue and discussion, sharing of ideas on how the event is and, as a result, both the event and the people working the event grow. When you get all parts of the family driving an event in the same direction, with a focus on the mission, and just watch out, get out of the way, and be ready for it to do some amazing things.

The next American Legion Riders state meeting is at American Legion Post 366 in Princeton, WI, on February 7, 2026, at 1 PM. You can find more information on the Wisconsin American Legion Riders by visiting their website: <https://www.alrawis.org/>

The Cruise for a Cause, 'Family First-26' event is open to the public, with approximately 90 participants expected, and the route details will be shared online. The link for registration and updates may be found at:

<https://www.alrawis.org/C4C/index.html>

10 tips to turn events into PR powerhouses

Focus on turning events into effective public relations tools by planning intentionally, leveraging partnerships, and following through before, during, and after an event.

The core message is that PR should support the event's goals—not dictate them.

Successful PR starts with a clear event purpose (attendance, fundraising, awareness, sponsor recognition, or community engagement) and then builds messaging and outreach around those objectives.

- **Start with a Clear Event Plan**

Define the event's purpose and goals first, then align PR to drive attendance, awareness, revenue, and recognition. **Don't let PR drive what you do at the event.** Focus on your event goals and purpose.

Then create a PR plan to create event success:

- Drive ticket sales/attendance
- Save the date – calendar hold
- Create event awareness – attendee targets and the community at large
- Recognize sponsors/prize donors to fulfill your deal agreements
- Vendor outreach/awareness
- Increase event website traffic
- Appreciation/highlight VIP/speaker attendees and special guests
- Apparel sales, general donation appeal, etc.

- **Create PR Tools in Advance**

Prepare materials that guide and amplify outreach—run of show, press releases, media lists, quotes, visuals, and sponsor assets.

- Run of Show (ROS)
- Media Alert

- Press Release
- Media contact sheet
- Posters
- Quotes from key event VIPs and/or high achievers – live video clips from your phone to post on social media
- Giveaways – buttons or rubber wristbands
- Sponsor outreach opportunities – who are their audiences and how can they be reached
- *Pay particular attention to your needed revenue streams – anything that increases your revenue should get more emphasis.*
- **Make It Visually and Emotionally Compelling**

Strong photos, unique facts, and fun experiences create urgency and “don’t miss it” appeal.

 - Photos
 - Great images will always get more attention, particularly in social media
 - Not just logos – imagery with people
 - Facts – Unique opportunities that people want to see
 - VIP speaker you can’t see anywhere else or a local celebrity that may draw fans – example: Join local meteorologist who will be the emcee at the Meat Raffle.
 - Ability to support/meet notable Veteran members in your community
 - Challenge to beat attendance from last year... bring a friend... largest (fill in the blank) ever!...
 - Fun – great idea for a first date, family activity, car enthusiast (car show), budget friendly (\$3 dollar beers donated by local brewery), etc. --- FOMO: If you don’t attend, you are going to miss it!

- **Leverage Partners for Reach**

Activate sponsors, speakers, vendors, and corporate partners to promote the event through their own networks.

- Social media
 - When someone registers, include the option to automatically post that you have registered... includes an invitation to join you
 - Always link a corporate participant so your announcement also reaches followers of the corporate page
- Speakers – put appearance details on their website calendar and ask for a post on their socials (authored by that individual)
- Bank sponsor – Put a sign in the lobby of the bank
- Grocer sponsor – Provide bag stuffers
- Restaurant donor – provide tabletop signage to promote the event and give recognition
- Corporate giving – ask to add a thank you in their offices (poster in lobby, thank you copy for newsletter, in person announcement at a teambuilding meeting)

- **Simplify Participation**

Use clear calls to action and easy options for registering, donating, sharing, or getting more information.

- PR should have an EASY call to action (CTA)
 - On-line registration
 - On-line donation
 - Easy to copy social media link to share
 - Venmo for donations
 - Email/phone contact for more info
 - Website link with full details

- **Pitch Early—and Follow Up Often**

Consistent, polite follow-up increases media attention; be flexible and prepared for last-minute changes.

- Follow-up is key
- Add any additional facts and fun if new info is available
- Get confirmation/commitment for any media that will attend – reporter, camera + reporter, photographer?
- Make it easy – reserved parking, guide upon arrival, intro to speaker, private moment for photo/quote
- Expect the unexpected
 - Rain – confirm the event is still happening or provide insight on adjustments (reschedule, move indoors)
 - Event/news conflict – recommend ways to fit in and get coverage even if the media can't be at the event. Example: Supply imagery and results by deadline
- **Execute with Intention on Event Day**

Assign roles, capture key moments, collect stories and names, and stay alert for unexpected PR opportunities.

- You have planned the work, now work the plan
- Create a shot sheet for your photographer
- Assign roles – you can't do everything – focus on where you can do the best work
- Take advantage of the opportunity
 - Special stories
 - Notable groups
 - Surprise facts
- Keep notes on things to remember
 - Names (thank you calls, invites to next year)
 - Top donors (special private thanks particularly if they contributed to good PR)
 - Surprise participants or stories

- **Maximize Post-Event Coverage**

Share results, thank supporters, and publicize impact—post-event PR extends value far beyond the day itself.

- THIS IS THE MOST OVERLOOKED ADVANTAGE!
- Wrap up – how many, how much, shout your success
- Recognize participants, VIPs, sponsors, donors, other support
- Send out appreciation
 - Press
 - Socials
 - As needed for leverage in future years – example: send to City of Cedarburg Police (great job! No issues! We are doing it again!)

- **Give Yourself Grace**

External factors happen; if coverage falls short, pivot to recap stories and keep momentum moving forward.

- Follow through even if the results weren't at the level of success you hoped for
- Don't give up – if you didn't get coverage leading into or at the event... try for a recap or announcement to publicize what you accomplished
- You can't control rain, major news days, illness, and so much more.

- **Review, Share, and Improve**

Conduct an after-action review, document lessons learned and pass along insights to strengthen future events.

- Do an After-Action Review (AAR) to get input from key stakeholders to do a better job next year
- In many instances, someone else will be taking the lead on this event or a similar one in the future – leave notes, organized files, timelines
- Critical notes for PR: your media contact sheet, including:
 - Name
 - Title/type (photo editor, news editor, reporter, etc.)
 - Media name/coverage area

- All contact details: email, cell phone critical
- Insight on ways they like to receive info – or tips to make them happy (doesn't like detail until two weeks prior, don't call end of day)
- Coverage preference (likes family friendly, geographic area, business focus, needs photography with story)

Effective PR is intentional, story-driven, partner-enabled, and cyclical, with learning and improvement built into every event.

Foundations of a S.M.A.R.T. PR Campaign

S.M.A.R.T. Goal Framework

- **Specific** – Clearly defines the objective.
- **Measurable** – Includes quantifiable outcomes.
- **Achievable** – Realistic based on capacity and past results.
 - Relevant – Directly supports organizational mission.
 - Time-bound – Includes a defined deadline.

Role of Strategic Planning

- Prevents unfocused or reactive outreach
- Aligns messaging with organizational priorities
- Provides benchmarks for success evaluation

Eight Essential Steps for PR Campaign Success

Core Campaign Steps

1. Set clear, measurable goals
2. Keep websites and social platforms updated
3. Share meaningful, real-life stories
4. Build a targeted media contact list
5. Write clear, complete press releases
6. Pitch stories and follow up consistently
7. Track performance and outcomes
8. Evaluate results and refine future efforts

Key Takeaway

- Continuous improvement strengthens each subsequent campaign.

Sample PR Campaign: Goal and Messaging

Campaign Objective

- Recruit 25 new active volunteers within 3 months

Messaging Strategy

- Highlight:
 - Veteran impact stories
 - Volunteer testimonials
 - Upcoming engagement opportunities
- Distribution channels:
 - Local newspapers
 - Social media platforms
 - Community websites
- Posting frequency:
 - Three social posts per week
 - Outreach to 10+ media outlets

Sample PR Campaign: Engagement Tactics

Community Information Night

- Hosted at a Post, library, or community center
- Objectives:
 - Educate
 - Build relationships
 - Capture contact information
- Metrics:
 - 40 attendees
 - 10 new members

Volunteer Referral Challenge

- Current members invite new prospects
- Incentives:
 - Small rewards or recognition
- Outcomes:
 - 10 participating members
 - 15 new leads

Tracking, Evaluation, and Reporting

Measurement Tools

- Shared tracking spreadsheet
- Metrics include:
 - New volunteers
 - Event attendance
 - Media coverage
 - Website and social traffic

Evaluation Process

- Weekly progress reviews
- Midpoint performance adjustments
- Final assessment at campaign conclusion

Strategic Value

- Data-driven decisions improve ROI and outreach efficiency

Social Media Strategy: The 5-3-2 Rule

Content Distribution Model

- **5 Curated Posts (50%)**
 - Trusted external resources
 - Veteran and community-related content
- **3 Original Posts (30%)**
 - Organizational updates
 - Program highlights
 - Event promotion

- **2 Personal/Human Posts (20%)**
 - Volunteer spotlights
 - Behind-the-scenes moments
 - Gratitude and recognition

Benefits

- Builds trust and credibility
- Encourages engagement
- Humanizes the organization

Content Calendars and Long-Term Engagement

Purpose of Content Calendars

- Organize and schedule messaging
- Maintain consistency across platforms
- Align content with goals and key dates

Operational Advantages

- Reduces last-minute posting stress
- Improves collaboration and accountability
- Supports performance tracking and growth

Strategic Opportunities

- Leverages holidays and awareness campaigns
- Highlights impact and community involvement
- Strengthens donor, volunteer, and partner relationships

Fun Holidays for February Social Media

Here's a fun and engaging way to celebrate each of these February holidays on social media:

- FEB. 2 - Groundhog Day – A great opportunity to ask your LLF and audience to guess whether the Groundhog sees his shadow. #groundhogday
- FEB. 4 - Home Made Soup Day – Ask your LLF and audience their favorite homemade soups. Let them share stories and recipes. #homemadesoupday

- FEB. 8 – National Boy Scouts Day – Post your favorite Boy Scout (son, hubby when he was younger, Grandpa, etc.). Ask your audience to send in their favorite Boy Scout. #boyscoutsday
- FEB. 14 - Valentine’s Day – Ask your audience to post photos of their Valentine. #valentinesday
- FEB. 17 – Random Acts of Kindness Day – Encourage your audience to practice random acts of kindness on this day (and every day) and then ask them to recall a story when someone was kind to them. #randomactsofkindnessday
- FEB. 27 – National Chili Day – Host a Chili Competition at the Post or ask your audience for their favorite Chili recipe. #nationalchiliday

Next Zoom Chat

- **Date:** February 25, 2026 (Wednesday, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM)

Topics: Cultivating Local Business Relationships & Collaborations, How do Businesses successfully use Branding, S.W.O.T. Analysis

- **Special Guests** from The Sons of the American Legion.

Have questions or feedback?

- Share your thoughts on new topics, valuable takeaways, and how we can keep elevating ALA’s public relations impact. Let’s keep the momentum going and make every member’s engagement opportunity count.

Wisconsin American Legion College – Spring 2026 Virtual Training

Open to the Entire Legion Family – American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and Riders.

Your Legion College is offering 22 virtual training opportunities this spring, including two offerings each of the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Courses. Completion of these three courses earns the Wisconsin American Legion College Graduate pin, proudly worn by many in the Legion Family.

This spring, we especially encourage you to attend the following high-value sessions, taught by Bob Shappell, Dean of the Wisconsin American Legion College, and Natalia Genovesi King, American Legion Auxiliary Department PR Chair:

- **Feb 28 (9:00 AM–Noon) – Basic Social Media for the Post/Unit level**
- **Mar 18 (6:00–9:00 PM) – Basic Social Media for the Post/Unit level**
- **Mar 19 (6:00–9:00 PM) – Public Relations for the Local Legion Family**

Course Fees

- Basic Course: \$5
- Intermediate & Advanced Courses: \$15 each

All Legion Family members, including those from other Departments, are welcome. You can complete the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced courses in just three months.

Full Spring 2026 Course Schedule

- **Feb 28 (9AM–Noon)** – Basic Social Media for the Post/Unit level
- Mar 7 (9AM–Noon) – Adjutant Course
- Mar 11 (6–9PM) – Post Commander Course
- Mar 12 (6–9PM) – County Commander Course
- Mar 14–15 (9AM–Noon both days) – The Basic Course
- Mar 17 (6–9PM) – Consolidated Post Report Course
- **Mar 18 (6–9PM)** – Basic Social Media for the Post/Unit level
- **Mar 19 (6–9PM)** – Public Relations for the Local Legion Family
- Mar 21 (9AM–Noon) – MyLegion.org Course
- Mar 21 (9AM–Noon) – Post Commander Course

- Mar 24 (6–9PM) – Post Finance Course
- Mar 25–26 (6–9PM both evenings) – The Basic Course
- Mar 31 (6–9PM) – County Commander Course
- Apr 1 (6–9PM) – MyLegion.org Course
- Apr 1 (6–9PM) – Generational Leadership Issues at the Post Level
- Apr 2 (6–9PM) – Adjutant Course
- Apr 4 (9AM–Noon) – Post Finance Course
- Apr 4 (9AM–Noon) – Consolidated Post Report Course
- Apr 11–12 (9AM–Noon) – Intermediate Course
- Apr 22–23 (6–9PM) – Intermediate Course
- May 20–21 (6–9PM) – Advanced Course
- May 30–31 (9AM–Noon) – Advanced Course

Registration

Sign up online at: www.wilegion.org/legion-college

Questions? Contact the Dean: wilegioncollege@gmail.com | 414-899-4067

This spring, strengthen your Post, Unit, or local Legion Family presence—you don't need seven years, you can earn your Legion College pin in three months!

Eight Essential Steps for **PR CAMPAIGN SUCCESS**



1. Set clear, measurable goals



2. Keep websites and social platforms updated



3. Share meaningful, real-life stories



4. Build a targeted media contact list



5. Write clear, complete press releases



6. Pitch stories and follow up consistently



7. Track performance and outcomes



8. Evaluate results and refine future efforts

