

Publicity Ideas & Suggestions for Clubs

by Jane McKee, CGCI Communications Director

Definition: publicity: any information, promotional material, etc. which brings a person, place, product or cause to the notice of the public.

Do you have great programs, projects and activities but are not sure how to go about publicizing them? Here are some suggestions for getting the word out:

- Where do you get your information...
- Think beyond your club and/or neighborhood...
- Don't be afraid to ask...the worst they can do is say "no"...

WHAT?

Media resources include newspapers, magazines, newsletters, advertising flyers ("penny savers"), radio, TV, posters, handouts, online calendars and event notices and more.

WHERE & HOW:

- **NEWSPAPERS:** NOTE: Unfortunately in today's economic climate, many newspapers are no longer offering "community news" sections so it may be harder to obtain the coverage you need. But keep looking, there are alternatives.
 - **Small outlets** (usually a weekly edition covering a small town or neighborhood).
 - Contact the local editor or community editor and ask about coverage of ongoing activities (club meetings, guest speakers, smaller events), deadlines, how to submit (e-mail, fax) and photos (will they accept photos submitted by the club or do they prefer to provide their own photographer.) Invite them to your meetings/events.
 - **Medium outlets** (those covering one County, a segment of a County or a city area).
 - Contact as above, but many of these have a weekly "home/garden" sections and will do feature stories on larger events (flower shows, garden tours, luncheons, plant sales etc).
 - **Major media outlets** (those that cover the state or large counties) – LA Times, San Francisco Chronicle, San Diego Union Tribune etc.
 - Many have "local" editions covering a County or specific region but may restrict the type of coverage available i.e. "basic info" only, photos of the event (published after) but no pre-event photos, limited number of event submissions etc.
 - Under "contact us" (inside the local section) will be listed telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for everything from "late delivery" to "community news". Call or write and ask how to submit information on community events.
 - Today most major outlets rely on their online calendar section that will list the basic info of date, place, time, type of event. Check their websites for "submit your event" forms.

Following is a sample press release:

The _____ Garden Club will hold (insert your activity) on (date/time) at (location). (Insert specific information about the activity). The club meets the (insert your schedule ex: first Tuesday of the month), (time) at (location). Each meeting features (speaker, demonstration, refreshments, etc). The program for (insert next monthly meeting if appropriate) will be _____. In addition the club sponsors (workshops/study groups/garden tours or whatever) throughout the year. Membership is open to anyone interested in gardening and guests are welcome at any meeting or event. For information contact: (name and phone number). _____ Garden Club is a member of _____ District, California Garden Clubs, Inc (CGCI) and National Garden Clubs, Inc. Founded in December 1931 with 23 charter clubs, CGCI has grown to 270 clubs with a membership of over 20,000. In addition to local community garden clubs, CGCI has 78 specialty Affiliates and

Associated Plant Societies and 158 Youth Groups. In 1932 CGCI was admitted to membership in National Garden Clubs, the largest volunteer gardening organization in the world.

- **TV/RADIO:**
 - Many local stations have programs that feature or highlight special community events or activities.
 - This may be a scripted ad or an informal interview with one or more of your members, maybe even “on location” at your event.
 - Check the local listings or their website for contact information.
- **MAGAZINES:**
 - Whether large or small, the important thing to remember is that magazines have a long lead-time for publication.
 - Most will need information a minimum of two (2) months in advance of their publication date. And most will, at the very least, offer a calendar listing or a paid ad.
 - Check your area for locally published magazines (Chamber of Commerce and Visitor’s Bureau are good sources) and how often they publish.
 - Many Chambers publish a local “resource” book listing businesses and attractions as well as clubs and their major events.
- **INTERNET:**
 - Post your SPECIAL event on the **CGCI** (and/or your district) online calendar.
 - “Google” the word(s) ‘garden’ or ‘garden club’, zero in on your area and you may find dozens of websites that are willing to publicize any/all activities.
 - You may also find the online version of magazines and other publications that have calendar listings.
 - If you have a club website be sure to link it to as many of these websites as possible.
- **POSTERS/FLYERS:**
 - Local merchants, nurseries/garden centers, libraries, community centers, real estate agents, farmer’s markets and many more...
- **MISCELLANEOUS:**
 - Check with other local organizations to see if you can post your events in their newsletters (perhaps an exchange?), on their websites (try the Chamber of Commerce or local Visitor Bureau), or have special event flyers available at their meeting.
 - How about real estate offices? Will they allow you to put club information flyers into “new resident” packets?
 - Free or special interest flyers/magazines that appear in your mailbox – many have calendar listings.
 - Nurseries and garden centers may have customer newsletters or a website that includes an event calendar.
- Did you have a PR plan that worked for you? Let us know – we would love to share it with all the clubs.