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## **How Public Relations Can Help Grow Your Lodge**

Promoting your Lodge activities through publicity can be an economical and effective way to insure the success of your programs and reach members who may not normally attend Lodge meetings as well as potential new members. It is less costly than advertising but does require a measure of effort. The decline of membership in Massachusetts Freemasonry over the past 50 years dictates that we need to employ modern marketing techniques including public relations to bring new candidates into our Lodges. Favorable publicity also helps to lift the shroud of secrecy under which many non-Masons believe we work.

Effective public relations or publicity can help change negative attitudes about us, our Lodges, and our good work. But, PR takes work. And, like everything else in our Fraternity, if you as an Officer of your Lodge, are willing to make the effort to make it work, it probably will. If you make the effort to write a news release, print or duplicate a flyer and then do the legwork and make the telephone calls to place these materials in the hands of editors and news directors, you are almost guaranteed a successful event.

There are abundant publicity opportunities available in almost every region of Massachusetts. There are very few areas that are not covered by daily and/or weekly newspapers, radio stations, television stations, cable TV companies and even supermarket bulletin boards. In your area hundreds of people visit your local supermarkets and other stores every day. It's easy to prepare a "broadside" that can be easily duplicated and posted in these locations. Be sure to ask permission before posting.

There is one very important thing to remember however. Editors and news directors owe you or our organization nothing. Press contact is, or should be, very much a mutually beneficial activity. You are providing them with information that is of interest to their readers, viewers or listeners and they are providing you with a forum to deliver your message to people who have the potential of attending your event. Encourage and respect that relationship.

## **Opportunities for publicity**

Many opportunities exist in your area to promote your Lodge activities. These include:

- Daily & Weekly Newspapers---news releases and photos
- Radio Stations---news releases and Public Service Announcement (PSA) scripts
- Television Stations---news releases and Public Service Announcement scripts
- Cable TV Systems---Public Service Announcement scripts
- Bulletin Boards/Store Windows---Flyers/broadsides

## **How to prepare effective news releases**

The heading of a news or press release should contain the name of the organization---such as “Massachusetts Freemasons”---the date that you want the information to be released, (in most cases: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE), and the name, telephone number or perhaps email address where the editor can get additional information. This is illustrated in the examples we've attached.

There are five key elements that **MUST** be in every piece of promotional material you develop:

**Who**  
**What**  
**Where**  
**Why**  
**When**

These five elements should also appear in the very first part of your news release and, in a condensed form, in the headline. Again look at the examples to see how they have been incorporated into our sample releases.

**Who**, of course, could be “Massachusetts Freemasons” or your Lodge. Most people outside of the organization don't understand our titles and usages, instead of writing "Suchandsuchalodge A.F.& A.M.", it would be better to use "Suchandsuchalodge of Masons”

**What** is where you describe your event emphasizing the benefits to the reader.

**Where and When.** You would be amazed at how often a news release goes out WITHOUT the location, date, and time of the event. This is not only embarrassing but makes more work for the editor. State these facts clearly, using the full day and date and using AM or PM to note the times. If the location is not generally well known, write in short directions using landmarks, street names and route numbers where possible. Make it easy for your potential customers to find you. It is sometimes also a good idea to insert a name and telephone number at the end of the release where people may call for more information. But unless there is someone to answer this telephone at least during normal business hours who is prepared to answer many calls and questions from the general public, it may be best to leave this out of your release. Be careful.

**Why.** Again, sell the “sizzle” of your event. For example, the reason we do Child Identification Programs is to facilitate the identification of missing or exploited children and to promote child safety.

Although the next information comes under the “who” element, it belongs at the end of the release and is called “the motherhood statement”. You have the opportunity in every press release you write to educate the public as to who Freemasons are and what we do. We do this by associating Freemasonry with things that are relatively well known. The following is a typical “motherhood statement” that belongs near the end of the release but before the final “for more information” paragraph:

*American Freemasonry was created in Massachusetts in 1733 and there are more than 270 active Masonic Lodges in 170 Massachusetts communities. In North America Freemasons contribute more \$2-million each day to charities. In Massachusetts, Freemasons operate the Shrine Burns Hospital in Boston where some 3,000 severely burned children are treated annually without charge. They also operate the Shriners Orthopedic Hospital in Springfield, and collect more than 20,000 pints of blood annually---80% of that collected by the Red Cross. Freemasons in Massachusetts also provide more than \$200,000 each year in college scholarship assistance, promote child safety through state-wide Child Identification Programs, and sponsor DeMolay Chapters for young*

*men and Rainbow Assemblies for young women.*

This is a lot of information, but it really positions Massachusetts Freemasonry as a worthwhile organization. This kind of information can produce a positive image and help change negative perceptions held by the public and by too many members of the press.

These are the very basics in preparing a news release. There are, of course, variations and exceptions such when a guest such as the Grand Master has promised to attend your event. This should be written into the first or second paragraph of the release. As for timing, you should have your news releases in the hands of the media two to three weeks prior to the date of your event.

### **How to prepare a public Service Announcement script**

The same news release may be given to both newspaper editors and broadcast news directors. But, in broadcasting, you have another opportunity for promotion through public service directors. These are the people who coordinate announcements or non-paid commercials known in the trade as PSA's or *public service announcements* and are broadcast by the radio or TV station as a public service. The same script could also be used for *Community Bulletin Board* programs and cable TV system bulletin boards.

PSA's must contain the same information as in a news release but the tone can be a little more conversational. For example, you might begin a PSA script, *Parents with children 18 and younger are invited to participate in a comprehensive Child Identification Program that will be conducted by Massachusetts Freemasons. The program is free and you're under no obligation...etc.*

News releases can be as long as two pages as long as they're tightly written but PSA's should not be longer than 30 seconds. That's about 75 words. And remember, each number counts for a word.

### **Preparing broadsides and flyers**

With the availability of computer desktop publishing programs it's relatively easy to prepare professional-looking broadside or flyer that can be used effectively in several ways to promote your event. Clip art with the square & compasses logo is easily accessible from

several sites on the internet. Just type “Masonic Clip Art” in any search engine and you'll be amazed at the number of sites that come up.

They can be inexpensively duplicated at neighborhood copy centers for distribution throughout your area. Supermarket bulletin boards Remember, though, if you plan to insert these in your regular Lodge Communication, you must receive permission from Grand Lodge first.

Many copy centers will also enlarge and duplicate your flyer on index card stock and many merchants are more than happy to post these in the windows of their stores. Distributing flyers and getting posters up takes a lot of legwork but the results make it a very worthwhile activity and an effective promotional tool.

### **Placing promotional materials & editorial contact.**

All of the news releases, public service announcements and flyers you worked so hard to produce are only effective if they get used, or placed. Addresses and telephone numbers for newspapers and radio stations are readily accessible in the Yellow Pages as is information on local cable TV systems.

With the exception of major media outlets such as those in Boston, Worcester and Springfield, your chances of building a relationship with local editors and news directors is excellent. Most are anxious to establish good relations with local civic and service organizations and most will go out of their way to help you. But you must take the first step.

At very least, make a telephone call, introduce yourself and your Lodge and tell the editor a little about your Lodge programs and how successful they have been. Mention that you would like to send them (or better, deliver in person) a news release about your program and *invite them to attend*. Again, the success of your promotion will directly reflect the effort that you put into it.

### **Follow up. You're not done yet.**

If the local media does not cover you event by sending a reporter or photographer, this gives you another opportunity to prepare and send out a second news release following your event that contains information such as the number of children processed in a CHIP

event and how successful it was. If you've taken photos yourself, choose one or two of the best and send them along with your release.

At very least, if an editor or news director has made the effort to print your release or broadcast news of your program, send them a note afterwards thanking them for helping to make the event successful. No other thing you do will pave the way to making the promotion of your next event successful not just for your future CHIP programs, but also for other Lodge activities that you should promote on a regular basis. Building a positive relationship with your region's editors will pay dividends well into the future. The effort is well worth it.

**The following is sample copy for a CHIP news release:**

CHIP---The Masonic Child Identification Program  
is coming to  
Veterans Memorial Stadium Tuesday evening, August 1, 2000  
as Quincy participates in National  
Night Out for Crime Prevention

Massachusetts Freemasons invite children, age 18 and younger, to participate in a comprehensive Child Identification Program at the National Night Out program at the Veterans Memorial Stadium, Hancock Street & Southern Artery in Quincy on Tuesday evening, August 1, 2000 from 6:00 PM until 8:00 PM (Rain date: Tuesday August 8th.) Each child will have a brief videotape interview, will be fingerprinted by police personnel, and will have a Toothprint™ made by professional dental personnel. All materials are given to the parents for safe-keeping. No copies are kept on file and the program is free to all.

This CHIP program is conducted by members of Masonic Lodges in the Boston 4th and Quincy 26th Masonic Districts in cooperation with the Massachusetts Dental Society, the Quincy Police Department and the Quincy Citizens Police Academy. It is estimated that over 60,000 children have already participated in Masonic Child Identification Programs (CHIP) throughout Massachusetts.

The Toothprint™ impression is a relatively new means of identification where the child bites down on a wafer, making a permanent, archivable record of their teeth. Toothprints were

developed by Dr. David Tesini of Framingham, a pediatric dentist who developed Toothprints as another means of identifying a child that fingerprints alone may not guarantee.

According to the FBI's Peter Banks and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, when a Toothprint™ is taken, sufficient proteins remain in the saliva on the wafer from which a DNA test can be successfully performed for yet a second means of identification from the Toothprint. He also stated that, since the Toothprint wafer is sealed in a "zipper"-type plastic bag, enough scent remains for a trained dog to identify and track it.

Masonic Child Identification programs are held periodically throughout Massachusetts and may be sponsored by any group but are generally sponsored by local Masonic Lodges as part of their community service programs. Many school officials have requested that the program be brought into the school systems in their municipalities.

When you consider the frightening statistics that over 1-million children are reported missing in the United States each year, there are over 100,000 attempted abductions by non-family members for the same period, and over 3,000 Americans remain unidentified, the value of this program is enormous.

Freemasonry is the oldest and largest fraternal organization in the world. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was established in 1733 and is the third oldest Grand Lodge in the world. Today, there some 50,000 Freemasons in Massachusetts that meet in more than 270 individual Lodges in cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. Grand Master Fred K. Bauer is the latest in a succession of distinguished Massachusetts Freemasons to hold that office. Previous Grand Masters include Revolutionary War patriots Paul Revere and General Joseph Warren.

Freemasons in North America contribute more than \$2,000,000 each day to charity. Freemasons operate the Shriners Burns Hospital in Boston where more than 750 severely burned children are admitted each year and treated at no charge. Some 3,700 children are treated each year in the hospital's clinic, again at no charge. Freemasons also operate the Shriners Orthopedic Hospital in Springfield where children are treated at no charge.

Freemasons are responsible for collecting more than 80% of the blood collected by the Red Cross in Massachusetts---more than 20,000 pints annually. They also provide more than \$200,000 in scholarship assistance annually. Masonic Lodges promote child safety through statewide Child Identification Programs. Masonic Lodges also sponsor and support the Order of DeMolay for young men and the Order of Rainbow for young women with several active chapters and assemblies here in Massachusetts.

For more information call 1-800-882-1020 or visit the Massachusetts Youth Child Identification Program (MYCHIP) web site at: [www.mychip.org](http://www.mychip.org).

###

**The following is sample copy for radio Public Service Announcement (PSA):**

Massachusetts Freemasons in cooperation with the Massachusetts Dental Society, the Quincy Police and the Quincy Citizens Police Academy invite you and your children, age 18 and younger, to participate in a comprehensive Child Identification Program on Tuesday evening, August 1, 2000 (rain date is August 8th) from 6 PM until 8 PM as Quincy participates in National Night Out for crime prevention. Your child will have a brief videotape interview, will be fingerprinted by police personnel, and will have a toothprint™ made by professional dental personnel. All materials are given to the parents for safe-keeping. No copies are kept on file and the program is free to all. It's piece of mind that is well worth your time. No appointment is necessary. Just walk in, Tuesday, August first from 6 PM until 8 PM at the Veterans Memorial Stadium, Hancock Street and Southern Artery in Quincy.

**The following is sample copy for a newspaper calendar listing:**

EVENT: Masonic Child Identification ProgramCHIP--featuring Toothprints™ sponsored by Masonic Lodges in the Boston 4th and Quincy 26th Masonic Districts in cooperation

with the Massachusetts Dental Society, the Quincy Police and the Quincy Citizens Police Academy as part of Quincy's participation in National Night Out for Crime Prevention.

**DATE & TIME:** Tuesday evening, August 1, 2000 from 6 PM until 8 PM at Veterans Memorial Stadium, Hancock Street and Southern Artery in Quincy. (Rain Date, Tuesday, August 8th).

**DESCRIPTION:** Children 18 and younger will have a brief videotape interview, will be fingerprinted by police personnel, and will have a toothprint™ made by professional dental personnel. All materials are given to the parents for safe-keeping. No copies are kept on file and the program is free to all.

Finally, learn to delegate. Surely there's a Brother in your Lodge with a talent for writing who may be willing to become the Lodge Publicity Chairman. Try also to recruit a photographer who will work with the PR Chairman. It is still true today that a picture is worth a thousand words. Appoint a PR committee to help share these tasks.

It has been documented that more than 30 new members have become Masons as a direct result of the first CHIP program with Toothprints® in Quincy in 1999 and the wide publicity that it received. If you put the effort into building effective programs in your Lodge and promote them within your community, you will have taken the first major step in building a stronger, more active membership in your Lodge.

# **(INSTALLATION NEWS RELEASE)**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

(NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER, FAX  
NUMBER AND EMAIL, IF AVAILABLE))

**(NAME OF LODGE) of Masons in (NAME OF TOWN)  
installs Officers for the coming year.**

(TOWN NAME)(NAME OF LODGE) of Masons recently held it's annual installation of officers at the Masonic building in (LOCATION). (NAME OF MASTER) of (TOWN OF RESIDENCE) was installed as Worshipful Master and will lead the Lodge in the coming year. The term "Worshipful" is an old English term meaning one being worthy of respect.

In addition, the following elected and appointed officers were also installed: (LIST NAMES, TOWNS OF RESIDENCE AND OFFICES OF OTHER OFFICERS).

The installation ceremony was conducted by (NAME INSTALLING OFFICERS OR DEGREE TEAM AND PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS, IF WARRANTED)

(INSERT ANY LODGE HISTORY OR POINTS OF INTEREST HERE)

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Freemasons in North America contribute more than \$2,000,000 each day to charity. Freemasons operate the Shriners Burns Hospital in Boston where more than 750 severely burned children are admitted each year and treated at no charge. Some 3,700 children are treated each year in the hospital's clinic, again at no charge. Freemasons also operate the Shriners Orthopedic Hospital in Springfield where children are treated at no charge.

Freemasons are responsible for collecting more than 80% of the blood collected by the Red Cross in Massachusetts-more than 20,000 pints annually. They also provide more than \$200,000 in scholarship assistance annually. Masonic Lodges promote child safety through statewide Child Identification Programs. To date, more than 100,000 children have participated in this highly successful program supported by the Massachusetts Crime Prevention Officers Association.

Masonic Lodges also sponsor and support the Order of DeMolay for young men and the Order of Rainbow for young women with several active chapters and assemblies here in Massachusetts.

((NAME OF LODGE A.F.& A.M.)) meets on the ((NUMBER AND DAY OF WEEK)) each month at the Masonic Building ((ADDRESS)), and membership is open to all men, age 21 and over, regardless of race or religion. For more information, contact ((NAME OF MASTER)), Worshipful Master of ((NAME OF LODGE)) at ((MASTER'S TELEPHONE)) or the Lodge Secretary, ((NAME OF SECRETARY)) at ((SECRETARY'S TELEPHONE)).

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# **(VETERAN'S MEDAL PRESENTATION NEWS RELEASE)**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
(NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER,  
FAX NUMBER AND EMAIL,  
IF AVAILABLE)**

**(NAME OF LODGE) of Masons in (NAME OF TOWN)  
presents 50-year Veteran's Medal to (Name of Recipient)**

(TOWN NAME) In 1952 the first passenger airplane powered by a jet engine flew. Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth* won the Academy Award as the best motion picture of 1952. And, that crazy music we began to hear on the radio was called Rock & Roll for the first time. It was also an important year in the life of (NAME OF RECIPIENT) of (TOWN OF RESIDENCE) joined the (NAME OF LODGE) Lodge of Masons in (LOCATION). He was recently honored by (NAME OF LODGE) Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts by being awarded the 50-Year Veteran's Medal. It was presented by (NAME OF DISTRICT DEPUTY OR OTHER) on behalf of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

*(INSERT ANY LODGE HISTORY OR POINTS OF INTEREST HERE SUCH AS FURTHER BACKGROUND ON THE RECIPIENT)*

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Masters include Revolutionary War patriots Paul Revere and General Joseph Warren.

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((NAME OF LODGE A.F.& A.M.)) meets on the ((NUMBER AND DAY OF WEEK)) each month at the Masonic Building ((ADDRESS)), and membership is open to all men, age 21 and over, regardless of race or religion. For more information, contact ((NAME OF MASTER)), Worshipful Master of ((NAME OF LODGE)) at ((MASTER'S TELEPHONE)) or the Lodge Secretary, ((NAME OF SECRETARY)) at ((SECRETARY'S TELEPHONE)).

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# **(GRAND MASTER VISIT NEWS RELEASE)**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
(NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER,  
FAX NUMBER AND EMAIL,  
IF AVAILABLE)

### **Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts to visit (((NAME OF LODGE))) in (((NAME OF TOWN)))**

(TOWN NAME)(INSERT NAME OF GRAND MASTER), Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts will visit (((NAME OF LODGE))) of Freemasons in (((NAME OF TOWN))) on (((DATE & TIME))). (((IF POSSIBLE, INSERT PURPOSE OF VISIT))).

(INSERT ANY LODGE HISTORY OR POINTS OF INTEREST HERE)

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((NAME OF LODGE A.F.& A.M.)) meets on the ((NUMBER AND DAY OF WEEK)) each month at the Masonic Building ((ADDRESS)), and membership is open to all men, age 21 and over, regardless of race or religion. For more information, contact ((NAME OF MASTER)), Master of ((NAME OF LODGE)) at ((MASTER'S TELEPHONE)) or the Lodge Secretary, ((NAME OF SECRETARY)) at ((SECRETARY'S TELEPHONE)).

###

# **(OPEN HOUSE NEWS RELEASE)**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
(NAME, TELEPHONE NUMBER,  
FAX NUMBER AND EMAIL,  
IF AVAILABLE)**

### **Local masons invite you to learn more about Freemasonry in Massachusetts**

Massachusetts Masons in the (INSERT NUMBER OF DISTRICT) District are inviting the community to learn more about Freemasonry at an open house to be held on (DATE) at (LOCATION). The open house is sponsored by (NAME and LOCATION of LODGES) in the Masonic District, and refreshments will be served.

*(INSERT HISTORIC OR OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT  
LODGES HERE)*

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Masonic Lodges also sponsor and support the Order of DeMolay for young men and the Order of Rainbow for young women with several active chapters and assemblies here in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts Freemasonry membership is open to all men, age 21 and over, regardless of race or religion and offers a wide range of opportunities for community service, personal improvement, leadership and fun.

For more information, contact (((NAME OF MASTER))), Master of (((NAME OF LODGE))) at (((MASTER'S TELEPHONE))) or the Lodge Secretary, (((NAME OF SECRETARY))) at (((SECRETARY'S TELEPHONE))).

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## **CHOOSING A LODGE PUBLICIST**

1. The COMMUNICATIONS CHAIRMAN, is the representative, spokesman, and point of information of Massachusetts Masons in your local area regarding activities and events.
2. As such, the communications chairman will acquaint himself with the activities and events publicized by the Lodge.

Whenever the press asks questions over the phone or in meetings, the communications chairman provides the answers. If at all possible, the communications chairman should be the only point of contact with the press.

If the communications chairman does not know the answer, he will say, "I don't know, but I will find out. By when do you need this information." This response will immediately establish the communications chairman as an experienced publicist.

If the communications chairman's response is followed with a question such as, "Tell me what you think?", or "Take a guess," his answer must be, "I wouldn't want to give you the wrong information. Let me check and get back to you."

The communication chairman's mission is to focus on promoting and answering questions about activities in the Lodge's community.

3. The communication chairman must speak on behalf of the Fraternity's beliefs and principles, not his own. Information must be firsthand. His attendance at all events, to be publicized or which the press is present, is essential.
4. If the questions from the press are regarding more than a Lodge activity, the Grand Secretary's office should be contacted to get assistance from Grand Lodge when speaking on behalf of Massachusetts Masonry, in general.

## **SETTING OBJECTIVES AND GOALS**

Before discussing Objectives or Goals, let's first step back and agree on precisely. What is the purpose of Freemasonry? Not what we do. Not our History. Not what we envision. But the actual basic purpose of Freemasonry.

Agreement on this major point is all important because it will become one of the basic guidelines to judge the validity, acceptance or rejection of our objectives.

With this in mind, let's agree that the Primary Purpose of Freemasonry is:

To bring together men of good will, to promote integrity, fellowship, service, good citizenship and the benefit of all humankind.

Based on the basic "purpose", your communication objectives in your community plan are:

1. Increase awareness/understanding of the purpose of Freemasonry.
2. Increase awareness of what Freemasons in your Lodge are doing, most particularly in your community.
3. Sell belonging, helping the community and the benefits of the Lodge's activities in all press release documents.

The priorities of the Lodge Communications Chairman is to report on:

1. The Lodge's community
2. The Lodge's state
3. National
4. International

If the communications chairman is involved in state, national or international news worthy situations or contacted by state, national or international media obtain assistance from Grand Lodge as you would be representing Massachusetts Masonry in addition to the Lodge and its community.

## **CONCENTRATE ON WHAT PRESS NEEDS**

From this moment on, let's think of placing news or information in the media as a highly competitive "sport". There are winners, and there are losers. Winners get their material used. Losers do not.

A newspaper, magazine, radio station, television station, or any medium that publishes or broadcasts regularly, faces the problem of filling space or time with news, information, entertainment that they feel will appeal to their audience.

Their job is not easy. It requires continuous effort, plus a great deal of time, skill and investment to find the material they have decided their readers want/require on a regular basis.

Note these guidelines:

1. The media needs news, information, filler on a regular basis.
2. It must be the kind of material that "they" feel will be of interest to "their" readers.
3. You have "your" information that you want them to use.
4. You are competing with every other company, organization, group and charity for space or time.
5. The Media is not interested in what you want. They are only interested in what they and their audience wants.
6. Therefore, your information must be aimed/adapted/presented in a way to meet their needs, their requirements, in their format. Let's find out what they want. In the format they want it. And give them what they want, in the format that they require.
7. The easiest way (in fact the only way) to find out what the ground rules are is to ask. Ask the editor, ask the columnist. Ask who ever makes the decision on what material is printed. Make the contact by meeting them in person and compile a list of your media friends. Please forward your list to the editor of the *Blue Pages* to be compiled for use by other communications chairmen.

## GETTING STARTED

Establish a one year goal of placing one publicity release a month or at least one for each meeting or event of your Lodge.

Obtain a copy of your Master's program for the year and the Grand Lodge program for the year.

Plan your program using those events that provide the best opportunities for press releases.

The following segments of the manual will help you decide which events offer the best possibilities, and how to go about the job of getting your releases placed in the local press.

During the year you will receive notices of "news" and forthcoming events from Grand Lodge. Some will present opportunities for community adaptation and trigger new ideas as well, but remember, it is imperative that we put forth only one message/theme.

Once you've selected the items and events that will work best in your community, and you've outlined your plans on paper, sit down with the Master and Lodge Secretary.

It is important to discuss your program with them so that they have a clear understanding of your objectives and give you their full support. Then present your program to the members of your Lodge so that you are all on the same page.

Chances are they will also have suggestions, ideas and input that will help you fine-tune your program-As a good communicator, you will, of course, keep an open mind in evaluating and utilizing suggestions.

Why not write down in this manual the phone numbers now that you will need to contact these important people:

WM \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

SEC \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **A SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

The event: All You Can Eat July 4th Pancake Breakfast.

Gather information for your release by interviewing the key people at the Lodge who organized the event.

Select the elements that tell the story.

Analyze your notes, in this case, the article. List the elements that make up the story from a general interest point of view.

Decide on the time frame for the releases.

For the sake of this exercise, you've decided to do two releases.

1. Announcing the forthcoming All You Can Eat July 4th Pancake Breakfast.
2. Announcing the Donation Made From the Proceeds of the All You Can Eat July 4th Pancake Breakfast.

Both releases will tend to be quite similar, unless there is something to add a new dimension to the breakfast. The advantage of doing two releases is that your first release may not get used by the paper. The second release will double your chances of exposure.

Write the headline and the release.

Suggested solution to event #1 - Forthcoming All You Can Eat July 4th Pancake Breakfast.

The elements of the story.

Who - Lodge name

What - All You Can Eat July 4th Pancake Breakfast

Where - Lodge hall location

When - July 4th from 6-9:30 a.m.

Why - To raise monies for community charities

Timing your releases.

Release #1 Timed to go out before the event.

Release #2 Timed to go out after the presentation of charitable funds is made.

Headlines and Releases.

Release #1

**PRESS RELEASE**

June 11, 1998

**FOR RELEASE THE WEEK LEADING INTO  
JULY 4, 1998 AND COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

CONTACT<Name>

<Phone>

**Norfolk Lodge to Hold its Annual July Fourth Pancake  
Breakfast to Benefit Community Charities**

**Norfolk Lodge, the Needham Freemasons, holds its annual all you can eat pancake breakfast from 6:00 to 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 4. The event is held at the Masonic Hall, 1101 Highland Avenue, next to the Needham Public Library. Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$3 for children under 12. Proceeds benefit community charities such as Needham Park and Recreation Commission, D.A.R.E., Needham Food Pantry, Little League, and Tot Lots. Enjoy all the pancakes you can eat, experience community spirit and a lofty amount of patriotism while supporting your community.**

Norfolk Lodge welcomes new members. Membership in the brotherhood of Masons means many things. It means being part of an unbroken tradition that stretches back over 500 years to a time when guilds of Freemasons traveled throughout Europe laying the stones of the great Gothic cathedrals. It means sharing the values of our nation's founding fathers; men who believe in the brotherhood of man are firmly rooted in the Constitution of the United States and that of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It means becoming a better person while helping to improve the quality of life for others. It means forming deep and lasting friendships that transcend the boundaries of race, religion and culture, as well as those of geography. But most of all, being a Mason means the kind of deep satisfaction that comes only from selfless giving; from doing for others without asking, or expecting, anything in return. To become a Mason or for more information contact <Name> at <Phone> or any Freemason.

###

Release #2

**PRESS RELEASE**

June 11, 1998

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:** <Name>  
<Phone>

**Norfolk Lodge's Annual July 4th Pancake Breakfast  
Supports  
New Playground at Rosemary Pool**

**Dateline: Needham - June 2, 1998**

Norfolk Lodge, the Needham Freemasons presented the Needham Park and Recreation Commission a donation for the creation of a new playground area at Rosemary Pool (construction commencing this summer). The funds were raised by the brethren of Norfolk Lodge through the support of the community and the attendees of the 1997 July Fourth Pancake Breakfast.

Those present (left to right - in enclosed picture): Kenneth Morrison, Master of Norfolk Lodge 1997-1998, Wilfred Corey, Past Master 1996-1997, Phil Robey and Patricia Carey of the Park and Recreation Commission and Jeffrey Rosenberg, Norfolk Lodge Senior Deacon and Pancake Breakfast Chairman.

Proceeds from the 1998 Pancake Breakfast will again support community charities. Funds are being raised by the brethren through advertising sales on the event placemat, as well as through charitable donations and ticket sales. If you would like to learn more about sponsoring the event and supporting the Needham community please contact <Name> at <Phone>.

Norfolk Lodge welcomes new members. Membership in the brotherhood of Masons means many things. It means being part of an unbroken tradition that stretches back over 500 years to a time when guilds of Freemasons traveled throughout Europe laying the

stones of the great Gothic cathedrals. It means sharing the values of our nation's founding fathers; men who believe in the brotherhood of man are firmly rooted in the Constitution of the United States and that of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It means becoming a better person while helping to improve the quality of life for others. It means forming deep and lasting friendships that transcend the boundaries of race, religion and culture, as well as those of geography. But most of all, being a Mason means the kind of deep satisfaction that comes only from selfless giving; from doing for others without asking, or expecting, anything in return. To become a Mason or for more information contact <Name> at <Number> or any Freemason.

###

Remember, Information for articles must be timely, so do not delay.

## **MEDIA RELATIONS**

### **SHAKE HANDS WITH YOUR TARGET**

Most guidelines to effective communications overlook one of the most important steps... person-to-person contact. In your relations with the news media, continuous contact over a period of time, combined with accurate information, plus speedy, credible response to questions will eventually get results. As a communicator for Freemasonry, you, more than anyone in your area, must know what Masons are doing locally and elsewhere in the state. Be informed so that you can inform. This is the key. Keep the Masonic Awareness Committee and Grand Lodge informed as well.

In the communications media, the people are key. Remember that they are the professionals. If you follow the next two suggestions, you'll find your assignment that much easier and build a working relationship with the press much sooner:

1. Meet and get to know the press contacts in your area. Find out the kind of news they are looking for.
2. Maintain personal communications by phone, in person, and by card or letter. Keep in touch as they may ask you for a story.

You've heard the adage, "Names Make News." It's true. The names of your local members, their activities in the community and to a lesser degree the Lodge, add interest to your releases. The Lodge's activity is of interest, only when its activity impacts on people or the community.

The following are some things to remember about establishing a good relationship with media contacts:

1. Never send a story to the media unless you feel it is newsworthy to the community.
2. Of course, always use common sense and good taste in your news stories and relationships with news contacts.
3. Don't play favorites. If there is more than one contact in your area give each an equal opportunity for coverage.
4. Never ask an editor to run a story as a favor.
5. If your story is used, in part or in whole, remember to say thank you, in writing or in person.
6. If a news contact calls after receiving your release, answer any questions candidly, quickly and completely so he can complete the story. If you don't know, say I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you by (give a date or approximate time). Then ask if that's all right, but then you must do it. You must deliver. That's how you build credibility, confidence and a good relationship.
7. Don't be overly dismayed, or call to complain if your story was not used or only used in part. Sometimes space limitations or reshuffled feature schedules are to blame. Remember, once the story is in your contact's hand, it's his to do with what he feels fit. It's a good idea to ask how you can improve your release. Ask for thoughts and suggestions.
8. Always leave a typewritten list of official titles in your Lodge and District which are likely to be used in your releases. Some editors find these helpful to check names and titles in any subsequent releases or telephone stories. Important, you must keep that list up-to-date for him.

## **WHAT MAKES NEWS**

Every group in your area is competing for attention in the news media.

The limitations on space which the news media can give to social, fraternal and religious news competes with everything else. Some of the media may have policies against running such routine articles as organization's elections, appointments, or achievements. Your "edge" is to know what the editors are looking for, and give it to them, in the time and format which meets their requirements.

You must learn to recognize and use publicity only for those things that interest others.

You can be the originator of more interesting Lodge and district programs, if you issue a tactful challenge to the appointive officers. "Give me something to publicize," is a request that sometimes works wonders. When members are made aware of the need to think "newsworthy," they are more apt to develop ideas, programs and projects that have news value. (See Chapter 2 for more than 100 possible Lodge activities.)

Be part of the planning. Know what's going on. Operate as though you were the media. Very important, insist on the lead-time you need to do an effective job.

At meetings and planning sessions, you must take accurate notes. These are mandatory in preparing your communications plan of action and the news releases. Get used to taking accurate notes because they can be the basis of news phoned to your media contact if news is breaking quickly.

The following are some ideas which usually warrant space in many of the news media throughout the state:

1. New or unusual approaches to publicize annual or routine items. This is where your imagination counts.
2. Human Interest Angles. Everyone appreciates stories about warmth, humor and unusual events of other people's lives especially if they involve youth, the elderly, the

community or deserving people.

3. Look for “news hooks” in your stories. This might be a single facet that makes your news story different from all the others. Examples include any firsts; a program designed to accomplish a unique purpose; unusual participation or involvement of people; a new twist to your story theme; onetime only events never before done; something that affects the majority of the people; topical events, information, solutions, etc.
4. Look for potential features in your story... something which people would appreciate knowing about in greater depth. Past events, anniversaries, history and holidays lend themselves to this approach.
5. A flair for the dramatic story, unto itself might be less than exciting but its history, background, environment, concept, application, or potential may make news.
6. Think about the reader. Each newspaper has particular visual needs and interests. Think of the visual potential of your story as if you were an editor or news director or someone other than a Brother. Does the idea still grab you? If so, GO and take pictures.
7. Initiate or provide support to elements of prime importance to your community: pollution control, youth activities, charities, crime prevention, health and educational activities, urban development, self-help or locally oriented programs for community betterment all have news potential.
8. Special awards received or presented by your organization, especially for other than Lodge activities.
9. Guest speakers, speeches or interviews presented by well known spokesmen or authorities, particularly those visitors with credentials.
10. Reaching milestones as they affect local people and the community.
11. Public installation of Lodge officers. Be aware if there is any tie to the community.
12. Visitation by Grand Lodge officers, or for that matter, any noteworthy guest or speaker. Again, the key word is noteworthy to the community.

## **TIME FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

1. **BEFORE** the planning stage, announcement of plans. Never announce something that you may not get done, only those things that you know you can accomplish. In this instance it is better to provide less than more information.
2. **DURING** the announcement phase what's going to happen.
3. **AFTER** the event, follow-up with a report of what happened.

More tips that usually get your story used. Make sure:

That the facts are accurate and the statements quoted are correct.

That you or a responsible individual are available to provide answers to questions after the article has been received. Both names and phone numbers of people to contact to answer questions must appear in the letterhead of your release.

That the story reaches the right person, particularly at a new newspaper.

## **PREPARING NEWS RELEASES**

1. Writing the news release (type the final copy).
  - a. There are many methods of writing news releases, but consciously or otherwise, most writers follow the “inverted pyramid”. The diagram below will be helpful in utilizing this discipline of descending-order-of-importance,

WHO, WHAT, WHEN  
WHERE, WHY  
and HOW  
Important Details  
other info

Repeat WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE.

When tight on space or time, editors cut copy to fit their format.

So, facts presented in this order are more likely to be used, because the story can be cut back to the first paragraph or leading few sentences which should include the most important of the “Five W’s”. Few editors have the time to sift through copy in order to rewrite a story. If it can’t be cut from the bottom, it could end up in the “circular file” under the desk. Remember: The substance of the story should be told in the first two or three lines, at most.

b. Be sure that each story includes the most important factors of the “Five W’s” as soon as possible. Those factors that make the news. Certainly, by the end of the second sentence you should have covered the most important points.

c. Make headlines short and concise.

d. The first paragraph is called the “lead” paragraph and should be designed to capture and hold the attention of the reader and editor.

e. Accuracy is all important. Names, dates, places, times, etc. must be specific and correct. Always verify names because a name may have a variety of different spellings. Always use the full name (first, middle initial, and last names) and proper title. Never submit copy using only the last name and initials. Be certain to indicate whether a woman is Miss, Mrs. or Ms. You’re almost always safe with Ms. if you are in doubt.

f. Always write as an organization, never as “we”. Avoid editorializing with colorful adjectives or adverbs that are news taboos such as, “fantastic”, “great”, “colossal”, etc. Also, quantify amounts when possible. Rather than say, “The Lodge event had a fantastic turn out,” say, “More than 200 attended the event, thereby setting a new record in attendance.” All claims, opinions, or predictions must be anchored, attributed to someone ( “said,” “reported”).

g. Write “tight” Use short declarative present-tense sentences (7-10 words at most). Verbs are better than adjectives. Use simple straightforward words as much as possible-Keep paragraphs brief and maintain easy to follow flow of thought in them. Include pertinent facts and don’t “pad” basic information. If the media wants additional information they will ask for it.

2. Writing Headlines – Follow the three golden rules

**FOCUS:** Go directly to the point, don't dance around, stay on track.

**LANGUAGE:** Precise-minimal number of words-no puffery, no hyperbole.

**CONTENT:** Most interesting/important point to the reader not you, not to the Craft, not to the Master. To The Reader.

3. Reproducing the News Release

- a. News releases should, of course, always be clean and neat and always typed (on one side of the paper only).
- b. Use 8-1/2 x 11 plain white paper that can be handled without tearing.
- c. Provide ample margins (1 1/2 inches) on each edge of the paper for the editor to mark instructions and make editing notes. Always double space sentences.
- d. In the upper right hand corner type your name, street, city and state address and telephone number. You should list a second name and telephone number on the chance you may not be reachable when the media calls with questions. If you do use a second name be sure he is versed on the release and its background.
- e. Very important. In the center indicate "FOR RELEASE" Wednesday, May 8, 1999 or what ever date meets the papers closing date. Newspapers must get materials in advance of closing dates. Check your media for their deadline dates and remember them.

4. The body of the release

- a. Leave an inch of space after your headline before you start your lead paragraph. This gives the editor space to rewrite or write his own headline or instructions.

- b. Indent each paragraph five spaces.
- c. If at all possible, your story should not run more than one page. Always end each page, if there should be more than one page, with a complete sentence and paragraph. Write “more” if the story continues to page two. At the end of the story end with “###”
- d. Figures and names.

Figures: One to ten are always spelled out except in time and dates. Numerals are used for 11 on up. Never begin a sentence with a numeral.

Names: First mention of a man’s name should be William Townsend. Thereafter, it is Mr. Townsend or Townsend.

Titles: Never use Worshipful or Right Worshipful in your copy, except when preparing it for a Masonic Publication.

## 5. Photographs

Good photographs are a must, if included. Regardless of the media, they all aim for professional results. You can help and should try to meet their photo standards. Some Lodges are fortunate enough to have volunteers who provide good quality photographs. Others should budget a little money for photos.

### About Photography

- a. Ask each editor’s needs. Follow any information you get from the media.
- b. Find out how far in advance the paper needs photos and try to meet those deadlines.
- c. Number of subjects, in most cases, should never be more than four. Two or three are the preferred limit, unless for some special reason it calls for a “group” photo.
- d. Action is a must. Don’t have the subjects just sit or stand there, grinning at the camera-Show them shaking hands, looking at business papers or casually discussing something; doing anything with implied action. No beverage glasses if it is a banquet.

## 6. Captions For Photographs

- a. The bare facts: what, when, where and why should be indicated. This should be followed by the who, name and title, identified from left to right. A portrait photo carries the name, title and name of the organization. Your source identification should appear above the caption as it does in a news release.
- b. Never paste the caption across the back of the print; the caption must be easily removable. It usually goes to the typesetter and the photo to the reproduction department.
- c. Never use a paper clip to attach the caption. Never write on the back of the print. Either of these acts will damage the print.
- d. Captions should be typed on the lower half of an 8 1/2 x 11" sheet of paper. Put a little glue across the top half of the sheet and lay the print face up and centered above the caption so that you can see the picture and read the caption at the same time. Fold the caption up over the face of the print along the bottom edge of the print.

## 7. Media Outlets for Your News Releases

### a. Daily Newspapers

A lot of city daily newspapers publish once a week area sections or special announcement sections. These may be your best chance for local news. If there is a local correspondent (stringer as they are known in the trade) find out who it is and how they like to receive news - through the mail or by phone. Get to know them and deliver when you promise. Editorial sections that talk about local news are also a possibility. Last but not least, is the letters to the editor section. If something good is done for the community get someone to write a letter to the editor saying so.

### b. Weekly Newspapers

Here's where you stand the best chance of getting your news in print. Weekly editors depend on home town folks for nearly 75 percent of the news they publish. Small staffs mean little time or

patience with poorly prepared news releases. Remember to relate to the community.

c. *Trowel Magazine*

Please don't forget to keep your own state Masonic magazine on the list to receive all of your material. At least here you will get first hand attention to everything you send. Get to know the deadlines.

*Trowel Magazine*

Masonic Building  
186 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02111

d. Local Radio and Local Television

You have a local radio station or two... Treat them just like any other editor. They have departments and shows that use local news. They are particularly interested in coming events so mail your material to the news and show editors that you have become acquainted. A phone call of introduction will suffice but a face to face meeting is best.

## **CONCLUSION**

We hope that this section will be helpful in getting you started. We don't expect that you are going to go right out and be a professional overnight. Over a period of time, if you try to adhere to the main principles here and learn through your own experience, you will succeed. Once you get a set procedure for the way you approach and do things the time you put in on projects will be greatly reduced.

REMEMBER "Something good in print is better than nothing in print."

Keep copies of your clippings so that at the end of your first year you can show your results.

Plan ahead. Try to get news items appearing on a monthly basis. Keep your Lodge informed of articles as they appear (the Brothers do not always see the paper). GOOD LUCK!

Remember, once you get to know the press you can invite them to cover events too!