



Lions Clubs International

# PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDE



Lions Public Relations Guide

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## What is Public Relations?

Public relations (PR) involves all forms of communication – from writing news releases and distributing promotional flyers to talking to friends, family and coworkers. Equally important are actions such as wearing a Lions lapel pin or marching in a parade.

Good public relations – informing the community that your club is building a park, conducting a vision screening or collecting eyeglasses – will help foster community support.

Public relations can even support your club's membership efforts. People want to belong to a successful and reliable organization. By actively promoting your club and its programs, you'll be projecting a positive image in the community and showing that your club is worth joining.

# What Are the Public Relations Chairperson's Responsibilities?

Though PR is every Lion's responsibility, the PR chairperson is in charge of the following:

- Communicating information about your club to the community, including the media.
- Keeping your club aware of PR efforts and results.
- Providing information to International Headquarters about outstanding Lions programs and activities by using the "Submit A Story" feature on the Lions Clubs International (LCI) Web site ([www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)).

To get started:

- Set Goals – Review your club's previous efforts. Evaluate what worked, what didn't and why.
- Determine the PR Budget for the Year – Effective public relations programs can be done on a limited budget. Be sure to budget for both ongoing public relations efforts and special events.
- Plan Ahead – Planning and timely execution are vital for your public relations efforts.
- Create a Timeline – Determine how and when you will promote your club and when you will start publicity for your club's special events. But be flexible—newsworthy activities may come up during the year.
- Use Resources – Visit the Lions Clubs International Web site at [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org) for resources that will help you execute your PR program.
- Discuss Your Plan – Meet with your club president and the chairpersons of your club's various events and projects.
- Be Persistent – Keeping your club visible in the community isn't something that will happen overnight; it takes time.
- Keep a Record – Note to whom and when you sent news releases and who used them. Save articles about your club. Include the publication's name and issue date on the

clipping. Record broadcasts of interviews and other radio and television, and share it with your club.

- Inform Your Club – Report regularly on your publicity efforts and results at club meetings. Write articles about public relations activities and results for your club newsletter. Explain how your club benefits from good public relations.

## How Do I Determine What is Newsworthy?

News offers information about activities or events that are of interest to, affect or involve the public, such as the dedication of a new Lions park. Some projects, although worthwhile, may not be "newsworthy." To determine what is newsworthy, ask yourself, "Would a non-Lion find this interesting or useful?" Public service gives information about a specific topic to help or assist the public, such as describing the warning signs of diabetes or encouraging volunteerism.

Decide which activities are unique and may be of interest to the media. To be considered newsworthy, they should be about timely events or activities that:

- Enhance your local community (parks, school programs).
- Involve the general public or other community groups (fundraisers, eyeglass collections).
- Perform a public service (vision/health screenings, drug abuse education).

Read local newspapers, watch television news programs and listen to a variety of local radio stations to get a feel for what is likely to be covered by your news media.

Get involved early in the planning of Lions projects to determine their PR potential. The following are examples of club activities with possible news value:

- Service projects aiding community groups such as the visually impaired, disabled and elderly

- Eyeglasses recycling/Sight Night/Recycle For Sight
- Programs for youth/Lions International Peace Poster Contest/Scholarships
- Special fundraising events/club anniversary events and major donations
- Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) grants/disaster aid
- Club elections/volunteer recognition/Melvin Jones recognition
- Holiday projects

Check the LCI Web site for activity guides highlighting planning and PR ideas for various programs.

## How Do I Contact the Media?

Create a media list by compiling the names of newspapers, radio and television stations in your area, along with mailing and e-mail addresses and



telephone numbers. Call each media outlet to determine the editors or reporters to whom you should send information about Lions activities. Verify the spelling of names and ask about deadlines. Also ask how they want to receive information, such as by e-mail, mail or fax. In general, information should be sent to the following:

- General assignment editor at small daily or weekly newspapers
- Community events reporter at large daily newspapers
- News and/or public service director at radio and television stations

Every Lions news story will not be published or broadcast. Local newspaper editors and the news director of a radio or television station decide which stories will be printed or broadcast each day. Be persistent. Continue to look for good stories and angles that make Lions stories newsworthy.

## How Do I Share Lions Messages with the Public?

Use a combination of the following PR tools and resources to share your message with the media and community members.

### Club Fact Sheet

A club fact sheet will provide background information about your club to reporters. Include a fact sheet with all news releases. You can also use fact sheets as handouts during community events. See the example at the end of this guide.

### News Release

News releases answer six key questions in the first two paragraphs: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Subsequent paragraphs should provide additional information in descending order of importance. Simply written and fact-filled releases are more likely to be published.

To increase the chances that your release will be used:

- Be sure that it is about a newsworthy event.
- Keep paragraphs and sentences short, limiting them to a single idea.
- Use quotes to enhance basic information. When attributing quotes, be sure to identify the person's name and title.
- Include the name of the appropriate contact person at the top of the page along with a daytime telephone number and e-mail address.
- Follow a standard press release format (see the example release at the end of this guide for the format of news releases, and visit the "Sample News Releases" on the LCI Web site to download pre-formatted fill-in-the-blank press releases).
- At least two weeks before your event, distribute news releases to editors, reporters and news directors on your media list who cover your particular type of story.
- If you have a major story, follow up with each media outlet one week before the event. Offer to answer questions and outline photo opportunities. Be positive and enthusiastic in explaining why their audience would be interested in your story.

Call your local media outlets to suggest a feature story to a reporter or editor in a situation when a news release might not tell the story well. Interest the reporter in covering a story, such as the importance of volunteers in your community rather than covering a specific event or activity.

### **Interviews and Public Speaking**

An appropriate club spokesperson should be prepared to provide accurate information with enthusiasm and confidence. Following are tips for successful interviews:

- **Know Your Facts.** Be ready to expand upon the who, what, when, where, why and how stated in media material.
- **Prepare Key Message Points.** Rather than answer a question with a simple "yes" or "no," use the interviewer's question as a bridge to your key messages. Practice

answering likely questions prior to the interview. Review the association's key messages on the LCI Web site, and adapt them to fit your club's messages.

- **Give Short, Clear Responses.** Mention your main points early in the interview in a few, brief, clear sentences. If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to find out the answer and follow up immediately.
- **Mention Your Club's Name Often.** Avoid saying only "I" or "we."
- **Watch What You Say.** Never give "off the record" comments.
- **Dress Appropriately.** Always wear your Lions pin. For television, avoid pinstripes, white shirts, loud prints and too much jewelry.
- **Smile.** Be conversational. Let the reporter see that you enjoy being a Lion.

### **Post-Event Publicity**

Report the results of your programs and fundraisers to the community through the following:

- **News Release** – Prepare a brief, one page news release highlighting the project's results. Include photos.
- **Letter to the Editor** – Write a thank you note to the community.
- **Display Advertisement** – Consider placing a small advertisement thanking the community for its support. Many publications offer not-for-profit discounts. Some will even donate unsold space free of charge.

### **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

PSAs are brief (10, 15 or 30 second) messages aired at no charge on radio and television stations as a community service. They must benefit the community, not just your club.

Lions Clubs International has a collection of PSAs covering a variety of topics that are available at no cost to clubs, including broadcast quality PSAs in MPEG format for television stations to download. Visit the LCI Web site for the full list of PSAs.

When writing a PSA, brevity and clarity are of utmost importance since at most you have 10 to 30 seconds to communicate your message. Messages

about preventing blindness, serving youth, fundraising events that benefit the community and public events sponsored by your club are appropriate subjects. PSAs need to:

- Get the listeners' attention.
- Show how listeners will benefit from doing what you suggest.
- Tell listeners where to go, what to do, when to do it and where to call for more information.

As a general guideline, a 10-second spot will have approximately 20 words and a 30-second spot will have approximately 65.

Contact the news or public service director at your local television or radio station to learn the station's scheduling and format requirements and if they can assist you with production. Often stations have a reduced production rate for not-for-profit organizations.

### Public Access Television

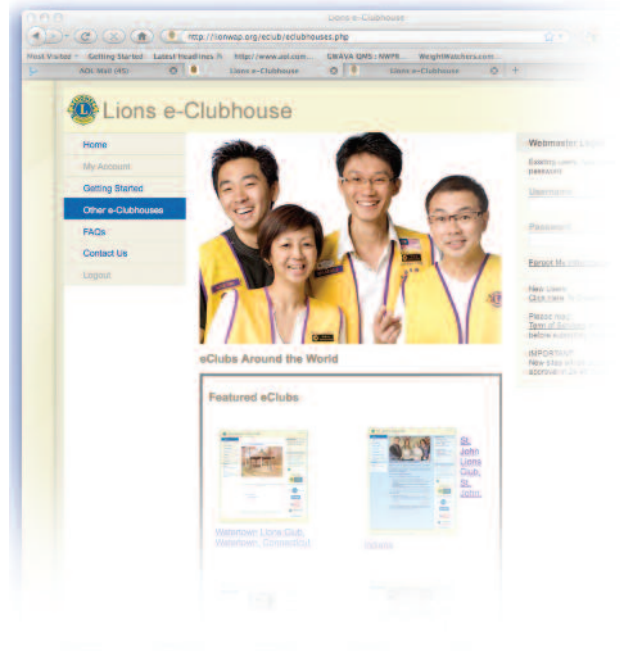
Public access stations air PSAs, run videos of club activities, post club events on community bulletin boards and have club members participate in community talk shows. Contact the public service director at your local cable station regarding program opportunities.

### Video Programs

Show a video such as LQ-Lions Quarterly Video Magazine or PSAs at community events and when you meet with other community groups. View and order videos from the Lions News Network (LNN) on the LCI Web site. You can also view videos on YouTube ([www.youtube.com/lionsclubsorg](http://www.youtube.com/lionsclubsorg)) and download LQ on iTunes.

### Web Sites and Social Networks

Web sites and social networking sites are excellent ways to let people know about your club. Use e-Clubhouse to create a club Web site with easy-to-use templates and free hosting from LionNET. Once created it is important to keep your Web site updated and to include the site in your publicity materials.



Social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace and Twitter are excellent for promoting Lions clubs. Ask a club member comfortable with social networking to create and regularly manage the club's pages on these sites. Include contact information, photos from recent projects, a statement of purpose and a list of upcoming events. See the Online Community section on the LCI Web site for more information and links to LCI's social networking communities on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Flickr.

### Printed Promotional Materials

Printed materials for promoting your event should:

- Answer: who, what, when, where and why.
- Use clear concise language and include only necessary information.
- Be eye-catching and printed with a laser printer or professionally printed.
- Use a bold, easy-to-read font or typeface.
- Include your club's name, contact information and the Lions logo.

You may be able to negotiate with printers or photocopy services to produce your flyers and posters at a reduced not-for-profit rate.

Have club members post flyers and posters throughout your area—at public bulletin boards, libraries, store windows, bus stops, train stations, etc. Ask local businesses and government offices to have them available for customers.

## Photographs

Photos can enhance your club bulletins and promotional materials and should be sent to newspapers along with a news release. Display photos of your club's activities and people you've helped at a community event. When taking photos, remember:

- Use a digital camera when possible. Digital photos are easy to send, save and store. Submit digital photos as attached files. Do not cut and paste them into an e-mail.
- Use only clearly focused photographs.
- Shoot candid rather than posed photos. While posed and group shots may be used in club bulletins, candid shots are much more interesting. Many publications will not use posed photos.
- If you must pose people, make the photos look as natural as possible by having them do something. Carefully frame the photos so some people aren't cut off.
- Get as close to the action as possible.
- Limit the number of people and don't include too much background.
- Shoot a lot of photos and select the best shots.
- Call your local newspapers to see if and how they accept electronic photos.
- Submit your photos to International Headquarters using the "Submit a Photo" form on the LCI Web site.

## LION Magazine

Receive national recognition for your club's service activity by submitting articles and photos to LION Magazine. While not all submissions can be published, here are some guidelines when submitting your story:

- Submit detailed information—who, what, when, where, why and how—of your club's completed service project or fundraising activity.

- Do not send images formatted for use on the internet. Web images are too small and do not have the high resolution required for use in LION Magazine.
- Include clear, candid, action photographs of Lions participating in the project. Be sure everyone in the picture is identified.
- Do not send "grip-and-grin" photos (i.e. people shaking hands, check presentation, etc.).
- Include the name, address, daytime phone number and/or e-mail address of a contact person who is familiar with the project.

Submit stories and photographs that meet these guidelines to LION Magazine, 300 W 22nd Street, Oak Brook, IL 60523 USA or e-mail [magazine@lionsclubs.org](mailto:magazine@lionsclubs.org). It often takes up to a year for chosen articles to appear in print.





## What Are Some Additional Publicity Ideas?

There are many ways to tell your community about your Lions club and activities. If your club is sponsoring a community event:

- Ask to have information posted on your community Web site or message board.
- Pass out flyers or brochures about your club and its activities. If the event is a fundraiser, hand out information telling how the money will be used.
- Display the Lions logo and club name prominently on all materials and at all activities and events.

Even when your club doesn't have a special event planned, you can:

- Wear your Lions pin and apparel.
- List your club in local phone books and community directories, along with a contact person and phone number. Keep this information up-to-date.
- Put information about your club in "Welcome to the Community" packets offered by local agencies or chambers of commerce.



- Invite community organizations to present information about their activities at club meetings and offer to present information at their meetings.
- Display local Peace Posters at a library or community center.
- Ask government and school district newsletters to include information about your club, especially if you are involved in a community or school project such as the Peace Poster Contest, a vision or diabetes screening, building a recreational center, etc.
- Place a highway sign or marker outside your community. Keep it in good condition. You can purchase a highway sign from Club Supplies Sales Department.
- Donate a subscription of LION Magazine to your local library. Contact LION Magazine Department for ordering information.

## What Resources Are Available from International Headquarters?

A variety of materials are available to help you develop your club's public relations program for the year. See the "Communicating Your Activities" section under "Managing a Club" in the Member Center on the LCI Web site ([www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)). Use the "Search" function on the LCI Web site to find the following resources.

**Sample News Releases:** A variety of sample fill-in-the-blank news releases are available on the Lions Web site to download.

**Key Messages and Questions:** When talking to the media and others in your community about your Lions club and LCI, it is helpful to know what messages you want to get across.

Key Messages are available on the LCI Web site to help you prepare before interviews and activities where the media might be present. They are also

useful in presentations to groups, schools and other organizations. Included are Key Questions and suggested answers. Practice answering these questions with your Lions members and always remember to accentuate the positive.

**Fact and History Sheets:** These publications contain up-to-date information about the association and its history and can be downloaded in all languages from the LCI Web site or a copy can be ordered from the Public Relations Department. (Fact Sheet PR-799, History PR-800)

**Logos and Art:** LCI and LCIF logos and program logos are available in various formats (TIF, GIF, JPG, EPS, AI) to download from the LCI Web site.

**Lions News Network:** Lions News Network (LNN) contains all available videos and public service announcements (PSAs) from LCI and LCIF. You can watch and order videos from the LNN section on the LCI Web site.

**LQ-Lions Quarterly Video Magazine:** is produced four times a year (January, April, July and October) and located on LNN. LQ features inspiring stories from Lions clubs around the world dedicated to making a difference in their communities and the lives of individuals. Running approximately 14 minutes, this is an excellent presentation for Lions and non-Lions groups and can be used on cable access stations.

**Tools to Submit Stories and Photos:** Use the “Submit A Story” and “Submit a Photo” feature on the LCI Web site to provide information to International Headquarters.

**Newswire:** This monthly online newsletter, covering the latest news, information and programs from International Headquarters, is available on the LCI Web site. The information is appropriate for inclusion in club, district and multiple district publications.

**Activity Guides:** International Headquarters provides activity guides and brochures outlining how to plan and promote a wide variety of projects, including Lions World Sight Day and



Recycle For Sight. Visit the Planning Projects section in the Member Center on the LCI Web site for more information.

**Lions International Peace Poster Contest:** The Lions International Peace Poster Contest is a turn-key program, which promotes peace, encourages youth and fosters good public relations. Visit the Lions International Web site to learn more, review contest rules and view past finalists. Purchase a Peace Poster Contest Kit (PPK-1) from the Club Supplies Sales Department online. Or, call (630) 571-5466 or in the U.S., Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada call (800) 710-7822.

**How To “Get In” LION Magazine:** This publication (PR-708) provides tips on preparing articles for LION Magazine and offers advice on taking effective photographs.

For further information, e-mail the Public Relations Department at [pr@lionsclubs.org](mailto:pr@lionsclubs.org) or call (630) 468-6817. For story submissions, e-mail LION Magazine Department at [magazine@lionsclubs.org](mailto:magazine@lionsclubs.org) or call (630) 468-6909.

## **Lincoln Park Lions Club**

### **Fact Sheet**

#### **Membership**

Established in 1968, the Lincoln Park Lions Club currently has 85 members—men and women who volunteer their time to perform a variety of community service activities. The group is one of approximately 45,000 clubs in Lions Clubs International, the world's largest service club organization.

#### **Vision programs**

Worldwide, Lions are dedicated to aiding the blind and visually impaired through programs such as SightFirst, which works to eliminate preventable and reversible blindness. Locally, the Lincoln Park Lions participate in the Lions Recycle For Sight used eyeglass recycling program. Since 1989, they have collected more than 40,000 pairs of glasses for distribution to people in need in developing nations. The Lions have also assisted hundreds of area residents to obtain eye care and have worked each year with the Lincoln Park School District on preschool and elementary school vision screenings.

#### **Youth Programs**

The Lincoln Park Lions Club sponsors the Lions-Quest Programs—"Skills for Growing," "Skills for Adolescence" and "Skills for Action"—in four Lincoln Park schools. Lincoln Park Lions are also sponsors of the annual Lions International Peace Poster Contest in five local schools and youth groups. In 2009, one of the club's sponsored entries was a multiple district winner, advancing to the international judging.

Since 2009, the Lincoln Park Lions Club and the Warren County Health Office have co-sponsored an annual communitywide forum during the first week in November on drug awareness and substance abuse. The club increases awareness of these issues through a widespread public service campaign. It also aids in the development of new strategies to combat the rise in substance abuse.

Meetings are held at the Lincoln Park Towers, 749 Broadview Avenue, every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m.

Sydney Ryan, President Lincoln Park Lions Club

**(Phone number)**

**(E-mail address)**

**(Club Web site)**

**For Information Contact:**  
**(Name)**  
**(Phone number)**  
**(E-mail address)**

**For Immediate Release**

**(WINNER'S NAME) WINS LOCAL COMPETITION IN  
LIONS INTERNATIONAL PEACE POSTER CONTEST**

**(City, date)** — **(Winner's full name)**, a **(grade level)** grade student at **(school name)**, has taken the first step to becoming an internationally recognized artist by winning a local competition sponsored by the **(name)** Lions Club.

**(Winner's last name)**'s poster was among more than 350,000 entries submitted worldwide in the annual Lions International Peace Poster Contest. Lions Clubs International is sponsoring the program to emphasize the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

**"(Quote from winner describing the poster or his/her inspiration for the poster),"** the **(winner's age)**-year-old from **(city)** said. The poster was selected for its originality, artistic merit and portrayal of the contest theme, **(contest theme)**." The judging was held on **(date)** at **(location)**.

**(Club name)** Lions Club President **(club president's full name)** said **(he/she)** was impressed by the expression and creativity of the students at **(name of school or youth group)**. "It is obvious that these young people have strong ideas about what peace means to them. I'm so proud that we were able to provide them with the opportunity to share their visions.

**"(Winner's last name)**'s poster will advance through the district, multiple district and international levels of competition if **(he/she)** is to be declared the international grand prize winner," **(club president last name)** said.

One international grand prize winner and 23 merit award winners will be selected. The grand prize includes a cash award of US\$5,000 **(or your country's cash equivalent)**, plus a trip for the winner and two family members to the awards ceremony at Lions Day with the United Nations. The 23 merit award winners will each receive a certificate and a cash award of US\$500 **(or your country's cash equivalent)**.

"Our club is cheering for **(winner's first name)** as **(his/her)** poster advances in the competition, and we hope that **(his/her)** vision will ultimately be shared with others around the world," **(club president's last name)** said.

Locally, **(winner's last name)** and **(#)** other students will be honored for their participation by the **(name)** Lions Club on **(date)** at **(place)**.

View past international grand prize winners at [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org). Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization with more than 1.3 million members in approximately 45,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas around the world. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired and made a strong commitment to community service and serving youth throughout the world.

###

30 Second Volunteerism Public Service Announcement  
**Lions Clubs International**

*Script provided for local narration and ability to add local Lions club contact information. Please verify that local Lions club Web site is up-to-date and phone number is accurate.*

VIDEO:

Silhouettes move and dance across screen

Footage of Lion volunteers over colored background transition to: Silhouettes

Young person spinning

Family dancing

Men dancing

Women dancing

Giving lunch to homeless

Katrina Rebuilding

Recycling Papers

Lions with Orphans

Boy with Glasses smiling

Thumbs up after vision screening

Dancers

Transition to end graphic: Lions logo

(localizable to add local Lions club phone number and/or Web site address – please be sure information provided is up-to-date)

AUDIO:

Did you know volunteering can be fun?!

Community service is for everyone!

Young people,

Families,

Men,

Women

As a volunteer you'll  
Help your community and  
Gain valuable skills;  
Network with others,  
Energize your life,

Make an impact,  
and have fun!

Get in step with your community.  
Volunteer.

Visit [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)



## **Lions Clubs International**

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