

Getting **THE WORD** Out :

Simple 'How-To' steps to help the Blue Lodges work the local press.

Press releases are one of the easiest, least expensive and most effective ways for your lodge to keep the local media – and through them, the local community informed and up-to-date on your lodge and its events.

I. A press release overview :

- a.) Keep it short (300 word maximum)
- b.) Make the content relevant to the market/distribution area/community...always ask yourself: why should general readers care about this?
- c.) Editors are looking for : What, Where, When, Why, Mission/Goal for event, Who, Date, Contact information and Time. If you are promoting an event/fundraiser, include a cost (and if appropriate, what benefit or entity the monies are going to, and *why* this is a good thing). If you include day and date, e.g. Wednesday, May 6, make sure day and date are *correct*.
- d.) Include a photo of the lodge, lodgeroom, Officer Line or mugshot of the Master or person of interest.

II. Press Release format :

- a.) Lodge Name/logo, and (If your lodge is granted permission by the Grand Master – see below): Square and Compass art.
- b.) Your Name NEWS RELEASE*
- c.) Business Name, Phone Number, E-mail address, Web and FB address.
- d.) Headline here of what the topic is
- e.) The first paragraph is the interesting lead that gets to the points. Everything of critical importance should be in the headline and in the first paragraph.
- f.) Informational Paragraphs to follow.
- g.) Use END at the end of your press release

III. Tips :

Newsworthy press release submissions should read like news – not sales or marketing promotions. If they read like advertising, most editors will ignore them.

Be Concise:

Keep press releases short, just one or two pages, if possible. Don't say in 300 words what can be said in a 150 to 200 word news brief or calendar item.

Be Current:

Include the release date or "For Immediate Release" at the top of page one under the contact information and write *"NEWS RELEASE" in the upper right hand corner.

Be Catchy:

Write an interesting lead that quickly gets to the point. Everything of critical importance should be in the headline and the first two paragraphs. If it doesn't pique the Editor (or the reader's) interest immediately, don't expect anyone to wade through the rest of the content.

Be Targeted :

Know your audience. Don't blindly send your press release to a wide audience. Develop a targeted list of the local journalists and publications that cover the geographic area that the lodge draws from and/or the subject matter, who are likely to be receptive.

Be Orderly :

Write "more" at the bottom of the first page if there are multiple pages. Use END, or -30- at the end of the last page, even for one-page press releases.

Make it Actionable :

Include a contact name with telephone number and an e-mail address.

When reporters contact you, respond promptly. The reporter who calls you may be working on a story for this week's publication or writing an article for an online news site that will be posted that day. If you call back too late, you won't make it into the story.

Be Timely :

Take deadlines and lead times into account. Newspapers need copy daily, and wire services and Web sites can generate new copy hourly. Pay attention to editorial or special section calendars.

Include Attachments

If sending photos, be sure to include a caption in a separate document. Include sources, contact and a release date.

Distribution :

Try to find out your local newspaper's preferred method of contact. Most community newspapers/websites prefer you email your press release.

Follow up :

Every body wants free ink/bites. Editors receive numerous press releases from local organisations and non-profits on a daily basis. If you decide to follow up with a phone call, tell them immediately the topic of the release and the exact date you sent it to them. Don't just ask if they received your press release.

Calendar Submissions:

Most local newspapers have Community Event/Calendars that you can submit items to online. Take a look around at your own local newspaper website and submit away. Usually an Editor or Assistant Editor will review it in a day or two.

- a.) **Here in Western Washington**, Each **Sound Publishing** community newspaper title has a website.
- b.) Go there.
- c.) Below the 'Masthead', you will see a navigation bar with various categories of stories: 'News, **Calendar**, Blog, Sports, Entertainment, Business, Lifestyles, Community, Business and About Us".
- d.) Click on "Calendar"
- e.) Click on 'Add an Event'
- f.) Add your calendar event
- g.) Submission Guidelines: Event submissions are free.

Once your request is submitted, it can take up to 48 hours for the event to appear on the calendar.

Events may also appear in our print calendar at the editor's discretion.

*In general, please do not submit events publicizing a business-oriented sale. Most publications also reserve the right to refuse any event or submission.

Letters to the Editor submission requirements:

- a.) Copy should be 200-250 words in length (electronic submission is preferred).
- b.) We require a name, a city of residence and a daytime phone number for verification.
- c.) We publish only the writer's name and city of residence.
- d.) Letters should discuss issues, not personalities. Personal attacks will not be published.
- e.) We do not accept letters that are part of letter-writing or petition campaigns.
- f.) Letters become the property of the Reporter Newspapers/Sound Publishing, and may be edited. They may be republished in any format.

N.B: *After an event that involves community or community support, or a community-oriented fund-raiser for a Non-Profit, it is possible that you may get some additional press by submitting a 'Thank You' letter to the Editor. I usually include some of the main community players or partners or donators, and end with what the event was for and who it benefitted and what the lodge is, or a Mission Statement.*

Here are a few Lodge topics that may be newsworthy :

- a.) Officer installation
- b.) Lodge open house or ceremony (Invite the public to visit your Lodge room. That also will give you a chance to talk about Freemasonry to any one who is interested).
- c.) A special anniversary (person or lodge-oriented)
- d.) Lodge programs that benefit the community at-large or a local non-profit or charity group:
- e.) 'Bikes for Books' or other community enrichment programs the lodge is doing or partnering with another entity or group on.
- f.) Guest Speakers and notable accomplishment of a Lodge member.

Additional Ideas:

1. Some of the smaller local radio stations will make free announcements about things going on in their community. No harm in asking.
2. Many cities and towns have a place on their website to post times and places for local clubs and associations.
3. Most towns have an entrance sign showing the time and date of service club meetings, usually sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce or the Businessmen's Association. Ask them if you can hang your Lodge sign there too.
4. Local Visitor Centers and Chamber of Commerce offices are often asked about local clubs and lodges by visitors and new residents. Make sure they know you exist, and have

your meeting dates and contact information. They often publish a city or town directory on social media. Make sure your Lodge is in it.

5. Be sure that the Lodge meeting dates and times are clearly posted on the outside of the Lodge building.

6. If you have a tenant be sure that he/she knows your Lodge meeting date and time. A sojourner or potential member may ask. (~ the above six points are kindly submitted by WB Brian Thomas)

Suggestion : As a promoter of The Craft with a background in advertising and marketing, I have always personally balked at the restrictive GLWA statute that says each lodge has to have *prior permisison* of the Grand Master to use the Masonic Square and compass logo on Signage, advertisements, brochures, stationery, website, social media, business cards, etc. I suggest the GM pick five or eight versions that he approves and let each lodge choose which (preapproved) one fits its individual style. The eight can be reviewed every five years or so by the current GM.

Here is a recent article on The Craft on NPR :

http://www.npr.org/2014/08/27/342209139/freemasonry-still-alive-and-well-and-mostly-men-only?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20140828

In one of my publications, the *Snoqualmie Valley Record*, the two Lodges in my circulation area, Falls City and Unity, are great at keeping the community informed of its events.

Here are a few samples and the headlines associated with the article or brief :

Bikes for Books sample:

http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/east_king/svr/community/50738742.html

A generic article on The Craft:

http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/east_king/svr/news/30139679.html

Mystery of the Masons explored :

www.valleyrecord.com/news/30139679.html

North Bend's Unity Masonic Lodge re-lit for second century :

www.valleyrecord.com/lifestyle/222378841.html

North Bend's Unity Masonic Lodge holds 100th installation of officers :

www.valleyrecord.com/community/132558308.html

North Bend's Unity Masons to celebrate lodge centennial :

www.valleyrecord.com/community/219696871.html

Fall City Masons to install 2012 officers :

www.valleyrecord.com/community/136097968.html

The focal point: 117-year-old Falls City Masonic Hall :

www.valleyrecord.com/news/176282951.html?mobile=true

Bikes for books: Masons, Singletrack program gears up children to read :

www.valleyrecord.com/lifestyle/130440893.html

Taste secret chili rituals at Masonic cook-off :

www.valleyrecord.com/entertainment/147176255.html

Fall City Masons return with pancake breakfast, military vehicle display :

www.valleyrecord.com/community/211303621.html

Historic Fall City Masons to host education ceremony :

www.valleyrecord.com/news/30154219.html

Most local news publications also have a **Facebook** page. Feel free to submit something on that as well. You can also try submitting posts on the local FB pages of: Chamber of Commerce or Downtown Business Associations (of which most lodges are probably also members of, or brothers are active in.).

Respectfully Submitted :

William G. A. Shaw of Easter Lair, Lodge Alba 315.
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