

PUBLIC RELATIONS CURRENTS



MAKE A GREATER IMPACT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON BY WORKING TOGETHER:

By Virna Luke

With the holidays approaching, Wreaths Across America Day (December 14), Martin Luther King Day (January 20), and American Legion Family Day (April 26), this is the moment to use your toolbox of communication, kindness, and teamwork with your Legion Family to arrange events and support one another.

Our Legion Family consists of the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and those who have dual membership in the American Legion Riders.

The true strength of our Family is best represented when we work together to promote the American Legion's mission: **to enhance the well-being of America's veterans, their families, our military, and our communities by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.** When the Legion Family works together, we have a stronger influence. We have a shared objective, and by combining our varied abilities, perspectives, and strengths, we can only achieve success, accomplishments, and make a difference.

So, this holiday season, we encourage you to find ways to work with your entire Family to provide holiday events and activities to help veterans and your local community. Don't forget these tips:

- Take advantage of the easy-to-use fillable templates for media releases and letters to the editors found on [ALA National website](https://www.alafl.org).
- Take action photos, high-resolution, do not compress when sending by email to reporters.
- Share your story on social media and provide details of the activity.

Together, we are stronger, and there is no better time than holidays to work as a Family.

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THIS THANKSGIVING, WRITE THANK YOU CARDS



By Erin Hoffer, APR, CPRC

Thanksgiving provides an opportunity to reflect on what we are thankful for and let those who matter know that we appreciate them. For PR chairs, a hand-written thank you card can go a long way in strengthening relationships both inside and outside of our unit. This year, consider sending hand-written thank you cards to organizations or individuals who matter.

During your next Auxiliary meeting, we encourage you to have everyone sign thank you cards to give to the Legion, Sons and Riders within your Post Family to let them know how much your unit appreciates their continued support. Also send thank you letters to any organizations or businesses that may have sponsored your events or activities. Don't forget to send a personal thank you card to the reporters who you contact throughout the year, too. Who else can you thank?

In a world where everyone either texts or sends an email, a personal handwritten note will leave a lasting impression in the mind of the individual who receives it. It tells them that they matter. As Maya Angelou once said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."



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WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY, LIVE WITH PURPOSE



By Virna Luke

Wreaths Across America (WAA) was founded in 2007, and its mission is to: **Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve. Teach the next generation the value of freedom.**

WAA is best known for its annual wreath-laying ceremonies on the second Saturday of December, known as National Wreaths Across America Day. Volunteers place wreaths, with each name spoken aloud (say their name) in respectful acknowledgement of our veterans' sacrifices for our freedoms.

Having a common mission with WAA. In August 2023, at the American Legion Auxiliary's 102nd National Convention in Charlotte, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WAA was signed. ALA members are encouraged to sponsor wreaths and volunteer; read this great [blog](#).

Each year, a theme is announced; the 2024 theme is **Live with Purpose**

"I listened to people who had gone through great adversity, and they'd taken that adversity and turned it around as a call to action to spend the rest of their lives making sure that every day was meaningful and that they lived with purpose." Karen Worcester, WAA Executive Director.

To learn more about WAA, take time to visit their [website](#), resources section, shop, and listen to their radio station.

Live with purpose. I hope that your Legion Family will sponsor wreaths and/or volunteer on National Wreaths Across America Day on December 14. Make sure to take photos and share them on social media using hashtags: #LiveWithPurpose, #WAA2024, and #BuildingTheHouse.



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LAUNCH A MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN BY TELLING YOUR UNITS STORY



By Erin Hoffer, APR, CPRC

As we near the end of the calendar year, units' Membership Chairs will be busy with recruitment and renewal efforts to try to meet or surpass membership goals. We, as Public Relations Chairs, can help! Here are two steps to create a Membership Campaign.

Step One: Capture the Story

As Public Relations Chairs, our strength is having the tools to tell the story about our units and the difference that our members make for individuals, families and veterans. This means telling the story about the personal connections, the unit camaraderie, and the joy that comes with being a member of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Take a moment to create content that touches people's hearts and reminds them why they are a member. Here are some ideas on how to do this:

- Collect written or video testimonies from members. Ask them to answer the question, "Why are you a member?" and "What is your favorite part of being a member?"
- Gather existing or take new photographs that show unit members smiling and working together
- Ask someone your unit assisted to share their personal story and how the unit's help mattered. (Perhaps you have this already in thank you cards or other correspondence.)

Step Two: Distribute the Story Alongside Reminders to Join or Renew

Use the information you have gathered to craft social media posts, flyers, videos, letters or emails. In every communication, add "Renew Now!" or "Join Now!" messages. Here are some ideas of how to spread the content:

- **Social Media** - Schedule several social media posts on your unit's social media channels between now and December 31.
- **Flyers** - Create a colorful flyer to distribute at your Post's Canteen and on bulletin boards around your Post.
- **Videos** - Many of our smartphones have a video creation app (like iMovie on Apple and Samsung Create on Samsung phones) that makes splicing video together easy. Create a video montage and post on social media or the television screens at your Post.
- **Email and Letter Reminders** - Craft messages to send in individual emails or letters to members.

Make sure to work closely with your Membership Chair on your campaign and be sure to share your efforts on our [ALAFL Public Relations Facebook Group](#).

SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT YOUR EVENT WITH AN EFFECTIVE FLYER:

By Virna Luke



A well-designed flyer is an effective and inexpensive way to advertise your event; however, you must be intentional in your design to grab your audience's attention so that they will read and act on it.

Your flyer should have an eye-catching focus point with distinctive and professional graphics, vibrant colors, and easy-to-read fonts. The best practice for the details is to follow the 5 W's (who, what, when, where, and why) and provide the start and end times of your event, so your audience knows what to expect. From my own experience, it's disheartening for my belly when I show up to an event and the food service has ended.

Include a contact phone number and/or email address for more information. In addition, the flyer's information should highlight the benefits of attending and have clear call-to-action (purchase tickets, call/email to sign up, register online) so your audience knows where to go or who to contact next. Also, make sure to proofread your flyer as many times as necessary to ensure that all details are correct.

Below are samples of flyers for upcoming events, and you can find more on our **ALAFI Public Relations** Facebook Group.

Join me at the Public Relations Breakout Session at **Fall Conference** on Friday, 11:30am-12:45pm (Grand Sierra D) for a walkthrough of **PosterMyWall** and **Canva**.



CREATE A FACEBOOK EVENT TO REACH MORE PEOPLE

By Erin Hoffer, APR, CPRC

If your unit is hosting an event, create a Facebook Event to help spread the word. An estimated 175 million people in the United States use Facebook, the leading social media channel in the world.



Photo By Firmbee dot com, Unsplash

Facebook's Events section provides users an easy-to-navigate listing of events happening near them. They can search by date and proximity. Facebook's algorithm will recommend events to people with similar interests as the event subject matter. So, using Facebook as a mechanism to spread the news about your event is a key strategy to gain more attendees. Here are the general steps to creating an Event listing on Facebook:

To create an Event hosted by your unit's Page (for events that are open to the public):

1. Log into Facebook, then click your profile photo in the top right.
2. Click **See all profiles**, then select the Page you want to switch into.
3. From your Feed, click **Events** in the left menu. You may need to click See more first.
4. Click **+ Create new event** on the left.
5. Type in an **Event name**, select the date and time, and click whether the event is **In person** or **Virtual**.
6. Enter event information by following the prompts.
7. Click **Create Event**

Create an Event for your unit's Facebook Group (this is ideal for events that are only open to Post Family members):

1. Go to facebook.com/groups and select your Post Family's group.
2. Click **Write something...** then click **Add to your post** and select Create event.
3. Fill in the details for your event.
4. If you want to invite all members of your group, select **Invite all members of [group name]**. For private groups, you can only invite your friends in the group.
5. Click **Create event**.



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