



PUBLIC RELATIONS CURRENTS



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As we step into the new year with fireworks lighting the sky, we're reminded that January brings more than celebration. It brings renewed energy, fresh purpose, and a bright reminder of why we serve. Each burst of color reflects the passion we carry forward into 2026, especially under our theme: **"Passion for Veterans."**

Passion isn't soft or subtle. It's bold, determined, and impossible to miss! Passion shows up with sleeves rolled, hearts open, and a shared commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of our veterans, their families, and our communities.

This season gives us the perfect opportunity to refocus our efforts in public relations: communicating with intention, amplifying our veterans' stories with dignity and pride, and strengthening the trust our communities place in us. PR isn't just about promoting events or creating social media posts; it's about making sure **every act of service, every project, and every volunteer's effort is seen, valued, and understood.**

As you journey into 2026, lead with heart. Lead with clarity. Lead with the kind of passion that inspires others to join our mission. When we show our dedication with purpose and warmth, we build stronger units, stronger relationships, and a stronger legacy for those we serve.

Here's to a year filled with purpose, teamwork, and unstoppable passion.

Happy New Year!



NEW YEAR, CLEAR MISSION: WHY PR RESOLUTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By *Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC*

For American Legion Auxiliary's Public Relations chairpersons, New Year's resolutions can be more than personal promises. They can be a **powerful planning tool**.

Writing down resolutions forces you to pause and reconnect with your "why." Why does your unit's mission matter? Who are you trying to reach? What impact do you want your communications to have this year?

When your time is limited and your passion is high, clarity keeps you focused on what truly supports the mission.

Strong resolutions also create space for strategy. Instead of vague goals like "do more social media," **try setting measurable objectives**: increase newsletter open rates by 10 percent, earn three local media mentions, or recruit five new volunteers through storytelling campaigns.

Clear goals help you prioritize efforts and show the value of your work to leadership. Resolutions don't have to be rigid. Think of them as guideposts that keep your messaging consistent and your energy aligned. Revisit them quarterly, adjust when needed, and celebrate progress along the way.

A well-written New Year's resolution can turn good intentions into meaningful, mission-driven results.



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RE=ENERGIZING YOUR PUBLIC IMAGE FOR 2026



By *Virna Luke*

January offers a clean slate, and with it comes the perfect opportunity to **re-energize your unit's public image**. While the heart of our mission remains constant: service, connection, and community. Our presentation can always benefit from a small tune-up. This is the month to refresh your message, polish your visuals, and take a clear-eyed look at how your unit appears to the public.

A great starting point is your online presence. Update your bios on social media and websites. A short sentence that captures your unit's spirit can go a long way. Swap outdated photos or graphics with fresh ones that reflect your members today. People want to see the faces behind the mission, so show them!

January is also a perfect time to evaluate whether your messaging still aligns with your goals. Are you highlighting your most meaningful programs? Are new members easily able to learn who you are and what you do? A quick internal audit can reveal opportunities to simplify, clarify, and inspire. Even small changes, like establishing consistent colors, fonts, and tone, can make your unit look more unified and confident. And **confidence is contagious**.





NEW YEAR MEANS NEW MEMBERS: TAP INTO THEIR ENERGY & EXCITEMENT

By *Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC*

As the renewal date of December 31 nears, you may find your Auxiliary Unit filled with new members excited to get involved, make connections, and make a difference. Don't let this opportunity pass by to tap into their energy and enthusiasm. Consider creating an onboarding process in which you offer communications as to why we do what we do, how we do what we do, and what matters most.

Think of **onboarding as your first PR campaign of the year**. Your audience just happens to be your newest volunteers. Start simple. A warm welcome email or short guide that explains the ALA mission in plain language helps new members quickly understand the "why." Share a quick story about a veteran or family your organization has helped. Stories stick far better than policies.

Next, clarify the "how." New volunteers don't need every detail on day one, but they do need to know how to get involved without feeling lost. Outline a few clear pathways: committees they can join, events they can help with, or small tasks they can tackle right away.

Don't forget the "**what matters most**." Make sure to tell stories about how your unit has truly made a difference in the community. This can include output measurements like how many veterans received holiday cards or how many families got holiday baskets. This may help energize them even more, but also reinforces the goals and mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. Finally, keep it human. **Pair new members with a buddy**, host a casual meet-and-greet, or check in after the first month. Onboarding isn't a one-time message; it's an ongoing conversation. When new volunteers feel **informed, welcomed and valued**, they're far more likely to stay engaged and become your strongest volunteers.





WHEN TIME IS TIGHT: SMART PR STRATEGIES TO SAVE TIME

By *Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC*

When you're a volunteer PR chairperson, time is often your most limited resource. Between full-time jobs, family commitments, household chores and service to your organization, it can feel impossible to "do it all." The good news? You don't have to. **Effective public relations isn't about doing more; it's about doing what matters most.**

Start by prioritizing communications that directly supports the ALA mission. Ask yourself a simple question: *What does our audience need to know right now?* Focus on one or two key messages each month instead of trying to promote everything at once. A clear priority helps prevent burnout and keeps your messaging focused and intentional.

Next, make repurposing your best friend. Have one success story from a recent event? It can live in multiple places. Turn it into a short social media post, a paragraph in your unit's newsletter, and a talking point at the monthly meeting. One strong piece of content can stretch far when time is tight, and repetition actually helps your message stick.

Consistency matters more than frequency. It's better to post once a week reliably than to post daily for a month and then disappear. Create simple templates for social posts, media releases or event promotions so you're not starting from scratch every time.

Finally, give yourself some grace. When you focus on priorities, reuse what works, and stay consistent, your communications remain strong without overwhelming your schedule.



TOOLS IN 2026 HELP PR CHAIRPERSONS WORK FASTER

By *Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC*

There are an abundance of free digital tools that can help PR chairpersons **work faster, easier, and more effective**. Today, many of those tools are powered by AI, giving extra support when time and resources are limited. When it comes to content creation, tools like Canva not only offer free design templates for social media graphics, flyers, and presentations, but also include AI-powered features. Canva's AI can help generate design layouts, images, and even draft basic copy, making it easier to create content without starting from scratch.

For writing and editing, Google Docs remains a go-to for collaboration, and its built-in AI tools (Gemini) can help refine your work. AI-powered suggestions assist with summarizing notes, improving clarity or drafting first versions of content - perfect when you're staring at a blank page. Multiple volunteers can still comment and edit in real time, keeping teamwork front and center.

In social media, platforms like Meta Business Suite (Facebook & Instagram) use AI to recommend posting times and surface performance insights. Facebook now offers AI suggestions to content - with the ability to rewrite. Scheduling posts in advance helps maintain consistency, even during busy weeks.

When used thoughtfully, free AI-powered tools don't replace PR chairpersons; they **empower them to work faster, smarter and keep the mission moving forward**.



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Tips for Using AI-Generated Content Responsibly in PR

- **Always review and edit**

Treat AI content as a first draft, not a finished product. Read everything carefully to ensure it matches your unit's tone, values, and messaging.

- **Watch for hallucinations**

AI can confidently generate information that sounds correct but isn't. Be especially cautious with dates, statistics, quotes, names, and historical details. Read each sentence carefully.

- **Fact-check key information**

Verify facts using trusted sources before publishing or sharing. This is critical for credibility, especially in communications.

- **Protect proprietary and sensitive information**

Never input confidential data, internal strategies, member lists, donor information, proprietary information, or private conversations into AI tools. Assume anything entered could be captured, stored, or reused by someone else.

- **Be mindful of copyright and ownership**

AI-generated text or images may still raise copyright concerns. Avoid asking AI to replicate specific copyrighted works, and ensure final content is original and compliant with your organization's policies.

- **Maintain human input**

AI can help with structure and ideas, but authentic storytelling comes from people. Add personal insights, real experiences, and mission-driven language.

- **Avoid bias and unintended messaging**

AI can reflect biases. Review content for language that could be exclusionary, inaccurate, or misaligned with your audience.

- **Use AI to assist, not replace, judgment**

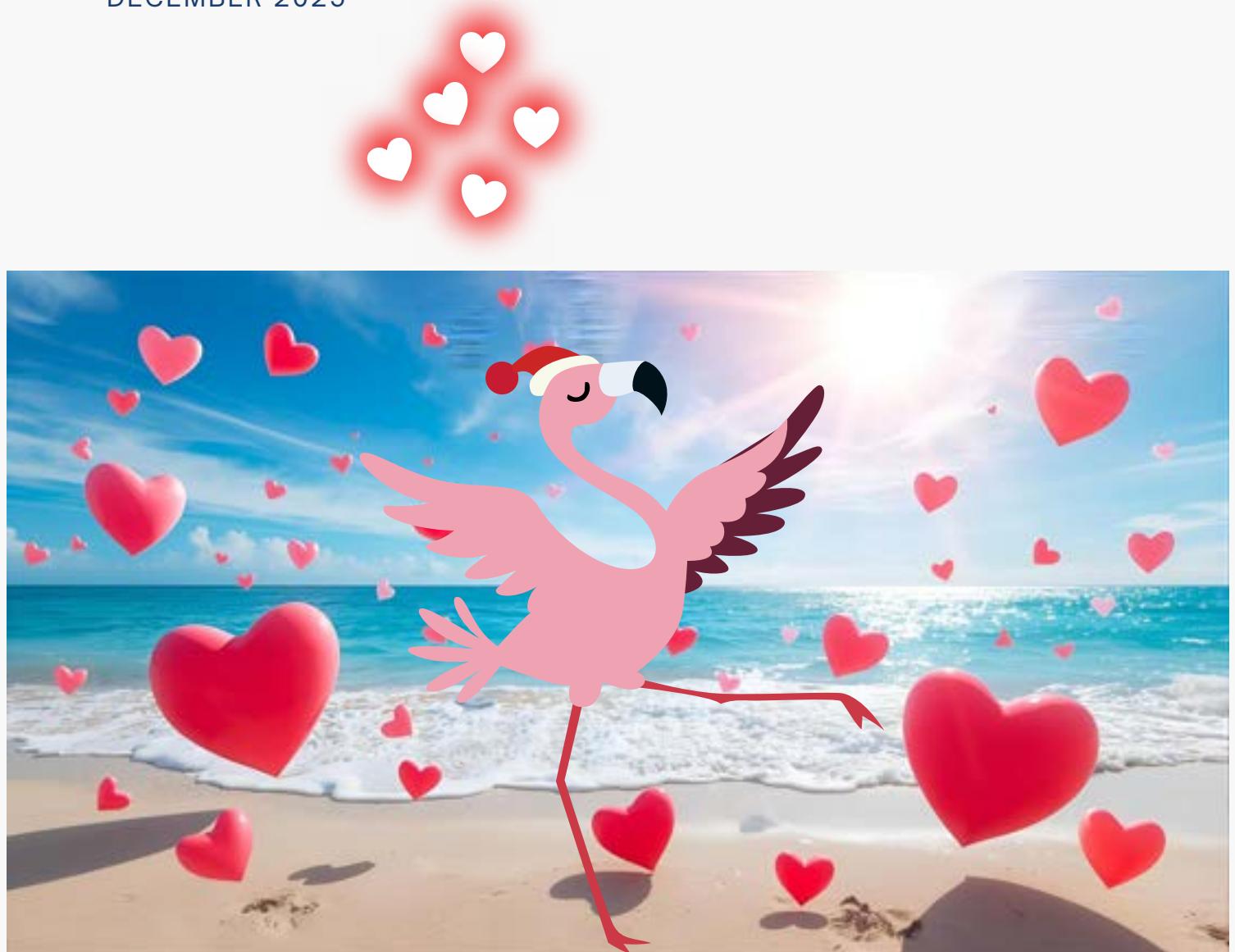
Strategic decisions, such as what to say, when to say it, and to whom, should always be made by people who understand the mission and community.

- **Be transparent when appropriate**

If your organization has guidelines about AI use, follow them and be clear internally about how AI supports your work.

Used thoughtfully, AI can be a powerful assistant—but it always requires human oversight. PR chairpersons bring oversight, ethics, and attention to detail to the table.

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
Thank you for sharing your passion -
Virna, Patricia, and Erin

