



GET NOTICED

VFW Public Relations Guide



VFW Fights for Respect With Ad Blitz

By Lisa Brownlee
Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, one of the nation's oldest veterans' groups, is trying to boost its image — and that explains some unusual ads running lately on ESPN.

Many people still associate the VFW with old war stories, sparsely attended parades and World War II veterans like Bob Dole, who is a lifetime member. About half of the organization's 2.1 million members are over the age of 65.

"If you go back 30 or 40 years, almost every family had a veteran or knew a veteran," says Steve Van Buskirk, spokesman for the VFW, which is based in Kansas City, Mo. But today, veterans' concerns are no longer the "secret code" they were after World War II, when the



members seeking more visibility, Mr. Buskirk says. "We wanted quality time. We wanted to reach the audience that we could possibly reach. ESPN reaches 71 million households a week on cable TV.

The pitch isn't aimed at young people, although the VFW has a membership base and is looking for recruits. "Obviously, we're an organization," says Paul H. Vietnam veteran and account executive in Springfield, Mo., who is a VFW member. "We have an annual budget of about \$10 million. VFW gets most of its money from dues (\$20 a year, or as little as \$10 for a lifetime membership) and from the sale of its publications.

The VFW also hopes to attract more young people than it has in the past. It is a political group, and it is interested in politics, and it is interested in the military.



ADVERTISING The VFW Fights for a New Image



VFW post ranks woman at the top

New 6024 commander can tell a WWII story like she was there, which she was.

By Susan Gill Hardin
The Oregonian's Staff Writer

Give Jackie Shoeki a table at the Elks lodge, a beer and an audience, and she can answer a war story as good as the pope. Maybe better.

How many may say you are old and that's right. Douglas D. Eschenbrenner, commander of the 6024th Central Postal Directory in Europe in World War II, once selected a Christian Science reporter to write about him in the Christian Science Monitor.

And how many could give firsthand descriptions of the combat through the Champagne-Fluency on VE-Day?

She was in Europe and the Elks lodge in Portland after 12 months of "loneliness."

"I'm used to stories and being around people after serving in the Army and all that," said Shoeki, who at age 23 joined the WAC, the Women's Army Corps, out of patriotism and boredom.

With the 31-year-old Eschenbrenner, who was surprised when she was selected commander of the 6024th Central Postal Directory in Europe in World War II, she was the first woman to hold that rank in the post's 65-year history.

SEE WORKS PAGE 9



Care packages headed to Iraq

By Ted Mookdiah
Daily News Staff Writer

They filled with rooms, toiletries, toothbrushes, toothpaste and other necessities. The care packages are headed to Iraq.

The care packages are courtesy of Moscow and Pullman residents who have spent the past month collecting items for U.S. troops.

Days Thayer, a Pullman state representative who began the drive, said the items most in demand by troops is prepackaged paper washcloths.

"You can imagine staying in one of those suits for a month," he said.

Bags of goodies assembled from items dropped off at auto repair and equipment stores in Moscow and Pullman also include letters, writing tablets, pens, games, shampoo and socks.

In Moscow, the local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars teamed with the Chamber of Commerce to assemble care packages. Dan Meyer, VFW commander in Moscow, and volunteers will spend Friday putting the last

School children from Bovill, Pullman and Moscow wrote letters and drew pictures to be included in the care packages.

Staff
Daily News

MORE ONLINE
For more coverage on the war and local events, go to www.oregonian.com

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Public Relations—Beyond the News Release

PUBLIC RELATIONS may be the most important task you and your Post will undertake. It occurs every minute of every day. It goes beyond preparing and distributing news releases. It is the underlying element that brings success or failure to your Post. All contact between your Post and the community has a public relations aspect. **Ensuring the community views your Post positively is the job of the public relations officer.**

In 1929, *VFW* magazine ran an article titled “Keeping Your Community Interested.” It stated: “Keeping your community interested is equivalent

to making it think in terms of the VFW. These thoughts must be of admiration, appreciation and gratitude ... not for services rendered during the months of conflict ... but for the constructive aid, which your organization is giving to your community years after the war.”

Today, that thinking is still on target. The community service your Post performs will enhance the Post’s reputation as a responsible, caring and energetic community service organization—one that leads by example.

Your PR Program—Defining Your Mission

One of the first steps in planning a public relations program is to define your objectives. **At the national level there is a set of objectives that reflects the mission of the organization.*** Keep this information close at hand. You will refer to it numerous times. Include a portion of it that reflects the focus of your event in your news release tag line. Below are the steps to start your PR program:

- **Determine your audience.** This includes members, potential members and non-members. Different Post activities appeal to different segments of the community.
- **Define your message.** Sticking to one subject in a news release is essential. However, your message may be presented in several ways through various outlets. Determine the best outlet for the best results.
- **Develop a strategy.** How can you best accomplish your goals? Look at the dynamics of your commu-

nity. Build a relationship with the media in your area. Keep an up-to-date list of contacts for each outlet. Become the best source of information in your community on patriotic and veterans issues. Develop relationships with other local community service organizations.

When evaluating your program, you should listen carefully to the feedback from Post members and officers, members of the community and the media. Take this information and fine tune your program, if necessary. A good public relations officer is a communicator and a listener.

Suggestions from all sources should be considered. After all, those people see the program from a different angle, and what might be very clear to you may not be to them. A new point of view may help get the word out more efficiently and effectively.

Development of good public relations takes time and commitment.

*Priority goals are listed each year in the December issue of VFW magazine.





Building Media Contacts

Now that you have been appointed public relations officer you can take a moment to pat yourself on the back. The Post commander has placed his/her trust in your abilities to successfully promote VFW's goals and programs. Now the hard work begins.

You have been chosen based on your outstanding skills with words and people. Each of these components is of equal importance.

As the public relations officer, you will have to speak to the media and general public. Therefore you need to be able to speak clearly and concisely on veterans issues and VFW programs. Your ability to communicate in both the written and spoken word will benefit the Post and the community. (See Appendix III and Appendix IV on page 17 to articulate VFW's history and mission when speaking on behalf of your Post.)

You should build a good working relationship with members of the media, as well as the leaders of the various VFW programs. The assistance of offi-

cers and members is invaluable when gathering information to present to the media. When your information is accurate and of interest to the community, the media will welcome your submissions.

Some basic equipment needed for the job of public relations officer is a computer, word processor or typewriter; official Post stationery (letterhead and envelopes); a dictionary (spell check doesn't always know what word you are trying to use); and a style guide, such as the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

A camera is a great tool when used properly. After all, "a picture is worth a thousand words," but only when that picture is of good quality and supports your newsworthy story. Avoid taking "grip-and-grin" photos. Additionally, always look for the action shots. Remember, get close and get faces.

Your goals are to develop a public relations program and make it work, establish media contacts and increase the community's awareness and respect for the VFW.



Building VFW Awareness by Rewarding Your Community

Know the VFW programs and how they serve the community. **Our programs are the heart of our organization, beginning with community service.** Tell the community about the Post service officer and the assistance available to any veteran and his or her dependents to gain entitlements.

Our programs can reach people in the community who might not otherwise know veterans or the continuing service they offer to their communities. Through our youth and citizenship-education programs we offer valuable and needed information to various groups in the community.

Establish an awards program that relates to VFW

programs. Everyone loves praise. Recognition focuses the community spotlight on the individual or group being acknowledged as well as on the VFW. Award your local police, firefighters and EMTs with a certificate of appreciation during a public ceremony. Coordinate this event with a community anniversary or a national observance.

Other organizations or groups that have assisted VFW in a community-service project deserve thanks as well. Host a special event to recognize individuals or groups who further VFW's aims and ideals. Include teachers, public officials, youths and members who have demonstrated support of VFW's values.

Deal With Bad Publicity, Don't Avoid It

Unfavorable publicity needs to be handled promptly and with as accurate information as possible. Here are some tips for dealing with negative publicity:

- **Don't avoid the media.** Help them get all the facts so the story will be fair and balanced.
- **Do not provide conjecture or speak before you have all the facts.**
- **Do not place blame.**
- **Do not discuss fault or liability.**

- **Deal with the situation and move on.**

Even a bad situation can have positive aspects. Think of this as a welcome opportunity to present VFW's programs and projects that help the community (see Appendix V on page 18 for an example of turning a negative into a positive). If you have been helpful, the media contacts you make can prove valuable in the future.

Targeting the Media with a Specific Message

Get to know the media in your area. This includes newspapers, both daily and weekly; radio, television and cable television stations; local or regional trade publications; and local and regional magazines.

Your contact list should include: name, title, address, affiliation, phone number, fax number, e-mail address if available and publication deadline dates.

Remember: your membership is diverse. Contacting various outlets ensures that your message reaches a

wide audience.

Not every news release will need to be sent to every contact. A news release announcing teachers and students receiving awards from the VFW would be best sent to the local media outlets as well as the school and any professional publication for teachers. A blood drive held at the Post would have a different list of media contacts. Choose carefully. A constant barrage of unrelated news releases can numb the media to your message.

‘Thank You’ Reap Rewards

Nothing is more important than saying “thank you.” A well-written thank you note to a guest speaker is imperative.

Presentation of a certificate of appreciation to an individual or a group that has assisted with a program goes a long way toward building community relationships. A brief note of thanks to a member of the media for event coverage can help keep the lines of communication open. You also may want to consider writing congratulatory letters to individual Post members when they have accomplished something noteworthy outside of the organization.

Many members belong to various community-service organizations. Sending congratulatory letters to elected leaders of other service organizations is a good way to establish a spirit of camaraderie between organizations. After all, we are all trying to better our communities through voluntary public service.

In addition, you can host an annual appreciation event for local law enforcement agencies, community-safety representatives, educators and youths who deserve recognition.



Make Your Community Proud of Your Post

Make your community proud it has a VFW Post. Be the focal point in your community for all patriotic programs. Whether it's parades, school programs or voter registration, make sure the VFW has a visible presence.

Keep the Post home in good shape. Make it attractive and welcoming. Let it be an example of an organization that is proud of its history and working

to make the community a better place in which to live. When the Post has a good image, it is easier to get the media involved and excited about VFW-sponsored events.

Finally, remember that you represent VFW to every person you meet. The impression you make is one the public will associate with the VFW. Make sure it is a good one.



Keep a Calendar

A calendar of upcoming VFW events can help simplify your job. On your calendar include important national events, anniversaries and observances. To commemorate these dates you may want to have a letter to the editor ready for possible publication. Also you might consider hosting an event in observance of these special days. When planning an event it also is important to consult with the local community calendar. **Scheduling conflicts can be avoided with some simple checking.**

Important Dates to Remember:

3rd Monday in Jan. - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan. 27 - Signing of Vietnam Peace Accords (1973)
3rd Monday of Feb. - Presidents Day
April 11 - Persian Gulf War Official Cease-Fire
May 1 - Loyalty Day
May 8 - WWII Ends in Europe
May 15 - Peace Officers Memorial Day
3rd Saturday in May - Armed Forces Day
Last Monday of May - Memorial Day
June 14 - Flag Day

July 4 - Independence Day
July 27 - Korean War Armistice Day
Aug. 15 - WWII Cease-fire in Pacific
Sept. 2 - Peace Treaty Ending WWII
Sept. 11 - Patriots' Day
Sept. 17 - Citizenship Day
3rd Friday in Sept. - POW/MIA Recognition Day
Sept. 29 - VFW Founded in 1899
1st Tuesday of Nov. - Election Day
Nov. 11 - Veterans Day
Dec. 7 - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

A News Release Must Be Newsworthy

The most fundamental way, although not the only way, to get your message out to the media is through a news release.

An effective news release relates information that is newsworthy. It should be clear, concise, error-free and answer the five “W’s” in the first paragraph: who, what, where, when, why.

Try to keep the news release to one page, two at the most. If more information is needed to better explain your news release (fact sheets, biographies or program information), it can be attached. Be sure the contact person’s name, phone number and the date of the release are clearly indicated.

Include quotes from the head of the organization, the Post commander or the officer responsible for the program. It is best to use quotes that sound natural and express an opinion or position.

Press releases can be written on events, programs, awards, election of VFW officers or national issues. Be sure to highlight the local aspect no matter what the subject. Localization makes for easier placement.

Avoid buzzwords and organizational acronyms. Assume that readers know nothing about the organization—chances are they don’t.

As you are writing, think about simplicity. Be brief. Forget flowery adjectives—they will probably be cut anyway. And don’t be insulted if your release is changed or cut, as long as it gets the main points across. The editor’s job is to do just that—edit.

Know the media deadlines. Allow enough time for editors to call with questions, but not too much time for the interest to lag.

Make the reporter’s job easier by e-mailing the news release to him/her. Follow-up with a phone call.

When you have completed your news release, go back over it again. Check that you have answered the five W’s in the first paragraph. Did you give the release a point of local interest? Are the sentences short and clear? Is the release written in a consistent manner? Is it typed and error-free? Nothing is more irritating to an editor than having to re-write a release.

If a photo is included with the release, be sure to provide the names of everyone in the photo and a brief explanation of the event. Make sure the photo is of good quality and suitable for publication.

(See Appendix I on page 15 for a news release example.)





Public Relations: Free Advertising

There are significant differences between public relations and advertising.

With advertising you control the timing and content but not the cost. **In public relations you have no control on the timing or content but pay nothing.** Resources will determine which method you use most frequently.

Talk to the local radio stations about advertising. The cost of placing a 60-second spot can be minimal depending on your location. Radio stations have staff ready to assist you on placement and costs. Explore this medium for effectiveness of messaging (how many of your target audience you reach) and cost comparison.

VFW National Headquarters has new radio messages for your consideration and possible use in your public relations plan. They do solicit membership, so they cannot be used as PSAs (public service announcements), which are free.

Headquarters also has both 60-second and 30-second videos available that are considered PSAs. The announcements cover VFW's commitment to community and remind the viewer, "If you enjoy your freedom, thank a veteran."

Additionally, if you advertise to solicit members, be mindful of the environment at the Post. Make sure the prospective member feels welcome and respected.

Be Creative with Publicity Options

We have talked about the printed word in the form of a news release and the possibilities available through radio ads and video PSAs, but there are other options to investigate as well.

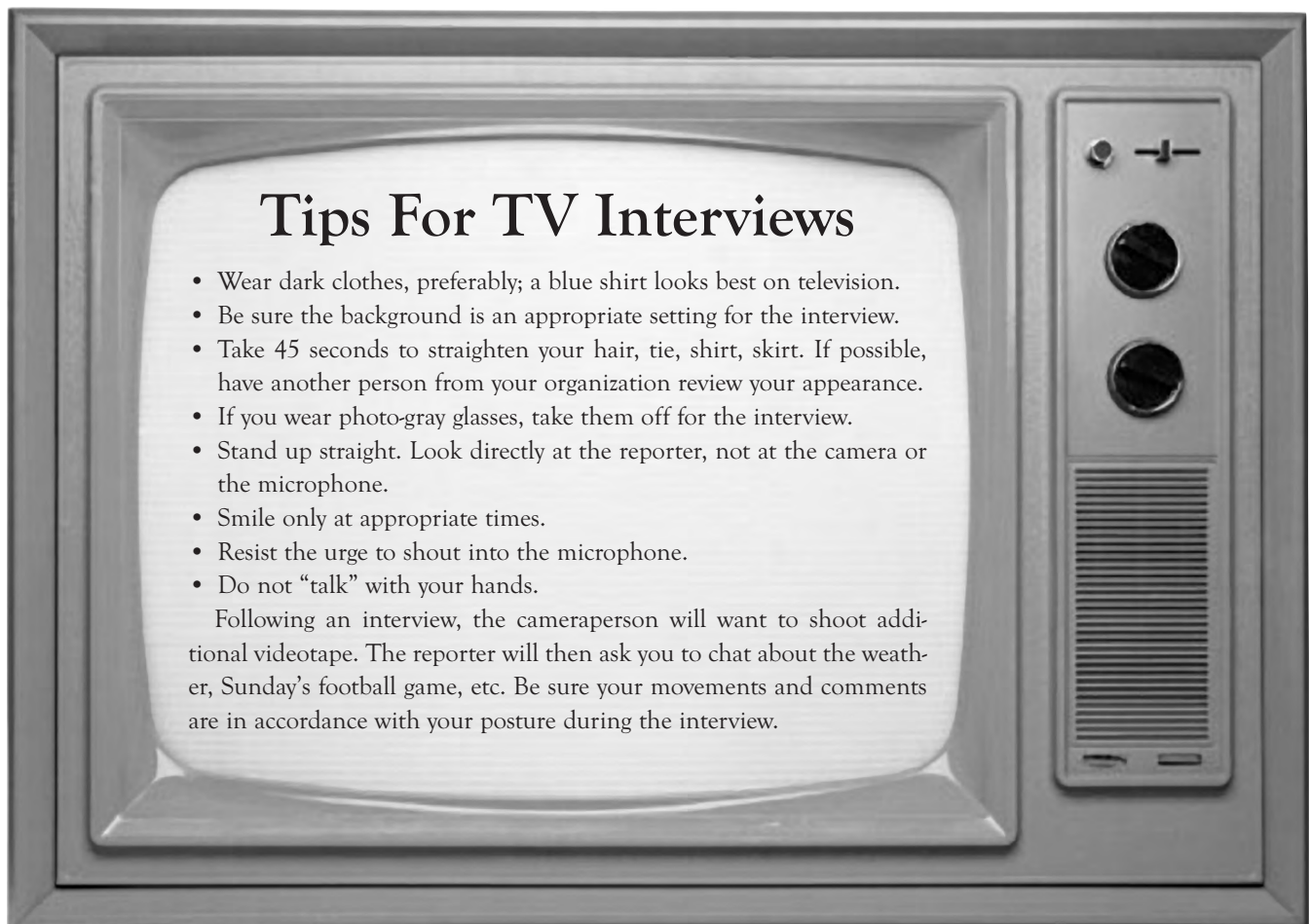
- **Outdoor advertising** ranges from bumper stickers to welcome signs as people drive through your community. Take every opportunity to keep the community aware of VFW's presence. In this age of mobility it is important to remember that the population in your community can change daily. Keep the VFW name out in front of residents.
- **Exhibits** in shopping areas, fairs, community social events and other public forums are excellent ways to bring the VFW story to the community. Information on VFW activities and programs can entice eligible veterans to join the organization and favorably influence others in the community.
- **Cable television** offers a broad spectrum of services that may be useful to your program. Check out local programming that is available to announce VFW events or participate in a community information program that covers topics of local interest. Some cable operators will assist non-profit organizations produce programs of interest to the community.
- **AMC Theaters** and VFW developed various slides to help viewers determine if they are eligible for VFW membership. These slides can be placed in the advertisement rotation shown before the feature presentation at your local AMC movie theater. Costs are proportionate to the number of screens and the number of viewers. Contact national headquarters for further information (see Appendix II on page 16).

Control Interviews with Facts and Research

If reporters call, determine why they are calling and the subject to be discussed. Ask if the reporter is on deadline, and assure the reporter you will call back before the deadline. Remember, you have little control over the interview. However, if the reporter asks a question off the subject, bring him/her back to the agreed topic. Here is a step-by-step guide from the preparations to the actual interview.

- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers.
- Know what you want to communicate. Plan to make your points accordingly.
- Do your research. Provide background or expanded information.
- Call the reporter back as promised.
- Never lie or mislead a reporter.
- Offer your conclusion first, briefly and directly. Back it with facts.
- Avoid organizational jargon and acronyms.
- Be realistic and positive.
- Short answers are better than long. Use complete sentences.
- Be honest, responsive and factual. Don't talk too much.
- Don't accept a reporter's facts and figures as true; don't respond to a hypothetical situation; and do respond to negative leading questions with positive statements.
- Keep cool. Don't allow yourself to be provoked.
- There is no formal beginning or end to an interview. Everything within earshot to a reporter is fair game.
- **Remember when talking to a reporter there is no such thing as "off the record."**
- If there are any skeletons in the closet, be prepared for them to come up in the interview.
- Be prepared to state all your positive points completely in response to the first questions asked.
- State clearly when you can release information and why.
- If you don't know the answers, say so, and offer to find out.
- Don't overlap the interviewer's question; begin your answer when the reporter is finished.

The interview will be brief. A reporter has only a few minutes to get your full story. Don't ask to approve the story before it is published or broadcast.





Notifying the Media When the Chief Visits

The commander-in-chief's visit to your area is an important event for several reasons. First, he is the chief spokesman for our organization. Second, he meets with the President and key congressional members to express the interests and needs of the nation's veterans. Third, he is widely traveled and aware of the concerns of veterans and their families across the nation.

For these reasons, the local media will be interested in his views on veterans issues, national security and foreign affairs. It benefits the VFW and veterans in general if the Chief's visit is well-covered by the media.

Media plans for the Chief's visit should include some of the following guidelines:

- **News Release.** First, contact your Department headquarters to see if it is writing the news release for the Chief's visit. If it is, ask the Department for a copy. Then make enough copies of it to hand out to the news editors in your community. If the Department is not creating a news release, write one yourself.
- **Talk Shows.** If any of the TV and radio stations in your community air talk shows, contact them and ask if they would like to have the VFW's commander-in-chief as a guest. You should do this even before you get the news release because these shows schedule their guests far in advance. Of course, be sure the Chief will be in your area long enough to take part in this type of interview. Most Post visits are scheduled for 30 minutes. Such an interview works best at the beginning of a visit or at the end. In any case, coordinate with your Department headquarters to determine what works best with the Chief's already-established schedule.
- **News Conference.** Since the amount of time a Chief can spend at a Post is limited, it is usually a good idea to invite the media for a specific time. Then, turn the Chief over to them for a news conference-type interview.
- **Place.** Where you conduct the interview is very important. **Do not conduct interviews in the Post canteen.** Use your meeting room or some area that is clean and quiet.
- **Interviewees.** The media is there to interview the Chief. Conduct the interview in such a manner so others cannot interrupt. You, the Chief, the Post/District commander and the Department commander are the only VFW members who should attend the interview. Post, District and Department commanders are there only to provide information on veterans issues on a local or state level. Do not put the Chief into an interview by himself where the media are going to concentrate on local veterans issues. The Chief talks only on relevant national and international issues.
- **Time.** The best time to conduct an interview at the Post is as soon as the Chief arrives. Reporters have deadlines to meet, and they do not have time to stand around while the Chief visits with members. Get the interview started when he arrives. He can visit with members later. The only exception to this rule is when the Chief will be at the Post for a luncheon or dinner. For these visits, ask the media if they would like to eat with members, listen to the Chief's remarks afterward, and then interview him. Quite often, the Chief's remarks to the group after the meal give the media ideas for questions.
- **Follow-up.** If there are questions that can't be answered during the interview, be sure to get the name and phone number of the reporter, and provide an answer as soon as possible.

Good PR Helps Retain Members

The public relations officer has an additional responsibility to members of the VFW. The PR officer, along with other Post officers, must ensure that Post activities are enjoyable, interesting and diverse. This promotes membership retention. Members who show pride in the organization and the community service they perform attract potential members.

Remind members to wear their lapel pins. Make sure new members feel welcome and offer them the opportunity to get involved in a VFW program or project that captures their interest. Getting a new member off to a good start, or involving an existing member in a new program, is in everyone's best interest. **A happy member is the best PR the VFW can have.**

A PR officer is not responsible for meeting programs or choosing which VFW program to present to the community, but you do have an overlapping responsibility to enhance any community-service project that is undertaken. Good public relations can't make up for lack of planning or poor administration. You can offer suggestions to overcome these problems and hopefully good PR will be the result.

Supporting VFW activities through meaningful PR is the key to supporting members in their efforts to help the community. Members will recognize your contribution to the success of the VFW and its many projects and programs. There is no substitute for teamwork.



Offer VFW Publications to Your Community

VFW magazine and *Checkpoint*, as well as your Post and Department newspapers, are the links to the membership. For those members who do not frequent the Post, the newsletter/newspaper is a vital connection that keeps them informed about all the great things the Post or Department is doing. It may even encourage them to become more active members.

Keep in mind that the Post and Department newspapers go beyond VFW members. Others may see them at a VA facility or veterans nursing home.

When you have finished reading your copy, consider dropping it off at your local library, barber-shop, doctor's or dentist's office. Better yet, drop a copy off at any fraternal organization's meeting place in your community. Even if the reader is not eligible, it is a good way to keep the public informed of how the VFW contributes to the community. Your paper is a great tool. Make the most of it.

Using the Internet for Publicity and Outreach

The Internet is a world of endless possibilities. It contains more information than most people will ever need. When researching for the most up-to-date information on a particular topic, it can't be beaten. **It provides you with the opportunity to communicate rapidly with VFW members and others who visit your Post's Web site.**

Your Post's Web site is a window into the Post's character. A calendar of current activities, showing what, when, where and how to volunteer, is an incredibly useful tool. A listing of diverse activities carried out by the Post allows numerous people to find the "perfect fit" for their interests and abilities.

Tell your Post's story.

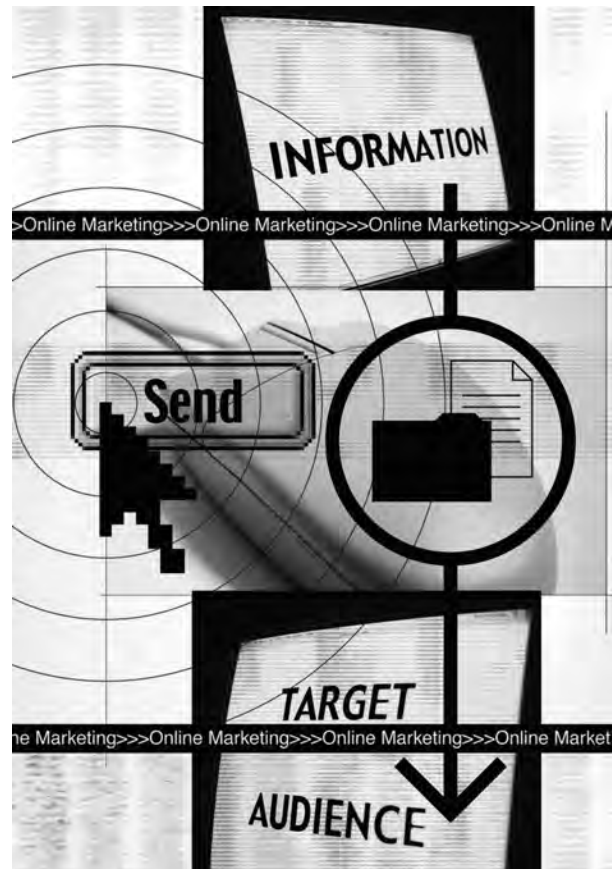
- Is the VOD program in full swing? If so, what schools are participating? How many students are participating? What are the awards for the top students?
- Have you participated in the Adopt-a-Highway program?
- Did you adopt a local military unit?
- Have you recently recognized local citizens for their efforts to better the community?

Seize this opportunity to tell your story on your Web site.

The prompt placement on your Post's Web site of news releases on current actions on veterans legislation, or breaking news on issues of interest to veterans, is vital because members need to be aware of current events so they can contact their local, or national elected officials, and voice their opinions.

Numerous issues concerning veterans can be researched on the Internet. Find out how your congressional representative or senator voted on a particular bill. Biographical and contact information on that individual is available in an instant. Use this tool to keep yourself and your members informed. The following Web site can help you get information on bills before Congress and their current action: www.thomas.loc.gov.

If your community has a Web site, ask if they will allow a link to the Post's site. This would be an excellent opportunity for non-members in the communi-



ty to become further acquainted with the VFW and the many programs and projects it performs that benefit the community. Be sure to include information on how to join and a local contact at the Post.

If you keep your members informed they will feel connected to the organization and take pride in its accomplishments. Feeling proud and connected may encourage them to become more involved in Post activities. Increased involvement leads to more and better program participation. It is a win/win situation for the member, the Post and the community.

In addition, it's important for the Post Web site to continually be updated. A Web site that isn't being updated or maintained will deter visitors from your site. In this day of "instant access," people demand that information on Web sites be current. Otherwise you could lose credibility in your community.

Appendix I: Sample News Release

Refer to page 9 when writing your own news release.



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release, Contact:

Jerry Newberry
(816) 756-3390

VFW Leads Homefront Initiative

Contacts:

Jerry Newberry
National Headquarters
406 W. 34th St.
Kansas City, MO 64111
Ph: (816) 756-3390
Fax: (816) 968-1199
Cell: (816) 868-0120
JNewberry@vfw.org

Bill Smith
Washington Office
200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Ph: (202) 543-2239
Fax: (202) 543-0961
BSmith@vfw.org

Web site:

www.vfw.org

Mission:

VFW is an organization of war veterans committed to ensuring rights, remembering sacrifices, promoting patriotism, performing community services and advocating for a strong national defense.

Kansas City, MO, March 25, - In cooperation with the USA Freedom Corps' "On the Homefront" program, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is extending its troop support and volunteer network to the families of deployed service men and women.

As part of the VFW's "Support the Troops" campaign the veteran organization's Military Assistance Program is partnering with the uniformed services' Family Support representatives to provide patriotic "Thank You" packages to the families of deployed servicemembers. Although contents will vary, some of the items in the support packages will include canned food, baby food and diapers.

According to MAP Director Bud Haney, recent events have made shipping packages directly to servicemembers and units difficult. "The overwhelming influx of packages into the military postal system creates increased logistical problems for the military support vehicles used to carry combat supplies such as food, ammunition and spare parts," Haney said. "Many packages are restricted from entering the theater of operations where the troops are and either have to be placed in a holding area or returned to the sender."

"The VFW's patriotic "Thank You" packages" will demonstrate to our armed forces that we support them by supporting their families so they can concentrate on performing their mission and not worry about their family's needs," Haney added.

As part of the White House initiative, organizations, in cooperation with the USA Freedom Corps, are encouraged to engage Americans in volunteer service activities to support the needs of deployed troops and their family members. These volunteers can assist families with a variety of tasks such as financial planning, major household repairs, yard work, free or low-cost childcare and activities for youth, while one parent is stationed away from home. In addition, local organizations and businesses can offer discounts on goods and services — such as, movies, sports activities, financial and legal services — to military families, and promote the initiatives with window placards, websites or other advertising.

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Appendix II: Ads, PSAs and Web Sites

VFW Resources

For more information on any of the following resources available from VFW National Headquarters, contact: *VFW Communications Dept., 406 W. 34th St., Kansas City, MO 64111, phone: 816-968-1170.*

Radio spots. The VFW has developed 60-second radio spots. These are available on CD, with open-ended spots for local tags.

Video PSA. We have 60-second and 30-second public service announcements (PSAs) available. Each is a testament to veterans and the role they have played in our nation's history. They are available in VHS or BETA format.

Theater Ads. These slides are designed to help veterans determine if they are eligible for VFW membership. They can be placed in the advertisement rotation shown before the feature presentation. Costs are proportionate to the number of screens and the number of viewers.

Ad Slicks. Various sized ads reflecting the VFW mission and programs are available. These slicks are ready to place in your local newspapers and are available free of charge.

For information on the cost of the CD, video PSAs, theater ads, or to request ad slicks, please contact the VFW Communications Department.

Web Resources

VFW's Web site, www.vfw.org, is an important source of information about the national organization. Information on VFW's position on a particular topic is available on the front page or in archived materials. Check this Web site frequently and feel free to copy pertinent information to your Post's Web site.

The Web site also has information on current national officers, available speeches, VFW magazine, calendar of events and extensive program guides. Check the *News & Info* section for media releases and policy statements.

Look up current and past legislative information at www.thomas.loc.gov.

Tools to help members can be a



Video PSA



Theater Ad



Print Ads



Appendix III: Fast Facts

To concisely emphasize VFW’s programs and purposes, refer to the text below.

The purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States are:

- Preserving and expanding veterans rights and benefits.
- Advocating a strong national defense.
- Promoting patriotism.
- Offering community service.

These objectives are accomplished by:

- Lobbying Congress on behalf of veterans through VFW’s National Legislative Service and monitoring care and seeking assistance through VFW’s National Veterans Service.
- Monitoring overseas troop deployments and the Pentagon’s budget through VFW’s National Security and Foreign Affairs section.
- Educating schoolchildren with the help of VFW members through VFW’s Citizenship Education and Community Service and Youth Development, Scholarship and Recognition departments.
- Serving communities at the local level, such as VFW Post members cleaning roadsides in the Adopt-a-Highway program, as well as national projects like disaster relief.

Non-profit Status

VFW is a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Service Code and contributions are deductible under section 170(c).

Programs

- Annually, VFW awards more than \$2.5 million in youth scholarships through its Voice of Democracy program.
- VFW awards more than \$900,000 a year in U.S. savings bonds through the Patriot’s Pen contest.
- VFW and its partner, the Ladies Auxiliary, annually donate more than 13 millions hours of community-service.
- Every year, VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary contribute millions of dollars worth of community service-projects.
- Our Ladies Auxiliary annually collects more than \$3 million for cancer research. It has donated some \$47 million since the late 1950s.
- Through its *Operation Uplink* program, VFW has given out millions of pre-paid phone calling-cards to veterans in veterans homes, hospitals and active-duty military.

Appendix IV: Historical Highlights

When referencing VFW’s history, be mindful of accuracy by reviewing the copy below.

1899	American Veterans of Foreign Service, (Columbus, Ohio)	1936	VFW Congressional Charter.
1899	Army of the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico, (Denver, Colo.)	1937	Bicycle safety program.
1901	American Veterans of Foreign Service (Eastern Branch, Altoona, Pa.)	1946	Dept. of Athletics & Recreation established. National Security and Foreign Affairs section formed.
1914	The three foreign service organizations merge to form Veterans of Foreign Wars. Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW formed. <i>Foreign Service</i> magazine established.	1947	Voice of Democracy established.
1919	VFW’s first lobbyist appointed.	1948	First community service contest.
1919	National Service Bureau established.	1959	VFW Cancer Research Center established in Minnesota.
1921	Americanization Committee established.	1960	VFW Washington Memorial Building dedicated.
1922	Buddy Poppy program established.	1962	Lite-A-Bike established.
1925	National Home established.	1973	Drug Awareness program established.
1929	Recovery of U.S. remains from Russia.	1978	Women admitted to the VFW.
1930	VFW Loyalty Day established. Boy Scout-VFW relationship established.	1979	VFW-PAC established. Shooting program with NRA established.
1934	Sons of VFW founded. Americanism Department established.	1984	VFW membership surpasses 2 million.
		1994	VA Golden Age Games co-sponsorship begins.
		1995	Youth Essay, now Patriot’s Pen, begins.

Appendix V: Gaining Positive Publicity

The following news story is an example of how effective public relations reaps rewards.

VFW CHAPTERS SEND OUT S.O.S. FOR NEW, YOUNGER MEMBERS Lobby, Social Group Losing Vets to Old Age

By Michael Stetz
San Diego Union-Tribune
June 9, 2003

Many of the men who fought in World War II and Korea are our elderly now. They are dying. Even Vietnam War veterans – those who served early on in that long conflict – are reaching their 60s and beginning to pass away.

Bobby Price, the incoming commander of the San Diego VFW District, worries about that. As America's war veterans age, Price said, it makes it that much harder for the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization to stay viable and strong. So he wants to get the word out, to those who are home or who are coming home soon from the war in Iraq: Join.

"We welcome them," Price said.

His organization and others like it continually try to recruit new members, and it is not because they hope to beef up the weekend fish fry turnout at local posts and lodges.

It is because veterans benefits are being cut, and there is strength in numbers. Price, for one, sees a lot of numbers.

More than 200,000 people served in the latest war – the first major conflict since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Tens of thousands more served in Afghanistan, in the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

"We're talking about a whole new crop of war veterans," Price said. "We're always recruiting. It's a matter of us getting the word out."

It's not easy, though. The VFW is not just fighting numbers. It's fighting a stigma.

"People think we're an old folks' home," said Price, 45, a retired Navy lieutenant who served in the Persian Gulf War and other conflicts. "And a bar. We're not just a bar."

The VFW is a powerful lobby, say Price and others involved with it. It fights for veterans rights, particularly health care concerns. But it can't do its job as effectively without muscle. And the membership is the muscle.

The membership has been shrinking. The VFW has about 1.6 million members today, down from a high of 2.16 million in 1992. Today, membership problems have been easing – nationally, the organization is meeting its goals – but some individual posts still suffer.

Last year, the San Clemente VFW post put an ad in *The Scout*, the base newspaper at Camp Pendleton, appealing for new members because the core members were dying off.

The American Legion has seen an increase in members, but more veterans are eligible to join that organization. Those who served in the military during conflicts can sign up. They do not necessarily have to have been sent overseas.

It is questionable if the new warriors will join up in significant numbers immediately, though.

Returning veterans normally have other priorities. They are raising families or busy with their military careers or about to embark on civilian ones.

In many cases, veterans wait for years before they see the need or have the time.

Tim Woodhouse, a Vietnam War veteran and now the commander of the Pacific Beach VFW post, recalls coming back from Southeast Asia. Woodhouse said he couldn't wait to hit familiar Mission Beach venues, where people his own age hung out, not the local VFW post.

He got home in 1969. Joined the VFW in 1982.

"That's just the way it is," said Woodhouse, whose post has seen a drop in members over the past decade, as older veterans die.

Some of that stigma about the VFW has a kernel of truth, as well. Walk into a VFW post and it's not like you are walking into a hopping, pulsating, hip Gaslamp joint.

"VFW? Stands for Very Few Women," quipped one man at a local post.

Then there is the perception that VFW regulars are hard-core war veterans, quick to dismiss the new generation of veterans, whose wars have not been the long, drawn-out ones they have experienced.

The 1991 gulf war? That ground campaign lasted five days. The most recent one? The heavy fighting lasted a little more than a month.

VFW members maintain they have respect for those who go to war – any war.

“I’m proud of these kids,” said Stan Prelgovisk, a Vietnam War veteran who is a member of the Coronado VFW post. “Absolutely, I would welcome them as members.”

Charles Ostro, a Korean War veteran and another member of this post, doesn’t care how long such conflicts last.

“Anybody who goes has the chance of being shot,” Ostro said. “They’ve earned this right.”

Still, he admits that it is not easy for the different generations to mix. Some older veterans don’t know how to talk with younger people. And younger people may feel intimidated by the older veterans.

The VFW has been affected by both the aging of veterans and the lack of major military campaigns overseas.

Of late, Congress has eased membership requirements for the VFW, the oldest military veterans organization in the nation. Veterans are eligible to join if they have received hostile fire or imminent danger pay during their service. Also, those who served in post-war Korea and other hot spots, such as Kosovo, are now also eligible.

“It’s a new world,” said Jerry Newberry, spokesman for the national VFW, based in Kansas City, Mo.

Huge military operations – such as the one America muscled together for World War II – seem to be a thing of a past. Today’s deployments are leaner and directed at small hot spots, such as Somalia, Bosnia and Panama.

Price, the local VFW official, said the organization probably won’t see a significant number of new members immediately. But the VFW hopes to educate those coming home about the benefits of joining, so that one day down the line, they will check it out.

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Mission:

VFW is an organization of war veterans committed to ensuring rights, remembering sacrifices, promoting patriotism, performing community services and advocating for a strong national defense.