



Public Relations Handbook

For NARFE Chapters and Federations



Contents

PUBLIC RELATIONS	1
Introduction	1
PR Objectives	2
Goals for NARFE PR Programs.....	3
THE MEDIA	4
Print Media	4
Electronic Media	5
Getting Ready to Meet the Media	6
Media Contact List.....	6
BEYOND THE NEWS	8
Letters to the Editor.....	8
Special Newspaper Features and Sections	8
Flyers and Brochures	8
Public/Community Affairs Programs	9
Radio Talk/Call-In Shows.....	9
Public Access Channels/Cablecast	9
THE PRESS RELEASE	10
How To Write and Distribute.....	10
Sample Release	12
THE MEDIA INTERVIEW	13
COMMUNITY RELATIONS & PUBLIC SERVICE	15
TIPS ON PUBLIC SPEAKING	16
CHAPTER & FEDERATION NEWSLETTERS	18
THE INTERNET	22
SOCIAL MEDIA	23

Public Relations

INTRODUCTION

Clearly, personal contact is the most effective means of communication. The opportunity to tell someone about NARFE's mission and benefits of membership face to face gives you a chance to personalize the message and, moreover, take an opportunity to gauge reaction. The message about NARFE can be adjusted to accommodate the interests and even objections of the listener.

For instance, a prospective member's voiced concern about annual membership dues can be addressed by a careful explanation of the affordability of NARFE membership and its many benefits, including *narfe* magazine and NARFE Perks. The prospect who is interested in legislative issues can be told in great detail about NARFE's lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill and in statehouses across the nation.

This personal contact can be extended and expanded. NARFE Service Centers and service officers provide an important public service and, in turn, provide an excellent opportunity to reach potential NARFE members. The public service activities of NARFE chapters, such as the important contributions being made in the area of funding Alzheimer's disease research, help to increase public awareness of NARFE, its involvement and its message.

As the person responsible for your chapter or federation public relations program, you have the opportunity to further extend and expand the reach of NARFE, to strengthen communications among its members and, most importantly, you have the opportunity to promote NARFE's goals and objectives.

Welcome to the field of public relations. The philosophical hows and whys, along with the multitude of academic definitions, views and theories, are beyond the scope of this handbook. This resource is more concerned with the rewards of persistence, identifying and using existing technologies effectively, and working a few public relations miracles here and there.

The purpose of a public relations program is to achieve defined goals and objectives using effective communications tools and techniques. The goals and objectives may include earning favor-

SUGGESTED PR OBJECTIVES

- ★ Protect the interests and advance the causes of federal employees, retirees and their survivors in Congress
- ★ Increase NARFE membership and revenue
- ★ Build public appreciation for active and retired federal employees and their families
- ★ Increase public stature for your NARFE chapter/federation as a community and issues leader. Inform the community about members' civic contributions.
- ★ Inform local and state officials of NARFE's interest in and positions on issues affecting your members
- ★ See that newspaper, radio and television editors understand the NARFE position on controversial issues
- ★ Work with NARFE officers to make legislators and the public aware that the well-being of public employees has a direct effect on the quality of government

Public Relations

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able public recognition, promoting understanding or encouraging action.

For NARFE, public relations is important for gaining and maintaining public understanding and support. It is essential for informing elected officials and for influencing legislation and policies that affect federal retirees. Public relations helps highlight the public service contributions being made

by NARFE chapters and federations. Public relations helps to attract new members. Most importantly, public relations can help achieve the goals outlined in NARFE's mission statement.

NARFE'S MISSION STATEMENT

To support legislation beneficial to current and potential federal annuitants and to oppose legislation contrary to their interests.

To promote the general welfare of current and potential federal annuitants by advising them with respect to their rights under retirement laws and regulations.

To cooperate with other organizations and associations in furtherance of these general objectives.

THE 'PUBLIC' IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

With the goals and objectives of a public relations program established, we must then consider where our message, information and efforts will be directed. The "public" in public relations includes internal and external audiences.

Internal Public Relations

Internal public relations is targeted toward NARFE members. Public relations helps promote communications among the membership, chapters, federations and within NARFE Headquarters. It provides important information on legislative positions, developments and initiatives. It serves to promote public service activities and fellowship. In short, the internal public relations program encourages individual NARFE members to work together to achieve the Association's goals and objectives.

One of the best means of communicating with our members is a chapter newsletter. The public relations officer may serve as the newsletter editor, or a separate member may serve in that capacity. In either event, public relations and newsletter publishing are related activities and should complement each other in communicating NARFE messages. Email is a growing internal communications tool for NARFE at all levels, and chapter and federation websites also reach an internal, as well as external, audience.

External Public Relations

External public relations is meant for the general public, with special consideration given to targeted audiences, i.e., potential members. NARFE's external public relations program seeks to generate favorable public recognition for federal workers and federal retirees. Beyond the general public, our external public relations efforts should also include: elected officials, groups and organizations with shared concerns and interests, and the media.

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POSSIBLE GOALS FOR NARFE CHAPTER/FEDERATION PR PROGRAMS

The following objectives and goals are simply to illustrate the kinds of activities you might consider appropriate for your public relations plan. In each chapter and federation there are unique circumstances and individuals that might help advance the overall goals of the organization. Use the resources and talents that are available to you in your chapter or federation.

- Make a concerted effort to get favorable news items published periodically.
- Learn the needs, deadlines and structure of your local newsrooms.
- Develop working relationships with news directors, editors, producers, and reporters of print and electronic media.
- Develop story ideas around NARFE's views on events and legislation affecting individual local members.
- Create opportunities for chapter and federation officers to address civic, business, religious and community organizations in your town. Urge chapter/federation members to wear NARFE badges and pins. Use every opportunity to identify yourselves with NARFE.
- Invite your elected officials (local, state and national) and candidates for elected office to speak at your chapter/federation meetings. Send out releases and media alerts announcing the visits; in general, seek out press attendance.
- Study and use position papers, fact sheets, articles and other materials generated by NARFE Headquarters, such as *NARFE Insider*, Legislative Hotline, *narfe* magazine and GEMS email messages.
- Set up a NARFE display at fairs, community meetings and in conjunction with special events, such as during Public Service Recognition Week.

The Multiplier Effect

NARFE's PR procedure calls for our members and officers throughout America to do as much public and media relations as possible in their own communities. Our members are best equipped to identify and respond to media challenges in their own communities, since they live there, know many local personalities and newsmakers, and are familiar with local issues. Furthermore, newspapers and radio/television stations usually show a preference for featuring the views of community residents rather than those of professional spokespeople.

National Headquarters provides guidance and information to federations and chapters, who then spread the word in their communities, allowing more people to hear NARFE's message. Thus, the multiplier effect is an excellent use of NARFE's most important resources – our vigilant and energetic members. Of course, National Headquarters stands ready to handle challenging cases upon request from the field as well as deal with the Washington media and national publications.

In the following chapters, you will find information designed to assist you in developing a public relations program. Keep in mind that your audiences, internal and external, are equally important for achieving NARFE's goals and objectives. Finally, know that, as a public relations officer, you are providing an essential service for your chapter, federation and our Association.

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The Media

AN OVERVIEW

In our information-driven society, there is an abundance of messages competing for our attention. Nowhere is this more evident than in the media and related areas. Newsletters and direct mail, signs and billboards, newspapers and magazines, radio and television, and the Internet are all vying to inform us, entertain us or motivate us to buy, sell, borrow or get involved. A quick scan across our radio dial or through our television channels provides a sampling of the many different ways information is delivered. As the person responsible for public relations, you will want to become familiar with the media. This knowledge will enhance your understanding of how the media works and, in turn, prepare you to make full use of available media to promote the NARFE message and membership in your chapter/federation.

The media is usually divided into two descriptive categories – print media and electronic media. Print media includes newspapers, magazines, newsletters and other publications. Electronic media – also referred to as broadcast media – includes radio and television, but can also include technologies such as video infomercials, satellite transmissions, computer-generated telephone calls, and online news services and social media.

PRINT MEDIA

Newspapers

Local daily and weekly newspapers remain a vital source of news and information in our communities. Local newspapers play an important role in the development of a successful public relations program.

Regional and Specialty Newspapers

In many areas, there are newspapers devoted to regional coverage. These papers cover a larger area than your local newspapers but will usually have a page or section dedicated to information and news from your community. There may be a special page or section geared toward a specific audience, such as senior citizens or federal workers. Specialty newspapers include those that target a specific group or community, such as the growing number of newspapers solely designed for retirees or the newspaper published for the local federal installation. Another useful publication is the local Buyer's Guide or Shopper's Guide. These specialty publications have a sizable readership, and while they may not accept news items like those sent to regular newspapers, they usually will have a "Community Bulletin Board" for meeting announcements and may provide Public Service Announcement (PSA) space for such things as NARFE Service Centers and NARFE chapter or federation-sponsored public service activities.

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Newsletters & Direct Mail

In addition to your chapter or federation newsletter (which is covered thoroughly in a later chapter of this handbook), there may be newsletters published in your area that could be included in your public relations program. Newsletters published for communities, subdivisions, churches, government installations and others should all be considered and viewed as potential vehicles for promoting the NARFE image, message and membership.



While there may not be a great opportunity for a full-blown direct mail public relations campaign in your chapter or federation, you should be familiar with the tools and techniques that can be effective even on a limited basis. For instance, a list of potential NARFE members can be compiled and a copy of the chapter or federation newsletter or a recent press release could be mailed to them.

ELECTRONIC (BROADCAST) MEDIA

Radio

There are more than 13,000 radio stations in the United States. These stations vary in size, coverage and programming. While there is an increasing number of stations adopting a “talk radio” format, many radio stations still feature music with consideration given to demographics, listener preference and market segmentation.

Knowing who is listening to a radio station helps advertisers decide on which station to buy time. The same information can help public relations practitioners when they are trying to identify which radio stations have the audience they are trying to reach.

As you start to analyze and become more familiar with your media market, you will be able to identify which radio stations can help in your efforts to deliver the NARFE message and promote membership.

Television

There are almost 2,000 television stations and some 10,000 cable systems in the United States. Some television stations are affiliated with networks, such as CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS or FOX. The bulk of the programming on network-affiliated stations originates from the network and is not produced locally. However, network-affiliated stations usually have some locally produced shows, including news, weather, sports and community/public affairs programming.

Independent television stations (those not affiliated with a major network) provide a clear alternative in program choices. The programs on these stations will vary from region to region, town to town. Where one independent station may feature old movies and reruns, another may focus on programs of interest to a specific group or groups within the community it serves. Becoming more familiar with the programming of your local television stations – network affiliates and independents – will help you identify which stations provide the best opportunities for promoting NARFE.

One of the most important developments in television has been the rise in the number of cable systems. More specifically, the increase in public access cable television and other community cable channels has created new opportunities for individuals and groups to produce and present their own television programs. In a later chapter, we will take a closer look at public access cable television and how it can be used as part of your public relations program.

GETTING READY TO MEET THE MEDIA

Media relations is a key component of the job done by those responsible for chapter/federation public relations. Working from a list of the media and other appropriate outlets, you can communicate important information about NARFE, its purpose and its legislative agenda. You can strengthen NARFE's identity by sharing news about your chapter/federation activities. And, through your media relations efforts, you can increase and strengthen NARFE membership.

"The basics of establishing an effective communications program within the chapter can also be used to develop an effective external public relations program."

While the newsletter may be the cornerstone of communications within the chapter/federation, a media relations program will use a variety of tools and techniques, including press releases, press conferences, media interviews, talk show appearances, letters to the editor and media kits. The foundation of your media relations program will be your media contact list.

CREATING A MEDIA CONTACT LIST

The media contact list helps organize essential information. This list should include your local newspapers, radio stations, television stations and other media-related outlets. This list should also identify key people at the media outlets, such as news editors, program directors and others. The list can also include other publications and organizations. For instance, the local federal installation may have an employee newsletter or quarterly paper that you will want to include.

Information for the media contact list can be gathered from a number of sources. The NARFE home page, www.narfe.org, is one great source. After signing in as a member, click on the Legislation section, go to Legislative Action Center, and click Media Guide. Then type in your ZIP code. This will give you a list of media in your area. You can also go to the "Yellow Pages" in your local phone book. Under the headings of Newspapers, Radio Stations and Television Stations, you will find basic information about your local media. The media list information should be listed in a way that makes it easy to use.

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For example:

Anytown Clarion-Bugle
Reporter or Editor Name
Title (City Editor, Business Editor, etc.)
123 Main Street
Anytown, MD 01234
(301)123-4567
Fax (301)345-6789
Email address

These suggested press entries provide the essential information needed for creating a media contact list. From these entries, you can develop a mailing list for press releases and media advisories. In addition, you can develop a media telephone contact list for follow-up calls, timely announcements or scheduling changes. The media list can also include other important information, such as deadlines, notes about special public affairs programs or special editions of the local paper.

Knowing the deadlines (when a paper goes to press or a radio/television news program makes final preparations to go on the air) helps to ensure that materials arrive in a timely and usable manner. Some daily newspapers have more than one deadline. There may be early and “final” editions. Weekly papers will want materials two to three days before the paper goes to press. Radio and television news departments will want reasonable time to develop and produce news stories for broadcast. Information concerning the deadlines of particular media outlets is important and should be included as part of your media contact list.

An essential public relations tool, the media contact list helps organize the important information you need to develop a media relations program.

Beyond the News

Byond the front page, beyond the radio or television newscast, there are a number of opportunities to promote the NARFE message and membership. While news stories can provide a consistent presence for your chapter/federation, the opportunities that lie beyond the news mainstream should be considered when putting together a public relations program. A media availability inventory can help you identify and organize opportunities that go beyond the news. In Chapter 2, we talked about developing a media contact list to help identify and categorize the different media outlets in your area. The media inventory goes one step further and identifies the public relations opportunities that exist at each media outlet.

The local newspaper may have special sections or features that would be appropriate for NARFE-related stories and information. The local radio and television stations may have public/community affairs programming. And, the local cable television system should provide public access channels for use by individuals and organizations in the community. Developing a media availability inventory calls on us to look beyond the news and analyze the public relations potential of media outlets. A media availability inventory may include:

Letters to the Editor

The editorial page, one of the most-read sections of the newspaper, is an excellent forum for promoting the NARFE message. In many instances, an editorial written by a NARFE member has not only increased awareness of and concern for a specific issue but also has increased public awareness of NARFE's very existence, which promotes membership and support for NARFE's positions. Letters to the editor are excellent methods of responding to incorrect or slanted stories about federal employees and their retirement benefits.

Website

The NARFE Legislative Action Center has letter-to-the-editor templates on current legislative topics that can easily be personalized.

Special Newspaper Features and Sections

Many newspapers have special features and sections that focus on specific communities and neighborhoods in their coverage area. There may be a special feature that spotlights people, events or activities. Smaller newspapers may even be receptive to a regular column written for federal retirees to talk about issues and concerns important to them. A newspaper column for and about federal retirees would be appropriate in areas where there are a large number of federal retirees.

Flyers and Brochures

Flyers, brochures and posters are all good ways to promote NARFE and your chapter or federation. Start taking stock of all the places you see other groups and organizations placing their announcements and information and determine whether NARFE materi-



als could be put there as well. Check out the Member Recruitment section of the NARFE website for tips.

Public/Community Affairs Programs

Local radio and television stations provide opportunities for community-based groups and organizations to discuss issues and events of public interest. By identifying and becoming familiar with the public/community affairs programs in your area, you can determine which ones should be included in your public relations plan.

Radio Talk/Call-In Shows

Talk radio programs provide a double opportunity for public relations practitioners. First, there is the opportunity to appear on the program. The chapter or federation legislative chair or other officer could be scheduled on a talk radio program to present a federal retiree's perspective on current events and issues. A NARFE public service activity could be featured. Or, a representative from the local NARFE Service Center could appear on a program to talk about services provided by the center and to answer callers' questions.



Another public relations opportunity provided by talk radio is the chance to participate in the program as a caller. By participating in the program, the NARFE caller can increase public awareness about NARFE and the concerns of federal retirees. While some subjects may not lend themselves to NARFE's objectives and message, you should be alert to opportunities to interject a NARFE point of view.

Public Access Channels/Cablecast

Provided as part of local cable franchise agreements, public access channels provide an excellent public relations opportunity for NARFE chapters and federations to participate in existing programs or to produce their own "cablecast."

With public access, air time on a local cable channel is provided free of charge or for a small fee, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Production facilities and equipment, along with professional assistance, may also be provided. You can check with your local cable television company or the local governmental body that issued a franchise license to the company for detailed information. The franchise licensing agreement outlines public access channel availability and what services and assistance the cable company will provide.

In addition to public access channels, your local cable company may also have education and government access channels. These channels may also provide public relations opportunities for your chapter/federation.

These are but a sampling of the public relations opportunities that exist "beyond the news." By developing a media availability inventory for your community, you will be able to identify the appropriate opportunities to include for your mix.

The Press Release

THE PRESS RELEASE: HOW TO WRITE IT, HOW TO DISTRIBUTE IT

The press release is the most common tool used in public relations. Your release tells editors and reporters what news you have to offer and gives them the chance to weigh it against other demands for news space or time. Remember, though, a release is not the only vehicle for telling about NARFE and may not be the best one. (See Chapter 3, “Beyond the News,” and Chapter 6, “Community Relations,” for other suggestions.)

A typical big-city newspaper or TV station gets literally hundreds of releases every single day. An editor doesn't have time to do much more than give each one a glance. In many big-city newsrooms, they may not even get opened. Reporters and editors say that they use only 2 percent of the releases they receive. Don't lose heart, though; they also say that 60 percent of news stories are suggested by PR practitioners. This means you have to create a “news hook” – show its importance – in the headline and again in the first paragraph or “lead” of your news release.

Content of the Release

Whenever possible, the first paragraph or lead should answer the five basic questions of a news story: Who, What, When, Where, Why. The headline on your release is noth-

Pointers for Writing your Press Release:

- ✍ Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. That's not always possible, but it's a good rule of thumb. One page is best, but no more than two pages is recommended.
- ✍ Give exact dates of events. Use “Thursday, September 1, 20__,” rather than “next Thursday” or “tomorrow.” Check all days and dates on a calendar. Use a.m. or p.m.
- ✍ If your news release concerns an upcoming event, include the address as well as the name of the place.
- ✍ Give the town of residence for all the people mentioned.
- ✍ Spell out numbers from one to nine; use numerals for 10 and above. Do not begin a sentence with numerals.
- ✍ Check all names for accuracy and spelling. The first mention of a name is “John Smith of Newark.” Subsequent mentions are “Mr. Smith,” although the editor may delete the “Mr.”
- ✍ Attribute any opinions. For example: According to Mr. Smith, “The reluctance of the mayor to release funds is hindering the programs for the elderly.”
- ✍ Use an editorial style guide to ensure consistency. If you don't already have an in-house standard, consult one of the leading style guides such as The Associated Press Stylebook, etc.

ing more than an abbreviated version of the lead. The paragraphs that follow the lead provide supporting details.

Other Press Release Pointers Include:

- The second paragraph should be devoted to developing the “news hook” of the story in a succinct, declarative way.
- If an individual is the subject of a release, substantiate his/her qualifications in the third paragraph by ranking them from most to least impressive.
- In the fourth paragraph, state the relevance of the individual or event to the NARFE chapter/federation.
- Include a final “boiler plate” paragraph on NARFE that identifies the Association.

Format of the Release

- Press releases may be sent via email or postal mail.
- Use your official chapter/federation letterhead for the release.
- Type the release, double-spaced (fronts only for those sent via postal mail).
- Include a headline at the top.
- The text should have generous margins on both sides (NARFE uses 1”).
- Give the following information at the top of the page. It can go in either the left or right corner, but should be consistent:

CONTACT: John Roberts
301-123-4567 (office)
301-234-5678 (home)
301-345-6789 (cell)

This tells an editor or reporter whom to call if there is a question about your news. In the other corner type:

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, September 4, 20___. If the press release or its content cannot be published immediately, be sure to indicate on the release the date when the embargo is lifted.

- If you have a sharp, clear photograph that goes well with your story, include it. Carefully identify the photo and everyone in it (from left to right) on a second piece of paper (typed) and attach to back of photo with a single piece of tape. Never write on the back of a photograph. If submitting the release via email, include the photo as an attachment and put the identifying information in the email message.

Before you mail or deliver your release, check spelling and typing for accuracy.

SEE SAMPLE RELEASE ON PAGE 12

Keep a copy of all releases filed in chronological order.

Joseph A. Beaudoin
National President

Paul H. Carew
National Vice President



Elaine C. Hughes
National Secretary

Richard G. Thissen
National Treasurer

NEWS FROM NARFE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — September 4, 20__

CONTACT: John Roberts
301-123-4567 (office)
301-234-5678 (home)
301-345-6789 (cell)

Federal Retirees Take Little Comfort in Budget Process: NARFE Calls on Lawmakers to ‘Hold Fast’ on Earned, PROMISED BENEFITS

Federal retirees can take little comfort in the fact that the administration’s proposed budget for the coming fiscal year does not recommend cuts in their earned and promised retirement benefits.

“We know from experience that the congressional budget process can create cuts not even called for by the Administration,” said John Roberts, a legislative officer with the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE).

Mr. Roberts called on members of the House Budget Committee to “hold fast” against any congressional budget proposals that might diminish earned and promised federal retirement and survivor benefits.

NARFE, with some 1,300 chapters and almost 260,000 members, is the only association solely dedicated to protecting the earned retirement benefits of federal employees and retirees.

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association

www.NARFE.org | 606 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 | **phone** 703-838-7760 | **fax** 703-838-7785

Federal Workers Protect America’s Heartbeat



Show your support at www.PROTECTAmericasHeartbeat.org

The Media Interview

Preparation is the key. Whatever your interview goal, first clearly define it in your mind and on paper. This will help you remember the main points to make and will keep you focused on these points during the interview. Focus on two or three points you want to make during the interview. Be sure to make them over and over. You don't have to avoid questions, but your responsibility is to make NARFE's points quickly and effectively, then answer the interviewer's questions. The techniques described in this section work equally well for print or radio and TV. In addition to these tips, the "Media Outreach" Toolkit on NARFE's Protect America's Heartbeat website, www.protectamericasheartbeat.org, has a "How-To-Guide for Interviews."

There is evidence that a television viewer makes a decision about a speaker's credibility within the first 25 seconds. It is vital, then, to be prepared to speak easily and naturally, to know what is the most important message you wish to present, and then to do it. Here are steps you can take to ensure that you will appear to be a poised, confident and experienced expert on the subject.

Find out as much as possible about the interviewer

If you are booked for a radio or TV appearance, for example, watch or listen to at least three or four shows to determine the interviewer's style, the kinds of questions asked, and whether he/she is bland or abrasive. For a print interview, read the reporter's column or some of his/her stories written for the paper.

Summarize your main points

With your objectives in mind, list the main points you want to make. Typing them on large index cards and going over them repeatedly is one way to sharpen your memory. If you're slated for a radio or newspaper interview, take the cards with you as a source of ready reference. Having them will prevent you from forgetting key points and will also help to relieve any anxiety. However, don't read the cards during the interview or try to remember what you want to say word for word. Memorize key phrases or sentences here and there. The surest way to make a TV/radio appearance dull is to sound as if you are reading. The goal is to sound as conversational, relaxed, informal and spontaneous as possible.

Give the interviewer information about yourself

Some interviewers find out as much as they can about their guests beforehand. Others do little in the way of homework. It is a good idea to send, in advance, a short biography of yourself highlighting your activities, career and interest in the subject.

Anticipate difficult questions

Are there any questions the interviewer might ask that could embarrass either you or NARFE? Prepare for tough questions and be ready to answer effectively. Never get mad! It will reflect badly on you and NARFE and will not solve any problem. Any chance to

The Media Interview

effectively respond to a difficult question will be lost since the audience will see and remember only the anger and not the response.

Keep your audience/readers in mind

The interviewer will do this and so must you. Consider the type of station/readership, the time of day, the nature of the community and the audience/readership attitudes toward the subject being discussed.

Prepare aids you will need

Will props help you achieve your objective and make your points more readily? Especially in the case of a TV interview, it's wise to check ahead of time with the program director and the show's producer. Props might be photographs, charts and illustrations.

Build your poise and assurance

The best way to develop genuine self-confidence is to get to know your subject so well it would be difficult to stump you on a question or catch you in a blunder. Genuine self-confidence relaxes you and frees you from anxiety. Remember reporters, writers and talk show hosts prefer short, terse comments that get across solid points. He/she then has the opportunity to either go on to another question or encourage you to elaborate on what was just said.

Level with the audience

This is a basic rule of interview procedure. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, say so. If you need more information, offer to get it. It's OK not to know the answer to every question. At the same time, you have to be careful not to exaggerate or slip in giving out sensitive information. If asked a question that puts you on the spot, you can explain that you haven't had time to examine the facts, but you will be glad to make a statement when you do.

Talk, but do not monopolize

Guard against doing all of the talking, as any one-sided interview is usually boring no matter what the subject. On the other hand, you may have the opposite problem if you participate in a group interview and are confronted with a talk-show monopolist. In this case, fight fire with fire; don't hesitate to interrupt; try to get the interviewer's attention by signaling when you have something to say. Be extremely careful with this technique. It is easy to be perceived as bullying or domineering. Strive to be concise, polite and professional in your delivery.

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Community Relations and Public Service

COMMUNITY RELATIONS ... DO GOOD AND TELL ABOUT IT!

Chapters and federations are deeply involved in their communities. This involvement is reflected in the numerous public service activities undertaken by NARFE members, chapters and federations. This great public service, this significant contribution being made by NARFE members in their communities, makes for good public relations.

First and foremost, NARFE public service activities are making a difference. The significant contributions made by NARFE members to funding for Alzheimer's disease research are nationally recognized. NARFE Service Centers are providing essential assistance to federal retirees, their spouses and survivors. NARFE members are involved in adopt-a-highway litter clean-up programs, they are visiting shut-ins, and they are volunteering time at hospitals and nursing homes. Where there is a need in the community, it is likely you can find a NARFE member involved.

NARFE public service activities go a long way toward achieving important public relations objectives. Public service helps increase public awareness throughout the community and among potential NARFE members. It helps NARFE gain and maintain public appreciation. And public service increases respect for NARFE, its message and its membership.

The potential news value of NARFE public service activities should not be overlooked. Newspapers, particularly weekly papers, will include news stories and photographs about significant public service activities. Local radio and television stations may be interested in having NARFE members participate in a public or community affairs program to discuss a public service activity. An invitation for members of the community to join with members of a local NARFE chapter in a public service activity might have some news value. Working with NARFE members involved in public service activities, you can identify the potential news stories and assess their news value.

GREAT PUBLIC SERVICE CAN MAKE FOR GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS.

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Tips on Public Speaking

One of the greatest challenges for NARFE chapters and federations is that of maintaining positive public visibility. To answer that need, you should actively seek out opportunities to speak in public settings. Those who do so perform a valuable service for NARFE. All members are encouraged to work similarly, to seek out opportunities to place the name and good work of NARFE in the public spotlight regularly and vigorously.

There are millions of individuals who are eligible to join NARFE but haven't done so because they don't know about the organization. It is up to folks like you to help shape NARFE's identity in the most positive terms for those many individuals who are eligible. The truth is that potential NARFE members are everywhere. But if we fail to use the tools around us to deliver our message, we might as well be invisible.

We often hear from members who want to find new ways to tell their friends and communities about NARFE. It is our hope that this handbook will help members to do just that.

If you recognize that some retirees or near-retirees in your town don't understand what NARFE is all about, then you can work to inform them. One way to do that is to use your local business or social clubs, church or community groups, who often seek out speakers carrying important messages.

Letters sent to these groups from the chapter or federation can tip them off to the existence of worthy speakers from NARFE. The topics one might suggest are many. These might include NARFE's work over more than 90 years. They might include noteworthy life stories and careers of chapter members, or community work done by NARFE volunteers. If the talk is presented well, people will know more about NARFE, and that ought to trigger questions such as, "How do I join?" (Of course, you or your speaker will be likely to provide the answer to that whether it is asked or not.) The key is to create within your chapter or federation a speakers' bureau, a pool of members who know NARFE well and who are, above all else, enthusiastic. With knowledge and enthusiasm on their side, public speaking ability can become an acquired skill.

Preparation

Studious preparation beforehand will go a long way toward calming pre-talk jitters. Stage fright, after all, is normal. The trick is to avoid the appearance of being nervous, which will make an audience ill at ease. Practicing beforehand enables a person to be more spontaneous, because he or she will be that much more familiar with the material.

Tape Recording

Try it in advance. You'll find that, by listening to the playback, you can spot controversial or long words and eliminate them. Remember: Little words work well. Also, mark your text for phrasing and emphasis. Use lively pacing. Varying the pitch and tone of your voice will create interest and credibility. And practice.

Videotaping

If you can arrange it, videotape your practice sessions. Work to project a confident, authoritative presence. Because "presence" is mostly a function of posture, pay attention to that. Keep your weight on the balls of your feet and do not shift or lean, but don't freeze either. Find your comfortable balance.

Hands

Use gestures only to accompany, underscore or emphasize words, but only in a motion away from the face. Use one hand to mark your page, the other to move it aside when finished with it.

Smile

Do it to relax your face and your audience. Make eye contact. Rehearsal will make it easier to lift your eyes from the written page.

Grooming

Wear conservative attire to keep your audience's attention focused on the message. Avoid plaid or checkered shirts, jackets, or ties, busy prints or out-of-date clothing, all for the same reason.

Text

Type double-spaced and in large type, if possible.

Critique

Ask for one after each rehearsal and from friends after the final presentation. This will help you polish your skills. Do not take offense; perspective always changes with the viewpoint. You may also be relieved to know that some of the things you were concerned about went unnoticed.

Recon

Scout out the surroundings before the presentation. Check the size, acoustics, temperature and the sound system (if there is one). Ask for adjustments to room temperature or sound system beforehand if you so desire.

Remember: If you are nervous about public speaking, you are in good company. An investment of time, energy and practice will ensure that you will accelerate your development as an effective speaker for NARFE.

Chapter and Federation Newsletters

TIPS FOR EDITING CHAPTER AND FEDERATION NEWSLETTERS

Check your facts! Make sure the information in your newsletter is accurate. Check for spelling, especially of members' and National Officers' names.

For help with chapter and federation newsletters, go to the NARFE website, www.narfe.org, choose Officer Resources, click on Tips, Tools & Templates, then News-letters Tips & Templates.

Check your mailing lists! Are you mailing to deceased members? Don't send more than one copy to HQ. It will be circulated through the National Officers and senior staff. Be sure you have current National Officers' names.

Visit the Bulk Mail Section of the local post office for rules on mailing your newsletter. Or visit USPS.com/businessmail101.

A newsletter is one of the best means of promoting communications among the members of your chapter/federation. Sent to all members or as a group such as officers, the newsletter will communicate important information, share news about chapter/federation activities, and promote membership improvement and retention. The newsletter is designed for a specific audience – NARFE members and potential members.

In addition to these tips, the “Legislative Activities at the Leadership Level Toolkit” on NARFE’s Protect America’s Heartbeat website, www.protectamericasheartbeat.org, has information on using chapter and federation newsletters for legislative updates and calls to action.

While how the information is conveyed is as important as what the information is, an effective chapter newsletter does not have to be an expensive project. Some of the best newsletters consist of just a single sheet (8½” x 11”) typed on both sides and photocopied. Brief declarative sentences and descriptive headlines are recommended to enhance understanding and interest. Listed below are some guidelines.

Standard Information

Regardless of whether a newsletter is two or more pages in length, certain “standard” information should be included in each issue, such as:

- Names of chapter officers accompanied by their titles, telephone numbers and email addresses.
- The name, telephone number and email address of the editor.
- A calendar of upcoming chapter events (next two-to-three months).
- Names of senators/representatives along with their local and Washington addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and website URLs.

Headlines

Liberal use of headlines is important. This practice enables the reader to quickly and easily absorb the sense of the news, thereby allowing him or her to focus on items of most interest. A lack of headlines can discourage a person who reads slowly or has limited time or attention span.

President's Column

It is a good idea to lead off the text with a president's column, which should be clear, concise and oriented to the most important chapter business. The message could be a report about an important recent event, a policy meeting, national news or correspondence received concerning an issue of broad membership interest. It is best if you refrain from discussing vacations or home renovations or other topics not of general interest.

Identify Writers

If "I" or "we" is used in the body of an article, make sure that the writer is first identified.

Cover Pertinent Issues

Federation and national issues should be regularly covered in chapter newsletters.

Consistent Design

Strive for consistency in design so that readers may readily refer to sections of primary interest to them. As an example, you may choose to start each issue with the president's column followed by the legislative report and the service officer's news. You can enclose upcoming meeting details and similar important subject matter in a box. See NARFE website, www.narfe.org, for design ideas and boilerplate design: click on Officer Resources.

Tips for Layout - Print

- A double-column layout is easier to read than a span of page-wide type.
- If there is more material than will fit comfortably on both sides of an 8½" x 11" sheet then try a piece of 11" x 17" paper folded horizontally. You can easily enlarge this format by adding an insert.
- A newsletter designed as a self-mailer saves envelope expense. On the lower quarter of the back page, imprint the chapter return address, preferably in the upper left corner. (Usually the editor's address is used.) The remaining space is reserved for an address label and postage. Tape along the bottom.
- Either underline important dates and times or type them in caps or bold type for easy reference and emphasis.

Page Composition Tips for Electronic Publishing

Publication design and production has seen a sea change since the transition a genera-

Here are some ideas for items you might want to include in your chapter newsletter:

- Local/chapter news
- "Hats Off" section, congratulating local members
- Minutes of the last meeting and/or reports from committees
 - Legislation
 - NARFE-PAC
 - Treasurer
 - Membership
 - Sunshine Committee
 - Alzheimer's
- Editorials/commentaries (keep them nonpartisan)
- Member profiles
- Reports/commentary from chapter/district/federation/national officers
- Legislative/political reports
- Service officer info
- News from Headquarters
- Calendar of events
- Member prospect name forms
- Chapter history tidbits
- Photos

(You don't necessarily need to include all of these components; you might want to vary your newsletter content from time to time.)

Chapter and Federation Newsletters

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tion ago from waxed galleys of type on mechanical boards to desktop publishing and electronic page layout. In the shift to computer-aided publication design, the process has become more streamlined and new technical skills are demanded of the user. Yet in the age of the personal computer, the competent graphic designer or online editor still needs the same sense of aesthetics that publication professionals have developed for generations.

A page layout still entails placing and arranging and rearranging text and graphics on the page, and a good composition is one that is both pleasing to look at and effectively conveys the message of the text and graphics to the intended audience. The following are commonly accepted principles of “page architecture” that can help ensure a successful layout:

- **Align all elements with one another or by using a grid system**

Place each text or graphic element on the page so that they have a visual connection to each other. By basing the page layout on a grid, you can use horizontal or vertical alignment; align objects along the same edge or center them. (The most popular desktop publishing software programs automatically provide such templates.)

- **Select a single visual or make strong visual connections**

Simple, yet powerful layouts use one strong visual. If using multiple images, though, keep them connected both through alignment and proximity.

- **Keep odd or even elements in balance**

Creating the right balance is both about the number of text and graphics elements and how they are arranged on the page. Odd numbers of text columns or visual element tend to create more dynamic layouts. Even numbers of columns or visual elements create symmetry but generally produce formal, more static layouts.

- **Add white space in the right places**

Just as important as the text and graphics on the page is the empty space. Cramming too much on the page – even if it is perfectly aligned and balanced can ruin a composition. The page needs visual breathing room. Increased space between paragraphs, lines of text (leading) and looser letter spacing (tracking) can also improve a layout.

- **Emphasize differences between design elements**

While some aspects of page composition involve things that are the same – such as alignment and consistent use of color – it is also a good idea to use contrasting

elements in such things as color and alignment. The greater the difference, the greater the contrast, and the more effective the layout. Examples of contrasting elements to create emphasis include making headlines larger than body text and using a different size or color of text for captions, pull-quotes and page numbers.

- **A few pointers about typography:**

- 1. Limit type styles to no more than three different fonts per page –**

Introducing too many families of type on one page can be distracting and compromise your publication's readability.

- 2. Type alignment affects readability –** Justified copy (where the lines in a column are uniform in length) oftentimes results in awkward spacing between words (depending on the width of the column, the length of the words in a given line of type and the hyphenation setting used). Setting body copy flush left, ragged right will avoid this effect.

- 3. Avoid bad end-of-line breaks –** Limit end-of-line hyphens to no more than two consecutive lines, and try to keep percentages and date ranges on the same lines.

Advertising

Some chapters have found that selling small ads for local businesses in their newsletter can help with the cost of publishing the newsletter. Before you take this step, however, check with the postmaster where you mail your newsletter to make sure you are within Postal Service guidelines.

Copyright

Any article or story disseminated by NARFE Headquarters may be reproduced, with attribution. Some chapters like to reproduce articles from other sources. Generally, this may be done without violating copyright regulations if the source is credited.

The Internet

The advent of the World Wide Web revolutionized mass communications. The world now has a new medium at its fingertips; one that facilitates communication between computer users anywhere in the world, at any time, with a few strokes of the keyboard or a simple click of the mouse.

NARFE now offers hosting for chapters and federation websites. For information and prices, contact: webhosting@narfe.org.

In addition to the traditional use of newspapers, radio and television, the Internet offers another viable medium for companies, organizations and individuals to convey messages, relay information and solicit responses via websites on the Internet. NARFE HQ has taken full advantage of this opportunity by making its website available at www.narfe.org.

The objective of NARFE's website is threefold:

- First, to inform the public of what NARFE is and what its objectives are;
- Second, to update and inform our members on key legislative issues, press releases, retirement and annuity news and advice, and other administrative information; and
- Third, to attract and solicit potential members.

In addition to NARFE Headquarter's website, some NARFE regions, federations and chapters have independently established their own websites. The sites are similar to the NARFE HQ site in that they provide important information, but with a local touch. Members and nonmembers alike can access information on dates and times of local NARFE events and chapter meetings, messages from chapter/federation officers, lists of chapter/federation officers, legislative information and NARFE background facts. These websites help increase name recognition for the Association, and allow visitors to the sites the ability to access information in a short amount of time with little effort.

We wish to stress the benefits of creating such sites. You should talk with your chapter/federation officers and members about posting a website on the Internet if your region/federation/chapter has yet to do so. NARFE Headquarters provides such services for a nominal fee.

HOW TO CREATE A FACEBOOK ORGANIZATION PAGE

Chapter Facebook pages are a great way to reach out to current members and to engage prospective members. On your state federation or chapter Facebook page, you can post information about upcoming meetings, post pictures from events and share information with your members and the larger community. To create your own state federation or chapter Facebook page, go to www.narfe.org and click on Legislation, then choose Facebook Page Guide on the menu at left.

The “Legislative Activities at the Leadership Level Toolkit” on NARFE’s Protect America’s Heartbeat website, www.protectamericasheartbeat.org, has step-by-step instructions on how to create a Facebook organization page as well as Facebook page dos and don’ts.

To visit the NARFE Headquarters Facebook page, go to www.narfe.org, scroll down and click on “Find NARFE On Facebook.” To find us from your Facebook page, simply search for NARFE National Headquarters.



**National Active and Retired
Federal Employees Association**

606 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1914
(703) 838-7760 • FAX (703) 838-7785
www.narfe.org
Email: pubrel@narfe.org