

PUBLIC RELATIONS



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One of the best kept secrets of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is the great works our Posts, Districts and the Department does in support of the communities in which we live and work and on behalf of our military service members, veterans and families.

How our Posts and Districts market themselves within their communities and with local news media outlets could set the stage for success in the years to come.

Media Advisories, Calendar Notices, Social Media posts and News Releases can serve to communicate the message of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, promoting the good work of our Posts, Districts and Departments, and engaging the communities in which we live and work.

Public Relations not only works to improve our credibility and accessibility, but also aids in marketing our organization to potential members, donors and supporters. Today, Public Relations is much more than just distributing press releases. It's about taking advantage of a number of ways to best engage, educate and influence our audience.

When developing your Public Relations program, you will need to define your objectives and decide what you want to accomplish.

- Determine your audience. Who do you want to reach with your message? Different VFW activities appeal to different segments of the community.
- Define your message. Sticking to one message is essential. However, your message may be presented in several ways through various outlets. Determine the best way to present your message for the various outlets.
- Develop a strategy. How can you best accomplish your goals? Look at the dynamics of your community. Build a relationship with the media in your area. Keep an up-to-date list of contacts for each outlet. You may have better results if you have one person at each news media outlet as you go to contact. Become the best source of information in your community on patriotic and veterans' issues.
- Make your Post, District and Department visible and active on social media.

From time to time you may need to evaluate your strategy. Listen carefully to feedback from members and officers, members of the community and the media. Take this information and fine tune your strategy, if necessary. Just remember developing a good public relations takes time and commitment.

There are ways to promote your Post, District and the Department within the community. Media advisories, News Releases, and Social Media Posts are some of the most important ways you can promote what the organization is doing within your community. If you need help in developing a Media Advisory or writing a News Release, please contact me. I will be glad to answer questions or offer suggestions.

The Illinois VFW News – the official publication of the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars – is published quarterly - September, December, March and June. It is mailed to the Illinois VFW membership, select members of the VFW Auxiliary, and distributed to the Veterans Administration facilities in Illinois. While we print 55,000 copies quarterly, one copy of a newspaper can be shared by as many as five people, meaning one issue of the Illinois VFW News has the potential of reaching more than 250,000 people throughout the organization. The Illinois VFW News is also uploaded on our website.

Articles, news, and other items for the *Illinois VFW News* can be submitted via e-mail. If you do not have access to a computer, you can also mail the information to me at the above address. If sending via U.S. mail, please include name and telephone number of the person submitting the item; type or print news item legibly; and send original photographs. The deadline for submitting items will be the 1st of the Month preceding publication (August, November, February and May).

2021-2022 State Publications Contest

Editors of District and Post newsletters are invited to enter one issue of their publication in the 2021-2022 State of Illinois Publications Contest. The entry must have been published between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021.

Publications will be judged using the following categories:

- Post Publications published 1-4 times per year
- Post Publications published 5 or more times per year
- District Publications published 1-4 times per year
- District Publications published 5 or more times per year

All publications entered in the state competition will be forwarded to the National Publications Contest.

State Publications Contest first place winners will receive a beautifully engraved plaque. Awards will be given out at the State Convention in June 2022.

An independent panel will judge all entries in the Publication Contest.

All entries must include the following:

- Name of Newsletter
- Editor's name and contact information
- Frequency of publication (1-4 times per year or 5 or more times per year).

All entries must be received not later than **February 28, 2022**.

News Media Professional of the Year

Posts and Districts are invited to nominate a News Media Professional in your community for the State of Illinois News Media Professional of the Year competition. There is no entry form - please type a one-page nomination letter highlighting how your nominee has best told the VFW story or your Post's or District's work in your community. You may also include newspaper clippings and/or weblinks with your nomination. The deadline for nominations is **May 1, 2022**. The News Media Professional of the Year will be recognized at the Illinois State Convention in June. All nominations should be mailed to the Editor, Illinois VFW News.