

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE: LOCAL RATING

_____ Pony Club

Contact Name

Contact Phone/Email

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Date)

LOCAL RIDER ATTAINS _____ RATING

NOTE: This can be reworked to include names of numerous members uprating at one time.

YOUR TOWN, STATE—_____ Pony Club announces the uprating of _____ from _____ to _____ at a testing held on _____ in _____, age _____, is the son/daughter of _____ and _____ of _____.

To earn the rating, _____ passed an examination that tested horsemanship skills and knowledge. S/He had passed a series of _____ previous standardized rating tests since joining Pony Club in _____. Each of the ten Pony Club ratings is more difficult than the preceding one, and requires Pony Club members to learn more about horses and their care and to become increasingly accomplished riders and teachers of riding and horse care to younger members. The top rating, 'A,' is reached by fewer than one in 300 and denotes throughout the international horse industry a highly competent and knowledgeable horseperson.

The leader of _____ Pony Club is _____ of _____. There are approximately 12,500 members of USPC in 625 clubs throughout the country. Along with an emphasis on helping its members learn to ride and care for horses, Pony Club promotes teamwork, a sense of responsibility, safety, good moral judgment and self-confidence.

The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC) was founded in 1954 as a nonprofit national youth organization to teach riding and horsemanship through a formal educational program. Many of the nation's top equestrians, including most of our Olympic Equestrian team members, have Pony Club roots. Members range in age from as young as 4 through age 21. Activities are English-riding based, and members ride both horses and ponies, depending on the size of the rider and the discipline in which s/he is competing.

All Pony Club competition is team competition, much like the Olympic games, where members learn the importance of cooperation and teamwork.

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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE: NATIONAL RATING

_____ Pony Club

Contact Name

Contact Phone/Email

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Date)

YOUTH ATTAINS NATIONAL RATING

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY: The United States Pony Clubs, Inc. announces today the uprating of _____ from _____ to _____ at a testing held on _____ in _____.

_____, age _____, is the son/daughter of _____ and _____ of _____.

To earn the rating, _____ passed an examination that tested horsemanship skills and knowledge. S/He had passed a series of _____ previous standardized rating tests since joining Pony Club in _____. Each of the ten Pony Club ratings is more difficult than the preceding one, and requires Pony Club members to learn more about horses and their care and to become increasingly accomplished riders and teachers of riding and horse care to younger members. The top rating, 'A,' is reached by fewer than one in 300 and denotes throughout the international horse industry a highly competent and knowledgeable horseperson.

The leader of _____ Pony Club is _____ of _____. There are approximately 12,500 members of USPC in 625 clubs throughout the country. Along with an emphasis on helping its members learn to ride and care for horses, Pony Club promotes teamwork, a sense of responsibility, safety, good moral judgment and self-confidence.

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SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPH CAPTIONS

A REMINDER: Do not write on the back of a photo as it leaves an impression that will be picked up by the scanner or camera at the newspaper. Type information on a sheet of paper and carefully tape photo to it.

Action photo of Pony Club member at a recognized Pony Club activity. Rider must be wearing approved ASTM/SEI helmet and appropriate footwear.

SAMPLE CAPTION: John Jones, 17, was awarded the highest rating of the United States Pony Clubs, Inc., in Anywhere, Anystate, on September 3rd. John, a member of Let's Ride Pony Club of Yourtown, is the son of Sue and Dave Jones of Yourtown and is a senior at Yourtown High School. Pony Club is a non-profit youth educational association that teaches riding and the care of horses to children through age 21. For more information about Pony Club, call Mary Doe, the club leader, at 555-1212.

Head and shoulders photo of Pony Club member and mount. If visible in photo, appropriate footwear a necessity!

SAMPLE CAPTION: Suzie Smith, 16, riding Blaze, attained a rating of C-3 at the recent testing held at Iwannahorse Farm in Yourtown on August 14th. Suzie, 16, is the daughter of John and Mary Smith of Anywhere. Pony Club is a non-profit youth educational association that teaches riding and the care of horses to children through age 21. For more information about Pony Club, call Mary Doe, the club leader, at 555-1212.

MEDIA RELATIONS AND WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

by Walter D. Patterson, Public Relations, Otter Creek Pony Club

Developing media relations will allow any business or organization to obtain free coverage of events and activities. This is your chance to get your theme and message across to interested reporters and eventually the public. A good press release will answer all the questions a reporter would want to ask, and be interesting enough that they will want to do a story. However, most organizations often overlook or underutilize this very important media relations tool. Successful press releases get your organization's name and event in print. In this article, I will offer several tips on how your Pony Club can improve its media relations and press coverage.

Attracting media coverage has a lot to do with whether or not your event is newsworthy, but it is also about form and function of the press release. A well written press release is typed, easy to read, and provides the necessary information (who, what, where, when, why?). The aesthetics are as important as the story, but are often overlooked by an inexperienced person's effort at public relations.

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You will never understand the importance of public relations and the media until you realize that conversations disappear as soon as the words are spoken. This brings us to the essence of publicity. Unless you are there to tell people, they will forget the message. Managing media coverage for your organization means everything you do, including what you say, and how you say it.

Even the way you present yourself should reflect your organization's goals. Effective use of media relations advances and assists in achieving your organizational goals and has the ability to educate and influence public opinion. Pony Clubs can use effective media relations to assist the organization in gaining community support, fundraising efforts, publicizing an event, recognizing individual or group achievement, such as placing at equestrian competitions. Successful media relations can even help you increase membership and interest in Pony Club.

A media relation's plan should have two goals. The first goal is to clearly manage the media coverage for your organization. This coverage can play an integral part of promoting Pony Club and providing recognition for equestrian sports. The second goal is to develop a solid media relations plan. This takes time to implement because it involves establishing relationships with real people. It is not as simple as writing the press release and faxing it to every newspaper or radio station in your area. Over time, if you are truly committed, you will build a strong relationship with people who are the decision-makers in your local, state or national media markets.

In order to be prepared, you should evaluate the media markets in your area or region and develop a database of newspapers, television and radio stations that provide services to the market area. Vital information for the database should include business name, address, contact person, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address. Additional information should include deadlines for submission of articles. For example, a weekly newspaper may have a Tuesday deadline for their Thursday publishing date. An important part of being prepared is to keep your database updated. The media database I have developed is computerized. However, 3x5 note cards also work very well.

When you are writing a media release or developing a media plan, it is important to determine whom you want to reach, and what areas or regions you want to reach. For most organizations, media lists run along a local and regional path. Next, how does each media outlet conduct business? What are their deadlines to which you must adhere if you want your story to run the next day or the next week? I would like to suggest sending each media contact person a media kit that provides information about your group and organizational goals. The press kit could include a fact sheet about your organization, photographs with captions attached, a calendar of events, biographies of key individuals and brochures. This information can be kept on file and used by the reporter when necessary. Additionally, your group is more likely to receive media coverage if your contact person already has all of the vital information about your group. Always remember that your job in managing media coverage is to make the reporter's job as easy as possible.

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Finding out the information reporters need and providing it to them in a well written, standard format is critical to successful media coverage. Finally, what about after the story appears in the newspaper? I would like to suggest saving newspaper articles, and keeping a written log of radio and television coverage.

When you are writing a press release, think about the following question; what would you want a newspaper reader to pick up in the paper in the morning? An example of this concept is found in the film industry. Take a look at any one-page advertisement for a new movie. An action packed movie might have the Siskel and Ebert “Two thumbs up!” or “A rip roaring roller coaster ride!”

These quotes are examples of what public relations professionals in the film industry might use to promote a movie. I do not advocate using these types of quotes to promote your Pony Club or event. However, these quotes do give you an idea of how important it is to get the audience’s attention. Additionally, you should keep in mind your organizational goals and how your story fits in with those goals.

The press release should generally be no more than one 8-1/2 x 11-inch page and should be on organizational letterhead. The press release should include the following information: The upper left corner should have your name and telephone number, while the upper right corner should have the words “For Immediate Release”: with the date set just below it. At the end of the text center the symbols ###. This is an age-old method used to tell reporters that the release is completed and there are no further pages to follow.

Media releases should be current, concise and complete. They should be printed double-spaced and include the name of a contact person in case the reporter needs additional information or wants to conduct a follow up. A headline should be set in bolder and larger type just above the body of the press release. Media releases should have the who, what, where, when and why close to the beginning and be kept to a single page whenever possible. Imagine that the reporter will read only the first three lines before deciding whether or not to trash it. What would you say and what is the most important information? Check and double-check all of your facts. There is nothing worse than announcing a Saturday event when it is really on Friday. Always have someone else read your press release for grammatical errors and content before it is sent.

The most important thing to remember is to make your news newsworthy. If you are writing press releases for every little thing, they will be reviewed and placed in the circular file for awhile. Fax or mail press releases to the appropriate media outlet. Some stories are designed and only appropriate for print, while others may be appropriate for print, television and radio. For example, a press release on an upcoming event may only be printed in the calendar section of the newspaper or the radio, but would rarely be announced on the six o’clock news. As always, it depends on what the event is and who will be there.

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While I have primarily focused on newspaper (print media) in this article, it is important to utilize other types of media coverage as well. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are non-paid commercials on a non-profit organization's upcoming event or its on going services which many television and radio stations will run free of charge. Contact the station's Public Service director to find out the station requirements. Usually, a written script for a 10, 15- or 30-second spot (typed, double-spaced in caps), or a pre-recorded spot which you must produce on your own. Some stations will record the spot for you in their studios and free of charge.

Finally, do not be discouraged if you get minimal or no interest in a particular story. It is extremely rare for 100% of the media you contact to be interested in a given story. Even if the reporter is interested, sometimes he or she just may not be available at the right time. Reporters do file releases for future use in "roundup" stories (those, which include the activities of a number of organizations). If you cannot sell a particular story or event to the media, you still have made a valuable media contact and have improved your chances for the next time. Always remember to say please and thank you when interacting with the media.