



**Sons of Norway**  
**HERITAGE PROGRAMS**



**IdeaBank#22**

**PRESS RELEASE AND PUBLIC  
SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**1985–1986**

# Publicizing Lodge Events: Press Releases and Public Service Announcements

If your lodge is sponsoring events open to the public, or your lodge wants to attract potential members, you will need to inform the general public of your doings. There are two simple devices for notifying newspapers, radio, and TV stations. These are press releases and public service announcements.

These are both one-page announcements providing concise information and the name of a contact person. Both press releases (PRS) and public service announcements (PSAS) must be timely to receive attention. There is a standard format for each, as examples will show.

PRS and PSAS should be sent to the local media. It is important to collect information about local media, and have it accessible. Names are available from the newspaper masterhead; by phone call to the newspaper, radio, or TV office; through local media directories or other listings available through public libraries. A little research, and you'll come up with a list of appropriate recipients at local papers and stations. Lists should include the person's name, title, mailing address, phone number, deadline, name of paper or station, and any other special information. Remember that one paper may have a different person for community calendar, local news column, and features. These lists should be updated as necessary. It is always better to have the correct name of the person responsible for the community calendar or cooking page, than to send blind announcements to the paper or station. This little personalization can save time, and help your announcements reach the airwaves or printed page.

Do not expect every media source to include your PR or PSA each time one is sent. Electronic and print media get lots of announcements. Whether yours is included depends on whether it is received before deadline, if there is space available, and on news priorities. The most you can do is present the information in the best possible way, at the most appropriate time.

Keeping a publicity file of copies of PRS and PSAS, as well as clippings of what was printed, can be informative (What went in?/What didn't?) and satisfying.

Now, on to what to write, and how to write it.

PRS and PSAS must be newsworthy. An event or activity is newsworthy during the few days preceding, during, and (sometimes) after it occurs. An ongoing project needs to have a human interest angle before it becomes newsworthy. Most PRS and PSAS will be very brief, and will be used for community calendars, announcements and brief fillers.

By writing a longer, more detailed pr or psa, you can highlight the human interest aspect

of the event. This could lead to a feature article, a radio interview, or a TV appearance on a local show.

It is important to keep it brief, informative, active, and accurate. The old “who, what, when, where, why, and how” is a good guideline. Write the most important information (such as who, what, where, and when) in the “lead”—or first sentences. If there is room, add the less important information, such as why and how. Be flexible, though, because depending on the event, “how” might be more important than “who,” or “why” more important than “where.” Use short sentences with active voice verbs. Use simple words, avoiding elaborate explanations or jargon. Double-check that all the pertinent facts are included—details such as date, day, time (include a.m. or p.m.), any costs or whether it is free, location and directions, and clear designation of sponsorship. You may want to briefly state that your lodge is “a part of Sons of Norway, a fraternal benefit society serving the needs and interests of Norwegian descendants, a society of approximately 70,000 members in three countries.” Include names—double-check the spelling—of well-known persons involved in the event. The tone of the writing is also important. Lively verbs will express activity and enthusiasm. Make it sound exciting!

Sending PRS and PSAS is a matter of appropriate timing. Don’t mail releases to dailies and weeklies at the same time. Send information so it will arrive before the media’s stated deadline, not at your own convenience. A day or two ahead is fine, but no one wants to hold on to an early PR for a month. If you are going to be getting your information in just the nick of time, call ahead. Space or time can be reserved for your announcement. It is easiest to mail PRS or PSAS, but you can also hand-deliver your message, especially if you are short on lead time.

It is possible to include black and white photos with a news release. The photo should be sharp, well-focused, and well-composed. Do not use color or slide film. A black and white print is best for reproduction. Be sure to include a “cut-line” or caption for the photo, including who, what, when, and where.

If you have lodge stationery or letterhead, use it. Do not put PRS or PSAS on colored or oversized paper. White 8- 1/2 x 11 paper is fine.

### **THE PRESS RELEASE FORMAT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:**

1. The words “Press Release” typed or printed at the top.
2. A release date, or date the information is given to the media.
3. A contact person with phone number.
4. Lines should be double-spaced.
5. Length: one page or less is best.
6. The end should be marked.

Public service announcements are made by radio and TV stations for non-profit organizations. Stations are even required by law to give a certain amount of time each year for airing PSAS. It is often best to include a cover letter with your PSA, explaining why your lodge would like to have this announcement aired. For community calendar listings, such a letter is not necessary. Formats are usually 10-, 15-, 20-, 30-, or 60-second spots.

#### **THE PUBLIC SERVICE FORMAT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:**

1. "Public Service Announcement" printed at the top.
2. Release date: when the information is being sent to the media.
3. For broadcast: time period (opening and closing date) in which this news can be aired.
4. Length: number of words and number of seconds.
5. Contact: name and telephone number of someone with further information.
6. Lines should be double-spaced.
7. Difficult words or names should have phonetic pronunciation in parenthesis following the word.
8. PSAS should be 60 seconds or less; 30 seconds and under are best.
9. Indicate the end of the announcement with your initials.

#### **PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING SAMPLE AS GENERAL GUIDES.**

April 21, 1993

Dear Lodge Publicity Director:

Enclosed is a copy of Idea Bank Installment #22: "Publicizing Lodge Events: Press Releases and Public Service Announcements." Copies of Idea Bank Installments are available to any Sons of Norway member at no cost. We hope Installment #22 will be a handy reference for you, as well as a resource for others who may be involved in publicizing special events.

Fraternally yours,

Heritage Programs