

Publicizing Services

Awareness

Each member of the organization should know the goals and purposes of the program and talk about them with friends and associates. Large programs should appoint a publicity chairman and develop an ongoing awareness program. Awareness activities for any program include

- Publicizing meetings and tutor trainings
- Assisting with social and recognition events
- Providing speakers with statistics and other pertinent information
- Writing news releases
- Arranging interviews for radio, paper, and television
- Locating students willing to tell their stories
- Preparing and distributing posters, flyers, and brochures
- Training a telephone team
- Writing and distributing a local literacy newsletter

Publicity

- Consider the following activities in publicizing your program
- Newspaper advertisements, photos, news releases, stories, interviews
- Radio and television, public service messages, talk shows, interviews
- Billboards and marquees
- Posters, brochures, flyers
- Balloons
- Speeches, skits, audiovisual presentations
- Organizational newsletters, church and school bulletins
- Bookmarks
- County fairs
- Restaurant placemats
- Cooperation with other, similar organizations
- Volunteer fairs
- Parades
- Open house
- Awareness events
- Lapel buttons
- Letters to the editor
- Mass mailings
- Window displays
- Displays in libraries and other locations

Community contacts & resources

Literacy programs are urged to tap local organizations for a wealth of resources. Not only can the contacts provide a variety of materials and volunteers, but they can also provide referrals, publicity, and local networking. Some of the reasons for developing cooperative efforts are to

- reach more people
- improve services
- extend services to previously unserved groups
- develop more specialized services
- improve public relations
- improve the program's image in the community
- open up funding possibilities
- increase community support
- benefit the community
- avoid duplication of services

Some of the local organizations and agencies you may want to consider are

- Libraries
- Schools
- Head Start programs
- Teacher organizations
- Social services agencies
- The Red Cross and Salvation Army
- Homeless shelters
- Family planning agencies
- Rehabilitation centers
- RSVP and other volunteer groups
- Nursing homes
- Churches
- Newspapers, radio, cable, and television
- Chambers of Commerce
- Women's organizations
- Local governments and office holders
- Veteran outreach programs
- Food banks
- Employment offices
- Ethnic and minority organizations
- Mental health agencies
- Senior citizen programs and residences
- Agricultural extension offices
- Community centers

(Michigan Literacy, Inc.)

Sample community checklist

A. Creating a marketing packet

An information packet may be very useful as you work to market your program. Consider including the following information

- Description of the organization's mission and philosophy
What is the organization trying to do and how is it being done?
- Description of the community needs the program addresses
Why was the organization created and does it meet community needs?
- Description of the market being served
What are the characteristics of the people being reached? Define demographics such as income level, race, and gender. An effective way to do this is with charts and graphs which are more eye-catching and visually appealing than text alone.
- Map of where the services are available
This demonstrates the reach of the program. Funders want to know how well the program meets the community need and how the program has grown.
- Description of the organization's impact on the community
How many people have been reached to date and how have lives been changed? Increases such as income level, self-esteem, and employment status are good items to include. Be careful to use actual data rather than assumptions.
- Profiles of the people being served—success stories
This is one of the most important elements of a good marketing packet and often the most fun to create. Call or visit some of the people helped by the program, ask questions about how the project has changed their lives, and write a brief article. Include specific details, quotes, and photographs when possible. Photos are an asset to any marketing piece.
- Press articles about your program
If possible, show that the press is interested in the program. Positive press coverage can generate volunteers, financial support, learner recruitment and general awareness.
(VISTA Source, summer 1997 issue. Written by Holly Stockdale)

B. Working with the media

To publicize services, programs need good relationships with local media outlets. When working with the media, consider the following

- Before meeting with local media, decide exactly what information you want to get out to the public. Then, stick to your agenda. Too much information can obscure your message.
- Timeliness and local activity make a story appealing to regional media. Stress community involvement, local people making a difference.
- Invite members of city or town boards, local business people, etc. to attend your events. Then let media know you've done so.
- Be specific about who is involved in your event or program; the mayor, the superintendent of schools, more than 150 local high school students, etc.

- In addition to major outlets, contact smaller community daily and weekly publications, local talk radio, city magazines, area cable stations, and alternative press. Identify area college outlets by calling the university's student activities or student programming department.
- In written pieces use simple, direct language.
(Tips for Working with the Media", published by The United Nations Association of the United States of America)

Newsworthy activities/events

Avoid bombarding outlets with press releases. Sending information indiscriminately and too frequently can devalue your press material. Be selective when choosing the events and stories to submit for publicity.

What news or activities merit media coverage?

- Announcement of new board members
- Funding news such as fundraising projects and grant awards
- Significant donations (make sure the donor wants this publicized)
- Volunteer recruitment; learner recruitment
- Awards; honors
- Unique services
- Human interest stories—your mission and activities lend themselves to these kinds of stories

C. Writing press releases

When writing news stories or press releases, consider the following

- Very rarely should a press release be more than one page. You are not writing an article, just trying to interest someone in your story.
- Lead with the timeliness of the story and/or notable names. Date, time, and location should be clear in the first paragraph.
- If speakers will be available for questions, include that information.
- Contact the editor to determine how far in advance press releases should be submitted.
- Be objective and do not editorialize.
- Human interest stories are usually the most interesting.
- Type material double-spaced on one side of an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper.
- Leave ample margins all around the page.
- On the upper left hand corner, include the program name, address, and phone number to be used if the editor needs more information.
- Include the date when the release was mailed and the date the news should be released. Consider designating the piece "For Immediate Release."

- A visit with the local editor can determine if the paper prefers for you to include photographs or if they prefer sending a photographer to you. Keep a signed photo release of individuals in pictures in your file.
- Send the press release to a specific person. Check the mastheads of your local papers or call and ask someone in the news department who would be most interested.
- Some papers prefer written stories and pictures to be submitted by email. Contact the editor to determine the paper's policy and preference.

The LRO can provide the names and contact information for newspapers in your area.

D. Style guidelines

- Somewhere in the beginning of an article, the reader should find answers to the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how. Also, consider the following style guidelines when writing press releases
- Write out the name of an organization the first time it appears in each story.
- Use the active rather than the passive voice (Say "The Perry Literacy Council will hold ..." rather than "It was announced that the Perry Literacy Council will hold ...").
- Include facts, not opinions.
- Identify all persons quoted. Do not assume everyone knows Bill Jones is the board president.
- Write out numbers one to nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 and above. When beginning a sentence with a number, spell it out.
- In a second reference to an individual in a story, use only the person's last name (on second reference, Bill Johnson should be named just as Johnson).
- Try to limit the length of paragraphs. If sentences are longer than 20 words, try to shorten them.
- If possible, include a quote by the third paragraph.
- Be accurate! Spell names correctly.
- Proofread, proofread, and proofread!

F. Sample proclamation

Sometimes a mayor or local official is willing to proclaim literacy day or literacy awareness week. He/she might wish to see a sample proclamation.

Personalize the following sample proclamation by inserting local information as appropriate.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, there is a growing awareness throughout the United States that illiteracy affects one of five adults; and

WHEREAS, one of five adults in Oklahoma cannot read; and

WHEREAS, these adults are not able to fully participate in the advantages of Oklahoma life including education, sufficient employment, cultural advantages, and civic responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, in recognizing this problem, Oklahomans throughout the state are teaching adults to read in local literacy programs; and

WHEREAS, Oklahoma community leaders, businesses, associations, and media representatives have responded to the statewide effort to enhance opportunities for adults to learn to read; and

WHEREAS, the city of (your city's name) appreciates the help and recognizes (your program's name) efforts to assist adult new learners;

NOW, THEREFORE, I (your mayor's name), MAYOR of the City of (your city's name) in support of this noble and worthy program do hereby proclaim (date), as Literacy (day, week, month) in the City of (your city's name).

Signature

(Seal)

Date

G. Sample press releases

Some of the press releases included here are actual releases used by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Others are samples that literacy programs can use as examples when writing releases to publicize different activities, events, trainings, etc. Be sure to customize each release with local information. Use guidelines from previous section on writing press releases.

Sample press release promoting Read Across America Day

Date

Contact:

Phone:

E-mail:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hundreds of Oklahoma City Children Celebrate Read Across America Day

(Oklahoma City)—More than 800 at-risk children visited the Oklahoma City Zoo on March 2nd to celebrate Read Across America Day!

Read Across America Day was founded by the National Education Association (NEA) to promote the importance of reading. Annual Read Across America events are hosted by the Ready to Learn/First Book program which focuses on children who are deemed at-risk for low literacy and is sponsored by The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) and the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority (OETA).

Thanks to important partnerships with Barnes & Noble, the Krueger Foundation, the Oklahoma City Zoo, McDonald's, and others, at-risk children from public schools throughout Oklahoma City participated in fun learning activities, met the Man in the Yellow Hat, and received Curious George books for their personal collections.

"We always enjoy Read Across America Day," Colleen Woolery, ODL's Family Literacy Coordinator, said. "This year, more than 800 children came to the zoo to participate in several activities and have fun listening as volunteers read a story to them."

Perhaps most importantly, each child was given a Curious George book to take home and share with his or her family.

"For these children, this book will play an important part in starting personal home libraries," said Woolery. "For that reason alone, we feel our Read Across America Day event is vitally important to the futures of the children who participate."

"This huge reading party was not only fun for the children, it also promoted reading and literacy," Leslie Gelders, Coordinator for the Literacy Resource Office of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, said. "Thanks to our partners, sponsors, staff, and volunteers the 2007 celebration of Read Across America Day was bigger and better than ever!"

Sample press release to promote Tutor Training Workshop

Date

Contact:

Phone:

E-mail:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Literacy Training Planned

The (name of program) announced that it will host a 12-hour tutor training on (dates) at (location). After completing the training, volunteers will be certified literacy tutors with the program and will be matched with an adult learner.

According to program director, (your name), “Our program provides free reading instruction to adults over the age of 16 who wish to improve their basic reading skills. Right now, we have a waiting list of adults who need tutors.”

The tutor training will cover a variety of teaching strategies and give participants the opportunity to see and practice these techniques. Attendees will also view a variety of instructional materials and learn how accommodate a learner’s strengths and weaknesses.

“The (name of program) is here to support both the tutors and the learners,” said, (your name). Our program has provided reading instruction to adults in the community for (number) years.”

Adequate reading skills are vital in today’s society. Adult with minimal reading abilities often find it difficult to find employment, follow directions on labels and forms, and even read to their children.

The training is free (or adds your cost) and no special degree or experience is required. For more information, contact the (name of program) at (program phone number). Registration is required, so call today.

Sample press release to promote BEST training

Date

Contact:

Phone:

E-mail:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Program Name) Better Able to Serve English Language Learners

(name of attendees) of the (program name) attended an Oklahoma Department of Libraries' (ODL) Literacy Resource Office training designed to help adult literacy learners learn to read, write, and speak English.

The two-day training, presented in early April by ODL Literacy Consultant Arlene Nelson, covered the use of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) assessment tool. The BEST is specifically designed for English language learners. It tests listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills at an elementary level.

"The BEST will provide programs a better way to assess the literacy levels of English learners," Nelson said. "Currently used assessments don't always correctly ascertain the specific learning needs of English learners."

(quote from attendees on the training and planned use of the BEST)

One of the many goals of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries' Literacy Resource Office has been to help local literacy programs meet the needs of English language learners.

"English language learners are the fastest growing portion of Oklahoma's adult literacy learner population," Leslie Gelders, Literacy Resource Office Coordinator, said. "We are very pleased to offer literacy programs in Oklahoma the opportunity to serve English language learners more efficiently."

The BEST training is one of several types of workshops that the Literacy Resource Office will sponsor this year.

"Despite budget cuts, we know it is vitally important to continue to meet the needs of Oklahoma's adult literacy programs," said Gelders. "Training in learner assessment helps identify learner needs and also assists with more accurate reporting."

For more information on Oklahoma's literacy efforts, contact ODL at 800-522-8116. (Add local program contact information)

Sample press release to promote National Volunteer Week

Date

Contact:

Phone number:

E-mail:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oklahoma Literacy Volunteers Honored

We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give. -Winston Churchill

Adult literacy programs throughout Oklahoma will honor volunteer literacy tutors during National Literacy Week, (date).

Like many of the state's charitable causes, local literacy programs rely on the generosity of volunteers who give freely of their time and talent.

(your name), literacy coordinator with the (name of program) said, "Oklahomans are especially generous with their time. Last year, literacy volunteers contributed more than 165,381 hours statewide. If these tutors had been paid for their services, the value would have surpassed \$2.98 million, according to Independent Sector. In (name of community) more than (number) hours were contributed with a value of (number of hours x \$18.04)."

Volunteers with the local literacy program offer assistance in many ways. They assist with general office duties, fund raising, recruiting, and marketing (add other duties, as applicable). Perhaps the greatest volunteer need is that of reading tutor. Interested individuals attend a tutor training before they are assigned an adult learner. Then, tutor and learner meet at least once a week for reading instruction.

According to (your name), "Recent statistics from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) indicate that 12% of Oklahomans read at a *below basic* literacy level, while another 31% need to improve their reading skills if they wish to perform tasks beyond the simplest, everyday literacy activities."

The local literacy program addresses the need for literacy services by providing free basic reading instruction using materials and teaching strategies designed to teach adults. Volunteer tutors are well trained, are provided with a variety of teaching resources, and are supported by the literacy program. "We give our tutors the tools they need to be successful, but it's their attitude, commitment, and compassion that really shine," said (your name).

There are many ways to help local and statewide literacy efforts, according to (your name). "We hope that National Volunteer Week will motivate others to volunteer their time and talent to help improve literacy in our community and in our state."

For more information about Oklahoma's adult literacy movement, visit, www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy or contact (name of program) at (your number).

Sample press release for Grant Announcement

Date

Contact:

Phone:

E-mail:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Program Name) Awarded Community Literacy Grant

The (name of program) has been awarded a Community Literacy Grant from the Literacy Resource Office of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. The purpose of the grant is to enhance local literacy services.

This grant program is made possible by an annual appropriation to the Department of Libraries from the state legislature.

“These funds will allow the (name of program) to expand its resources to better meet the needs of the community while maintaining current literacy services and programs,” said (name of coordinator), literacy coordinator with the (name of program).

A report issued from the National Institute for Literacy estimates that nearly one in five Oklahomans lack the most basic reading, writing, and computational skills necessary for functioning in everyday life. The report goes on to say that (x%) of adults in (your county, your city) function at the lowest level of literacy.

Grant funds will be used to purchase instructional materials, present a book discussion series and offer a variety of training and educational opportunities for learners and their tutors (add additional information as applicable).

To become a volunteer tutor or to receive more information about the (name of program), call (coordinator's name) at (phone number).

Sample release to promote Local Tutor(s) Receive(s) Honor

Date

Contact:

Phone:

E-mail:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Tutor Receives Honor

Volunteer tutor, (name of tutor), recently received statewide recognition for dedicated service to (XYZ) Literacy Council.

During a presentation held at (location) on National Literacy Day , (name of president, mayor, coordinator), (title) of the local literacy program (city, if mayor), presented the (name of award) to (name of recipient). This outstanding individual committed more than (number) hours as a literacy tutor to help adults in the community improve basic literacy skills.

Volunteer tutors are the lifeblood of our organization and we believe (name of community) tutors are some of the most qualified and dedicated in the state,” (program representative) said.

The (name of award) is sponsored by the (name of organization). (include information on the organization that sponsored the award).

“Call the (XYZ) Literacy Council at (phone number) for more information about local literacy efforts, to sign up for the next tutor training, or to make a financial contribution. For information on statewide literacy efforts, visit the Oklahoma Literacy Resource Office website at www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy



Appendix A

The Literacy Resource Office (LRO) of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) assists local literacy programs in a number of ways. The office has six staff members and offers literacy support services. Other resources include

- Toll-free phone: You may call locally to 405-522-3205, or toll-free within the state 800-522-8116. The phone is answered from 8-5, Monday through Friday.
- Quarterly newsletter: LRO writes and distributes Literacy Notes, a free newsletter about literacy events in Oklahoma. Persons wishing to be on the mailing list should contact the office at the numbers above.
- Literacy grants: When funding is available, ODL offers Community Literacy Grants. Notification of grant availability is included in Literacy Notes and is filed with the Secretary of State.
- Speakers: LRO can provide speakers any place in the state, on any subject related to literacy.
- Print materials: Brochures, bookmarks, certificates, posters, and flyers are often available free to literacy programs. Additional items may be purchased from OLC.
- Lending Library: LRO maintains a collection of informational resources on topics including family literacy, English language learners, workplace literacy, learning disabilities, GED, volunteer management, etc. (see Appendices E-P). Materials are added on a regular basis, so call for more information.
- Updated list of programs and contacts in Oklahoma. See Appendix C.
- Updated list of trainers and apprentice trainers. See Appendix D.
- An Oklahoma literacy web page at www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy

Literacy Resource Office Staff

Leslie Gelders, Literacy Administrator

Leslie brings more than 21 years of adult literacy experience to LRO. During this time she has been a tutor, trainer, grant writer, program developer, and public speaker. Leslie has served as a co-chair of the ProLiteracy America Governance Council, President of OLC, member of the Oklahoma Literacy Initiatives Commission, in addition to numerous task forces and committees. Her skill in developing partnerships has resulted in national recognition and her success in grant writing has benefited programs throughout the state.