

**Guidance on Being Highly Visible
March 2016**

APPRECIATIVE ICEBREAKER *(based on a checklist from the Society for Nonprofits)*

Answer the following questions about your League:

1. What percentage of the community you serve do you think knows about and understands what your League does?
2. Who in the media (traditional and online) know about your League and what it does?
3. What kind of experience is your League having as they increase visibility and connect beyond our members using online and social media?
4. How up-to-date is the media list for the area that your League serves?
5. How often do you invite members of the media to attend an event and how are you developing strong relationships with them?

GUIDANCE

As the old adage goes, one needs to “make hay while the sun shines.” In 2016, the sun is shining especially bright on League and its core voter service work. We will make a tremendous impact on our communities this important election year as we register new voters and provide information to voters through our forums, debates and voter guides. Being highly visible around these great community services helps the community exercise that vote from a more informed place and maximizes the precious volunteer hours going into their creation.

As individuals who are passionate about not only fulfilling our mission in effective and meaningful ways, but also making the organization stronger, we will want to ask the important questions above. In short, we will want to be thoughtful about who knows about the good work that we are doing – and how they can help us in doing it.

As we note in the MLD, the biggest “visibility net” that we can cast is by doing outreach to the media (traditional and online). This should be a priority for every League before, during and at each voter service or election-related event in 2016. LWVUS has great resources to assist Leagues with this. Resources include:

- [Event Planning Checklist](#)
- [Chapter 3, MLD handbook](#)
- [Chapter 4, Empowering Voters of Tomorrow](#)
- League Management site, [Visibility area](#)

In this guidance, we also wanted to point you to some other “voices” on this important topic. According to the Kentucky Nonprofit Network, “The media is a powerful tool – make sure to utilize it effectively! If you want to present a news story, make sure you have something newsworthy to say. If it’s not new, different, timely or unique, the media won’t use it as news. However, feature stories such as the endeavors of your nonprofit organization are classified as human interest and do not need to be ground-breaking.”

In the MLD we talk about the power of using our community based [human interest stories](#) to continue to link the League’s work back to the service we provide and the people who volunteer with us to do so. What about sharing the inspiring experience of [registering new citizens to vote?](#)

The following tips will assist you (see link below):

- **Create a Media List:**
Your first step is to develop a list of contacts. Develop a list of media contacts that have covered your organization in the past. Be sure to include contacts (writers, bloggers, managers) at daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations, and TV and cable outlets. Call and ask who at the media

outlet covers nonprofit activities, general human-interest stories, or community service issues. Develop a roster of names, titles, e-mail addresses and telephone/ fax numbers of the reporters, producers and assignment editors.

Pritchard Communications adds, "The media list is the keystone to any successful media outreach plan...Why? A solid media list equips you with the tools and insight necessary to reach out to reporters thoughtfully. Pitching good story ideas to the *right* reporters will build credibility for you and your nonprofit, and ultimately lead to media coverage."

- **Maintain Good Relationships:**

The success of your media strategy will largely depend on your interaction with the media. Building respectable relationships with journalists, bloggers and key staff usually does not happen overnight. The liaison is developed over time. Keep in touch regularly with reporters and others on your media list. Offer them new story ideas and notices of events; provide them with new statistics and other information so they will rely on your organization as a key resource.

- **Think Like a Journalist:**

As you develop your news and feature story ideas to "pitch" to the media, look for stories that are timely, unique, unexpected, the first of their kind, interesting, heartwarming, inspirational, and/or sensational/controversial.

- **Use Pictures:**

A good photo makes the difference between getting media coverage or not. Photos also can be used on your websites or in social media postings and are vital in order to engage people. Make sure your event has a 'photo opportunity'- an interesting visual that tells the story, not just people talking at a podium. Contact your television stations' and newspapers' photo desks to invite coverage of your event. Have your own photographer present at the event as well. The photos should show nonprofits actively engaged in service. Do not forget to caption photos.

- **Other Media Opportunities:**

Even if your local media does not cover your event, there are other opportunities to get their attention. You can write an Opinion Editorial (also known as an op-ed) about the positive impact of nonprofits on your community. Call your local paper to find out the process for submitting an editorial opinion: where to send it, how you can follow up, etc. LWVUS resources have tips on op-eds.

- **Follow Up with the Media:**

Make calls to reinforce the information in your news release and media advisories and fill in gaps if necessary. Be mindful of reporters' deadlines - ask if you are calling at a good time; if not, ask when would be a better time to call. If a specific event is taking place, invite the media to cover it, and point out photo opportunities.

- **Monitor Your Coverage:**

The media needs feedback to gauge community interest in their coverage and programming. Alert members of your organization to monitor the coverage you receive, and urge them to alert their coworkers, families, and friends about upcoming coverage. Stress the importance of positive feedback to let the media know you appreciated the coverage. Positive consumer response tells the media that your "issues" are of concern and interest to the community; this will help you obtain press coverage in future years. An easy way to monitor your League's coverage is with [Google Alerts](#).

Note: The above tips are from the Kentucky Nonprofit Network.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Pritchard Communications: ["Don't Overlook the Most Crucial Tool to Your Media Outreach"](#)

Society for Nonprofits: ["Make Your Organization More Visible"](#)

Kentucky Nonprofit Network: ["Media Outreach Tips"](#)