

Public Awareness

**Putting Your
Grange in Its
Best Light**



Produced by the
National Action Grange Advisory Committee
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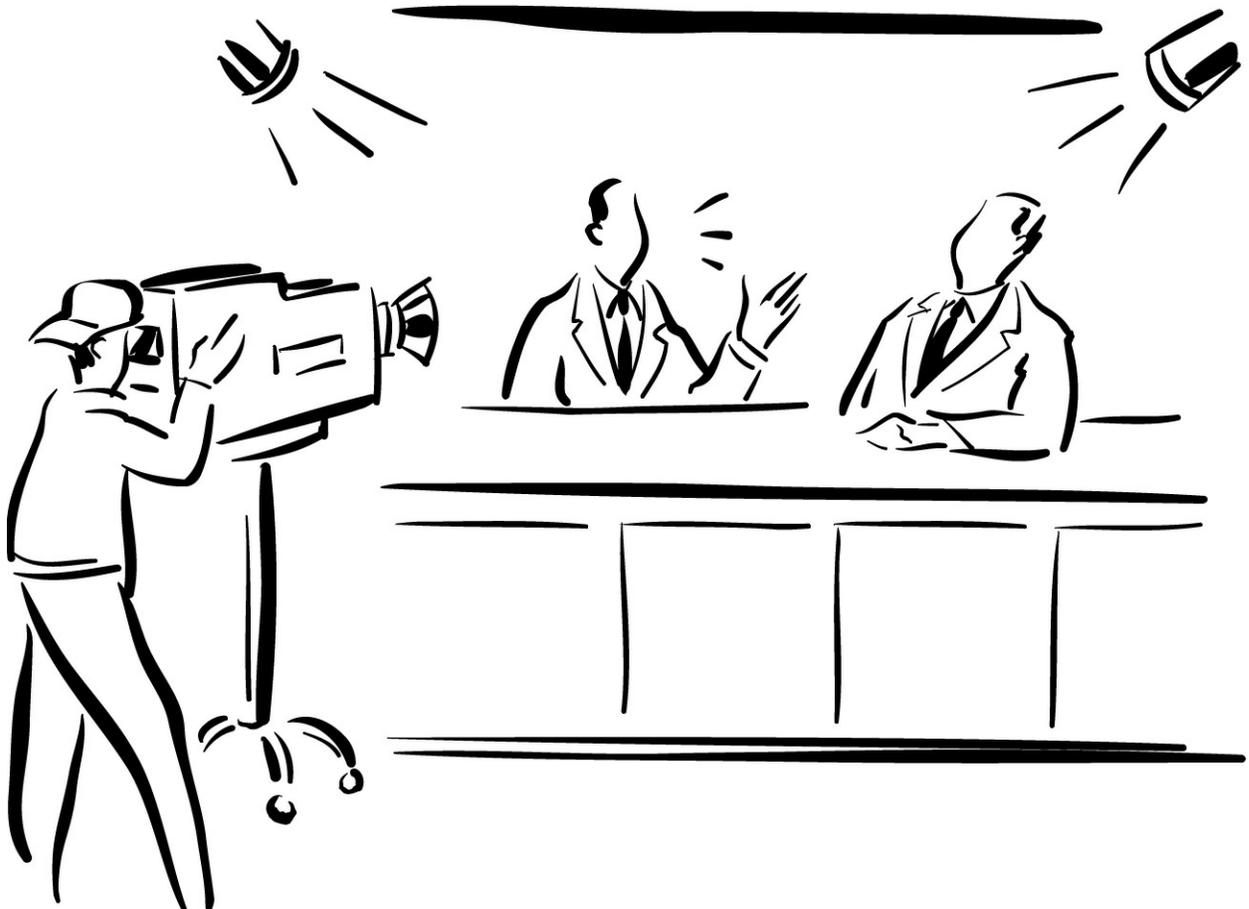
Are you ready?

Grange leaders and their teams who have been working over the past year or so to make their Grange a relevant part of their community will be most ready for the ideas in this Help Guide. But all Granges, and all Grange leaders can benefit from the concepts and practices in this Help Guide, so give it a try.

Here's the basic idea.

Granges are interested in attracting new members and retaining those that they recruit. Leaders in these Granges can form a team and begin a drive for new members, but your job is much easier if your Grange is well known and respected, and if people know how and where to join. An effective public awareness effort can help ensure your success in securing new members.

The local press and media, newspapers, radio and, of course, TV can be creative partners in this effort. However, you should know that getting their interest and getting YOUR story told is not as simple as you might think it is. We hope your Grange is “ready” for such an initiative. The story below will explain what we mean.



Fix the store before going after customers

It's a basic concept we all can understand and, when we do, we will find the processes of working with the press and getting new members are vastly improved. Here's a story that will help explain our point.

"My Grandfather Hood was a shrewd businessman and operated a local variety store in our town for almost 30 years. I worked in the store with him when I was young and when I was home from college. His store was always filled with customers because grandpop took the time to make sure he had the products and the people to take care of the customers in our town.

When I was in my junior year at college, grandpop died suddenly and by the time I returned home during the summer some awful changes had taken place. The store was a mess. No one had taken the time to stay on top of the products and the departments in our store no longer had the variety people had come to expect. Customers who used to stop in now walked on past and the people who worked there gathered in the back and chit-chatted for hours. The few customers who did come inside were almost unnoticed.

I went to my mother and asked her "What are we going to do with grandpop's store?" She said she thought we should advertise to which I answered, "For what?" I responded, "Why would anyone come into the store when it looks like this? We either need to fix it up or sell it. Without this investment in time and money, no one will shop here and it won't be worth a dime."

Discuss the story and the following three questions with your team.

1. What would you do if this were your problem to solve?
2. How is this story like getting your Grange ready for new members?
3. What lessons can we learn from this short case study?



The answers, please

We're sure your team saw both the problems and the opportunities presented in the case study. Check out these answers with your team and see how similar they may be .

1. What would you do if this were your problem to solve?

Most people quickly recognize that without grandpop's leadership the store quickly lost its appeal and relevance. Customers walking past and not in are your first clue. Other clues will be that the store lost its product appeal. New products would be available from other stores but not this one. People go where they find the latest and best solutions. Even long time loyalty to grandpop and his store was not enough to keep customers shopping where there was little value.

2. How is this story like getting your Grange ready for new members?

There are many similarities and clues throughout the story. But the real message is in the importance of the choices the son and mother must make in resolving the problem. Many people who hear this story agree that advertising or marketing the store is a right answer. Too few stop to answer the "for what?" part of the equation. Suppose they do spend a lot of money on advertising and people still find the products out of date and out of touch. What will be the new result? Will they not have disappointed their customers once again? So advertising may be part of the solution but it has to be considered in light of the total solution to a problem.

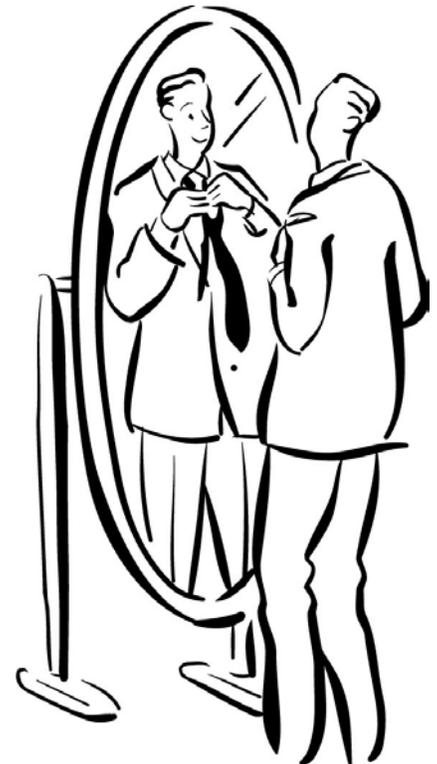
Most Granges want to put their organization in the best light in the community and want to be open and attractive to new members. The press and media can help, but first you need to take this story to heart and understand its implications.

For more help on the appeal portion of this equation, see the June Help Guide on Creating Appeal.

3. What lessons can we learn from this short case study?

There are at least four:

- Getting your Grange ready to be "interviewed" by the press and media and scrutinized by new members is a critical first step in renewing your Grange.
- The leaders of every Grange looking for coverage in the local press and media need to understand the basics and "fixing the store" is a first step.
- In business, this concept would be summarized as "product development always precedes market/customer development." We need to create fundamental appeal and relevance before we invite the user, or the press, to give us a try.
- Creating appeal and relevance are part of the leader's job and important goals for his or her team.



Now, what about the press and media?

One thing most Grangers are really not clear about it is how the press and media work, and what the leader needs to do to make good news about their Grange happen. In this and the next several pages, we're going to explore this a bit and invite you to give these concepts a try.

First, let's define media and the press. The media is a broad category we give to those who use one of the many possible forms of communication: radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, trade journals, and newsletters.

Mass media usually refers to those forms of the media that address large groups of national or regional audiences without regard to the particular segment you might find most useful. The Wall Street Journal, the national network and cable TV, and some radio stations are part of the mass media. They inform a lot of people you don't care about. Still, they reach the largest audience so a really good news story (or a horribly bad one), might make it in the nightly news or into the New York Times.

In most cases, the press refers to the representatives of the media, although the term "the press" has taken on a meaning all its own and often is substituted to mean "the media."

A Few Fundamental Ideas

We'd like to begin by sharing with you seven basic principles. These are really ideas you can consider as fact, although your team may want to use them as the basis of discussion and their relevance to your Grange.

1. The press can never be considered as a public relations arm for your Grange.
2. The media, (newspapers, TV, etc.) are in the business of making money, and then informing the public. If they do not make money, the second part of their responsibility won't matter. The numbers of subscribers, readers, listeners, and viewers are the proof the advertisers require before spending their dollars. Your news must support these goals, even in some small way, or news about your Grange will never see the light of day.
3. Bad news sells before good news, many times. "If it bleeds, it leads" is a statement of fact in most local TV stations. Strive for good news that appeals to the audience and your chances improve.
4. Writers and producers in the media are human beings with a job to do. They have space to fill, inches of copy to write, stories to file, or airtime to fill. It can be your story or some other. You do have a role in making their job easier if you understand the basics.
5. Relationships, especially with the local press and media, are not only possible they are necessary. Try following the steps outlined later in this Help Guide.
6. Building "press equity," meaning the good will you create through relationship building, is very achievable in many communities and imperative with all community Granges.
7. This is a long-term commitment for any Grange and clearly worth the effort if attracting and retaining members are important goals for your Grange.



How are media relationships established?

Let's imagine your Grange is in a small town. Chances are your town will have a local radio station or two and it may have a local TV outlet, but most programming won't originate there. Some other station in the region will claim to represent the members of your community. Your job is to find out the facts about who covers your area.

Assuming that your community Grange has a series of outstanding programs that involve the Grange and its members in the community, and that you have good local reputation, the questions become two fold.

1. What do we do that will interest the media so we can expect coverage?
2. How do we go about getting the attention of the local press and media?

First, question #1.

What do we do that will interest the media so we can expect coverage?

The real answer to that question goes back to an earlier discussion in which we asked you to understand the business the media are in. If finding and retaining subscribers and readers is your answer, then the response to the questions should be "What news or stories about our Grange will attract readers to the publication and keep their loyalty?"

The answer will seem overly simplistic, but the reality is that stories about young people, kids, and kids doing good things that are viewed by the public, the readers, as positive, sells papers and keeps listeners. Several years ago, a group of editors from both local and regional press and media were asked what was the one idea, the single most important thing an organization could do to attract the press and media. In a single voice they said, "Anything positive with kids."

Community Grange Strategy: Develop, implement and sustain programs that produce positive results with children. Partnering with the local schools is a natural way to make this happen faster and with better results.

Second, question #2.

How do we go about getting the attention of the local press and media?

This question will consume most of the remainder of this Help Guide, so get ready.

First of all, remember what you are trying to accomplish. If you are like most Granges, you want favorable news or stories about your Grange in the press or media because they represent:

- Evidence that you are relevant
- A way of informing non-members that there may be something for them in the Grange
- A way of getting your Grange name in the paper or on radio or TV
- A way of recognizing members in the Grange or the community
- A way of getting your name in front of potential members
- A way of informing members that they can be proud to be a Granger
- A way of distinguishing yourself from other organizations in the community

If there are other reasons important to your Grange, list them here:



Next, we need to follow a set of procedures or rules that have worked over time. You can adjust them for conditions in your area, but some version of these five steps is needed. Remember, make sure your Grange is ready for “public inspection” before beginning this activity.

Step 1.

Identify and build a public awareness team within your Grange. Identify a team leader who is willing to work to develop a public awareness capability and who has some interest or experience working with the local press and media. Anyone who has worked on a newspaper or has a background in journalism, or who is willing to learn can make this a most interesting contribution to your Grange.

Identify the name of your Team Leader for Public Relations and team members here:

Team leader: _____

Team members: _____

Step 2.

After forming your team, meet to develop your “best light” goals for your Grange. Identify your strengths and your areas of weakness and keep these designations handy. Work to convince the leadership to continue working on reducing the negatives and building on the strengths. Use a chart like the following

Areas we can maximize as strengths of our Grange.	Areas which we need to improve.

Examine any past coverage in the press and media for your Grange. List the names of writers or reporters you may find. Identify also, all of the local papers, radio and TV stations, local magazines or tabloids, or other sources of media that you might like to have cover news about your Grange.

Use a chart like this one and list the names of every publication, radio or TV station, tabloid, trade, press or community publication you find. Call to get the names of the key contacts (see next step). This will be important when it comes to mailing press or news releases or informing them of a pending event or important story.

<i>Type of Media</i>	<i>Name of Organization</i>	<i>Principle Contact</i>	<i>E-mail/phone</i>	<i>Special instructions</i>

For example, Robert Marshall may be your principle contact at the Towson Valley Times, a small local paper and one of a series of seven owned by Patuxtant Publications. He covers youth activities for all seven papers but specializes in the greater Towson area. He can be reached by phone and e-mail and is a local supporter who does not know your Grange and has not covered your youth activities in the past. Your team needs to know how to find and establish a relationship with the “Robert Marshall’s” in your community.



Step 3

Develop a press and media kit for your Grange and make sufficient copies for use with every contact you develop. Your objective: Meet with as many local editors or contacts as you can and let them know about your Grange, what you are doing, and how you can help provide coverage for the reporter or editor's area of coverage by supplying him or her with news or information about events sponsored by your Grange. Customize your press kit by including the following:

- Information about the Grange
- Information about your community Grange
- A list of key contacts he/she can use for additional information
- A list of activities or events sponsored/supported by your Grange
- Information about your membership, the total number and where they live
- A sample or model news release

Step 4

Arrange at least a "get acquainted" meeting with every contact you identify. Make sure you are meeting with the right person. Confirm this while trying to make an appointment. Editors and reporters may resist your attempts, but if you can tell them how you can be helpful, they may be more inclined to give you some time. Perhaps a luncheon meeting will work best.

During the meeting try to better understand the reporter's job. Listen to him or her describe what their needs are before trying to tell the reporter about your Grange and news or story opportunities that might be of interest.

Summarize your findings, the important deadlines, and contact information on a summary sheet that may include all of the following categories:

Contact Name

Telephone Number

Fax Number

Pager Number

E-Mail Address

Mailing Address

Type of computer program preferred for news releases

Type of photographic files preferred and requirements

Deadlines for weekday, weekend news

Deadlines for TV coverage

Preferred formats for New Releases

Conclusions about PR and your Grange

Every Action Grange, in fact every Grange in America, makes some news that will be of interest to the public. For decades the Grange has made news for American agriculture and American farmers and has done a pretty good job at keeping the public informed.

At the local, community level, Granges have not been as successful. We feel that understanding the basics outlined in this Help Guide is only the first step in developing a real public relations program for your Grange. You can find out a lot more on the Internet or in the library or by asking for help from your local college, Chamber of Commerce, or similar organizations.

We believe there are only a few ideas you need to constantly keep in mind:

1. You need to do the hard work of creating a public awareness program. You cannot expect the press and media to do the job of creating awareness about your Grange. Only you can do that.
2. The press and media are interested in news that appeals or affects their readers. This can be news about your Grange, but it has to pass the real test of “are our readers likely to take any notice of this story about this Grange?” News or stories about kids have special appeal.
3. The press and media are made up of human beings with jobs to do. Meet and build a relationship with the press and media in your area. Make that job easier by providing real news following the help they provide in meetings you have with them.
4. Favorable news and stories about your Grange adds to the favorable ideas people in the community have about your organization. This awareness supports goals for membership growth and retention. Citizens like to belong to distinctive, relevant organizations. Make it easy for them to learn about the good things you do.
5. Professionally prepared materials, new releases, and a press kit are part of the process of building “press equity.” These are definite assets for your Grange and really worth the effort.



News Release Form

Here is a news release form you can adapt for your Grange. You can produce this on the computer or reproduce the version on page 12 on a copier. Make sure the information is correct for your Grange.

News

Aromas Grange News and Information

Contact: Joel Smith
123-XXX-XXXX

Aromas Grange to Pledge 1000 Hours to Support Mt Hope School

Washington, CA. August 17, 2002, Aromas Grange today announced that its members would pledge 1000 hours in support of learning excellence at the Mt Hope school. Under the terms of the gift, members of Aromas Grange will each provide services to support the school in areas worked out in a partnership with the principal, Ms. Dorothy Evans. The gift is to be completed during the new school year which begins September 1, 2002. The announcement was made by Mrs. Mary Deeder, President of Aromas Grange.

In presenting the gift, Mrs. Deeder said, “ We are so pleased that our members have determined that this is the perfect gift for them to give to this community and to the children in this school. We only wish we could make a gift like this to every school and to all kids everywhere.” Deeder continued, “When it comes to making a difference, we have determined that nothing compares to the help we can provide the educators of our children in the school where so many good things can happen.”

In receiving the gift, Principal Evans said, “We believe this is the largest single volunteer effort for any school in this state. As far as we know this is also the first gift of volunteer hours by an organization and we are so pleased that the Grange could be there first. We look forward to a long and helpful relationship.”

More details would be added.

Aromas Grange- PO BOX 400 Washington, CA 23223

Exhibit 1 Sample News Release Form

News

Contact: