

The Media and the Message: Part One

by K. Jennifer Austin

From coast to coast to coast – nobody doesn't know Scouts Canada! Our 97 years as a Movement for youth have seen us build a recognition as one of Canada's best-known youth programs.

This can both help and hinder our Mission. It helps because we don't need to start from scratch when it comes to educating Canadians about the Scouting Movement. Unfortunately it can also work to our disadvantage because many Canadians have inaccurate pre-conceived notions about who we are and what we do. We have to work hard to ensure that an accurate picture of Scouts Canada is painted for the public; one that is current and reflective of who we are today.

Did you know that many Canadians still don't know that we are a co-educational organization? I am constantly amazed when people I meet, including media, say that they had no idea that we have been welcoming girls at all levels since the 1990s. Did you also know that many people have no idea of the impact we have on youth in our country? You know and I know what a vibrant, relevant organization we are – and that we're cool, fun, and better than ever. We need to get that message out.



Photo courtesy Jean Thomas

It's great to invite the media to those formal events...

Sleepovers
In the Ontario Science Centre!

Weather-Wise Program Forecast

Clear conditions for cool science!
Breezy badge-work activities.
Heavy participation in hands-on fun!
Light scattering of sleep among the exhibits.
A little foggy in the morning...

For schedule and to book
416-696-3256
www.OntarioScienceCentre.ca/sleepovers

Ontario Science Centre
An agency of the Government of Ontario

The Message

The great news about Scouts Canada:

- For generations we have helped shape the leaders of tomorrow.
- We have a long history of environmentalism (i.e. planting Scoutrees, bottle drive, recycling, community cleanups, and no-trace camping).
- We provide tremendous value to our members.
- We play an important role in helping youth develop the self-esteem to stay on the right track.
- We need more volunteers so that we can meet the needs of every youth who wants to join!
- Using the outdoors as our classroom provides youth with fun, adventurous experiences that they will remember for a lifetime.
- We are a cool and fun place for kids to be!

That's the message: now how do we spread it? There is no better way than being in the public eye – and regularly! Each year, there are a number of key times when we can convey ideas to the public. These include fall recruitment, Bring a Friend month (February), Scout-Guide Week, Scouts Canada's official fundraisers, Scoutrees plantings, Kub Kar Rallies, and local community service projects.

Public Relations is key. The term "public relations" can mean different things to different people. For our purposes, it should mean getting our message out into the community. This can be done in a number of different ways.

The display's the thing

Many councils set up displays at local malls and community centres. This is a great way to show our presence in the community. The February 2004 issue of *The Leader* features a great article on how to successfully organize your display. It's posted at <http://www.scouts.ca/inside.asp?cmPageID=220>.

Make sure you have lots of youth members present to speak with other youth who approach the display for more information. Having youth participate in an interesting activity will also increase the "draw". Councils have access to display booths and can loan them to your group if you provide them with sufficient notice.

Seeing is Believing

Scouts Canada produces professionally designed brochures and posters that can assist you in your public relations efforts: these items are great for assisting with fall recruitment. Be sure to have them displayed at your local community centre, grocery store bulletin board, schools, and anywhere else you find youth and prospective volunteers. You can order these through your council office without charge. See the sidebar for a listing of resources.

Make it a Special Event

Kub Kar rallies, Scouttrees plantings, fundraising blitzes, area camps... these are just some of the special events that you will want the community to know about. Contact your local media and post signs around the community to let people know what's going on. Check out www.scouts.ca to access public relations kits for fall registration, Scouts Canada's official fundraisers, and Scout-Guide Week. You'll also be able to develop your own news release from the templates provided, send in a pre-written opinion-editorial piece to the local newspaper, and provide local elected officials (municipal, provincial, federal) with a statement that they can read in their house of representation.

Get with the Media

Over the years, Scouts Canada has built up a great deal of goodwill with the Canadian media.

As Director of Communications, I receive articles from our clippings service each and every day to indicate that the media is truly interested in what our organization is doing. We just need to channel their interest in order to encourage stories and photos that accurately reflect who we are.

For instance, when the media attend your event, ensure that youth are front and centre in any photos. Avoid the "grip and grin" pose where someone is shaking hands and not demonstrating what is interesting about the activity. Have the youth carry out a task that tells the story: that's how to deliver the real message of Scouting.

The Big Three: On cable TV

"Television is colourful, full of action and sound. It lends itself ideally to Scouting. It provides another window through which parents can watch their children experience fun and excitement."

– John Olliver, *Leader Magazine*, 1994

Cable television can be an exciting venue for your group. With a little research and a lot of good planning – the sky's the limit.

Did you know...many cable television stations provide cameras and equipment free of charge? Visit the program manager of your local station, and find out as much as you can about their operation – including what they need from you to publicize your Scouting event. You'll need to thoroughly plan, develop and produce your television spot – so give yourself lots of time, remembering to keep in mind the schedules of the local station. Another option is to invite local community programmers to attend Scouting events. Whatever you decide to do – have your youth participate as much as possible in the production.

On the Radio/TV Station

Want to approach local radio and tv stations? It's easier than ever with our Scouts Canada Public Service Announcements (PSAs). There are announcements in 10, 30, and 60 second format. You can find samples at: <http://www.scouts.ca/inside.asp?cmPageID=408>. There are also PSAs for our official Scouts Canada fundraisers at: <http://www.scouts.ca/inside.asp?cmPageID=118>. Approach your local radio station and ask if they would consider having one of their announcers read the PSA.

We even have professionally produced radio and tv commercials that many stations will air as PSAs. These can be found at: <http://www.scouts.ca/inside.asp?cmPageID=148>. These are great for fall recruitment.

In the Paper

Local community newspapers are a great source of information on what's happening in your area. Make Scout-

ing a part of it: try approaching the news editor with ideas that could be parlayed into a regular Scouting section. Be prepared to write copy yourself, if need be – enlist the help of someone in your group with a flair for writing. Above all, make sure you respect the newspapers' deadlines and that your dealings with them are always professional and courteous. Community newspapers often publish stories and photos provided to them by local organizations like Scouting.

Be Prepared...with lively, fun copy, great photos and a positive attitude: you could begin a partnership with local media that will flourish for years to come. What a way to take Scouting's profile to the streets!

Look for Part Two in next month's issue for samples of media writing. ✕
– K. Jennifer Austin is National Director of Communications and Executive Editor, *Leader Magazine*.

Look What We Have for You!

Catalogue #	Item
91-103	BOTA - registration poster - English
91-104	BOTA - registration poster - French
91-105	Poster (Who knows how far they'll go!) - Bilingual
91-106	Posters - Want to be a Hero - English
94-316	Hey Parents Brochure - English
94-318	ScoutsABOUT - English
94-330	ScoutsABOUT - French
94-319	Extreme Adventure - English
94-331	Extreme Adventure - French
94-322	Bring on the Adventure - Be A Leader - English
94-323	Bring on the Adventure - Be A Leader - French
94-324	Bring on the Adventure - Beavers/Cubs - English
94-325	Bring on the Adventure - Beavers/Cubs - French
94-326	Bring on the Adventure - Scouts/Venturers - English
94-327	Bring on the Adventure - Scouts/Venturers - French

Plus much more like:

- Bring on the Adventure Pens
- Bring on the Adventure Tattoos
- Bring on the Adventure Rulers
- Bring on the Adventure Pencils
- Bring on the Adventure Decal/Sticker

Contact your council office for more information.