

# Al Kader Shriners

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# **COMMUNITY RELATIONS MANUAL**

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**2010**



## INTRODUCTION

Good community relations are essential for any organization to prosper and grow in today's world. What's more, a positive image will not only garner support for your Shrine Club but will attract new members.

As a Shriner, you are not only a member of ***The World's Finest Fraternity***, but you are also a part of ***The World's Greatest Philanthropy***. So, you have every right to be proud and to want everyone else to see Shrinedom in a positive light.

About a decade ago, Imperial Shrine saw the need to change its public relations concept to a grass roots campaign, that is, to take the success story of Shriners Hospitals beyond the public at large, right down to the people in the communities. Thanks to the Imperial Shrine PR Program, we see a public that understands and supports our Shriners Hospitals like never before. And, we see a definite increase in the cooperation that exists between local communities and Shriners Hospitals.

Now we must strive to improve the public image of Al Kader, and its Shrine Clubs by improving Shrine relations with communities throughout Al Kader's jurisdiction. How? By emulating the Imperial community relations program.

This is a challenge that deserves the enthusiastic commitment of every shrine club and every Noble.

## **SHRINE CLUB COMMUNITY RELATIONS.**

2. The need for good community relations.
2. Developing a community relations program.
2. Evaluating community attitudes.
3. Promoting awareness and improving your image.
3. Keeping the public informed.

The need for good community relations. A Shrine Club that raises funds in a community or seeks support from a community needs good community relations. Likewise, increasing membership in a Shrine Club is contingent upon attracting Masons in that community to join the local Shrine Club. Needless to say, as Shriners you have an obligation to children everywhere who suffer from an orthopaedic condition, burns, spinal cord injury or a cleft lip & palate for making their parents or guardian aware of the treatment and care available at a Shriners Hospital.

Developing a community relations program. Shrine Clubs should rely on guidance and support from Al Kader Public Relations Committee Chairman and the Potentate's Personal Representative to their Shrine Club in establishing a community relations program. Shrine Club officers should thoroughly understand the concept of good community relations, then organize and implement a program suited for the communities in their shrine club jurisdiction.

Evaluating community attitudes. There are many in every community who know little to nothing about Shriners Hospitals and even less about Shrinedom. There are also many who have negative attitudes toward Shrine-Masons, having been exposed to anti-masonic propaganda. In any case, evaluating attitudes within a community is essential to improving community relations. Begin by establishing a ratio of positive attitudes verses negative attitudes toward Shriners. If the community as a whole sees Shriners in a positive light, then emphasis will be on a public information program. If there is a preponderance of negative attitudes in a community then a public relations program is needed to improve community attitudes.

Promoting awareness and improving your image. Ignorance is a terrible thing. People are skeptical of anything they have insufficient knowledge of. They are prone to distrust the unknown or even dismiss something they don't understand as baneful. In Masonry, we are "brought to light." Thus we encounter the precepts of Freemasonry and as we begin to understand it we are filled with a desire to learn more about it. Promoting awareness is nothing more than making the community aware of who the Shriners are and what they do. Improving your club's image within a community is quite simple. Share all the good things Shriners do with everyone in the community. Shriners taking part in community activities is an excellent way to engineer positive attitudes in a community.

Keeping the public informed. When you tell a friend or neighbor about Shrinedom, what your club does and is planning to do, you are informing him or her. Tell others, and you are spreading the word. Tell it through the media and you are informing the entire community. Shriners who live or work in a community become a vital part of that community, so what they achieve or accomplish is community news and community news is the reason for which weekly newspapers and local radio stations exist. Shrine Club activities that have a positive impact on the community should be shared with the community through the local media. Shrine Club's should also make social, civic and fraternal organizations in their communities aware that Al Kader has a speakers bureau and will be happy to furnish a speaker for a future meeting.

## SHRINE CLUB MEDIA RELATIONS

4. What is news?
4. What makes news?
5. Which media is right for Shrine Club news ?
5. Meet the media.
6. Meet the editor and news director.
6. Meet the media staff
7. Do's for good media relations.
7. Do not's for good media relations.
8. The media interview.
8. Interviews pertaining to Shriners Hospital.
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9. Guidelines for a media interview.

What is news? News is what people need to know or want to know. You might say news is information that is meaningful to people or information that relates to their personal or social affairs. Editors or news directors determine what makes news in their particular publication or broadcast media and generally speaking, their decision is influenced by how timely the information is and how newsworthy the material is. Other considerations are likely to be their readers, listeners or viewers interest and the availability of space in a publication or availability of time on a broadcast or telecast. Keep in mind also that there are many other worthy organizations competing for publicity, so to get published....get there first with the best news.

What makes news? Generally speaking, most editors and news directors consider stories to be newsworthy when they are:

- Timely...happening now, or have just happened.
- Informative...informs readers, listeners or viewers about something they need to know or want to know.
- Localized...about someone or something in the community.
- Human Interest...something new, something entertaining, or something about someone famous.
- Educational...useful information, or something that effects readers, listeners or viewers personally.

- Unique...unlike any other information or story the media is likely to be featuring.

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Which media is right for Shrine Club News? Most households have one or more TV's, as well as several radios. Most cars have radios but no TV. More people read weekly newspapers than daily newspapers, especially outside the metro areas where most Shrine Clubs are located. So, logic dictates that radio is the best news medium for most Shrine Clubs, followed by the weekly newspaper. This is not to say that the other media should not be considered. Quite the contrary, use all media sources to the fullest extent possible.

Meet the media. When you meet media personnel, don't hesitate to discuss which media is the right one to print, broadcast or televise Shrine Club news. Analyze each news release to determine which media is the most likely to use it.

- Daily newspapers have sections, i.e., National; Regional; Metro; Sports, Opinion, etc. For instance, the sports section would be the most likely to carry an article about a football player being selected for the annual Shrine East-West All-Star Football Game. An article about a local Shriner who coaches a champion Babe Ruth team might be a toss up between the sports section and metro, so ask your media source. Daily newspapers may have Special Sections, like "Washington County Weekly" which might be ideal for news from your Shrine Club.
- Weekly Newspapers are suburban or community oriented with a coverage area identical to many Shrine Club jurisdictions. The weekly newspaper in your community is looking for news about local people, many of whom belong to your Shrine Club, so be alert for news about your members, then get to your local media with the news before someone else takes credit for it. If you are planning an activity or special event, be sure to invite the local media.
- Radio stations are either community oriented or they cater to a select group. If a radio station is a local radio station or carries community news, they may be happy to include Shrine Club news. Some will even promote events for your Shrine Club. *(continued)*

- Television stations are usually interested in news appealing to a wide audience. So, unless you have an unusual news story which appeals to a wide audience or something that will interest a large segment of a TV stations viewers, your Shrine Club should concentrate on local media.
- Cable television providers sometimes televise local news or they televise programs produced by a local school district, junior college, or education district. If your community has local cable television, contact the school, college or organization that produces the local news for guidance in getting coverage for your Shrine Club.

Meet the editor and news director. The success or failure of your publicity efforts will largely depend on your working relationship with the media. Editors and news directors rely on trusted sources for news, otherwise they must verify the story before releasing it. This takes time and manpower and often the editor or news director must decide whether its more trouble than the news is worth. Call for an appointment to meet the editor of each local newspaper and the news director of each radio and TV station, introduce yourself, and explain that you would like a few minutes of his/her time to introduce yourself. Then, put together a press kit, starting with a business card or information sheet identifying you as the media contact for your Shrine Club. Also, include material about Shriners, i.e., Who Are The Shriners? 20-Questions, etc. as well as material about Shriners Hopitals. Be prepared to answer questions about your Shrine Club and Shrinedom. Any answers you give must be correct and if you are asked any question that you are not absolutely certain about, simply say that you do not have the answer and you'll get back to him/her as soon as you can get the information. Be sure to get back to them.

Meet the media staff. Once you have met the editors and news directors of the local media, get to know the reporters who work local news. And don't forget the sports reporters who will be a valuable source for news about the Shrine East-West All-Star Football Game and the players and coaches your Shrine Club sponsors. Be generous in giving invitations to reporters to attend Shrine events, especially when the program will be newsworthy, e.g., guest speaker from Shriners Hospital, a famous person, unique entertainment, local football players banquet, etc.

Do's for good media relations.

- Do encourage media personnel to visit Al Kader Temple, the Portland Shriners Hospital, then make reservations for them to have a tour of either or both facilities. Also, invite them to your Shrine Club meetings.
- Immediately answer and return calls from the media.
- Be prepared to take some lumps from the media, especially on controversial issues. Traditionally, the media is committed to presenting both sides of a story. Also, negative attitudes may prevail toward the Shrine, so you may well encounter an anti-shrine media mogul. In any case, treat media personal with dignity and respect and avoid alienating them. If the media does make a mistake, carefully consider how important it is, and if it is a serious enough error, you might call their attention to it in a friendly and positive manner.
- Be honest and truthful at all times.
- Understand that media personnel are busy people with tight schedules. Keep your visits, telephone calls, e-mails and faxes brief and to the point. Never keep a reporter or director waiting for any reason.
- Know the deadlines for the various media. Get news releases in well before their deadline. Avoid contacting reporters or editors anytime close to their deadlines.
- Treat all the media the same. Give a news release or story to all the media at the same time. Playing favorites will result in a loss of creditability.

Don't's for good media relations.

- Don't exaggerate or give incomplete or misleading statements to the media.
- Don't ask for retractions, even if a report or story about your Shrine Club or Al Kader contains misinformation. You may, in a friendly and positive manner, provide the media with correct information. *(continued)*

- Don't complain because a news release or story you submitted was not used.
- Don't ask a reporter to let you review his story about your Shrine Club, Al Kader or a Shriners Hospital before it is published.
- When questioned by the media or asked to make a statement, **never say "no comment."** "No comment" is the media's clue that you are hiding something or withholding information from them. If you can't answer their question, level with them....tell them why you can't answer, e.g., "I am not privileged to have that information, but I will have the [Potentate][Potentate's Personal Representative] get back to you as soon as possible." *Then follow through!*
- Don't talk "off the record" to the media. Anything you say or write becomes a quotable quote and subject to publication and/or broadcast and/or telecast.
- Don't ask a reporter or editor for a copy of an article or story from their archives. Look it up in the public library or try to purchase a copy of the newspaper which carried the story.
- Don't overwork the media. Wait until you have very significant news before you ask the media if they would like to cover the story or would prefer that you submit a news release.

The media interview. The media interview can be a most effective way to gain favorable publicity. On the other hand, it can be a public relations disaster. Whatever is said to a reporter or moderator, right or wrong, becomes a matter of public record, subject to being repeated over and over again, and for generations to come.

Interviews pertaining to Shriners Hospitals. In all cases when the media requests information about a Shriners Hospital or would like to interview someone associated with a Shriners Hospital, be congenial, cooperative and eager to honor their request, but make no statement beyond, "I will have someone from the Portland Shriners Hospital contact you right away." Then immediately, relay the information to the Public Relations Director at the Portland Shriners Hospital or contact Al Kader Public Relations Chairman.

Interviews pertaining to Al Kader Temple. In all cases when the media requests information about Al Kader Temple or would like to interview someone associated with Al Kader Temple, be congenial, cooperative and eager to honor their request, but make no statement beyond, "I will have someone from Al Kader contact you right away." Then immediately relay the request to Al Kader Temple or the Al Kader Public Relations Chairman.

Interviews pertaining to a Shrine Club. Each Shrine Club should have a spokesman who is an expert on the affairs of the Shrine Club, is well informed about Al Kader and Shrinedom, and is an experienced public speaker. The Personal Representative of the Potentate to your Shrine Club is usually a good choice for a spokesman for your club.

Guidelines for a media interview.

- Arrive for the interview before the appointed time.
- Ask the reporter or moderator what topics will be covered.
- Be prepared. Know the nature for the interview, panel discussion, or show. If you can not answer every question properly and explain everything in detail, you are sure to be embarrassed and embarrass your peers and Al Kader.
- Just be yourself. Be open, be relaxed, and above all else, be honest and truthful. Don't twist facts or quotes. Even the slightest deviant from absolute truth is a falsehood and will destroy your credibility. If you are not absolutely certain of a fact, figure or statement, admit that you [do not know] [are not privileged to that information] [have not kept abreast of this matter] but that you will either get back to him/her with the information or have the [Potentate] [Recorder] [Treasurer] [Public Relations Chairman] get back to him/her right away with the information or details.
- Be brief. Get well organized. Use plain English. Anticipate questions and formulate the answers in your mind or make notes. Start with the most important points, then if time permits, give details. Refrain from Shrine titles or terms unless you explain their meaning, like Potentate is the Shrine term for CEO. *(continued)*

- Attempts at humor often backfire, so don't try to be funny.
- "No Comment" is the kiss of death in an interview. "No Comment" sets off alarms that the reporter or moderator has hit a nerve and the readers, listeners or viewers assume that you are hiding something or are embarrassed to answer the question.
- Some reporters or moderators may try to catch you off balance by throwing curves or tossing impossible questions at you. Keep your composure, and say "I sure did not expect that question." "As soon as this [interview] [program] is over I will research this matter and get back to you right away." Keep your cool. Never let a reporter or moderator get to you, Loose your temper and you loose creditibility.
- If you are doing a TV interview, do not wear loud colors, bright ties, or bold plaids. The bright lights and reflectors used on TV stages intensify bright colors and contrasting designs which can distract from what you are saying. Don't hesitate to wear make-up. The pro's do!

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