

Publicity: Tell the BVL Story

Your BVL program can provide a wonderful story for local media. When you kick-off your campaign, consider inviting the media to cover your event. Or, prepare a press release about your program and distribute it to area newspapers, radio and television.

Positive publicity cannot only help your cause, but it can help the entire sport of bowling. Through BVL, with its unique history and programs, bowling can be put on the front page of the community calendar and our goal to support America's veterans will receive attention.

If you've never coordinated a publicity effort, we have developed some materials to help you get started. These include:

- How to write a press release
- Making a press list
- A sample introduction letter
- BVL slotted release

Also, as you go through your campaign, think about any feature stories which may be appropriate for the media... Does your group bowl with area veterans? Do any of your volunteers have a personal connection with a veteran? Does your area BVL program conduct any special programs at the area VA facilities?

If the answer is yes, call or write your media contacts and let them know about the story. Offer to arrange an interview time and help set up the meeting. (If your area has a particularly interesting BVL story, we want to hear about it, too. Please share it with us!)

Most of all, don't give up. If the media doesn't attend your first event, invite them to the second, and the third. Many of our local programs have worked hard to attract the media to our cause and our sport – but when it happens, you can be proud!



Preparing the Press Release

There is a standard format to follow when developing press releases for distribution to the media. The written material, or “copy” is always typewritten on 8 1/2” x 11” white paper (your letterhead will do for the first page). Stay away from odd size or colored paper. All copy should be double-spaced. Leave ample margins all around and use only one side of the paper.

Several elements are mandatory for each and every press release. First, in the upper right hand corner, put your name (as media contact) and a telephone number where you can be reached both days and evenings. Second, every release should have a ‘catchy’ headline. Headlines should be clear, but catchy. Keep your message to a minimum of words. Third is the dateline. The dateline provides the location of the event or story and the date of the event or upon which the story is being written. Generally, news press releases should not go beyond one or two pages, although feature stories will run longer. When a release continues to a second or third page, always write the word “-more-” at the bottom of each continuing page. Additional pages should be clearly marked by a “slug” or abbreviated headline in the upper left hand corner, followed by the standard for numbering pages of newspaper copy, “Add One”. At the end of the release, write one of these standard symbols: “-30-” or “####”.

Once you’ve developed your release, with all the blanks completed, you might want to follow these steps to insure the widest possible distribution for your release.

Finding the Media

The first step you'll want to take is to make a list of the area media that might cover the BVL story. Perhaps you already receive one local paper; seek out other papers that are circulated in your area -- from the larger regional papers to the shoppers or 'pennysavers.' Don't forget the specialty newspapers or newsletters that reach your community: business-oriented, religious or civic service organizations' publications (e.g. - the local Catholic Church newspaper or Elks newsletter). This list will be an ever-growing, ever-changing document.

After you've identified the printed publications, move to broadcast media. Although you probably know a few radio or television stations, make an effort to "travel" up and down your radio dial and "channel surf" on your television. Make a careful list of each of the radio and television stations you've identified.

The second phase of the identification process is to determine and record the deadlines for each of the media outlets you've found. Depending on the printing schedule, each newspaper, magazine and newsletter has a specific time after which it cannot take information for the current issue. Naturally, if you have an event scheduled on Tuesday, you'll want to hold it significantly before a 3:00 p.m. deadline at your local newspaper. Likewise, most radio stations and television stations have deadlines, too. Generally, TV stations need news by 4:30 p.m. for the evening broadcast and 8:30 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. for the late news. Most importantly, avoid calling your media contacts just prior to deadlines.

Identify who is writing/producing the stories. In other words, begin tracking which reporter at the local newspaper is writing stories that are related to bowling in some way. One of BVL's advantages is that it can fall into several different areas of the news business -- news, feature, sport and even business. For instance, if Mary Smith's by-line regularly appears in the sports section focusing on golf, you'll want to make a note of that and put Mary on your media list. At the television station, if John Jones seems to do a fair number of human-interest stories, then he would be a good future contact. Don't forget the interview shows on local radio stations. If you can provide a knowledgeable spokesperson, they can provide a fertile ground for sending out your message.

Additionally, many printed publications develop an editorial calendar -- a list of stories or special sections they plan to produce throughout the year. You can usually call the publication to request a copy of their editorial calendar.

Here is an appropriate way to list your media contacts:

MEDIA: _____
NAME: _____
Phone: _____ FAX: _____
e-mail: _____
Position: _____
Address: _____
Deadlines: _____
Date(s) called/ Comments: _____

Contacting the Media

Now that you know who they are, take some time to try to reach each media contact by phone. Introduce yourself and BVL and tell them that you'll be sending them some information about your upcoming event. You may use the slotted release we've provided, or develop one which is more detailed about your specific event. We've prepared a sample introduction letter and press release for a fictitious town which is holding a BVL tournament on Veterans Day:

November 1, 20087

*Ms. Amy Smith, Lifestyles Editor
The City Press
100 E. Main St.
Anytown, USA*

Dear Ms. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today about our upcoming tournament for the Bowlers to Veterans Link -- or BVL.

With more than 50 league bowlers signed up for the event to be held on Veterans Day, we're looking forward to a great day for bowlers and veterans alike.

I've enclosed more information about our event and the BVL (See Sample Release.). I'm certain that your readers (listeners/viewers) would enjoy hearing about our efforts on behalf of America's veterans. I will call next week to follow up.

Cordially,

*Mary Brown
For the Anytown BVL*

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Local Media Contact: (Name,
phone number)
(Phone # days and eves)
National Media Contact:
Elizabeth Montanya
(703-934-6039)

Local Bowlers Roll for Veterans

(YOUR TOWN) -- Keeping a promise made in 1942, the (your town) area league bowling association is gearing up for their annual fund-raising drive as part of a nation- wide effort with the Bowlers to Veterans Link, a nonprofit organization of league bowlers which provides programs and services for military veterans in need.

The association will be coordinating (list activity – e.g. a tournament, a bake sale, a raffle) at area bowling centers including (list centers).

All (your town) residents are invited to participate in the drive by (dropping off a donation at the center/signing up for the tournament).

The Bowlers to Veterans Link – or BVL – has more than 1,500 local bowling associations participating in drives this year. Collectively, these associations are expected to raise more than \$1 million for the effort, which provides recreational and therapeutic equipment and services not funded by the government. BVL supports millions of veterans at the 173 VA Medical Centers, 206 Veterans Centers, 83 State Veterans Homes and a growing number of VA clinics nationwide. In (State), those facilities are: (List facilities as indicated on attachment.)

“We are always grateful for our good friends at BVL,” remarked VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi. “Through the years, they have remained steadfast their promise to support our nation’s veterans – and they have never let us down. Our nation’s bowlers understand the sacrifice of our veterans and are willing to show their commitment.”
-more-

“Local Bowlers Roll....” Add One

The local BVL effort is being spearheaded by (BVL Chair Name). For further details about the drive, please call xxx-xxx-xxxx.

The National BVL Offices are located in Metropolitan Washington, D.C. For more information about the national program, call 703-934-6039 or visit www.BowlforVeterans.org.

