

How to Write an ImPRESSive Press Release: An Introduction for Recreation Directors

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One of the many responsibilities of a Recreation Director is to support the public relations and marketing strategies of the facility. There are numerous ways in which Recreation Departments promote the quality of life activities offered. Some common ways includes: newsletters, flyers, contests, community events, posters, videos, displays, brochures, health-fairs, staff and family events, promotional products (t-shirts, mugs, lanyards, etc.), local news and press releases.

Not all facilities have a designated Marketing Director, therefore the Recreation Director often finds her/himself left with the task of writing press releases for TV, radio or newsprint media. Although most of us are not trained journalists there are some things we should consider when taking on this challenge.

First of all, is the topic newsworthy? Since people tend to gravitate toward human interest stories, recreational services are a prime target for promotional opportunities. Michael Hotz, LNHA, FACHCA, Administrator at the Health Center at Bloomingdale in Bloomingdale NJ, states, "Recreation is the sizzle on the steak of life in a Nursing Home." There are so many activities, services and events that can be promoted, some of which include: pet therapy, Snoezelen, music therapy, Resident Council, community events, outings, intergenerational events, cultural events, specialty clubs, contests, staff events, celebrations, pen pal programs, the use of technology and adapted equipment, special programs (fall-prevention, feeding programs, dementia programs, etc.), specialty units, special populations, art programs, physical activities (exercise, sports, tai chi), reminiscence, resident service projects, and so on. The list is endless!

Once the decision is made to promote an activity or service it is important to note that each press release should be typed on facility letterhead, be double-spaced, and have an indicated released time (i.e. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE). The headline should clearly define the content of the story and should be interesting as well as eye-catching. In some cases, there may also be a sub-headline. In addition, the appropriate contact information such as name, facility name, phone number, fax number, email address, website address, etc. should be clearly stated.

Each press release must have a beginning, middle and end. The important questions of: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? should be answered. Be sure to give examples and utilize quotes by pertinent individuals. Tell the story by having the most important information first and more detailed information in the 2nd paragraph (and 3rd if applicable). A summary, and company information is to be included in the last paragraph. Keep the press release short and to the point and write from the 3rd person, otherwise known as "the journalist's perspective".

Sending a photo with the press release is a great way to increase your chances of getting some publicity. Although most forms of media accept color photos, black and white photos are

preferred. In addition, write pertinent information on the back of the photo including the name and address of the person to whom it should be returned to and the name of who/what is in the photo. You may also consider writing a caption as well. Simply type out the caption and paperclip it to the photo. You may not get the entire press release published, but rather just the photo with caption. As we all know, a picture is worth a thousand words, so don't forget to send one with the press release.

A quality recreation program is imperative in marketing strategies. More and more family members are choosing health care facilities, based on quality of life as well as quality of care. So don't forget your camera. You just may have the next front page story sitting on your desk!

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

The following is a sample press release related to recreation programs in long-term care. Note: Before writing a press release or any other public relations activity, refer to your facility administrator, marketing director, etc. to ensure you are following guidelines.

CONTACT

Contact Person
Company Name
Telephone Number
FAX Number
Email Address
Website URL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES: A FUN-DAMENTAL COMPONENT IN LONG-TERM CARE

“Activities are the heartbeat of the facility,” a resident in a long-term care facility once said. The importance of activity in long-term care is just one reason why *name of facility* offers a variety of recreational activities that stimulate minds, promote physical fitness, increase social interaction, teach new skills and, overall, improve the quality of life for all residents.

At *name of facility*, residents are engaged in person-centered, meaningful activities, specially adapted to meet the needs and interests of each resident. For example, the wide range of therapeutic recreational activities at *name of facility* include pet therapy, music therapy, intergenerational programs, community outings, exercise and creative-expressive programs, cognitively challenging games, cultural programs, clubs and special events, programs for the cognitively impaired, etc. are just some of the activities offered. Programs are offered daily and provided in small, medium and large-sized groups, as well as on a one to one basis.

The team of professionals at *name of facility* believes in creating an environment that is fulfilling, holistic and nurturing for the residents. For that reason, *name of facility* has an inter-

disciplinary approach to quality of life. As an example, the Food and Nutrition Department hosts a monthly cooking class, in which residents share in the preparation of their favorite recipes. Similarly, the Rehabilitation Department works in conjunction with the Recreation Department to increase residents' physical functioning. Even the Nursing Department can be found reading the newspaper or singing in the dayroom. In addition, there are numerous community groups and volunteers that enhance the quality of life of the residents.

The long-term care industry has changed dramatically over the years. Now, quality of life is as equally important as quality of care. Recreational activities have become a heightened focus of regulatory agencies such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and are a FUN-damental component of today's long-term care facilities. *Name of facility* is one of 10 skilled nursing facilities in the xyz Corporation that provides both short and long-term care and rehabilitation services. For more information on *name of facility*, please call (555) 123-456-7890 or visit us on the web at www.nameoffacility.com.

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For more information about the recreation program at *name of facility*, call *name of Recreation Director*, at 555-123-4567 or email recreation@nameoffacility.com.

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