

### 3 Public Relations is NOT Publicity!

Most of our parish CCWs do a terrific job of **Publicity**; hence the success of our programs and fund-raisers. However, we may not be as good at **Public Relations**.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: What is it? Who does it? Why should we as a CCW be concerned with it?

Basically, public relations is the creation of an image or identity for an individual, organization, business, multinational corporation, whatever. It is the things that are done to conjure up a desired impression in the minds of a group. One of the current uses of Christmas cards, for example, is to remind others of your existence, and tell them that you are healthy, friendly, cheerful, etc.; that is why they are used today by businesses, as well as individuals.

To be a successful individual, organization, or business, you want to project an image that will be appreciated by your friends, will attract members and workers for your organization, or entice customers for your business. For parish CCWs, this usually means that you want to portray your council as a friendly, hard-working group which balances service to the parish and community with spiritual, educational and social activities for the women of the parish.

All members of CCW, and especially the board members, have a role in Public Relations. “It is our responsibility to inform council members, as well as the parish and community of our accomplishments and activities. This is not to receive praise but to interest and encourage women to find their places in our organization”<sup>1</sup> and to share in the spiritual, service, and educational opportunities of our CCWs.

In many councils, however, the function of “Public Relations in print” may be carried out by the Publicity Chair, though it can be a separate role of the Vice President or other board member. In practice, it means that you need to go beyond publicity articles advertising upcoming programs. For example:

1. When your president or our board members represent you at meetings or functions of other organizations, do as the **Catholic Woman** magazine does when it lists the attendance of the NCCW President, Executive Director, etc. at governmental and other meetings.
2. Be sure to report the success of every project, such as a detailed article on the work involved in the preparation and delivery of holiday baskets to needy families or other service project. Be positive: tell what you’ve done, and mention the people or groups who helped. Don’t be apologetic or scolding (“We could have done more if...”; or “With so few helpers, we...”)
3. Occasionally (Thanksgiving or Christmas might be a good time for this), you might consider public thanking – in your parish bulletin, newsletter, or local newspaper – individuals or groups who helped your CCW.
4. At the beginning or mid-way through the year is also a good time for articles re-explaining your projects and programs. There are always new people in the parish; do they know what “Water for Life” is, or P.A.D.S.? (You may even educate long-standing parishioners!)

An article can be written to convey any impression you want. If you want others to view the CCW as a vital and caring group, then be sure your article is enthusiastic. If you want women to know that your CCW welcomes all the women of the parish, whatever their available time or talent, say so, and make your article is warm and inviting.

Basically, a public relations article differs from a publicity article in that it goes beyond ‘advertising’ and becomes ‘image-making’. Do give your parish women and men (and your pastor?) the picture or ‘image’ of CCW as an important and purpose-filled organization.

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<sup>1</sup> NCCW Guidance and Resources Manual, September, 2004, page 4-4.

