

**ARRL Board of Directors  
January 2006 Meeting**

**Report of the Media and Public Relations Manager**

Since the July 2005 meeting, the public relations function of the ARRL has been in overdrive due to Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Not only was there a window of opportunity for positive, aggressive public relations during the initial hurricane events, but also in the events following them.

As previously reported in many places, the situation in which Amateur Radio played a critical role in the hurricane rescues and relief resulted in over a thousand media hits. These ranged from small local papers right up to the New York Times, Boston Globe, Atlanta Journal, Washington Post, and other major newspapers. In addition, Amateur Radio was praised in reports by CBS, MSNBC, Fox and other television news – just about everyone but CNN. Many radio interviews were done via phone, and extra help was brought into the office to aid in handling all the media contacts. In order to enhance my position with the media, I traveled to the marshalling site in Montgomery, Alabama which brought even more interest by media as they sought "on the scene" interviews. Once again Howard Price and Johnny Donovan responded quickly to my request and provided an updated audio PSA which hammered home the message that "Ham Radio works." This was quickly distributed and played on many radio stations.

Follow-up activity has included positive summaries in many national outlets ranging from PC Magazine to the Home & Garden TV Network. More importantly, these efforts have led to many new inquiries from agencies seeking to add Amateur Radio operations to their response plans. Unfortunately, despite the Herculean efforts of some PIOs and the provision of news releases for their use, many local PIOs did nothing and missed a grand opportunity to publicize local hams as they relayed HF messages for Gulf activities around the country. I will continue to press that being a PIO is not just for Field Day activities. Two known future releases are reported to be coming from producer Richard Lubash and also the Discovery Channel. Both will document Katrina events and are promising they will have Amateur Radio's roles prominently included in their stories.

An additional PR opportunity came from the unanticipated repeat of the Toy Drive. While our role was very small in comparison to the larger scope of national relief efforts, positive relationships were established and regional television coverage was achieved. More importantly, it gave hams across the nation who could not go to the Gulf themselves a way to contribute, created positive emotions, and cemented relationships with The Salvation Army, with whom we have an MOU.

Discussions with new PIOs continue to find that they are intimidated by the 40,000+ pages on the ARRL website and get lost despite the new search engine. To remedy this, a "Swiss Army Knife for PIOs - version 2006" has been created: a CD with its own index and containing all the critical information a new PIO may need right on the disk. It provides club speakers with an easy to access, indexed format giving the wealth of speaking tips, topics, presentations and ideas gathered by the PRC for speakers. Over 500 of the 2005 version were distributed for free to PIOs, club leaders, SMs and others. The 2006 version has even more information, is simpler to use, and provides step-by-step info on maximizing local public relations.

The monthly CONTACT! web-based newsletter has continued to be published regularly at the beginning of each month with timely information and even more aids for PIOs. When possible, a large amount of "Cut & Paste" or "Fill in the Blank" material is included for use in local newsletters, releases and other publications. Many positive comments continue to be received about the improved utility and quality of this e-zine. All newly appointed PIO's or PIC's continue to receive personal greetings and thank-you's along with introductory materials to aid them in their new roles. Members sending in media materials are sent individualized acknowledgements. The PR email reflector continues to grow with over 340 members.

While many topical releases were provided to PIO's and media outlets, the major releases of the past months (other than directly hurricane related) included:

- ARRL Toy Drive -- "Mission Accomplished!" Dec 20, 2005
- Hams called upon again in KY Tornado Nov 16, 2005
- Hams Hold National Toy Drive for Hurricane Kids Nov 2, 2005
- ARRL Hams hold Second Holiday Toy Drive for Katrina Children Oct 25, 2005
- ARRL Calls on FCC to Shut Down Manassas BPL System, Cites Continuing Interference Oct 13, 2005
- ARRL Debuts Electronic Public Service E-letter Aug 16, 2005
- ARRL Releases Legislative Video Aug 16, 2005
- DHS Proclaims September "National Preparedness Month". Amateur Radio Awareness Day is Saturday, Sept 17. Aug 9, 2005

Among other accomplishments, not as obvious but significant, has been providing increasing support and resources, including background information, DVD videos, audio CD's and other topical materials for PIOs and PICs who are seeking local coverage. Many phone calls are now received from reporters simply seeking confirmation of claims made by local clubs or PIOs. This confirmation function has taken on a greater importance in PR for all organizations following recent national news media scandals.

In my July 2005 report, I wrote that we would evaluate news clipping services against their costs. In a budget-cutting decision, Burrells-Luce is no longer providing our clipping services. Even with the best offer for such services, the cost of \$5000 per year was not seen as justifiable at a time when Google and other free web-based news services covered so much of the same information. While Burrells-Luce and Bacons picked up many small articles not shown in Google searches, there had not been any articles of

significance found by the clipping services that were not also shown in Google and other free, web-based options.

I also reported in 2005 on the possibility of a foxhunt conducted for blind persons, conducted as a national competition and including other handicaps. It was thought that linking this with the 2006 Hamvention in Dayton, and the probable use of the golf course next to Hara Arena, should entice good media coverage. Bob Frey, WA6EZV, Dick Arnett, WB4SUV, were recruited to develop this with the aid of Joe Moell, K0OV. However, they have reported that there does not appear to be enough people interested as contestants, and the project is expected to be cancelled.

“Media Hits” has been expanded in *QST* into a larger column whenever space allows. While hits with major media outlets are expected inclusions, I also have attempted to always add in some small, local efforts by PIOs whose impact may not be as great, but inclusion encourages everyone.

Future plans include activities at several levels.

The "Hello" campaign, based on the convergence of the 2006 centennial of voice over the airwaves, license restructuring, appeal of DX work, and the positioning of Amateur Radio as a friendly, personable group of people, was explained in documents provided at the July 2005 Board meeting. Since then, I have also received email and materials from leagues in Japan and Italy who want to join and participate in this campaign. Exploratory, but non-committal, discussions with Icom and Kenwood have already received enthusiastic responses. It is a comprehensive, aggressive and major campaign which will call for the active participation of **all** levels of the ARRL organization. If funded by the Board, and supported by Amateur Radio related companies to the levels predicted by the Marketing Department, it will become the pivot for public relations through 2006 and climax between Christmas and New Year's.

In conjunction with the “Hello” campaign proposal (presented initially at the July 2005 meeting), a website is expected to be established and publicized providing simple access to very basic information for non-hams. Linkage on this site will include finding a club representative in your home area ([www.arrl.org/findaclub](http://www.arrl.org/findaclub)). By providing both puzzle pieces, the information and guidance to persons willing to be the speakers, and easy contact for people seeking speakers via a local club, PIC or SM – people who would know who is available and qualified as speaker in their area- we will achieve the task requested by the PSC in 2003.

The consummation of the MOU with the US Power Squadrons has brought new opportunities for Public Relations. While many of the potential actions are more appropriately under the realm of membership development, I have been in contact with Don Stark of USPS and he is also looking forward to ways we can work together to maximize the “Hello” campaign through the USPS.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It is only with your support and that of the hundreds of PIO's that any of this is possible. If you have any questions, please contact me.

In Your Service,

Allen G. Pitts, W1AGP  
Media & Public Relations Manager