

Guide for Chapter and Department Public Relations

Objectives

- To increase Community awareness of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.
- To enhance the image of the Order and educate the public on the history of the Purple Heart medal and the purposes and accomplishments of the MOPH at the Department and Chapter levels.
- To enlist Member participation in these endeavors.
- To attract new members and increase the number of Chapters in the Order.
- To encourage public and private financial support of the MOPH.
- To improve the flow of communications between National Headquarters, the Regions, the Departments, the Chapters, and the Members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Challenge

How to increase community awareness of the purposes of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and better publicize Chapter and Department service to Veterans, and involvement in community activities

Response

Each Chapter should have a public relations plan, executed by one or more of its Members. This public relations plan outline is designed to assist the Chapter to become better known within the community it serves. Community involvement is the answer to creating awareness of the Chapter. Involvement by members of the Order will foster recognition and support for the Order through participation in veterans' activities, award presentations, and participation in community events.

How To Make Yourself Known

Community Involvement

If you want to be recognized by the community, you have to be involved in the community. Take the time to get to know the other Veteran Service Organizations in your community, as well as other civic organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Optimist Club, or Rotary Club. Meet with local community leaders such as the Mayor, Police Chief or Sherriff, Tax Assessor, Postmaster, School Officials, County Veteran Service Officer, and others who organize community events, just to be sure they are aware of your existence. Volunteer to attend their meetings and to speak about the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Community Functions

Seize every opportunity to participate in community events to publicize your Chapter or Department. Set up a booth, with a MOPH banner across the table, at county fairs, state fairs, motorcycle rallies, and holiday celebrations - any community function that draws a large number of people.

- Ask all members to wear MOPH caps and shirts while they man the booth and answer questions about the Order.
- Use the MOPH Display provided to each Department to publicize the organization. If your department has access to other displays, such as a State Fallen Hero Memorial, request its use for your event.
- Hold a raffle to draw attention and generate funds for the Chapter.
- Pass out literature about the MOPH: Membership applications, Americanism items, and MOPH promotional materials.
- Sell Chapter or Department memorabilia such as coffee cups, pens, paper pads, or other items with MOPH logos.

Viola Sales

Viola sales create community recognition of the Order. Your Chapter can hold a Viola drive at any time, but especially on August 7th (Purple Heart Day). Remember, be sure to order Violas at least two months prior to your event date from the National Viola Chairman. His name and contact information is in the Purple Heart Magazine or on the National website.

- Set up Viola sales at high traffic areas such as the entrance to a Wal-Mart, grocery store, or a shopping mall.
- Make sure all participating members wear MOPH caps and shirts.
- Publicize your upcoming Viola sale with a Public Service Announcement (PSA).

Parades or Commemorative Events

Chapters should participate as a unit in parades or other commemorative events, particularly on Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day. Other commemorative events, such as Armed Forces Day or Pearl Harbor Day, which commemorate active duty military or veteran remembrances also provide an opportunity to make your presence known. Request the local National Guard or Reserve unit provide an open truck to carry Chapter members who are not able to march. If military trucks are not available, find a member or an auto dealer willing to support your Chapter with a vehicle.

- Provide MOPH signs for both sides and the rear of the truck. You may be able to get the signs donated by a local sign maker. Alternatively, they can be ordered from MOPH member Bill Markley who advertises in the Purple Heart Magazine.
- Make sure all members wear MOPH caps and shirts or jackets.
- Display your Chapter or Department flag.
- Have American flags available for members to wave.
- Be proud – Be Patriotic!

Funerals & Memorial Services

Whenever possible, Chapter members should attend funerals for fellow Patriots, as well as other veterans who may not be members. Not only is this a sign of respect for a departed patriot and friend, but will be greatly appreciated by the departed's family.

- Chapters should have a Purple Heart wreath constructed of silk flowers, and have the wreath present at funerals.
- Members should wear MOPH caps to all funerals for members and veterans.
- If a military funeral, Members should salute during the playing of Taps and at the Rifle Volley.

Awards Presentations

The Military Order of the Purple Heart has a number of awards that recognize other members of the community and help to promote Patriotism. Again, participation in these award programs help the Chapter and Department develop awareness of their existence and contributions to the community.

ROTC Award Program

- Each Chapter should designate a Member to present MOPH ROTC or Junior ROTC Leadership Medals at appropriate awards ceremonies.
- Members should understand that participation in these ceremonies demonstrates MOPH interest in the development of Patriotism and Leadership in today's youth.
- The member should be prepared to offer brief remarks about the MOPH, the objectives of the Order, why MOPH honors youth, etc. .
- Family members present at the awards ceremonies will appreciate the MOPH presentation and such programs will help build recognition within the community.

First Responders - Public Safety Program

Each Chapter and Department should designate a Member to monitor the news for reports of a Law Enforcement Officer or Fire Fighter who is killed or seriously injured in the line of duty and initiate preparations for the officer or his family to be recognized by MOPH.

- Contact the Chief of Police, Sheriff or Fire Chief and tell him or her of the MOPH program to honor Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters. Ask the official to agree to a ceremony for the presentation of a MOPH award. Ask that the family and other officers be present, and that the local chapter be allowed to make the presentation.
- The local press, TV and radio will want to cover such a presentation. Send out a press release concerning the presentation.
- Have a handout prepared for the press that explains the purposes of the MOPH and its objectives. Fact sheets are available on the National MOPH website or are available from the National Headquarters.
- The member making the presentation should be prepared for possible interviews by the media prior to and after the presentation.

Oral History Presentations

Most of today's children have limited knowledge of what happened in World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, or in the Gulf War. They have heard about Iraq and Afghanistan, but their knowledge is limited to television exposure. Each Patriot has a story to tell; how we went into battle, what we experienced, what we learned. Those subjects are especially of interest to history teachers in local elementary and high schools.

- Meet with the local principal and volunteer to have a member spend some time with a history class about the war he or she fought in.
- Tell your story. Children are interested in knowing what we did in our wars; camaraderie, weather and living conditions, food and rations, etc.
- Sponsor an essay contest on Patriotism or Americanism with appropriate awards.

Media Relations

Believe it or not, one of the easiest ways to get the word out about your Chapter or Department is by building good relationships with your local news media. It only takes a few minutes to "**google**" the name of your hometown and the word "media." In return, you will get the names and contact information for all of the newspapers, radio, and television stations in your area. Call each one and ask for the name of the news editor or a point of contact for veteran issues. Ask to speak with that person and then ask him or her for a good email address where you can send news about your organization.

Newspapers

The best friend your Chapter has is the local newspaper editor – at a minimum give him/her a call and introduce yourself. Ask whether they will accept press releases and PSA's by email and get the right email address. There is a requirement that all media

outlets must provide Public Service Announcements (PSA's) free of charge. Most editors will support you with other stories if you give them news and scheduled events to work with. If you can't reach the Editor, find a reporter who regularly writes on Veteran issues, and get to know them.

- Create a PSA and send it to all local newspapers, at least two weeks prior to the event, whenever you have an upcoming meeting, commemorative ceremony, or membership function. (See Attachment 2)
- Create a Press Release when anything of news value happens to members or the Chapter or Department takes part in a special event. (See Attachment 3)
- If necessary, take the Press Release in person to the editor, wearing a MOPH hat and shirt. Ask the editor if they would cover your event and run the article or story.
- Offer assistance for reporters or photographers who visit a Chapter event.

Television and Radio

When you develop a Press Release or PSA for the newspaper, be sure to also provide a copy to the television and radio station news directors. When possible, visit the radio or TV station and meet with the news director. At least call to introduce yourself.

- Provide the news director with your news release sufficiently in advance to allow the station to cover the event or story.
- Always provide a point of contact for additional information or details and support requests for interviews with members.
- If meeting in person, wear your MOPH hat and shirt.

Press Releases and Public Service Announcements

At Attachment 1 -- Sample press release for a Chapter or Department to provide to the local newspaper editor, TV news director, or radio station manager.

At Attachment 2 -- Sample Public Service Announcement to announce the upcoming meeting of your Chapter or Department.

At Attachment 3 -- Sample announcement of the election of Chapter or Department Officers.

- Don't worry, you don't need to be the world's best writer, but you do need to include all the critical points such as WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY.
- Provide a point of contact with telephone number and email address, if available, so the editor, news director or radio station manager can contact that person for more information.

- If the press release concerns news about a member, be prepared to provide biographical information about that person. As a minimum, be prepared to tell the media what the Patriot did, his/her accomplishments, war record or anything that might add to a human interest story about the Patriot.
- Most States have an Office of Veterans Affairs that publishes a periodic newsletter and maintains a web site. Often these publications include an events calendar for the upcoming month. Find out where you can send notifications of upcoming Chapter and Department events for inclusion on their calendar.

Weekly Newspaper Series

People like to read about others. Although time consuming, if your Chapter or Department has a Member who is a good writer, ask your local newspaper editor if he or she would be interested in a weekly article about members of your Chapter; where they served, how they were wounded, incidents about battles, what they have accomplished since coming home, etc.

- If the editor likes the idea, he/she might assign a reporter to do the series and run the articles, with photos, for eight or ten weeks.
- If the editor likes the idea, but doesn't have the manpower to spare to write the articles, tell him/her you will have them prepared if they will use them.
- Go to the local high school or college and identify the person teaching journalism or advising the school newspaper. Tell them your idea for a series and ask for volunteers to do the reporting. Most will jump at the chance to do something meaningful, and get a byline to do so.
- After identifying a person to conduct the interviews, seek volunteers from your Chapter to be interviewed.
- Conduct three or four interviews on the same day at a VFW or American Legion Hall, Library, or other public place.
- Take photos of members wearing MOPH caps to complement the articles.

Responding to Press Inquiries

In the event you are called or approached by someone from the media to comment on an article, news report or event, it is not necessary to obtain prior authorization from the National Headquarters. However, if you are asked for comment in your official position as a Chapter or Department Commander, make sure that you identify the response as either your "personal view" or that of your Chapter or Department, and NOT as representing the position of the National Order.

You should **never** hesitate to say something that brings honor or respect to the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the services it provides to all veterans.

GOLDEN RULE: If asked to comment on something you know nothing about or believe it would discredit or bring dishonor to the Order --- **DON'T.**

If you believe the query is in regard to something negative that has appeared in the press or a news report, or that your response might be interpreted to reflect badly on the Order, please refuse to comment. Immediately notify the National Adjutant and the Director of Public Relations of the circumstances of the query.

Communications with Your Members

Chapter or Department Newsletters

Chapter or Department Newsletters provide an excellent way to keep Members updated on events taking place within your unit. The content is entirely up to you, but could include a calendar of upcoming meeting or ceremonies, minutes of past meetings, announcements, sick call or obituary announcements, etc. It is a great way to write stories about individual members and their accomplishments and include photos. The key is to keep your members informed on what is going on in the Organization.

Chapter or Department Websites & Social Media

While building a Chapter or Department website may sound like a daunting endeavor, it can really be fairly simple. There are many examples of Chapter websites that have been built either by Members, or donated and maintained by a local provider as a free community service. There are links to existing Department and Chapter websites on the National website that you can look to for ideas. However, it is not necessary or required to go to such great lengths or expense. There are a number of the new social media outlets that will allow you to do a website for free. For example, anyone can build a group page on “Facebook” or “My Space”; you can do a free blog at “blogspot.com;” or you can even “twitter.”

Public Relations Assistance

When faced with a public relations situation not addressed in this plan – or just in doubt about how or what to do -- do not hesitate to contact the National Public Relations Director for assistance. He will make every effort to assist you in expanding community recognition. He will provide tips, ideas and graphic support (logos, banners, etc.) on programs you might employ to meet your Chapter or Department goals. He can even teach you how to “Twitter.”

Enclosure (1) to Attachment C

Example of Press Release

Military Order of the Purple Heart

After more than 50 years and many requests, on Thursday, April 19th, at 9:00 am, retired Sergeant Randall Stung will receive his long awaited Purple Heart in a ceremony at City Hall for wounds received while he served in Korea. The Purple Heart is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those who have been wounded or killed at the hands of an enemy while serving in the Armed Services.

State Adjutant General, Major General Steven Marker, himself a Korean War veteran and a Purple Heart recipient, will make the presentation.

Sergeant Stung was wounded in 1953 during an attack on his unit by Chinese near the famous Pork Chop Hill. As a member of the 2nd Infantry Division, Stung was a machine gunner and was wounded by enemy mortar fire which destroyed his position and killed all other members of his squad. Stung is married to the former Anne Mae Bloom of Wichita Falls, Texas. They have four children and 12 grandchildren. After his military service, Stung worked as a school bus driver for the city of Wichita Falls until his retirement in 1999.

.
For further information, contact Leroy Goodwords at (333) 689-0998

Enclosure (2) to Attachment C

Example of Public Service Announcement (PSA)

“Calling All Combat Wounded Veterans”

Chapter (**Your Chapter number and name**) of The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), is calling all combat wounded veterans to join in our efforts to promote patriotism, history, fraternalism, and assistance to all veterans with VA claims, homelessness, and job placement.

We will meet at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, March 21, 2009 at the VFW Post 1911, 2530 Commerce St., Joplin, MO. Please come to see what we are all about. For more information, please call (**Chapter Commander or Adjutant**) at (**Phone Number**) or by email at (**Email Address**).

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) was chartered by Congress in 1932 to protect and promote the mutual interests of Purple Heart recipients. MOPH is the only veterans' service organization that is comprised exclusively of combat veterans. All Combat wounded are invited to come and meet fellow Purple Heart Veterans ranging from World War II to the present – you do not need to be a member to join us. To become a member, bring a copy of the Purple Heart Certificate, DD-214 or a copy of the original orders and join us. Chapter (**your chapter**) is pleased to welcome all Purple Heart recipients in the vicinity of (**your community and state**).

Enclosure (3) to Attachment C

Sample Chapter/Department Election Announcement

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEARTS ELECTS NEW DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

The Military Order of the Purple Heart is pleased to announce the election of **(name of new commander)** as the Commander of the Department of **(Your State)** for the year 2009-2010.

(Insert short biography of Department Commander, including where and how wounded, brief synopsis of career, what you are doing now.)

The Department of **(Your State)** is comprised of **(# of chapters)** Chapters located throughout the state, and represents the interests of more than **(# of members)** Purple Heart recipients.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) was chartered by Congress in 1932 to protect and promote the mutual interests of Purple Heart recipients. MOPH is the only veterans' service organization that is comprised exclusively of combat veterans. All Combat wounded are invited to visit a Chapter near them and meet fellow Purple Heart veterans ranging from World War II to the present – you do not need to be a member to attend a meeting. To join, bring a copy of the Purple Heart Certificate, DD-214 or a copy of the original orders to a meeting near you. A lifetime membership is only \$50.

For more information on the Military Order of the Purple Heart or to locate a Chapter near you, please contact the Department Adjutant, Patriot Tony Recipient at Phone: 603-627-0123, or by e-mail: recipient@aol.com

Enclosure (4) to Attachment C

Standard MOPH Description Insert to Press Releases

[The Military Order of the Purple Heart \(MOPH\)](#) is unique among Veteran Service Organizations in that all its members were wounded in combat. For this sacrifice, they were awarded the Purple Heart Medal. With grants from the MOPH Service Foundation, the MOPH and its Ladies Auxiliary promote Patriotism, Fraternalism, and the Preservation of America's Military History. Most importantly, they provide comfort and assistance to all Veterans and their families, especially those requiring claims assistance with the VA, those who are homeless, and those requiring employment assistance. MOPH volunteers provide assistance to Hospitalized veterans at VA sites and State Veterans Homes

For information contact:

(INSERT YOUR NAME, TITLE, PHONE NUMBER, AND EMAIL ADDRESS)