

# A Guide to Public Relations

## A PR Manual for The Secular Franciscan Order

For the Local, Regional and National Levels

By Mary and Bob Stronach, SFO  
NAFRA September 2005



Edition 1.1

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Introduction.....    | 3 |
| Getting started..... | 3 |
| Goals.....           | 3 |

## PART I

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How do we achieve our goals?.....                       | 4 |
| I. Media communications.....                            | 4 |
| II. Advertising/Public Service Announcements.....       | 5 |
| III. Website.....                                       | 5 |
| IV. Newsletters and e-newsletters.....                  | 5 |
| V. Establish a local or regional Franciscan e-list..... | 6 |
| VI. Mailings.....                                       | 6 |
| VII. Effective use of promotional materials.....        | 6 |

## PART II

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| How to become effective in PR.....                         | 6             |
| The preliminaries.....                                     | 6             |
| How and when to contact media.....                         | 7             |
| The difference between news release, feature, PSA, ad..... | 8             |
| Tips for working with the media.....                       | 9             |
| How to write a press release.....                          | 11            |
| Creating a masthead for your press release.....            | 12            |
| Sample Press Releases.....                                 | Addendum & 13 |
| Writing news features and profiles.....                    | 17            |
| Writing a public service announcement/commercial.....      | 18            |
| Creating a masthead for your PSA.....                      | 18            |
| Sample PSA.....  | 18            |
| Writing a letter to the editor.....                        | 20            |
| Making flyers for events.....                              | 20            |
| Sample flyers/poster.....                                  | 21            |
| Designing an advertisement.....                            | 25            |
| Sample advertisements.....                                 | 25            |
| Writing and designing a newsletter.....                    | 28            |
| Some do's and don'ts of quality newsletters.....           | 28            |
| Creating an e-newsletter.....                              | 29            |
| Building a website.....                                    | 30            |
| Taking photos and selecting the right photo.....           | 32            |
| What happens if you don't have digital photos?..           | 32            |
| When to use photos with press releases.....                | 32            |
| The electronic media and how to work with them.....        | 33            |
| Step-by-step compiling of media/ mailing lists.....        | 33            |
| What to do with your media and mailing lists.....          | 34            |
| For very special events you may need a media kit.....      | 35            |
| Preparing for special events with sample releases.....     | 36            |

## ADDENDUM

## Introduction

**P**ublic relations opens windows and let's the breeze move freely. It carries the words of Francis and his approach to living the Gospel message to every corner of the world. It should be the mission of the public relations team at all levels -- national, regional and local -- to celebrate the wonderful world of Franciscan living in the world and, especially, the Catholic community.

Look around you. You have eyes and ears throughout your region, throughout your community. Ask your SFO brothers and sisters what is happening. Why is it happening? What do they think should be highlighted or promoted? Is there a major anniversary? Is there a profession? Is your fraternity involved in a ministry that is unique or has a major impact in your community? Have you just selected a family of the year? Are you planning a gathering which might be of interest to the Catholic community or to the public in general? Did you recently hold elections? Or, how about an open house? These are all opportunities to reach out to the public -- through the local print and broadcast media, the diocesan paper, the church bulletins, special newsletters, etc.

This manual is a tool to help you develop a strong public relations effort -- for both internal and external communications.

### Part 1

## GETTING STARTED

There are several key items that all fraternities and regions should have in order to insure a smooth, comprehensive and effective PR program.

1. Appoint an individual or team who would take responsibility for coordinating PR. PR would consist of articles and contacts to your media (both Catholic and public), advertising, support materials.
2. Make certain that you have an e-mail address that is checked often and a telephone number with voice mail. It is very frustrating for an individual who sees information about the SFO and then doesn't know how to contact you.
3. Consider a website and, once you have one, promote the website address.

### Goals

At all levels, we should have common goals. For public relations, they are:

- to bring a new level of awareness of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) and its role in the Church and in the world
- to inform our Franciscan brothers and sisters of events and opportunities
- to enhance the level of participation of our Franciscan brothers & sisters by actively and frequently communicating to them about events and inspirational role models
- and to reach out to those within our Church who may have a vocation to the SFO

## HOW DO WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?

We should try to achieve our goals by using the following venues:

### I. MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

#### News releases

- Election results (at all levels)
- Events (should be sent to all media within the area where the event will take place)
- Post-event coverage with photos (especially to the Catholic & religious media and regional SFO publications)

**Invitations to media (often the diocesan newspaper) for event kick-offs and interview opportunities with notable speakers**

#### **Special letters to the editor or position/reaction papers based on national/local news**

(Fraternities should review issues confronting their area and be prepared to submit letters to the editor taking a Franciscan position. **Note: whenever Franciscans take a position on an issue as Franciscans, it may be helpful to discuss it with regional and/or national representatives to insure that the position of the local Fraternity is in tune with the Order as a whole)**

**Special features** sent to Catholic publications on SFO personalities or special events

**Stories about the *message* of some of the speakers at national, regional, local events**

**(Releases may be sent to regional and local Catholic media)**

*The media you may want to reach can include daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, newsletters, radio, TV, web*

*(Whenever possible, articles should be accompanied by photos to the print media)*

*Before submitting a story/article to media, your PR team should evaluate the appropriateness for that media. For example, election of local officers may be fine for the local newspapers or weekly publication and the diocesan newspaper, but not the TV or large metropolitan newspaper (although some large papers publish local community pages where an election announcement would be welcome). It should, however, be sent to your local and regional newsletters.*

**REMEMBER:** As a National Organization, you may be able to get the attention of national media for key issues, which directly impact the Catholic Church. You may be able to provide important perspectives on issues, mores, work, peace & justice, family, ecology & youth. You have an important task ahead and an opportunity to help turn around misunderstandings about church, and church practices. As an organization with almost 16,000 members, you have some clout.

As a regional organization, you may have the same clout when dealing with issues on a regional level, and as a local fraternity, you may be able to respond to local issues.

## **II. ADVERTISING/PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Advertising and public service announcements (PSAs) can be used effectively in several distinct areas:

1. To inform the community of the existence of the SFO and its purpose. This is called an image ad. You can choose to build your image in the church community or to the general public. Establish yourself as an involved member of the community. You can tell what you do, elicit assistance on a project, or simply explain that SFOs are Franciscans.

2. To attract new vocations. Simply inform the community that we are seeking new members. That is often done by saying that a new formation class will begin soon and, if anyone is interested, they should contact the local minister. (A phone number and e-mail address should always be included in any advertising piece.)

3. To invite public/Catholic community to a special event -- such as a guest speaker, day of reflection, or workshop.

## **III. WEBSITE**

A website can be a major link to the community. It is an opportunity to explain what the SFO is, why people become SFOs, the types of activities in which the SFO is involved, how to get more information for those who think they have a vocation. To maintain visibility, ask local churches and dioceses to exchange links. (Chances are that a fraternity member, or member's relative is Internet-savy and will be able to get your website started.)

## **IV. NEWSLETTERS AND E-NEWSLETTERS**

Send your newsletter to churches and ask them to place it in their vestibules and publication racks. Send it also to church groups (Catholic Charities, Catholic Schools and Colleges, hospitals) -- wherever you can find Catholics who might have a vocation and don't know it yet.

If you can establish an e-newsletter, promote it through local Catholic e-lists. Offer it through your church bulletins or diocesan newspaper (in fact, the establishment of an e-newsletter might be a good news story for your diocesan newspaper).

Later, we'll talk more about information that you should include in your newsletter and e-newsletter.

## **V. ESTABLISH A LOCAL OR REGIONAL FRANCISCAN E-LIST**

This is an opportunity for local Franciscans and their friends to connect on-line and for those individuals who would like to find out more about Franciscanism. Members of the e-list can talk about local issues and concerns, Francis and prayer, the Commissions and Francis' answer to Gospel living,

## **VI. MAILINGS**

Mailing are extremely effective in communicating with other fraternities, church groups and individuals. They should include a letter explaining what the event is and why it would be beneficial to participate. A flyer can be included for them to post at church.

You may also want to mail your fraternity newsletter as a way to inform other groups of what is happening with the local SFO. Send it to them on a regular basis.

## **VII. EFFECTIVE USE OF PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS**

Many brochures and videos are already available from NAFRA Franciscan Resources, local book stores, on-line stores, university book stores. Our own NAFRA website is a wealth of information about the SFO. The job of the PR team should be to insure that such materials become visible -- to the fraternity and in local churches.

Flyers and brochures (e.g. **What is the SFO?**) are an important tool that can be sent out in mailings and brought to churches, Catholic bookstores, hospitals and other Catholic agencies. Your goal should be to be always visible to others.

# **Part II**

## **HOW TO BECOME EFFECTIVE IN PR**

### **THE PRELIMINARIES**

**T**he media is only one aspect of effective public relations. In preparing for any event, several aspects should be considered:

1. Have you planned and organized your event and made certain that you have an event that is promotable?

2. Have you made a comprehensive invitation list that is appropriate for the event? Depending on the event, invitation lists may include: all SFOs in your area, family members, friends, church leaders, government leaders, media, church congregations who may be directly affected (e.g., a member of a church is being professed), club presidents and officers, members of other clubs or organizations.

3. Do you have enough volunteers to insure a smooth, well-run event?

4. Have you reserved a location which would allow space for the number of people invited (assume 30 to 50% of those directly invited may come).

5. Have you drafted a script of what will happen? who will speak? when? for how long? what they will say? The last thing you want to happen is to have the public and media attending an ineffective program.



## ***How and when to contact media***

**T**he news media consists of: daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, newsletters, church bulletins, and local websites.

Not all media are appropriate for all stories you may have. Therefore, you must study your media and analyze your project or event. Is this an event that you want open to the general public? or to Catholics? or to other Franciscans and Fraternities?

Then, determine which type of media is appropriate for your event. If it is something that is of interest to only Franciscans or Catholics (e.g., *Transitus*), then focus on Franciscan newsletters in your region, church bulletins, diocesan newspapers, personal invitations or mailings. If, on the other hand, it is an event which the public may find helpful (e.g., a lawyer speaking on “living wills”), then, you may want to submit a news release to local and regional media, as well.

You may want to research your local newspaper, radio or TV. Does the newspaper include a religion section for events happening at local churches? Does your TV or radio have a program which focuses on local events or church news? If so, you may want to submit your article specifically to the editor of the section or producer of the program.

If your community is small, announcements on elections of local officers would be appropriate for your local newspaper. Otherwise, your diocesan newspaper might be a better media outlet.

In many daily papers, Saturday is a common day for religion news. If so, it may be the perfect venue to announce your regular meetings. But, if your local newspaper does not have a religion section, don't let it get you down. A compelling story is always of interest to a publication -- especially if it includes a local angle. So, if you are having a speaker at your meeting who could provide an interesting story angle, it is still very appropriate to send an announcement of the event to the newspaper. Make certain that your article includes the reason why you think the newspaper would be interested. (For example, you have invited a local military veteran who served in Iraq, or an expert on ecology.) Think in terms of being a general reader of that publication. What would interest you?

Once your event is over, you may want to consider a report on the event, quoting the speaker, getting quotes from the attendees and photos of event, speakers and attendees. Many local media and diocesan newspapers appreciate these types of stories because they are so short-handed.

In general, you may want to use the following as a guideline of which media to contact for stories, etc.:

### **Local newspaper and diocesan newspaper:**

Special speakers, events, workshops on topics of interest to the general community: Topics relating to the Commissions are often appropriate for general discussion.

Regular meeting schedule (if your local newspaper has a religion section).

Local fraternity elections for a neighbor's page (or Good News page), or the religion page.

If there is a member of your fraternity who is also very active in the community, you may want to contact your local paper or the diocesan paper to do a special profile of the individual.

If your fraternity or a fraternity member is celebrating a significant anniversary, that is a good news angle; plus, an historical piece might be appropriate, especially for your diocesan paper. (Don't forget offering a picture of the individual.)

Letters to the editor are appropriate to respond to local, regional or national issues. Items relating to the Commissions are ideal for this method of outreach.

### **Radio/TV**

Limit your contact to radio and TV to very special events with high profile speakers or events which might be of general interest. (e.g., the commemoration of an International Day of Peace; a fundraising event for victims of a major disaster.

### **Electronic Media**

Today, we also have the benefit of hundreds of sites on the web which may accept stories -- sometimes they have calendars to list events, other times they want special features that focus on issues or people; sometimes their focus is historical. They may want essays or they may require in-depth research pieces.

Also, many newspapers and magazines may have website versions of their publications. Sometimes they are teasers and shorter versions of the print; other times, they provide more information than the print versions. Whatever the case, when you contact the media about an event, you may want to request they use the story on the website as well.

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A NEWS RELEASE, FEATURE, PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT, ADVERTISEMENT/COMMERCIAL, PRESS CONFERENCE AND WHEN TO USE EACH**

A **news release** is an article that you write to inform the media of an event, special anniversary celebration, elections, etc. It provides the who, what, when, where, why, and how (how much) of the event or celebration; details of election results and background on the new officers, including past offices held, other volunteer involvement and affiliations, brief work history, wife/husband, children. A news release is published at the discretion of the newspaper or announced as a news report on the radio/TV. The newspaper, radio/TV can edit the story at their discretion. You'll often find that your story is barely recognizable when you see it in print or hear it on the radio/TV. Don't be shocked, hurt or upset. The media has space and time limitations, plus style guidelines to follow.



A **feature** is a special story that focuses on a person, background on an event or organization, special project description. This is more colorful than a straight news story. There is depth, insight, emotion, fact and perspective woven into a well-written feature. If you're lucky, the media may use it. But, just as beneficial is when the media decides to take the story and follow up with an interview to do their own feature.

A **public service announcement (PSA)** is a free advertisement or commercial. It is used at the discretion of the media -- space or air-time allowing. It is a brief announcement -- a skeleton of the news release. It is especially effective for events that might be of interest to your community. For the print media, it may look like an advertisement; for the radio/TV, it sounds very much like a commercial and can be as short as 10 seconds or as long as one minute. (A good rule of thumb is to go with a 30-second PSA, but you may check with your local stations' PSA directors for their preference.)

A **press conference** is an invitation to the media for a major or special announcement where you will have a spokesperson(s). This should be rarely used. Only schedule a press conference if you have an event which will make an important local impact. It is difficult to get the media to come all at the same time -- unless it is considered important by them. Usually, it will be more effective to contact each media outlet separately and inform them of the special reason why they should be doing the story.

An **advertisement or commercial** is a paid announcement. While cost is always a problem, this is the only way that you can truly control the information you want to relay to your audience/public. You also determine when the ad or commercial will run. Print advertisements may work well if you are having a "membership drive" or promoting a special event. In the broadcast world, a commercial is also referred to as a "radio spot" or "TV spot." Although commercials may vary in length from 10 to 60 seconds, the normal TV spot is 30 seconds and the normal radio spot is 60 seconds.

A **letter to the editor** is meant to be used for the fraternity or individual to take a position on an issue, to recognize the work of a group or individual, to say "thanks" for an effort made by a local group or agency.

## **TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

### *Developing a Good Working Relationship*

1. Plan and prepare what you are going to say before you contact the media.
2. Whenever possible, try to contain your news release to one sheet of paper. Make your first paragraph the most important aspect of the story to capture the attention of the media.
3. On your news release, always include the name and telephone number of the person the media should contact for more information or for clarification. Also, always indicate the best date on which you would like your news item released to the public. (e.g. For release: April 5 or Immediate).

4. If pertinent, take a digital photo of your subject and have it ready to go, should your media request it. Digital photos should be 200 to 300 dpi (dots per inch), or a minimum of 3.5 megapixels (the higher the better). New digital cameras are capable of capturing images at 4, 5 and even 8 megapixels.
5. Send out your news release to the attention of the appropriate department by fax and e-mail.
6. If you are e-mailing your news item, do not send it as an attachment. Paste it in the body of the e-mail. Because of spam and viruses, news media are generally wary of attachments, and their security may even block them.
7. Follow up with a phone call, especially if it is a time-sensitive news item (upcoming event) or if you would also like to send a photo. Ask if the release has been received and be prepared to send it out again if they respond in the negative. For the print media, this is the appropriate time to ask for permission to e-mail a photo. For the broadcast and print media, this is the appropriate time to offer to schedule an interview, if the news item warrants it.
8. Do not call during news deadlines. When you call, ask first if they are on deadline. If they are, offer to call at a better time for them.
9. If you hope to have media attend a special event, give them sufficient notice and then, call them on the day before to **remind** them.
10. For PSAs (free radio advertisements for non-profit organizations)
  - a. Prepare a script of PSAs of 15 and 30 seconds in length. PSAs should be written in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.
  - b. Audio versions (15/30 seconds – mp3), if digitally prepared, can be sent to the media by e-mail, BUT ONLY with advance permission from the PSA director of the station or his/her representative.
11. If you have an article idea that you believe would make a great feature, contact your media to suggest the story. Again, avoid times when your contact person may be on deadline. Be prepared to make your case with all your information at hand.

*If you have a legitimate complaint/concern about information which was erroneously printed or broadcast, evaluate the importance of the error. If it is critical that it be corrected (such as the wrong date of an upcoming event), contact the media, ask for the appropriate person, explain the situation briefly and respectfully request a correction. Remember, the media deals with hundreds of requests daily. Patience and respect go a long way in developing a good, long-term relationship with them.*

## HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE WITH YOUR “SIGNATURE” PARAGRAPH

The typical media outlet receives hundreds of releases a day -- by mail, by fax, by e-mail. What makes yours memorable or compelling enough to be used? Sometimes it's a great lead sentence that's catchy and upbeat. Sometimes, your lead is straightforward and business-like -- it tells the story -- simply and clearly.

If you have a colorful or compelling angle (a veteran who served in Iraq is going to talk about how his unit sent a child to the U.S. for surgery; a Secular Franciscan who is celebrating 50 years as a Franciscan by going to volunteer to help the victims of a hurricane), use it. If you don't have an angle, make your news story clear and simple. Provide the key information in your lead paragraph or very close to the top of the story. It then becomes easy for the media to edit the story, if necessary, or to use it in a bulletin board section without much editing.

Remember to give all important details in the first two paragraphs: who, what, when, where, why, how, cost, time, location (with address), someone to contact for more information.

Your press release should be printed with a large “NEWS” (or “NEWS NEWS NEWS”) heading. It's an alert to the media that this is a formal announcement for their consideration. You should also include the date of the release (when it should be released to the public) and a contact person should they have questions concerning the information you sent. It should begin with a headline that focuses on the news of the story. Use an active verb in the headline. E.g., IRAQ VETERAN TO DISCUSS MERCY MISSION AT FRANCISCAN GATHERING.

Try to limit your article to one page, but, if it jumps to a second page, always indicate that there is “more” to the story at the bottom of the first page and a heading matching your headline on page 2. Eg.  
Bottom of page 1: -- MORE --  
Top of page 2: IRAQ VETERAN TO SPEAK -- PAGE 2

You may use a quote from a key organizer of the event which may explain the why of the event or why the public might be interested.

Always end your news release with a “signature” paragraph, describing what the SFO is. E.g.  
**The Secular Franciscan Order is a Catholic order of married and single people who strive to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their daily lives by following the Rule of St. Francis of Assisi. Locally, the Secular Franciscan Fraternity meets (day of meeting) at (time) at (name of church/hall). Anyone wishing more information may call... or e-mail...**

This signature paragraph is often cut out, but, it helps to inform the media of who we are. And, if they have space, sometimes, they keep it in -- especially in small dailies, weekly or bi-weekly papers.

***When to write a news release***

- election of officers
- a brief notice on the next meeting
- a guest speaker at the next meeting
  - a special workshop
  - a day of reflection
    - professions
  - special anniversaries
- announcement of family of the year
- any other special event you may be sponsoring or co-sponsoring (e.g. Franciscan Peace Vigil)

**CREATING A MASTHEAD FOR YOUR RELEASES**

At the top of your news release, you should have a heading that looks something like the heading on page 13: (You'll only need a heading like this if you are faxing or sending by snail mail. NEVER embed a graphic or a photo into your e-mail. It makes the document too large.) See next page for a sample set-up.

-- SAMPLE SET-UP --



**NEWS**

**NEWS**

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER -- ST. MARY FRATERNITY

123 Any St., Any City, State 12345

315-333-3333

sfoanyfraternity@anyservice.com

FOR RELEASE: Immediate (Month 1, 2005)

CONTACT: Bob Jones, Minister, 333-333-3333, bobsfo@anyservice.com

HEADLINE ALL IN CAPITAL LETTERS

*SUBHEADLINE IF AN ASPECT OF THE STORY WARRANTS IT*

(NAME OF CITY) -- Begin your story....Make your introductory sentence compelling and include important information in your first two paragraphs.

Include a quote from the chairperson/organizer of event about the importance or value of attending. ".....," noted Mary Smith, chairperson of the event and minister of the SFO Any Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

End your article with your signature paragraph:

**The Secular Franciscan Order is a Catholic order of married and single people who strive to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their daily lives by following the Rule of St. Francis of Assisi. Locally, the Secular Franciscan Fraternity meets (day of meeting) at (time) at (name of church/hall). Anyone wishing more information may call... or e-mail...**

At the end of your story, indicate that it is finished by writing ...

-- END --

*(Many PR practitioners use "###" or "-30-" to indicate the end of the story)*

**NOTE: Articles sent to radio/TV are usually shorter and are typed in all capital letters.**

-- SAMPLE -



St. Joseph Fraternity  
Secular Franciscan Order  
P.O. Box 232  
Marcy, NY 13403

# NEWS NEWS NEWS

**For release: Immediate: September 7, 2005**

**Contact: Karen Szczesniak, SFO, minister, 315-735-9106**

## **24-HOUR FRANCISCAN PEACE VIGIL TO MARK INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE**

**UTICA -- In conjunction with the International Day of Peace, St. Joseph/St. Patrick's Church on Columbia St. in Utica will be holding a special 24-hour Franciscan peace vigil. The vigil will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 20 with an Ecumenical Service and Mass.**

**Following the Mass, the Church will be open throughout the night for Eucharistic Adoration. The Vigil will end on Wednesday, September 21 at 6 p.m. with a prayer service and reposition of the Holy Eucharist.**

**The public is invited to participate in the opening service, as well as stop by anytime during the 24-hour peace vigil. Groups are also welcome. Refreshments will be served at the Parish Center after the closing service.**

**"We extend an invitation to all our Christian and non-Christian brothers and sisters to join us in our prayer for peace and for our service men and women in Iraq. Together, our voices will be heard," said Karen Szczesniak, minister of the St. Joseph Fraternity of The Secular Franciscan Order, which is hosting the event.**

**For more information, or for groups to schedule a time, call 735-9106.**

**The Secular Franciscan Order is an order of married and single men and women who have chosen to live the Gospel life by following the guidelines set forth by St. Francis of Assisi.**

-- ### --



ANOTHER SAMPLE:

St. Joseph Fraternity

## SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

St. Joseph/St. Patrick Parish Center • 702 Columbia St., Utica, NY

# Religion News

for religion & calendar editor/director

For Release: Immediate (July 25, 2003)

Contact: KAREN SZCZESNIAK, 315-735-9106, jacopa@juno.com

### SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER HOLDS OPEN HOUSE

UTICA – A Franciscan Informational Evening will be held for those considering making a commitment to living a lifestyle which is focused on the Gospel. The presentation will review the history of lay and religious Franciscans, their relationship with the Catholic Church, and how being a Franciscan can relate to one's secular life.

The Open House will include representatives from the Secular Franciscan Order, the Conventual Friars, the Sisters of St. Francis, and the Poor Clare Sisters. Also represented at the event will be FrancisCorps, a unique Franciscan ministry for young men and women.

The event will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Monday, August 11 at St. Joseph /St. Patrick Parish Center (the Franciscan Gathering Place) at 702 Columbia Street, Utica.

“This will be an opportunity for people wishing to know more about the Franciscan lifestyle and how it can fit in their own lives,” said Karen Szczesniak, minister of The St. Joseph Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in Utica, the organization hosting the event.

“Many people don't realize that you can be a lay person, live in the world with your family, husband or wife, and still have a vocation to live your life linked to St. Francis of Assisi and to the Gospels. We invite the public – from thirteen to 95 – to join us Monday evening and to find out more about this unique opportunity to bring joy to the world and to their own lives,” added Szczesniak.

-- MORE--

**FRANCISCAN OPEN HOUSE -- PAGE 2**

**Representatives from the various Franciscan Orders will be available to answer questions about life as a religious or as a lay Franciscan and the process of Profession.**

**Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be served.**

**The Secular Franciscan Order is a Catholic order of married and single people who strive to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their daily lives based on the guidelines set forth by St. Francis of Assisi. Locally, the Secular Franciscan Fraternity meets (day of meeting) at (time) at (name of church/hall). Anyone wishing more information may call... or e-mail...**

**-- END --**

## WRITING NEWS FEATURES/PROFILES

Features are more flexible and creative in format. They make great reading. They inform, educate, inspire, bring to tears, make you laugh. They provide role models or give a community a sense of history. They are great for the people or local section of the paper, a magazine story (sometimes even for national publications), a newsletter, a website.

Again, you should begin with a compelling statement. E.g. “John Jones spent one year in Iraq, but his tour of duty will impact the life of a child for a lifetime...”

You can tell your story chronologically or, if more appropriate, by topic areas. Quotes will add color and perspective to the story.

Make your close memorable. E.g., “Little Ahib has returned home to Iraq, but he brought with him the love and hearts of each and every member of Company A, including that of John Jones.”

### *Ideas for features/stories*

- A Secular Franciscan celebrates 50 years as an SFO: an opportunity to tell the story of the SFO and how it has changed
  - A family of SFOs -- three generations tell why they became Franciscans
  - A special ministry: An SFO began a soup kitchen in the community which has grown with volunteers and clients
- SFO has established Eucharistic Adoration and has continued non-stop 24/7/365 for the past 10 years.
  - Living your faith at work -- how local SFOs take their vocation to work
    - An ecological project
    - Tackling a peace and justice issue
  - A story about the life and activities of the family of the year

## **WRITING A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT/COMMERCIAL**


How do you make 30 seconds memorable? That's all the time you typically have to reach your audience in an audio or video PSA. Every word must count and, if possible, you have to try to capture your audience in the first few words. The rest of the time should be dedicated to the details: who, what, where, when, why, how, cost and contact information.

(E.g.) PEACE. WHO WANTS IT? TO FIND OUT, COME TO THE FRANCISCAN PEACE VIGIL ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 6 P.M. AT ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH, COLUMBIA ST. SPONSORED BY THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 733-3333.

You can submit your audio PSA to radio and use a version for the bulletin board screen on your cable TV system. It can also be submitted to your local newspaper or diocesan newspaper or church bulletin for their announcement/bulletin section.

## **CREATING A MASTHEAD FOR YOUR PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

At the top of your PSA, you should have a heading that looks something like this:



**PSA**                      **PSA**  
THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER -- ST. MARY FRATERNITY  
123 Any St., Any City, State 12345  
315-333-3333  
sfoanyfraternity@anyservice.com

FOR RELEASE: Immediate (date), please continue running until (date)  
CONTACT: Bob Jones, Minister, 333-333-3333, bobsfo@anyservice.com

HEADLINE ALL IN CAPITAL LETTERS

(WRITE YOUR PSA ALL IN CAPS) THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER WILL BE HOLDING AN ALL-DAY ECOLOGICAL ADVENTURE AT FATHER JONES NATURE CENTER IN JONES CITY. DISCOVER THE BENEFITS THAT WILDLIFE PROVIDE. REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 9 A.M. COST WILL BE \$10. IT INCLUDES BREAKFAST AND LUNCH.

-- END --

(A PSA can be 10, 15, 30 or 60 seconds in length. 30-seconds is the typical length.)

NOTE: A public service announcement may also be the right size for local calendars of events and church bulletins which typically do not provide much space for announcements. TV bulletin boards may require even shorter versions.

SAMPLE SET-UP:



Karen Szczesniak, SFO  
St. Joseph Fraternity  
Secular Franciscan Order  
P.O. Box 232  
Marcy, NY 13403  
315-735-9106

September 2, 2005

Dear Bulletin Board Director,

Please consider placing the following announcement on your bulletin board and run it until Wednesday, Sept. 21. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Szczesniak, SFO  
Secular Franciscan Order

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO ATTEND A FRANCISCAN 24-HOUR VIGIL FOR PEACE AT ST. JOSEPH/ST. FRANCIS CHURCH AT 702 COLUMBIA STREET. PRAYERS FOR PEACE BEGIN AT 6:30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, SEPT. 20. EUCHARISTIC ADORATION FOLLOWS FOR 23 HOURS. ENDS WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 21 AT 6 P.M. WITH CLOSING PRAYER SERVICE. SPONSORED BY THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER.

-- END --

## **WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Letters to the editor can inspire, challenge, even help effect a change in attitude. It allows the SFO to take intelligent positions on issues, backed by good support information. Your letter should be short (typically no more than three paragraphs), to the point and supported by documentation -- if you are taking a position on an issue.

You may be responding to an environmental concern or may want to support a special project that will benefit the community.

You may also write a letter to the editor to commend a group, company or individual on the quality of a project or success of an event. A brief description or explanation of why you are commending or thanking is sufficient.

Whenever you write a letter on behalf of your fraternity, make certain that the majority accepts the position you are taking and then sign everyone's name (or those who give permission). Make certain that your letter includes the fact that you are Secular Franciscans.

## **MAKING FLYERS FOR EVENTS**

Flyers should be simple, attractive and easy to read. Do not clutter with too much information. Words should be large and neat for easy reading. Always include a contact number if anyone needs more information.

A flyer is often used as a pick-up piece at church, at a bookstore, school or other public venue. It may be put on windshields or inserted in a church bulletin.

Remember, a flyer is NOT a poster. A flyer typically is smaller and provides more details. A poster has large type, and is easy to read from a reasonable distance. It announces an event, location and time simply. It is not cluttered with information.

An effective flyer should include the following:

1. an attractive graphic device (e.g. a picture of the tau or a Franciscan icon)
2. title of event
3. location, day, time
4. a brief explanation of activities or purpose
5. call to action: (Join us for a truly spiritual adventure!)
6. contact information

(Recently, we used an advertisement, enlarged it to be used as a flyer. See next few pages for samples.)



# Tau

**Franciscans living in the world wear  
this reminder of their  
commitment to a Gospel life.  
If you are married or single  
and you feel the call from God  
to embrace a Franciscan lifestyle,  
call us today to learn more.**

- Live in the world.
- Work in the world.
- Celebrate your family life  
in the world.

*Become a Secular Franciscan where you'll find  
fraternity and support  
while living in the world.*

*God is waiting for your call.*

**vocations@nafra-sfo.org**

**1-800-FRANCIS**

**www.nafra-sfo.org**

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE FRANCISCAN PEACE VIGIL



JOIN MILLIONS OF OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND  
GROUPS AROUND THE WORLD IN HONORING  
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE  
THROUGH COMMUNITY PRAYER AND  
OTHER SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES.

**PEACE VIGIL BEGINS:** Tuesday September 20, 2005, 6:30 p.m. gathering  
at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church, beginning with A Franciscan Decade  
Rosary Prayers for Peace  
7:00 p.m. Mass begins with Eucharistic Procession  
– *Blessed Sacrament from Adoration Chapel to Church*

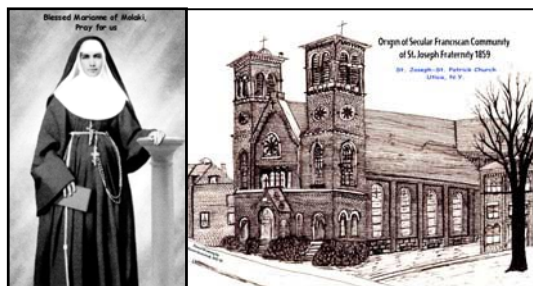
## 24 - PERPETUAL EUCHARISTIC ADORATION IN THE MAIN CHURCH

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE** concludes Wednesday, September 21,  
2005, 6:00 p.m. Benediction and Reposition from Church to Adoration  
Chapel

*Small reception to follow in the Parish Center  
Sponsored by the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of St. Joseph  
of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region*



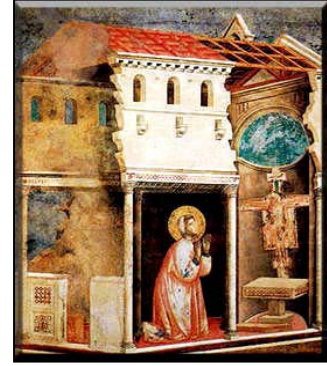
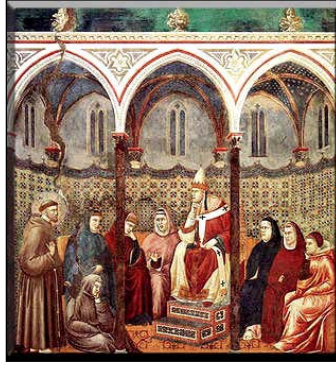
**St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church  
702 Columbia Street, Utica, NY**



*Home of Blessed Marianne of Molokai*

SAMPLE FLYER

# A FRANCISCAN GATHERING



THE GIFT OF THE MANTLE \* FRANCIS PREACHES BEFORE POPE HONORIUS \* JESUS SPEAKS TO FRANCIS



FEATURING: **FR. KEVIN KENNY, O.F.M. CONV.**

Two talks which explore the theology of the frescoes in the Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi and how it relates to the Eucharist

**Sunday, September 18, 2005**

**St. Joseph-St. Patrick Parish Center,**



**On the point of Varick, Lafayette and Columbia Streets, Utica, NY;**

*(NYS Thruway, Utica Exit 31, go toward downtown – right on Lafayette St.- see Parish Center on left; From Rt. 12N, exit Downtown, follow Court St. ramp, turn right at light-make next right on Lafayette)*

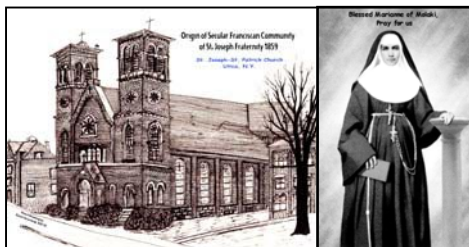
**10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church** *(next to parish center)*

**11:30 a.m. Parish Center – Welcoming and Sign In**

**12:00 noon Parish Center – Brown bag lunch – Refreshments provided**

*(If time is kind to us – we may pray the Franciscan Crown Rosary before Fr. Kevin's first talk)*

**1:00 – 5:00p.m. – Fr. Kevin's first talk followed by a walk over to St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church for Exposition and then return to the Parish Center for Fr. Kevin's final talk and blessing.**



*Home of Blessed Marianne of Molokai*

**Hosted by the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of St. Joseph<sup>1</sup> Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Region**



*Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha*

**♥ There will be time for reflection and Opportunities for questions and answers**

**♥ FREE WILL OFFERING**

<sup>1</sup> There will be Franciscans items for sale; handmade knotted Crown Rosaries, T-shirts with locally designed Franciscan Graphics, books, other Franciscan items



SAMPLE POSTER

# A FRANCISCAN GATHERING

*Where is the Secular Franciscan Order  
going in the 21st Century?*



featuring

Bob Roberts, SFO, PhD

Franciscan Scholar, Professor of Church History

**Public is invited. Join us. Refreshments.**

Sunday, Date, 2006

time p.m.

Location, City, State

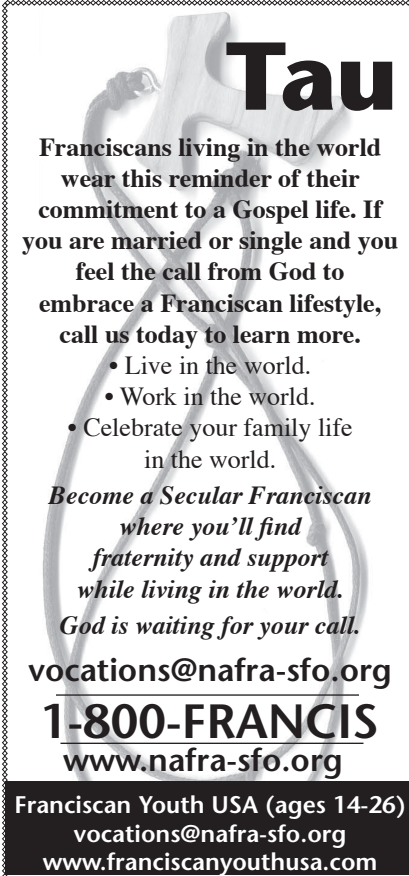
## DESIGNING AN ADVERTISEMENT

Just like flyers, advertisements should be simple, attractive and easy to read. Do not clutter with too much information. Always include a contact number should anyone need more information.

An effective advertisement should include the following:

1. an attractive graphic device (e.g., a picture of the tau or a Franciscan icon)
2. a catchy headline
3. information about the event or your message clearly stated
4. location, day, time (if it is an event)
5. call to action: (Join us for a truly spiritual adventure!)
6. contact information

## SAMPLE ADS



**Tau**

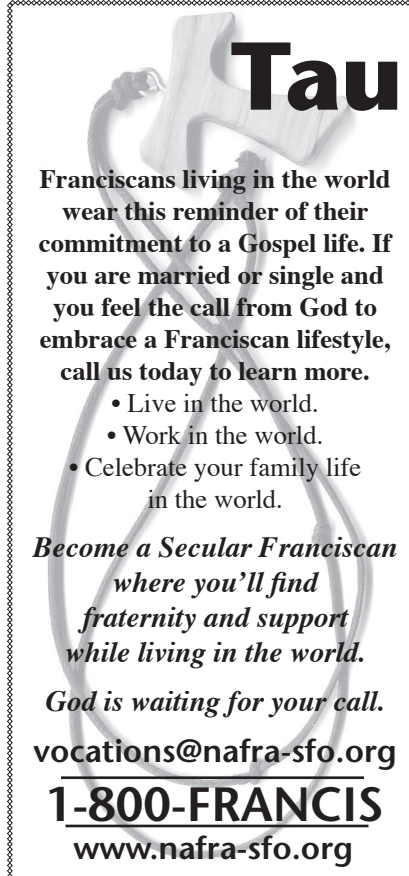
Franciscans living in the world wear this reminder of their commitment to a Gospel life. If you are married or single and you feel the call from God to embrace a Franciscan lifestyle, call us today to learn more.

- Live in the world.
- Work in the world.
- Celebrate your family life in the world.

*Become a Secular Franciscan where you'll find fraternity and support while living in the world. God is waiting for your call.*

[vocations@nafra-sfo.org](mailto:vocations@nafra-sfo.org)  
**1-800-FRANCIS**  
[www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org)

Franciscan Youth USA (ages 14-26)  
[vocations@nafra-sfo.org](mailto:vocations@nafra-sfo.org)  
[www.franciscanyouthusa.com](http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com)



**Tau**

Franciscans living in the world wear this reminder of their commitment to a Gospel life. If you are married or single and you feel the call from God to embrace a Franciscan lifestyle, call us today to learn more.

- Live in the world.
- Work in the world.
- Celebrate your family life in the world.

*Become a Secular Franciscan where you'll find fraternity and support while living in the world. God is waiting for your call.*

[vocations@nafra-sfo.org](mailto:vocations@nafra-sfo.org)  
**1-800-FRANCIS**  
[www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org)

SAMPLE AD



Five Fantastic Reasons  
To Join Franciscan Youth

Franciscan Youth has five fantastic reasons for fine youth like you!

There's

Fun (1)      Fulfillment (2)      Frolicking (3),  
that's true.

But more than that, we're Faithful to the faith (4)

And do Far-reaching projects. too. (5)

*For more fantastic reasons to join Franciscan Youth,*

*pick up the phone and call,*

*Or e-mail -- that's fine, too.*

**Franciscan Youth USA**

(ages 14-26)

vocations@nafra-sfo.org

**1-800-FRANCIS**

**[www.franciscanyouthusa.com](http://www.franciscanyouthusa.com)**



## ONLY THE FEW ARE CALLED TO FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY



### ARE YOU?

If you love Francis of Assisi...

If you appreciate the world and all its gifts...

If you believe in peace and justice...

If your work can be a source of joy...

If you care about youth and their faith journey...

If family for you means commitment, love, joy,

Then, you are Franciscan.

AND, you may have a vocation to become a Secular Franciscan living as a married or single person in world.

Call or e-mail us today to learn more.

### 1 - 800 - FRANCIS

[vocations@nafra-sfo.org](mailto:vocations@nafra-sfo.org)

NOTE: An advertisement like the one above would be appropriate in your church bulletins or in the diocesan newspaper, but probably not in a local public paper.

## WRITING AND DESIGNING A NEWSLETTER

Your newsletter should reach several audiences:

1. Your local fraternity
2. Your regional fraternity
3. The Catholic community at large

Its purposes should be to:

1. inform your fraternity of upcoming events;
2. celebrate fraternity life by highlighting activities and fraternity members
3. educate and inspire fraternity to action
4. inform and educate the Catholic community at large

A well-planned newsletter incorporates and responds to all of the above purposes. It could be a one-sheet typed product or a 16-pager. Whatever its size, it should have a clean look and should be easy to read. Even the best-designed newsletter will lose impact if it is badly reproduced. Furthermore, no matter how pretty and well-designed a newsletter is, if it doesn't have interesting, informative content, it will lose its appeal.

Remember, the key element in the newsletter should be news.

### *Some do's and don'ts of quality newsletters:*

1. Keep your stories, messages and educational pieces short and upbeat. Don't exaggerate.
2. Use lots of member names.
3. Provide key information on all up-coming events: who, what, where, why, how, how much - verify that your information is accurate. Indicate if public is invited.
4. Update fraternity on some of the ministries of individual members. Briefly describe ministry; provide one or two quotes from the fraternity member providing perspective and insight into the ministry.
5. Provide brief insights, action plans or suggestions for ministries on at least one Commission per issue.
6. Allow your formation director to do a brief (two to three paragraphs) article on a formation topic.
7. Summarize an event that took place, include quotes from the attendees and presenter and photos.
8. Avoid long, gray columns of type. Use art, photos, boxes to break up your text. But, don't overdo graphics.
9. Only use bright and clear graphics.
10. In your masthead, remember to include: name of newsletter, name of fraternity and region, volume/ number of edition, date.

11. In your inside masthead, you should include the names of officers and editor and contact information and a brief mission statement: (e.g., to inform, to educate, to inspire members of SFO and to inform the community-at-large of the work of the Secular Franciscan Order). Also include a statement calling the fraternity members and others to contact the editor with any information they would like considered for publication. Include e-mail and mailing address where information can be sent.
12. Be consistent with the look of each of your newsletters, using the same masthead and basic set up. Also, be consistent on publication dates.
13. Try to keep your column widths consistent within the stories.
14. Avoid underlining. It makes reading difficult. For emphasis, you may want to boldface or italicize.
15. Vary the size of your photos.
16. When using photos, crop close to the subject you want to emphasize.
17. Limit the number of typefaces.
18. Be fair in coverage. Try to vary the names of members in your publication.
19. Don't reprint copyrighted cartoons, drawings or articles. It is illegal. You may, however, quote a story briefly, but identify your source.

Plan on printing extra copies and send to all fraternity members, churches for placement in vestibule, presidents of church groups, Catholic bookstores (ask them to place on counters), Catholic schools (ask principal to place in faculty rooms); Catholic school PTO presidents, diocesan offices. To save postage and printing costs, you may want to save the document as a PDF file and e-mail it to members who can receive e-mail. It might be more beneficial to print copies to be mailed to organizations and churches for display at their facility.

### **CREATING AN E-NEWSLETTER**

An E-Newsletter can be created by simply making a PDF file of your newsletter and e-mailing it to your audience. If you are creating your document in Microsoft Word, you can save your document into PDF format by going to your print page and select "Save as PDF." You must keep in mind, however, that not all readers have high-speed internet, nor do they have the capacity in their computers. Before you e-mail to them, we suggest that you offer the service and have them request it.

Another possibility is to save your document into HTML format for the web. In Microsoft Word, select "Save as Web Page" under your File Menu. This format will be easier to e-mail and easier for your readers.

## **BUILDING A WEBSITE**

Presence on the Internet is definitely the way of the future. More and more people are using the Internet for much of their information. For these reasons, every fraternity and region should seriously consider a website. Unless you have a friend or fraternity member who is well-versed in website design programs, probably the easiest way to create and build a website is to use Microsoft Word and to save your pages in HTML format (by simply saving as a web page in the File Menu).

### ***What to do first***

Once you have decided to establish a web page, you'll need to decide on an address for your website (eg. [www.name-of-fraternity.org](http://www.name-of-fraternity.org)) and to find a service on which your website will be housed. It will cost you from \$25 to \$75 to register your name. A service may cost between \$7 and \$15 per month, depending on the length of your commitment. You may also want to consider piggy-backing on your regional site. It may save you some money and it would benefit both the regional and your local traffic. Check with your regional minister to see if that is possible. You will also be able to get a link to your site from the NAFRA site. Go to the NAFRA site and e-mail for more information about that possibility. Some Catholic websites offer free or low-cost web pages (with limitations) for Catholic organizations.

### ***What to include on your web page***

Of course, you can be as elaborate and comprehensive as you would like, but, for the majority, we recommend that you start simply -- by providing information which is not available anywhere else -- material which is unique to your fraternity. It is not necessary to re-create everything about Francis and the Secular Franciscan Order. There are plenty of sites on-line which offer exciting, motivational material. Provide that information by linking to those interesting sites. Of course, much information can be found on your NAFRA site, [www.nafra-sfo.org](http://www.nafra-sfo.org). and you should should plan on linking to NAFRA from your home-page.

So, then, what should you include?

1. The name and location of your fraternity
2. The region to which you belong
3. The times that your fraternity meets
4. An e-mail or phone number for the reader to be able to contact you (only use a generic e-mail: e.g., [info@fraternity.com](mailto:info@fraternity.com), which can be forwarded to your personal e-mail)
4. A calendar of upcoming events and special announcements
5. Information about your fraternity -- history, vision
6. Special ministries to which you are committed
7. News about your fraternity and fraternity members -- professions, anniversaries, working on some project; pictures of members and recent events
8. Information about what the SFO is and how to get more information about it

9. Some fraternities may want to list fraternity members (We caution you against using phone numbers, addresses, private e-mails of your members)
10. Links to NAFRA, your regional fraternity, other interesting Franciscan sites or sites focusing on the Commissions
11. Use your website to provide more details on a story you have in your newsletter

Once you have decided what you want on your site, you'll need to write up the information and input it into Microsoft Word or whatever program you have decided to use (such as Microsoft Front Page and Adobe Go-Live).

Next, you need to decide what graphics you want to use. A picture of the location where you meet, a Franciscan symbol -- the Tau, San Damiano Cross, Francis, some graphic representing the name of your Fraternity -- are some possibilities.

Keep your design simple. It's easier to access, making it more appealing to your audience.

Save your document in HTML format.

Get information from your server on how to upload your site to the web.

Once you have uploaded your website to your server. Test it. Make certain that all pages are linked and that the pages come up smoothly, quickly and without any problems. If the document takes too long to come up, you may have too many graphics on the page. You may need assistance here with someone who is used to working with the web -- perhaps a family member or friend can help.

Once your website is running smoothly, promote it. Put it on your letterhead and business cards. Include it on the masthead of your newsletter. Write a brief story in your newsletter about it and what's new on it. Submit that same news article to your regional newsletter, diocesan paper, church bulletins and even your local newspaper.

One final note: Keep your website updated. There is nothing more disappointing than visiting your website only to find that the information is outdated.



## TAKING PHOTOS AND SELECTING THE RIGHT PHOTO

We are in the age of digital photography and the print media appreciates receiving photos in digital format. Your photos should be taken with a camera of 3.5 mega-pixels or more.

Photos are great to go with magazine articles, newsletters, newspaper stories (public or diocesan).

When taking the photo, make certain you have enough light and have a clear, well-balanced picture. Remove clutter around the subject of your photo. If it is an individual portrait shot, make certain hair is neat, collars and ties are straight and he/she has a natural, soft smile. If you are taking an event photo, focus in on a special specific action, possibly two or three people involved in an activity. If taking a long shot of activities, (e.g. to show a crowd), focus in on a handful of people and their faces. The rest of the photo will usually take care of itself.

Only clear, sharp photos should be sent to the media. Crop your photo (cut out what is unnecessary), if necessary. Identify all subjects in the photo in order, usually left to right. Include a brief sentence stating the what, when and where of the event.



If your photo is in digital format, first contact the newspaper, magazine, diocesan newspaper, newsletter editor; inform him/her that you have photos to go with the story; and ask for permission to submit it digitally.

### ***What happens if you don't have digital photos?***

Don't worry. Just use your 35 mm photo. Again, make certain that it is clear and balanced and your subject is in focus. Drop it off to the newspaper/magazine office or mail it to them with a copy of your news release.

### ***When to use photos with press releases***

A photo with a press release is typically used

1. To report on election of new officers
2. To highlight a key speaker at an event
3. To show the key or unusual features of an event (either before -- by using a previous year's photo, or after the event)

## **THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND HOW TO WORK WITH THEM**

Communication is always the key to effective public relations and publicity. Today, e-mail can help us reach any one, any time. However, as you may have experienced, we, as individuals, are bombarded with sometimes hundreds of e-mails daily. Can you imagine, then, how many e-mails pass the desks of editors by the hour? Experience has shown that, for the most part, editors do see and sometimes respond to e-mails. But, it is always a good practice to contact the editor or news director by phone. Remember -- be sensitive to deadlines at the paper and air time responsibilities for radio and TV. Always ask if it is a good time to talk. They'll be honest with you. If it is not a good time, offer to call back later and ask when a better time would be. They will appreciate your consideration.

## **STEP-BY-STEP COMPILING OF MEDIA/MAILING LISTS, UPDATING IT REGULARLY**

When organizing yourself to submit a news story, an updated media list is critical. We often forget the most obvious outlets for our news. It takes a little time to compile, but it will be used over and over again and will insure effective communications with the public and church members.

If you have internet access, it becomes very easy to get addresses and phone numbers. If not, use your telephone book for local media and just keep your eyes open at your church for magazines, newsletters.

On the internet, you may either do a general search in google.com or go to superpages.com. The general search may provide listings and websites. The advantage of a website may be that all information is on the webpages, including fax and e-mail.

If you choose to do a search on superpages.com., input the following information: For church bulletins: "Catholic churches", thirty mile radius, name of city from where you want your search to radiate. Be patient. It takes a few seconds. The results should provide the names of local churches, their address and telephone numbers. Copy and paste your information onto a text document for future reference.

Do the same for "newspapers", "weeklies", "radio stations", "television stations", "diocesan newspapers," "clubs and organizations," "Catholic magazines," and any other resource you may feel appropriate. \* Please note that newsletters may not be listed on superpages. In that field, your personal knowledge and that of other members of the fraternity may yield more information. (e.g. Some of your church organizations may have newsletters, but they may not have specific phone numbers, e-mails, etc.).

You're not done yet. Once you have compiled that information, call the church or media outlet and ask for the name of the bulletin editor, a fax number (if available) for news, an e-mail address for news items, PSAs and photos.



Names of editors and news directors will also be helpful when making your follow-up telephone calls. When contacting churches, you may also want to find out the names of the groups associated with the church, ways to contact them and a contact person.

When you have compiled the data, separate into mailing list and media list. Develop a data base for each. Media lists will include all media outlets -- general public media and Catholic media. Mailing lists may have clubs and club officers, government and church officials, friends of the fraternity, other fraternities, families of fraternity members. Set up your e-mail group and, if you have faxing software or a fax machine, input pertinent data.

Try to update your media and mailing lists at least yearly. Often, whenever there is a change of staff, there is a change in e-mail address. With clubs and organizations, officers change and, with that, the contact information may change completely.

### **WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR MEDIA AND MAILING LISTS**

You now have a comprehensive list of local/regional contacts that could be excellent outlets for your information. Depending on the project or event, your media list may or may not be a part of your mailing list. Use your mailing list for invitations, for sending copies of your newsletter, special letters to inform of some event or issue of common concern.

Your media list is obviously for information for public use. Keep in mind that each time you do a news release, you should evaluate which market you want to reach. Be discriminating in your choices. You want the media to notice and appreciate what you are sending them. If they keep getting information from you, which they ultimately throw away, they will not trust your news judgement. Sometimes, your public media is the venue you will find most effective; other times, you may want to send your information strictly to the Catholic audience (church bulletins, letters to Catholic groups, diocesan newspaper).

Many computers today have the capability to fax. If yours does, it becomes relatively easy to send your news release directly to the media by faxing.

E-mail is also an option, but **never** attach the story to the e-mail. Copy and paste it within the body of the e-mail. Repeat your headline in the subject line.

The advantage of faxing over e-mail is that a fax is a hard copy. Someone has to pick it up and look at it before making a decision on what to do with it. E-mails, on the other hand, save paper. However, the media gets hundreds of e-mails daily. It could get lost in the process. The advantage is that it is already in a usable format. In many cases, the editor could simply cut and paste into the publication. There's a better chance of getting the story in without much editing. Ideally, it is recommended that you duplicate your efforts by faxing and e-mailing, if both are available.

You may also mail the release (and photo) to your local media.

Always follow up with a phone call to the news desk to verify that the e-mail, fax or mail arrived to the right person. Be prepared to send it again, in case it got lost or thrown away.

Probably, the most effective way to reach your media is a personal visit to the office. Introduce yourself and offer your story in hard copy or offer to e-mail the story (and photo) to the appropriate editor after you have made your case in person. (It's harder for an editor to forget you and your news if he/she has met you in person.) Again, avoid deadline hours.

### **FOR VERY SPECIAL EVENTS, YOU MAY NEED A MEDIA KIT**

If you are having a very special event which you believe would be of interest to the media (especially diocesan newspaper), you may want to invite a reporter to observe. A media kit with background information would help the reporter do a comprehensive story.

Such events might be:

- An ecological trip to a marsh
- A workshop on a peace and justice issue
- A revealing presentation/panel discussion on issues relating to the workplace, ecology, family, peace and justice, etc.
- A well-known speaker
- The faith journey of a well-known sports figure

As you can see, such topics may have the strength to draw media attention and a reporter may want to stay to report on it. But, he/she may need background information. That is where your media kit becomes important.

#### ***How to prepare a media kit:***

1. Get folders and, if possible, paste the SFO logo on the cover.
  2. Compile background information about the topic to be discussed
  3. Ask your speaker for a brief biographical sketch
  4. Include a photo of the presenter (either printed or on CD)
  5. A flyer on what the SFO is.
  6. Key facts and statistics on the local fraternity (age, number of members, local officers) and national SFO (almost 16,000 members) (go to NAFRA-SFO.org)
  7. Names of other resources and websites where more information is available on the topic
- (Please note that these are just suggestions. Don't feel overwhelmed if there is information you can't obtain. Do the best you can. It's simply a courtesy to provide such information. It makes it easier for the reporter to do his/her job.)

# ADDENDUM

## PREPARING FOR SPECIAL EVENTS -- FROM START TO FINISH

The following are reprints of features which have already appeared in the TAU. They are reprinted in the following pages as a reminder of what to do -- taking an event or project from start to finish. In some cases, they provide sample releases that you can copy and substitute information for your news item.

## Promoting a Special Event

**P**rofessions. Twenty-five year anniversaries. Golden Jubilees. These are special events that should be planned lovingly -- and promoted. They celebrate the gifts we, as Secular Franciscans, give to God.

### THE CELEBRATION

The first rule is to plan well ahead for a celebration worth attending and reporting on.

1. Organize a service that moves the soul and portrays the Franciscan charism.
2. Prepare a printed program.
3. Following the service, have a PARTY. Cake, cookies, refreshments, a dinner. As Franciscans, that should be easy!
4. Take photos -- as a memory of the event and for a possible news story.

### INVITE GUESTS

1. Prepare invitations.
2. Make a list of family, church associates, pastor, community leaders. Invite town and city officials -- mayor, legislators -- whether you know them or not. They get many invitations, but they also like to go to events -- to meet people.
3. Mail invitations about 3 to 4 weeks before the event. Include a phone number where they can RSVP.

### INFORM MEDIA

Contact your local media and the diocesan newspaper. Prepare a news release announcing the event, including a brief biographical sketch of the individual(s) being honored. Use a special footnote in the release to invite the media, or, if they cannot attend, offer them the opportunity to interview the guest of honor and key fraternity leaders.

Don't forget church bulletins -- give the release to the church which your honoree attends. Ask the parish priest to include it in the bulletin about two to three weeks

before the event. Include a contact number.

Keep in mind that the media have priorities. They may not always respond. They will not publish your whole story. If you get a paragraph, celebrate!

Ideally, it would help if you could drop off the article with a photo of the honoree at the newspaper's office. If you mail, fax or e-mail the release, make sure you follow-up with a phone call. Ask the editor if he received the piece, if he has any questions, if he is considering running it. Again, offer the opportunity for an interview. Sometimes, editors will do a feature on a local citizen.

Be prepared to provide information about the Secular Franciscans, including your own fraternity.

Follow-up with another release after the event. Include some highlights and information about the guest of honor. Include a head-and-shoulders photo of the honoree and/or an action shot of the event.

Through all the planning and promoting of the event, always keep in mind that our celebration is a spiritual event -- a time when the Franciscan charism should shine.



Bernice Bannigan

## SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

ST. JOSEPH FRATERNITY  
SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IN THE UNITED STATES  
CONTACT: Bob or Mary Stronach, SFO, 315-796-9284.  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 17, 2004

### BERNICE BANNIGAN CELEBRATES 50 YEARS AS SECULAR FRANCISCAN

UTICA -- Bernice Bannigan of New Hartford was honored for her 50 years as a professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order on April 17 during a Golden Jubilee Celebration at St. Joseph-St. Patrick Church sponsored by St. Joseph Fraternity.

Officiating at the celebration was Fraternity Minister Karen Szczesniak, SFO, who presented Mrs. Bannigan with a Jubilee plaque. Offering special blessings were Fr. Richard Dellos, pastor of St. Joseph-St. Patrick, and Fr. Kevin Kenny, OFM Conv., spiritual assistant to the fraternity and director of the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Shrine in Fonda.

Born Bernice Gates in 1915, Mrs. Bannigan grew up in West Utica and was a long-time South Utica resident before moving to the Presbyterian Residential Community on Middle Settlement Road in New Hartford.

Professed in 1954, she served in a number of positions with St. Joseph Fraternity, including prefect (fraternity leader), librarian and infirmarian. Her long-time Franciscan ministry centered on charity work for the poor and shut-ins. In addition to the Secular Franciscan Order, Mrs. Bannigan was active in the Ladies Assembly of the Knights of Columbus, the Ladies Guild of Historic St. John's Church, and the Guild at St. Elizabeth Medical Center, where she had been a long-time volunteer.

The Secular Franciscan Order is a religious movement inspired by St. Francis of Assisi for lay people and clerics. ***(Substitute the underlined portions.)***



## Announcing your meetings and events

If you're a Secular Franciscan and have accepted the responsibility of publicity for your Fraternity or Region, you have accepted a ministry – one of outreach, one of opening doors to the Secular Franciscan Order. It is an awesome responsibility and one which will reap benefits for God and for the Church.

Think about it. You send out an announcement about a regular meeting of the SFO. (see example) and you touch the soul of someone whom God is calling as a Secular Franciscan.

Once your announcement is out there, don't worry, the Holy Spirit will direct our future Franciscan brothers and sisters to read and to consider.

It won't happen right away. We won't be swamped with inquiries.

You may remember that when you first heard His call, you may have fought it or you may not even have recognized it. It took time, prayer, convincing.

Your job is to assist the Hound of Heaven. Keep sending out the releases /announcements – every month, every meeting, every event. The day will come when our brothers and sisters will feel compelled to find out what this Secular Franciscan Order is all about. They will soon dis-

cover the charism of Francis and His directive to build His church.

### WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

1. Prepare a simple announcement on an upcoming event or meeting.
2. Research the Catholic publications and Christian stations in your area – their name, address, phone number, fax number (if you have a fax available) or e-mail (if you have access to e-mail).
3. Research the regular daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, radio stations, even TV stations, if they have a regular "calendar of

events" segment. It's especially appropriate for your local newspaper, if it has a weekly religion page.

4. research churches and regional Catholic organizations which have bulletins (and bulletin boards).

5. Mail, fax or e-mail your announcement at least two weeks before your event.

6. Follow-up with a phone call to verify that each outlet has received your announcement and make a personal plea to consider using it. This draws attention to your announcement and, as

they say, "the squeaky wheel..." Keep your request simple, direct and brief. Don't be surprised if a number of outlets say that they have not received your announcement. What they are saying is that they didn't see it or someone threw it out or it didn't seem worth saving. Offer to resend it. They'll often say yes and, if you have reached a decisionmaker (editor, news director), the "yes" means that they will try to use it.

January 4, 2004

For release: Immediate

Contact: Bob & Mary Stronach, 315-796-9284

### **Secular Franciscans to Meet; Iconography to be Discussed**

St. Joseph Fraternity of The Secular Franciscan Order in Utica will meet on Sunday January 18 at 2 p.m. at St. Joseph - St. Patrick's Parish Center on Colombia Street, Utica.

Highlighting the meeting will be a presentation by Diane Loveric about Iconography and praying the Icons. It will include a discussion on the Byzantine San Damiano Cross, a cross associated with the popular St. Francis of Assisi.

The gathering is open to the public. Anyone interested in learning more about the Secular Franciscans as a vocation for single and married individuals is also welcome.

NOTE TO MEDIA: You are welcome to join us for the presentation. It should be informative to many of your readers, listeners or viewers.

**(Only use the "note to media" when you have a program which would be unique and newsworthy.)**

*Please note that we recommend including the phrase "public is invited" to entice the media to use the release. If media think that it is a closed meeting, they may be less likely to use the item. Furthermore, only those people who are curious about religion and/or the order will come. Also note that the sample above has key phrases underlined. Please insert your information there.*

# Getting the Word Out

PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MINISTRY

by Bob & Mary Stronach, Public Relations Chairs

## How to Make

# Family

# of the

# Year

## Event

## Purposeful

*Promoting good family life should be the work of each fraternity and region. The Secular Franciscans have the perfect venue to inspire and educate families in our communities – the Regional Family of the Year Award.*

It is an honor for a family to be recognized as Regional Family of the Year, but, it can be much more -- a useful tool for education and for practicing the Family Commission. Society needs role-models for good family living, and we have them in abundance.

### *How do we get our members to nominate families?*

Annual meetings are the perfect venue to reach almost every fraternity. Take ten minutes to explain the importance of the award -- not just because it is a way of recognizing the efforts of our families, but also because we are desperate as a society to see that good family living is possible and worthwhile. Inform the ministers that we need to broadcast to our communities how families can live the Gospel. Then, pass out a brief preliminary nomination form and tell them that you will collect it within 10 minutes. Also allow them to take extra nomination forms back to their fraternities so their members can also nominate families. Remind the fraternities often about getting nominations back soon.

### *How do we get all the information about our nominated families?*

Once the preliminary forms are reviewed, the nominators should be contacted for additional information. The National Family of the Year nomination form can be an excellent guideline.

The families, themselves, should also be contacted by the Family Commission Chair. Additional information should be gleaned about family life, the how-tos of building family relationships, church and volunteer activities for all members of the family.

### *How do we honor our families of the year?*

The annual meeting should be planned so that one of the dinners or lunches will focus on the Family of the Year. Family members, friends, fraternity members, parish priests, volunteer organizations where members of the family serve could all be invited. (Who knows, perhaps, among the guests, will be others who have the vocation.) Provide flowers and a plaque or some other memento of the event.

### *How do we use our Family of the Year to help educate the community?*

An article announcing and profiling the family of the year for the region should be sent to media where the family lives. It should also be sent to the diocesan newspaper and the family's home parish. Included in the article should be some how-to advice on good family living.

If possible, and if the family is willing, interviews could be scheduled on local talk shows.

Benefits for such a campaign include: honoring a family for a job well done, promoting good family living in the community, good-will for the Secular Franciscans, and a greater understanding of the work of the SFO in relation to the Family Commission.