



Penobscot Bay Press  
Community Information Services

**Workshop on connecting with the news media**  
**MEHAF Community-Based Initiatives Learning Community Meeting**  
**May 24, 2016 Hallowell, Maine**  
**Presented by Penobscot Bay Press**  
**Nat Barrows 367-2200 natb@pbp.me**

**Purpose and overview**

The purpose of the workshop is to give the participants the perspective, knowledge and tools to effectively communicate and connect with appropriate media outlets to help them tell the story of your organization.

**Communication basics**

Human communication is a complicated process. To be effective, the person communicating needs to be able to understand some basic components of the communication process:

- Be clear on who is the audience.
- Know your objectives.
- Analyze the climate.
- Review the message.
- Be open to different opinions and ideas.
- Communicate in terms your audience can understand.
- Keep it simple.

Keep in mind that in face-to-face human communication, studies have shown that 58% of the message is conveyed in body language, 35% in the tone and only 7% in words.

Be creative, always.

**Understanding the news media**

News organizations, and the people who staff them, live in a world of constant deadlines, overload of information flow, with competing demands for time and attention along with the pressure and stress these demands create. They make judgments about the importance of the material they deal with, then spend their time and focus accordingly. They usually have limited, and sometimes no, space, especially in print media, for all the material they have in hand.

In our area the media organizations are closely connected with and care about the communities that they cover. Most individuals in media organizations care passionately about being fair, balanced, accurate and complete with the information they create and disseminate. This is why they are journalists.

**The communication process**

*Your media connector*

It is essential that **only one person** from your organization both creates your publicity and connects with media outlets. That person should: understand the mission, goals and purposes of the organization;

be able to write; be able to meet deadlines; be willing to connect with all appropriate people in the organization when gathering information for news release writing; have a passion for accuracy.

### *Know your message and audience*

Before starting to create publicity materials, the organization's media connector must know what the message is and what is the potential audience.

### *Know your potential media outlets*

Name of contact person, complete contact information, work hours, deadlines, particular interests, connectivity notes

### *Materials/means to tell the message*

News release, photo, app friendly, digital, social media

## **Writing the news release**

There are six elements that every news release should have in terms of content and how it appears:

**1. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** These words should appear at the beginning of the press release. They let an editor know that your news can be used right away.

**2. Contact Information:** Next list the name, title, telephone number and mail of the organization's media contact person, in case there are questions or an editor needs more information. Include your website with a link if possible.

**3. Headline:** Write a headline for your news.

**4. Dateline:** This should be the town your press release is issued from and the date issued.

**5. Lead Paragraph:** The first paragraph needs to grasp the reader's attention. This and the next paragraph or two should contain the relevant information of the story, such as the five W's (who, what, when, where, why).

- **Who:** First and last names, correctly spelled, of the people involved. Include appropriate personal and background information, such as titles or affiliations.
- **What:** A complete, succinct and factual description of the activity, event or situation.
- **When:** The date and day of the week (make sure they match) and time of the event. Include details on any upcoming deadlines such as registration or notification.
- **Where:** The proper name of and full directions to the venue where the event or activity will take place.
- **Why:** The reason for the event or activity.

Ask—and answer—all these questions before you send the press release.

*The headline and first paragraph should tell the story, with further paragraphs providing more explanation or information.*

**6. Text:** The main body of your press release where your message should fully develop. Use the inverted pyramid style of writing, where the most important information is near the beginning.

*(Examples of press releases start on page 5.)*

## **Mechanics of creating news copy: the do's and don'ts**

### *The Do's*

• The three rules of journalism: accuracy, accuracy, accuracy. Check, double check—everything. After writing and spellchecking your first draft, take a break for a while. Return to your material, then recheck before you hit the send button. Remember, it is your and your organization's credibility on the line.

- Make sure the information is newsworthy. Remember the key elements of news: prominence,

drama, human interest, localness, consequence, oddity, topical. Use quotes to incorporate opinion, subjective ideas, explain rationale for actions. Avoid trite quotes; purge clichés. Deal with the facts; tell the truth.

- Use clear, concise, vivid language. Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Always write in complete sentences. Avoid run-on sentences and long paragraphs. Make each word count. Check for proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- If appropriate, provide a “for more information” section with as much contact information as the reading public will need: name, phone number, e-mail address, website, mailing address.

- Lead time: Because of the volume of news media outlets receive, the earlier you can provide a press release, the better, giving editors some flexibility in when it can be printed and used. But do not send in the material too early so it gets lost in the flow. The closer you get to a deadline the more likely your material may not make the cut. If you miss the deadline, shame on you—it will not be used.

- Find out the technical requirements of the media outlet. **PBP requirements:** Send your information as a Microsoft Word document as an attachment to an email, or as simple text in the body of an e-mail. Or load onto a flash drive, CD or DVD and bring it to one of our offices.

### *The Don'ts*

- Avoid fancy language. If readers will need a dictionary to understand your release, you don't know your audience. The exclamation point is your enemy. It detracts from your credibility. If you must use an exclamation point, use only one. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions. If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness distracts from your story, so keep it concise.

- Never submit a press release IN ALL UPPER CASE LETTERS.

- Personal opinions. If you want to persuade readers to attend an event, don't write that it is hilarious or brilliant—editors will delete opinions. Opinions belong in letters to the editor and guest columns.

- Fancy formatting. Every newspaper has its own style, so keep it simple and let the editors worry about it. Capital letters or italics just make the editors' job more difficult.

- Extra material. Don't copy and paste large passages from websites. Again, think of your audience and the editor. If the editor has to plow through large segments of PR material to see if there is anything usable, he/she will be not be your friend. Do your own editing.

- Re-contacting. Unless you later find a **major** mistake, do not re-contact the editor for minor changes or rewrites. This creates a huge hassle and irritation. When you hit the send button, let it go.

### **Photos**

Photos are an important part of newspapers and website. If you think your press release merits a photo, talk to the editor about it. Sometimes it is possible to have a staff member take a picture. If a newspaper photographer cannot attend your event, take a photo yourself and include it with your story or release.

Always try for action photos rather than posed photos. Photos with people in them, particularly people's faces, are usually given preference. Include the caption information with your press release, including listing people in rows from left to right. Keep the caption information short and to the point of just explaining the key elements in the photo. Give credit by naming the photographer.

Find out what the media outlet wants for photo submission. Send photos with your release via email, or load on a CD, DVD or flash drive and bring it to the media outlet office. **Penobscot Bay Press requirements are:** All digital photos must have at least 150 pixels per inch (300 ppi preferred), be at least 5 inches across (7 inches preferred), and must be in TIFF, JPEG, EPS, Photoshop or PDF format. All JPEG compression should be “high quality.” Images from low-resolution cameras are generally unusable unless they are 3 megapixels or higher. We do not take images off websites for any of our information products.

## **Creating and submitting opinion pieces**

Many, but not all, print publications accept Letters to the Editor and opinion columns with various labels like Guest Columns and Another View Columns. Policies vary widely from company to company. The best approach is to ask your contact at the media company for copies of their policies and parameters.

For your reference, following are the **Penobscot Bay Press policies**.

### **Letters and Guest Columns Policy**

Expressions of opinion by our readers are a vital part of this community newspaper. Provocative or critical comments are an important part of free speech in a community and are welcome, but should be primarily aimed at problems and issues, not personalities.

Letters to the editor should be short, focused and not advertisements. Letters must be exclusive to our publications. We do not accept third party letters. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters from a group must include a signature by a spokesperson. Length is limited to 350 words. Guest columns are intended as longer pieces (700 words maximum) that present new information and can elaborate on particular positions. All material will be published at the editor's discretion and edited for clarity, inappropriate language and length.

Material submitted will not be returned. There is no guarantee of publication. All letters and columns must be signed in original by the writer, include address and daytime telephone number, and be received no later than 1 p.m. on Tuesday to be considered for same-week publication. E-mail to [opinions@pbp.me](mailto:opinions@pbp.me) or mail to P.O. Box 36, Stonington ME 04681.

All letters, columns and regular features on our editorial page are the statements and views of the writers and are not necessarily those of this newspaper.

### **Writing effective letters to the editor**

Following these tips will help increase the likelihood that a letter to the editor will be published.

- Letters stand the best chance of being published when they are about a topic that was in the news recently.
- Refer to an article found in the paper. Focus your subject matter on topical community issues and concerns.
- Personalize your letter. Tell why the issue affects you personally and how it impacts the community, the country, etc.
- Keep the letter short and concise. The length is limited to 350 words.
- Avoid rants. Instead, include facts and examples that don't stray from the original subject. Eliminate jargon and try to reduce the number of buzzwords so that anyone reading the letter can understand it easily. Cite reliable sources for your claims and facts.
- When you sign your letter, make sure to include your full name, home address and daytime phone number.

## **Other media**

Some digital products accept personal blog materials. Social media, radio and TV have a different set of user parameters. These and more are the subjects of Faith's presentation.

## **Examples of press releases**

The four examples that follow are press releases received for publication by Penobscot Bay Press. They range from excellent to unusable. We use these as examples and teaching tools only, with absolutely no intention to disparage or disrespect these organizations in any way.

**Example 1:** *Excellent. Well-written, succinct, all information included. A good example that demonstrates the principles of this workshop.*

For immediate release

Contact: Robyn Sealander (robyn@sealanderarchitects.com or 669-2833)

Brooklin Youth Corps Has New Coordinator

BROOKLIN —Suzzi Nielsen, a teacher who now works at a substitute at George Stevens Academy, is the new coordinator for the Brooklin Youth Corps. This year's BYC season begins June 29 and runs through August 20, Mondays through Thursdays.

The youth corps is a town-sponsored summer program through which Brooklin teenagers earn minimum wage doing chores for homeowners as well as community service projects. The chores range from weeding to wood stacking.

Nielsen works currently as a substitute teacher at GSA, and also worked there last year as a part-time science teacher. Prior to that, she worked as a teacher at the Penobscot School. She worked earlier as a substitute teacher for RSU 24 and as the Title One Math teacher at the Bucksport Middle School. Her resume also includes work for the USDA Forest Service, as well as the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Created in 1997 by Brooklin selectmen and citizens to give teens a summertime activity and a chance to try out the working world, the BYC is subsidized by annual fund donations, grants, and funds voted at town meeting. A grant from the Maine Farmland Trust in Blue Hill helps to fund the BYC's work on a garden the program shares with the Brooklin School. The teens also raise funds for the program through projects such as the chicken barbecue at the town's Fourth of July celebration, a bottle drop in Brooklin village, a stand at the Thursday afternoon farmers market and other projects.

Employers who can pay are billed for the teens' time at minimum wage, while program funds cover the teenagers' social security and other employment taxes as well as the costs of coordinator salary, transportation, and equipment.

The BYC can be contacted at P.O. Box 141, Brooklin, ME 04616, or via its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/BrooklinYouthCorps> or by calling 207-266-2946.

-end-

contact:

Robyn Sealander, AIA

Principal

Sealander Architects

79 Main Street Suite C

Ellsworth ME 04605

207.669.2833

**Example 2:** *Good, well-written, but very long. While there is plenty of information about the events Haystack wants to promote, there is not a headline and no photo captions. Contact information for the editor is missing from this example, but it is possible that it was included in the original email and is no longer available in our files.*

DEER ISLE —Haystack's is proud to host Hand-Crafted on Deer Isle: Work by Five Furniture Makers, from July 19 to September 2nd, 2015 at the school's Center for Community Programs. The exhibition highlights five of the

island's skilled and creative makers in wood. All long-time Deer Isle residents, several of the artists were born and raised here, and others settled in Deer Isle to join a creative community of boat-builders, blacksmiths, carpenters, and other working artists. The exhibition will feature work from Bruce Bulger, Eben Foss, Julie Moringello, Bill Turner, and Geoff Warner.

Underwriting support for Handcrafted on Deer Isle: Work by Five Furniture Makers provided by Betsy Rowland.

### **Evening Programs in Haystack's Gateway Auditorium**

Haystack Mountain School of Crafts' Summer Evening Programs Series includes presentations by Session instructors - renowned artists and leaders in their disciplines - and visiting artists who will share their work, ideas, and influences. At the close of each workshop, Haystack hosts a self-guided Studio Walk-Through around Haystack's campus, and an End-of-Session Auction, that includes works by Session instructors and students who have donated work to benefit Haystack's Scholarship Programs. The Session 3 Studio Walk-Through and End-of-Session Auction will take place on Thursday, July 30, at 7:30PM on Haystack's campus and in Gateway Auditorium.

### **Artist Talks by Haystack Faculty**

Haystack's instructors will each present their work to the public, highlighting their unique artistic practices. Faculty members are invited by Haystack to teach, and are each considered masters of their craft.

On Monday, July 20, Alleghany Meadows (clay) and Evan Christopher (visiting musician) will share their work.

Alleghany Meadows is a studio potter based in Carbondale, Colorado. He is a long-time instructor and board-member of Haystack, and the co-founder of several galleries. Evan Christopher is a New Orleans-based clarinetist and composer with a "contemporary, early jazz" style—critics have called his respect for the music traditions of New Orleans, "a triumph, joining the present seamlessly to a glorious past." During his residency, Evan Christopher will perform at opening night - July 31 - for the 15th annual jazz festival hosted by Opera House Arts in Stonington.

On Tuesday, July 21, Jeannet Iskandar (glass) and Raissa Bump (metals) will share their work. Jeannet Iskandar arrives from Ebeltoft, Denmark, to teach glassblowing at Haystack this Session. Her work has been collected and shown in museums and galleries across the US and Europe. Raissa Bump is known for both intricate, one-of-a-kind pieces and beautiful edition collections, and has received grant funding to educate her maker community on creative work-safety and health.

On Wednesday, July 22, Sue Gosin (papermaking/book arts) and Cynthia Thompson (papermaking/book arts) will share their work. Sue Gosin is the co-founder of the Dieu Donne Papermill, and has developed curriculum and designed studio programs in several universities. Her artist books have been exhibited and collected by leading institutions. Cynthia Thompson is a master book- and paper-maker whose work has been shown and collected all over the South. She explores Japanese and Western-style traditions of hand-papermaking and hand-bookbinding, in combination with contemporary papermaking and fabrication techniques.

On Thursday, July 23, Mary Anne Jordan (textile/surface design) and Russell Baldon (wood) will share their work. Mary Anne Jordan makes quilts that use her own uniquely dyed, printed, and painted textiles. Her work is shown across the midwest and Michigan. Russell Baldon is an artist who has studied and worked with some of the country's leading furniture makers. His work focuses on the ways that everyday objects communicate and how the forms delivering this information influence our perception.

On Monday, July 27, Haystack's Session 3 Technical Assistants will share their work. Haystack's Technical Assistants are also each artists in their own right, and are each nominated by Haystack or by a Session instructor, to aid in leading classes and facilitating Haystack's students work in the studios.

On Tuesday, July 28, Haystack's Staff, many of whom are also working artists, will present their work. Haystack's staff and technical assistants are accomplished craftspeople who work in a wide range of media.

### **Haystack Mountain School of Crafts**

is an international, non-profit, studio program in the arts offering six one- and two-week studio workshop Sessions to craft-makers and visual artists of all skill levels, led by prominent faculty artists. Haystack also offers a residency program, conferences, a visiting artist series, spring and fall workshops specifically for Maine residents, and workshop series and mentorship programs for Maine high school students. [www.haystack-mtn.org](http://www.haystack-mtn.org)

### **Tour Haystack**

Tours of Haystack’s historic campus are available every Wednesday at 1 pm, through September 2. The award-winning campus, designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes, is a series of shingled buildings cascading down the hillside overlooking Jericho Bay and the Deer Isle Thoroughfare. Suggested \$5 donation to support Haystack’s scholarships and studio improvements.

Haystack’s Evening Programs Schedule is posted online at: [www.haystack-mtn.org/events/summer-evening-program-series](http://www.haystack-mtn.org/events/summer-evening-program-series). Request a catalog or printed evening programs schedule by calling 207-348-2306, or e-mail [haystack@haystack-mtn.org](mailto:haystack@haystack-mtn.org).

[End]

**Example 3:** *Usable, but confusing because of the two sets of start times, which required a call to confirm. In addition, note that the request was for Coming Events only, but the editor deemed it important enough to also run as news.*

Press Release:

Please put this event news in the February 25 and the March 3 issues in “Coming Events”

Sunday, March 6

Penobscot Democratic Caucus

Sunday, March 6, 2:00 PM

Penobscot Community School Gym

1:00-2:00PM Unregistered and Unenrolled (aka. Independent) voters may register as Democrats and participate in the caucus.

For more info, Caucus Convenor Maggie Williams 326-8920

**Example 4:** *This press release is unusable as presented because there is no date for the event. It was received via our website.*

Email                      [chrissy@bluehillheritagetrust.org](mailto:chrissy@bluehillheritagetrust.org)

Phone Number            (207) 374-5118

Town of residence        Blue Hill

What type of content are you submitting? Press Release

Message

Join the Blue Hill Heritage Trust & Tap into local syrup enthusiast Tim Laflam, as he leads a workshop on tapping maple trees and shares his expertise on syrup making! We will begin at the Blue Hill Heritage Trust Office for a quick talk on tapping trees, and then head out into the woods for some hands on practice! No equipment needed, dress warmly! Please register by contacting our office at [info@bluehillheritagetrust.org](mailto:info@bluehillheritagetrust.org) or by calling (207) 374-5118.