

Best Practices for Publicizing Your Conversation Project Program

Hosting a Conversation Project program is a great way for your organization to reach new audiences and provide opportunities for individuals in your community to connect with public scholars, provocative ideas, and, most important, each other, through idea-driven dialogue. A clear public relations plan is *essential* for developing an audience for your Conversation Project program.

Oregon Humanities (OH) has provided materials to help you get started with your publicity efforts. These materials are also available for download on the OH website at oregonhumanities.org. If you prefer hard copies, please contact Annie Dubinsky, Program Coordinator, at a.dubinsky@oregonhumanities.org or (503) 241-0543, ext. 116. (Please note: the OH logo and scholar photographs are only available in digital format!)

Oregon Humanities will provide the following materials:

- OH logo to use in all print and web materials (available on the OH website beginning October 1, 2009)
- Press release template to be completed and reproduced on your organization's letterhead
- Scholar-facilitator profile to use in your introductory remarks at the program
- .jpeg image of the Conversation Project scholar-facilitator to use in print and web materials

Newspapers, printed calendar listings, and broadcast public service announcements

Ideally, print and broadcast media should receive press releases *between four and six weeks prior* to the date of the event. Please remember to include local college and high school newspapers on your mailing list to reach young adults in your community. Newspaper articles, calendar listings, and public service announcements often directly quote from press releases, so proofread your materials with care and make sure the time and date, location, and contact information are accurately and clearly stated.

Research your local media online or by phone to find out who should receive press materials because it's most effective to address them to a specific person. Find out if your contacts prefer to receive hard copies or e-mail. For e-mail correspondence, copy and paste the press release into the body of the message. The headline of the press release should also serve as the e-mail's subject line. Several days after you send the press release, it's good practice to call your contacts to confirm that they received your materials and ask if you can answer any questions. Remember that Conversation Project scholar-facilitators are happy to give phone interviews for a feature article so, if appropriate, this can be offered as an option. Media contacts are also welcome to call Oregon Humanities Program Coordinator Annie Dubinsky at (503) 241-0543, ext. 116, to learn more about the Conversation Project and other OH programs.

Posters and fliers

We suggest that you create a poster, flier, or handbill to help publicize Conversation Project events. Effective materials should include basic event details (i.e., day, date, and time of the program); the location, including building name and address; the title of the program and name of the scholar-

facilitator; a photo or other image; your group's name and logo; OH's logo; and a contact name and phone number or e-mail address for more information. It should also include the following statement: "This program is made possible by the generous support of Oregon Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Oregon Cultural Trust."

Libraries, city halls, recreation centers, churches, grocery stores, community centers, schools, and coffee shops often have bulletin boards where you can place posters and fliers about your Conversation Project program. Before posting your material, be sure to ask if a manager will need to review and date it before posting.

Advertisements

Some newspapers donate advertising for community events, and others charge lower advertising rates for nonprofit organizations; ask about the policy at your local newspapers. Their production department may be able to help you design an ad. The best time to run an ad is the week before the program.

Websites, online calendar listings, and e-mail lists

The web is one of the most effective tools for getting the word out about your upcoming Conversation Project program. In addition to your own website, ask your city and county government, local libraries, schools, civic and special interest groups, and Chamber of Commerce to post information about your program on their websites. Don't forget to post the event on local online event calendars (e.g., craigslist and media websites) and send notices to topic-based email lists or organizations whose work is related to the topic of the program you are hosting.

Other Outreach Tips

- A personal invitation (by mail or e-mail) or phone call is the best way to let special contacts and friends know about your program.
- Tap into your local network of partner organizations. Ask if local civic, religious, and social groups will announce your upcoming program at their meetings or services and in their print and web materials. Many nonprofit organizations also may be willing to include information about an upcoming program in their print and web materials.
- Find out if your town has a marquee that's available for publicizing community events.
- Ask your local library or community center to make a display about the topic of your program or create a small take-away bookmark publicizing the event.
- Remember to publicly acknowledge the support of the local organizations that have supported and assisted with the program.
- Don't forget to include copies of your public relations materials with the host evaluation form that you'll submit to Oregon Humanities after the program.