

2012

GFRMRC Communications Plan



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Strategic Plan

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GREATER FALL RIVER MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS
PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN
RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS
DECEMBER 1, 2012

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Greater Fall River Medical Reserve Corps (GFRMRC) public relations plan is to recruit new members into the organization in order to fulfill the mission statement and mantra. The mission statement is “To identify and prepare individuals who want to volunteer their time to respond in the event of a medical emergency in the community.” The mantra is “Be informed. Be prepared. Be a volunteer.” These objectives are infused into the public relations plan and reinforced through public relations techniques.

The GFRMRC operates with a 100% volunteer workforce. Therefore, recruiting members is a top priority for the efficiency and survival of the organization. Currently, senior citizens constitute 70% of the volunteer workforce. This poses a potential problem because as these seniors get older, sicker, and pass away, there could be a significant drop in the number of volunteers. Public relations techniques must be implemented to attract younger members that will invigorate and add sustainability to the organization.

Another problem for the organization is the term “medical” is used in the title. Many potential volunteers think they cannot participate because they do not have a medical background. Although the GFRMRC needs medical personnel to administer Flu Injections, perform health screenings, and provide medical assistance during a real emergency, non-medical personnel are just as important. Non-medical personnel serve as clerical support, interpreters, transportation, child care, food prep, pet handlers, public information, and shelter support. Since the organization will not change the title, the messaging in the public relations techniques must also emphasize that non-medical personnel are needed.

In summary, this plan will attack the following problems.

- ✚ Recruit new members
- ✚ Recruit younger members that will add vitality and sustainability (must be at least 18)
- ✚ Emphasize in the messaging that non-medical personnel are also needed

II. Research

In order for me to craft an effective public relation's plan to generate new volunteers; I had to research the reasons why the current volunteers participate in the program. I conducted interviews with volunteers from the Greater Fall River Medical Reserve Corps and other local non-profit organizations. I also researched articles on the internet.

My interviews within the GFRMRC revealed that most of the volunteers were very active in the community. Most expressed that volunteering added meaning and purpose in their life. They volunteered for other organizations and several held leadership positions. There was a spirit of altruism and a commitment to public service. They were confident that their involvement would cultivate a better community.

The statistic showed that 70% of the GFRMRC volunteers were senior citizens. Some of the older volunteers stated that the work made them feel younger. According to the Corporation for National & Community Service, "Those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life."¹ The younger and middle aged volunteers were investing more of their time into their careers and did not have as much discretionary time for volunteer work.

¹ <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/volunteering/benefits.asp>

In some instances, the volunteers had to choose which organization would receive their free time. This is when the organization's benefits came into play. This seemed apparent whether a volunteer was from the GFRMRC or another organization. Many volunteers want to feel like they are receiving benefits for donating their time.

A big draw for the GFRMRC is that they provide free training to their volunteers. The training was very broad from CPR training, pet handling, to utilizing social media during times of disaster. Many volunteers felt the free training would help them personally and professionally.

The medical personnel also received continuing education units (CEU's). This saved them money for courses they would normally have to pay out of pocket. Retired medical personnel found this incentive attractive because the free training helped them maintain their medical licensing.

Nursing students are recruited from Bristol Community College. The GFRMRC entices them by offering them networking opportunities as they pursue a medical career. The experience looks great on their resume because it demonstrates that they have been active and involved in the medical field while they were attending school.

The organization is sanctioned through the Surgeon General's Office and recognized by the Federal Government. All applicants must pass a CORI check. This offers credibility to the organization. Most of the volunteers had a sense of pride in the organization and felt like they had been specially selected.

I learned some key themes from my research. They are the following.

The GFRMRC offers benefits to its volunteers.

- ✚ The training is free.
- ✚ Medical personnel can earn CEU's for most of the training.
- ✚ There is a wide variety of training available for medical and non-medical personnel.

The GFRMRC is well respected in the community.

- ✚ The GFRMRC is recognized by the Federal Government and falls under the umbrella of the Surgeon General.
- ✚ The GFRMRC participates in many community events.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is prepared for a disaster.

This messaging can be captured in the public relation's plan by incorporating these themes in graphics, photography, and video.

III. Project Summary

The GFRMRC is a community-based group of volunteers who can serve during local health emergencies or disasters and assist with local public health or community needs throughout the year. Large scale disasters and emergencies quickly overwhelm the emergency response systems. Volunteers from the MRC are qualified, trained and credentialed to help in a structured response. Locally, they work with EMA (Emergency Management Agency), the Fire and Police Departments and Highway Departments. Their mission is to train and pre-credential volunteers to assist in an emergency.

Their motto is: **Be Informed. Be Prepared. Be a Volunteer.**

The MRC maintains a public presence by participating in community events. Some of these events are Somerset's Public Safety Day and Fall River's Disability Awareness Day. They offer free Annual Flu Clinics and health screenings including drills for emergency preparedness. The Greater Fall River Medical Reserve Corps encompasses Somerset, Swansea, Fall River, and Westport

The goal of the GFRMRC is to recruit 5% more volunteers who will serve as medical and non-medical personnel. The objectives of the plan is to utilize public relations tactics and techniques to meet the goals of increasing the number of volunteers

Press Conference:

One objective is to hold a [press conference](#) in January at the Fall River Government Center. The GFRMRC should collaborate with local government officials and public health organizations to make a formal announcement that the Director Alvin McMahon will be stepping down and the new leader will be taking his place. This will be a perfect opportunity communicate short and long term goals to its publics and solicit for new volunteers.

The press conference will be broadcast on YouTube. With the placement of strategic keywords, the press conference could have a global presence. It can later be distributed to local Public Access Stations and linked to embed to social media and the website. Twitter can be used in real time. Local radio station WSAR often covers press conferences live. An event such as this will renew the public confidence that the new leadership will provide the same level of service.

Key Messages (Applicable to all target publics)

- ✚ A change in leadership is taking place.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is prepared to assist you during a crisis.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is active in the community.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is looking for volunteers like you.

Target Publics and Specific Messages

A. Internal Publics/Audiences

1. Volunteers: We have a change in leadership and we need your support and dedication during this transition.
2. Families: You can be confident that your family member is volunteering for a worthy organization and is performing an important service to others.
3. Clients: (Members of the community that have dealt with the organization in the past) You can be confident that the organization will still provide a professional quality of service with the new leadership

B. External Publics/Audiences

1. Donors: This is professional organization that is worthy of my support.
2. Media: This is a professional organization providing a high level of service to the community by providing free flu clinics, health screenings, and training to serve us during a crisis. I would like to publicize their efforts to inform the community.
3. Prospective Volunteers – I have a medical degree and I would like to assist this worthy organization. I do not have a medical background but I can assist them as a non-medical personnel and gain experience.

Poster:

A poster could be designed with the objective of attracting new volunteers. The poster would capture the patriotic theme and display the logo and mantra. Photos would document some of the different types of training that is free to its volunteers. Graphics in print would state that the organization is looking for both medical and non-medical personnel.

The poster would be launched in February. It would be posted in public buildings like the Government Center and Town Halls where there is a lot of traffic. Since 70% of its members are senior citizens, it would be good to target the Council on Aging in Fall River, Somerset, Swansea and Westport. Posting it in hospitals would attract the medical community and let them know that they can receive CEU's for the free training.

Key Messages (Applicable to all target publics)

- ✚ The GFRMRC has highly trained personnel.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is active in the community.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is looking for volunteers.

Target Publics and Specific Messages

A. Internal Publics/Audiences

1. Volunteers: We have free training available for both medical and non-medical personnel.
2. Families: Your family member is well trained and ready for a crisis.
3. Clients: (Members of the community that have dealt with the organization in the past) You can be confident that this organization trains its volunteers for emergencies and community events.

B. External Publics/Audiences

1. Donors: This organization provides excellent training that is worthy of my support.
2. Media: This organization provides free training and I would like to publicize this opportunity to the community.

3. Prospective Volunteers – I have a medical degree and I would like to take the free training so that I can earn CEU's and keep up with my medical licensing. I do not have a medical background but I can improve my professional skills by taking advantage of the free training.

Video Public Service Announcement

The GFRMRC was selected by the National Headquarters to appear in a national Public Service [Announcement](#) promoting the 10 year anniversary of the organization and promoting the services that they provide to the community. I was given the task of coordinating the media for that day. I also had contributed photographs and videography to be edited in a local version.

Although the video is pitched from the perspective of the national organization which is managed under the Surgeon General, the message is that there are volunteer opportunities in your local area.

The Medical Reserve Corps produced the video to be broadcast on cable networks and during Joan Lunden's Business Review. Once the editing has been finalized, it will be available on YouTube, and DVD's will be available for the local public access stations. The local version will also be distributed in the same manner. A radio version could be submitted to the local radio station WSAR. They often broadcast audio PSA's for local non-profits and mention them during their public affairs programs.

Key Messages (Applicable to all target publics)

- ✚ The GFRMRC has highly trained personnel who are prepared for a disaster.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is active in the community.

- ✚ The GFRMRC is looking for volunteers.
- ✚ The GFRMRC is recognized by the Surgeon General's Office.

Target Publics and Specific Messages

A. Internal Publics/Audiences

1. Volunteers: You are part of a nationally recognized organization and you have been trained to serve the community during times of emergency. You are contributed to your community's health.
4. Families: Your family member is well trained and ready for a crisis.
5. Clients: (Members of the community that have dealt with the organization in the past) You can be confident that this organization trains its volunteers for emergencies and community events.

2. External Publics/Audiences

4. Donors: This organization is prepared for a disaster. This organization is educating the community about their health by providing free flu clinics and health screenings. This organization is managed by the Surgeon General and is worthy of my support.
5. Media: This organization is sanctioned by the Surgeon General. This organization is ready to assist during an emergency and provides resources to educate families about their health. I would like to publicize these free services to the community.
6. Prospective Volunteers – I have a medical degree and I would like to assist this organization and serve my community. I do not have a medical background but the PSA said my services are needed also.

IV. Key Messages (applicable to all target publics)

- Bullets of messages as necessary

V. Target Publics and Specific Messages

VI. Inventory of Current Public Relations Resources

I performed an inventory of the GFRMRC's current public relations resources they have utilized in the past year. Some of these public relations techniques must be upgraded and others are working effectively.

Website

The GFRMRC currently hosts a website at <http://www.bristolcountymrc.org/index.html>. The website was launched in 2006 and unfortunately it looks outdated. The content provides rich information and facts about the organization but it lists recent activities in the year 2008.

Although the GFRMRC has limited resources, I strongly suggest that the organization hires a web designer to bring this humanitarian organization into the digital age. The website should be a centralized public relations source for information about volunteer opportunities, free training, improving public health in the community, and updated information during times of crisis. Information about preparing for several different types of emergencies should be available on the site.

The public relations plan of recruiting new members should resonate on the web pages. Photos and testimonials from current volunteers should demonstrate that volunteering teaches you new skills and is fun and rewarding. The objective is to get the viewer to want to join the organization by showing real people doing interesting things.

The first problem is that when you Google search the organization it is ranked number 8. Using search engine optimization, key words could get more visitors to the site. Video links and other interactivity would keep visitors on the site longer and direct them to social media links.

Social Media

Last year, the organization launched a Facebook and a Twitter account. A major criticism is that they are not updated. The demographics show that 70% of the volunteers are senior citizens. Effectively utilizing social media would recruit younger volunteers which would help sustain the organization long-term. The twenty something year old generation spends a lot of time using social media and they share the content and give feedback.

Facebook gives the organization the opportunity of posting photos of their volunteers training and participating in community events such as flu clinics, EDS Drills, health screenings, and public safety events. The organization currently has 60 likes. There are approximately 250 volunteers. They should be able to generate more likes by sending the messaging to their friends on Facebook and sharing content with other non-profit organizations.

Twitter is a great tool during times of crisis. This was demonstrated during the Arab Spring and the fall of the Egyptian Government in March 2011. Even when the Egyptian government was censoring the communications, and silencing the media, social media not only helped organize the protests, but broadcast the fall of the Egyptian government. Social media apps on cell phones turned average protesters into a citizen journalists. Even when phone communication is unavailable, text messaging is still possible.

I assisted the GFRMRC in broadcasting their press conference from the town hall on YouTube. I will continue to encourage them to utilize this free service to broadcast training and to create PSA's to recruit new members and promote their social influence in the community. Improvements on the Website and

updating the social media will foster greater levels of trust and reciprocity in the community.

Managing social media can become a full time job. I propose that the organization recruit a student intern to handle the social media. A student concentrating in Communication, Journalism, Public Relations, Professional Writing, Advertising or Marketing would be well suited for this position. The student would gain valuable experience and networking opportunities interning with this credible organization.

Newsletter

The organization currently produces a quarterly newsletter sent to its volunteer via e-mail and posted on their website. This source of information effectively reaches its internal publics. The articles are professionally written and inform the volunteers about upcoming training and public events. I strongly recommend that they continue with the newsletter.

Media Relations

The GFRMRC has a good relationship with the local media and has been featured in many positive newspaper articles over the past few years. One of the reasons for this positive press is that the organization has strong leadership and management.

Alvin McMahon has been with the organization for five years and has served as the Director for four of those years. Alvin has been the recipient of Bank 5's Hometown Hero Award, the Fall River Chamber of Commerce's Community Service Award, and official citations from the Massachusetts Senate, House of Representatives, the Somerset VFW, and the Somerset Selectmen. Alvin will be stepping down from his leadership position in December. The public must feel confident that the new leadership will provide the best service during

times of disaster. This can effectively be communicated through a press conference in January to inform the public about the change in command.

VII. Participants in Plan Development

Planning Group Attendees/Team Members (describe scope of work, timeframe etc.)

- List names (and job title/area if appropriate).

VIII. Objectives and Proposed Activities

Objective 1

Statement of objective

Activity	Budget	Deadline	Objective
Press Conference YouTube Public Access Television Stations	250.00	January	Announce the retirement of Alvin McMahon and the appointment of the new director.
Redesign Website	1,000.00	January	Redesign website to make more interactive using SEO
Poster		February	Display poster in public buildings to interest potential volunteers, promote free training, emphasize the need for both medical & non-medical personnel
Video PSA YouTube Public Access Television Stations Link on Website		February	Launch Video PSA to solicit for volunteers & emphasize that the GFRMRC is improving public health in the community by providing flu clinics & health screenings
Radio PSA		March	Launch Video PSA to solicit for volunteers & emphasize that the GFRMRC is improving public health in the community by providing flu clinics & health screenings

<p>News Release to Announce Annual Training</p> <p>Fall River Herald News Fall River Spirit Somerset Spectator</p>		<p>March</p>	<p>Announce free annual training to try and recruit new volunteers, emphasize the need for medical and non-medical personnel</p>
<p>Launch New Social Media Strategy</p> <p>Find Student Intern to manage social media</p>	<p>Free</p>	<p>March</p>	<p>Public Relations Plan already launched, student intern updates social media to reinforce public relations plan</p>

End of Draft