PresenTense

October 2003

the newsletter for CAP public affairs officers

Civil Air Patrol
Strategic Communications

Inside

NEW!
CAP IN THE NEWS

In this new monthly feature, find out which national media outlets are covering CAP. Page 2

NAVIGATING THE NEW HEADQUARTERS WEB SITE

Are you lost when you log on to the new headquarters Web site? Learn more about the site design, upcoming features and ways to navigate while the transition from old to new is in the works. Page 2

NEW!
ONE-PAGE CASE STUDIES FOR PA TRAINING

Beginning this month, use these quick, one-page front & back, easy-to-reproduce lessons for your own PA training. Page 3

PLUS

☑ **Web sites for PAOs**
☑ **Latest CAP stats**
☑ **How to get PA seminars from the 2003 CAP National Conference**

***PresenTense* is the official monthly publication for public affairs officers of the Civil Air Patrol, and is produced by Melanie LeMay in the Strategic Communications and Planning Directorate, CAP National Headquarters, Maxwell AFB, Ala. All copy is written by Melanie LeMay unless otherwise noted.**

Is there something you'd like us to cover in *PresenTense*? Contact Melanie LeMay at mlemay@capnhq.gov or call her at (334) 953-5320.

Photo by Thomas Traver

Worth 10,000 words? Oregon WIng PAO Lt. Col. Tom Traver uses the public relations skills he's acquired over the years to serve other volunteer organizations as well as CAP. Traver took this photo Aug. 16, 2003 during an early-morning apartment fire in Portland, Ore. when he was assisting with PR and photography for the Oregon Trail Chapter of the American Red Cross. His photo, which later ran in the Red Cross *Oregon Trail Magazine*, shows incident response team leader Michale Sacamanto receiving a hug from a two-year-old who lost his home and all his belongings in the fire. Michale had just given the child a stuffed toy, drawing a smile from his mother, left.

Public relations in a media-driven world

As Oregon Wing PAO Tom Traver can testify, the skills you acquire while working public relations can serve you well in both the business community and in other volunteer organizations. You need only watch the progress of a highprofile election, court case or natural disaster to know how much PR shapes the opinions and actions of the public.

For that reason, effective PR people are valued by intelligent organizations. Smart managers know that much of the behind-the-scenes work is useless if it's not perceived quickly and accurately by a public that is already inundated with competing news from around the globe.

It's true that the skills you acquire as a PAO will help you promote CAP and other volunteer groups. These skills can also prove valuable to you in your career, because effective writing, the ability to listen, attention to detail, creativity in communication, and relationship-building are skills that transcend the boundaries of job descriptions.

See **Public Relations**, page 2

Navigating the new headquarters Web site

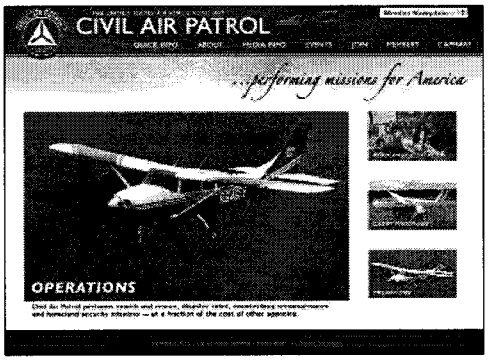
The CAP National Headquarters Web site has a new look, and promises to be a more efficient and modern-looking portal to information about CAP for members, the general public, and media.

Think of the front page, shown at right, as a kind of "electronic brochure" for people who don't know a lot about CAP. Its contents, according to Web designer Tim Frantz of CAP NHQ Strategic Communications, include general facts about CAP suitable for both the general public and the media.

"This front section is what we're calling 'Level 1,'" Frantz said. "We're still in the process of developing it and linking it to the more detailed sections in Levels 2 and 3."

Media will be able to use Level 1 to access quick information about CAP, using selections from the "Quick Info" and "About" menus.

The "Media" menu currently includes an archive of 2003 press releases and a list of national media contacts. Soon to come will be a photo gallery, high-resolution logos, videos, and streaming video events. This section will be invaluable to print media seeking photos and logos to accompany stories, and access to video will satisfy the needs of television and radio reporters.



Screen shot by Tim Frantz

www.cap.gov is the new CAP National Headquarters Web site. The front page, shown above, includes the pull-down menus that lead the visitor through what Web designer Tim Frantz calls the Level 1 (basic information) pages.

Frantz says Level 2 will include more detailed information and will be accessible from Level 1. Level 3 is for CAP members only and will require a password for entry.

"Changing a Web site design is an enormous undertaking," Frantz says. "We're trying to integrate a lot of information on a lot of subjects from people who work with CAP members all over the country. This will be an ever-evolving project, but we hope to have the basics functioning within just a few more weeks." Visit the new site at www.cap.gov.

CAP in the News

In recent months, CAP-related articles appeared in the following national publications and Web sites:

Air Force Magazine (June 2003)
The Washington Post (June 5, 2003)
Air Force Radio News (June 5,16, 03)
AvWeb (June 19, 2003)
Flying (July 2003)
Air & Space Smithsonian (July 2003)
General Aviation News (July 4, 2003)
Air Force Times (July 7, 2003)
Aviation for Women (July-Aug 03)
In-Flight USA (August 2003)
Boston Globe (Sept. 7, 2003)

PA Seminars from 2003 Annual Conference

This year CAP NHQ produced CDs containing the Power Point presentations from all the breakout sessions for those attending the national conference. If you did not receive one (or were unable to attend) and you're interested in the PA presentations, contact Melanie LeMay at mlemay@capnhq.gov.

Public Relations, continued from page 1

Tom Traver's public relations skills were tested last month when the Oregon Wing completed an intensive statewide training exercise dubbed "Operation Oregon Silver." The exercise included components of air search and rescue, homeland security, disaster relief and counterdrug operations.

When media arrived to cover the event, Traver and other CAP members were there to help. "Besides staying in contact with them prior to the event, we helped them with their gear while they were onsite," Traver said. "We actually carried their tripods around for them so they were not so encumbered, and they really appreciated that assistance. We also offered them free lunch while they talked with our members. Of course, we had a PAO right there with them during the interviews."

Traver says it's important to maintain your rapport with the media throughout the year, and not just when major events are about to occur. "The squadron commander here, Lt. Col. Buzz Florip, is very much one of the 'good guys' with the local media," Traver said. "One news director mentioned that they very much appreciate him because he's always accomodating when he works with their TV news crews."

Traver suggests PAOs identify those people in the squadron who are comfortable in front of the camera and able to communicate information in a clear and unruffled way. Knowing who these people are in advance can make all the difference when you have a sudden influx of media and need to put a knowledgeable person on the air. *(Continued next month)*

Web sites for PAOs

Air Force Association media guide – AFA's online media guide allows you to search for media outlets by location, contact names or organization names. This user-friendly site also allows you to choose recipients and send information to them by e-mail. Give it a try at http://capwiz.com/afa/dbq/media.

CAP MEMBERSHIP
as of August 30, 2003

Cadets 26,904
Seniors 37,482

TOTAL 64,386

Public Affairs Case Study 1

Editing your Press Release

Here's a recent letter from Michael Todd, a new PAO in Pennsylvania:

Dear Ma'am:
I am a new senior member of Delco Composite Squadron 1007, PAWG. My specialty track is Public Affairs. Our squadron recently had an event that was newsworthy. I wrote an article and sent it to my commander and she said that it was not "military enough." I was wondering if you couldn't by chance point me in the right direction for a little instruction on how to write "military style." Please get back to me as soon as possible. Thank you for your time.

Mike, a new CAP member, was asked to be his squadron's PAO because he was comfortable with the idea of working with media. As part of an organization called Second Time Around Parents, he had worked with the press many times in the past.

Now as a new CAP member and PAO, Mike was writing a press release for *The Town Talk*, a weekly magazine in Media, Pa., and the area's daily newspaper, the *Delaware County Times*.

"My intention was to catch the public's eye with this press release," he said. "CAP did a fine job on Super Sunday. I wanted to convey the idea that we were very professional in representing CAP, but at the same time, show that we had fun being members of CAP."

Mike's enthusiasm for his subject was evident in this release. His choice of words and style made his commander uncomfortable, however.

Below we've reproduced Mike's first draft of his press release along with our questions and comments from the editing process. Turn the page to see the edited version.

The first draft

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 18, 2003

Local Civil Air Patrol Squadron to Sweep the County!

With the help of Fatal Vision Goggles high moral, and a free raffle for free pizza, senior members and cadets from Civil Air Patrol Delco Composite Squadron 1007, the United States Air Force Auxiliary, kicked off a new era of recruiting in Media this past Sunday.

This past Sunday was Super Sunday in Media, a time when friends and family alike gather to enjoy shopping of arts and crafts, and to enjoy some quality time together.

CAP brought crowds of families and friends together as they demonstrated the affects of alcohol with Fatal Vision Goggles. The squadron also handed out information on cadet programs, senior programs, and other valuable information regarding such diverse topics as Drug Demand Reduction and orientation flights for cadets.

The edit

While this headline gets points for enthusiasm and grabs the reader's attention, it overstates the facts and doesn't really give an accurate picture of what the press release is about.

Don't forget the dateline, which is the place from which the press release is originating. Always place the dateline at the beginning of the copy, in capital letters.

What's the real point of this press release? Sounds like the Delco squadron is stepping up their recruiting. Say so in both the headline and the lead sentence. Try to make the lead encompass as much of the gist of the release as possible.

Be sure your spelling is right. Spell check won't catch "moral" vs. "morale," but your readers and editors will.

There's a difference in writing style for straight journalism vs. public relations. Save feel-good descriptive prose for promotional pieces. A press release is all about facts. A promotional piece is often more about emotional appeal. In this case, readers probably are familiar with Super Sunday, so you don't have to serve as press agent for the virtues of the event. Just identify Super Sunday and keep your focus on the news you're reporting.

Again, watch those tricky spelling words. Each time you use a word incorrectly in a press release, you can damage your credibility with the media. This is another spell-check blooper, "affects" vs. "effects."

What are Fatal Vision Goggles? Sounds fascinating, but the reader never finds out. Likewise, what is Drug Demand Reduction? Who are these cadets who get orientation flights? If your readers knew the answers to these questions, they wouldn't need to read your article to learn more about CAP.

The first draft
continued

"The crowds we drew over to the table were just incredible," said new senior member Michael Todd, "I was really thrilled about the number of people we spoke with."

Local organizations were generous in their support of the CAP display including Sbarro's at Granite Run Mall who donated pizza and drinks for the pizza raffle, Media Presbyterian Church who loaned tables and chairs, and Dr. Nancy Forrest from Life Beyond Abuse for support and service. Without her Sunday would not have been possible.

The edit
continued

Don't include too many quotes, especially if the people quoted aren't saying anything particularly newsworthy. Try to get quotes from key people who were involved, however, and include people both within and outside CAP. Don't quote yourself unless you absolutely have to!

A press release is not the place to overtly express appreciation for help your squadron has received. This kind of recognition is better suited for your squadron newsletter. If you want to show that the business community is supporting you, translate this information into a simple statement of fact. Remember, the press release is for news; it's not a forum for thanking your contributors.

Your last sentences or quotes in the release should give your reader closure. What turned out to be the significance of the news item? What was the result? What's the next step? What might happen in the future as a resullt of this situation or event?

End each press release with a tagline that provides a general description of CAP and its work. Be sure to identify the end of the press release. Use the traditional *-30-* or the word *END*.

The rewrite

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 23, 2003

[CONTACT INFORMATION HERE]

Civil Air Patrol celebrates Super Sunday with super recruiting

MEDIA, Pa. – Super Sunday meant super recruiting for members of Civil Air Patrol's [NAME] squadron in Media.

As part of the town's annual arts and crafts festival, local CAP volunteers mounted a display to showcase some of their unit's training and service capabilities.

As part of the display, CAP members demonstrated Fatal Vision goggles, which simulate the effects of alcohol and drug use on performance of everyday activities. CAP uses the goggles as part of its anti-drug training program for youth. The local CAP squadron also assists with search and rescue operations, disaster relief and aerospace education.

The unit is stepping up recruiting for senior and cadet members to join the Media squadron, emphasizing the opportunities CAP offers for helping the community and for learning more about aviation and aerospace.

Businesses and organizations in Media, including Sbarro's Pizza, Media Presbyterian Church and Life Beyond Abuse, supported CAP's recruiting efforts with donations and equipment for the CAP display. "CAP volunteers can contribute so much to our area," said Dr. Nancy Forrest of Life Beyond Abuse. "We hope their Super Sunday display helped the community understand more about the services CAP provides."

"We had such a good response at this display that we're planning an open house for early next year," said CAP member Michael Todd. "People seem eager to learn more about our missions and we're eager to tell them."

CAP is the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force and a nonprofit organization with more than 64,000 members nationwide. Its members perform 95% of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. Volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counterdrug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the almost 27,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 60 years. For general information about CAP, visit the national headquarters Web site at www.cap.gov.

Media's [NAME] squadron meets [TIME, PLACE, DATES]. For information about the local squadron, call [CONTACT NAME] at [PHONE NUMBER] or go online at [WEB ADDRESS].

-30-