

Tips on Effective Newsletters!

The Good: A Newsletter may be your best bet when you want to tell a story in detail, OR when you want to tell a story from many different angles OR when you're telling a story that no one is interested in—because you can include other items that will make people want to read it.

For example, with a newsletter you can include a long “scientific” article about the advantages of a collection system, and you can also include a short “fun facts” or a crossword puzzle, or pictures, etc., etc. You can include not just collection information in your newsletter, but lots of other features that will make people interested in picking it up and reading it.

The Bad: It can be hard to get some folks to read a newsletter – It might seem too long, they might not be able to read well, or in the case of youth, they might think it's boring! Newsletters take a lot of time and work, and a lot of ink and paper (if you print). Newsletters aren't instant – because they take work, they aren't for addressing immediate events or getting instant response.

What to think about: Remember who your audience is! Who are you trying to reach with the newsletter?

The VISUAL

- Make it visually appealing for your audience!
- What pictures will you use? How **big** should the pictures be?
- What font type? Usually a simple font will be best. Arial, Comic Sans, Cambria, etc. *Fancy can be hard to read*
- Ask preferences! Show your parent or kid, and ask what they like reading the most!
- What font size? Many elders have good vision from long years at subsistence, but not everyone. It is better to have a **larger** font size to read – even if it means more pages.
- “White space”! Make sure your margins are big enough—and your paragraph spacing is big enough. Most folks find it hard to read if there is too much text and pictures crammed into a page.
- Short paragraphs! Shorter paragraphs, with catchy “topic” sentences are usually best. Folks tend to skim after a few sentences.
- **Bold** and *italicize* or underline when you want to make a point. Especially in longer articles or paragraphs, it can help people understand better. But don't overuse these tools! Otherwise, people won't pay attention. Only use all capital letters if you are **YELLING!**
- Clip art keeps it interesting in longer articles and paragraphs. Clip art advantage over photos is that it is small, and small e-file. Your computer has some. There are some free clip art sites (e.g. <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images/>) and you can pay for a subscription for better quality , larger collections. E.g. www.Clipart.com is \$15 for a week, and \$135 for a year.



The Practical

Remember – there is always the next newsletter. How many pages will people have time to read? How many pages will you have time to write? How many pages and ink can you afford?

Where will you distribute this? Will it be available at the store, office, school? What place makes sense?

How will you distribute it? Print it out, email it, post it online? Mail it? Go door to door?

When will you distribute it? Newsletters don't need to be printed regularly, but they can. What makes sense in your community? If you make too many newsletter issues each year, will people get burned out? Too few may lose momentum. You also can time your newsletter for certain events, such as community meetings, carnivals, PFD month... and you can hold off distributing if it is bad timing. If the community is busily engaged in something —e.g. search and rescue, national news, busy subsistence period... they won't pay attention to your newsletter.

The Campaign Plan

You're not a politician, but much of your work as an environmental department staff is to *convince folks to adopt better practices* that will positively impact their environment and community.



Different communities and people respond differently. How should you give out your message? In a funny way? Through crosswords and games? Through scaring people about health or environmental impacts? Through connecting responsibility with cultural values and a strong community?

Will you stick to just one newsletter, or continue with the message until you're heard? Studies show about 1 year is enough for most people to get used to higher garbage fees.

You can provide facts in a way that motivates people. A fact on saving money might not provide the information that a mother needs to make up her mind. She might want to know a fact about protecting her child's health. Here are some examples:



This:	Motivates:
Visiting the dump increases your chance of getting stomach pain and headache by about 3 times.	People worried about getting sick
Self-hauling once a week to the dump costs an average of \$10 per month.	People worried about money
A collection program will stop people from dumping oil in town so our kids won't have to play in contaminated soil and be exposed to the toxic chemicals.	People worried about kids
User fees are required for us to get new landfill funding	People who think "why bother", we're going to get a better landfill someday anyway.
Picture of a neighboring community's clean town with a collection program	People who are tired of seeing litter or people who don't realize how much litter they have.
Funny story about visiting the dump and how bad it is...	Most people!
Elder story	People who value their culture and traditions
Printing people's names that don't pay (or do pay) in the paper (note- discuss with council first!)	People who care about what the community thinks of them.
Kid's drawing	Everyone who likes kids

The great thing about a newsletter is that you can include all of these and more!

The Hook



Another great thing about a newsletter is you don't need to stick to just your message. You can include items that will get people to stop and take a look at your newsletter, and to look forward to your next newsletter. Think "outside the box"! Ask your kids, parents, and anyone that is part of the group you are trying to reach. What do they want to read about? Then sneak in the collection program messages.

- A series of "soap opera" stories
- Raffles
- "Do you remember when..."
- Jokes & games
- Contests(like name that baby photo!)
- Thrift Store Swap ads
- School news
- Elder comments
- Recipes
- Pictures of everything!
- 10% off coupons for collection

Examples

If you are interested in looking at some sample newsletters that other Villages have created, go to www.zendergroup.org/sampleneletters.htm If you would like to share one of your newsletters with other villages, email us at ssebalo@zendergroup.org and we'll post it online! Also, for more ideas about how to get information out (such as through community meetings, psa's, and online social media), go to www.zendergroup.org/education.html