Soaring Publicity Handbook

How to Get Great Publicity Coverage

With Templates to Make the Process Simple
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Objectives

The objective of this document is to help you gain "Free" publicity for your soaring operation and the world of soaring by using Press Releases. Press Releases provide a way for the media to learn about "news worthy" events which are in their focus. For you, a Press Release is a way to gain considerable free recognition, is simple to do, and meets a need by various media to fulfill their content requirements. However, with this said, Press Releases are not a sure thing, so it's up to you to following the guidelines and be persistent. Using Press Releases will help you:

- Convey this main idea -Soaring is a fascinating, challenging, exciting activity. Let the general public (and even some of the people in aviation) know some of the joys of soaring.
- Inform the public that soaring facilities operate in their area. Once they know the names of local clubs or commercial operations, they can pursue this interest.
- Identify the SSA. Refer them to the SSA as an excellent source of information on the many aspects of the sport. Encourage the reporter to include the web address.

The soaring movement will benefit from increased public awareness of the sport. For this to occur, the media needs to know about our activities before, during and after. Through your efforts, thousands of people will have a chance to discover soaring. You will be doing a service to your local organization, the SSA, and the individuals who will soon share all the joys of soaring.

Before Contacting the Media

To make Press releases work, you will have to follow some prescribed guidelines. However, they are reasonable, and anyone can do it. To begin with, there are specific objectives for the press release:

- What audience you are trying to reach? (Pilots, youth, sports-oriented people, the general public, people who live in your city, etc.)

- What action do you want the reader to take? (Observe contest activities, attend an open house at a club or FBO, visit a display at a local mall, take a demo flight, join your club, etc.)

- What is the most eye-catching aspect of your soaring operation? (Youths' achievements, older members re-capturing their youth in the sky, medals or records by an individual member, up-coming events, etc.)

Familiarize yourself with local media

- Make sure the media you are going to contact matches your target audience

- Write press releases to appeal to that audience

- Create a list of reporters who cover stories similar to the topic of your press releases. (A reporter who specializes in human interest stories, for example, will be more inclined to cover first solo at 14 or 74).

"Trigger" Events

A gliderport is such an exciting place. We often think about the amazing events we witness and wish we could share them with others. We can. A press release is the perfect vehicle to do so. You can use
these models and tell the story that needs to be told. If you write from the heart, you can capture the moment and spread the excitement. Here are a few sample trigger events:

14 year old solos

WWII pilot goes for a ride

A father launches his daughter for her first solo

The club or commercial operation has a open house

Someone get a badge or sets a record

On Mother’s Day, a mother takes her daughter for a ride

Youth wins a aviation scholarship

**Contacting the Media**

**What Makes A Press Release Work**

The trick to making a press release work is to provide factual news worthy stories on a recent activity or event that people “should know about.” The fact you are in a glider business is not newsworthy in their eyes. The fact that so and so flew an airplane without an engine over 700 miles or a group of 5 gliders flew 364 miles in 8 hours to receive one of the SSA’s top flying awards is news worthy. It’s beyond normal, it’s unusual, and it just happened.

Of course, more long term type releases would be like the daily report of a sanctioned race just like a sports team would do. In this case you have to set up the event and send regular releases on who’s winning, etc. such as a golf tournament would do.

Note the format of the templates in this handbook. The text is organized in a standard pattern. Include your contact information and date on each page at the bottom. Reporters receive numerous releases and this information ensures that the middle page isn’t misplaced. The ### at the end signifies the end of the release. After the ## notes to the editor allow you to add useful information about photo opportunities or interviews.

Always check to see how the reporter wants the release sent. Some newspapers have a policy of not opening attachments. It is generally better to include the entire press release in the body of the message.

**Calling on Journalists for the First Time**

You will want to contact a journalist within the department of the media you wish to provide releases to. Having a name will greatly assist you in reaching the correct person that might do the best job for you in publishing your release. For instance, if you want to have a race covered in the local Sports section of the newspaper, contact the Sports Editor and tell him that you are providing information about an airplane race that they will find interesting.

Your goal is to find out:

- If you have reached the right journalist for your story
- If the person is free to talk to you now
- Whether the person wants to talk with you on the phone or have you send written material first
Following Up After You Send the Press Release

Have information you can offer in your follow-up call. In fact, you may want to deliberately withhold some intriguing facts that aren’t critical to the story but will give it an interesting twist and use them as bait when you follow up by telephone. Journalists don’t like to be asked if they “got that press release.” On the other hand, if you have some new information you can offer them, there’s a good possibility you can spark their interest.

Practice your telephone or personal approach to media people, so you can be brief and to the point. If you don’t get a clear indication of interest, but you don’t get turned down either, try to clarify the situation. You could say, “Are you interested, but just too busy to deal with it now? OK, then I’m going to call back next Wednesday.”

Approaching Feature Editors

Most feature editors want written article suggestions

Letters to feature editors should cover the following points:

- Tell the editor that you are offering an idea for a feature story.
- Summarize the idea in one paragraph
- Explain why the editor’s audience would be interested.
- Emphasize the scope and importance of the story
- Give a few interesting details.
- Suggest alternate approaches where possible
- Describe picture possibilities
- Enclose a prepaid return card along with your e-mail address and phone number

The above information is from the PUBLICITY HANDBOOK by David R. Yale

Approaching a Variety of Media Outlets

Consider contacting local radio and television stations as well as local and national magazines. Drive-time radio stations and local television stations are looking for fresh stories. Soaring is a great topic for photojournalists. You will want to add a note to editors for television stations offering to include film opportunities (and a glider flight, if possible) or offer to bring the glider to the station for the weatherman or correspondent to use as a back-drop for the interview. The note to the editor allows you to pick the time and place you would like to invite them, so you can provide for their safety, eliminate distractions, etc.

Creating Press Packets

U.S. Team Press Room provides a concise fact filled resource on the sport of soaring, sailplanes and soaring competition. http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_press.htm

Include “The History of Soaring” and “Soaring Competitions” from that site along with SSA and your local organization’s pamphlets.

Further question? Please contact Val Paget, SSA Publicity Chairman vpaget@gmail.com
**Step by Step Contest Coverage**

1. Contact contest organizers and determine if they have a media representative.

2. If not, volunteer to write press releases for the event and the class winners (or more if you have the time).

3. Offer to issue a press release for the local paper about the contest.
   a. Ask them the information you will need to fill in the press release template
   b. Ask them the names of the local paper/papers that would be most likely to cover this event

4. Revise Contest template on page 5 and contact the media.

5. Follow the contest on the “Contest Reports.”

6. If possible, get competitors to complete the “Pilot Information for the Media” form at a Pilots’ Meeting. (page 7)

7. At the end of the contest, look up the phone numbers of the winners on the SSA web site Member Locator section (If you didn’t get the pilots to complete the form).

8. Call the winners and explain the value of using their success at a contest as a way to promote soaring in their area. Underscore the need to promote their soaring site and the SSA. Encourage them to suggest that the reporter includes the SSA web site.

9. Get the information you need to fill in the template (page 9).

10. Ask the pilot to supply information about local papers that would cover such news. This may take a second call to get all the possible news outlets from the contest winners and the title of the section of the newspaper which would be the best outlet (City Desk, Feature Editor, Lifestyle, Sports, local supplement, etc).

11. Speak with the crew person for a quote

12. Complete the Contest Results Template on page 9. Much of the template will be finished after you revise the initial press release template. Only the parts about the specific pilots will need to be changed for different classes on subsequent press releases.

13. Contact the media.
Sample Press Releases

General Information Press Release
Developed by the USA Team [http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/]

PRESS RELEASE

Contact:
XXXXXXX XXXXXX (Name)
(XXX) XXX-XXXX (Phone)
XXXXXXX@XXXXXXX (e-mail)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Releases are critical to gaining media attention and coverage for soaring

HOBB, NEW MEXICO – August 1, 2004 – You never see blanks in newspapers, magazines or on television with the words, “sorry no news today”. Reporters have a job to do and they are generally expert at crafting news items and story lines that appeal to their particular readers or viewers. A good marketing communications effort, of which a press release is only a part, can interest reporters in the sport of soaring, meet the promotional goals of your club or organization and provide delightful and interesting reading for the target audience.

Any good marketing communications effort has a goal so the first step is to understand what the purpose of your press release is. Who do you want to reach? People within 50 miles of the club? Action sports oriented? What action do you want the people who read your release to take? Learn about the sport? Join your club? Ask about lessons? Once you have a good idea of your marketing communication plan and your target audience its time to do your home work to find the right media outlet and person in the media organization to send your press kit to. Read the local papers and magazines and pick well placed reporter or editor.

A good press release presents the news in journalistic style while answering the questions of Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. All press releases use an inverted pyramid to present material in descending order of importance with the most important information and details present at the start of the release.

Great releases have real news value and give the reader a reason to care about the story. Always write an eye catching headline and cross check all your facts. Resist the temptation to pontificate or puff the story and define terms, emphasize the positives and consider ways to tie your message into some greater news story. Only send your press release to the right people at the right media outlets and avoid the spray and pray mentality.
Distribute your press release as part of a larger media kit by mail or by e-mail but always include a web link so reporters can find more information easily. “While you need to write releases in a factual and journalistic style you can use quotes to include the more colorful aspects of the sport of soaring”, said Don Smyth, President of the ABC soaring club. Examples and third party endorsements are very powerful in press releases as well.

Over 70% of what appears as news begins as a press release in one form or another. Generally reporters and editors receive hundreds of releases per day and only a handful reach the printed page or screen. The closer your release matches the interests of the readers, the more complete the media kit and the better the writing, the more likely your press release will be seen by the public. The old saw is that with press releases you pray and with advertising you pay. With this template and some background you will be a media pro in no time.

Soaring or gliding, as it’s sometimes called, is flight without an engine using atmospheric forces to stay aloft. Sailplane pilots frequently climb to high altitudes, soar hundreds of miles and stay up for hours using only their knowledge of nature’s hidden forces and their sailplanes. High performance sailplanes are typically constructed using advanced composite materials and utilize refined aerodynamics for maximum performance. Instrumentation tracks the pilot’s progress around a course and makes it possible to use nature’s forces efficiently. The art of soaring happens when pilots blend technology, knowledge and skill together in soaring flight.

The sport of soaring is available nationally through the over 180 active soaring clubs located near most large cities in the nation. Contact the Soaring Society of America on the web (www.ssa.org) or call (505 392-1177) for your local soaring operation.

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Editors Note: The U.S. Team Press Room provides a concise fact filled resource on the sport of soaring, sailplanes and soaring competition. http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_press.htm
1. Title: Colorado Glider Pilots to Soar from Dalhart

2. Location and Date: DALHART, TEXAS - MILLER FIELD - July 10-17, 2004 -

3. Sponsoring organization: Members of the Colorado’s Soaring Society of Boulder will be visiting Dalhart to sample the strong Texas thermal updrafts starting on Saturday, July 10.

4. Newspapers need quotes. By providing them, you assist the reporter: “Our club normally soars in the mountains of Colorado but we have been coming to Dalhart for years and we always enjoy it”, said camp organizer Dick Hogue. The Dalhart area has almost perfect conditions for flying sailplanes with its normally hot dry summer weather and strong updrafts.

5. Modify it for your specific location: Gliders or sailplanes as they are sometimes called do not have an engine but stay aloft using columns of rising air, or thermals, normally associated with the ______ area. Thermals can rise to over ______ feet around _____ and are often marked by puffy cumulous clouds. Sailplane pilots bank their craft in tight circles to climb in thermals often achieving climb rates of 500 to 1000 feet per minute. Flights of over three hours are common.

6. Modify as needed: Sailplanes are towed aloft behind a powered aircraft to around 2,000 feet above the ground before releasing the tow rope. Without a motor, gliders must quickly find a thermal to climb on or they will be back on the ground in 20-30 minutes. Fortunately, thermals are common around _____ so staying aloft is not normally a problem. Skilled pilots can fly hundreds of miles gliding from thermal to thermal in cross country flight.
7. **Specifics on locations that the reader will recognize and/or weather:** Because of Dalhart’s location, local soaring pilots can accomplish the coveted five state (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico) flight if the weather is favorable.

8. **Use as is:** Modern sailplanes are made out of very strong composite materials similar to the kinds found on airlines and jet fighters. A single place glider weighs approximately 550 lbs and has a speed range of between 45 and 170 mph. Since sailplanes do not carry a motor, they are designed to minimize aerodynamic drag giving them a sleek smooth look. High performance sailplanes can go 60 feet forward to one foot down and cover 60 miles in one glide without lift from only 5,000 feet.

Soaring pilots use sensitive instruments including global positioning systems (GPS) to efficiently climb in thermals and navigate around the day’s course. GPS flight recorders sample altitude, location and speed every few seconds. They are carried by every competitor at contests to create digital files called a flight traces which are used for scoring.

9. **The event/ contest specifics:** The Dalhart Camp starts on July 10th and concludes on July 17th with 15-25 club members attending the week long event.

10. **Note to Editor:** Communicate the availability and time and place where a photographer or photojournalist could come and shoot and who their point of contact /escort will be. This might include the flight line on practice day, the contest director’s pilots meeting, the awards day, etc.

**Interview opportunity:** Used to communicate the time and place where a writer could talk to the Contest Director about this year’s event, the weather they expect, his challenges in selecting the various tasks for the various days.

11. The sport of soaring is available nationally through the over 180 active soaring clubs around the nation. Contact the Soaring Society of America on the web (www.ssa.org) or call (505 392-1177) for your local soaring operation.

   # # #

12. (Insert your information) Val Paget, SSA Publicity Chair, 832-654-3300, 11/05/05


This press release is a modified version of one on the US Team Press Room site. [http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/](http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/)
PILOT INFORMATION SHEET
For Media Coverage

Name: ________________________________________

Racing Class & Manufacturer: ______________________

Hometown (If not a major city – list closest city as well)
______________________________________________

Phone #___________________

E-mail:________________________________________

Name of crew or other person who could give a brief statement to the press:
______________________________________________

Crew Phone #:____________________

Crew e-mail:______________________

Names of any local papers or other media you would suggest we contact:
______________________________________________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

If there is some missing information, please try to give it to me before the end of the contest or contact me at: vpget@gmail.com

The SSA and the soaring community really appreciate your help in publicizing the sport. Press releases will be sent to you prior to submission to the media.
PRESS RELEASE (News Worthy Event)

Contact:
XXXXXXX XXXXXX (Name)
XXXXXXXXXX@aol.com (e-mail)
XXX XXX XXXX (phone)

PRESS ROOM
http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/ust_press

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1. Title: Area Pilot Soars to Victory
Piloting his motorless aircraft, _____ races ___ (total miles) to win a Regional Contest
(something catchy to grab the editor’s attention)

2. Location and Date:-

3. Organization sponsoring the contest: (1 & 2 can be done in one sentence)

4. Give information about the pilot -
   A. city or area of town, long time resident, school attended, etc. -anything to connect
      this person with the reader, occupation.
   
   b. Victory in ___ (event), competing with pilots from as far away as______.

4. Newspapers need quotes: A comment from the crew such as, “The times on this race
   were the faster I've ever seem. John averaged 92 MPH on the second day putting him in first
   place.” Or “When my friend, ____ asked me to crew for her at a sailplane race, I couldn’t
   imagine that she would fly over ____ miles in the 5 days and win the race against 23 others. She
   really is a tough competitor.”

5. Modify it for your specific location: Gliders or Sailplanes as they are sometimes called do
   not have an engine but stay aloft using columns of rising air, or thermals, normally associated
   with the ____ area. Thermals can rise to over ____ feet around ____ and are often marked by
   puffy cumulous clouds. Sailplane pilots bank their craft in tight circles to climb in thermals often
   achieving climb rates of 500 to 1000 feet per minute. Flights of over three hours are common.

6. Modify as needed: Sailplanes are towed aloft behind a powered aircraft to around 2,000 feet
   above the ground before releasing the tow rope. Without a motor, gliders must quickly find a
   thermal to climb on or they will be back on the ground in 20-30 minutes. Fortunately thermals
   are common around _____, so staying aloft is not normally a problem. Skilled pilots can fly
   hundreds of miles gliding from thermal to thermal in cross country flight.

(Modify with your information) 05/05/05 Val Paget, Soaring Society of America Publicity Chair,
832-654-3300 vpaget@gmail.com
7. **Specifics on the location and/or weather**: Weather conditions which challenged the pilot, specific, recognizable locations which the contestants had to fly over.

8. **Use as is**: Modern sailplanes, such as the ____ class sailplane ______ flies, are made out of very strong composite materials similar to the kinds found on airlines and jet fighters. A single place glider weighs approximately 550 lbs and has a speed range of between 45 and 170 mph. Since sailplanes do not carry a motor, they are designed to minimize aerodynamic drag giving them a sleek smooth look. Very high performance sailplanes can go 60 feet forward to one foot down and cover 60 miles in one glide without lift from only 5,000 feet.

Soaring pilots use sensitive instruments including global positioning systems (GPS) to efficiently climb in thermals and navigate around the day’s course. GPS flight recorders sample altitude, location and speed every few seconds. They are carried by every competitor at contests to create digital files called a flight traces which are used for scoring.

9. **The event/ contest specifics**: How many competed, the number of days, the margin of victory, ETC.

10. **Note to editor**: Communicate the availability of the contestant for interviews and opportunities to photograph the glider.

11. The sport of soaring is available nationally through the over 180 active soaring clubs around the nation. Contact the Soaring Society of America on the web (www.ssa.org) or call (__________) for your local soaring operation.

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(Modify with your information) 05/05/05 Val Paget, Soaring Society of America Publicity Chair, 832-654-3300
vpaget@gmail.com.

This press release is a modified version of one developed by the U.S. Team and seen on the US Team Press Room site. http://www.ssa.org/UsTeam/
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Houston Teen Sets a National Aviation Record

Sylvia Szafarczyk, 19, received the US National Record Certificate on February 11 at the Soaring Society of American’s annual convention in Ontario, California. Sylvia flew for nearly 7 hours alone over 210 miles to complete a flight which gave her two national and 8 New Mexico state records. She set records in the following categories: 15 meter feminine free out and return distance and 15 meter feminine out and return distance.

This year, Sylvia also completed in sailplane races against experienced pilots from all over the nation. She and her teammate, Mike Westbrook, age 19, won the third day in a regional contest in Hobbs, NM. They had to pilot a motorless aircraft with almost 58 feet of wingspan across rugged terrain to complete a 211 mile course.

Sylvia was just 13 years old when she learned to fly at The Soaring Club of Houston. From the beginning, her instructors recognized her talent and her enthusiasm for the sport. Quickly she became a respected pilot and a model for other girls and boys who took up soaring after her.

As a pilot, she has acquired many impressive credentials including a Gold Badge and the Kolstad Scholarship. She has accomplished all this while a student in the rigorous pre-med program at Rice University. In addition to the academic courses, Sylvia works as an Emergency Medical Technician at the Rice campus and in the community, with hopes of someday becoming an ER doctor. Clearly, she is a focused person, who is able to build a highly successful academic career at the same time she has attained enormous success as a glider pilot.

Note to Editor: Photo opportunities are available with Sylvia, the glider and the ambulance. The glider can be brought to the Rice Campus for photos or can be photographed at the gliderport.
Sample Press Release for News-Worthy Soaring Event

For immediate release
Contact: Martha Wilson
Mount Washington Resort
Phone: 603-278-3366
mwilson@mtwashington.com

Kevin Brooker
Post Mills Soaring Club
Phone: 802 333-3723
redpoint@sover.net

September 21, 2005

NATIONAL LANDMARK OF SOARING DEDICATION AT THE MOUNT WASHINGTON RESORT

BRETTON WOODS, NH – On Saturday, October 8, 2005, The Mount Washington Hotel will host the dedication of the newest National Landmark of Soaring, including a unique display of gliders. Mount Washington, New Hampshire has been designated the 14th National Landmark of Soaring by the National Soaring Museum located in Elmira, NY.

Since 1938, glider pilots from all areas of the US and Canada have been using the legendary winds at Mount Washington to fly unpowered aircraft to altitudes above 30,000 feet.

This daylong celebration of motorless flight, beginning at noon, will feature gliders and pilots on display and available to discuss the unique soaring conditions found in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

Mount Washington, New Hampshire is a truly historic soaring site. It was here that Lewin Barringer made the first wave flight in the United States, in 1938. Throughout the years, glider pilots have come to Mount Washington to pursue and develop the unique activity known as wave soaring.

Twenty-five years ago, The National Soaring Museum established the National Landmark of Soaring program for the purpose of recognizing sites, individuals, and events of significance in the history of motorless flight in the United States. On May 14, 2005 the NSM Trustees voted to designate Mount Washington, New Hampshire as the 14th National Landmark of Soaring.

For more information about the history of soaring, please visit the Landmark website at www.ssaregion1.org/NLS14.


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, May 28, 2005

MEDIA CONTACT, KEVIN BROOKER. 802 333-3723

Press Release

June 19-25, 2005 has been designated “Vermont Soaring Week” by the Soaring Society of America’s Vermont representative, Kevin Brooker. Vermont has some of the best soaring conditions in New England. During the week of June 19-25, the Sugarbush Airport located in Warren will host the New England Gliding Championships. Glider pilots from all over the country and parts of Canada will compete in several classes for the title of Regional Champion. Each day the pilots will fly for several hours with task distances between 60 and 200 miles. The most excitement for spectators will typically happen between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM each day.

Vermont has 4 active glider clubs that operate from mid April until the end of October.

For more information about glider flying please contact Kevin Brooker of the Post Mills Soaring Club via email redpoint@sover.net or phone (802) 333-3723.