

AUGUST – HOW TO MARKET AND PROMOTE YOUR EXPLORER POST

Music Full then Under

KRISTEN: Hey, y'all, and welcome to the August ExploringCast. I'm Kristen Falatko, Senior Exploring Program Specialist, along with Garfield Murden, Senior Boy Scouting Specialist. What have we got this month, Garfield?

GARFIELD: As an Exploring Executive, you've been able to identify potential Explorers through the Career Interest Survey, but what about the Exploring Advisor? How can they get more participants in their posts? So, let's talk about marketing and promoting your Exploring program.

KRISTEN: I'm kind of excited about this topic so let's go ahead and get started!

Music Fades

KRISTEN: And to help us with marketing and promoting this fabulous youth program we call Exploring is Wes Weems. Wes has been with Scouting for almost 10 years now and currently serves as the District Director with Three Fires Council. While never actually an Exploring Executive, Wes consolidated Exploring from a separate division within the council to the ownership of the traditional field teams. Since that time, Wes has been a leader in ensuring that Exploring gets the same amount of time and attention towards growth and quality program as any other Scouting unit within the council. Welcome to ExploringCast, Wes!

WES: Well, thank you. I'm very glad to be here.

KRISTEN: So, why should a unit share its activities with the rest of the community?

WES: Great question. You never know how many people you might have missed when put forth an effort like the once-and-done recruiting model, say, every fall or spring. When you take an active role in promoting your program, to get the word out about the fun that's being had, the good that these young people are doing, you're going to open the door for more people, more institutions, possible corporations that would help the advisor and help the post get the word out more, in turn open the door to get more members to come in the door.

GARFIELD: What are some activities or achievements that a post should be promoting?

WES: Any activity that's outside of a regular post meeting is something that should be promoted. The community want to hear the good stories about what our posts are up to, and oftentimes they just don't get the opportunity to hear it because we're not taking advantage of those avenues of communication. But anything that is out of the ordinary for example, a local partnership with a university. In our case National Louis University right here in the western suburbs of Chicago, last summer put together a program through their Criminal Justice Department inviting all of the local law enforcement posts to take part. It was a three-day seminar where they had some hands-on experiences out in the parking lot of a school. They had some instruction by local law enforcement and the Criminal Justice staff there at the National Louis University, and it was just a tremendous opportunity to invite local media to make sure we had a lot of videos and

pictures that we could distribute on our Facebook to show the local community what we're doing.

KRISTEN: So, you touched on your partnership with National Louis University. Can you explain some other ways that a post can promote their activities and achievements, maybe outside of the Law Enforcement Exploring Post?

WES: Sure. Well, by today's standards - social media. If you have not embraced it you need to. It is what the younger generation is accustomed to, and in order to remain relevant you need to do that. One of the things we've been able to capitalize on here in the western suburban Chicago market is the local community television. They, too, are an entity doing everything they can to remain relevant. And one of the things I personally have been able to do, and I share this with all of the advisors that I work with, is to become an e-subscriber to the local community television station. They produce news stories, so you click on the link on your email that opens up in a video box and it's like you're watching a local news story right there on your computer. We try to get every good Scouting story out there. It's a great vehicle for anything that an Exploring post is doing to get the word out about what's going on in Exploring.

GARFIELD: So, Wes, who would you say is responsible for promoting the post activities?

WES: There are a couple of layers to the answer to that question. I'm a firm believer in the mentality of if it is to be it's up to me. (Laughs)

KRISTEN: *(Laughs)* I like that.

WES: But, at the same time, any Field Executive is not going to be successful if they try to take on the burden of promoting for their different Exploring posts. It's got to come from within. But what you can do, is at that very important program planning meeting when you're putting things together for the post, you need to let the Post Advisor know that it's a very critical role of communications, marketing and promotions. So, you sow the seed there. You put into work a plan to bring in an advisor for a youth officer, soon to be elected, that is going to specialize and focus on communications, promotions and marketing. That would be the way then to get the word out.

KRISTEN: There was one time I was driving from the airport to a council and the minute I got on the freeway I saw a billboard for Exploring.

So, Wes, we always say peer-to-peer is the best way to get more youth involved, so how can the Explorers themselves really take part in the promotion of their own post?

WES: We just talked about making sure that there is an officer dedicated to marketing and communications, how the younger generation is embracing social media. They have their phones with them and they're taking pictures and videos and they're posting on other different things that they're doing, so, why not do that same activity with their Exploring post? Share with your friends, not only with your fellow members of the post but just your circles of friendship in general. Let them know what's going on through your experiences with the post.

GARFIELD: How are the Explorers' involvement monitored?

WES: It's better in some areas than in others, but the engagement of an Exploring Service Team is critical to help the local Field Executive know and understand the health of the different posts if you're not able to be there on your own. For those in the Exploring circles, they know that the Exploring Service Team is very similar to what in the tradition units a Commissioner Corps would be. They're the ones who can monitor and work with Post Advisors, engaging them to take part in the Exploring JTE Scorecard, to monitor those things. But I would also say this. We talked about an officer dedicated to marketing and promotion. There needs to be a solid description for the secretary role. It's critical to take attendance for the youth when they're at the meetings and expose that. Send it back out in a recap of the meeting to let people know what they missed if they weren't there. That's just one more way to help to promote a culture of wanting to be present at the meetings.

GARFIELD: Do you have any suggestions that you can share with the listeners on how to monitor that just to make sure that they're following protocol or procedures?

WES: Up front you want to make sure that the privacy settings of whatever social media outlet that you're using is set up to protect the individual membership of the post, but it's still an opportunity then when they do post something that they can share it with others.

GARFIELD: Now, I have also heard from councils and also from Explorer post that any of them have a code of conduct or they have some form of document that basically is set up for the Explorers saying what it is that you can do or can't do. Do you suggest doing something like that for the social media?

WES: Absolutely. Anything like that you would need to try to adhere and maybe partner that with the Guide to Safe Scouting and the cyber training that we do, to how to be safe on the Internet. And if they did that in bylaws (that) would work well.

KRISTEN: We have reference in our Exploring Guidebook on examples of SOPs or bylaws that the post can adopt and work from, grow and kind of elaborate from. So, are there any resources available for Post Advisors and the youth to learn more about how to really engage the community in the promotion of activities and achievements?

WES: I've had the wonderful opportunity to witness the Exploring Explosion Program launched last year, and with that was the new website, so I always tell people to start with [Exploring.org](https://exploring.org) because it is such a wonderful resource. There is so much material in there. If you go to the Exploring Brand Center you'll be able to find all of the logos and videos that you could use to create your own. There are so many resources, I'd urge them to take a look at that, to browse through that and make sure they're not missing out on a great opportunity to market and promote their Exploring post. I would also say get to know your local media outlets. I talked earlier about the local community television but, all of the local community newspapers. It's important for them to get the word out as well so they're always hungry for good local stories.

GARFIELD: Is there anything else about marketing and promoting Exploring that we haven't talked about that you think should be shared with our listeners?

WES: I do. If you are not engaging local civic clubs, then that is a big miss. Any Field Executive needs to, if they haven't already, develop a good relation with their local civic clubs if you're not a member of one already. I'm talking about the Rotary Clubs, the local Kiwanis, Lions, or the Exchange or Jaycees. And when you think about it, these are groups of people that are the adult stewards of their communities. Most of the time have arrived in their careers and they're very interested and very vested in what is going on in their backyards. And almost all of the time you will find out too that they have a dedicated committee to vocational activities. What is going on with our local high schools or our local trade schools? These are the committees that put together the scholarship programs. And if you can get your Exploring post to do a program for any one of these people it will open up more doors for you than I think you ever thought possible.

And another thing. I have not been a member of any civic club where a member if not the superintendent of the school district was also a member, so, that will also help you get access to the right people you need to talk to when it's time to share the great story of Exploring.

KRISTEN: You're exactly right, Wes, and I would like to piggyback off of that. I know we've talked about in previous ExploringCast about our new national partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, so not only civic groups and clubs but also your local chamber. More than likely, that superintendent or just the business leaders in the community will be a part of that Chamber of Commerce. So, these all sound like really great ways to get Exploring noticed in the community, and hopefully we'll get both

youth and adults more involved in this great Exploring program. Thanks for being on ExploringCast, Wes, and making it sound so easy.

WES: It's been my pleasure. I really enjoyed being a part of the show. Thank you.

GARFIELD: Thanks, Wes. Okay, listeners, here's a few reminders and tips before we go. Plan for your open house should be in full swing. To assist you in dotting all the i's and crossing all the t's, check out the September 2016 ExploringCast.

KRISTEN: Be sure to check out the brand new Strengthening Youth Through Exploring Career Brochures. There is a new brochure for each one of the 12 career fields.

BEGIN MUSIC UNDER

KRISTEN: But, sadly, the August episode of ExploringCast has come to an end, so, thanks to our guest, Wes Weems, for joining us.

GARFIELD: And thanks to you for listening, but don't keep all the fun to yourself. Be sure your fellow advisors are tuning in as well. And anyone can suggest discussion topics by sending us an email to exploringcast@scouting.org, or a tweet to @Exploringcast. So, with that, I am Garfield Murden.

KRISTEN: And I am Kristen Falatko. Now head on over to Exploring.org and sign up for the monthly newsletter. Be sure to like us on Facebook and, as always, follow us on Twitter and, hey, there's even an Exploring YouTube channel!

Music Full to Finish