

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
January, 2012

The PRC takes tremendous pride in the December release of the “Do It Yourself”, or “DIY”, campaign. The DIY video is the first general purpose video released by ARRL since *Amateur Radio Today* hosted by the late Walter Cronkite. Moreover, the DIY campaign restores a balance among the three major PR themes established in 2006: *Hello Radio* (emphasizing on-air fellowship and sport), *Emergency Communications* and *We Do That*, which concentrates on experimentation. The DIY campaign reinforces the *We Do That* theme. Many large scale disasters in the middle of the last decade highlighted Amateur Radio’s EmCOMM capabilities, eclipsing the other two themes. PRC members hope the DIY campaign will capitalize on the renaissance of kit building which has proven enormously popular through “Maker Faires”, electronics and craft fairs similar to hamfests which have a natural affinity to Amateur Radio. In addition, we believe DIY will prove attractive to educators promoting STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. We encourage Section Managers to incorporate DIY resources as part of their outreach to the electronics hobbyist communities.

Capitalizing on newly accessible technologies, the PRC held a webinar in early November on the role of PIOs and PICs in emergencies. Almost 250 logged in to hear ABC News Crisis Manager Howard Price, KA2QPJ, and Mark Kraham, W8CMK, News Director for NBC-TV affiliate WHAG in Hagerstown, Maryland, talk about what they expect as working journalists from PIOs in disasters. Price and Kraham made abundantly clear that ARRL PIOs need to know basics, such as if ARES is activated in their area, what kind of places are being staffed, what kind of traffic is being handled, and what frequencies are being used. The webinar was designed to address some of the field deficiencies exhibited by PIOs and PICs in areas affected by tornadoes in 2011. Because of the success of the November webinar, the PRC will host a webinar in the spring showing PIOs how to write and distribute releases for Field Day.

Showcasing outstanding ARRL Public Information Officers is the purpose of the annual Philip McGan Award. Named after ARRL’s first Public Relations Committee chairman, Philip McGan WA2MBQ (SK), the award honors a PIO who has shown consistent outreach to media. The 2011 winner is Angel Santana, WP3GW. Angel has been a tireless advocate of promoting Amateur Radio to the Hispanic community, not only in his native Puerto Rico, but also throughout Latin America.

In addition to successes, there were some campaigns which needed to be changed or retired. In the second half of 2011, the PRC retired the venerable *PIO Handbook*, a staple since 1993. Last updated in 2005, the contents of the Handbook were largely replaced by the on-line *PR-101* course. Going forward, *PR-101* will periodically be updated and formatted both as a training module and as an ongoing resource for PIOs. Also retired, but perhaps temporarily, was *Now Hear This*, the PR & Media Dept.’s audio and video blogs. While critically acclaimed, few accessed them. The PRC will assess if they should be brought back or combined with another internal media effort. Amateur Radio made up one of the largest groups in September’s annual *National Readiness*

Month campaign hosted by FEMA's Citizens Corps, but this annual tribute has been losing support yielding minimal impact for Ham Radio.

Members of the PRC have been dispirited by two trends which we hope will be corrected. First was the process which took over a year to adopt revisions to PIC and PIO job descriptions. The second is the ongoing delay in the timely bestowal of the McGan and Leonard Awards to their recipients. These two awards are very visible to media, and are reflections on ARRL. When presentations to their recipients are delayed, we believe this undermines credibility in the awards and in ARRL.

In December the committee welcomed its newest member, Mark Kraham, W8CMK. As mentioned above in the PR webinar, Mark brings professional experience and perspective to the PRC as a television news director and as the immediate past chairman of the Radio Television Digital News Association. The PRC is fortunate to have as its members Philadelphia radio journalist Mark Abramowicz, NT3V; radio personality and Nevada section PIC and SEC Don Carlson, KQ6FM; Texas legislative staff aide Steve Polunsky, W5SMP; and broadcast videographer and Oklahoma Section Manager Kevin O'Dell, N0IRW. A permanent guest to the PRC has been Radio Association of Canada (RAC) V.P. of Industrial Liaisons Norm Rashleigh, VE3LC. I want to acknowledge special appreciation to our Board Liaison for the past two years, Roanoke Division Vice-Director Dr. Jim Boehner, N2ZZ, who has worked tirelessly on behalf of the PRC. Finally, ARRL has a amazing resource in Media & Public Relations Manager Allen Pitts, W1AGP, who continues to astound all with what he accomplishes as a department of one.

On a final note, I am stepping down as Chairman of the PRC after three years. While I am proud of the accomplishments under my tenure, I am even more optimistic about future media and public relations opportunities for ARRL as it approaches its centennial. Several years ago David Sumner, K1ZZ, referred to Amateur Radio as a national resource. Along with his description came one which I believe captures the essence of Amateur Radio, "A hobby with a purpose." Amateur Radio has an exceptionally compelling story to tell. I hope ARRL's directors and its board will devote the resources and support to ensure that all peoples have the chance to learn about Amateur Radio's roles in the world, especially as ARRL approaches its 100th anniversary.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Morine, N2COP
Public Relations Committee Chairman