

Event-in-a-Box

Writing a Successful Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper or other publication can be an effective way to recruit volunteers, bring visibility to an event, and thank those involved in a project or event. It does not need to be long to be effective! Here are some tips to consider when writing a letter to the editor:

- Check the newspaper's guidelines for Letters to the Editor, including preferred method of delivery, and follow them. If submitting a letter electronically, be sure to follow up with a telephone call to make sure the email arrived.
- Write in easy-to-understand language.
- If you are mentioning anyone by name — volunteers, colleagues in your office, or others in the community or beyond — make **absolutely sure** you have the correct spelling of his or her name and job title (if appropriate). Never assume you know the spelling. John Smythe would rather you ask for the correct spelling than to have it misspelled as John Smith.
- Do your homework. Support your opinions with facts. Citing sources can add credibility. For example, if you're writing a letter to the editor to draw attention to a health screening event during National Heart Month, use statistics from the American Heart Association AND TELL READERS (in your letter) where the statistics came from.
- Sign your letter and include your address and a daytime telephone number. Some newspapers publish addresses and will not print a letter without one.
- Newspapers typically receive more letters than they can print. If your letter is not printed, you may want to call the editor in charge of the page and ask if he or she can offer suggestions regarding how you can be successful in having a letter published.
- If your letter is published, consider calling or emailing the editor and thanking him or her for doing so.
- A simple example of a letter to the editor:

Many Thanks for Making Fair a Success

Dear Editor,

A record 4,300 people attended this year's Bluebird County Fair, held July 20–24. The fair's success would not have been possible without the efforts of the 123 dedicated volunteers who did everything from selling tickets to making cotton candy to timing horse show events. It was truly a team effort.

Special thanks go to fair volunteer coordinator Bob Doeverything, who oversaw the effort.

– Randy Perfectagent, K-State Research and Extension Bluebird County office, 1234 Wildcat Lane