

# Press Release Process

Can you write a press release?

Of course you can. The process is simple, and the pages that follow will show you how to do it, step-by-step. But more important than the process is this guiding principle: Focus on your audience.

Your audience doesn't know you or Lions or your Club or your project. They care a lot more about their kids and their lawns than they care about you. Your job is to make them care. Why? So they will pay attention and hopefully attend your event.

How do you do that?

- By making your press release as clear as a mountain stream. Anyone who reads your release should know exactly what you're talking about. Anyone.
- By making your event interesting. Pancakes are pancakes. Clowns are clowns. But fundraising for hunger, a cure for diabetes or a disaster one town away can transform your event into a rallying point for your community.
- By preparing early. The sooner you know the details, the sooner you can get the word to your audience. The early Lion catches the crowd.

Is this do-able? Of course it is. Lions have been publicizing events for almost 100 years. Rotary has done it for even longer – and we're not going to let them beat us to the punch!

The most important thing: Press releases are one of several ways to build the crowds we need at our events. So what are you waiting for? Let's get started!

## Step One: Raw Material

All too often the facts don't scream: "This is a great story." In fact, they're usually just facts. Let me give you an example from my club:

The Canton Lions Club is pleased to announce that it has just been granted IRC Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for its new not for profit division, CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. This tax exempt status will permit it to exclude its purchases of goods for sale for charitable fund raising activities from state sales tax and will also permit it to exclude its income received from those sales from income tax. This will permit more of the funds raised from its efforts to go toward the many donations the Canton Lions Club makes each year for local, state and world-wide charitable causes.

This charitable tax exempt status also has a special charitable tax deduction feature for corporate and personal donations made to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. Now, both individual and business donations will be tax deductible for federal income tax purposes to the fullest extent permitted by law. Also, last but far from least, for those charitable contribution matching donations offered by many businesses, contributions to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc., will qualify for those matching donations one makes to tax exempt organizations.

Donations to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc., will be graciously accepted. Please send those donations to:

CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc.  
P.O. Box 363  
Canton, CT 06019

Where do you start? See Step Two...

## Step Two: Re-Format

Right from the beginning, I like to convince myself that I'm writing a press release. So I add the standard press release elements:

**For Information Contact:**

person  
phone number  
email address  
Facebook (if you have one)

### For Immediate Release

## Headline

**Your Town – Release Date – Your Club**

The Canton Lions Club is pleased to announce that it has just been granted IRC Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for its new not for profit division, CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. This tax exempt status will permit it to exclude its purchases of goods for sale for charitable fund raising activities from state sales tax and will also permit it to exclude its income received from those sales from income tax. This will permit more of the funds raised from its efforts to go toward the many donations the Canton Lions Club makes each year for local, state and world-wide charitable causes.

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CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc.  
P.O. Box 363  
Canton, CT 06019

Looks better already, doesn't it?

## Step Three: Translate

Well, the document may look more like a press release, but it doesn't read like one. How do you translate the facts into snappy sentences worthy of a press release? By shortening the paragraphs and clearing up the text.

Here's an example:

### Paragraph One: Original

The Canton Lions Club is pleased to announce that it has just been granted IRC Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for its new not for profit division, CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. This tax exempt status will permit it to exclude its purchases of goods for sale for charitable fund raising activities from state sales tax and will also permit it to exclude its income received from those sales from income tax. This will permit more of the funds raised from its efforts to go toward the many donations the Canton Lions Club makes each year for local, state and world-wide charitable causes.

### Paragraph One: Translated

**Canton, Conn. – November 25, 2014** – The Canton Lions Club has formed a new, tax-exempt entity, CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. The IRS has just granted the new entity 501(c)(3) tax exempt status which permits donors to deduct their donations from their federal income tax.

The first sentence isn't magic. It's shorter and clearer, but more importantly, it tells the story. Instead of being "pleased to announce that it has just been granted," the Canton Lions Club has formed a new, tax-exempt entity. We have action.

The second sentence tells the reader that the IRS has granted tax exempt status and what that status means. That's what your audience needs to hear.

But what about all the rest of the details? They're important, too! See Step Four...

## Step Four: Quote Somebody

Yes, there's a lot more information to share. But it's so much better when someone says it. In this case, we asked our Lions Club President to tell the world why we are so proud of our tax-exempt status. It also allowed us to recognize a member of the club who made tax-exempt status possible:

Here's the original:

This will permit more of the funds raised from its efforts to go toward the many donations the Canton Lions Club makes each year for local, state and world-wide charitable causes.

This charitable tax exempt status also has a special charitable tax deduction feature for corporate and personal donations made to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. Now, both individual and business donations will be tax deductible for federal income tax purposes to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Here's the quote:

"Tax exempt status has been a long-standing goal of the Canton Lions Club," said Carol A. Barlow, president of the Canton Lions Club. "Thanks to the efforts of our Board of Directors, and particularly Michael Donoghue, Esq., corporations as well as individuals can take a charitable tax deduction for any charitable donation made to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. This will enable our club to expand our service to our community, which is the reason we are here. We couldn't be more pleased."

Isn't that nicer? It also gives the news media two people to interview – Carol and Michael.

## Step Five: The Details

Here we are, two paragraphs into the press release. We've talked about tax-exempt, but we haven't talked about Canton Lions. Who are they? What do they do? Why would anyone want to donate money to CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc.? A brief paragraph can be just the thing:

The Canton Lions Club has been active in the Farmington Valley since 1951. The club has long standing partnerships with organizations such as FOCUS, Feeding Children Everywhere, the Canton Fire Department, and the North Canton Volunteer Fire Association to deliver a broad range of services for people in need. This year, the club spearheaded an effort to pack 63,000 meals for needy families and conducted a free pediatric eye screening to that used the latest technology to identify eye diseases in pre-school children in time for these diseases to be treated successfully.

But there's more.

Attorney Donoghue explained that events run by CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc. should result in an increase in the amount of funds going to charitable causes in Canton and beyond. This is because any purchases of goods for sale for charitable fund-raising activities are exempt from state sales tax, and any income received from sales of these goods is also exempt from federal income tax.

"We are particularly pleased to announce that matching donations offered by many businesses are now available for contributions to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc.," said Attorney Donoghue. "We encourage anyone who wishes to donate to the CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc., to send their donations to:

CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc.  
P.O. Box 363  
Canton, CT 06019"

## Step Six: Headline Time

I bet you've been wondering – did we forget about the headline? Not at all.

The headline is the most important element in a press release. It's the icing on the press release cake. It's the reason we read the story. It's the hook that catches a news editor and compels him or her to pursue the story.

I like to write the full story before the headline. Why? Because after the story is written, I have all the details and the high points to write the best headline.

The first headline I write is usually bare bones, simple to a fault:

### **Canton Lions Forms CantonCT Lions Charities to Accept Tax-Exempt Donations**

Then I make it simpler:

### **Canton Lions to Accept Tax-Exempt Donations**

...and more meaningful to ordinary readers:

### **Tax-Exempt Status to Help Canton Lions Increase Service**

I typically recommend this version because it follows our guiding principle: Focus on the audience.

## Step Seven: Finished Release

**For Information Contact:**

Robert Bessel  
860.324.8267  
rbessel@yahoo.com

### **For Immediate Release**

## **Tax-Exempt Status to Help Canton Lions Increase Service**

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Canton, CT 06019”

For more information about the Canton Lions Club and CantonCT Lions Charities, Inc., please visit [www.cantonctlions.org](http://www.cantonctlions.org).