

VALENTINE PUBLIC LIBRARY ADVOCACY POLICY

People who care about the Valentine Public Library and its ongoing mission and services must use their voices to ensure that the library legacy remains viable and fully funded. Below are some ways to utilize library advocates to make a long-lasting and significant difference for the library.

1. **STAY INFORMED:** Stay up to date about the bigger picture of libraries and library-related issues and legislation.
2. **SET GOALS:** Determine what needs to be accomplished. Does a referendum need to be passed? Does the budget need to be increased? Should there be a new law or policy on the state or local level? Should a piece of legislation be defeated? What will it take to make it happen? Once the goals are identified, then begin organization.
3. **GET ORGANIZED:** Define the goals and objectives. Assess the situation and identify critical tasks. Develop a communication plan, a work plan and a way to evaluate results.
4. **DELIVER THE MESSAGE:** set a communication plan with clearly defined key messages.
 - **Identify communication strategies;**
 - 1) Outreach to groups
 - 2) Personal contact
 - 3) Media

*Remember that the most effective is one-on one communication; i.e., a visit to a councilman, commissioner, or legislator is more likely to be remembered than a letter and a *personal* letter carries more weight than a direct mail brochure.

- **Select communication mechanisms;**
 - 1) News releases
 - 2) Media advisories
 - 3) Non-library publications
 - 4) Op-eds and letters to the editor
 - 5) Partnerships
 - 6) Publications
 - 7) Public service announcement
 - 8) Radio shows
 - 9) Speaking engagements
 - 10) Special events and promotions
 - 11) A telephone tree
 - 12) Web and internet outreach (Facebook, blogs, Twitter, wikis, etc.)
- **Speak out;**

For any advocacy campaign to work there must be spokespeople who are knowledgeable and skilled in delivering the library message to others.

A few carefully chosen statistics can be impressive, but stories bring the library message to life.

- 1) Tell stories about how the library has made a difference in your life.
 - a. Personalize remarks.
 - b. Be prepared.
 - c. Practice a conversational style of delivery.
 - d. Show enthusiasm.
 - e. Use visual aids when appropriate.

5. TARGET THE AUDIENCE: Define who will be able to help in achieving the goal. Brainstorm for possible audiences. (For example, if the library enjoys strong support among senior citizens, they may be a primary audience for assisting in the achievement of a particular goal.)

6. DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE MEDIA: It is important that the library have an understanding on how to deal with media contacts. Designated spokespeople should know or have copies of the library's key message on various topics. They should be prepared and give short, punchy quotes known as "sound bites" that can be repeated easily by the hearers.

7. Deal with bad news in a positive way: Although it is never pleasant, bad news can create an opportunity for delivering a positive message and building support. Try to focus on the solution, apologize if appropriate, and prepare one-page message sheets that include key talking points, and answers to the most difficult questions.

8. Get to know the elected officials: They have been elected but how can they help the library's cause? Get to know them - and their staff - first.

- Visit websites and social media pages of officials to learn their issues and priorities.
- Invite them to the library and let them see firsthand how valuable the library is to the community.
- Invite them to a special event.
- Give them specific way they can get involved with the library.
- Invite them to participate in National Library Week.
- Send them e-mails or letters to alert them of important concerns and issues.
- Let them see how constituents are using the services provided by the library.

9. Talk, talk, talk: Look around. There are people everywhere who could use their library and who don't know about the valuable resources just waiting for them. At the grocery store, bank, community meeting, post office, or even on a walk with the dog, talk to people and tell them why the library is important and why it is valuable to the community.

