QuickBytes Hot Topic – Sept 2021   Linda Queen,
CREATING CLUB WEBSITES THAT WORK   CFWC Website Chair

Most CFWC clubs have realized that maintaining an easy-to-navigate website is, quite honestly, the BEST way to keep current members in-the-know and reach today's potential members throughout your community. Anyone, anywhere, anytime can access a website – so make sure yours is doing the job!

Come to terms with the necessity of a website
- Websites have been around many years – designing one is not the daunting task it once was. Some tech know-how is helpful; but there are numerous popular, easy-to-learn web-design programs.
- It's true that newer members might be good candidates for assisting with a club site; but don't ignore other possibilities: hire a website developer; ask tech-savvy friends or family, contact a high school or college computer class.
- Secure a domain name that includes the club name and, ideally, the GFWC acronym (i.e., GFWCAnyTownWomansClub.org). Typically, nonprofit groups use the ".org" suffix.
  Hint: if your club name is a bit obscure (i.e., the "Good Morning Club" or "Ladies Social Club", etc) – do a search using the words in your name to make sure there is no undesired surprise on Google's search results.

What is the GOAL with your website?
- If your club can't be found online, it's truly as if your club doesn't exist! Creating an online space to share your club's mission and promote its contributions to the community is absolutely vital!
- A well-designed website is the best way to attract new members. These potential members will, guaranteed, want to check out your website before joining.
- Keep in mind, club and district websites represent the *entire* CFWC and GFWC organization to the public. Content or posts must not conflict with any aspect of our organization.
- A website requires up-to-date, fresh and easy-to-find information. There's nothing worse than opening a site and seeing old, outdated information. Sadly, that may be your only chance to engage a potential member; that person's enthusiasm to learn more is deflated and you'll never know about the talented future member you lost out on!
- Keep things current! Remove outdated content quickly; shoot for adding new content or photos about 1x a week. If you are "back in business" after last year's Covid restrictions – make sure you remove or update any Covid-related messaging on your website asap!
- For inspiration, take a peek at other club websites by visiting the "CLUBS" page at **cfwc.org**.

A GOOD NONPROFIT WEBSITE WILL:

Prominently show the organization's purpose and goal. Usually, the first thing people want to know when visiting a nonprofit's website is what the organization does, what services it offers, and who it is designed to help. A brief, informative description of the organization should be on the homepage.

Have a feel that matches its service. It is important that the overall "vibe" be friendly and engaging. Not stuffy or stuck-up; yet, not too casual or flippant. You are hoping to engage people to either support you or consider joining. Do this through color scheme, font, photos, and particularly how activities or projects are described. Don't give the impression through your site that someone would not be welcome to join or that expectations of members are burdensome or too time-consuming.

Make it easy to contribute. Donations are critical to nonprofit organizations and women's clubs are no different. Thus, it's important that a website display a quick, easy method to donate to the cause. The

further down a page a "donate button" sits, the less likely people are to find it. If you choose to encourage donations through your site, put it at the <u>top right side of the home page</u>.

Confirm the organization's expertise on its subject. If describing a project that benefits a charitable organization your club supports, be sure to use that organization's full name and that all details are accurate. Perhaps include a link to that organization from your site. Translate acronyms such as "GFWC" when it is first used. Update names of GFWC/CFWC officers/leadership as administrations change.

Show, as well as tell, what the organization does. Have a photo gallery page or place 1-2 interesting, engaging photos on each page. Minimize posed group shots. Permission should be obtained prior to using recognizable photos of children. Also consider obtaining photo releases from members.

Include a 'news and events' section. It's important to give visitors an incentive to get involved with your club, so be sure to add new content often and promote community events you are participating in. A perspective member may visit your website several times before deciding to contact you about membership. Be sure she sees fresh, new news about projects, activities AND include photos!

WHAT WORKS ON A CLUB WEBSITE?

1. HOME PAGE – Mission statement, brief history of club, explains affiliation with CFWC/GFWC.
2. LEADERSHIP – Include photos and brief bios of officers and names of club chairmen.
3. MEMBERSHIP – Info about meetings; dues; how to join; membership application.
4. PROJECTS/EVENTS (aka "What We're Doing") – include active photos of members and brief descriptions. If you include newsletters, consider eblasting just a link to members that will take them to the website.
5. CONTACT PAGE – Create a specific email account (i.e., Clubname@gmail.com). Inquiries received <u>must</u> be monitored by someone who can answer or redirect quickly.
6. MEMBERS ONLY - a "private" section for forms, member directory. Should be password protected. Make sure members understand that the roster cannot be used for any unauthorized or sales-type purpose or shared with outside parties.
7. ONLINE PAYMENT - requires a PayPal account (or other payment processing app) linked to your club's bank account.* Can be useful for new members joining, paying renewal dues, and receiving monetary donations via a "donate" button on the home page.
   *Consider including anticipated PayPal transaction fees in the annual expense budget

What a club website **IS:**
- o 24/7 exposure about your organization. Visitors to your site could be potential members, community leaders, interested donors, or members of other philanthropy organizations.
- o A method to provide information with a "long-ish shelf life" and include more detail than brief postings on a club Facebook page.
- o Well presented, reliable, accurate. Proofread, use good grammar, few abbreviations or acronyms
- o A resource for current members (forms, check requests, club calendar, etc.).
- o Updated often with new content (1x a week or so).
- o An accessible spot to archive newsletters and minutes.

What a club website **ISN'T:**
- o Gossipy; snarky; negative.
- o Invading your members' privacy or exposing identifying info besides their name and club position.
- o A place for personal information, other personal affiliations, or personal events.
- o A place to air personal opinions, city grievances, or political viewpoints.
- o Judgmental about community goings-on or city leadership.

GETTING MEMBERS TO USE THE WEBSITE

- A club website can be the perfect place to house useful (and current) club forms, member directory or yearbook, newsletters and minutes. Less paper copies – chairmen print what they need.
- Consider putting newsletters online and then just eblast the link to members. Saves printing costs and avoids formatting issues re old computers, etc.
- Offer a "members only" section that is password-protected. Explain to members (perhaps make it part of your bylaws) that the membership directory cannot be used or shared by members for any unauthorized or sales-type purpose.
- Bring a laptop to a meeting for a "website walk-thru" presentation on an overhead screen. Tour your own club site of Facebook page, as well as CF and GF websites. [HINT: this would be a reportable Leadership project!]
- As members become familiar with what's on the website, they'll begin to share club news, photos of themselves with club friends – adding up to free publicity *and* possibly new members!
- Encourage chairmen and members to poke around the "CLUBS" tab on CFWC's website. Click on links in different areas of the state; read newsletters or minutes if available. You'll be inspired with new project ideas and ways to update or streamline how your club could do things.

USING CFWC/GFWC LOGOS & TRADEMARKS

CFWC tagline: *STRENGTH UNITED IS STRONGER®*

GFWC taglines: *UNITY IN DIVERSITY®*
LIVING THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT®

   Federated clubs and districts are allowed to use the above trademarks on websites and print materials in either black/white or color. However, they cannot be altered, recolored or reshaped in any way (other than enlarged or reduced in overall size). No additional words or punctuation can be added and the entire tagline must be used, including "®" (which identifies a registered trademark).

SSL "SECURITY" CERTIFICIATES

You've probably attempted to visit websites that opened with a warning, such as: "This site is not secure…" and perhaps been scared away. Don't let this happen to people visiting your site! The way unsecured websites become secured is through installation of an *SSL certificate (***S**ecure **S**ocket **L**ayer). A secure site ranks higher in the listing of results through Google and other search engines; however, it does NOT make a website more resistant to being hacked. An SSL certificate is meant to secure communication between a <u>user</u> and your website; protecting <u>the user's data</u>, not your website.

Obtaining an SSL certificate is encouraged – your club website will rank higher in search results and people visiting your website will be more comfortable opening it. Several levels of security certificates are available, ranging from no fee to premium – contact your website hosting service for information.

NEW for 2022! -- CLUB WEBSITE CONTEST
See next page for details

NEW for 2022! -- CFWC CLUB WEBSITE CONTEST

Club websites are a must-have tool to engage today's prospective new members and people wanting to learn more about your club and our organization. CFWC's Website Contest aims to challenge clubs to develop websites that are organized, easy-to-navigate, and professional-looking; offering information that is both current and credible.

ENTRY DEADLINE
Entries must be received by email before 11:59 pm on **FEBRUARY 15, 2022**.

CONTEST RULES
• Contest submissions must be made via email to ***lindaqueen@roadrunner.com***
• The subject line of the submission email must read *Website Contest Entry*
• The submission email must include:
  - Club name and website address
  - Club president's name and contact information
  - Name and contact information of person submitting the entry
  - Number of club members for 2021-2022 club year
  - 250-word essay describing website purpose and the club's approach to website maintenance and content
• Federated clubs may enter only one (1) website into the contest
• The website homepage must contain links to both CFWC.org and GFWC.org.
• The website must offer a method to contact the club directly for inquiries.

JUDGING & AWARDS
Entries will be judged by CFWC Website Chair and additional members of CFWC's Communications & Public Relations Committee.

Award certificates will be presented at the 2022 CFWC Annual Convention to one (1) club in each membership category (small, medium, intermediate, large) to recognize outstanding achievement in website implementation.

Contest Questions?
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