

Make Note of Notable Members

What do Shirley Temple, Betty Ford and Julia Child all have in common? In addition to being inspirational women, they are all former members of the Junior League, an organization that focuses on developing women as civic leaders and the positive impact they have on their communities. “We have a 113-year-old legacy that’s filled with impressive women who are inspiring to members and surprising to the public,” says Laurie Dodge, director of marketing for the Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc. “Highlighting your notable members can help you show the depth and breadth of your organization.”

“Knowing what you’re trying to achieve through your list is extremely helpful,” Dodge says. “It should portray your organization in the best light, and the people you decide to feature should be based on your overall goals and objectives.” Dodge recommends recognizing your notable members in the following ways:

1. **Spotlight via a monthly newsletter.** In addition to listing the most accomplished members on its website, the Junior League uses a monthly newsletter to announce achievements of exceptional members through profile pieces and special columns. “You see some of our members have become Supreme Court justices, celebrities and first ladies, but we also want to give the spotlight to regular women who have done extraordinary things in their communities,” Dodge says. “Writing about them in our newsletter, *Connected*, is just another way we can do that.” When possible, make sure to fact-check these stories with people to ensure their character and accomplishments are portrayed accurately.
2. **Dedicate a page on your website.** The Association of Junior Leagues International’s Famous Members Web page includes well-known figures, accomplished politicians and women who have been a beacon of light for the organization (see <https://www.ajli.org/?nd=p-who-legacy-famous-list>). This page should be updated on a reactive basis, or whenever you feel it’s necessary to add a powerful member to the list. Dodge recommends periodically reviewing archives to make sure you haven’t missed any members who may have moved on to become well-known individuals in their respective fields.
3. **Celebrate birthdays, holidays and awareness months.** “Social media has made it easy for members to become engaged by commenting on archival photos of famous members like Shirley Temple and Eleanor Roosevelt,” Dodge says. “During National Women’s History Month, we do multiple Facebook posts and tweets to recognize historical members as well as current members who are doing fantastic things.”

Source: Laurie Dodge, Director of Marketing and Development, Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc., New York, NY. Phone (212) 951-8300. E-mail: ldodge@ajli.org. Website: www.ajli.org

PUBLIC SPEAKING ADVICE

Know Your Presentation Environment in Advance

Making a presentation on your home turf can be challenging enough. But what about when you are asked to make a presentation at an unfamiliar location — a hotel conference room, a convention center, a university seminar room?

To avoid any presentation surprises, follow these planning principles:

- **Know your speaking environment in advance.** Ask for the room’s dimensions. Know seating capacity. Ask about lighting, sound system and temperature controls.
- **Be specific in covering presentation requests.** Will you need a lectern, a lavalier microphone or a prompter? Get your request confirmed in writing.
- **Arrive early.** Schedule your arrival early enough to check out the presentation space in advance. Look at the seating configuration. Does it need changing? Test the microphone. Find a contact person who will remain close by should something go wrong.

Use Technology to Make the Most of Your Membership Form

It’s something your members will see at least once a year — the membership renewal form — so why not make the most of it and simplify the renewal process at the same time?

To do so, try these easy ideas:

1. **Put your form online and make it interactive.** It makes renewing that much quicker and easier. When you get members on the phone who are dragging their feet because they don’t have time to fill out the form, refer them to your website, where you have created an interactive renewal form they can type their information into and submit. In about five minutes, they can be done and you’ve kept your member.
2. **Allow members to print their own proof-of-membership letters.** If members have the need to verify membership to attend certain events or take advantage of certain member benefits, make it easy for them — and you. Give them access to printable proof-of-membership letters on a members-only section of your website.
3. **Add a line or two to your form.** Now that your form is online, it’s relatively simple to get some additional information from your members without inconveniencing them. So, if you want their opinions about different membership options or new benefits you are considering, just ask by adding a line to the form.
4. **Boost your bottom line.** Add a donation option on your form as well. Many members will welcome the opportunity to multitask by renewing their membership and making their annual donation at the same time.

Think Positive

- Don’t let setbacks slow you down as you seek to make your membership organization the best it can be. Recognize that any failure puts you one step closer to your next win. Be willing to make mistakes — and to forgive and support others when they do the same.