

News (Continued from page 1)

Time-tested strategies for getting news coverage

1. For "minor" classroom activities which have interesting photo opportunities, take pictures yourself. Most newspapers these days accept color photos, provided that they are clear and bright. Submit the photos along with a short article in which you clearly explain the activity and identify people in the photo.¹

2. For interesting "major" events or activities that will present many photo opportunities, invite a reporter to your classroom. Do this by mailing or faxing a press release with a brief description of the event about a week ahead of time. Follow it up with a phone call a few days in advance.

3. If something "big" is happening at your school, like a day devoted to mathematics, with assemblies or panel discussions, invite the electronic media to cover it along with the print media. Network affiliates as well as local public television stations may be interested. And don't forget cable networks in your area—broadcasting educational events fulfills some of their community programming requirements. Mail or fax a printed summary of the event at least two weeks in advance. Follow up your written release with a phone call.

faxes or electronic mail) to these individuals.

A good article or press release is constructed around the who, what, when, where, and why. Avoid judgmental words and editorial phrases like "an outstanding project." Follow the "Dagnet" advice: "the facts, ma'am, just the facts." Try starting your story with an interesting fact or question like "How many combinations of pizza can your local pizzeria really deliver?" Then, follow it up with the facts your students discovered. Be accurate, write in clear and grammatically correct language, and (above all) be concise. It's a good idea to have a colleague read and edit your story before you send it out. Don't despair if an article is not printed; it may be because of space limitations, or other factors beyond your control. Keep trying.

Remember also, it's not just classroom activities and our students' work that are newsworthy. Publicizing our own accomplishments is extremely important in these days of tight funding for education. It is vital that the taxpayers know that teaching is not just a ten-month, eight-to-three occupation. Newspapers frequently devote a column to professional development and advancement. Send in a photo of yourself with a

¹Include first and last names. Add titles and job descriptions if applicable, or grade levels for students.

brief press release any time you participate in a conference—for example by introducing the speakers in a session, or making a presentation. If you complete a degree, are elected to an office in your regional CTM, or receive an award or other recognition, let your community know: parents want to know that their children's teachers are recognized as leaders in their profession. Make sure that you clear all news releases with the appropriate school personnel, such as your building administrator or principal. (In fact, it is good public relations to invite administrators to such events; they like to get into the act, too.) If your school does not have a standard news release form, you should create one; be sure to check it with your administration before you send it out. And *do send it out!* You and your students will be on your way to fame—if not fortune—and the whole mathematics community will benefit from your efforts. ❖

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References

- [1] "Kennett Mathematicians Solve a Mystery", *Community Courier*, 2-15-95.
- [2] Neil Goldstein, "The Case of the Stolen Diamonds." Performed regularly in the *Leadership Program in Discrete Mathematics*—the plot involves Euler paths.
- [3] "Applying Their Skills", *Wilmington News Journal*, "Crossroads" Sec., 5-4-94, p. 1.

Venn Diagram Game (Continued from page 5)

Once all the students seem to be guessing correctly where they belong, I ask them to tell me what they think the rule is. Some students will give incorrect rules; I help them see why the rule is incorrect by asking them whether certain students in the diagram are in the right place, according to the (wrong) rule. On the other hand, sometimes a student will come up with a rule that works for everyone in the diagram, even though it is not the rule I had in mind; I'll point out that their rule is also correct—based on the evidence so far. After I have done the "rule-making" a couple times, I ask pairs of students to take over running the game. (I advise them not to make the rule too complicated, and usually have them tell me the rule in advance.)

I have used this activity very successfully with adults in teacher inservice training as well as with 4th-graders. My 5/6th-grade math club used to beg me to play the game! I have found it an excellent way to model the process of inductive reasoning, i.e., learning from examples. When you only have a few examples to work with, it's hard to guess the rule correctly—you have to keep trying. The more examples you have, the fewer the possibilities, and the easier it becomes to find the rule. ❖