



# Community Outreach

## Defined:

Community Outreach is an effort by individuals in an organization to connect its ideas or practices to the efforts of other organizations, groups, specific audiences or the general public.

Unlike marketing, outreach does not inherently revolve around a product or strategies to increase market share. Typically non-profits, civic groups, and churches engage in outreach.

Outreach often takes on an educational component (i.e., the dissemination of ideas), but it is increasingly common for organizations to conceive of their outreach strategy as a two-way street in which outreach is framed as engagement rather than solely dissemination or education.

Outreach strategies are linked to the organization's mission, and define targets, goals, and milestones.

## So what does this mean to CAP?

This means that in order for CAP to survive we must

- Let the community know who we are
- Let the community know what we do
- Let the community know why what we do is important and how it supports the community
- Let the community know how they can support us

A lot of what you do accomplished these goals. Your press releases, newsletters, the website all tell your story, but your unit must do more.

Squadrons can take much of their regular activities and turn them into community outreach events. Here are some examples:

### Cadet Program Activities:

Color Guard Presentations  
Parades  
Honor Guard Presentations  
Funeral Details  
Cadet Speeches to Local Groups/Schools  
Road and Park Clean-up

### Aerospace Related Activities:

Fly-A-Teacher  
Media Flights  
Hangar and Aircraft Tours  
School Visitations  
Community Presentations  
Joint Events with other Groups (Young Eagles)

### Operations / Emergency Services

#### Activities:

Practice SAREX's  
Table Top Missions  
Joint Training with Local Agencies  
Hosting Training

### Squadron Activities:

Open Houses  
Recognition Nights  
Recruiting Drives  
Fund-Raising Efforts

## Working Smarter not Harder

Don't forget that you can do more with the work that you are already doing.

Consider sending your newsletter, releases and website updates as appropriate to:

Political and Government Leaders  
Community Leaders  
Other Aviation groups  
Local Law Enforcement Agencies  
Military recruiters

Also consider sending in items to "community Calendars" and producing your own media such as videos or appearing on Public Access TV.

## Results:

Please consider your Community Outreach efforts as simply another way of fund-raising.

Making and keeping friendships for your squadron is a **long term program** that requires effort, dedication and a team effort.

But the results are worth it.

# How to run a successful unit open house

Lt Col Darin Ninness, Concord Comp Sqdn, NH Wing

So you wanna have a unit recruiting night (open house, membership night, whatever you choose to call it is up to you), but you really don't want to go broke/kill yourself in the process? Well, join the club!

This article will document the preparations for the Concord Composite Squadron's 18 October 2001 Open House and membership Night as we make those preparations.



NOTE: What works for us may not work for you, but it can serve as a guide that you can modify as necessary. Open house events are location & unit specific, so you have to tailor your event to your unit. We're not saying that this is the only way to do it, just one of the ways to do it.

As a benchmark, the Concord Squadron's previous membership nights have netted the following:

OCTOBER 2000: 14 cadets, 4 seniors

JANUARY 2001: 15 cadets, 1 senior, 2 CSMs

MAY 2001: 14 cadets, 1 senior

## SCHEDULING

From experience, we know that we run three open house/recruiting meetings a year: Fall (Sept/Oct); Winter (January); Spring (May/June). This gives us plenty of time between each to run a Cadet Basic Training cycle and give our CBT trainers plenty of time to work on their own achievements.

In the case of our fall open house, we have some external considerations for scheduling:

1. We want to allow a few weeks after the start of school to allow cadets to arrange for recruiting events in their school
2. The local mall holds a "charity expo" in October, where we will have an opportunity to recruit for two days in the mall for free (they charge a lot of money otherwise).
3. We are scheduled for an IG inspection on 11 October.
4. Holding the Open House too late in October can push the CBT graduation too late into January and past the January Open House.

We start to look at a date as far out as May 2001, which is when we hold our spring open house. We'd like to know when we're holding the next recruiting night so when people visit after the timeframe in which we [accept new members from the spring open house](#), we can tell them when our next open house is. By late May, we know its going to be in October, but not much more.

Our recruiting goal for this event is 15 cadets and 2 seniors.

## PREPARATIONS

**25 July. T-84 days.**

***When Is It Going to Be?***

Contact the mall for information on the next charity expo so we have a better idea of when in October to schedule our open house. The mall is still up in the air as to what weekend they will hold their charity expo and they claim they won't know for awhile. Time to make our best guess and stick with it. As mentioned in the Scheduling section above, we already know most of our constraints. 4 October is out, 11 October is out, 18 October is looking more and more like the date, placing us after the IG inspection and the mall recruiting. At this point, we have over 80 days to plan and prepare for this event, and planning is the key. *(A later check of the calendar reveals that starting the CBT cycle the week after the Open House on 25 October, and accounting for the holidays, will put the the CBT graduation right on same day as the January Open House. Plans will start in October for the January Open House, since it is not dependent upon external events like the October event is. We'll plan for the January Open House and the Fall CBT cycle graduation on the same night and make a big deal out of it..)*

**26 July. T-83 days.**

**Gimme some stuff!**

Order recruiting materials from NHQ via the online ordering tool. Emphasis is heavy on cadet materials since we already have a ton of senior materials. Print a couple pages of [Avery 5160 address labels](#) with Open House-specific information for the brochures when they arrive.

**1 August. T-77 days.** *Time for Some Assignments.*

Assign areas of responsibility to squadron staff members so they may begin working their assigned areas.

The PAO is responsible for media contacts.

The Personnel Officer begins work on the new member packets.

The Deputy for Cadets and the Aerospace Officer are each responsible for the cadet programs and aerospace displays, respectively.

The Commander is handling the main PowerPoint presentation (which, he remembers, needs a little tightening).

The Cadet Commander is tasked with a small drill demo, along with a brief spiel in the middle of the presentation (something the Explorers call a "call to join" in their open house membership events. Usually delivered by a ranking cadet. Its a good selling point!)

One of the squadron pilots gets handed the pilot display. He also is computer and simulator savvy, so he volunteers to setup a yoke & pedals to plug into the projector after the presentation.

One of the Cadet Sponsor Members volunteers to bring some baked goods in, while the mother of two cadets offers to handle the liquid refreshments (punch and coffee).

**15 August - T-63 days.** *Time to Let The Press Know*

PAO revises boiler-plate open house [press release](#) (this baby has been in use for 3-4 years now) to fit the dates. Review and update the media contact listing. We have an Excel spreadsheet listing each newspaper, radio station, TV station and other media contacts in the area with name, address, phone, fax, e-mail and web addresses. E-mailed and faxed open house press release to all media outlets.

**17 August - T-61 days.** *The Politicians.*

We begin compiling list of local government officials that we'd like to invite to our open house. Starting with our town, we visit the city website and get all the information about the city councilors and the mayor. Then we expand our search to the surrounding towns and villages, as well as all the state senators and representatives from all of these areas. When finished, we have a list of almost 50 people that we're going to invite by letter. These go into an Excel spreadsheet that contains first name, last name, title, district, address, city, state, zip, phone number and e-mail address for a later mail merge in MS Word. (*We use Excel just because its a quick and dirty way to get the job done. A full-featured database app like Access might be handy, but that takes time and effort. Anybody with Word & Excel can do this in a few minutes with almost no training.*)

**20 August - T-58 days.** *The Politicians, Part 2.*

Finish the invitation letter ([click here](#) to download the letter) to the local government officials and perform a Word mail-merge to produce the letters and mailing labels. Print, sign, fold, stuff and seal 48 envelopes. Whew. (in reality, that only takes about 20 minutes)

**21 August - T-57 days.** *Posters, anyone?*

Fixed up the dates on the black & white 8.5 x 11 flyers and [posters](#) for cadets to hand out. Printed the first batch on golden rod paper.

**29 August - T-50 days.** *The Politicians, Part 3.*

Mail all 48 letters to the local government officials. Cross fingers and hope a few show up.

**30 August - T-49 days.** *Hey, We're Gonna Be On TV!*

Gentleman from the local newspaper calls. He's doing a new TV show for the local cable-access channel on community events. Wants to know if we'd like to be on it prior to our Open House. Heck yes! :) We hammer out a date the first week of October for a taping.

**1 September - T-47 days.** *Flapping in the Breeze*

After a brief flap over domain names, the squadron website returns at a different URL. Fix all the flyers and posters to reflect new URL. Growl repeatedly. Reprint Avery 5160 labels for brochures reflecting new URL.

**3 September - T-45 days.** *A Chance Meeting*

Met a newbie teacher from the local middle school who is teaching 6th grade. We get to talking about Civil Air Patrol (he knows a couple of our cadets). He offers to take flyers and get them into the hands of the 7th graders at the middle school. Dance a little jig after that one.

**4 September - T-44 days.** *What about the schools?*

After talking to the teacher the day before, we suddenly realized that we were forgetting about the local school administrators, principals and guidance counselors who could be our greatest allies in getting recruits out of the schools. Start by creating another Excel spreadsheet of all the principals, assistant principals, deans of students, guidance counselors and superintendents of schools in the immediate area. The list grows to over 70 names. Begin writing a letter for this mail merge which touts the educational benefits of CAP.

**5 September - T-43 days.** *More flyers! More flyers!*

Reprinted another batch of flyers for the cadets to distribute. 500 in all. Passed out flyers at Commander's Call that evening to invite other units to our open house. (*Not only are we interested in showing other CAP squadrons how we run our membership recruiting, but we also like to have as many people in uniform as possible to show some strength!*)

**10 September - T-38 days.** More schools.

Finish writing the letter to the school principals & administrators. Continue compiling names and addresses of school administrators.

**12 September - T-36 days.** Lock the doors.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September send a shockwave through the unit. The battalion XO at the National Guard armory we meet at informs that we're going to be unable to access the armory due to the security considerations in the aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks. Uh oh. The scramble begins to find a new meeting location.

**13 September - T-35 days.** Assembling the packets.

Assembled a packet for each of the school administrators (some 35 or more!). Each packet gets the letter, the CAP Story pamphlet, the Plane & Pilot Magazine article, a couple cadet recruiting brochures, a couple teacher recruiting brochures, and one each of our three flyers for the upcoming open house.

**13 September - T-35 days.** Trying to have a \*real\* meeting.

Conducted the usual squadron meeting at Wing HQ instead of the Armory. Apart from discussion of 11 Sept events, cadets want to know whether or not we'll be back in the armory by 18 October for the unit open house. Inform the cadets that 18 Oct is a go whether we're in the armory or not.

**17 September - T-31 days.** In the mail it goes!

Packets for school administrators go into the mail today. In all, about 35 packets went out, and in retrospect, that could have been reduced to one per school with multiple addressees. That would have reduced our mailing costs. Next time.

**18 September - T-30 days.** Refreshing!

Coordinated with Lieutenant in charge of our refreshments. Between her and several parents, we'll have punch, cookies, brownies and a cake. Yum. Bring on the chow!

**18 September - T-30 days.** Time to find a new place to meet...

National Guard armory XO calls to say that it doesn't look like we can access the armory for our meeting on the 20th, either. The near future is not looking bright for access, either. Time to step up the hunt for a new meeting location and to inform potential attendees that we're not going to be at the armory.

**19 September - T-29 days.** Thanks to the Grand Poobah!

The local Elks Lodge offers the use of their basement until the end of November for unit meetings. They have an upstairs hall we can use for formations or inclement weather drill if its not being used otherwise. A little closer coordination secures the use of the hall for the Open House. Planning and coordination can resume in earnest.

**20 September - T-28 days.** Show me a sign..

Co-project officer contacts local rental establishment to find out about renting one of those two-sided flexible letter signs. \$30 for a week. He reserves the sign for the week prior to the open house. The sign will be placed out in front of our Wing HQ, which is across the street from the Elks Lodge, to improve our visibility and advertise the open house. Begin making arrangements for a sign to go in front of the Armory redirecting visitors to the Elks Lodge for the open house. Submit a notice to the local newspapers and radio stations revising the location and asking that all current announcements be altered to reflect our change in venue.

**21 September - T-27 days.** No chance for the mall rats..

The recruiting opportunity in the mall is dead after the mall informs they have changed their "charity expo" into a "night-out shopping" event without the participation of local non-profits.

**27 September - T-21 days.** Waving the flag.

Monthly unit bulletin for October runs a reminder that the Open House is on 18 October at the Elks Club instead of the Armory, and that recruiting efforts by members should be directed toward potential members attending that night. Also, cadets are advised that the "wear your uniform to school" day in conjunction with the Open House is 15 October, the Monday before the activity.

**1 October - T-17 days.** Preparations for TV..

Meet with the gentleman from the local cable station for a "pre-interview" leading up to the taping of the cable show. Arrange for our cadet commander and cadet deputy commander to be on the show, as well.

**2 October - T-16 days.** And the Emmy goes to...

Tape the TV show for later broadcast this evening. We hit the open house angle hard. Very hard. 30 minute show goes by in what seems like 15 minutes. If this brings even 10 potential members in we'll be doing well.

**6 October - T-12 days.** Where are the other 7 dwarves?

Pass out flyers for open house at Wing Conference (*no, we're not bashful..*)

**7 October - T-11 days.** You've got mail!

Created a short e-mail alert for the invited guests (state senators & representatives, school administrators and counselors) to let them know that we're not going to be at the armory and directions to the Elks' Club hall. Several lawmakers respond that they plan to attend. Unfortunately, the 18th is also a big city council meeting, so we probably cannot expect any city councilors.

**8 October - T-10 days.** Packets, packets everywhere...

Begin assembling the new member packets. Each packet consists of a highly-modified ANG recruiting folder obtained from the local ANG unit, several of the CAP recruiting "four color glossies," a couple locally developed Q&A sheets, a bookstore order form with instructions, and an application packet consisting of a CAPF 12 or 15 with detailed instructions.

All told we assemble 50 packets. About 40 cadet and 10 senior.

**11 October - T-7 days.** Who is doing what?

Coordinate with the participants to confirm their assignments. The ES-rated troopers will setup an ES display. The deputy commander for cadets and some of the cadets will make arrangements for a CP-specific display. The pilots plan to bring a computer-based flight simulator to setup and run. Cadets are assigned to duties like door guard and greeter, while others are run thru a short drill routine by the first sergeant for demonstration purposes.

Finalize the schedule with the staff. We'll call the event to order just after 6:30 (civilians are notoriously late, right?), and after brief welcoming remarks by the commander, there will be a short graphic presentation, a drill demonstration and an opportunity to ask questions in the group setting. Then we'll let everybody walk around and "press the flesh" while munching cookies and drinking punch. That's where the \*real\* recruiting happens.

**13 October - T-5 days.** Signs, signs, everywhere there are signs..

Arrive at Wing HQ for orientation flights to find the flexible letter sign on the lawn pointing to the Elk's Club across the

street. The sign is visible from a half-mile away. Looks pretty good, too.

**15 October - T-3 days.** TV Premiere!

TV show that was taped on 2 October appears on local cable access channel. It will be shown several times over the next three days. Same day, a newspaper article about Civil Air Patrol appears in the local paper. Several interested people call that evening.

**16 October - T-2 days.** Next slide, please..

Put the finishing touches on the PowerPoint presentation for the event. Make some modifications to the presentation to reflect CAP's involvement in the events following September 11th.

Phone calls continue. Since the article in the paper, we've probably gotten 10 calls! Up to this point, we've gotten about 35 phone calls relating to the open house since we started handing out flyers. Based on that and other indications, we estimate that we might get as many as 100 people at the event. I leave a message for my ANG liaison to get more folders for recruiting packets. The 50 we have may not be enough.

**18 October - D Day!** Time for the Big Game

Change the flex-letter sign in the morning from "18 OCT" to "TONIGHT!"

Arrive at the hall about 1630 hrs for setup. A couple cadets arrive a few minutes later and start setting up chairs for the guests. We set up a large "theater-style" area for the presentation, and the ES, AE & CP displays are setup behind and to one side of that. The refreshments are along the back wall. Recruiting packets are held back until after the presentations so that they only go to the folks who are \*really\* interested. Other materials are available at each of the displays.

1800 hrs. Folks start trickling in. By 1815, its a full-blown flood. Yikes. They're packing the place. Several members from other units arrive to bolster the blue-uniform presence. Two of our cadets arrive in BDUs. Someone always misses the message.

1840 hrs. "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome you to the Concord Composite Squadron's Fall Open House and Recruiting Night...."

### **The Aftermath**

After wading thru this morass, you're probably thinking "man, that seems like a lot of work for recruiting." You're right, it is. But spread out over a period of 3 months of preparations, its all very small, bite-sized chunks that are easily accomplished. The key to that, of course, is prior planning.

But more importantly, did we accomplish what we set out to do? I'd say "yes, we did!" Not only did we intend to recruit new members, we were also seeking to raise the awareness of Civil Air Patrol's missions throughout New Hampshire's capital region with an eventual goal of starting a new unit nearby. To that end, we packed over 75 non-members into the hall, including a state representative and a state senator, all interested enough in finding out more about Civil Air Patrol to actually come to the unit for a visit.

How many people did we eventually get? Since we're not to the end of our new member period, we're still not sure yet. The night of the 18th we handed out about 35 cadet membership packets, and 9 senior member packets. At the following week's meeting, 25 October, there were 22 prospective cadets in the Cadet Basic Training class, and about 8 interested adults. We handed out another 9 cadet packets and three or four more senior packets that night.

As of this writing, on 9 November, we've received 14 applications. Eight have been mailed to NHQ and another six are awaiting checks or fingerprint cards to be joined up. We anticipated that 14-16 more cadet apps and 2-3 more senior applications, including a potential chaplain, will come into the unit in the next two weeks prior to our 22 Nov deadline.

What's next? Well, 19 October started planning for the next one on 24 January 2002. Good recruiting is like rust: it *never* sleeps.

More Online at: <http://www.cadetstuff.org/archives/000113.html#000113>