

GUEST SPEAKERS

No matter how active your club competitions are, no matter how skilled and willing your own members are in helping with programs, there's nothing like having "outside" or guest speakers to give the club a lift. They offer fresh ideas and generate new enthusiasm.

Guest speakers may be from another club or a nearby city. They may be professional photographers, artists, teachers, or newspaper people. They may be manufacturers' representatives. Or they may be nationally known speakers identified by your Camera Club Council or PSA Chapter.

Whether they come to your club free of charge or are paid fees or expenses, speakers are guests and should be treated with every courtesy. Speakers can relax and put on better programs if they are given the kind of hospitality they deserve.

Plan these special meetings with care and leave nothing to chance for these results:

- *Visitors will be impressed with the club's ability to obtain distinguished speakers. Well promoted, well attended, smooth running meetings can turn visitors into new club members.
- * No matter how small your group, a reputation for organizing friendly, successful lecture meetings will give it a good rating among clubs. Remember, just as you have a list of favorite speakers, so speakers have a list of favorite clubs. It pays dividends to have your club included in such a category.

PRELIMINARY PLANNING

Should the meeting be open to club members only, members and guests, or to the general public as well? This is influenced by the type of program offered.

If a fee is involved, the club can finance this in many ways. It can sell tickets to the public at a nominal cost. An affluent club may pay expenses out of its treasury. Expenses may be shared by two or more clubs. In some instances, local photo dealers will subsidize the event.

Starting times of meetings vary widely among clubs. However, schedule your start early and begin on time. A long wait disturbs your speaker and makes the audience restless. If you must vacate your meeting place at a specified time, plan accordingly. Allow a half hour for a question and answer period, for the audience to meet the speaker and for packing up.

One person should be responsible for all arrangements with the speaker and for the program. Assistants can be drafted to do some of the work, such as helping the speaker set up before the program and pack up afterwards. It is important to make and confirm all arrangements with the speaker in writing. These details include:

- * Date and time.
- * Name and address of meeting place.
- * Title and length of program.
- * Equipment needed.
- * Fee or expenses, if any.
- * Accommodations, if speaker is remaining overnight.
- * When, where, and how speaker is to be met.
- * Home and office addresses, home and cell phone numbers of person in charge.

If negotiations are made well in advance of the meeting, keep in touch with the speaker. Reconfirm the basic data two weeks before the event. As a precaution, the Program Director and the President should both know how and where to reach the speaker a day or two before the lecture. Secure publicity photographs and data from the speaker well before they will be needed.

Ascertain whether a speaker who is staying overnight wishes hotel or motel reservations, or prefers to be a house guest. If he or she will be in town an extra day or weekend, plan some form of entertainment. This need not be elaborate (e.g., a meal at the home of an officer, a local field trip, an evening at a member's home with a group of other members). Check with the speaker whenever possible before you plan since some prefer activity and others do not.

PUBLICITY

Usually attendance at any meeting is in direct proportion to the thoroughness of the publicity. A casual notice in the club's newsletter isn't enough. Good publicity is the result of careful planning. If your club does not have a member assigned to this task, one should be appointed, at least for such special events. For more information regarding Club Publicity, see the document linked on the PSA Club Services web site, Getting Started webpage entitled "Club Publicity."

TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS

You want to look professional to your visiting speakers as well as to your audience, so make sure all physical arrangements are completed in advance. With the speakers, check everything at the meeting place on the afternoon of the program if possible. Speakers normally insist on inspecting the technical setup well before the program. They know from experience that all too often well-laid plans go amiss.

Be sure your meeting place is adequate. If your club meeting room is not large enough for special events, arrange to use a community center, museum, utilities company, school, or YMCA auditorium. Here are some important considerations if you have any latitude in the selection of a meeting place: ventilation, lighting, and parking facilities.

If you expect a sizable audience, arrange for a public address system. Test it in advance. Recheck it to be certain it is properly adjusted to the speaker's voice and height. The speaker may wish a podium with a microphone and light attached, or may prefer a pin "mike." Many clubs have purchased their own pin mikes which they loan to visiting speakers. Many speakers require special sound equipment or assistance in setting up their own systems. These needs should be determined well in advance of the program.

TO SHOW PRINTS: Speakers will require a sturdy easel that is properly illuminated. If there is no stage, make sure the easel is placed high enough for those in the back rows to see. Provide two tables and assign a member to assist in handling the prints.

TO SHOW DIGITAL IMAGES: Provide an efficient projector with remote control and a sharp, brilliant lens. Double check to be sure the lens is clean. Have an extra bulb on hand.

Be certain that the screen is pure white, otherwise color will be degraded. Use one large enough so images will not be cut off and place it high enough for all to see.

Appoint an experienced projectionist ahead of time. This person should be on hand early enough to become familiar with the equipment and conditions and to receive instructions from the speaker. Arrange for a standby projectionist, just in case.

See that a bottle of water is handy for the speaker.

Appoint a member in charge of lights, ready to turn them on and off when necessary. It's also important to know where the fuse box is located and to have spares in case of emergency.

If your club does not have a greeting committee to take care of visitors, it is wise to create one. The committee duties are: watching for visitors, introducing them to members and making them feel at home. Some clubs keep a book for guests to register their names and addresses. This can be used for following up prospective members.

THE SPEAKER'S ARRIVAL

For your peace of mind, try to have the speaker arrive early in the afternoon of the lecture. If the speaker is traveling by car, have them phone on arrival. If the speaker comes by train or plane, be sure to have someone meet the speaker.

Most clubs take speakers out to dinner. Pick them up. Don't let them try to find the restaurant by themselves. A friendly club "shares" its visitor. Invite all members to join you at dinner, dutch treat. If you have a large group, make reservations in advance, and allow extra time for dinner. See that the speaker arrives at the hall a half-hour ahead of scheduled starting time.

Assign a club member to remain with the speaker from the time you first meet until the final good bye. This person should introduce the speaker to the people providing assistance and to club officers and members. He or she must never neglect the speaker, either before or after the program.

PRESENTING THE PROGRAM

Make every effort possible to start your program punctually. Don't penalize those who come on time. Keep routine announcements to a minimum, it's not the night for club business.

Introducing a speaker is an art. Be sure that biographical data is correct. Don't get the name, honors, or club membership wrong. Make the introduction laudatory, but keep it Brief. Don't give a detailed outline of the lecture.

If the program runs over an hour and a half, a short intermission halfway through is desirable. If you have a ten-minute "stretch" get the audience back to their seats promptly. A question and answer period at the close of a program is customary, but don't let it run too long. If yours is a large meeting attended by the public this may introduce complications. A better method would be to invite the audience to question the speaker individually after the program.

The concluding remarks are as important as the introduction. It is the responsibility of the member who opens the meeting to close it. He or she should thank the speaker briefly and invite visitors to the next regular meeting of the club, naming the place, date, and time.

THE FOLLOW-THROUGH

Help the speaker pack up their equipment and round up everything. When ready to leave, check carefully so that nothing is left behind.

If a fee is involved, have a check or cash, ready at the close of the program and present it unobtrusively. A nice gesture is to take the speaker out for coffee or refreshments. Naturally, you'll return the speaker to wherever they are staying or to the airport, if necessary.

Extend your hospitality to the next day if the speaker stays over. As previously suggested, try to be of service and be prepared to entertain modestly.

It is important to write the speaker a "thank you" email. Send copies of any publicity, as well as comments, favorable and unfavorable, to the speaker for his or her information.