

Publicizing Events at Small to Medium Size Stores

By Mary Gleysteen, Eagle Harbor Book Company

At Eagle Harbor Books, we try to give the community multiple ways to find out about events at the store. Here's what we've learned.

Paid Advertising: If you have it, use co-op money to buy ads. These ads both draw attention to the event and make the local media aware of your existence, increasing the likelihood that they will notice press releases, list programs in their calendar and entertainment sections, and cover events as news.

Press Releases: The most effective publicity is often free. Sending press releases to a list of local and regional media, including everything from the big city dailies read by your customers to community and specialty monthly and quarterly newsletters like the local library newsletter, arts council, chamber of commerce, historical society, school districts, etc. Be sure to make this list available to publicists and the author visiting your store.

It's okay to send out more than one press release for each event.

We send out 3 press releases for our programs- a quarterly listing of events (this is particularly useful for the monthly newsletters); a monthly listing that goes out the 15th of the preceding month; and a press release for the actual event that goes out 2 weeks before the event.

You can send press releases by email including links to publishers' or authors' websites or their email or phone contact information

Additional print press releases and/or flyers for particular events can be mailed to specialty groups, eg for a birding book-to the local Audubon society, land trust, feedstore, science classes and the nature writer at each of the newspapers in your area.

Put the author to work: Authors can be very effective in publicizing their events in your store. They or their publishers frequently provide easel-backed signs, or posters with the time and date of the reading, or will print and mail postcards announcing the event. Ask for a stack for the counter or for use as bag stuffers. Authors will also promote their reading at your store on their websites and link to your store. Get them to tell their readers how to obtain signed copies from you.

Use available In-house Publicity: We announce our events via the store's bimonthly newsletter and email newsletter, flyers on the doors, and events calendars posted in several spots in the store and placed on chairs at events. Try sending out email reminders of author events, along with a book review and a link to your website so that the customer can order the book.

Displays: Use window displays; a special "events" corner or space with the books of upcoming authors displayed; shelf talkers in books in their sections; and notices at the counter. We have a sandwich board on the sidewalk and a large "today" banner that we put in the window display the day of the event.

Cross Promotions: Ask other business to post flyers or announce your events. The local

knitting shop handed out bookmarks for *A Good Yarn* and displayed a copy of the book along with a notice of our recent event.

Word of mouth is still the best publicity of all. Chatting up your customers, friends, neighbors and total strangers at the supermarket can boost attendance. Think of it as handselling your event.

Even if you do all of the above and more, there will always be events for which attendance is disappointing (you unwittingly scheduled it on Superbowl Sunday, for example, or there's a hot city council debate the night your author is in town, or for some other less discernable reason). Your splendid efforts at publicity will not have been in vain, however, because you will have marketed the author's book and the fact that your store is a place where things are happening and an interesting place to shop.

Mary Gleysteen is events coordinator at Eagle Harbor Book Co. on Bainbridge Island in Washington and your Book Events Book Pro. Reach her at 206-842-5332.