

## November 2014 Opportunity for Guidance: The Essential Pair – A Good Story + an Ask

### APPRECIATIVE ICEBREAKER

Take a moment and reflect on these questions:

- Why do you love the League?
- Why did you join the League?
- Why are you so passionate about the League?

### GUIDANCE

When we talk about best practices for membership recruitment and engagement, we often talk about the need to demonstrate the value of membership in the League. We understand that we need to show people why they should care about and believe enough in LWV and its mission that they will join us in “making democracy work.” We try to show them the impact of their placing their values next to ours to make our communities and our democracy healthy, vibrant and strong by calling them to some action, such as volunteering with us, joining us or giving financial support.

This sounds good, but how do we do that effectively and efficiently? Our #1 best tool is to share our story (personal or League) and to follow that up with an ask – to join, to volunteer, or to donate.

Sharing your personal story about what the League means to you or sharing about the impact the League has had on your community are the best ways to convey the value of membership in the League. Reflect back on all the essential voter services work your League has done this year, stories of impact inspire others to engage and begin creating League stories of their own. Stories are:

- |             |              |                |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| ✓ Relatable | ✓ Passionate | ✓ Motivational |
| ✓ Memorable | ✓ Compelling | ✓ Authentic    |

According to Andy Goodman, a trainer and national expert on storytelling:

*...while we will always need hard facts to make our cases, we often fail to realize that the battle for hearts and minds starts **with the hearts**. The audience you seek will only give its attention to things it cares about, and caring is not an entirely rational activity. Consequently, it's incumbent upon us to make an emotional connection before we start feeding them raw facts, and stories have this ability. That's one of the reasons that they have been around for eons, and, to my mind, continue to be the single most effective communication tool at our disposal.*

### **“GOOD” STORIES**

While there are many resources about what makes a “good” or effective story (see below), there is one key element that we want to elevate here: the WHY.

Look at these two questions:

1. What do you do in League?
2. Why do you love the League?

How do the responses differ? Which is more compelling? In most cases, it will be the latter. According to The Non-Profit Narrative author Dan Portnoy, “You can tell me WHAT you do, but I need to know WHY. That’s the piece that I can get behind... Communicate WHAT your mission is and you can have an

audience. Communicate your WHY and you'll have collaborators." Our stories and our asks should have an emotional hook or appeal and demonstrate why someone's time, talents and energy are important to our mission and why they will benefit from giving them.

### WHEN AND WHERE TO ASK

Opportunities to share a story and make an ask are all around us.

1. **With new members or potential members** - At League events, in talking with neighbors or friends, and when out doing our mission-driven work, we encounter many individuals who want to know more about us. These are great opportunities to share a personal story and ask someone to join us.
2. **With the media (traditional or social)** – Stories can help to personalize and make some of the complex issues on which we work more approachable to the larger community. Social media is a good vehicle to show who we are, what we do and *why* we do it.
3. **With potential funders (individuals or others)** – Use stories that show the League's impact on #GivingTuesday\* and other year-end appeals. Show (not tell) what we do and why it is so important and ask for support to do more of it!
4. **With our current members (for deeper engagement or leadership fostering)** – Stories can be a great addition to an annual meeting, local newsletter, or website. Again, they can help to make what we do more relatable to others, including our own members, who may not be sure where they can have the greatest impact in League.



#### Additional Resources:

[The Non-Profit Narrative: How Telling Stories Can Change the World by Dan Portnoy](#)  
[September 2014 Guidance on Visibility Volunteer Recruitment, Engagement, and Maintenance](#)  
[MLD Handbook Chapter 5: Using Stories to Recruit New Members](#)  
Storytelling tool ([Chapter 10](#))  
[Goodman Center website](#)

#### #GivingTuesday Resources

[Everything Your League Needs to Prepare for #GivingTuesday](#)  
[Blog posts](#)