

HFA Public Relations Plan: 2006

Overview

There is currently a lack of quality, progressive media content in Florida and across the nation. The progressive viewpoint is seldom heard in our newspapers, television and radio. And there are only a handful of outlets producing progressive content in Florida today.

HFA seeks to foster a profound change in American culture – promoting a society more strongly aligned with Humanist values and displacing the influence of religious fundamentalism and dogma on our society. One of the principal means to accomplish this goal is by working to increase public awareness and acceptance of Humanism. HFA contends that the propagation of Humanism in America is not just a worthy goal, but also a duty that, if neglected, will have potentially drastic consequences. Because Humanism *is* the philosophy of Democracy, Human Rights, Freedom, and basic civility in Human discourse, an attack on Humanism is an attack on core American values. It stands to reason that a substantial increase in public understanding and acceptance of Humanism will greatly increase the likelihood that extremist ideologies will retreat in the face of an increasingly prevalent Humanist ethic.

HFA's Position:

HFA focuses on progressive social action (to make things better for everyone). We promote freedom of belief and church-state separation as a way to protect our freedoms, and ensure that we find reasoned and compassionate solutions to Human problems. HFA is pro-democracy and pro-human rights.

Issues:

The religious right, in the form of the Reconstructionist movement, has launched a “cultural war” against Humanism. In practical terms this means they are trying to convert our democracy into a theocracy, and most of the religious conflicts in our country right now – government display of the Ten Commandments, prayer in school, ID, the pledge, judicial activism, right to die, gay marriage, etc are merely flashpoints in this “war.” As the main representative of Humanism in Florida, HFA should be at the forefront defending our democracy (Humanism being the philosophy of democracy and Human Rights.)

Professional Services

Professional pitching services can help provide HFA with additional resources to be heard in the rather loud public marketplace. In 2005, HFA paid for an online pitching service and received good coverage and was contacted by reporters from *Time Magazine* and CNN regarding stories on Intelligent Design (ID). We plan to increase our use of these services in 2006. Specifically, we want to utilize:

- Yearbook of Experts (\$800). This service allows us to post press releases and announce events to the media; reporters from all the major news outlets participate in this service.
- Prof-Net (\$500/year). Allows us to provide speakers from HFA and receive email requests for experts from reporters doing stories.
- Public News Service Florida (\$3,000/year). It creates audio news stories for radio. These segments are ready to use. One of our partners (the Institute for Humanist Studies) uses this service and had 18 stories generated in one year with a couple of stories that were picked up nationally.
- Radio Distribution (\$2,500). If we create our own radio program, we can syndicate it across the state (and actually across the nation) by using a professional distributing service.

Local Markets

It is not enough to pitch stories at the state level. All news is local and if we are to receive the coverage we want statewide, we must recruit and train eloquent and charismatic individuals in the five most important media markets across the state (Miami, Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville and Tallahassee.) These individuals will be responsible for:

- Developing relationships with local reporters to pitch our stories and to be available for comment
- Working with local chapters or groups to obtain coverage for their events and to encourage local reporters to interview any guest speakers that promise wider community interest
- Assisting with the promotion of HFA and our speakers to the local media
- Encouraging local chapters or groups to conduct news-worthy events that can be covered by the media

TV

TV is the most effective media outreach tool; consequently, it is vital that any media plan include outreach to television.

- Events: In order to receive television coverage from the major networks, we must hold TV-worthy events such as press conferences and rallies. These events must contain a visual element worthy of TV coverage. HFA will host two such events each year: one focusing on our objections to the “cultural war,” and the other the giving away of the “Malarkey” Award. Both events should be well thought out to contain a visual element that will draw media to cover it.
- Interview Subject: HFA should be interviewed as a state voice on local church-state stories. We need to train local volunteers to be our voice in their communities. Subsequently, we can pitch our volunteers and ourselves as a resource to the reporters covering these stories.
- Public Service Announcements: Our local volunteers should be assisting the groups in their area to receive free listing of their events by the station as part of their public service announcement programs.

Print

Newspapers and magazines are excellent resources for our outreach and specifically the segment of the population we want to reach.

- Editorial Boards: HFA will conduct editorial board meetings with newspapers in all five important markets and others if we have local volunteers to help us. These meetings will be designed to:
 - Alert the editorial board about the interconnectedness of all the “cultural war” stories
 - Connect these stories to the larger “democracy v theocracy” paradigm
 - Educate them about the fact that Humanists are being demonized by the religious right regarding these issues
 - Present ourselves and our local volunteers as a resource for their reporters covering these stories
- Reporters: We must continue to pitch ourselves to reporters as resources for their stories on church-state issues. In addition to the professional pitching services we plan to use, our local volunteers will play an important role in developing relationships with local reporters covering these stories and pitching our story ideas to them.
- Letters to the Editor: It is estimated that 85% of newspaper subscribers read the editorial page. We can get a lot of free coverage by both writing letters from HFA and encouraging our members to write letters as Humanists. We will conduct regional trainings and ask groups to conduct bi-monthly letter writing sessions on specific topics by providing background, talking points, etc.
- Op-Eds: Our goal is to write and publish six editorial opinions to be published in the major newspapers in the five major markets each year. Board members and other accomplished writers will be recruited to help with this effort. Topics will be chosen to coincide with a national debate on some aspect of the “cultural war.” The writers of these editorials will also be promoted as experts and guests on talk radio and television news shows.

Radio

- Talk Radio: There are at least 35 talk radio shows produced in Florida. HFA has been pitching its Executive Director as a guest on these shows and in 2005 she appeared on four shows. We need to expand this and train two additional individuals to be guests and to pitch them accordingly.
- Public Service Announcements: Each station has a requirement to provide airtime to the public. This is done in the form of Public Service Announcements or PSAs. HFA has produced two radio-ready public service announcements, and can produce readable PSAs as required. These announcements were distributed in 2005 and we have received some airplay based on these spots in Miami, Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Fort Myers. We need to work with our local volunteers and the local groups to continue to pursue this free source of advertising.
- Our own show: The Center for Humanism in Miami is researching the idea of producing their own half-hour show titled, “The Voice of Reason.” If we produce this show, we can have it distributed to about 18 stations across the state and a

few hundred across the country. This would be an excellent way to ensure that we not only receive airtime, but that our unedited views are distributed by a third party. Additionally, these shows can be distributed online through our pod-cast and reach an even larger audience.

Advertising:

- Free: HFA should pursue free advertising in the form of public service announcements, community listings, etc.
- Paid: HFA proposes to purchase online advertising on news websites around the state. News website visitors are an excellent way to reach the demographics we are looking for to draw people into our movement.

Project Budget:

What	Amount	Comments
Pitching Services	\$4,500	For ProfNet, Yearbook and Professional News Service
Training	\$2,000	For local leaders and volunteers
Staff	\$5,000	For time spent on this project
Supplies/Phone/Office	\$1,000	For cover costs associated with printing, phone calls, and re-imburement of local volunteers
Travel	\$2,000	For costs of staff and trainers to go to local markets to conduct editorial board meetings
Radio Show	\$4,000	For production and distribution. This item is optional and a lower priority than the other elements of the project.
Advertising	\$12,000	For purchase of 3 months of advertising on news website in our key markets. This line item can be split if necessary. It is a lower priority than our other tasks
Total	\$30,500	