

CLUB COMMUNITY SERVICE

EXPANDING CLUB INTERESTS

Camera clubs that wish to enliven or widen their activities usually consider getting involved with and giving back to their community. A wider application of member's developed photography talents will help the club to become involved with the community.

One way to widen club activities is participation in photographic projects of a civic nature such as town or area publicity, welfare and charity fund-raising, historical documentation, community promotion, and education in the art and craft of photography. These are practical ways for clubs to satisfy restless members, to gain prestige, to increase their membership, and to get fun and publicity for their efforts.

Photographers derive deep satisfaction from lending their skills to worthy causes. Such contributions to the city, town, or village where the club is located identify a club as a group devoted to more than just self-interest. Respect and recognition by the community are bound to result. This document suggests projects that will challenge the creative thinking and activity of a club, regardless of its size or location.

INITIATING A PROJECT

Camera clubs, like other avocation groups, are apt to resist change, preferring to continue the *status quo*. But there will always be members who have the foresight and determination to pull their club out of a well-worn rut by fostering new and different ideas. It is on their shoulders that this venture will probably rest.

While some community or civic agencies may seek the assistance of camera clubs, most are unaware that photographers can enhance their projects. It is therefore necessary in most instances that clubs take the initial step. In so doing, it is wise for the club, through an official, to present a brief outline or plan. While project sponsors generally welcome photographic participation, clubs should remember that this acceptance entails businesslike fulfillment of responsibilities and obligations.

Once an agreement is reached, organized planning by the club must begin in earnest. An energetic chairperson should be appointed to supervise the project. As with all club activities, success is judged by the number of members who participate. Community projects are ideal from this standpoint because they afford everyone an opportunity to do something, regardless of photographic ability. Not to be over-looked is the fine club spirit developed through coordinated team effort and the opportunity for members to get better acquainted with each other.

Community and civic projects that any club will find rewarding range from simple to complex. There is ample opportunity to use existing individual talents. These activities also provide an opportunity for club members to brush up on their ability to make photo-essays, as well as their knowledge of photojournalism techniques.

PRODUCING DOCUMENTARIES

For the purpose of simplicity, club activities under this heading are divided into: General Promotional Projects, Historical Programs, and Special Community Events. Often there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between these projects, and a documentary may fall into more than one category.

* General Promotional Projects

Good pictures are always in demand by town municipal offices or agencies like the Chamber of Commerce, in order to publicize the community or area. The assembling of images of this type, with added commentary (printed or recorded), has been successfully carried out by many clubs. Pictures can be obtained on field trips with members assigned to cover specific subject categories and localities. This activity could be carried out as a contest, with the best images accepted for the proposed project. Projects may extend beyond town or city limits. The county, or state, or a particularly photogenic near-by area such as a National Park, Heritage site, or mountain range may offer interesting subject material.

- * A Florida club takes the photos of animals needing adoption and the photos are posted on the agencies web site.

- * A service group in Texas solicited its local camera club to take images suitable for murals in a community building.

- * A club in New England cooperated with a museum and nature center by taking pictures of the exhibit halls and grounds for a new brochure.

- * Another New England club cooperated with a local Nature Conservancy to produce pictures of their woodland areas for the Conservancy's annual calendar.

- * Working with their city community development leaders, a Canadian club preserves a picture of a living, growing city, with pictures that tell a story, rather than just a record of the city's architectural and scenic beauty. Divided categorically, assignments to members include: waterfront, sports, industry, transportation, location and entrances, exhibition, amusements, the unusual and amusing, recreation and parks, historical monuments, residential avenues, bridges, religion, hotels, restaurants, clubs, cultural, government and law, hospitals and laboratories, financial-commercial, newspapers and publishers. This presentation, with commentary, is a continuing activity with a DVD made available to club members, other clubs, non-profit organizations, and community groups.

*** Historical Programs**

While the subject matter of General Promotional Projects and Historical Programs is similar to some extent, their purpose is quite different. The aim of historical programs is to contribute to the permanent photographic record of the community, with the activity usually under the jurisdiction of a museum or historical association. Emphasis often centers on procuring pictures of old landmarks and buildings which could be destroyed by fire or removed for some reason. What is "new" today will be "history" in the years to come. Hence, photographing even the most recent community additions is necessary to preserve a visual record.

- * A mid-western historical society, in cooperation with a large camera club association, fosters the collection of prints for their records. More than 500 have been contributed in the past decade. Prizes are offered annually and the photographs are displayed in libraries, banks, and stores.

- * A Nebraska city invited a club to assist in its centennial celebration by assembling, copying and preparing for exhibition a photographic history of the community. Unfortunately, few early prints were available, so the club staged a six-month "Operation Rediscovery" during which it obtained the necessary old photographs from the public to copy. The completed set of 750 mounted prints, in nine categories, showed the city "then and now." Following lengthy exhibition, a famed art museum placed the photographs in its permanent collection.

*** Special Community Events**

Nearly all communities, small or large, are the scenes of especially photogenic colorful public

activities. They include pageants, festivals, fiestas, rodeos, flower parades, ski carnivals, vintage car exhibits, religious and holiday activities, the circus, anniversary celebrations, etc. Not only will these subjects make interesting programs by themselves and serve as excellent publicity, they are valuable historical "time marks."

Some places are famous for special things related to past events, such as a marine center, a remodeled village, or the birthplace of a great person. State and county fairs, as well as agricultural or industrial events, often play an important part in the life of a community. A "little theater" or high school bands are particularly adapted to photographic reportage. Subject matter is limited only by the creative minds of the photographers themselves. But even though they may possess this ability, it often requires initiative to convince civic and community agencies that amateurs and their clubs can make important contributions. Here are three typical projects:

- * A camera club in New Mexico covered the activities for a historic anniversary. A souvenir book was published and sold containing a picture story "to preserve, through the medium of photography a record of the people, the time, the place of this great community celebration." The club received about \$900.00 for its share of the profits and used the money to purchase new club equipment.

- * A Massachusetts club undertook the production of a program depicting the historical points of interest in their town in connection with its bicentennial anniversary.

- * A Michigan club not only takes the rehearsal pictures for a little theater group, including a children's acting unit, but also displays the photographs in the lobby of the theater.

FUND RAISING

Photography is a powerful publicity aid in raising funds for the welfare drives which take place in a community. There is need for single pictures and groups of images, as well as movies. The photos may be used for posters, billboards, newspapers, pamphlets, public displays, or for viewing by audiences. Since these pictures are for promotional purposes, most are required to be eye-catching and appealing to the general public.

The Community United Fund or similar groups are sources of popular projects for numerous clubs. Often the separate agencies making up these funds will provide long term, interesting activities for club members. The Red Cross, Salvation Army, YMCA-YWCA, 4-H, Boy and Girl Scouts, Travelers Aid, Visiting Nurse Association, Cancer and Heart Funds are some of innumerable deserving causes which can use good publicity photographs. Although operating at the local level, these organizations are national in character. However, many other community groups have needs that are as important to the local residents. Here are some: hospitals, churches, private schools and colleges, youth clubs, a "little theater," the volunteer fire department, and the periodic local charity appeals:

- * One Massachusetts club each year produces a program for United Fund publicity.

- * A Connecticut club produced images of twenty-nine different United Fund agencies in and around its city.

- * A California club held an auction of members' prints to raise money for earthquake relief.

COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS

Much of the satisfaction members derive from their avocation of photography stems from assisting beginners and the less experienced or from teaching the ill and handicapped. For these reasons, it is comparatively easy to turn the activities of individual members into a club project. Today, many clubs offer courses open to the public for a fee or without charge. They serve a dual

purpose as they benefit both the community and the sponsors.

- * An Ohio club has presented a twelve-week school of photography annually since 1923.

- * An Illinois company camera club conducts half-hour programs for fellow workers during the noon hour.

Education is not restricted to teaching alone. Travelogues, photo-essays, movies, print exhibitions can be both entertaining and instructive. Nature programs have become increasingly popular, as evidenced by the success of the Audubon Society programs. Service groups like Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary, women's and garden clubs, religious organizations, schools and hospitals are all prospective audiences for such programs. But remember that the presentation must not be too long, no more than thirty to forty minutes, and it must be well paced. The public represents a cross-section of interests, hence variety in subject matter is always best whenever possible, except for specialized audiences. The following projects show the wide scope possible under this educational category:

- * A club in the UK prepares a new photography exhibit for the walls of the local hospital every month.

- * A Pacific Coast club put on a thirteen-week TV photo show, with many of its members providing the know-how.

- * Digital programs are given at a state hospital by an Illinois club.

- * A Wisconsin club presented motion pictures once a week at a home for the elderly.

- * A Washington State club provides exchange students with color images so that they will return to their homeland with more than a word picture of the United States.

- * An Illinois council of clubs supplied teachers for a six-week TV photo course for children. It was so popular that it was repeated.

- * One Pacific Coast club prepared a set of images as a "friendship gift" to Ceylon.

- * A Michigan club presents a series of seven travelogues by professionals, over a period of six months, and sells a season ticket for five dollars.

- * A series of noon-hour stereo programs proved to be so successful that an Illinois city public library has invited the club to present another series.

- * Pictures of destruction by fire and accident, etc., play an important part in Safety Drives. Photographs of Public Health education are necessary, too.

- * A California club was asked by its city to take photographs of a mock airplane crash to test medical preparedness. The cost of which was covered by the city, was accepted for wide public distribution by the American Medical Association and state health department.

- * Contributions of photographic materials and equipment to worthy causes also lie within the generosity of clubs and their members. Nearly everything is acceptable, if it is in workable condition.

- * Special camera equipment is being provided by a large east coast club to hospitals and convalescent homes for children. Great interest has been shown in close-up photography by the patients.

- * Photography is now considered an important part of rehabilitation programs for the hospitalized, shut-ins, ill and handicapped. Clubs may share with the less fortunate by participating in such activities.

- * A club in Europe took a field trip to an orphanage where instant pictures were taken and presented to each of the youngsters.

STIMULATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY INTERESTS

Photography enters the lives of everyone today, either as a medium of communication, as a personal record, or as an avocation. The deep enthusiasm amateurs have for their art and craft is often conveyed to others, but group promotion by a club is much more effective in offering the public a better understanding of the camera's value and possibilities.

The opportunity for the public to see good pictures, in any medium, is always welcomed. The success of wide-scale national exhibitions is evidence of the layman's interest in photography. The many PSA-recognized International Exhibitions expose the community to high-quality work, as do "Tops in Photography" and many other PSA program materials.

While the public's viewing of pictures is highly desirable, its actual participation in photography is even more so. Contests and exhibitions sponsored by a local newspaper or organization, a county or state fair, or by a camera club itself, will spark the competitive spirit of many, especially timid beginners. Clubs and Councils can be a powerful promotional force in stimulating amateur photographers in the community to participate in these activities, with club members setting an example by entering their images also.

Not to be overlooked are the contests for youths like the annual PSA Youth Showcase which often convert the teenagers from snap shooters to serious photographers. This program is described in detail elsewhere on this webpage.

Recognizing the importance of an interest in photography, an increasing number of communities are sponsoring, sometimes jointly with a club or council, a "Photo Day" or Fair. Parks and recreation officials are especially receptive to this type of activity and will often carry the full financial burden. In some instances, photo dealers are called upon to help support the event. It may be held indoors or outdoors and there is no admission charge.

A variation of the above is a "Festival of Arts" where photography is one of numerous activities represented. The sponsors sometimes turn over the management of the camera section to the local camera club. In the larger cities "Photographic Shows" are staged by manufacturers, dealers, and stores. Often clubs and councils can obtain booth space. Here are some activities that have been successful in arousing community interest in photography:

- * A Michigan club had a booth showing photographs at their city annual flower show.
- * A university city in Connecticut launched a statewide "Festival of Arts" with a local camera club sponsoring the photography section. Model sessions, demonstrations, travelogues and an exhibition of contest entries were presented in "The Photography Tent" which was voted the most popular among all the exhibits..
- * An Arizona club and local college jointly sponsored five showings of "Audubon Screen Tours," each organization realizing a nice profit.