

# The Care and Feeding of Guest Speakers by Ray Klingensmith

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## **From the Multidistrict PETS Alliance,** revised for HC PETS, July 2012

The following suggestions are offered to maximize the effectiveness of guest speakers at multidistrict PETS meetings and to insure that the guest speakers enjoy their experiences at the meetings. For the sake of brevity, the suggestions are shown as a list of Dos and Taboos!

### **First Phase.**

Prior to the PETS – Once a speaker accepts an invitation to serve as a featured speaker, do the following things:

- 1. Appointment of Coordinator.** The general chair or the program chair should recruit a coordinator (sometimes called an aide or host) to coordinate the speaker's visit. The speaker should be given the name and e-mail address of his or her coordinator shortly after acceptance of the invitation.
- 2. Correspondence.** The coordinator should immediately contact the speaker. Any correspondence with the speaker after that time should include copies to the general chair or the program chair (or both). Similarly, any correspondence between the general chair or program chair and the speaker should include copies to the coordinator. DON'T invite a speaker and then forget him or her for several months. DON'T make the speaker feel that he or she has to correspond with several different people separately.
- 3. Travel Arrangements.** The assumption by most speakers is that all travel expenses for themselves and their spouses/partners will be reimbursed by the PETS. Clarify with the speaker what High Country will and does not cover. The coordinator should confer with the speaker about his or her travel arrangements, particularly in regard to the best airport to use for the PETS meeting and about any pre-meeting or post-meeting activities the speaker is invited to attend. DON'T let the speaker wait until the last minute to book his or her flights.
- 4. Hotel Reservation.** The coordinator should make sure the facilities chair or other appropriate person has made a reservation for the speaker at the headquarters hotel. The room should be charged to the PETS organization, — not to the speaker. Try to book a suite for the speaker, if one is available at reasonable cost. DON'T put a speaker in a smaller room than the rooms enjoyed by the PETS officers.
- 5. Invitation to Spouse.** The coordinator should advise the speaker that his or her spouse is encouraged to attend at the PETS organization's expense, unless that is not the case. DON'T make the speaker ask if his or her spouse is included in the PETS budget.
- 6. Confirmation and Reimbursement.** When the speaker purchases his or her airline tickets, the coordinator should ask for a copy of the tickets to confirm the flights and charges and then submit a copy of the tickets to the PETS treasurer for reimbursement in advance of the PETS meeting.

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7. **Speech Topic and Time.** The coordinator should confer with the program chair and then be sure the speaker is aware of the requested topic, the amount of time allocated, and the date and time of the presentation. DON'T keep the speaker in the dark about his or her assignment.

8. **A/V Equipment and Microphones.** The coordinator should ask the speaker about his or her needs for A/V equipment and his or her preference for microphones and props. The information should be quickly relayed to the Rotarian in charge of such equipment at the PETS meeting. Any problems or deficiencies should be resolved well in advance of the meeting. DON'T make the speaker ask about such details or wait until the speaker arrives to address such details. DON'T try to save money on cheap sound systems.

9. **Schedule of Events.** The coordinator should furnish draft copies of the schedule of events in order to enable the speaker to tailor his or her remarks to the total program. DON'T wait until the final draft is ready to share the schedule of events with the speaker.

10. **Maintain Communication.** The coordinator should call or exchange e-mail messages with the speaker at least once a month to ask if he or she needs any assistance in preparation for the PETS meeting. DON'T give the speaker a reason to accept another invitation for the same date.

11. **Information about the PETS Meeting.** The coordinator should provide the speaker with information about the number of club presidents elect who will be present at the PETS meeting. He also should provide information about the number of past district governors, trainers, and other Rotarians who will be present. Any information about the audience will be helpful to the speaker.

12. **Local Arrangements.** At least a full month before the PETS meeting, the coordinator should provide the name and phone number for the hotel where the speaker will stay and the name and cell phone number for the Rotarian who will meet the speaker at the airport for the PETS meeting. DON'T overlook any details, including the cell phone number of the speaker!

### Second Phase.

On site at the PETS meeting – Do the following things:

1. **Meet the Plane or the Car.** Be sure the speaker is met at the airport as he or she arrives. If the person meeting the speaker does not know the speaker, then a simple sheet of 8 ½ x 11 paper with a big Rotary wheel on it will be recognized by the speaker. Remember that some Rotary speakers (like me) may send their high school photos with their bios, so the speakers may not be identifiable by their submitted photos! DON'T make the speaker use a shuttle bus or a taxi. If the speaker is arriving by car, be sure a Rotarian is waiting in the hotel lobby for his or her arrival to help with unloading luggage and parking the car. DON'T make the speaker fend for himself or herself after arriving at the hotel.

2. **Advance Check-In and Room Check.** The coordinator should handle the hotel check-in for the speaker and have the hotel keys ready for the speaker's arrival. The coordinator also should check the room in advance to be sure it is in satisfactory condition. If there is a problem with the

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room, it should be resolved before the speaker's arrival. The coordinator also should take the speaker to the room and ask if the room is suitable. DON'T make the speaker wait in line at the hotel desk, hunt for the room, or remedy any problems with the room.

**3. Refreshments in the Room.** Some appropriate refreshments in the speaker's room can be helpful. However, don't overdo it! DON'T put a 15 pound fruit basket in a speaker's room for a one-night visit — particularly if he or she is traveling by plane.

**4. Pre-Meeting Events and Meals.** The coordinator should help the speaker find the location of any pre-meeting events. In addition, help the speaker find the location of all the rooms and restaurants that will be used during the PETS meeting. DON'T assume the speaker is not hungry and/or thirsty when he or she arrives at the hotel.

**5. Registration Packet and Introductions.** The coordinator should pick up the registration packet, and any other materials, for the speaker before he or she arrives. In addition, the coordinator should introduce the speaker to the PETS officers as quickly as possible after the speaker's arrival. DON'T make the speaker search for his or her registration packet.

**6. Tourism Attractions and Shopping Centers.** The coordinator should ask the speaker and the speaker's spouse if either or both of them are interested in visiting any local tourist attractions and/or shopping centers as time permits. DON'T assume the speaker or the spouse will want to attend every single session during the PETS meeting.

**7. View of the Plenary Hall.** The coordinator should take the speaker to the plenary hall at the first opportunity, preferably when the room is empty. The speaker may want to stand on stage to become acclimated to the room. The AV equipment, the microphones, and the props all need to be checked in advance.

**8. Special Seating at Meals.** The coordinator should advise the speaker about any special seating for the speaker at the meal functions. In any event, the coordinator should introduce the speaker to as many Rotarians as possible with a comment that he or she is one of the featured speakers. DON'T make the speaker wonder where he or she is supposed to be seated.

**9. Introduction of Speaker.** The introduction of speakers should not exceed three minutes in length. Mention only the three or four most noteworthy achievements of the speaker. Keep the introduction lighthearted in the Rotary tradition. DON'T read the speaker's biography.

**10. Speaker Evaluations.** If the audience is asked to complete an evaluation form for speakers, treat the topic tactfully during the announcements. DON'T remind the audience about the evaluation forms as the speaker is introduced.

**11. Thank You Comments.** There should be some complimentary comments about the speaker's remarks immediately following the speech. Either the emcee or another designated Rotarian should briefly mention one or two things he or she liked about the speech. Otherwise,

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the speaker will wonder if anyone heard what he or she said. DON'T go on to the next item until the speaker is thanked appropriately.

**12. Gifts for Speakers.** If the speaker is to be given a gift, make sure it is easily recognizable by both the speaker and the audience. If a contribution is given to TRF in the speaker's honor, follow up to be sure that it actually happens. DON'T give a large or bulky gift to a speaker — particularly if he or she is traveling by plane — unless the PETS organization is willing to ship it to the speaker.

**13. Attendance at Breakout Groups.** The coordinator should confer with the general chairman and then advise the speaker if he or she is welcome — or not welcome — to attend all or part of the breakout groups during the PETS meeting. DON'T make the speaker guess whether he or she is welcome at such groups.

**14. Club Presidents Elect Materials.** The PETS officers should decide if a copy of the club presidents-elect materials will be offered to the speaker as a gift. DON'T make the speaker ask whether he or she is supposed to receive a copy.

**15. Post-Meeting Events.** The coordinator should assist the speaker in attending any post-meeting events he or she wants to attend.

### Third Phase.

#### After completion of the PETS meeting — Do the following things:

**1. Check-Out and Transportation.** The coordinator should assist the speaker in checking out of the hotel and then provide transportation to the airport. If the speaker is traveling by car, the coordinator should provide assistance with luggage and the speaker's departure from the parking garage.

**2. Shipment of Gifts.** The coordinator should make sure that any gifts to the speaker that need to be shipped are shipped as quickly as possible.

**3. Thank You Letters.** The coordinator, and perhaps the program chair and/or the general chair, should send thank you messages to the speaker within the next three or four days. The speaker should be invited to submit any comments suggestions that he or she may have about the PETS meeting.

**4. Evaluations.** For the PETS organizations which ask the audience to evaluate speakers, the PETS officers need to decide if any of the information will be shared with the speakers. If any evaluation information is shared, then it should be done tactfully.

**5. Cultivation of Friendship.** All speakers should be treated with courtesy and respect in the true Rotary fashion — both before and after their speeches. The friendship of such speakers should be carefully cultivated before, during, and after the PETS meetings. The speakers are important partners in our PETS meetings.