

## **VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL PRESENTATION PACKAGE INTRODUCTION**

Dear VFI Alumni:

We appreciate your willingness to promote Volunteers for Israel. Enclosed in this packet are the following materials to assist you:

- a sample letter to introduce yourself and to schedule speaking engagements
- tips for preparing and making a successful presentation
- general guidelines for VFI presentations
- general guidelines for written PR.

In addition, the following visual aids for use in presentations may be ordered from your regional representative or from VFI's New York office:

- a DVD containing a variety of videos that showcase Sir-EI programs, the IDF, etc.
- posters
- extra copies of *The Volunteer Connection* newsletter
- bookmarks
- brochures

Thanks for spreading the word about our exceptional programs!

The VFI Marketing Committee

## **VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL**

### **Effective Presentations**

**An old recipe for rabbit stew lists the first step as follows: Catch a rabbit!**  
**The first step in presenting for VFI is to “catch an invitation.” You need to network at every possible opportunity. Other approaches: cold calls, direct mailings, Internet sources.**

### **Initial Planning**

In this phase you begin to **tailor the talk to the situation and the audience**. Talk to your host and clarify the points below before you spend much preparation time. If the environment and audience are unfamiliar to you, this is a critical stage. You may even want to do a literature search on potential audience members to identify areas of common interest or potential questions that may arise. Begin this stage early: The more lead time you allow yourself, the more time you will have to develop novel approaches to the topic and the more interesting and substantial your presentation will be.

Discuss these points with your host:

#### **Type of presentation**

\* informal chat, a seminar discussion, or a more formal presentation?

#### **Composition of the audience**

\*general audience or special group (Seniors, Sisterhood, Confirmation Class)?

\*number expected to attend

\*audience familiarity with Israel

#### **Time allotment**

\*is your talk part of a longer program?

\*is there any flexibility in the time permitted?

\*is Q&A period included?

#### **Setting**

\*sanctuary, auditorium, meeting/classroom

\*room set-up: fixed or moveable chairs, tables

\*will food and drinks be served? If so, will presentation precede or follow?

\*availability of AV equipment

#### **Host contact**

\*name, mail, email, cell phone (particularly for day of event)

\*provide same information for yourself

## **Preparation**

Once you know where you will be speaking and to whom, you'll have to decide how to construct your presentation. Start early!

### **Here are a few suggestions to get you started:**

1. Start preparing by thinking through what needs to be said. What information about VFI will convince audience members to participate in and/or support our programs? What factors make our program stand out? Collect material that may relate to the topic from unusual sources, and sleep on these ideas. The final product will be more fully developed and interesting.
2. Brainstorm a list of issues you plan to address. Don't hold back; list any idea that comes to mind. It's better to have too much material than not enough. It's helpful and efficient to list each item separately on a 3x5 card. Now, you can trim back to the number of ideas you can reasonably cover in the time allotted for your presentation.
3. Arrange your remaining ideas in a logical sequence (which may change as you develop the talk). Think about what sources are available to give you the details you need to develop your basic ideas. Write those sources on the back of each card. See "How Much Material?" below for more details.
4. Computer-based presentation programs (PowerPoint, Persuasion, etc.) can be wonderful time-savers. The time invested in learning to use these programs is rewarded by the speed with which even a moderately skilled user can create a presentation. These programs are tools for organizing your presentation (an electronic version of the index cards idea). They can be used to create visuals for the presentation (e.g., slides and transparencies) and even project those visuals during the presentation.
5. Determine transition elements that will help your audience move easily from one idea to the next.
6. Don't assume the audience will be familiar with basic concepts that form the foundation of your talk. Outline these concepts briefly but clearly early in the talk to avoid confusion.
7. Attempt to identify problems or questions the audience may have and address them in the talk before the audience has a chance to think of these things themselves.
8. Determine which elements would benefit by being presented with visual aids. Spend time working out the best way to present the material. Keep in mind that while using technology will enhance your talk, it will also increase the chances that something can go wrong. If you decide to use multimedia technology in your presentation, make sure the technology you require is supported in the room where you'll be talking! My personal bias is that the rewards outweigh the disadvantages as long as you take proper precautions.
10. Prepare your script. Some presenters are fine with just an outline; others like me prefer to write out every word. However, NEVER, NEVER read word-for-word from the script. Use it for support.

11. Think about an opening that will immediately capture the attention and the interest of the audience. I usually come up with this idea at the end of the writing process, but whenever inspiration strikes, put this idea on paper.

12. In your conclusion, summarize the main concepts you've discussed. Aim to help your audience achieve high retention of this final information. Make the final pitch for their participation and support.

13. You can then try out the presentation in front of a few friends or colleagues. Ask for feedback; then, act on that information. Select those who know only a little about your topic. This strategy will focus your attention on areas that may need more or clearer explanation.

### **How Much Material?**

Pre-determining the content in relation to length is always a challenge. The necessary length of the talk will become more obvious as you begin to practice. Remember that when you make allowances for a new setting and being interrupted by questions, **the practice talk will be about 20% faster than the real presentation.**

One way people try to reduce the length of a presentation is to speak more quickly: never a good idea. A better strategy is to be very selective about what you need to say, then say only that - and say it clearly with slightly longer pauses between words than normal. Increasing the length of inter-word pauses will force you to enunciate the ending of one word and the beginning of the next word - making it easier for the audience to follow what you are saying.

The optimal rate for a talk is about 100 words per minute. Any faster and the audience can't absorb the additional information. Use pauses, and repeat critical information. **“This idea is so important I want to say it again...”**

Don't run over! Ever! Shorten your talk by removing details, concepts, and information. If it becomes absolutely essential to supply certain details, supplement your presentation with a handout. Make about 10% more handouts than you think you'll need.

#### **Additional notes about handouts:**

Given the nature of short-term memory, it's always a good idea to give the audience a VFI newsletter, brochure, or handout to take home. Be sure that it contains VFI's mission statement, the website address, and the contact information for your Regional representative.

**You do not want the audience to be reading while you are speaking**, so think about the most appropriate time to give out the material. If, for example, there's a meal BEFORE your talk, you could place the items on the tables so that audience members can peruse them before you begin speaking.

## **Avoiding Problems and Getting a Little Help from Your Friends:**

Having spent all that time preparing the talk itself, there are still a few things you can do at the last minute that will help ensure a successful presentation, or if you are the nervous type, help fill time.

If possible, **take a tour of the room** you'll use for the presentation early in the day. Look for potential problems with sight lines due to furniture arrangement, dark spots due to dead overhead lights, intruding sound from ventilation or from adjacent rooms and hallways. These potential problems all can be fixed with a bit of prior warning and a polite request to your host.

If you need **specialized equipment**, make sure it is available and in working order ahead of time. It's your show, so ask for help with the equipment if you need it; it's better to ask for help than fumble around during the presentation. Determine who will be controlling equipment for you. **Computer presentations introduce a whole host of potential issues. Here are a few to consider:**

- \* Is the host software compatible with your presentation? Are the fonts, bullets, colors, etc. the same?

- \* Is there a sound card in the host computer? Is the sound system operational, but not too painfully loud?

- \* Back-up your presentation before you leave using an alternate medium, bring it with you separately from the one you plan to use (e.g., packed in a different suitcase), or e-mail it to yourself as an attachment. You may be able to access it from your destination if needed.

- \* Alternatively, e-mail it to your host and ask that he or she download the file and test it on the computer you'll be using. Do this **BEFORE** you depart for the trip!

- \* Did you include all the required files and resources for your presentation?

If the room is large or your voice is small, use **a microphone**. Try it out before the audience arrives. Ask for a clip-on wireless microphone, so your hands are free to hold notes and other materials. A portable microphone for audience members who want to ask questions is also very helpful.

Check to see that **accessories** are present: paper, chalk, eraser, markers.

## **BRING VFI FRIENDS:**

**Having other VFI volunteers** present is a big help and a comfort. They can help you set up the room and assist with AV equipment and handouts. More importantly, they can share their personal VFI stories, can speak up when no one else does in response to one of your questions, and can assist in answering audience questions. They can also help you keep track of your time.

## **The Moment of Truth: Some Reminders**

Don't be afraid to insist on **a few minutes to yourself prior to the talk**; 15 to 30 minutes is standard. Don't wait until the very last minute to make that run to the bathroom, and remember to check carefully your appearance - including zippers, buttons and other closures - before you reappear.

Use this time to double-check your materials. Don't allow yourself to be distracted by audience members coming up to chat.

**Gulp. So you are sitting there, about to be introduced. Remember, a bit of stage fright is a good thing and a very natural reaction. Now what?**

**Take several deep breaths** as you are being introduced. Visualize your rehearsed opening statement; don't improvise at the last moment.

Choose a **natural, moderate rate of speech and use natural gestures**.

Monitor your behavior, and avoid distracting habits (pacing, fumbling with change in your pocket, twirling hair). Moderate movement and hand gestures are OK, but avoid pacing and flapping.

**Avoid standing behind a lectern or desk** during the presentation. Stand to one side of the projection screen or blackboard and closer to the audience if possible.

**Converse with your audience.** Involve them in the process of the presentation by posing questions and **making eye contact**. Be patient if you ask a question: Give the audience time to formulate answers.

**Expect the unexpected.** Be prepared for interruptions (late arrivals, cell phones or pagers, burned out projector bulbs, fire drills, etc.).

If you must turn down the **room lights**, don't turn them off entirely. Don't leave the lights down any longer than necessary, and have an assistant ready to turn them back up at the appropriate time.

**BE YOURSELF!**

**BUT BE AWARE OF THE DISTRACTING ELEMENTS OF YOUR PERSONAL STYLE.**

\***voice/language use** (colloquial or slang expressions)

\***clothing and jewelry**

\*physical or vocal mannerisms

## **Handling Questions: It's not over 'till time runs out or the last question is answered.**

Decide whether you will allow your presentation to be interrupted by questions, will have a separate Q&A at the end, or if you will be flexible in this matter. Let your audience know what to expect at the start of your talk.

The question period is often the part of the talk that most influences the audience. It is where your ability to interact with the audience and think on your feet will be evaluated. To practice, try to predict questions and rehearse answers. **Here are a few guidelines for an effective Q & A session:**

1. Unless the questioner has a microphone, always repeat each question so the entire audience knows what you've been asked.
2. Before you answer, take a moment to reflect on the question. By not rushing to give an answer, you show a degree of respect for the questioner, and you give yourself time to be sure you are answering the question that actually was asked. If you are unsure, restate the question or ask for a clarification.
3. Above all, wait for the questioner to finish asking the question before you begin your answer! The only exception is when it becomes necessary to break in on a vague, rambling question; this is your show, and you have only a limited time to make your presentation. It is essential, however, that you break in tactfully. Say something like "So, are you asking....?" This will focus the question and give you a place to begin an answer.
4. If a question is asked **during the talk**, and it will clarify an ambiguity, answer it immediately.
5. Postpone questions aimed at resolving a particular person's problems until the end of the talk, or in private discussion. This is particularly important if the answer will distract either you or the audience away from the flow of your presentation. You can politely say, "Since that question relates to your specific situation, I'd be happy to discuss it in detail after the session."
6. Avoid prolonged discussions with one person, extended answers, and especially political arguments.
7. If you can't answer a question, just say so. Don't apologize. You may:
  - \* Offer to research an answer and get back to the questioner later.
  - \* Suggest resources that would help the questioner find the answer on her own.
  - \* Ask for suggestions from the audience.
8. Other than simple factual questions, finish your answer by asking the person whether or not you answered the question sufficiently. This acknowledges and thanks the questioner, and it lets the rest of the audience feel comfortable asking questions (because it shows you are genuinely interested in addressing audience issues, not just in lecturing to them), and it gives you a chance to more fully answer the question if your first effort was not quite on target. If the questioner says you didn't answer it and you believe you did, either ask the person to clarify the question (if time permits) or suggest that the two of you go into more detail at a break or after the presentation.
9. Set a time limit on questions. "I'll take two more questions before we end." Let the audience know you'll be available after the event to answer further questions.

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## **Guidelines for Presentations, Press Releases, Internet Posting, and Speaking in Public about the VFI/Sar-El Program<sup>1</sup>**

We hope that you had a positive experience on the VFI/Sar-El Volunteer program. We encourage you to tell others about your experience and encourage them to volunteer as well. We also encourage you to give them an accurate and realistic portrayal of what the program is like.

However, there are some restrictions on what you should tell or show others about the program. It is important that you do not misrepresent the nature or the purpose of the VFI / Sar-El volunteer program.

There are also some legal issues to which you need to be sensitive.

Remember that Israel is at war. We do not want to do anything that would compromise their security or cause them harm.

We offer these guidelines to help you tell/show what the volunteer program is about.

- **You CANNOT say that you “volunteered for/with the IDF.” IT IS NOT TRUE.**
  - It is against the law for US citizens to volunteer in foreign armies.
  - It is against the law for US citizens to encourage others to volunteer in foreign armies.
  - **The VFI application that you signed specifically stated that you were not swearing allegiance to or serving in the IDF.**
  - Post 9/11 – this is an even more serious issue.
- You volunteered for the VFI/Sar-El program that places volunteers on bases to work in non-combative maintenance and supply roles, and in hospitals and nursing homes. Sar-El is a non-profit organization based in Israel.
- *Do not* mention specific bases or exact locations by name. Refer to them as “a base,” “the base,” “a location close to XXXX,” etc.
- *Do not* use the last names of other volunteers or Israelis unless you have their permission to do so.
- *Do not* talk about weapons, tanks, military equipment, ammunition, etc.
- *Do not say that you were issued a uniform*; you were issued fatigues as work clothes so you would not get your personal clothes dirty.
- *Do not* use photos/videos of military vehicles (planes, tanks, trucks, etc.) that show unit identification marks.
- *Do not* use photos/videos showing volunteers posing with weapons.
- *Do not* use photos/videos that show security arrangements on bases or in other sensitive locations. (i.e. Photos/videos that show checkpoints, security fences, and other security arrangements.)

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<sup>1</sup> Revision Date: April 18, 2008      Filename: VFI-PresentationGuidelines-4-2008.doc

## Volunteers For Israel®

<http://www.vfi-usa.org>

Email: [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org)

Tel: 866-514-1948

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- *Do not place in public venues (print media or the internet), such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, blogs, web sites, newspaper articles etc. – photos/videos proscribed above or that would misrepresent the nature and the purpose of the volunteer program.*
  
- **SO WHAT CAN YOU SAY? There's a lot you can talk about. For instance:**
  - Why you were motivated to go.
  - What the experience was like in Israel
    - On the program
    - On the street
    - The people you met and worked with
  - What you think you contributed to the program
  - What you feel you got out of the program
  - Why you think others would enjoy the program, too

If you are uncertain about what to write or say – feel free to contact VFI at our toll free number – 866-514-1948 or 212-643-4848 or [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org) – to ask for guidance.

Thank you for spreading the word about Volunteers for Israel®.

## **Volunteers For Israel®**

<http://www.vfi-usa.org> Email: [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org) Tel: 866-514-1948

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### **VFI – Writing about your VFI / Sar-El Experience<sup>1</sup>**

**Dear Volunteer,**

**If you would like to write an article about your recent Sar-El experience but are having difficulty getting started, below are some suggestions that will help. A “catchy” opening attracts a reader’s attention. Here are some openings used by other volunteers who have graciously offered them as inspiration or for your use.**

*I recently had an opportunity to “stand WITH Israel” by standing IN Israel as a member of the Volunteers for Israel (VFI) program.*

*In the past, I have helped Israel by writing checks, signing petitions, attending rallies, and purchasing Israeli products. But recently I gave Israel the gift of my presence through my participation in the Volunteers for Israel (VFI) program.*

*Sleeping on a cot, eating army food, and doing manual labor may not be everyone’s idea of the best way to spend vacation time, but my experience with Volunteers for Israel turned out to be a remarkable journey.*

*The Israeli poet, David Shimoni once wrote, “From every Jewish heart an invisible path leads to the land of Israel.” Recently, I followed that path through an organization called Volunteers for Israel (VFI).*

*I have been a tourist in Israel many times, but during my recent trip through Volunteers for Israel, I felt like an insider.*

**If you need background information about the VFI program, the following statement may be used:**

*I first found out about Volunteers for Israel through a friend (newspaper article or ad, synagogue, etc.)*

*VFI is a non-profit, non-political organization whose mission is to connect Americans to Israel through hands-on, civilian volunteer work in hospitals, nursing homes, and on non-combat Israel Defense Forces (IDF) bases.*

*The program began in 1982 in response to a manpower shortage caused by the first war in Lebanon. General Aharon Davidi sent emissaries to the United States and other countries to enlist volunteers to harvest crops and help maintain the economy while thousands of Israelis were serving in the army. More than 600 volunteers responded to this call for help.*

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<sup>1</sup> FileName: VFI-Writing about.doc Revision Date: November 17, 2006.

## **Volunteers For Israel®**

<http://www.vfi-usa.org> Email: [info@vfi-usa.org](mailto:info@vfi-usa.org) Tel: 866-514-1948

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*Those initial volunteers were so enthusiastic about this opportunity that they asked General Davidi to continue the program after the crisis had ended. To date, more than 100,000 volunteers from more than 36 different countries have served. In Israel, the project is known as Sar-El, the National Project for Volunteers for Israel.*

**Of course, the most important part of your article will be about your unique, personal experiences.**

Mention interaction with Israeli soldiers including your madrichot, friendships formed with other volunteers, touring and cultural experiences, personal benefits (see below)

**Conclude your article by reminding your readers of the benefits that accrue from participation in the program, and be sure mention how they can obtain more information. Again, here are some sample conclusions.**

*Some volunteers refer to their experience as the ADVENTURE of a lifetime; others call it a chance to have an INSIDER'S view of Israel; still others say it expresses their SOLIDARITY with Israel and her people. I call it a MITZVAH.*

*For further information about VFI, call 866-514-1948 or 212-643-4848 or look at the website [www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org)*

*I volunteered for two (one, three) weeks, but I will remember it for a lifetime. If you would like to know more about VFI, please call 866-514-1948 or 212-643-4848 or visit their web site: [www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org).*

*I **gave** my time and energy to Israel, but I **got** so much more in return.*

*Mention what's important to you: a chance to step out of the routine of my ordinary life (adventure), a sense of pride and purpose, an opportunity to make new friends, a chance to challenge myself. For more information, call a VFI regional representative at 866-514-1948 or check the website <http://www.vfi-usa.org>*

**"Copying" is permitted! You may use these lines as written or use them for inspiration to produce your own clever opening or conclusion. Please share your articles with us.**

**The enthusiasm of current and past volunteers is our most effective marketing tool.**

**PRINT ON VFI LETTERHEAD**

Dear.....

In these challenging economic times, prudent organizations like yours are watching their budgets while still trying to offer interesting, varied, and meaningful programming.

Volunteers for Israel® can help. Our free VFI Speakers' Bureau can provide you with a lively, interactive program that will inform, entertain, and engage your audience while demonstrating how they can give Israel the most important gift of all---the gift of their time and energy and presence.

Volunteers For Israel® ([www.vfi-usa.org](http://www.vfi-usa.org)) is a non-profit, non-political, non-denominational organization whose mission is to connect Americans to Israel through hands-on, civilian volunteer work. Through VFI thousands of volunteers have served to build and strengthen Israel.

Just listen to what one of our recent volunteers on an Israel Defense Forces base had to say about his (her) experience:

**INSERT QUOTE FROM YOUR REGION**

We would welcome the opportunity to introduce Volunteers for Israel® and the **life-changing experience it offers** to your synagogue or organization. Look at our website, and call or email **us** today to discuss how we can meet your programming needs.

B'Shalom,

Insert your name, phone, and email