

**How to Run a Successful Student Speakers Contest**  
**A Guide for Club, Zone, and Region Speech Contest Chairmen**

Presented by Mike Dahl, Gridley Lions Club

**I. Ordering materials — Multiple District Four, Lions Club International**

A. Phone: (805) 963-6681

B. Fax: (805) 963-8254

**II. Contacting the Schools**

A. Contact schools early.

B. Supply each school with materials

1. Handbooks (for counselors and coaches only)
2. Posters (filled out correctly)
3. Date, time, and location of contest (Feb. 20 is the cut-off date for club level contests.)
4. Your name and phone number. C. Provide access for ALL students.

1. High schools

2. Jr. High schools, if 9<sup>th</sup> grade students attend.

3. Charter schools

4. Private schools

5. Home schools

D. What to do about reluctant schools?

E. Follow through.

**III. Selecting Judges**

A. Requirements

1. Not a Lion or spouse.
2. Not a member of a competing high school, or well-acquainted with any of the speakers.
3. Should be a prominent citizen from the community whose profession/vocation qualifies them to judge public speaking.
4. Choose a variety.

B. Contact them at least 2 months in advance.

1. Put together a judge's packet, and send it or deliver it to each judge.
  - a. A letter thanking them for volunteering. It should include the date, time, and location of the contest, and your name and phone number
  - b. A copy of the Judges Information worksheet

- c. A blank judge's information sheet with a stamped return envelope
  2. Be sure to call back 2 weeks prior to the contest to remind the judges about the contest.
- C. How many judges?
1. Three judges for club contests
  2. Five for zone and region contests and for any contest that will likely have five or more speakers.
  3. Be sure to have at least one alternate judge available for all contests.

#### **IV. Preparing for the Contest**

- A. Read the handbook — twice.
- B. Picking a location
1. Must be quiet, have adequate seating, and doors that can be closed.
  2. Make sure all members, participants, and judges are informed of meeting location.
- C. Preparing the location
1. All clocks must be covered.
  2. Check to make sure that the meeting will not be interrupted by intercom announcements, phone calls, noises, or foot traffic during the contest, i.e., a waitress, or a busboy.
  3. A public address system must be available.
  4. Is there a podium, tables, chairs, and an American flag?
- D. Make sure you have the award checks and certificates ready to award to the contestants on the night of the contest.
- E. Contact the local paper to see if they have a reporter available to cover the contest and take photos afterward. If not, arrange to have pictures taken and sent to the paper for publication.
- F. Have all necessary positions filled at least one meeting in advance of the contest. Give descriptions of each position to the Lions members and review what they will be doing.
- G. Call all contestants personally one-to-two weeks before the contest to make sure they will be there and to answer any questions they might have. Ask them to be prepared to tell a little about themselves after the judging is finished.
- H. Prepare a small gift or certificate to present to each of the judges to thank them for volunteering.

#### **V. During the Contest**

- A. Have a written agenda for the meeting. Follow the guidelines in the Handbook, including reading all of the rules aloud prior to the contest.
1. Write down the names of those being introduced.
  2. Follow Lions protocol when introducing Lions officers.

3. Prepare an introductory statement. Talk about the history of the contest, Lions Club projects, the Student Speakers Foundation, what will happen at the each of the next levels of the contest, etc.
- B. Check to make sure that speakers have no props and are not wearing uniforms or watches.
- C. Don't announce any of the contestants or judges until after all of the judges score sheets have been handed in. Use the time while the tellers are adding up the scores to introduce the speakers and the judges.
- D. When it comes time to announce the top speaker, announce only the winner. Do not announce second, third, etc.

## **VI. After the Contest**

- A. Give the "Next Level Contest Form" to the winner. You will have to find out the name and phone number of the next level chairperson and the date, time, and location of the next contest.
- B. Give a copy of the Student Speakers Contest rules to the winner. Be sure to let them know that only one 3 X 5 card is allowed after the club level competition.
- C. Give the winner a copy of his/her scores from the judges sheet to help them prepare for the next level.
- D. Send the post card with the winner's information to the next level chairperson.
- E. Be sure to send thank you notes to the school officials that helped recruit speakers for you.
- F. Announce the date, time, and place of the next level of the competition at your Lions meetings and encourage members to attend to support your club-level winner.
- G. Be sure to contact your winner a week before the event to make sure they have received all the information about the upcoming event.

Chairing a student speaker's contest at any level is a major responsibility that requires time, organization, and preparation. If you do not feel you can fulfill this responsibility, please let your club president or district chairman know now so that alternative arrangements can be made.

The MD-4 Student Speakers Contest is one of the most pleasurable and rewarding Lions activities held throughout California-Nevada. It provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase you Lions Club and the Lions organization to the community. It also opens the door to membership opportunities for judges, teachers, and parents. All you have to do is invite them back to a Lions club meeting as your guest and give them some brochures on Lions, available from the membership department at Lions Clubs International headquarters.