



SPEAKING OF SPEAKERS

There is a lot of interest in guest speakers for public lectures. However, much needs to be thought about before ever lifting the telephone to extend an invitation.

Topic

There is no national theme for National Chemistry Week, but you can come up with your own. Some points to ponder:

- Does your proposed topic 'fit' with the theme?
- Is the topic of interest in your community -- in other words, is there a potential audience?
- Is the topic sufficiently interesting to draw them away from home and hearth?
- Do you have a specific speaker in mind?
- Can your speaker cater the technical talk to your targeted audience?

Your Audience

- Will your topic appeal to everyone or to a specific audience -- i.e. of interest to parents; students; chemists; environmentalists; pharmacists; homemakers; youth groups such as Cubs or Brownies. Your guest speaker will need to know what kind of an audience she/he will be addressing.
- What size of audience are you planning (hoping) for?

Potential topics: Food; waste disposal; women in chemistry and chemical engineering; green chemistry, wine/beer making; fossil vs. synthetic fuels; allergies; pesticides. What are some of the 'burning issues' in your community? Listening to your local radio talk shows or a glance at the Letters to the Editor pages of your local newspapers will provide some clues. What are your local industries, universities and hospitals concentrating on? Obviously there will be some local experts available to speak on their 'pet projects'.

Places to look for expertise:

- Your local industries. Their Public Relations Departments can suggest a potential speaker. Some advantages: Probably no cost involved; the speaker is likely to be someone from your own community, with a feel for 'hot issues' in the community.
- Your local university. What are some of the innovative research topics being studied? There are likely to be professors or graduate students anxious to talk about their 'pet projects'.
- Conference programs. Participants of conferences have a lecture already written up. They are often interested in presenting their topic a second time and could cater it to your audience.
- If your target audience consists of high school students, consider inviting undergraduate' chemistry, chemical engineering or chemical technology students to speak. Besides the enthusiasm and energy they will have, their closeness in age to the audience will provide an excellent role model for the students.
- Retired chemists and chemical engineers in your community can be a powerful resource. Their commitment to the field has already been proven and they have unquestionable expertise upon which to draw.
- Your own colleagues at work or involved in the Local Section may have suggestions on potential speakers and topics.
- Does your university alumni publish a directory of "Where are they now?" indicating where former graduates are working? Perhaps one of them would be interested in speaking about career choices that are available to chemists, chemical engineers and chemical technologists.
- Does your community have a Science Centre? If so, why not approach them for suggestions?

So, now you have a topic; you know the kind of audience (and its size) that you want to address and hopefully you have a lead on a couple of potential speakers. The rest is easy - book a hall; publicize the event and the people will turn out. You will know from reading the section on Working with the Media that there is more to it than that. You will require good advance planning, persistence and persuasion to attract an audience.

- Finally, consider other options - panel discussions; radio talk shows; video presentations; question and answer sessions for students.

The Edmonton CIC Local Section hosts its Café CIC where several speakers talk on ordinary topics such as chocolate, tea, coffee, whiskey. It is mixed with sampling and musical entertainment for a diverse event.