How to submit a Press Release to Lorton Valley Star.

NOTICE that our deadline for print is on or about the 20th of each month for the following month's issue.

Press Releases should be For or About greater Lorton or Lorton Citizens for Human Interest or Useful local information. Answer the reader's question, "What interest is it for me?" Share polite subjects and spare us self aggrandizement. We don't publish free advertisements. This is the criteria for story selection. Sponsors my receive sponsor stories. Do not preface your press release with any comments to persuade the editor that he should include your story; This is a waste of everyone's time.

Our coverage area includes parts of Southern Fairfax County. South Alexandria, South Springfield, Mason Neck and Fairfax Station up to the Franconia Parkway. It also includes Occoquan, parts of Woodbridge, and Lake Ridge in Eastern Prince William County down to the Prince William Parkway. It does not include Arlington, Manassas or Fredericksburg.

Don't worry about pretty style; Just blurt it out and we'll address style. Pretend that you are talking on a dying battery and you don't know what sentence will be your last so get the most important facts first then fill in details.

E-mail preferred. Subject should be searchable for us.

We already know our name so subject lines that say Lorton Valley Star are useless to us to be able to search the mail and be able to sort stories. This can be critical if we have to go back to the E-mail to pull out a graphic or contact you. Good searchable subjects go from general to specific such as RELEASE, Event, Concert, Date, Organization. We won't type a paper release unless its importance makes that necessary.

Information Formats:

Include text within the body of the E-mail and any photos or graphics as attachments. Do NOT send self published flyers. We print story information not flyers. Do NOT send any files in proprietary formats requiring a particular brand of software to open. For instance, there is no public free reader for Word.doc so it is not web standard and we don't use Microsoft. E-mail works on plain text which is perfect as we only need information and reformat for our columns anyway. Photos should be .tif or .jpg. Graphics should be .eps, .pdf or hi-res .gif However files from web sites are generally not print quality.

Write in third person avoiding repurposing newsletter notes referring to US, WE, OUR.

Address the readership your notice is intended for; Do NOT include comments to the Editor. Include public contact information for publication. Write as the fly on the wall observing. Make clear delineation between your notice text and contact information for the press editor which is not to be published. Test to be sure your text includes the time honored Who, What, When, Where, Why and How but do NOT submit information in this form because the verbs become vague.

Releases about events:

Calendar events for web and print have a specific numerical date first format, followed by the title, followed by the day and time, followed by a terse reminder, RSVP info, Admission, and Contact info for the venue. Events needing more explanation should include an additional separate story to make the event inviting for which the event notice may end with "See story".

Timeliness:

If it is an upcoming event the date should be prominent in the text. If it is a report of something that has already happened then the date is less important and will not come in the first paragraph and may be appropriately vague. Stories about "you-missed-it" are probably of either historical value or reviews.

Date lines:

Lorton Valley Star is a community paper and generally does not need datelines identifying other cities. The exception might be that a Lorton entity received a commendation out of the area such as a Graduation or Wedding announcement.

Suggested format: (Blue comments added by Lorton Valley Star.)

There is a fairly standard format for creating press releases. It will help your credibility and chances of being published if you present your material this way. Imagine that the editor doesn't care but you are giving them easy to use fill. It's all in the presentation. Each press release should include the following:

E-mail subject	Make it searchable: Order it general to specific: Release, Category, Event, Group, Date, Example: Release, Entertainment, Concert, XYZ Performers, Saturday, April 1 Do not subject it the name of the paper; They already know their name and such a subject does not distinguish your press release.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:	These words should appear at the top left of the page, in upper case. If you don't want the story to be made public yet, write "HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL ...." instead. Include text in the body of the e-mail; Do not send proprietary files formats such as .doc
Headline	Just like a headline in a newspaper. Make sure this describes the content of the story. More than a label, it should point to the meaning for the reader.
City, State/ Country - Month Day, Year	These details precede the story and orient the reader. Being a community paper, Lorton Valley Star doesn't use date lines in print except where a local person achieves notoriety outside the community such as a college accolade.
Body	This is where the actual story goes. There should be more than one paragraph, each paragraph no more than a few sentences. if there is more than one page, write "-more-" at the bottom of the page. Write in third person so no: "we, our, or us". Use the quide: Who, what, when, where, why, and how but do NOT present it in that form. Stories predicting events should make the date prominent. Stories about things past should de-emphacize the time. Answer the reader's question: "What's in it for me?" If what you write is only self aggrandizement, think again.
Company/ organisation info	Include any background information about the company or organisation featuring in this press release. Public contact info to be advertised is needed for future events.
Contact Information	Include press contact person, company name, phone/fax, email, physical/postal address. Clearly delineate press contact info not to be published from the body of the info with public contact info to be published. FAX is dead.
ENDS or **###**	This indicates the end of the press release.

(xxx words)	If you like you could include the total number of words contained in the press release. 200- 400 words is a good length story for Lorton Valley Star.
Photos:	Attach only one or two color photos. Do not include graphics in text. Resolution should be 1000 to 1400 pixels wide or 200 dpi at intended size. Images from web pages are generally not suitable because of the compression and low resolution.
Calendar Listing:	
	For Lorton Valley Star online EVENTS calendar, you may (should) provide a terse reminder of the form: Date first; Title: Day/Time: Description of "what's in it for me" RSVP or Ticket info; Location: Public contact info; Again, keep it third person

Example

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Competition is Healthy Says Lemonade Stand Queen

Hamilton, New Zealand - November 12, 2004 - Increased competition in the local lemonade stand market should be welcomed, according to the operator of popular lemonade stand "Shelly's Pure Lemonade".

12-year-old Shelly Smith has been selling her home-made brand of lemonade from the footpath in front of her parents' North Street home for 18 months and has seen the highs and lows of the trade.

"Stands come and go," says Ms Smith, "but when there are more stands around the vendors are more serious. They try harder and make a better product. That gives our customers confidence and sales go up."

In recent months the number of lemonade stands in North Street has risen from three to five. Experts believe this trend will continue, with the possibility of two or even three new stands before the end of summer.

Ms Smith feels that a stable supply of lemonade will also benefit the streets' economy.

"People know that if they are thirsty, North Street is the place to come. With plenty of lemonade stands on this street it doesn't matter if some of the vendors take a day off. The customer is never disappointed so they always come back."

Shelly Smith is a sole trader of lemonade and occasional cookies. Her stand at 223 North Street is usually open weekdays after school and weekends, except when she is playing with her friends or watching a movie.

Contact:
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I think this example is flawed but at least it's the form.
I assume that readers are selfish so: The better headline would be:
North Street is the Place for Quality Lemonade
Ya see how that better answers "what's in it for me?"