GFWC Florida clubwomen are always happy to share their secrets of success with others, and Mary Ann Zipp is no exception. As Public Relations Chairman for District 12’s GFWC Rotonda West Woman’s Club, Mary Ann has had at least 500 articles published in two local papers in the ten years she has served in that role.

“Anyone can learn to get club stories published in your local paper”, said Mary Ann Zipp in a recent interview with GFWC Florida Communications & PR Chairman Laura Connelly. “The key is to let the Editor know how important it is for your story to be told, because people in the community need your club’s assistance.”

Mary Ann had no experience in this field when she assumed the role of club Public Relations Chairman ten years ago. Since then she has worked hard to build relationships with the Editors of her two local papers, one daily and one bi-monthly. She offers several pointers for clubs who want to tell their stories through local papers.

* Do your homework – review the staff listing online and select the people who write local and community event stories, as well as the Editor.
* Call, visit and/or email them to introduce yourself and GFWC.
* Know your club’s story – including the numbers – and share it as an introduction. How many hours did your club volunteer last year? How many scholarships, grants and donations have you given away locally, and for how much? What service projects has your club done that have helped others in your community?
* Research the background of the Editor or Staff Writer. Read their articles. Learn their style, and see what they publish. Send them an email to let them know you enjoyed a recent article.
* Since most papers prefer to communicate electronically, build an email relationship with your contact. Communicate regularly – weekly is not too often. Connect with them on topics they have recently written about
* Respect the format in which they want to receive articles. Make sure photos are clear, cropped and appropriately sized. Make their job easy – if they need names with each photo, be sure to provide them without being asked.
* Submit articles regularly, and continue to follow up by email.
* Once your article is published, thank them profusely, and tell them how grateful your club is to get this message into the community.

If you have questions or would like to speak to Mary Ann, you may send a message to her through communications@gfwcflorida.org. We are all grateful for her words of wisdom, and her willingness to share her expertise with GFWC Florida!