Making Your Speaker Feel Welcome

Speakers will enjoy their visit to your society if they feel welcome and appreciated. Here are a few strategies you can use to help put your guest in their comfort zone.

1. Decide on the topic for the presentation, lecture, class or seminar. Decide how long the presentation will be: one hour with 15 minutes of questions, or an all-day seminar. When you contact a speaker, make sure they know what topic you would like to have them present. For an all-day seminar they should be given information about what is going to happen. If it is a conference, provide the link to the conference site so they can review it.
2. Plan your speakers well in advance. We suggest one to two months for someone local, and five to ten months for a national speaker. Lead time will allow your guest speaker a chance to clear their calendar for the date and provide time to tailor the talk for your society. It takes a lot of work to prepare a quality talk.
3. Travel: If your speaker is traveling such a distance that an overnight stay is required you have several options:
    - Make arrangements for the speaker to stay in a nearby motel.
    - Offer suggestions on local motels to the speaker, although they may prefer to make their own arrangements. Some speakers like to come the night before if the lecture is early in the morning. This way they can relax and be ready to give a great presentation.
    - If possible, have the speaker stay at the home of a member of your society.
    - If travel will involve a bridge or ferry toll, offer to cover that as well.
4. The Speaker's Fee: It is important to clarify the fee with the speaker. Some speakers will charge for their lectures, others will not. It is your job to be clear on what the fee will be and if it is in addition to other costs. Each society will need to decide what they are willing to offer before contacting a speaker.
    - For a national speaker you will probably need to prepare a contract and negotiate other expenses like handouts, hotel/motel, airfare, etc.
    - Local speakers may be less formal, but it is a good idea to check to see if they require a contract. Again, you will need to work with them on expenses like handouts, hotel/motel if needed.

5. Ask what presentation aids will be required. Some speakers will need a slide projector, VCR, microphone, overhead projector or even the use of a laptop computer. Some lecturers have their own equipment, others may not. It is always a good idea to provide a back-up for the presentation. Have an additional laptop on hand just in case. Suggest that the lecture prepare a USB drive or burn a CD-ROM of their presentation so if there is a problem you have an option. Does the presenter need WiFi?
6. Ask if there will be handouts. Ask how handouts will be handled. Will they bring their own or are you to provide copies.
7. About two weeks before the presentation, contact your speaker again to see if any last-minute arrangements need to be made. The call also serves as a reminder for your speaker. Give them a phone number where they can reach you should an illness or family emergency arise. If a problem has already developed, it will give you time to prepare a substitute program.
8. On the day of the appearance, anticipate the visit. Arrange for someone to greet your speaker. Some societies take the speaker out to lunch or dinner. In any case, make sure your greeter understands that they must be there to assist the speaker in hauling books, setting up equipment, providing payment for expenses, and introducing the speaker to other members.
9. Find out about the speaker's background so you can give a great introduction and be ready to start the applause. When the presentation is complete, be sure to thank the speaker with another round of applause and be ready to assist in take-down.

Follow these simple guidelines and your speaker will have a wonderful experience, and so will you!