

# Tips for Event Publicity



## **One sure-fire way to spread news quickly is publicity, especially through mainstream news outlets.**

*(Make sure you always include your partnership director into your publicity plans and efforts.!) You will want to do this especially after you make a policy change. Although the mainstream media can be hard to access, particularly by a youth group, here are some basic tips that can help improve your chances.*

## **Before the Event**

Letting the public and the media know of an upcoming event is a key first step to attracting both the general public to your event as well as potential media coverage of your event.

### **Notify Calendar Sections of Newspapers & Online Calendars**

*Notify them, in writing, of the date, time, place, one sentence description and contact name with telephone number. The "one sentence description" should be catchy enough to get people to call for more information. Don't forget free online events calendars, many of which have forms you can fill out electronically to submit your event!*

### **Print Flyers and Distribute**

*Flyers are very helpful in publicizing your event. Print as many as you can, make them colorful and eye-catching and easy to read. Post them all over your school/community about two weeks before the event and re-post those torn down or worn away again a few days before the event. It may be helpful to create a different version poster for different audiences (one for schools, one for families, one for the general community, etc.)*

### **Public Service Announcements**

*PSAs can be sent to radio stations. A public service announcement should be short and to the point with the pertinent where, when, what and who in the first sentence.*

- Send the PSA to the station's public-service director or community calendar at least two weeks in advance.
- Call after you send it to make sure it arrived and ask whether they can use it.
- Your message should be in "live copy", the actual announcement you wish them to read. Most stations prefer 15 - 30 second spots. As a general reference, 20 words = 10 seconds, 50 words = 20 seconds and 75 words = 30 seconds.
- At the top of the page give the station the date the PSA should start and stop running. Send a thank you note to the station after they air your PSA.

## □ **Event Publicity - Press Release.**

Write and send a press release approximately 2 weeks prior to an event. The first paragraph should have the important **Who, What, Where** and **Why**. (Often a reporter will only read the first paragraph.) Be catchy in your title and direct in your point.

Presenting an angle for the story is also a good way to "hook" the press. Press releases should be sent to all newspapers, television news stations and radio stations in the surrounding area. **Always use existing relationships your group or organization has made.** No matter how good your press release is, you will have a better chance of getting covered if you follow up the release with a phone call.

- **Newspapers:** Press releases should be sent to the City Desk (or equivalent). If there is a unique speaker at the event, the press release can also be sent to the Features writer (or equivalent) for a feature story or profile that includes the event.
- **Television:** the press release should be sent to the Assignment Editor. In order for TV to come, there has to be a strong visual element to the event, something unique to photograph or someone noteworthy to interview. Television stations will often want to film interviews prior to an event. Don't forget about cable TV stations or other community run venues.
- **Radio:** The best bet with radio is often the pre-publicity. All talk radio, however, will often cover events through interviews either on the spot, or more likely, in the studio prior to the event. Press releases should be sent to the News or Program Director.

### **REMEMBER:**

- ✓ It is always best to send press releases directly to a person instead of a title (i.e. Bob Jones instead of News Director. It is to your advantage to take the time and call to ask for the appropriate person's name.)
- ✓ Call the media outlet to verify the arrival of the press release and quickly highlight the points of the event.
- ✓ Make sure someone is assigned to work with the press at the event. Designate certain people to be available for interviews and make sure they are prepped with talking points.

### **After the Event**

- Calls should be made to reporters who were interested in interviews that could not be scheduled prior or during the event.
- A call to the press person offering any further information is always appreciated and helps remind that person how important and news-worthy your information is to them.
- Any press person who covered the event should be kept on a list and sent any further information about the subject at a later date.
- Thank you notes are very important and will help cultivate the relationships you are developing with reporters.

### **DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS!**



All organizing is about developing relationships. Relationships with the media should always be professional. Honesty is crucial. You want them to know that when your organization seeks press, it is about something newsworthy and it is true. No matter how friendly a press person is, you should always assume that what you say can and will be published. Assume nothing is secret and act and speak accordingly. It is ok to tell a reporter that you don't know the answer to something right now but you will find out and get back with them. When you offer to get back to a reporter, do so promptly. Develop a reputation for providing solid, accurate and timely information.