

Using the Media

Why Use the Media?

The media is an important resource for youth. It can help you to:

- Raise awareness about an event, group or issue
- Gain credibility within the community
- Get access to participants or volunteers
- Create political pressure
- Challenging negative stereotypes about youth
- Getting youth voice and concerns out into the general community discourse
- Reaching ‘new’ (and large amounts of) people
- It’s not really hard to do ... and do well!

The Seven “News Values”

It is important to know how to “sell” your specific event or issue of interest to the media in order to get coverage. You are competing with countless other issues and stories, you need to be clear about why *yours* is important. As part of this, condense your message into one sentence- this is your *key message*.

When taking your message to the media, you should consider the Seven News Values to gain their interest. These Seven News Values are:

- 1) Conflict:
 - Good news stories always have to have conflict
 - Remind people of their problems, and show how you are struggling to resolve them
 - Position yourself as the valiant hero fighting the good fight
- 2) Humanity:
 - What does this mean to the readership/viewers?
 - Seek to bring every issue down to a personal level (show the human connection)
- 3) Immediacy:
 - Why is this story important now?
- 4) Locality:
 - Media will be looking for a local angle

Using the Media: *Getting your Voice Heard*

5) Celebrity:

- Are there recognizable names that can draw attention? Doesn't have to be a person, can be a well-known company or organization.

6) Novelty:

- Is there anything new that you can bring up that will grab people's attention, show how you're "wired in?"
- Use the 'youth angle.'

7) Timing:

- Wait for a slow news day, as it'll give your story more attention
- If it's a relevant to a major news item, put it out there then.

Selling to the Media

Press Releases

Press Releases inform the media about an event or an issue that you would like them to cover in more detail. They are detailed, longer, include quotes, can be used for an article, and include contact information for interviews.

Points to Remember When Writing a Press Release:

- Include the 5 Ws.
- Always write "Press Release" at the top of the page.
- Make your headline clear and simple.
- Contact information.
- Include the date.
- Provide background information, facts, sources.
- Use school/organizational letterhead if possible.
- Place "-30-" at the end.

Media Advisory

Media Advisories inform the media about an upcoming event you would like them to cover. They are shorter, inform the media of an upcoming event, and also include contact information.

Points to Remember When Writing a Media Advisory:

- Include the 5 Ws: who, what, when, where, why.
- Always write "Media Advisory" at the top of the page.
- Make your headline clear and simple.

Using the Media: *Getting your Voice Heard*

- Contact information.
- Schedule of events.
- Put the date for release at the top of the page.
- Use school/organization letterhead if possible.
- Place “-30-“ at the end.

Selling to the Public

Public Service Announcement

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) inform the public about an issue or an upcoming event. They are meant to be read over the radio or television. They are fairly short and include key information and/or statistics.

Points to Remember When Writing a Public Service Announcement:

- Include the 5 Ws.
- Always write “Public Service Announcement” at the top of the page.
- Make your headline clear and simple.
- Contact information.
- ‘Think’ about spoken work (TV, Radio).
- Include the length of time.
- Include a schedule for the event.
- Use school/organizational letterhead.
- Write “-30-“ at the end.

Community Event Listing

Community Events Listings briefly inform the public about upcoming events and include key information. That are intended for the newspaper, email, or internet postings.

Points to Remember When Writing a Community Events Listing:

- Include the 5 Ws
- Make it as clear and short as possible.
- Include all contact information.
- If faxing, use letterhead if possible.
- Make the title/headline clear and simple.
- Try email and internet postings.
- If there is a need, write “-30-“ at the end.

Using the Media: *Getting your Voice Heard*



The Interview

After you've submitted your press release or media advisory, the reporter may request an interview with you, or your appointed "media spokesperson." Every media opportunity is a chance for you to convey your issues and your message to the public—interviews are excellent opportunities!

When being interviewed:

- Have a positive attitude about the opportunity to be interviewed.
- Be prepared. Anticipate issues and questions- and have responses ready
- Organize 2 or 3 points you want to make: write them down, simplify and shorten them, and practice! Remember your goal.
- If you want to promote an event, make sure you know the who, what, where, when, and why of the event.
- During the interview be professional. Keep answers short and to the point, and avoid saying "no comment" (it conveys guilt)
- Always be honest, and if you are unable to answer a question, be straight up about it.
- Keep the reporter on your agenda and stick to your points

For more information on the Red Cross's **Media workshop**,
Email michelle.hassen@redcross.ca