



Work with the Media

As you develop your movement, publicity for your community's actions is critical. Use all forms of media – newspapers, radio, TV, Internet – to get the word out about your group. Additionally, the press may want to interview you about your work.

Tips for Engaging the Media

- Contact your local community newspapers, radio stations, TV stations and any source with a calendar of community events.
- Be familiar with the news outlets you contact and know which reporters cover local events.

Write a Letter to the Editor

Your letter can make a difference! Letters to the editor are an easy and effective way to raise the power of your voice. It doesn't take much time to write a letter to the editor and it is fairly easy to get one published in your local paper. Because the opinion section is the most widely read section of the newspaper, your senators and representative regularly monitor letters to the editor in their local papers to determine which issues are important to their constituents. So get started on a letter now!

Tips for Getting Your Letter Published

- **Keep it short.** Limit the length of your letter to 250 words or less. Make sure to follow the guidelines for your local paper; these are often found online.
- **Be timely.** If you can, respond to a recently published article in the newspaper. For example, you can write, "In the article 'Global Food Prices Increase Food Scarcity (Apr. 9)', the author claims..."
- **Start strong.** Make your main point in the first couple of sentences.
- **Localize the letter.** Explain why your local community should care about your issue.
- **Include your full name, address and phone number** at the end of the letter. Editors frequently call for confirmation before publishing letters.
- **If your letter is printed**, be sure to send a copy to your representatives' and senators' offices. Please also let us know about your publishing success by e-mailing your letter to acary@ajws.org.

Tips for Writing a Media Advisory

A well-written media advisory invites the press and the public to attend your event or cover your action. This tool provides the schedule for the event and gives important background information to raise awareness and interest. Send a media advisory *before* your event or action; one week to 10 days before the event is usually appropriate.

- **The shorter the better.** The advisory should be no longer than one page. Think of it as an invitation for journalists to attend your event.
- **Put your news up front.** Highlight important points in the headline and in the first paragraph. By the end of the first paragraph, the reporter should know who, what, when, where, why and how.

- **Provide contact information.** List a contact name and number that is actually reachable at the top of the advisory (i.e. a cell phone or a number with an answering machine or voicemail that is checked regularly).
- **Photo ops.** If you plan to have photographers at an event, clearly indicate at the bottom of the advisory that photos will be available after the program for the press.
- **Make sure there are no grammatical or factual errors.**
- **Follow-up.** After you send the media advisory (e.g. via fax or e-mail), follow up with a phone call a day later.
- **Advertise your success.** If the program is successful, send out a press release about the event's outcome. Make sure to use new language and provide new updates.

Tips for Writing a Press Release

The content of a press release is similar to a media advisory, but is usually distributed after the event. Whereas a media advisory encourages journalists to attend an event, a press release sums up the outcome of the event to be used for a following story.

- **Include a clear summary of who, what, where, when, why and how.** Think of it as a condensed article written by a journalist - that journalist is you.
- **Make sure your event is newsworthy** by focusing on a unique aspect of the event, such as a special speaker.
- **Provide hard facts and statistics.** If you have impressive numbers (e.g. the number of people involved in an event or the amount of money raised), include those as well.

Tips for Being Interviewed

If you are successful in getting reporters to your event, you should be prepared for an interview. Think of questions that you may be asked and write down answers to them. Compile a list of talking points to discuss throughout the interview. Talking points should include details on the who, what, where, when, why and how components of your cause.

- **Before the interview,** familiarize yourself with the media outlet that will be interviewing you and what kind of audience you will be addressing.
- **Know your facts and figures, focus on solutions,** and stay poised and level-headed.
- **Keep your audience motivated** by articulating your passion and focusing on the positive aspects of your work.
- **If you don't know the answer** to a reporter's question, don't lie and make up answer. Admit that you do not know and offer to direct the reporter to a source who will have a correct answer.
- **Talk to the interviewer,** not the camera.
- **Dress appropriately,** especially in case you will be photographed or filmed.

Tips for Contacting Radio Outlets

- Call the main radio station number and ask for the newsroom. Ask the newsroom to whom and in what format to send your media advisory. See section above for media advisory tips.
- Ask radio stations to broadcast Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about your cause and your group.
- Find out how long the PSA should be and write a concise description that emphasizes the most important details of what your group is doing.
- Convince a show to talk about your cause and what others can do to help.
- Local NPR affiliates are a great outlet and can be found easily at www.npr.org/stations.