

HELP, I have to talk to the media!

Working with your local media

Getting media coverage on your special Exchange Club event or project is a great way to spread the word about your club. Here are some tips to help you get the word out.

- ***Get to know your local media***, including newspapers (don't forget the smaller community papers), local news (radio and television), and online media outlets.
- ***Learn the names of the reporters*** who cover the beats most significant to you. Reporters who cover local, community, or human interest stories may be your best bet. Others might also be interested, such as the society columnist, if your event involves community leaders. The health reporter might be interested if it involves child abuse prevention. The calendar page editor will want your event listings.
- ***Get to know reporters personally***. Consider inviting them to speak at one of your club meetings. Send an invitation to special club events. Over time, you will have other opportunities to develop these contacts into more familiar relationships.
- ***Always give the media information that is newsworthy.*** Your information should be new, noteworthy, and relevant to most of the community.
- ***Make yourself available to the media.*** Give a home or cell number where they can easily reach you. If you receive a call from a reporter, return the call as soon as you can. Reporters are working on deadline and will appreciate your rapid response.
- ***Prepare for the interview.*** Make notes for yourself and develop talking points.
- ***Practice your key messages and say them with animation.*** Broadcast media are always thinking of soundbites. For TV pitches, make sure there is something visual for cameras. Use plain English and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- ***Always thank a reporter for his or her coverage.***

Keep in mind that the media is inundated with events and story ideas, so what you think is news may not always match their views. If a major breaking story is happening (whether local or national), wait a day or two for the media interest to die down so your information doesn't get overlooked.

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