



Getting the Word Out

Communicate with the Media

“Media” is the kind of word that has many definitions. Today, newspapers, magazines, and television outlets are competing against the “news on demand” world of the Internet. Here are some considerations that apply when “getting the word out” to all kinds of media.

- What works well at one media shop may not work elsewhere. You may want to send a press release as a Microsoft Word attachment—but some editors prefer you paste the release in the body of the e-mail message. Find out how your contacts prefer to receive press releases (e.g., fax, e-mail with attached or pasted content, snail mail?).
- Take notes about when editors/reporters won't be able to take your calls. Perhaps you want to call television stations at 10 am—but one station has an 11 am show, another has a noon show. The best advice: If you're within an hour of a major newscast, print deadline, etc., don't call! You will immediately make the short list of people to ignore.
- Produce a spreadsheet listing the media outlets in your area. Whenever you can, find an appropriate beat reporter (instead of the editor) to whom you can send your press releases.
- Write press releases the way media expects them to be written. The most universally accepted writing style among journalists is AP style. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* can be found at your local bookstore and will have easy-to-follow information on how to present certain words and phrases. These are used at all of the nation's major newspapers, television stations, and major magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Supplements

One item that appears frequently in discussions about best practices is the use of the publication supplement. These are special magazines distributed within wide-circulation papers/magazines.

Many local LEAVE A LEGACY campaigns have produced supplements in cooperation with local business publications, bar association magazines, or publications with a focus on seniors.

Most of these publications come at absolutely no cost to the local LEAVE A LEGACY program, but they reach thousands of readers. The cost is recuperated by the publication through advertisements. Call your local business publication and express your interest. The publication will likely assign its own reporters to write most of the stories, but your volunteers can help in providing editorial direction.

Here are some ideas for the supplement's editorial pages.

- 1) Local donor stories
- 2) Story defining the LEAVE A LEGACY mission and need for more bequests locally/nationally
- 3) Sample bequest language
- 4) Local bequest and will writing statistics
- 5) Information on other kinds of planned giving vehicles

A great benefit to these supplements is that they traditionally have a long shelf life and are often distributed at senior events.