

Working with the Media

Types of Media

Think of the following when considering “pitching” your story to the media. These tips may help you decide which media outlet is right for you.

Newspaper

- Often need response on short notice.
- Reporters cover “beats” and often write more in-depth stories than television and radio journalists.
- Interviews may be conducted over the phone.

Magazine

- Due to longer lead times, can often conduct more research and interviews.
- Quotes can be longer than with newspaper and television.
- Greater possibilities to develop a theme or point of view.

Television

- Need to be able to tell story visually.
- Sound bites are essential
- Stories are short.

Radio

- Often need response on short notice.
- Lots of time to fill, so stories can be longer.
- Interviews may be conducted over the phone.

What is considered news?

Not everything is considered news. Think about the following when deciding if your story is newsworthy.

News entails the following:

- Timely happenings.
- Trends, issues, etc. that affect a lot of people.
- Stories about unique or interesting people, or people in quirky, inspiring or unusual situations.
- Stories that give important, useful information to people.
- Stories about things that are new, different, first-of-a-kind, surprising, bizarre or colorful.
- Sensationalism, bad news, scandals, controversy, accidents.
- Events that are visual.

Interview Tips

Keep the following in mind when you are being interviewed.

- Always tell the truth.
- Talk from the audience's viewpoint – what does the audience need to get out of this?
- Don't use jargon.
- Don't say anything to the reporter that you don't want repeated.
- Be prepared – Ask questions and get necessary information prior to the interview.
- Know what information you want to get across – generally no more than three main points --- and know how to phrase it clearly, concisely and positively.
- State the most important facts at the beginning.
- Be yourself; talk naturally and conversationally.
- Avoid sarcasm and jokes.
- Take time to consider the question. Don't rush your answer.
- Bring supporting materials to the interview , like photos and graphs.
- Gain credibility through body language by maintaining eye contact and keeping a pleasant look on your face. Avoid nodding or other gestures that may imply that you're agreeing with something you don't agree with.
- Cite third parties that would be appealing to the audience and provide examples or statistics.
- Use audience-focused language that invites them into the "conversation." Phrases such as "We can all do this" and "This affects all of us" make others feel as though they have a stake in what you're discussing.
- Ask to have questions rephrased if you don't understand it.
- Let the reporter know that what you are saying is important by using phrases such as "The main point is..." or "The thing to remember is..."
- End your response positively, and if possible, encourage the reporter to address your issue.