

Part VI, Section B

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: Tip Sheets for Effective Media Relations

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- Building Media Relationships – 8 Ways to Get to Know your Local Media
- Click! Taking Photos That Get Published

QUESTIONS?

Please contact AJLI:

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Mexico: 001.800.955.3248

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E-mail: info@ajli.org

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: KNOW THE LINGO!

A GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED PR TERMS

The following is a glossary of commonly used media/public relations terms mentioned in the attached media guide. We recommend that you become familiar with these terms to help you publicize your League more effectively.

BACKGROUNDER – A one- to three-pages document containing background information on a specific topic. Can be formatted as a Q & A, bulleted or paragraph-form document.

BIO – A brief one to three-paragraph description of a volunteer’s community service, professional and/or scholastic achievements

CABLE ACCESS – As part of their contract with a city, cable companies are required to provide a public cable access channel for broadcasting noncommercial programs produced by citizens and nonprofit organizations. Get to know the managers of your local cable access channel – they can be a valuable resource and may help you disseminate your information more widely.

CALENDAR LISTING – A one-page synopsis of basic details regarding an event, includes info on what, where, when, why as well as ticket prices for the public. Sent to community calendars to publicize an event.

COMMUNITY CALENDARS – Numerous publications and online sites in your area may feature calendars of upcoming community events. Your media list (see below) should have a comprehensive list of all print, online and broadcast community calendar editors.

EDITORIAL CALENDARS – Most print media outlets (magazines, newspapers, etc.) develop editorial calendars a year in advance that highlight special feature sections they will create in the coming year. Don’t hesitate to contact your local newspapers and regional magazines to obtain a copy of their editorial calendar so that you can ‘pitch’ story ideas. Sometimes editorial calendars are posted on the publication’s web site.

FACT SHEET – A bulleted one-page document that provides facts, statistics and other brief information about a specific topic

FOLLOW-UP CALLS – Phone calls to media after a press release, media advisory or pitch letter is sent out. Follow-up calls should be made to ascertain whether media received League information and “pitch” the news value of that information.

LEAD TIME – The period of time media work in advance of publication or broadcast. Weekly newspapers may work on 2-3 week lead times while TV News works on a one-day lead-time. Check w/your local media to find out what their lead times are.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR - Letters to the editor of a publication emphasize the writer’s opinion on an issue of note or an item featured in that publication.

MAT RELEASE – Feature story created by the League to run in small community papers within a geographic region for a set price.

MEDIA ADVISORY – A one-page bulleted summary of the main details of an upcoming event highlighting the “who, what, when, and where” of the event as well as why the media should attend.

MEDIA KIT – A package of information on a specific topic that provides all of the relevant information to help the media write a story about that topic.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: KNOW THE LINGO! – PAGE 2

MEDIA LIST – A targeted database of reporters’ key contact information (e-mail address, phone, full name, etc.) as well as relevant insights (lead-times, preferred method of communication, etc.) – to be used for media outreach.

MEDIA TOURS (AUDIO/RADIO/DESK-SIDE) – A radio/audio tour is a series of pre-booked interviews with radio stations conducted over the phone or in-studio. Desk-side media tours are brief, pre-booked visits with reporters in their offices to discuss new League initiatives, programs and other relevant news (Each visit should be no longer than 15-20 minutes)

NEWS - News is anything previously unknown that informs, interests or inspires as well as matters to a significant portion of a media outlet’s audience.

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE– A one or two-page summary of your news story highlighting relevant facts and including quotes from key players. A press release should only be sent out to announce “news”.

OP-ED – An editorial written to express a view about a current issue in the news. Usually difficult to place as most papers reserve op-ed space for well-known guest writers.

PITCH LETTER – A letter or fax to a reporter emphasizing the selling point of a story idea. The pitch letter should be persuasive and highlight the key elements of what makes a story idea “news”.

PRESS CONFERENCE – A news event scheduled to release breaking news to a wide audience of reporters who need to cover this information in a short span of time. Press conferences should be used to release hard news i.e. a new report, new statistics, a groundbreaking or politically newsworthy initiative.

PRESS KIT – See Media Kit

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PRINT) – A non-commercial announcement that newspapers, magazines and newsletters can use to fill unused advertising space. Print PSAs usually come in a variety of sizes that match existing ad space sizes

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (RADIO/TV) – A radio PSA or public service announcement is a short, “non-commercial” announcement prepared to provide information during free airtime (usually 10 to 60 seconds) on radio stations or (usually 15 or 30 seconds) on television stations.

REACTIVE MEDIA CALLS – Calls initiated by reporters to gain information about the Junior League. Every League office should have a stated procedure on how to handle reactive media calls.

SATELLITE MEDIA TOURS – A paid media tour booked by a professional media tour company that allows a spokesperson to sit in a studio and do television interviews via satellite with TV stations nationally or internationally.

SAVE THE DATE ADVISORY – A media advisory that asks reporters to “save the date” for an upcoming event where you wish to have reporter in attendance. Sent well in advance of the event to hold the date.

VIDEO NEWS RELEASE – A pre-packaged 30-second news story about your League designed to be dropped into a regularly scheduled news program in whole or part. Usually costly to produce and may not be usable in larger media markets with union rules regarding news production.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: PRESENTING YOUR LEAGUE TO MEDIA

The Spokesperson Role in Media Relations

The Junior League President is always the official spokesperson for the League. Because any contact with the media has the potential to reach hundreds or even thousands of people, every League member should know the League's communications protocol – i.e., refer all media requests, calls, etc., to the President, President-elect, and the person in charge of communications for the League.

League members should be responsible for knowing basic information about the League: its mission, history, activities, and contributions to the community so that they can accurately represent the League to friends and acquaintances. Volunteers who are regularly in touch with community or corporate partners should also be well versed on the League as well as the benefits of partnering with the League.

Here are a few tips on what the League spokesperson should do before, during and after a potential media interview.

BEFORE A MEDIA INTERVIEW

- **Set up a communications protocol** –
 - Meet with your Board and brief them on the importance of the President (or PE) being the only person to comment on behalf of the League – this keeps the message consistent and helps brand the organization
 - Ensure that whoever answers the League phone knows to pass all media requests directly to the President of the League with a copy to the PE and/or the primary Communications person for the League; you may wish to supply that person with a script or media call sheet (see attached example) to handle calls more accurately
 - Consult with your PE and/or the League's primary Communications person to discuss any difficult media requests and determine next steps accordingly
- **Do your research** – Try to find out as much as possible about the interview topic beforehand and thoroughly research the reporter who is covering the topic. Generally, it's quite simple to do an Internet search to locate past stories written by news reporters.
- **Be strategic** – Not all publicity is good publicity. Choose your interview wisely based on what you want to communicate about your League and don't be afraid to decline interviews if they are not going to serve your purpose.
- **Develop key messages** – Determine 2-3 key points about your League, program or event that you definitely want to get across to the media. These are your key messages. Write them down so that you can easily reference them during a phone interview or memorize them for in-person interviews. Before your interview role-play with a fellow volunteer for practice so that your tone is conversational and what you say does not sound memorized.

DURING A MEDIA INTERVIEW

- **Be positive** – If you're not positive about the League, the reporter won't be either. Don't gloss over shortcomings but don't put undue focus on them either. It's important to be comfortable about the story you're telling and talk about solutions rather than problems.

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- **Don't forget your key messages!** – Don't end the interview without including your key messages in some way shape or manner even if it means asking the reporter to give you one more minute to say your piece. In a television setting, answer a reporter's questions but also include your key points by saying something like: "I just want to mention a few quick things..."
- **Nix "Off the Record" and "No Comment"** – Nothing is ever "off the record". Don't say "No comment," or "I can't tell you anything." If a reporter contacts you directly, just say you need a few minutes and get back to him/her in a timely fashion when you feel more prepared.
- **Appearance matters** – Keep in mind the story you're telling and dress accordingly, i.e. if you're highlighting a League landscaping project, don't wear a suit and pearls. For television interviews: A producer may ask you to not wear black and white as sharp contrasts create unattractive shadows. Solid colors generally translate well. Avoid distracting jewelry and dress simply and comfortably.
- **Don't use jargon** – Avoid using acronyms or League-specific terms such as focus area or signature project – these are meaningless to anyone outside the League. Use simple language, be clear and be consistent. For television interviews, use attention grabbing "sound bites" that get your point across.
- **You're only human** – Don't be afraid to tell a reporter you don't know something – it's better to check your facts, prepare your answers and get back in touch within the reporter's deadline rather than to make up an answer that may not be correct or stumble over an unprepared answer.
- **You don't have to go it alone** – If you know what the interview is about and feel that a fellow League member may know more about the topic, bring her along to provide more in-depth answers to specific questions as required.
- **Be helpful** – Cooperation is the key when dealing with the press. Reporters have their jobs to do and, like all of us, respond more favorably to a cooperative attitude. Helpfully answer those questions that you can in a timely fashion; be firm and friendly in declining to answer what you cannot or should not and don't ever lose your temper with a reporter.

AFTER A MEDIA INTERVIEW

- **Don't hesitate to follow up** – If you forget to mention something or feel that you need to clarify an issue after the interview is over, don't hesitate to call a reporter back or write a short note for clarification.
- **Aim for accuracy** – If there are inaccuracies in the final story, use your best judgement in determining whether or not to point them out. Is the error consequential? If so, a letter to the editor or a call to the reporter may be in order. For your own credibility, don't let your mistakes go uncorrected either. If you made an error, correct it as soon as possible. Just know that most retractions are never printed, reported or even read.
- **One for the list** – Pass the reporter's information and details about the interview to the League volunteer who manages your League's media list – the volunteer can then follow up with a thank you and find out if the reporter wants to be added to your media list.
- **Share the limelight** – Make sure you get copies of the final story and share them with League members – positive media coverage is a great morale booster!

SAMPLE MEDIA CALL SHEET

The following template can be used for media calls by the person who answers your League phone to ensure that all information pertaining to a media request is captured in one place.

DATE: _____ CALL TAKEN BY: _____

REPORTER INFORMATION:

FIRST NAME : LAST NAME: PHONE NUMBER:

TITLE/BEAT: _____

MEDIA OUTLET: (CIRCLE ONE) TV RADIO PRINT ONLINE

NAME OF MEDIA OUTLET:

CIRCULATION/VIEWERSHIP/AUDIENCE: (IF APPLICABLE)

NATURE OF REQUEST:

DEADLINE: (INCLUDE TIME AND DATE)

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: MANAGING CRISES

Crisis Communications Planning

What is a communications crisis?

A crisis is any situation during which your League could be portrayed in a negative light in the media.

What should I do in the event of a crisis?

Don't wait until you are in a crisis to formulate a plan. Ideally, you should be so well prepared that when you are actually experiencing a communications crisis, the media will be the least of your worries and, quite possibly, the source of some of your solutions. Here are a few ideas to help you be prepared:

- ❑ **Build relationships** – Your only contact with media should NOT occur when you need a favor. Focus on establishing good relationships with the media on an ongoing basis (please refer to the [Media Relations 101 Tip Sheet – Building Media Relationships: 8 Ways to Get to Know Your Local Media](#)) so that when you are faced with a tough situation, they will be more open to giving you a fair hearing.
- ❑ **Keep your eyes open** – It's impossible to anticipate every crisis that may occur but staying informed about happenings in your community can help you keep on top of potential issues that may arise.
- ❑ **Set up a communications protocol** – A communications protocol simply establishes how media requests are handled within the League
 - Meet with your Board and brief them on the importance of the President (or PE) being the only person to comment on behalf of the League
 - Ensure that whoever answers the League phone knows to pass all media requests directly to the President of the League with a copy to the PE and/or the primary Communications person for the League; you may wish to supply that person with a script or media call sheet (see [Media Relations 101 Tip Sheet – Presenting Your League to Media: The Spokesperson Role in Media Relations](#) for an example) to handle calls
 - Consult with your PE and/or the League's primary Communications person to discuss any difficult media requests and determine next steps accordingly
- ❑ **Create a crisis communications plan** – A crisis communications plan clearly outlines what steps will be taken in the event of a crisis. If you create a template plan, it can be adapted for various situations. Your plan should establish the:
 - League President as the official spokesperson on all issues related to the crisis
 - Practice of informing the League's decision-makers: the President, PE, the Board and the League's primary Communications person of a crisis or potential crisis immediately
 - Steps that will be taken by the League's decision-makers in responding to the crisis including assessing the situation and evaluating the impact of the crisis, informing/consulting with AJLI and League attorneys/accountants (if necessary), determining the extent and nature of the League's response and what will be the official League statement to all stakeholders
 - Stakeholder groups that will need to be informed of the crisis and/or the League response, i.e. League members, the media, corporate and community partners, advisory board members
 - Manner in which the League will communicate with each stakeholder group

What is the role of the League spokesperson in a crisis?

The League President is the official spokesperson who will field media interviews and requests on the crisis. If the President is out of town or unavailable, this responsibility is given to the League's President-elect.

The League spokesperson is NOT the sole decision-maker to determine how the crisis is handled. This is the joint responsibility of the League's decision-makers, including the President, the PE, the Board and the primary League Communications person.

A few things for the League spokesperson to remember:

- Tell the truth and deal with facts only
- Have a regular dialogue with media, providing updates as necessary
- Log inquiries so that you have back-up for anything you say
- Find community allies who will speak positively on your behalf
- Consult with AJLI and other appropriate advisors
- Be prepared!

Please refer to [Media Relations 101 Tip Sheet](#) – *Presenting Your League to Media: The Spokesperson Role in Media Relations* for further guidance.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: THE WRITE STUFF

How to Write Compelling Media Advisories, Press Releases, and Pitch Letters

There are a number of different types of press materials that can be provided to the media in standard formats that help them quickly identify what you are sending. They are as follows:

Media/News Advisory

A one-page bulleted summary of the main details of an upcoming event highlighting the who, what, when and where of the event as well as why the media should attend. A media advisory alerts journalists to an event that may not be at the top of their agenda but which may be of interest to them. It is an FYI written in a simple form without too many details. A media advisory can also be used to invite reporters to a press conference where further new information will be released.

Calendar Listing

A one-page synopsis of basic details regarding an event, includes info on what, where, when, why as well as ticket prices – it should ideally offer a member of the public all the information required to make a decision about attending the event. If you have an event that you'd like to include in the community calendars of your local newspapers and other media, use the calendar listing format to send the information to the calendar listing editor.

Press Releases

A one- or two-page summary of your news story highlighting relevant facts and including quotes from key players. A press release should only be sent out to announce “news”. The lead paragraph of a press release should capture a reporter’s attention and instantly explain the news value of the story.

Pitch Letters

A letter or fax to a reporter that emphasizes the selling point of a story idea. The pitch letter should be persuasive and highlight the key elements of what makes a story idea “news.” Pitch letters can be used to explain a story idea that may be a feature rather than “breaking news”.

Before you start...

Take a moment to discuss the essential news value of anything your League wishes to publicize. It is much easier to create effective media materials if you ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Who are we trying to reach with this information?
- Is the media the best way to reach these people?
- What is NEW about what we want to say?
- Why should people care about this information?
- What is the basic information we need to communicate (who, what, where, when, why of a story)?

The following pages contain examples of the above-noted media materials. Do not hesitate to contact AJLI if you have any questions regarding the development of press materials – creating or communicating the news value of a story is not an easy task – PR professionals spend their entire careers perfecting their ability to do so. You will be much better equipped to write press materials if you make a habit of keeping track of the types of issues that your local media are covering.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

Use media advisories to inform the media about upcoming events that you want them to cover. The following example is a template; please insert details specific to your League

The heading indicates to media that this information is to be used by them. Insert date of release below the Advisory heading

List the name, title and contact information of the League member who is the liaison to the media.

The headline should state the point of the release.

The sub-head provides additional basic information.

Provide event information with details that will be of particular interest to reporters, i.e. media availability, high profile speakers and agenda.

Provide a brief paragraph on the program/initiative you are publicizing.

End every advisory with "boilerplate" language describing your League and other partners involved.

Be sure to indicate the end of your advisory with three pound signs.

MEDIA ADVISORY

June 2, 2003

CONTACT: Susan Jones, Vice President, Communications
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
sjones@jlb.org

**JUNIOR LEAGUE OF BEDFORD FALLS HONORS GRADUATES OF
GOOD START SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM**

More than 50 preschoolers to receive school readiness diplomas at graduation ceremony

- WHAT:** Reception and graduation ceremony for preschoolers enrolled in the Junior League of Bedford Falls's *Good Start* School Readiness program
- WHEN:** Tuesday, June 10, 2003
Event: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Media Availability with Graduates and Parents: 9:30 to 10 a.m.
- WHERE:** Bedford Falls Town Hall, 532 Seventh Avenue, N.W. (between Birk and Rumsey)
- SPEAKERS:** Councilman Tom Harriman
Bedford Falls School Chancellor, Eve Ottenburgh
Graduates and parents of *Good Start* School Readiness program
- AGENDA:** 9:30 AM Media Availability
10:00 AM Event begins
10:30 AM Ceremony begins
11:00 AM Ceremony ends
11:30 AM Event ends

Good Start: An innovative school readiness assessment and instructional program developed by the Junior League of Bedford Falls and the 3 Rs Learning Center to provide parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school.

Founded in 1934, the Junior League of Bedford Falls is committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Junior League of Bedford Falls is a volunteer organization for women interested in making an impact in their community. We are part of the Association of Junior Leagues International, which is made up of 296 Junior Leagues in four countries. For more information, visit our web site at www.jlb.org

The 3 Rs Learning Center was founded in 1981 to provide personalized instructional services to students of all ages and skill levels. Today, there are over 900 3 Rs Learning Centers in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

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SAMPLE CALENDAR LISTING

Send calendar listings to local community calendars for events that you want to publicize to the general public i.e. speaker series, food drives or fundraisers. The following example is a template; insert details specific to your League

This indicates to the media that this is a calendar item. Insert date of release directly below the heading.

List the name, title and contact information of the League member who is the liaison to the media.

The headline should state the point of the release.

The sub-head provides additional basic information.

Provide information relevant to anyone interested in attending the event, including special features, ticket prices, etc.,.

Include a "reason to buy" – why should the public attend your event?

End every listing with "boilerplate" language describing your League.

Be sure to indicate the end of your listing with three pound signs.

CALENDAR ITEM

November 25, 2003

CONTACT: Susan Jones, Vice President, Communications
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
sjones@jlb.org

CALENDAR ITEM
JUNIOR LEAGUE OF BEDFORD FALLS' FESTIVAL OF TREES
RINGS IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Annual Holiday Mart Features More Than 100 Local Vendors

WHAT: The Festival of Trees - Junior League of Bedford Falls' Annual Holiday Market
A grand festival for holiday shoppers featuring more than 100 local vendors selling holiday trees, ornaments, handicrafts and gift items, Santa's Winter Wonderland, Afternoon Tea with Rudolph and Friends and hayrides daily.

WHEN: December 1 – December 14
10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily

WHERE: Bedford Falls Town Hall, 532 Seventh Avenue, N.W. (between Birk and Rumsey)

WHY: Tired of crowded department stores and lookalike gifts? Combine holiday shopping with a fun family outing at the Junior League of Bedford Falls' Annual Festival of Trees.

TICKETS: Individuals: \$15
Family All-day Pass: \$40
Tickets available online at www.jlb.org
For more information, please contact the Junior League of Bedford Falls at (xxx) xxx- xxxx

Founded in 1934, the Junior League of Bedford Falls is committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Junior League of Bedford Falls is a volunteer organization for women interested in making an impact in their community. We are part of the Association of Junior Leagues International, which is made up of 296 Junior Leagues in four countries. For more information, visit our web site at www.jlb.org

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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #1

Send press releases to local media to inform them of news i.e. new statistics/information on an issue supported by your League, new insights or information about funds raised after an event, etc., Keep the information simple – you can always provide supporting facts, backgrounders, etc., in an accompanying media kit.

This indicates to the media that this is news of a time-sensitive nature.

List the name, title and contact information of the League member who is the liaison to the media.

The headline should clearly emphasize the news of the release.

The sub-head provides further detail explaining headline.

The “dateline” opens the first paragraph. It indicates the name of the city from which the news is announced and the earliest distribution date.

The first paragraph addresses the who-what-where-when of the release and should highlight the news value of the story. In this example it highlights the community impact that a League fundraiser will have.

Provide further detail on the event highlighting relevant statistics if appropriate.

Include a quote from your president that conveys why the news in this release is important.

Provide an explanation of anything mentioned earlier in the release. In this case, explain details of the programs.

Include a supportive quote from your beneficiary/partner. Be sure to get their approval before using it.

End every release with “boilerplate” language describing your League.

Be sure to indicate the end of your release with three pound signs.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Susan Jones, Vice President, Communications
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
sjones@jlb.org

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF BEDFORD FALLS RAISES MORE THAN \$100,000 FOR SCHOOL READINESS, TEEN MENTORING PROGRAMS

Annual Spring Ball Enables Women’s Organization to Build Better Community

BEDFORD FALLS, IL, March 7, 2003 – Hundreds of Bedford Falls-area preschoolers and teens will benefit from Saturday night’s Junior League of Bedford Falls’ Annual Spring Ball, which raised more than \$100,000 for League-sponsored school readiness and teen mentoring programs.

More than 300 people attended the League’s Spring Fling, which featured dinner and dancing, a special performance by the Bedford Falls Choir, and a silent auction of artwork donated by the Bedford Falls Gallery.

“We are delighted by the success of this event because it helps fund programs that make a difference in the Bedford Falls community,” said Anita Smith, President of the Junior League of Bedford Falls. “Thanks to the generosity of those who attended our Spring Fling, the Junior League of Bedford Falls can continue to help preschoolers, parents and teens prepare for success.”

All proceeds from the Spring Fling will go towards funding the League’s *Good Start* school readiness program and *It’s All About You* – a school-based mentoring program that helps underprivileged youth build self-esteem while obtaining important life skills. To date, these programs have reached more than 1,000 preschoolers and teens in the Bedford Falls area.

“The Junior League of Bedford Falls has been a committed partner in educating and preparing the youth of Bedford Falls for future success,” said Bedford Falls School Chancellor Eve Ottenburgh. “The money raised through this event will help pay for much-needed educational materials and staff, among other things.

Founded in 1934, the Junior League of Bedford Falls is committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. The Junior League of Bedford Falls is a volunteer organization for women interested in making an impact in their community. We are part of the Association of Junior Leagues International, which is made up of 296 Junior Leagues in four countries. For more information, visit our web site at www.jlb.org

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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #2

Send press releases to local media to inform them of news i.e. new statistics/information on an issue supported by your League, new insights or information about funds raised after an event, etc., Keep the information simple – you can always provide supporting facts, backgrounders, etc., in an accompanying media kit.

This indicates to the media that this is news of a time-sensitive nature.

List the name, title and contact information of the League member who is the liaison to the media.

The headline should clearly emphasize the news of the release.

The sub-head provides further detail explaining headline.

The “dateline” opens the first paragraph. It indicates the name of the city from which the news is announced and the earliest distribution date.

The first paragraph addresses the who-what-where-when of the release and should highlight the news value of the story. In this example it paints a vivid picture of the event.

Include quotes from key speakers to add relevance to the story. League quotes are not always necessary if the League is mentioned in quotes from other participants.

Provide an explanation of anything mentioned earlier in the release. In this case, explain details of the program.

Include forward looking information i.e. future plans, insights, etc. as well as how funds will be raised.

End every release with “boilerplate” language describing your League.

Be sure to indicate the end of your release with three pound signs.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Susan Jones, Vice President, Communications
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
sjones@juniorleagueofbedfordfalls.org

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF BEDFORD FALLS’ GOOD START SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM GETS AN “A”

First class of preschoolers graduates with Good Start – Developed by 3 Rs Learning Center

BEDFORD FALLS, IL, June 10, 2003 – More than 30 preschoolers in miniature caps and gowns graduated today from the Junior League of Bedford Falls’ Good Start school readiness program at a Bedford Falls Town Hall ceremony hosted by Councilman Tom Harriman and School Chancellor Eve Ottenburgh.

“The Junior League of Bedford Falls’ *Good Start* initiative is a model program for our community because it ensures that our tiniest citizens start their school careers on the right foot,” said Councilman Harriman at a reception following the ceremony. “Our ability to ensure that children and their parents have the skills and resources for future success greatly impacts the quality of life in our community.”

Developed by 3 Rs Learning Center and implemented by the Junior League of Bedford Falls, *Good Start* is an innovative school readiness assessment and instructional program that provides parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school. Launched in the Fall of 2002, this is the first year that *Good Start* has been implemented in the Bedford Falls community.

“*Good Start* has made a difference in my daughter’s life,” said parent Irma Johnson. “Thanks to this program, at age three she knows the entire alphabet, can count to 20 and has the basic skills to communicate and cooperate with other children her age.”

“Partnering with the Junior League on *Good Start* makes perfect sense,” said Fay Barnes, CEO of 3 Rs Learning Center. “The League provides trained volunteers and access to incredible community resources that enable *Good Start* to effectively reach preschoolers in our community.”

In the coming year, the Junior League of Bedford Falls plans to offer Good Start to more than 100 Bedford Falls preschoolers through money raised at the Bedford Falls Thrift Shop and the League’s Annual Community Barbecue.

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SAMPLE PITCH LETTER

Send pitch letters to local media to highlight the news value of a feature story on the League or a League program. Pitch letters should be accompanied by supporting information, facts, statistics, and/or a media kit. The following is an example of a pitch letter “pitching” a story about a Junior League program.

Do your research and make sure to address your letter to the correct reporter at the outlet you are pitching.

Start the pitch letter with a “grabber” – something that grabs the attention of the reporter and draws him/her in to read more about the story you are pitching.

Enclose supporting information that provides further details on your story idea.

A pitch letter, ideally, should be a personal pitch to a specific media outlet or reporter. Thus, make references that tell the reporter that you know the types of stories covered by the media outlet. You may also wish to contact media outlets and request editorial calendars, which outline upcoming feature sections.

Always follow pitch letters with a follow-up call to the reporter.

April 16, 2004

Joe Black
Community Issues, Editor
The Bedford Falls Herald
1516 Argus Road
Bedford Falls, IL 32562

Dear Mr. Black:

Can you name a Bedford Falls women’s organization that has been responsible for:

- Providing volunteers and resources for the pediatric wing of Bedford Falls’ Mercy Hospital?
- Preserving and protecting the Bedford Falls Nature Park preserve?
- Building 3 Habitat for Humanity homes?
- Founding and funding the prehistoric section of the Hal Hagerman Children’s Museum?
- Helping more than 350 preschoolers get ready for school success?

The Junior League of Bedford Falls has done all that and much more thanks to the dedication of more than 100 women who support our mission to promote voluntarism, develop the potential of women, and improve the Bedford Falls community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers.

I strongly urge you to review the attached media kit highlighting some of our most successful programs and consider covering our organization for your upcoming series on the changing face of Bedford Falls. Since 1934, our organization has been on the forefront of meeting the changing needs of our community. I will contact you in a few days to discuss this story idea further.

In the interim, if you have any questions regarding the information I have sent, please don’t hesitate to contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or sjones@jlbff.org

Sincerely,

Susan Jones
Communications VP
Junior League of Bedford Falls



MEDIA RELATIONS 101: MEDIA FOLLOW-UP

The Basics of Story Pitching

Every press release, pitch letter, media advisory and calendar listing should be followed up with a call to the reporter or editor to whom it was sent. Never assume that just because you have mailed, e-mailed or faxed something to a reporter that it will get published. Here are a few tips for effective follow-up and pitching:

Prepare what you're going to say – Before you pick up the phone, determine 2 or 3 things you're going to say to a reporter or leave on his/her voice-mail as a follow-up to your press release, pitch letter media advisory or calendar listing. This can range from checking to see if they got your information (in the case of calendar listings) and determining whether they can attend and cover an event (in the case of a media advisory) to having a few salient points on hand as to why your story is worthy of news coverage (in the case of pitch letters and press releases). Remember a follow-up call is not just a follow-up it is also a pitch – you are selling the newsworthiness of your event or story.

Have your information on hand – Make sure you have a copy of whatever was sent to the reporter and be prepared to re-fax or re-send it as many reporters often get so much mail that whatever you send may get lost in the shuffle.

Don't be afraid to leave messages – Practice leaving a brief message that not only includes your contact information, organization and title but that also quickly highlights the newsworthiness of your event or story.

Example: Hi, this is Sue Jones from the Junior League of Bedford Falls. I'm calling to invite you to our School Readiness Graduation Ceremony – it's a chance to meet the participants of our *Good Start* program and learn about how the Junior League has improved school readiness for hundreds of preschoolers. I sent you a media advisory, please let me know if you received it or can attend, my number is (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Example: Hi, this is Sue Jones from the Junior League of Bedford Falls, I sent you a media kit on our organization and would like to find out if you are interested in covering us for an upcoming issue. I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss some of our exciting and innovative teen mentoring programs with you. Please call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Don't get frustrated – Don't be surprised if reporters do not call you back or do not immediately respond to your pitch. It takes time to build relationships and get on a reporter's radar. Be persistent without being annoying. If a reporter says he/she will keep your information on file, ask whether you can send information periodically as an update. If you are not getting anywhere with a particular reporter, find out whether there is another reporter who may cover the same or a similar beat.

Don't take it personally – Reporters are very busy people who can sometimes be abrupt. Keep in mind that they are inundated with story ideas on a daily basis. Be polite and always ask if you can contact them in the future with additional information. Do NOT take rebuffs or rejections personally.

Don't be intimidated – At the end of the day, reporters are people too. Remember to keep your follow-up calls conversational and use them as an opportunity to build relationships and learn more about the topics that are of interest to the reporter you are contacting. Even if you don't succeed the first time, keep the door open so that you can come back to the reporter at a later date with new, more targeted information.

Remember the time – Try not to call reporters at newspapers and broadcast media outlets at the end of the day as they are probably rushing to meet deadlines. The best time to call is mid- to late morning.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: EVERY LIST COUNTS

Developing a Media Database That Works

What is a Media Database?

A Media Database is a comprehensive list of media outlets (print, radio, TV and online), newsletters, reporters, editors and producers to whom you wish to send information about your League or who have expressed interest in the past about covering your League.

What software should I use to set up the League's Media Database?

While many professional publicists subscribe to expensive media database services, it's usually just as effective, if not more so, to develop your own League database in a software program such as Excel or Microsoft Access. This gives you the freedom to constantly update your database with new contacts as you obtain them and to include more personalized information about past coverage of the League, beat, etc.,

What information should I include on my Media Database?

Each person on your list should have a separate record on your database even if you have multiple people from the same media outlet. The following are some basic fields that you should definitely include on your database:

- Media Outlet Name
- Media Outlet Type
- Reporter Last Name
- Reporter First Name
- Reporter Title
- Address Line 1
- Address Line 2
- City
- State
- Zip
- Email address
- Telephone
- Fax
- Web site address (if the outlet has a URL)

In addition, you should also have information about the following in a separate Notes section:

- Favored method of receiving communication
- Lead time (if applicable)
- Issues covered
- Whether the reporter has ever covered the Junior League (include when and for what if possible)
- What types of Junior League information you have sent the reporter recently

These extra notes make it easier for other people to assist you in making follow-up calls and allows your successor to build on established relationships rather than starting from scratch at the beginning of the next year.

Who should I include on the League's Media Database?

You may wish to break up your Database into several smaller databases either by adding worksheets (in Excel) or adding a sort field (in Access). Regardless of what format you use, you should include the following:

- Calendar Listings editors at local newspaper, magazine, TV, radio and web outlets
- Community news reporters for your local print, TV and radio outlets
- Newspaper columnists who write about your community in the local papers
- Online editors for your local print, TV and radio outlets (these reporters maintain the web sites)

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: EVERY LIST COUNTS – PAGE 2

Who should I include on the League's Media Database? cont'd

- Editors at community newspapers (smaller neighborhood publications)
- Newsletter editors for all your partnering organizations
- Web sites that allow you to post local event information (i.e. Citysearch, local Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
- Assignment Desks/Editors for your local TV news stations
- Editors at local/regional magazines
- Op-ed Editors for all local newspapers (for letters to the editor)
- Individual reporters who have attended League events or have contacted the League for information in the past

Where can I get the contact information for media in my area?

The following are several ways you can develop your database:

- **Make a connection** - Find a League member who works in the PR field and ask if you can get local media contacts from her Media books
- **Go to Google** – Search the Internet for media in your area – visit their web sites and look for the “Contact Us” or “Submit an Event Listing” section – most sites have some information about how to reach that outlet or even the assignment desks
- **Keep your eyes open** – Read your local print media, watch local news and listen to local radio -- Check the masthead for who's covering what beat; become familiar with the columnists, reporters who cover your community and pay attention to what they're covering
- **Capture information** – When reporters contact your League, don't hesitate to ask them questions about what beat they cover and whether they would like to be on your media list
- **Join the club** – Contact your local Press Club, Journalists' or Writers' Association; visit their web site to get links to local media and names of local reporters who may be interested in covering the Junior League

Here are some web sites that offer links to local/regional newspapers and news outlets throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the U.K.:

www.newspaperlinks.com

www.refdesk.com/paper.html

www.worldnews.com

How often should I update the League's Media Database?

A good Media Database is one that is constantly changing and growing. When you make follow-up calls for releases or information that you send out about your League, always have your Database open so that you can change or update information as needed. Reporters are always changing beats or moving on to new jobs, your ability to keep your Media Database as current as possible will greatly increase your chances of getting stories placed about your League.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: BUILDING MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS

8 Ways to Get to Know Your Local Media

Reporters are busy people with tight deadlines. They are constantly walking a fine line between delivering relevant news and selling newspapers/engaging their audience. The best way to build media relationships is to treat them with respect and give them relevant news in a format they can use. Here are some quick relationship-building tips that should help you with your local media.

1. **Read local papers/watch local news** – Find out what your local reporters are covering and ensure you have the right people on your media list – nothing annoys reporters more than getting information that does not remotely apply to their beat.
2. **Recruit the media**– Want to get covered? Actively approach reporters at local papers/media to join the Junior League, be part of your community advisory board or participate as an emcee at League events. Leverage these relationships and encourage members of the media to cover the League. After all, our strongest proponents are those who have witnessed the League’s accomplishments firsthand!
3. **Talk to your members** – Members of your League may have connections to the media of which you may not be aware. Don’t hesitate to ask around and find out if your members have friends/acquaintance who are reporters. Try to leverage these relationships to get media coverage as well as free ad space or airtime. Every connection helps!
4. **Make connections** – Contact your local press club, reporters/writers associations and even local journalism schools and provide them with information about the Junior League. Make sure that the Junior League is included as a potential spokesperson on local speakers’ bureau lists and volunteer to speak to these groups about issues that the Junior League is supporting.
5. **Don’t bash reporters** – If a reporter gets the story wrong or does not mention you, send a polite note thanking them for covering you or your issue and diplomatically point out any errors or omissions. Do not send an angry letter to the editor. Remember that it’s never wise to make enemies in the media.
6. **Reward the media** – Create a Junior League media award for reporters in your area who have been especially attentive to covering issues supported by your League. Make this an annual award and invite reporters to attend or speak – this can help you make friends *and* gain visibility.
7. **Give them the VIP treatment** – Provide complimentary tickets to League events or create personalized invitations for reporters with whom you have a personal relationship. Always remember to send thank you notes to reporters who have provided coverage for your League.
8. **Make sure you provide REAL news** – REAL news is information that is relevant to a media outlet’s core audience NOT (unfortunately!) news that is relevant to the Junior League. Try and put yourself in a reporter’s shoes and evaluate whether your League news is:
 - Relevant to a large number of people
 - Timely – the topic is already in the news
 - New – it reveals new information, statistics, facts about an important issue or an interesting spin on an old topic

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: CLICK!

Taking Photos That Get Published

A picture says a thousand words and can capture the spirit of a League program or event in one quick click. A picture is also a quick and easy way to get coverage for your League. The following are a few tips to help you take photos that get published almost every time!

It's all about process – Make sure you have designated League photographers at all major League programs/events. In addition to taking great photos, these photographers must be able to provide information on the subject of the photos and send the pictures to all appropriate parties immediately after the event or next business day. Ideally, League photographer(s) should send photos to the League member responsible for posting them on the League web site and/or sending them to reporters after the event. The League photographer should also have an assistant who asks the photo subjects for the spelling of their names and keeps track of which names go with each photo.

Release forms – A release form should be filled out by all children or adults featured in League photos that are being taken for wider distribution through the media or through the League web site. (See attached for template photo release forms).

Go digital – Whenever possible try to take League photos on a digital camera – these are much easier to edit and circulate via e-mail after an event and the newest cameras take great, clear, focused shots.

Scanning basics – If you do have hard copies of photographs and plan on scanning them in for e-mail purposes, ensure that you scan them at 72 dpi (for web site purposes) and 300 dpi (if sending to the media).

Setting up a shot – Here are some things to keep in mind when you actually take your picture.

- **Make it interesting:** Avoid the traditional head or group shot whenever possible – it's boring, static and often says nothing about your League. Instead:
 - Take an action shot of a volunteer reading to a child or working at a food bank
 - For staged events, show the audience interacting with the speaker on stage
 - Look for ways to illustrate your story. If your League is collecting coats for a clothing drive, pile the coats up and take a shot of volunteers adding to the pile; if your League participates in a school readiness program, take a picture of the kids graduating from the program with diplomas in their hands
 - If you're featuring a particular League volunteer, show the volunteer doing volunteer work or working the phones rather than taking a straight portrait shot
 - If you must do a formal group shot, look at the composition and have the subjects stand in an interesting way or against a unique background
- **Look to the background:** Ensure that there is some Junior League signage within the background of the picture whenever possible. This ensures that even if the media cut out the Junior League name from the caption, it will be apparent that the subject of the photo is at a Junior League function.
- **Don't be afraid to direct:** Ask your subjects to look up or move around so that you can get a better shot. Even when taking candid you want to ensure that you're presenting a clear, usable picture.
- **Get close up:** For greater impact, move in close and take photos of a group of no more than three people, keeping them together to eliminate dead space and capture a more intimate shot.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: CLICK! – PAGE 2

Setting up a shot, cont'd

- **Cut the clutter:** Check to see if there are extraneous items that detract from your subject. Either remove your subject in front of a plain wall or curtain or remove clutter such as lamps or wall lights, pictures, jumbled bookcases, ashtrays, coffee cups, papers or plants
- **Focus:** For sharper pictures, use a good camera – one that allows you to adjust the lens to the exact distance of your subject. Avoid using disposable cameras and remember to move in for close-ups, arrange contrasts of black and white, and keep the picture as uncluttered as possible.
- **Play up the contrast:** Think about how colors will translate into shades of gray if the photo is run as a black and white. Try to alternate colors to avoid all dark colors blending together in a big muddy patch or all light colors fading into one another. This is especially true for hair color. Don't photograph a brunette against dark shrubbery or the hair will disappear!
- **Lighting:** A hazy day, light overcast sky or light shade offer the best conditions for outdoor photography because they avoid the black shadows created by bright sunlight. Try to shoot under slightly shaded areas – under a leafy tree or porch overhang – for softer light and diffused shadows. For indoor lighting – if you need a flash, check to see that you are not shooting directly into a mirror, window, picture glass or eyeglasses as these will reflect the flash and give you a big sunburst. If you can't avoid a reflective background, try and shoot from the side and at an angle to the reflective wall. The flash's reflection will then bounce away from your camera.

The send-off

- **Crop tips:** To improve the composition or eliminate unwanted segments, you can crop a picture digitally once it is scanned or ask a custom lab to crop a hard copy of the picture for you.
- **Captions with punch:** Provide captions to accompany your photos. Captions should explain what is going on in the picture or, in the case of a group shot, identify all subjects from left to right. Try and do a clever opener for your caption. For example, if your picture features children graduating from a school readiness program, your caption may read: **Getting off to a great head start:** *More than 30 preschoolers put their best foot forward at a graduation ceremony for the Junior League of Bedford Falls' Good Start school readiness program.*
- **E-mail:** Send photos to reporters as tif or jpeg files at 300 dpi. Include the caption in a separate file or within the body of the email and clearly identify which caption goes with each photo.
- **Mail:** If you must mail photos, tape a printout of the caption to the back of the photo and mail it between two pieces of cardboard in a padded envelope. Do not use paper clips or write with ballpoint or felt tip pens on the back of the photo.

MEDIA RELATIONS 101: CLICK! – PAGE 3

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF [INSERT NAME HERE] ADULT /MINOR PHOTO RELEASE FORM

I give the Junior League of [INSERT NAME] permission to publish in print, electronic, or video format the likeness or image of myself. I release all claims against the Junior League of [INSERT NAME] with respect to copyright ownership and publication including any claim for compensation related to use of the materials.

YOUR NAME: (Please print)

YOUR SIGNATURE

DATE

I give the Junior League of [INSERT NAME] permission to publish in print, electronic, or video format the likeness or image of my child. I release all claims against the Junior League of [INSERT NAME] with respect to copyright ownership and publications including any claim for compensation related to use of the materials.

MINOR'S NAME

YOUR NAME: (Parent or Guardian. Please print)

YOUR SIGNATURE

DATE

General Guidelines: Signed releases should be used when adults are posed for photographs or stated to appear on videotape. It is recommended that a release be obtained when photographing or videotaping a minor (under 18). Parent or guardian signatures are required: signatures of minors are not sufficient.

Signed release forms are not needed when subjects are in public places such as fairgrounds, parks, or public streets.

When images are published, the Junior League of [INSERT NAME] will take cautionary steps to provide minimum identifying information and will not use specific street or mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, or phone numbers.

Photographs or videotaping in private or public schools or youth camps must be done only with school or camp permission and with signed release forms from a parent or guardian of each child. Release forms should be included in school or camp registration materials. It is the responsibility of the photographer or videographer to obtain signed release forms and maintain records.