

One Day of Service Media Support

Servant Leaders in Action



Everyone who works hard and takes pride in what they do likes to get at least a little credit. Even if what they did was just the right thing to do. Since the One Day of Service program is based on community service, working through the various media outlets available for coverage might be something that could really help to raise the profile of your lodge or section in your area. Hopefully some of the information here, collected from various websites and contacts with professionals in the various fields will help your lodge or section to gain some public recognition or get coverage for your One Day of Service project.

The media will generally cover just about any event if there's a good hook to it. Hooks are the things that attract the media to cover a story. News media look for interesting hooks, such as famous or important people, an odd or colorful occasion or a timely event. If the story involves certain people, places or things, it can be newsworthy. Even if your story doesn't directly seem to have that newsworthy quality, you can try to pitch the story in a way so that it seems more newsworthy.

Newsworthiness is determined by a few factors, which are basically the same as the five W's and the H.

Who—Make sure you tell the media who will be at your event; who is sponsoring your event and who your event benefits. If your story is about your lodge putting in 500 man hours to rebuild a city playground, you have a good chance of getting coverage, since the media loves kids and the more kids, the better. Also, if someone noteworthy will be attending your event, mention that individual. The Mayor's going to stop by because his son is in the lodge? Plug that name.

What—Tell the media all what they can expect if they choose to cover your story. Are there great visuals that television stations won't want to miss, such as a truckload of snow being made for kids to frolic in California? Are there other happenings that coincide with this event/person? And what would the media miss-out on if they don't cover it? Make sure they are aware of what will be happening. Be sure to specify what the best time is for coverage.

Where—Be as specific as possible when giving the place of the story. Include a map if necessary. There's a big difference between saying that the project will be at Washington Park and saying that the project will be held at Washington Park on the corner of Main Street and Broadway near the ABC gas station. The media will appreciate your attention to detail and they will be less likely to get lost on the way to your event.

When—Include details of what time and what place your event/story will happen. A press release without a time and date is worthless. A story planner will have to call you to find out more information and they may be turned off by your inefficiency in writing the release. If you don't include important info, such as a date and time, then why should the editor care about that important info? Don't overlook the obvious—be sure to include all the times, places and dates.

Why—What is the purpose of your story? You hoping to accomplish a goal, like raise funds for a charity or raise awareness for an illness or build picnic tables for the elementary school kids? The “why” part is what reaches out to the media's audience. If the reason behind a story has far-reaching effects, chances are the media will cover it. If the “why” affects one person, then maybe the readers, viewers, and listeners of the media will also be affected.

How—Tell the media how your story will be told. Will you have 150 Scouts all there working as a team? Will there be any big moment at the end when there is a dedication or some other photo op? Make the technicalities of your story known and let them get a good idea in their heads of what they could make of it.

Keep in mind that a press release and press advisory should tell your story—don't leave anything important out. And don't hound the assignment editors, city planners and arts editors too much. It will only make them shy away from covering your project. While it's fine to check in and make sure that you're press release was received, it can only hurt your coverage if you annoy the person whom you want to cover your story. Finally, don't forget to leave a contact number for the day of the event. This can be crucial. If a news organization decides to cover your story at the last minute and they only have your home number and you already left, then you're out of luck. It's ideal to have a pager and/or cell phone so that you can be contacted in case the press needs to speak to you.

Specialty tips

TV

- TV is one of the hardest to make it onto because of the limited time for community items. If you're project is in the city, one of your best options might be to see if you can get a brief broadcast from the site on the 12 PM or 6 PM news shows. Many stations like to have short community items like that. As much advance notice to the station as possible is extremely important in this case.

Newspaper

- The key to local paper coverage is knowing someone who writes. Ask around among advisers and adults and find if they know anyone who wrote a story about a previous Scouting event that might still be around.
- Depending on the size of the paper, making a formal press release either right before and after the event, or right after with pictures and submitting it may help a lot towards getting something published.

Radio

- Radio stations will often have certain amounts of time each month set aside for “PSA,” or public service announcements. These are times that stations will give free air to certain community events or groups. If you get your act together in advance enough, you may be able to claim some of this airtime before or after an event.
- If your One Day project is taking place during some bigger event such as a town fair or something, you might be able to convince a station that is already broadcasting live from there to give you some time on air. It never hurts to ask!

Internet

- Most newspapers, TV stations and radio stations that cover anything will also include it on their website. So in the case that it’s one of those sites, you’ll probably be taken care of. But it never hurts to ask and double check.

Useful Links

“Community Media.” - <http://www.community-media.com/media.html>

“The Onion.” – <http://www.theonion.com/>

“Social Change Media.” - http://media.socialchange.net.au/using_media/How.html

A final word

No matter which one or all of these media outlets you use, just make sure you go out there and get coverage and recognition for your lodge or section’s efforts in your community. The BSA and OA need all the positive publicity possible and all the scouts, Scouters and Arrowmen who participate deserve the recognition. Good luck!

"Success is measured not in achievement for self, But in accomplishment for others."
- Jeff Wood