

# Working with Newspapers

## ***City News Department***

- The city desk usually deals with news items of local interest, not human interest stories or publicity. New releases are central to their work.
- City editors are key. They decide if a story is newsworthy, assign reporters to cover events and decide what will be printed.
- Reporters with appropriate “beats,” should also be contacted.
- News releases should go to the city editor or city desk.
- Five to seven days advance notice of an event is usually enough. Two days before the event phone to see if the reporter will attend.
- Prepare and send a press packet with credible news articles, newsletters, endorsements, and historical background of your group. Delivering in person can be helpful.

## ***Press Releases***

*Press releases are for short announcements that do not need much clarification. Think of a press release as a pyramid; the most important points at the top, and less important details are at the bottom.*

- Mix facts with quotes.
- Answer the five W’s: Who? What? When? Where? and Why?
- Have two contact persons listed at the top of the release for more information.
- Put the date of the release at the top. Use a catchy, but not misleading, title.
- Don’t go into too much detail.
- Don’t write more than two pages unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Always double-space.
- The final paragraph of the release should describe the aims and activities of your organization.
- If possible, make photographs, preferably exciting action shots, available for reporters.
- If you have done a background information sheet on your issue, attach it to your press release.
- Attach other background materials that may be appropriate.

## ***Media Advisory***

- Used to notify the media of an upcoming event(s) they might be interested in covering.
- Less detailed than a press release; simply states WHAT the event is, WHEN it is being held, and WHY it is being held.
- Be sure to list photo opportunities at the event. Media like to cover events where there will be many people.
- Include a contact person for press passes, if necessary, and any other questions.

## ***Letters to the Editor***

- They can cover a wide range of issues.
- Letters should respond or react to something previously printed in the paper.
- They should be addressed to the editor.
- Your group should call in advance to find out deadlines, length, format, etc.
- The usual maximum is 200-300 words.

- They should be typed, signed and contain an address and home and work phone numbers.

### ***Special Sections***

- Most dailies have sections or columns dealing with lifestyles, senior citizens, women, neighborhood issues, food, etc.
- Contact columnist or section editor.
- Special sections are good for special “angle” or more coverage on an issue, rather than an event.