

CHANGE THE WORLD



WITH A GIVING HEART

**National
Philanthropy Day[®]**

CHAPTER MEDIA KIT

The Association of Fundraising Professionals

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INTRODUCTION

Attracting media attention is often a puzzling process for many nonprofit organizations. In a world often dominated by scandal, controversy and cynicism, the good works of charities would seem to be perfect candidates for media outlets wanting to cover positive community events.

Yet, as nonprofits all too quickly discover, the press often glosses over charitable organizations. Perhaps reporters don't consider the charity's news substantive or "hard" enough. Perhaps there are so many nonprofits in the area that it's difficult to distinguish what makes newsworthy material. Even more disturbing, the most recent trend is reporters looking for scandals and controversies in the charitable sector at the expense of covering more positive news.

Is the media really biased against nonprofits? Actually, no. And getting a reporter to cover a nonprofit story is not simply a matter of good fortune. Reporters and media outlets follow a series of general guidelines in determining what stories they will cover. Those guidelines are not a secret; in fact, most reporters will tell you what they're interested in covering and how they decide what to cover...assuming they actually have the time to tell you.

This manual discusses the guidelines that reporters use and offers advice as to how chapters can work with the media to help publicize their National Philanthropy Day® (NPD) event. This manual is meant for chapters to use as they set up for their NPD event, although much of it can be used by any nonprofit for other public awareness campaigns.

The material contained herein focuses on "earned" media – that is, media coverage you earn by sending out press releases, talking with reporters and doing the necessary leg work to get your story and your event the attention and publicity it deserves. It covers issues such as developing story ideas, writing press releases and media advisories, talking with reporters when they don't have much time to talk to you and identifying other alternative media outlets that can increase awareness of your event to audiences that you might not have considered.

This manual is very much a work in progress. The Public Affairs Department at the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) is interested in hearing your thoughts, questions, suggestions or comments about this document. Every year, we'll work to publish a better, more complete document. And if you have stories, example or case studies, we'd love to hear about them as well. Please send us an email at paffairs@afpnet.org.

ONE FINAL NOTE: The term "National Philanthropy Day®" has been trademarked by AFP. Chapters are strongly urged to use the ® notation when spelling out National Philanthropy Day®. The acronym "NPD" does not require the trademark. To create the trademark symbol in Microsoft Word, type in "(r)" – without the quotes – immediately after "Day." Then hit the space bar, and the program should automatically create the trademark symbol.

**NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY®
MEDIA KIT**

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Developing Your Media Plan

It goes without saying that you should have a strategy in mind as you begin planning any media relations campaign. NPD is no exception. Spreading the word through publicity is an integral part of celebrating NPD. We want as many people as possible to join in our tribute to the vital role philanthropy plays in our daily lives.

The media plan is the foundation of all of your efforts to publicize your chapter's NPD event. It is essentially a timeline of what you want to do and when you want to do it. Developing a media plan isn't difficult – mostly it's a lot of common sense dictated by media outlet schedules and who you want to reach. You can do a lot of work simply by answering the following questions:

1) **What do you want your media plan to accomplish?**

Developing a list of goals for your campaign is one of the most important steps you can take. **Fortunately, your NPD goals are probably simple and straight-forward:**

- To increase public awareness of NPD as a time to say "thank you" to those who give throughout the year.
- To focus public attention on major accomplishments made possible through philanthropic contributions.
- To honor key local individuals and corporations for their philanthropic endeavors.
- To recognize local fundraisers, thanking them for their time, talent, and dedication.
- To increase public awareness of the chapter and its programs.

These are general goals that apply every year to almost every chapter. However, there are probably additional goals that may come up from year to year. Increasing attendance is a likely one. Perhaps one year you want to increase awareness of the NPD event in a certain group within the community. Or you want to make connections at a particular media outlet. It is critical to lay out these goals ahead of time so you can focus your efforts and not get side-tracked on ideas that don't help you reach your objectives.

Sample Media Objectives for AFP Nirvana Chapter

- To get front-page coverage of the NPD event in the Nirvana Times
- To increase awareness of NPD (and AFP) in the under-represented communities in Nirvana.
- To ensure that Ms. X, this year's Outstanding Philanthropist, receives solid coverage in Nirvana media outlets and in the larger region.
- To introduce the Youth in Philanthropy award to local Nirvana schools and get good coverage for winner.
- To honor long-time member Mr. Y, who is retiring after 50 years in the fundraising profession and many years of service to the chapter.

Developing Your Media Plan (cont.)

2) What groups are you trying to reach?

You may have already answered this question when you first developed your media goals. But in addition to identifying your audience, you should also try to define your audience. Are you trying to reach new groups who have never heard of AFP, or do most people in the community know who the chapter is?

3) What types of media outlets are necessary to use in order to reach those groups?

Just some of the different types of media outlets you might be contacting include:

- Newspapers (daily and weekly)
- Magazines
- Specialty and organization-specific newsletters. Religious institutions, charities and other organizations produce regular newsletters. Consider providing those outlets with information about NPD.
- Community publications and college papers. There may be specialty outlets that focus on specific groups within the community. Take advantage of these outlets with tailored messages that speak to different groups. Consider publicizing in newspaper or magazines that are published in different languages. You don't necessarily have to translate your information. (Several companies advertising job openings have taken out ads in English in foreign language newspapers and got great responses because many readers understood English and the ad stuck out because it was in a different language.)
- TV and radio stations. These outlets are not only good for public service announcements (PSAs), but often have community shows that are always looking for local guests. NPD honorees or chapter leaders might be able to get on these shows and speak about philanthropy in the community.
- Internet. Some Internet sites may produce regular content in newsletter or magazine format (known as e-zines). While many of them may be national in scope or focus on very specific issues, there may be some appropriate in your community. Also, remember that most print outlets have websites where they provide additional stories. Charities and other groups in the community might also let you use their website to publicize NPD.

As you determine which outlets you will need to focus on, consider how your audience gets its news. Are your target audiences tech-savvy – do they get their news from the Internet, or is the daily newspaper the main vehicle for receiving information?

Developing Your Media Plan (cont.)

4) What do you have to offer the media? (i.e., why should the media be interested in your event?)

The million dollar question, and it's important enough that we've devoted an entire section to this question later in the kit. Suffice to say, if you have trouble answering this question, then you're not ready to approach the media. Developing the right answer to this question is probably where you need to spend the most time.

5) When does the media need your information?

The best and most compelling story ideas won't mean anything if you don't get the information to media outlets by their deadlines. Some of your busiest leg work will be in contacting media to obtain their deadlines. Work backward from the date of your event and try to plot out every deadline that will affect your plan.

6) How will you contact the media?

A question that many individuals often overlook (much to their dismay). Reporters are busy people who move from one deadline to the next, so it's critical that you not only create short, snappy story ideas, but that you deliver them in a fashion and medium that is conducive to the reporter. More information on this critical topic is also included later in the kit.

Sample Media Plan AFP Nirvana Chapter

Target Date: November 15 (NPD Chapter Awards Luncheon)

Two months out (or earlier): Send out brief press release to radio and television talk shows, as well as to print outlets where you are seeking a feature story and that have a long lead time (a special Sunday section). The press release will announce the NPD event, provide general information and suggest feature ideas. These outlets need plenty of time to plan their schedules. One week later, make follow-up phone calls to these outlets about possible interviews and feature stories.

Six weeks out: Develop public service announcements and send them to radio and television outlets (their public service directors). One weekly later, follow up with a phone call to ensure they have received the material and see if they will run them.

Four to six weeks out: Mail news releases to target media and send pitch letters for feature stories in daily and weekly outlets. Follow up on pitch letters with phone calls after one week.

Four weeks out: Send event information to the calendars sections of daily, Sunday and weekly newspapers. Make follow-up phone calls one week later.

Three weeks out: Send pitch letters to newspaper editors about writing an op-ed or staff editorial about NPD. Make follow-up phone calls one week later.

One week out: Fax out one-page media advisory to target media. Call television desks and ensure they have received information about the event. If television crews are coming, ask if they need any special equipment. By now, you should be getting an idea of which media will be planning to attend.

One day out: Follow up with the media by phone and begin developing a solid list of who will be attending (most likely additional follow-up may occur the morning of the event). Call television and newspaper assignment desks to confirm coverage and any special arrangements that you have made. It may be useful to fax out the media advisory again.

Day of event: Set up a press table or other obvious place for the media to go when at the event. Have ready a list of media attending and a press kit about the event, containing information on the chapter, NPD, honorees and philanthropy. Have honorees and chapter spokespersons available for questions.

Finding and Developing Stories

The hardest part of any media campaign is finding and developing stories that will appeal to local media outlets. The following pages provide some ideas and themes that may resonate with your community's reporters and editors.

1) **Think Like A Reporter!**

Most media outlets receive hundreds of press releases and requests for coverage every day. Even in smaller markets, there is always more happening than can ever be covered and reported. Only a very small number of releases are ever acted upon by media outlets. The key, then, is to create stories and story angles that are considered "newsworthy" by the media – *to think like a reporter*. So, what is newsworthy? When thinking about the stories you want to publicize, consider these questions:

- What is the news value of my story? Why will readers be interested?
- Is the story idea timely? Does it fit into a larger news piece?
- Who will be affected -- is there a local angle? (crucial for local media)
- Are there strong visual components? (You should "paint" a picture for TV/news photo opportunities.)
- Who can provide background information on the issue? (Do I have an expert I can offer to the media who can provide a fresh perspective on a news item?)
- Who are other experts (besides my organization's) that I can recommend to provide a balanced perspective?
- Is there an opposing point of view? (Controversy can enhance a news story – don't be afraid to offer it, but consider the consequences.)
- Is a trend emerging in this area? (Provide the big picture.)
- Could this story idea develop into a series of articles or broadcast segments? (If so, be sure to offer 3-4 different angles for the story for the reporter's consideration.)
- Is this story being covered by anyone else? (Don't be afraid to offer an "exclusive" with key media--you can always suggest it to other media sources if you're turned down.)

Finding and Developing Stories (cont.)

Typical newsworthy stories often include these elements: conflict, novelty, simplicity, shock value, kids, celebrity involvement, action, strong imagery (often outdoors), local impact, humor, and irony.

There's only one way to learn what is newsworthy in your community: read/watch the news and find out what stories are being covered. This includes local TV news, talk radio, newspapers, talk shows and even Internet sites.

2) You Have A Lot Going For You!

Chapters have several advantages going for them as they go about publicizing their NPD events and trying to attract media coverage:

- Your chapter probably has held previous NPD events so the chapter and the event are at least somewhat known in the community. Familiarity can be very helpful, but don't worry if it's your first NPD event.
- Community impact!
- The public likes to hear about people and organizations who have money and how they give it away (witness the growing popularity of the *Forbes' Top 100 Philanthropists List*).
- Your chapter is probably honoring or including well-known members of the community in the NPD event, another newsworthy story element.
- The people and/or organizations you are honoring may have very good media lists and want to conduct their own publicity as well.
- Assuming your NPD event includes award, the public and the media love awards and ratings. Sure, the chapter is not actually rating anyone or any organization, but an award is essentially saying that for this year, this honoree is the best the community has to offer.
- Your chapter's honorees may have interesting stories of their own – how they made it, challenges they have faced, obstacles overcome, etc. This is often the best story angle a chapter has when publicizing its NPD event.

What these advantages mean is that a chapter may not have to spend a lot of time “selling” the story. There are so many good newsworthy elements for NPD that most reporters will immediately see the news value.

But what those advantages won't guarantee is the type of coverage you'll get. A good media plan with creative story ideas and solid follow-up is the difference between getting a minor mention in the Society column and a feature story about the event, the chapter and the honorees. The inherent advantages of an NPD event allow you to get a reporter's attention – however briefly. It's what you do with the short time that will dictate the coverage. So be confident that you'll be listened to, but don't ever think that the event will sell itself.

Finding and Developing Stories (cont.)

3) Building a Story

Your chapter's NPD event, by itself, is very nice and wholesome. You are honoring people in the community. Your chapter represents a number of fundraisers who have committed themselves to making their community a better place. Your organizations are helping people everyday. But as we've mentioned, all of that great stuff will probably only get you a small mention in most outlets.

To get your NPD event truly noticed, you need stories – the cornerstone of media. Somebody interesting has to be doing something interesting (usually to someone else, equally as interesting) in a community where the reporter thinks the public will find all that – interesting. Sure, it's an obvious statement, but given the number of press releases that seem to forget this idea, it's definitely worth saying.

Given what has already been said about newsworthy elements and the advantages your chapter has, you may already have a number of story ideas. But let's go over some of the basics:

- Someone has given a large amount of money, is giving a large amount of money, or intends to give a large amount of money. The public and the media like to hear about large amounts of money. You personally may not like that idea, but from a public relations perspective, it sells well. You don't need to be sensational, but dollar figures often catch a reporter's eye.
- A program that the donors funds, volunteer supports or charity manages is tremendous/unique/cool/innovative/inspiring/is being duplicated across the country (choose one). Just remember that there are many great programs that people are supporting. If this is a lead story angle, be certain that the program is everything you say it is. Otherwise, it may just sound like every other a reporter has heard.
- The donor, volunteer, nonprofit or other entity has overcome great odds and is now very successful. This angle often has the best chance of getting a feature story.
- A time-tested winner is youth in philanthropy. Anything about children and young adults involved in giving and volunteering is a strong angle and usually has good visuals.

Many of your best story angles will probably focus on the donor. If one or two of them have a good story, your job just became a lot easier. And that's a key point. Don't try to sell all of your honorees. To be sure, they're all good people and organizations. They all do great work. But from a public relations perspective, some may have more appealing stories than others.

Finding and Developing Stories (cont.)

For example, what's the better lead paragraph?

1. The AFP Utopia Chapter will honor five individuals and organizations that have made great philanthropic contributions to the community of Utopia at the chapter's annual NPD luncheon at Hotel Utopia...
2. Ellen Smith, who arrived in Utopia twenty years ago speaking no English and is now a successful businesswoman and has given millions of dollars to charity, is just one of several honorees at the AFP Utopia Chapter's NPD luncheon...

The first one is probably headed to the Calendar section – which is okay, but not what you want when you are trying to land a feature story. The second one gives the reporter a story angle immediately – it starts him or her thinking that maybe this is an interesting release that needs immediate follow-up. Plus, you mention all of the other honorees later in the release. You can even do more than one release, creating a second one to focus on another interesting honoree (but don't overdo it). The adage that a rising tide lifts all boats applies here. Focusing your public relations messages on one or two honorees will increase awareness of all honorees.

So what happens if none of your honorees' stories reach out and grab you from a public relations perspective? It does occasionally occur. And when it does, it's time to think beyond the honorees. You didn't think it was all about the honorees, did you? (It is, usually, but in public relations you have to be flexible).

- Giving in the community. Who else knows more about how well (or poorly) charitable giving is going in the community than the local AFP chapter? You don't need a survey or anything that formal. Get four or five members to be ready to talk on the record about how their fundraising has been and what they expect in the future. If you're like most chapters, your NPD event is in November, so members can also talk about the importance of giving in the holiday season and the end of the year.
- Link national issues and trends to the local community. Online giving – what's happening nationwide and which local organizations are running successful online campaigns. Accountability – how are local organizations being more accountable? What was the impact of Sept. 11 on the community's charities?
- Getting back to your honorees, you can link what a donor supports to giving trends or issues in the community. For example, "Ellen Smith's \$50 million contribution to the Utopia Environmental Fund has been a bright spot in an otherwise dreary year for environmental organizations." Your honorees are often indicative of giving trends either nationally or locally, so use them as examples.

Finding and Developing Stories (cont.)

- Providing tips on wise giving and how to spot fraudulent solicitors is always appreciated. The AFP Public Affairs Department has some sample material it can provide to interested chapters on this topic. Another interesting topic is how to choose a good organization to volunteer with and how to be a good volunteer. Even board service (what a board does, how to be a board member) might be successful.
- Don't be afraid of controversy and/or "negative" issues. Are people in the community fed up with all of the direct mail they receive? Talk about why charities use direct mail and how individuals can take steps to avoid receiving it. Have honorees talk about why direct mail important for charities. Has a local organization been implicated in wrongdoing or impropriety? Talk about what organizations should be doing and why most of them are doing the right thing. AFP chapters are the "good guys." Use the *AFP Code of Ethics* and *Donor Bill of Rights* to let the public know that there are individuals who are looking out for them. These controversial stories are going to occur. It's better to have AFP involved and speaking for legitimate charities and fundraisers than to let exaggerations and ignorant statements go unchallenged.

Any of these story ideas are thought-provoking and may get a reporter interested in covering more closely your event. And to ensure your honorees get coverage, offer them as experts or speakers who can provide perspective on these issues. You get a story, the honoree gets coverage and everybody wins!

4) Using An Anniversary Theme

2010 marked the 50th anniversary of AFP, and the International Headquarters used that theme quite successfully in its marketing and public relations efforts. Your chapter might be celebrating its fifth, 10th, 15th, etc. anniversary. Or, it might be celebrating an anniversary of its NPD celebration. How much has philanthropy changed over that time, and how important has it become to your local community?

Chapters might consider using this theme as part of their media efforts as well. A look back at 20 years of philanthropy in the local community might not drive a major feature story, but it's a good hook to get reporters interested in covering NPD and looking at your other story ideas. The media does tend to like statistics – e.g. "The local area has seen a 50 percent increase in giving over the past 20 years." Historical information about giving in your area might be found from a local community foundation. In the U.S., the National Center on Charitable Statistics at the Urban Institute (website: <http://nccs.urban.org>) has information about giving regionally and may have data on localities as well. In Canada, the charities section of the Canada Revenue Agency website (<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/>) may have similar materials.

A Few Other Points to Remember

Before you begin any planning or other activities, there are a few important things to remember when working on a media relations campaign.

I. Public Relations Is Work!

A good public relations campaign is more than just sending out the occasional press release. Planning, thinking creatively, developing materials, talking with the media, making follow-up calls – all of these activities are integral to a solid campaign that will achieve your goals. Lots of other organizations just send out press releases and hope for the best. Get a leg up on the “competition” for news stories by going the extra mile.

A good public relations campaign also means being proactive. You don’t wait for donors to come to you – you go out and solicit them. The same holds true for the media. Don’t wait for the media to come to you because they won’t. Contact the media on a regular basis with story ideas and cultivating relationships with key reporters and editors. You can make contacts through news releases, media advisories, pitch letters, phone calls, letters to the editor, editorials and public service announcements – even lunch meetings. You might even arrange background interviews to discuss your chapter's event or other projects.

II. There Are Things Beyond Your Control

There’s nothing worse. Your event is tomorrow. You’ve sent out some short, concise and creative press releases and made your follow-up calls. Several media outlets will be attending, including a camera crew from a local television station. And then someone local wins the International Hopscotch Competition and the rest of the news disappears

All of us at AFP apologize in advance if this happens to you. There’s nothing more deflating. But if your story really has “legs,” so to speak, then it still might be covered later. Last-minute changes do occur, so be prepared. The reporter or camera crew you expected to appear at the event may never materialize.

III. It Takes Time – Don’t Be Afraid to Try Again

The same story pitched in a slightly different way to a different reporter may prove more successful. Many factors, such as the reporter's mood or whether he or she is on a deadline, can influence his or her decision. Don’t give up simply because one or two reporters haven't shown much interest. And don’t be intimidated to contact reporters because you think you might be wasting their time or they won’t want to listen to you. If you’ve done their homework, they will. Besides, it’s their job to hear from people – otherwise, they wouldn’t ever hear about what’s happening. It’s a lot like approaching a potential donor, only you’re not asking for money.

Getting the Story Covered

You've created your media plan. You've developed some good stories. Now comes the leg work: getting the story placed in media outlets.

This section of the kit will discuss how to create the materials that will have reporters knocking down your door to cover your NPD event. News releases, press advisories, pitch letters, public service announcements – these are the tools you will use to place your stories.

And that means working the media. So here are few things to consider as you call, fax and email reporters or editors with the wonderfully creative documents you have developed.

- The phone is not a good way to introduce yourself to a reporter unless you have big, breaking news. Until you have a reporter on a first name basis, it is best to pitch a story in writing, not over the phone. Email has quickly become a reporter's best friend – use it!
- The phone is appropriate – and sometimes is the only way – to follow up with a reporter. After you have sent a fax or email, wait a few days and then follow up by phone if you haven't heard anything. A second email might also be appropriate, although it might get lost in the reporter's inbox. You have to be persistent, but know when to quit.
- Never exaggerate a story. Once you lose your credibility, it's tough, if not impossible, to get it back.
- Respect the media's deadlines. That's how they work.
- Return calls from the media promptly. Sure, they may take a while to respond to you, but turn the other cheek and get back to them ASAP!
- Don't demand approval for stories written about your chapter. Offer to review material if appropriate (and this will rarely happen), but never demand to see the story before it is printed.
- Don't assume the reporter knows about your issue, but don't be patronizing either.

Press Releases

A news release is a short announcement (usually no more than one or two pages) sent to the media. The purpose of a news release is to interest an editor in writing an article about your event or some aspect of your event. If used to announce an event, it should be sent about four to six weeks in advance.

As you compile your media list, include specific reporters, planning editors (television), city editors (newspapers), news directors (radio), and if applicable, any "calendar" or "society" sections in your newspaper(s) or on radio stations.

News releases are usually written in a journalistic style, and are occasionally printed exactly as written (although an editor or reporter will usually rework the release or choose to focus on only one angle of the story).

Here is a news release "formula":

- The lead paragraph should contain the most basic and most important information: who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- The lead paragraph should also contain the news peg -- that is, the reason for this news release. The lead paragraph should answer the question: What's the news?
- The body of the news release contains the supporting information, the information that explains why this news is interesting to others. You may use quotations and/or biographical information to support your news.
- You may wish to conclude your news release with a statement of explanation about AFP. Though statements like this are rarely printed, they help the editor or reporter understand the news release more fully. Below is the paragraph AFP uses at the end of its media releases:

The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) represents 30,000 fundraisers in 222 chapters throughout the world, working to advance philanthropy through advocacy, research, education, and certification programs. The Association fosters development and growth of fundraising professionals and promotes high ethical standards in the fundraising profession. For more information, go to the AFP website at www.afpnet.org.

Chapters can integrate this paragraph into their own release and include information about their own membership and activities.

Press Releases (cont.)

When you are ready to mail your press release to your list of target editors and reporters, you should follow this format or a close variation:

1. Type the release on white paper, using your chapter letterhead for the first sheet. If you do not have letterhead, be sure to include your chapter's name and address at the top of the page. Try to use a good quality computer printer that is easy to read. Do not use a "script" typewriter font.
2. The date of the release should be at the top of the page, usually on the right side.
3. The name and phone number of a person to be contacted for additional information should be given; again, usually on the top right side. Include the area code and day and evening phone numbers.
4. A release time may be typed in capital letters. For example, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (which indicates that the information may be published immediately) or FOR RELEASE ON MAY 15, 10 A.M. (which indicates you do not want the news publicized until that time).
5. The headline should be in capital letters under the release time.
6. The text of the release is always typed, double-spaced, on one side of the sheet only.
7. If the release is more than one page, the word MORE or CONT. is centered at the bottom of the first page, and at the bottom of any subsequent pages before the last one. Staple press releases that are longer than one page.
8. The second and subsequent pages of the release should be "tagged" at the top left of the page with an identifying phrase (from the heading) and the page number. You may include the date.
9. At the end of the release, center "# # #" or "30" several lines below the last line of the text to indicate the conclusion.

See page 18 for the type of formatting that AFP uses when writing a media release.

Press Releases (cont.)

As you write your press release, keep these tips in mind:

- Keep your language simple and avoid professional jargon.
- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and crisp. Rely on action verbs.
- Numbers and figures can be catchy. However, don't overwhelm a release with numbers. Otherwise, they lose their impact and it can be difficult for readers to differentiate figures and statistics.
- When people are quoted, bold their name and title. This will help personalities stand out.
- In the eyes of a reporter or editor, the news is not necessarily NPD, but the events or people associated with it. Be sure to mention NPD and its importance, but the focus should be on philanthropy, your honorees and the importance of charitable giving in the local community.
- Always mention the participation of local government officials or other well-known celebrities. Quotes from these individuals may be helpful in getting your release more attention.
- You can write a press release longer than two pages, but don't expect a lot of people to read much beyond the second page. In any release, try to place all of the critical information on the first page.
- Spacing, of course, affects the length of a release. You want reporters to be able to read your release, but you also don't want a five-page release. A release doesn't have to be double-spaced, but at least 1½ spacing will prevent a reader's eyes from locking up.
- In a press release, every subsequent paragraph is less important than the one preceding it. Thus, the first paragraph is critical. It must contain all of the essential information (or nearly all of it) written in a clear and concise manner. Try to steer in a story idea, but don't get too cute. Every other paragraph builds on some aspect of the first. The rest of the release will follow quite easily once you have a solid opening paragraph, so spend some time on it.

Sample Press Release



Date: October 15, 2011

For Release: Immediate

Contacts: Chapter Contact Name, Title, Phone Number

Amanda Green To Be Named Utopia's Outstanding Philanthropist

Utopia Foundation and Utopia, Inc. Also Receive Honors for Charitable Work

(Utopia) – The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) Utopia Chapter will name **Amanda Green**, noted author, world traveler and businesswoman, as the area's top philanthropist at its 10th annual National Philanthropy Day® (NPD) luncheon on Nov. 15 at the Utopia Hotel.

More than 500 people are expected to attend the NPD luncheon, which recognizes individuals and organizations for their contributions to countless charities and causes in the Utopia community. Across North America, more than 100 AFP chapters and nearly 50,000 people will participate in NPD events.

Ms. Green, who will receive the 2011 Outstanding Philanthropist Award, has traveled around the world and written several best-selling novels about her travels. Upon her return from South America ten years ago, she became especially interested in children's health and environmental causes. She has contributed nearly \$10 million to charities in the Utopia community, including a critical lead gift in the Utopia Children's Hospital campaign that allowed the institution to finish its new children's wing.

(cont.)

(Amanda Green To Be Named Utopia's Outstanding Philanthropist...Page 2)

Also receiving honors at NPD are the **Utopia Foundation**, renowned for its innovative programs in education, and **Utopia, Inc.**, a long-time supporter of many charities in the area.

"National Philanthropy Day® is the day we recognize and pay tribute to the contributions that philanthropy -- and philanthropists -- have made to our great city and our nation," noted **Robert Jones, President of the Utopia Chapter**. "With the federal government downsizing, charities have to rely more and more on individual contributions. Our honorees tonight have made the commitment to support philanthropy in Utopia and keep the spirit of civic betterment alive and strong."

Joe Smith, news anchor for Channel 1 in Utopia, will serve as emcee for the event, which will begin at 12:00 noon in the Paradise Ballroom of the Utopia Hotel.

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Media Advisories

A media advisory is essentially a bare-boned press release. There are two reasons to use media advisories.

1. When holding an event, distributing a media advisory is a good way to follow up on a media release and remind media outlets about the event. Some organizations will issue an advisory about a week before an event and follow up with the same advisory the day before as well.
2. You want to respond to a news item but don't have a strong story angle or don't have the time to craft a full-blown media release. For example, a national incident occurs during the morning and you want to have your president and CEO available for comment when the local outlets are preparing their story. You could distribute an advisory to the media outlining who is available for comments, why they're an expert and a short summary of what he or she might say. In this manner, advisories can be a good way of helping your organization become a regular source for reporters.

Of course, for NPD events, chapters are far more likely to send out media advisories because of the first reason. While releases can vary in length, advisories should definitely be one page. They need to answer the following questions:

SUBJECT: Use an interesting headline to grab the editor's attention. Stress if there will be good photo opportunities at the event.

WHO: List key spokespersons and any prominent people who will be attending or who could provide an interview.

WHAT: Explain the event, news conference, or interview opportunity in concise terms (one sentence).

WHEN: Clearly indicate the date and time of the event. Underline this information to highlight it.

WHERE: Give details of the event's location, including special information, such as parking or directions.

BACKGROUND: Give a short summary of the reason for the event, offering any statistics or recent news that adds to the news value.

CONTACT: Include a contact person, an alternate, an address, and a day and evening phone number.

When writing advisories, many organizations use a question-and-answer format to make the information clear and compelling (see the sample advisory on the next page). Treat an advisory with the care you would when writing a media release, and of course print it on letterhead.

Sample Media Advisory

Date: November 14, 2011
For Release: For Immediate Release
Contact: Chapter Contact Name, Title, Phone Number

Media Advisory -- Photo and Interview Opportunity

Local Philanthropists, Volunteers to Be Honored By Association of Fundraising Professionals

What: The Association of Fundraising Professionals Utopia Chapter will hold its 10th annual National Philanthropy Day® luncheon to recognize those individuals and organizations that have made tremendous contributions to the Utopia community. Amanda Green, Jane Doe, Utopia Inc., the Utopia Foundation and the fourth grade of Utopia Elementary will be honored.

Who: The following individuals will be attending National Philanthropy Day®:

- The Honorable Janet Brown, Mayor of Utopia;
- Amanda Green, author and businesswoman, to receive the Outstanding Philanthropist Award;
- Jane Doe, chair of the Utopia Charities Alliance, to receive the Lifetime Philanthropic Achievement Award; and
- Mary Jones, Principal of Utopia Elementary, and the fourth grade class of Utopia Elementary, to receive the Youth in Philanthropy Award.

When: 12:00 - 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 15, 2011 (National Philanthropy Day®)

Where: Utopia Hotel, Paradise Ballroom, Address and Phone Number

Visuals: Mayor, Awards, Utopia Elementary 4th Grade Class

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Pitch Letters

When you're serious about trying to get a feature story about philanthropy, your chapter, one of your honorees or some other aspect of your NPD event, it's time for a pitch letter.

A pitch letter suggests a story idea to a news editor or reporter. The goal is to get them to interview your chapter leadership or a person your organization is honoring. Writing an effective pitch letter can be difficult and takes practice, and such letters frequently need to be tailored for each specific reporter or organization. Therefore, chapters should probably write pitch letters only for the one or two major media outlets they particularly want to cover the event.

Some organizations pitch stories by phone. If you are an experienced communications expert, cold-calling with a pitch may work best for you. Otherwise, it is strongly recommended that you begin the pitch with a letter and then follow-up with a phone call. Give the reporter a few days or a week to get back to you. If you haven't heard from him or her by then, make that phone call (and don't think that because you haven't heard, there's no chance of a story).

A pitch letter isn't even a letter – it's usually an email. This allows you to get the pitch out immediately and allows greater flexibility in what you send – don't overlook the power of images that you can embed in the email.

An effective pitch letter should include:

- A creative, gripping first sentence about the subject that grabs the reader's attention, making him or her want to read on.
- Information that briefly and creatively describes the story you are suggesting, including statistics and figures to support your ideas.
- A statement that suggests an interview with your spokesperson for further information.
- A closing statement that you are available to answer further questions or provide more information. You should also mention that you will be following up within two weeks to determine if they are interested in an interview.

Tips to remember when writing a pitch email:

- Keep it short, under 400 words.
- Make sure you've written the letter with your particular media in mind. Personalize the letter, and address it to a particular person, not a title.
- Don't send attachments! You probably don't open attachments from people you don't know. Reporters and editors do the same. Any visuals (and keep them to a minimum) should be embedded in the email itself.
- Always include a link to the chapter so the reporter/editor can learn more about AFP.

Sample Pitch Letter # 1

Outlet Name
Street
City, State (Province) Zip (Postal Code)

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. Editor:

(Like any business letter, don't use the first name unless you know the individual well. If you don't know the editor's name, contact the media outlet's office and ask the receptionist/office assistant.)

First Paragraph: Your letter must start with a quick hook or some angle of the story that will catch the reader's attention.

“Charitable giving in the United States was actually quite flat in 2010, but the city of Utopia wasn't hit that hard because of the philanthropy of Amanda Green and her million dollar contributions to several organizations. The Utopia Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals will be honoring Ms. Green for her lifelong dedication to the community at its 10th annual National Philanthropy Day® luncheon on November 15.”

OR

“When Amanda Green first came to Utopia, she couldn't speak a single word of Utopian and barely had ten dollars to her name. Now she's giving million dollar gifts to several charities in the community, showing the dedication and spirit that has her earned the honor of 2011 Outstanding Philanthropist by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Utopia Chapter.”

Second and (possibly) Third Paragraphs: Provide more detailed information about Ms. Green's accomplishments, who they media outlet could talk to, and where else they can get information about her.

Closing Paragraph: Provide information about AFP and the chapter.

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Chapter

P.S. Postscripts can be effective and are often read even when the letter is skimmed. Provide a telling statistic or other eye-catching information that might not fit in the letter.

Sample Pitch Letter # 2

This is a much more formatted approach to writing a pitch letter that may be appropriate for some stories. This approach may best work with an accompanying letter briefly discussing the story and then referring to the outline below.

National Philanthropy Day®

Suggested Story Outline

Topic: A Day in the Life of a Professional Fundraiser

Suggested Outline:

The topic lends itself to a human interest story that would chronicle a “typical” day for a development professional. Such a story could achieve the following:

- Debunk the myth of the fundraiser as a “hired gun.”
- Illustrate the importance of fundraising to nonprofit organizations.
- Illustrate the importance of volunteers to the entire fundraising process.
- Portray the fundraiser as an integral part of the administrative structure of a charity.

A sample program outline might be as follows:

- Breakfast meeting with volunteer(s)
- Mid-morning organizational staff meeting
- Lunch with volunteer and donor prospect
- Afternoon meeting with development staff regarding proposal production
- Evening meeting with outside organization which the fundraiser serves as a volunteer.

Of course, this topic is highly subjective and would need to be adapted to each individual’s schedule.

Phone Pitches

Typically, you will call the media to suggest a news story that cannot be pitched in writing because of time factors, and to follow up on a letter, release or media advisory that you sent a few days earlier. Either way, your objective is to secure a commitment from the reporters or editors you call to cover your cause. How do you handle the call? What do you say?

Follow these guidelines:

1. Prepare for the call in advance. The media may not have had time to read your letter or release, so be prepared to sell the idea by phone in 30 seconds. Have all of the essential story information in front of you.
2. When you call, ask for the appropriate person. Explain who you are, immediately ask if they are on deadline, and if so, ask what would be a good time to call back. Try to stay clear of deadline day altogether if you can find out ahead of time.
3. Explain what you are calling about. Keep it short and to the point – remember, 30 seconds!
4. Assess their interest. Here are some replies and appropriate responses:

“I vaguely remember receiving that, tell me what it was about...” or “I haven't had time to read it. Quickly summarize what you want.” Briefly explain the event and subject and reason for the letter or advisory and offer the opportunity for them to interview appropriate spokespersons. Position your organization's spokesperson as an authority on the subject. “Our director, Joe Smith, has worked with volunteers of all ages for more than 30 years and can give you an in-depth look at philanthropy and the growing trend of volunteerism.”

“I read the advisory, but I'm not sure whether or not we can do anything with it.” Reply by asking if they've ever covered this story before; point out that you thought the public might be interested in this angle, etc. Try to move them off the fence to your side.

“I'm not interested.” If possible, politely try to find out why they aren't. Often, time and/or staffing may be the reason. They may be interested in the story at some other time or on a different aspect of the issue. This could open the door for future coverage, but don't push it. Ask if they know of anyone else at the station or paper who might be interested. If not, thank them for their time.

5. Don't forget the follow-up. Send a brief note thanking the reporter for taking the time to talk with you. And use the note to make another short pitch!

Public Service Announcements

Under regulations created by the Federal Communications Commission, all radio and television stations must allow some public access programming, such as through community announcements or public affairs shows.

Public service announcements (PSAs) are essentially short advertisements for charities – announcements about an upcoming community or nonprofit event or service. PSAs can't be commercial in nature and generally don't focus on controversial issues. They're perfect for raising awareness of philanthropy and your chapter's NPD event.

PSAs come in a variety of lengths: 10-, 20-, 30- or even 60-seconds. Stations may use different versions of the same PSA, so it's usually a good idea to develop different versions of your PSA about philanthropy and NPD. You never know which one will fit a station's schedule.

One advantage of PSAs is that chapters don't have to produce their own. You can just write the copy and submit to the station. If they want to use it, the station will record it and broadcast it. This doesn't mean you can't produce your own should you have access to the appropriate resources. But some stations don't accept prerecorded PSAs, so be sure to check beforehand, and always send along a copy of the script.

The disadvantage of PSAs: because they're so easy to create, stations receive a lot of them. Thus, it's important that chapters are pro-active in advocating for their PSA.

Here are some things to consider as you move forward in developing your PSA:

- Plan accordingly. As our sample media plan indicated, you need to get your PSA out as early as possible. Stations will appreciate it too.
- Develop different versions of your PSA, each one at a different length: 20-, 30- and 60-second spots are usually good.
- Formatting is critical. Provide contact information, when the PSA should run and other information at the top of your submission, just like you would for a press release. Double-space your submission, and put the 20- and 30-second spots on the same page.
- Practice the length. Say each one out loud and time it.
- Watch your language. Unlike a press release, you're not talking to the media. With a PSA, you're talking directly to the public. You can be more informal. If you include uncommon words, include a phonetic spelling (for words like "philanthropy").

Public Service Announcements (cont.)

- Push your PSA. Stations receive a lot of them, so pitching your PSA is critical. Include a letter with your PSA as to why it should be run, and include information about APF and the chapter. Follow up like you would with a media release.
- For television, stations will often run an organization's logo as a backdrop while the PSA is running. So include your chapter's logo in a color slide or offer to have it emailed to the station.
- Items to include with your PSA submission:
 - Fact sheet listing important information about AFP and your chapter, such as a description of your cause, date the chapter was founded, services, programs and goals.
 - Cover letter describing the reason you wish to air the PSA (pitch letter).
 - List of officers and board members and perhaps a financial statement (some stations may require this).
 - Some stations might also require proof of nonprofit status (i.e., the IRS 501(c)(3) letter of exemption or appropriate documents from the Canada Revenue Agency).

SAMPLE PSA # 1

November 15 is National Philanthropy Day®

Philanthropy: It's such a big, important-sounding word. It's actually Latin, meaning "the love of Humankind." But the real meaning of philanthropy boils down to one word: giving. Giving money. Giving time. Giving of ourselves.

Last year, Americans (Canadians) gave billions of dollars to countless causes across the country and around the world: schools, religious institutions, the arts and groups that fight social problems. And we didn't give because we had to, but because we wanted to. It just feels good.

But we can do even more. We can give just a little more of ourselves, to help others, to help our community, and to help our world.

This year, do something special for National Philanthropy Day® on November 15. And make an even bigger difference by giving throughout the year.

Philanthropy. It's a big word that means a little love. And it'll make you feel great.

Public Service Announcements (cont.)

SAMPLE PSA # 2

No one in the United States (Canada) is required to give to charity, which is exactly why they should.

Philanthropy -- voluntary giving for the common good -- is so important precisely because it *is* voluntary. Giving feels good not just because it's the right thing to do, but because we make the choice to do it. And charitable giving benefits everyone because all of us, at some time, have been helped by a charity.

November 15 is National Philanthropy Day®. Join thousands of Americans (Canadians) in remembering the tremendous work charities perform and supporting your favorite causes and organizations.

SAMPLE PSA # 3

Are you a philanthropist? It sounds like a big word, but it has a simple definition: one who gives time and money to support charitable causes.

November 15 is National Philanthropy Day®, a time to recognize the amazing contributions that charities have made to our communities, our country and our world. It's also a day to honor everyone who has supported charities and the causes they work on.

If you're a philanthropist, one of the millions of Americans (Canadians) who support the countless causes of charitable organizations, thank you. Your help and assistance is greatly appreciated.

If you haven't given yet, use National Philanthropy Day® as a time to get involved with your favorite charity and cause.

The choice is yours.

Because everyone can be a philanthropist.

Sample Public Service Announcement Letter

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. Programming (Public Affairs) Director

I've been waking up to the INSERT NAME Morning Show for the past NUMBER of years, and I have such a good time listening everyday.

There are many things I enjoy about RADIO STATION, but one of the things I respect the station for is its commitment to public service and philanthropy.

November 15 is National Philanthropy Day® when thousands of Americans (Canadians) will celebrate the wonderful contributions that charitable giving and charities have made to our society and our world. The Association of Fundraising Professionals, through its more than 170 chapters across North America, has sponsored educational and award activities to celebrate the day.

This year, the CHAPTER NAME of the Association of Fundraising Professionals is celebrating National Philanthropy Day® with a LUNCHEON/DINNER/EVENT on DATE.

To help commemorate the day, we have developed a 30 second audio public service announcement.

I am writing to request that STATION run the PSA as soon as possible, and especially during the week of DATES.

Thanks in advance for your help with this, and keep up the good work for our community!

Sincerely,

Name

Chapter Title

Contact Information

Talk Shows/Interviews

Getting on to a talk or public affairs shows is a great opportunity for your chapter to showcase what it does in the community and its NPD event. The medium allows for greater in-depth coverage than a typical story in a newspaper. However, this is a double-edged sword, as the chapter may have less control over what issues are discussed, especially if phone calls are taken during the show. The chapter's spokesperson must be prepared for any type of question or topic.

Booking an appearance is similar to pitching a story. The chapter must know the right person at the station (typically the director of programming or public/community affairs) and pitch their story idea (and person who would represent it) to that person. However, for a radio or television show, making a phone call is an appropriate way to begin the pitch (although the individual may request you send additional information via email).

When trying to book an appearance, you must begin early – at least six to eight weeks from the date of your event. In addition, spend some time thinking about who would be the chapter's best spokesperson. While much of your media efforts may be focused on getting attention for your honorees, those individuals may not be effective, especially when it comes to promoting the chapter. Members of the chapter's board or long-time members are probably most appropriate – someone who is outspoken, articulate and has a solid knowledge of the issues.

If you get an appearance, congratulations! Now you need to focus your efforts in preparing your spokesperson. Since he or she will be talking about philanthropy and NPD, there probably won't be a lot of hostile or controversial questions. The interview should be a very positive experience designed to increase awareness of philanthropy, the chapter and the good things that are happening in the community. But it still pays to be prepared. Here are a few interviewing tips:

- Conduct a few practice interviews and throw a few possible questions at the spokesperson. Don't just let him or her read the questions and think about answers. Formulating a response in one's head and then having to verbalize it in a public setting are two very different things. Take the time to practice.
- Slow and simple: you should have plenty of time to make your points, and they should be very simple points. Don't use professional jargon.
- Focus: Figure out those simple points in advance and stick to them. Especially when controversial issues may arise, don't get sucked into conversations you don't want to have: "That's an interesting comment, but my point is...."

Talk Shows/Interviews (cont.)

- Refer to concrete examples, personal experience and clear images. A lot of spoken data can be extremely boring, even if it makes an interesting point. Use statistics sparingly, and back them up with examples.
- Don't look directly at the camera – look at whom you're talking with or the camera operator. Maintain eye contact, but you don't have to stare. Don't fiddle with your hands or hold anything.
- Never say “no comment.” If you cannot talk about an issue, explain why.
- You don't have to answer hypothetical questions. Just say “No” or “I'm not interested in hypotheticals.”
- Be honest. If you don't know the answer, say so and try to find the answer later.
- Even the most seasoned celebrities get nervous. Odds are, so will you. Use it positively – it can actually help you look more vibrant and vigorous.

Always be sure to ask how you can get a copy of the interview or show. You never know when that might be handy for your NPD or other chapter event.

Letters to the Editor/Op-Eds

A letter to the editor is an opportunity to express praise or criticism for an article or editorial or otherwise comment on a story you may have read. It can be a great way to bring up issues that might have been missed in an article and promote philanthropy and volunteerism.

Letters to the editor should be very short: at most three or four paragraphs and no longer than one page. They should get to the point very quickly with just a small reference to yourself and your organization so the newspaper can understand your perspective and expertise on the issue. Letters to the editor should be written as quickly as possible in response to the article, preferably the same day the article appears. Always include your name, address and phone number.

Writing an op-ed piece provides another opportunity to appear on the editorial page. An op-ed allows an individual to write a longer column about an issue of interest. This is an effective way to address important issues or comment on developments in the news, such as the growing trend of volunteerism, the good deeds philanthropy enables, or the contributions made to good causes in your community during the past year.

An op-ed is much tougher to get published than a letter to the editor, and chapters may have to pitch an op-ed idea much like a feature story. Keep in mind two key factors. First, you need to advocate aggressively that you are an expert on the issue. After all, the editorial page is where issue experts ply their trade. In any pitch, be sure to include the credentials and background that make you an expert on the issues of philanthropy.

Second, an op-ed must focus on a very interesting and timely issue. This is not a place to showcase your honorees unless they can be worked in as examples. Op-eds should address key issues affecting philanthropy: why is giving so strong (or slow), accountability, ethics, legislation, wise giving, etc. While the chapter could be mentioned, the focus should be strictly on the subject at hand.

Like press releases, op-eds need a very strong opening. But since you probably have more room, you can be more creative. Unlike press releases, you can be more subjective since you're not reporting on news. You need to capture your reader's attention and clearly state the theme of your op-ed. Additional paragraphs support your theme. The closing should not only reinforce and restate the theme, but also leave the reading thinking.

Different media outlets have different word lengths, but most will fall in the 600 to 800 word category.