

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

WRITE PRESS STORIES, NOT PRESS RELEASES. The modern press release needs to be written like a feature story. It should read like an article you would find in a publication, not like a dry, formulaic announcement. This shift toward storytelling in press releases stems in part from the smaller staff sizes at publications. Anything an editor or reporter can drop into a lineup without having to write the story from scratch is more likely to receive coverage. Stated another way, the less a reporter or editor has to do with your release to turn it into a story, the better.

BRING YOUR STORY FULL CIRCLE. Focus on the people who have been helped. It's easy for an organization to write about how much money it's given away. It's harder to bring that story full circle and write about what happened after the money was given away. Your story isn't the fundraiser that allowed the club to write a check. It's the effect that money made in someone's life or in the community. Your story isn't complete unless it illustrates how the effort made a difference.

MAKE IT PERSONAL. Start your news item with a story that will draw the reader in. The more personal and specific that story is, the better. Write about a child whose life was changed because of your club's work. Find an adult who was able to access a service because of your club. Move beyond the number of people helped to talk about one or two people who represent that larger number.

TIE YOUR NEWS ITEM TO THE LARGER NEWS. See when the media in your community are talking about different subjects, and tie your news items in with those trends. If your club focuses on hearing health, try to get media coverage of your work around the Fourth of July, for instance, when noise-induced hearing loss is likely to occur.

GIVE THE RELEASE A STRONG PITCH. Write several talking points that showcase the importance of your news item. These talking points should be simple, clear, and contain a call to action for the target audience. Use this language when you pitch your release to the media.

LEVERAGE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS. Let your media contact know your release is on the way before it arrives. This will help contextualize the release so it's not just another piece cluttering the contact's desk or inbox.

SUBMIT YOUR RELEASE PROPERLY. Always check the media outlet's website to see how it wants releases submitted. Following submission guidelines can mean the difference between getting your release read and having it tossed.

FOLLOW UP. Always follow up to ask if your contact received the release and needs any more information.

