



MEDIA AND SUPPORTER COMMUNICATION TOOLS

WHAT IS NEWSWORTHY?

- Timeliness** “If it isn’t new, it isn’t news.” Your story must be current. Submit your story within a few days of the event or activity.
- Accuracy** The story needs to be 100% accurate before it’s offered to reporters. Check and re-check your story before you submit it. It is critical that the story is completely accurate, with all names and other information spelled correctly.
- Inaccurate Information** If you find that information in a story you have already submitted has changed or is not correct, call the newspaper immediately so the information can be corrected. It is important to report changes so that readers will not be inconvenienced by incorrect information.
- Objectivity** Be objective. You must remain completely impartial.
- Creativity** Try to provide a new angle or twist on the story.
- Human Interest** People like to read about the lives of other people. Quotes add authority to a story. Here’s an example: “We’re really excited about this competition,” said advisor Bob Heart. “It’s the highest target we’ve ever set for ourselves.”
- The Community** How will community members benefit from knowing the story?
- Visual Appeal** Think of a photo or informational graphic to provide to reporters.
- Tie-ins** Tie into a special event that involves the community or tie in with national news events that are getting public attention.
- Trends** Reporters are always looking for futuristic angles on observations about stories currently in the news.
- Clippings** After you have submitted a story, watch the newspaper closely. Once the story appears, clip it carefully and collect each one for your record book or as part of the club scrapbook.

MEDIA RELATIONS FOR 4-H: AN OVERVIEW

Reporters and editors choose which information they will provide to the public.

There are two basic forms of media outlets:

Electronic/Broadcast Media

Radio
Television
Cable Television
Internet/On-line Services

Print Media

Newspapers
Magazines
Newsletters
Brochures/Pamphlets

Regardless of the types of media outlets and activities you choose to use, the key elements for getting along with the media are:

1. Understanding what the media want in a story.
2. Making sure that the information is provided to them clearly, quickly, and in the correct format.

Journalists and Broadcasters look for similar story elements:

- ☺ Audience appeal
- ☺ Issues that stimulate debate, controversy or even conflict
- ☺ Stories that generate high rating and increased readership
- ☺ Fresh angles and twists that will sustain public interest

There are generally two kinds of stories:

1. Hard News Stories – Newsworthy articles that readers need to know about right away.
2. Feature Stories (Soft News) – Stories for special weekly sections or stories that reporters can save for a slow news day.

THE 5 “W”S AND 1 “H” OF NEWS





Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

The important parts of a news story are the five W’s and the H. Explain each one and your story is written!

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ❖ Who is the story about? | ❖ Where will (did) it happen? |
| ❖ What is the story about? | ❖ Why will (did) it happen? |
| ❖ When will (did) it happen? | ❖ How will (did) it happen? |

These facts must be accurate! Check and re-check names, titles, dates, times, costs, etc.

NEWS STORY FORMAT

-  The first time you refer to a person, use their full name (and title, if appropriate)
-  The next time you refer to a person *under* age 18, refer to them by their first name. The next time you refer to a person age 18 and *over*, refer to them by their last name.
-  Write in the third person. This means you use the words *he, she, him, her, they, them* – NOT the words *I* or *you* or *we*.
-  Use simple language. Don’t use a long word when a short word will do. Sentences should be short and easy to read. Paragraphs should contain no more than two or three sentences.

PHOTOS CAN STAND ALONE OR HELP 'SELL' STORIES, BUT ...

- **Any action is better than none.** Two people who are talking are more interesting than two people just staring at the camera. Someone stretching to catch a ball is more interesting than someone posing while holding that ball.
- **Close is better, too** – until, of course, distortion sets in. This is particularly true for “people” photos, because most viewers are more interested in facial expressions than clothing.
- **Simple is also better.** Viewers like a clear “center” of interest. Messy backgrounds distract – as do pictured items that compete for attention.
- **Cutlines.**
 - Always use present tense verbs (see underlined words below photo, right), so they describe what IS going on in the picture, not what WAS happening.
 - Cutlines’ main purpose is to identify the people – often introducing groups with “From left.” They have as many facts as are needed to understand the photo.
 - Cutlines can explain anything unusual in or about the photo. But they do NOT say what is already clear (for example, “Rhonda smiles as she types”).
 - **Where cutlines go.** Tape a typed cutline to the white margin or back of the photo. Do NOT use paperclips or write on the back; that damages photos.



Where 4-H leads? – Rhonda Atkinson, past Kansas 4-H horse project winner, still owns horses, but earned a master’s degree in journalism that she uses to edit the *Kansas 4-H Journal*.

PHOTOS HELP TELL THE STORY!

The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words is accurate! A photograph can draw the readers to the story because a picture draws the eyes and then the reader wants to know the story behind the picture.

Follow these rules of thumb with pictures:

- 🏆 All persons in the photograph should be clearly identified, front to back, left to right.
- 🏆 Check and re-check the spelling of names of persons in each photograph.
- 🏆 All persons should have given permission to use their photographs.
- 🏆 Submit photographs to the newspaper in the required format (usually .jpg files) along with your article. At the bottom of the article, indicate the name of the photograph file you are submitting.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER ...

Ask to speak with the staff person to whom you will be submitting your news stories (copy), and request detailed instructions on how copy is to be submitted, such as:

- ✚ Electronically – be sure to get the e-mail address
- ✚ Hard copy – does it need to be typed or is handwritten copy acceptable?
- ✚ What photo formats are acceptable?

On the attached *Columbia County Media Contact List*, we have provided some information for each newspaper in Columbia County. You may want to contact the one you most frequently use to check on any new details.

WHERE ELSE CAN YOU PUBLICIZE 4-H?

Here's some ideas to promote 4-H. Talk these over with your leader or your extension educator.

- Ⓢ Offer to tape radio public service announcements during National 4-H Week.
- Ⓢ Offer to assist in working on the county 4-H newsletter.
- Ⓢ Offer to work with your extension educator on producing special pages in the newspaper during National 4-H Week.
- Ⓢ Write a letter to the editor during National 4-H Week, telling how much you enjoy the 4-H program.

HELPFUL WEB SITES

Merriam-Webster online dictionary

<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary>

Encyclopedia Britannica

<http://www.britannica.com/?source=mwtab>

Thesaurus.com

<http://thesaurus.reference.com>

Roget's Thesaurus Online

<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/thesaurus/>

Addresses for Newspapers

<http://www.onlinenewspaper.com/usstate/usohio.htm>