

CELEBRATING SHIP VOLUNTEERS THROUGH MEDIA COVERAGE

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Tips to Attract Media Attention

- ⇒ Become a media consumer, especially in the media your audience uses most.
- ⇒ Begin building relationships with the media both through emails and over the [phone](#). Reach out regularly so reporters see your program as a local, frontline resource for Medicare information.
 - Don't know who to contact? *Find and contact national and local media* online at the [Media Guide](#).
 - This resource allows you to reach out to local and national newspapers, magazines, and TV news stations using their online submittal form.
 - Find contact information for reporters and editors, and submit press releases and letters to the editor directly through the site.
- ⇒ “Hook” reporters with stories that provide a local angle to national news story (e.g. the release of Medicare Trustees report on trust fund) or special events (e.g. National Volunteer Week).
- ⇒ Invite local media to your big events by sending out [media advisories](#).
- ⇒ Send a [letter to the editor](#) in response to a Medicare story. Be sure to include a description of your program and contact information.
- ⇒ Submit an editorial describing the SHIP program, its beneficiaries, and the services you provide (Resource: [Why SHIPs are Critical](#)).

THEORY IN PRACTICE

Example: using the [Media Guide](#) to reach out to Nashville media.

1. Click Tennessee on the map or type in the zip code you want to target.
2. Check the boxes for the organizations you want to inform.
3. Cut and paste your press release or media advisory into the fields.
4. Fill out your contact information and personalize the communication by uploading a picture of yourself (optional).
5. Hit send and your message will be distributed to the media outlets your audience goes to for news and information.
6. Follow-up with the editor or reporter that covers health, civic engagement, or aging issues by phone.

Tips to Entice Journalists to Follow Your Story

When communicating with reporters by phone follow these basic rules:

- Do some background research so you can personalize the interaction
 - Refer to previous stories and be familiar with their style
- Be prepared with your “pitch”
- Ask if this is a good time
- Lead with the “hook,” more specifically explain why this issue is important and timely for their audiences
- Keep it short and snappy
- Offer to provide background information on future stories
- Follow-up with a short email that includes
 - Your contact information
 - A few suggestions for future stories, and
 - A link to your program

When creating written documents for the press follow these basic rules:

- Know which format to use to alert your local media about story opportunities
 - Use a media advisory when inviting reporters to an upcoming event.
 - Answer the “five W’s”: who, what, when, where and why.
 - Send your advisory two weeks before your event.
 - Follow-up shortly before the event with a personalized phone call.
 - Use a news release to describe a new finding, breaking news, or trend story.
 - Try to tie your release to a national story but focus on the local angle.
 - Describe visual components that might intrigue photo or video journalists.
 - Include a quote from your SHIP Director or Commissioner.
- Keep your communication short (ideally no more than one page) and simple.
- Begin with a short, attention-grabbing lead sentence detailing why the event is important.

Suggestions for Writing “Attention-Getting” Press Materials

Reporters receive many “pitches” for coverage each day, so make sure yours is memorable, snappy, and short.

- Tell a story
 - Use this formula created by Bill Stoller of [*Free Publicity*](#):
 - Situation, Surprise, Support
 - Think about your story visually
 - For example: With three phone lines ringing off the hook during the Annual Enrollment Period, SHIPs rely on the dedication of 100 volunteers to reach out and counsel 30,000 Medicare beneficiaries in a 300-mile radius.
- Lead by answering the 5 W’s
 - Use the 3Ss to illustrate
 - Who – SHIP volunteers
 - What – Should be celebrated
 - When – During National Volunteer Week
 - Where – Publically
 - Why – Volunteers help citizens enroll in Medicare drug plans that best meet their medical and financial needs.

THEORY IN PRACTICE: The 3Ss

1st Sentence, Situation:

This week a volunteer with the Arlington State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) helped Mary Jones find assistance paying for the cancer drugs she needs to save her life.

2nd Sentence, Surprise:

SHIPs provide personalized Medicare counseling and education. Because SHIPs operate on a very tight budget, many rely heavily on volunteers to provide an array of services. Without volunteers, clients like Mary might have faced serious hardship.

3rd Sentence, Support:

April 27 through May 3 is National Volunteer Week and we are taking time to celebrate our SHIP volunteers.

Additional Resources

- [2008 National Volunteer Week Resource Guide](#), Points of Light Foundation (free)
Online: <http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/seasons/nvw/tools.cfm>
- [Media Guide](#), congress.org by Capitol Advantage (free)
Online: <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/media/>
- [Media Access Guide](#), Seattle Times (free)
Online: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/contactus/media/media_access_guide.pdf
- [Communications Toolkit](#), W.K. Kellogg Foundation (free)
Online: <http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=75&CID=385&NID=61&LanguageID=0>
- [Free Publicity](#), Bill Stoller (Free “newsletter for PR Hungry Businesses”)
Online: <http://www.publicityinsider.com/PressReleaseSecrets.pdf>
- [Bacon’s Media Database](#), Cision (Subscription based but often available for free at the public library)