



PUBLICITY

As Publicity Team Leader for the ASF National Walk, you hold a very important job. All other committees can work very hard to create a terrific event, but the people who will support it must know what's happening. A great event may be poorly attended, because people simply didn't know about it! YOU are key to helping the ASF Walk be a local success.

Your team needs to commit to and deliver the right information to the media at the right time. Correct details, names, location, dates and phone numbers are essential. Delivering them to the proper contacts is a must!

Plan Your Way into the News

Getting publicity doesn't just happen by sending out a press release or public service announcement (PSA). It takes work to get the coverage—and it's worth it! The following are some important tips to help you be successful in your local area publicizing the ASF National Walk:

1. **A Good Story Deserves to be Told!** **The basis for considering coverage for an article, feature story or news story item is its value to readers, viewers or listeners.** Will the audience be interested in your story; will it help them or entertain them? The ability to get your event communicated lies with getting it to the right person, not the organization (you may think it is helpful, interesting, entertaining, but will the media and local community?)
2. **Most difficult issues turn into compelling stories. Who is/are the person/people behind the issues/event?** Personalize the story; give it a face and a name. Looking for the story behind the subject/person/event and bringing the issue to the reader/viewer/listener in a personal way.
3. **Look for a way to hook into current trends and news stories** (e.g., a story on recent budget cuts and how it affects an individual/family with AS; a story on low-income health issues and how it relates to misdiagnosis of AS in low-income or minority families; spending increases/budget cuts in education and how it affects individuals with special needs/individuals with Angelman Syndrome, etc.)
4. **Know the difference between a news story and a feature story.**
 - a. News Stories:
 - i. Immediately newsworthy
 - ii. May localize a national story
 - iii. Time-tied
 - b. Feature Stories:
 - i. Compelling read/viewing
 - ii. Not time-tied
 - iii. Personalized story, usually one person's story
 - iv. May present a challenge, conflict, tension, change
 - v. Not an announcement of an event, advocacy piece or promoting a cause
 - vi. Mass mailings generally don't work
5. Objectively ask: would I be interested in reading/viewing/listening to this story?
 - a. Ask others not associated with the walk if they would be interested in this story (general interest).
6. **Know your local media**
 - a. Read the paper, listen to the radio and watch the television stations you plan to pitch your stories to.
 - i. Only one person from your team (YOU) should contact the news media (or be directed/assigned by you to do so). Two members calling with the same story are bound to bring conflict or confusion.
 - ii. Establish personal contact with the proper people at the newspaper/TV or radio stations. Get to know the staff members responsible for your type of organization.

Choose a reporter appropriate for the story to be covered (i.e., Features Editor, Planning Editor, Assignment Editor, Health Reporter, etc.)

- iii. Be brave. Don't be afraid to suggest something new if you honestly believe you have a workable idea. Media people welcome original ideas when they are practical and of interest to the public.
 - iv. Contact the newspaper/stations and determine the best times to pitch a story to a specific reporter or editor.
 1. Meet the deadlines for news releases
 2. How do they like to be approached (phone, fax, e-mail)?
 - v. Know the deadlines of the newspaper/stations. Don't call to pitch a story at a planning time or right before a deadline.
 - vi. Be aware of what's going on in the news. Pitch a story on a "slower" news day; avoid big breaking news days.
 - vii. Make it simple when you call. When pitching a story, you will have approximately 15 seconds. Be quick and concise. Avoid using complicated jargon (i.e., "neurogenetic condition" "chromosomal abnormalities" etc.) Pitch to the level of an 8-year-old. (e.g., "Angelman Syndrome is something that happens when you are born. People with Angelman Syndrome don't talk, have a hard time walking and using their hands, and will need someone to take care of them for the rest of their lives.") Make it compelling so they will want to know more.
 1. Always follow up with a fax, e-mail or phone call.
 2. Ask the reporter if he/she will pursue the story. Need to be upfront if you are working with someone else on the story (if circulation/viewing or listening areas don't overlap, should be O.K., but don't pitch to competing papers/TV stations/radio stations and try to play one off the other.)
 3. If a particular reporter is not interested in pursuing the story, ask if there is someone else who they think would be interested in your story.
7. **Photographs and Video:** Newspaper space and airtime is costly, therefore photographs and videotape should be of interest to many readers/viewers beyond those appearing in the picture. If you have an idea for interesting photo/video footage, discuss it with the editor in charge.
- a. Pictures and videotaping require advance planning by both the editor and you. Call the editor when you have an idea in mind. The editor will make the necessary arrangements with the photographer/camera person.
 - b. Assignments should, generally, be made one week before the date a photo is to be taken. Generally, there should be only a few people in the photograph. A crowded photo lacks reader appeal except in certain circumstances—when the crowd itself is the message. The photo should have graphic attraction—some action taking place.
 - c. Have everything ready for the photographer/camera person. The publicity team leader should be the contact person and should be ready to answer any questions. You should be able to identify by name and title the people who will be in the picture/video. A typewritten list is most helpful to a photographer/camera person in avoiding spelling errors.
8. **Some Do's and Don'ts**
- a. Routine refreshments served after an event is not newsworthy and should be omitted.
 - b. Avoid opinions. Statements such as "everyone will have a great time; a good time was had by all" are judgment statements and should not be used. Superlatives such as "famous, well-known and celebrated" should be omitted.
 - c. Avoid giving commands in news stories or urging people to be on time.
 - d. Use first and last names of the people who are mentioned in news releases and stories. (E.g., Tom Brown or Pam Smith are the complete names and should be mentioned as such).
 - e. Write everything down and keep a record of your contacts, call back dates, follow up calls, etc.
 - f. Avoid using abbreviations such as AS or ASF; these should be written out.