

PR ^{the} Toolkit



for **DECA** Advisors

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PR Toolkit for DECA Advisors

Does your school administration know about your students' accomplishments? Does the school board know your chapter does more than travel to competitions and stage a community service project or two? Other than your students' parents, do community members know what DECA is and what your chapter does?

For too many DECA chapters, the answer is no. Despite all your hard work and all the effort your chapter members put in to their schoolwork, their competitive event projects and their chapter activities, you and your students are probably not as well-known as you should be. To solve that problem, DECA has created this PR Toolkit. With just a little bit of effort to start with and some ongoing maintenance, you can get a chapter PR program going and start getting the recognition you deserve.

Who, what, where, when, why and how are the classic questions we're told to keep in mind whenever we write, whether it's a report, a DECA competitive event manual or a birthday party invitation. In this packet, we're going to use these six questions to walk you through the process of setting up a PR program for your chapter. Specifically, we'll look at

- Why you should send out press releases
- What you can write about
- Who should write the releases
- How to organize and format PR
- Where the releases should be sent
- When the releases should be sent

Why:

INCREASING COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND REWARDING MEMBERS

You know you work hard, in class and after school, to help your students succeed. Your students know the amount of effort they put in to helping their community and learning more about marketing and business. But who else knows? How many other people in the school, in the administration or in the community at large hear about all that you and your DECA chapter achieve?

If you're like most chapters, the answer is: not many. Some chapters are really good about getting press releases out, and if yours is one of them, this packet probably won't tell you anything you don't already know. But many DECA chapters either don't send out any press releases at all or only do a limited amount of PR, contacting a school newspaper with announcements and maybe forwarding national DECA's press release when a local student wins a scholarship or a competitive event.

TAKE TIME OUT TO GET THE WORD OUT

Why not send out press releases? For some advisors, it comes down to a lack of interest or a lack of time.

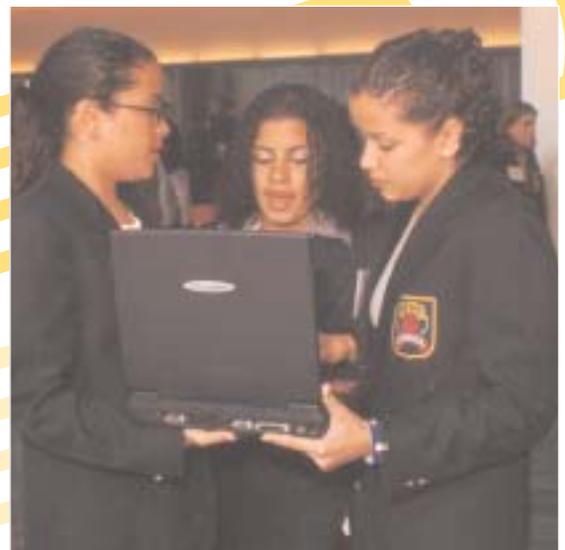
Most chapters that coast under the community's radar still consider themselves successful. And they are—their members are learning a lot about marketing and business, working on chapter activities and competitive events and learning real-world skills in the process. That's the good news. But a bad economy, rising budget deficits and a continuing emphasis on standardized test scores have left some career and technical education (CTE) programs in danger of being cut. School and community leaders don't always realize how valuable CTE programs are to their school's success and their students' futures.

Some advisors are reluctant to actively pursue publicity for their chapter. For them, it feels too much like patting themselves on the back. In reality, it's one of the best things you can do for your marketing education program. By spreading the word about your students' accomplishments, you can demonstrate to the community that your ME program is worth having around.

Publicity helps your program stay viable in other ways, too. By publicly applauding members, you reward current members for their hard work, encourage them to stick with the program, and entice new members to join.

1, 2, 3

Once you've decided to start a PR program, it's not hard to get going. You (and your students) need to decide three things: what to write about, who will write it, and whom to send the press releases to. Then your chapter does the actual work of sending out press releases and following up with journalists to see if the releases were received and if they will be published. Each step in the PR program can be broken down into small tasks and shared among members so no one person has to devote too much time to the project.



What: WHAT CAN YOU SAY?

What should you write about? To be taken seriously, your press releases need to be newsworthy; they have to talk about something of substance. Fortunately, that's not hard to do. In fact, if your chapter has a program of work in place, you have the foundation for your PR program right there. If you don't have a POW, here are some suggestions for press release topics. It's not an exhaustive list; you may come up with other ideas for PR opportunities!

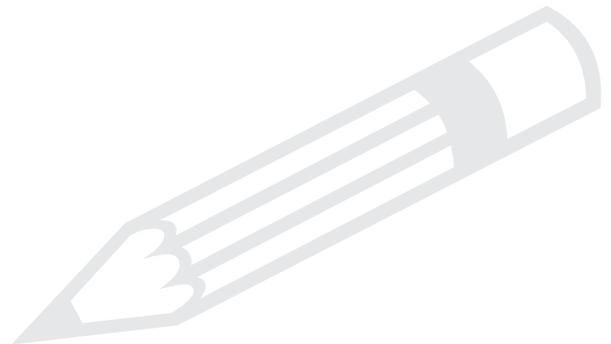
- Officer elections
- The program of work itself—if you've drawn up a POW detailing your chapter activities for the year, let people know about it
- DECA Week activities
- The results of your membership campaign
- Chapter activities—any chapter activities are fair game. Make sure you include vocational activities such as field trips and guest speakers, as well as community service projects
- Fund-raising projects—for these you may want to send two press releases: one ahead of time to publicize the activity and one afterward to announce results
- Business partnerships—a write-up about the businesses that have helped your chapter throughout the year; the number of students with co-op jobs, the experience your students are gaining in those jobs, etc.
- Employer recognition activities
- DECA competition—how many members are attending DECA competitions, plus any honors and achievements
- Leadership conference attendance
- Scholarship wins and other academic honors; the number of senior members from your chapter who will be attending college next year
- New products or services at your school store

THINK BIG

If you're feeling ambitious, you could also aim to have a general interest news story written about your chapter. Not sure what a reporter could write about? Think about it this way: If a stranger walked in through your classroom door right now and said, "Tell me about your chapter," what one thing would you want this person to hear about before he or she left the room? Is there a chapter activity you're particularly proud of? Is there something in your students' backgrounds that makes their academic achievements even more impressive? Do a large percentage of chapter members go on to college?

In "Seven Steps to Getting Known" (see article in this packet), Jill Lublin refers to this as your "ooh-ahh factor"—something about you, your chapter or your marketing students that would make an outsider stop and take notice. For example, Willamette High School DECA in Eugene, Oregon, raises money each year for an orphanage and soup kitchen in Minsk, Belarus. It's an interesting story, and, sure enough, in October 2003 their local paper ran an article titled "Food for faraway kids: Willamette High students raise money to feed children they'll probably never meet."

You don't have to do something internationally spectacular to score an article in the paper, of course. Just think of something that will be interesting to people in your community.



*O CANADA!
DECA chapters
show their pride.*

Publicity-worthy Topics

Use this worksheet to list the various projects and activities your chapter will work on this year (Project name), the approximate date when the project will take place (Project date) and whether or not you want to send out a press release about it (Send PR?). You can also use the Send PR? space indicate whether a press release should go out before the project to encourage contributions to fund-raising projects, for example, or to get community support, and/or afterward to report the results.

VOCATIONAL UNDERSTANDING PROJECTS (field trips, guest speakers, academic projects and competitions, school store news, business partnerships):

Project name

Project date

Send PR?

CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS PROJECTS (charity fund-raisers and community service projects, both large and small):

Project name

Project date

Send PR?

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE PROJECTS (member recruitment campaigns, DECA Week, chapter social activities):

Project name

Project date

Send PR?

LEADERSHIP PROJECTS (officer elections, leadership conference attendance):

Project name

Project date

Send PR?

OTHER PROJECTS (academic honors and scholarships, college attendance):

Project name

Project date

Send PR?

GENERAL INTEREST (use this space to list any interesting story ideas about your chapter that don't fall in the other categories):

Seven Steps to Getting Known

Jill Lublin, the founder of GoodNews Media, Inc., and one of the co-authors of *Guerrilla Publicity*, recommends seven steps DECA chapters can use to get better known.

Step 1 involves figuring out who you are, what you do and how to express it in the most succinct and interesting way possible in less than 30 seconds. That's how long you have to make that all-important first impression. Practice your "intro" until it flows in a positive, strong and confident manner. If you look and feel the part, it will be reflected in your handshake, eye contact and tone of voice. It is as important as the quality and image of your materials.

Step 2 is determining your "ooh-ahh" factor—the story about you, your chapter or your students that makes people go "ooh, ahh, tell me more." Understand why you are news from the media's perspective and begin to create materials that will tailor that story to the specific media whose attention you wish to gain.

Step 3 is to define your audience and create a media list. As a local chapter, your main focus will be on local media. If you are pursuing national recognition, then check out major newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, entrepreneurial publications, teen or business magazines. Familiarize yourself with all the media on your list and make preliminary phone calls to get the appropriate names for directing your information to. Update your list every few months.

Step 4 is to create a press release—a three- or four-paragraph, one-page document that tells your unique story clearly and grabs media attention quickly. The first paragraph must contain the who, what, when, where, why and how of your story.

Begin with the city and state/province of origination and end with "For Further Information, call . . ." Grab attention by giving a statistic that illustrates why their audience needs this information. Sometimes the press will use only the first paragraph, so it must contain all of the most relevant information.

The second paragraph might consist of a quick description of your chapter and its activities and the third should contain a quote from the highest source you can find. It is always better to use someone else's words to praise your chapter. Ask the principal or a school board member to comment about your chapter, or have a local businessperson talk about his or her experiences with DECA members.

The press release should be done on letterhead—either the school's letterhead or one you create for your chapter. On the top left it should say FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE and the upper right hand should show the CONTACT with the name and number of your public relations officer (or yourself). Be absolutely sure your press release is 100 percent accurate in terms of grammar, facts, punctuation, spelling and names.

Step 5 involves creating a press kit to attract the media's interest. Over time, you're going to send out multiple press releases, right? So make it easier on yourself by assembling some background information about your chapter and your school, your school store (if your chapter runs that), photos of chapter activities, past press clippings and information on your chapter's program of work for the current year.

Different types of media have different requirements—TV producers need a visual hook while radio wants the verbal aspect of the story. Your story should be personal so an audience can put itself in your shoes, identify with what you're doing and perhaps apply it to their own lives. It also must be interesting and give value and benefit to the audience.

Step 6 is the all-important mail-out. Now comes the most critical part, the three Fs: the follow-up, the follow-up and the follow-up. It is up to you and your chapter to make the calls. Begin by saying, "Hello, my name is . . ." and start your pitch within 10 seconds. Remember your hook and tell them in 30 seconds or less why you are news. For national media, calls should be made within one week of when you mailed out your press release; local/regional media within three to four days (one or two days if e-mailed).

Step 7 is a series of reminders to help you create powerful publicity year-round. If you follow these tips, you will be well on your way to capturing the media's attention!

- Make personal contacts with the media as often as possible.
- Keep your business card and press materials handy. If your school doesn't give teachers business cards, you can create them using your computer and desktop printer. Check the local office supply store for business card paper. Each sheet is perforated so you can print a full page and then tear the page at the perforations to separate each card.
- Know what is special about your chapter and get the word out using the media.
- Know the media you are pitching—always read the paper or magazine before you send press releases to it and watch or listen to a radio or TV show before you appear on it.
- Be prepared for interviews. Journalists just might call you before you call them.
- Be consistent with your image and make sure all your materials reflect the image you want to project for your chapter.
- Participate in social and civic activities and network to increase your chapter's visibility.

Jill Lublin is the author of the national best-selling book, Guerrilla Publicity (Adams Media), part of the Jay Levinson Guerrilla Marketing Series. She has also completed two audiotapes, 7 Key Points to Powerful Publicity and Insider's Edge to Powerful Publicity, and a training video. In addition, Jill is the founder of GoodNews Media, Inc., and host of the nationally syndicated radio show, Do the Dream. Adams Media will publish her upcoming book, Networking Magic, in 2004. Jill is an international speaker on the subjects of public relations and marketing. She can be reached at (415) 883-5455. Her Web site is www.promisingpromotion.com.

Who:

TOM SAWYER WITHOUT THE CON JOB

Interested in starting a chapter PR program but not sure you have the time? You don't have to do all the work by yourself. In fact, you shouldn't. It's like Tom Sawyer, only without the con job—it's actually better if your students do the work. Anyone who ever expects to one day send a cover letter in with a résumé needs to know how to write a brief but interesting summary of accomplishments. Summarizing a chapter's goals and activities is good practice for writing about their own individual achievements one day.

When it comes to selecting someone to write a press release for your chapter, you can choose from a variety of approaches. Your PR or communications officer, if you have one, is the most obvious choice. Otherwise the job could fall to the chapter historian, since he or she is already keeping track of the chapter's activities. Looking outside of your officer team, you could select any chapter member with good writing skills, or assign the press release to all chapter members as homework and select the best one to send to journalists.

You could also make a chapter project out of it: Have one team of members compile a list of people to send press releases to. Have another team review your planned chapter activities to decide how many releases to issue this year. Most chapters use school letterhead or just blank paper for press releases, but if you have someone with good design skills in the chapter, you can ask them to create letterhead instead. One member or group of members with good writing skills can write the actual release. Others can help edit and proofread. Detail-oriented members can take charge of mailing each press release to your contact list, and you can also have your chapter place follow-up calls to reporters.

You'll review each press release (and the mailing list) before it goes out, of course, but if your chapter helps shoulder the workload, you don't have to give up a lot of your time to make a PR program happen.



DECA's work with organizations like the Muscular Distrophy Association is definitely something to brag about!

PUBLICITY ASSIGNMENTS

Use this page to keep track of which chapter members will handle what PR tasks. If assignments will change throughout the year, photocopy this page before completing it.

STEP 1. Compile a list of press release topics.

STEP 2. Schedule when PR will go out.

STEP 3. Compile a list of journalists/contacts to receive press releases.

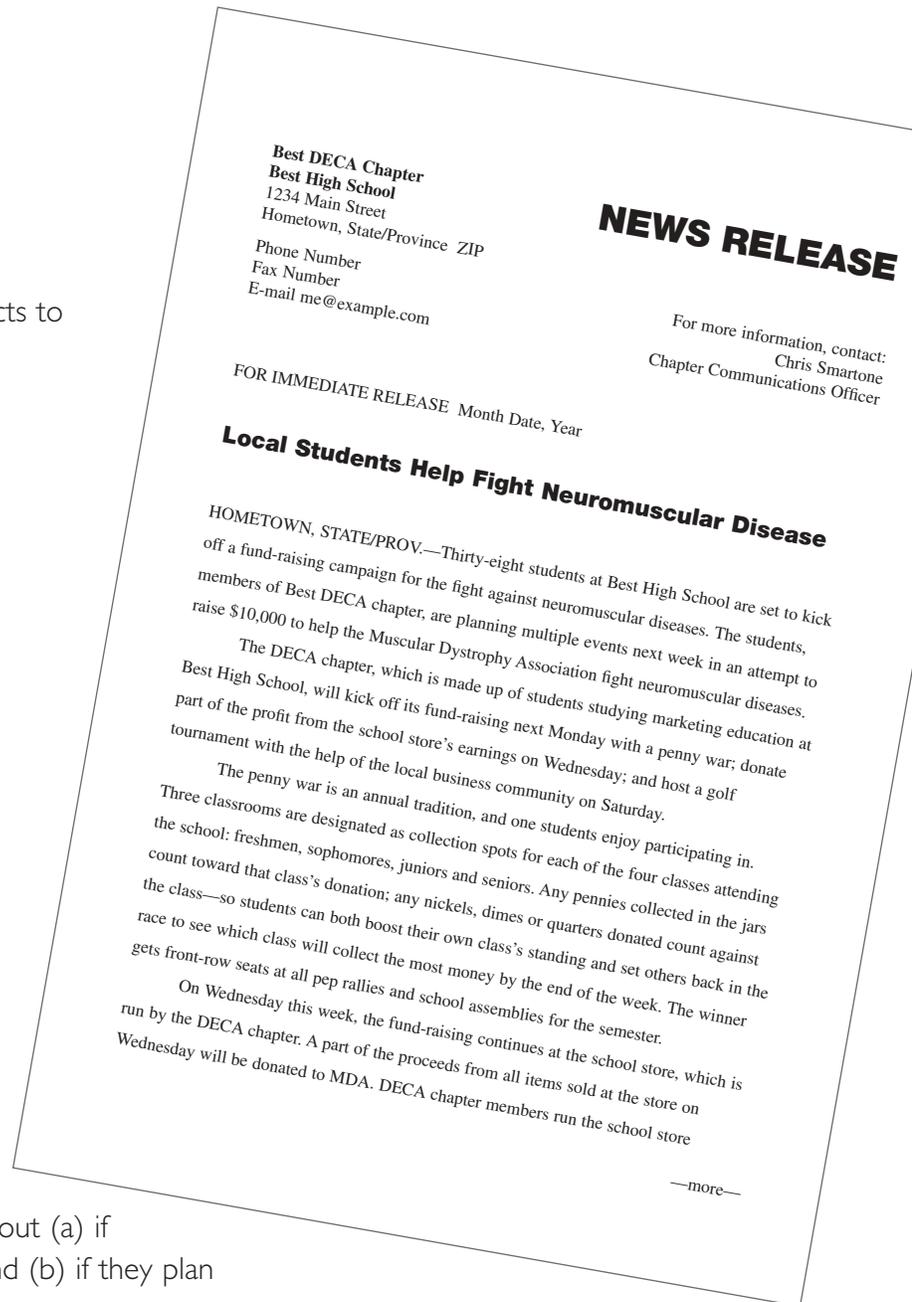
STEP 4. Design letterhead (if necessary).

STEP 5. Write the press release.

STEP 6. Edit/proofread the press release.

STEP 7. Mail, fax or hand-deliver all copies of the press release.

STEP 8. Follow up with journalists to find out (a) if they received the press release and (b) if they plan to publish it.



How:

MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER WITH STANDARDIZED FORMATS

When it comes to formatting press releases, you have a variety of styles to choose from. Chris Nguyen, DECA's Western Region vice president, describes one of the most common styles in his article "How to . . . Gain Recognition for Your Hard Work." The article, which ran in the November/December *Dimensions*, is included here for your convenience.

Whether you use the format that Chris recommends or come up with your own layout, several basic elements must be included:

- Chapter name, school name and address
- Advisor name and contact information, including phone number, fax number and e-mail address
- Media contact name and phone/e-mail if the contact is someone other than the advisor
- The words "News Release," "Press Release" or "Media Release"
- Release date—this is the date when it will be all right for the media to print or broadcast your news. In most cases, you'll write "For Immediate Release" and today's date. If for some reason you don't want the media to publish your news until a later date, write "For Release on" and the date when it will be okay to publish

Whether you use school or chapter letterhead or just plain paper, make sure that all the necessary contact information gets included. If a journalist has a question about your press release and has to put in a lot of effort just to figure out how to contact the chapter, he or she may decide your news isn't worth the effort and run a different article in its place.

Once you've set up your press release layout, you can reuse it for each release you send out during the school year.

LET THE PROFESSIONALS HANDLE IT

Chris Nguyen's article has some good tips about writing press releases. The better shape your release is in when it leaves your hands, the greater your chances of getting published. Journalists may not always have time to do extra legwork on an article, especially at a local paper with a small staff. So if your release is written like a news article to begin with, a reporter who is up against a deadline may decide to run your PR basically verbatim rather than selecting another article that needs more time and attention.

Having said that, though, we should say that you don't have to write Pulitzer Prize-winning copy to get published, so don't let any perceived lack of writing ability in your chapter stop you from trying to generate publicity through the news media. You still have two choices: Find someone else to review your chapter's press releases before you send them—a journalism or English teacher might be willing to pitch in here—or do your best and rely on reporters to make it sound good in the end. Just make sure your press release has two things: (1) all the most pertinent facts (who, what, where, when, why and how) about whatever it is you're publicizing; and (2) contact information so journalists can get more information if they need it.



Competition and scholarship winners at the 2001 ICDC.



How to ... Gain Recognition for Your Hard Work

By Chris Nguyen, 2003–2004 Western Region Vice President, High School Division

If you've ever been upset because the local paper put the spotlight on the school play but didn't run a story on your chapter's charity work, then you need to start getting the word out. How? Get recognized! Start sending out press releases about your chapter. Don't know how to write a press release? Follow these tips.

BE A CONFORMIST

Publicists use very specific formats for press releases. Using a standard format not only simplifies your job but also makes it easier for reporters to use what you wrote.

To start, develop letterhead to use for all your PR. Use either standard letter size or legal paper. Letter size is better for faxed releases.

Although styles vary, your letterhead should contain the name of your chapter, the school address, your advisor's phone number at school and ways reporters can reach you, such as a fax number and your e-mail address. This goes at the top left. The words "News Release," "Press Release" or something similar go at the top right.

Underneath the contact information, put "For Immediate Release" and today's date. If you don't want the newspaper to print your news right away, write "For Release on" instead and add the date when it will be okay to publish. Try to stick with "For Immediate Release" if you can.

On the right margin of the same line as the release date, type "For more information, contact" and the name of the person who will be available to answer questions.

TURN IT UPSIDE DOWN

Now comes the text. A good press release is written as an "inverted triangle"—you begin with the most important information, the next paragraph contains slightly less important information, and so on until the end. Details should be in the middle paragraphs and below, to be used as background and filler.

Press releases are designed to transmit facts, so express opinions by quoting someone in your group. Clearly state who is being quoted and what relationship they have to your chapter.

Mark the end of the release by typing "###" on the first blank line after your text is completed. That way journalists who receive it will know they're not missing pages.

If your release goes over one page, type "more" at the bottom of the first page. Then retype the title and the date on page 2.

10 MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. Don't forget that it's the journalists who receive your release who decide if it will be published. They want stories that look like news articles. Your release will be more appealing if it has a short, simple headline and an opening (or "lead") paragraph that sums up the most important point.

2. Don't get fancy. Reporters and readers appreciate plain language. Avoid the temptation to use "fluffy" language to make your news sound important. Be real!

3. Create a standard description of DECA and of your chapter to use in every release you write. Either work these descriptions into the body of the release or put them in a separate paragraph at the end, after the ###.

4. Have something to say. To call attention to your accomplishments, confine your publicity efforts to issues of substance. You need to have "news" to justify the release.

5. Don't beat around the bush. Make sure your first one or two paragraphs contain your key points because that may be all that the newspaper has room to print.

6. Don't leave journalists clueless. They may have questions, so designate a contact person who can discuss the story and your chapter. Include contact information.

7. Don't forget your ultimate audience. While you're sending the release to journalists, their readers are your ultimate target. Pick publications whose readers would be most interested in your message. Think about what would be important to them and highlight that angle in your release.

8. Get a second opinion. Have someone else read the release before you send it out. If they believe some issues need clarification, revise accordingly. Great resources include your DECA advisor, your English teacher, a journalism teacher or the school paper's advisor.

9. Watch for jargon. Will readers be familiar with terms such as "civic consciousness" or "social intelligence"? Will they understand the significance of the volunteer work your chapter does? If not, explain.

10. Don't underestimate your accomplishments. Publications are happy to publish stories about meaningful events, so don't hesitate to distribute press releases about chapter activities and members' accomplishments. You should also send PR about fund-raising events ahead of time; the publicity could help bring in donations.

Where:

WHERE DO THEY GO?

When you and your chapter members sit down to create a list of people and organizations to send press releases to, you may be surprised at how long your final list is. It may include

- The editor of your school paper
- School administrators
- Guidance counselors (if you want them to encourage students to join your chapter)
- The school board
- A reporter or editor at each paper read locally
- A reporter or editor at TV stations with local news broadcasts
- The news editor at any radio stations with local news broadcasts
- Web sites that feature local news or community calendars
- All professional members of your chapters
- Businesses that support your chapter in some way (or businesses that you would like to support your chapter)
- Local affiliates of the DECA National Advisory Board that you partner with or would like to partner with
- Local associations or organizations that might be interested in marketing education news (this may include marketing or sales associations, the Chamber of Commerce and other business groups)
- Alumni who still interact with your chapter
- Your state/provincial advisor
- DECA's *Dimensions* magazine

National news media won't normally be on your mailing list—*BusinessWeek* and *The Wall Street Journal* aren't going to write about the average high school fund-raiser. But you may occasionally come up with an idea for an interesting news story that does have appeal beyond your local community.

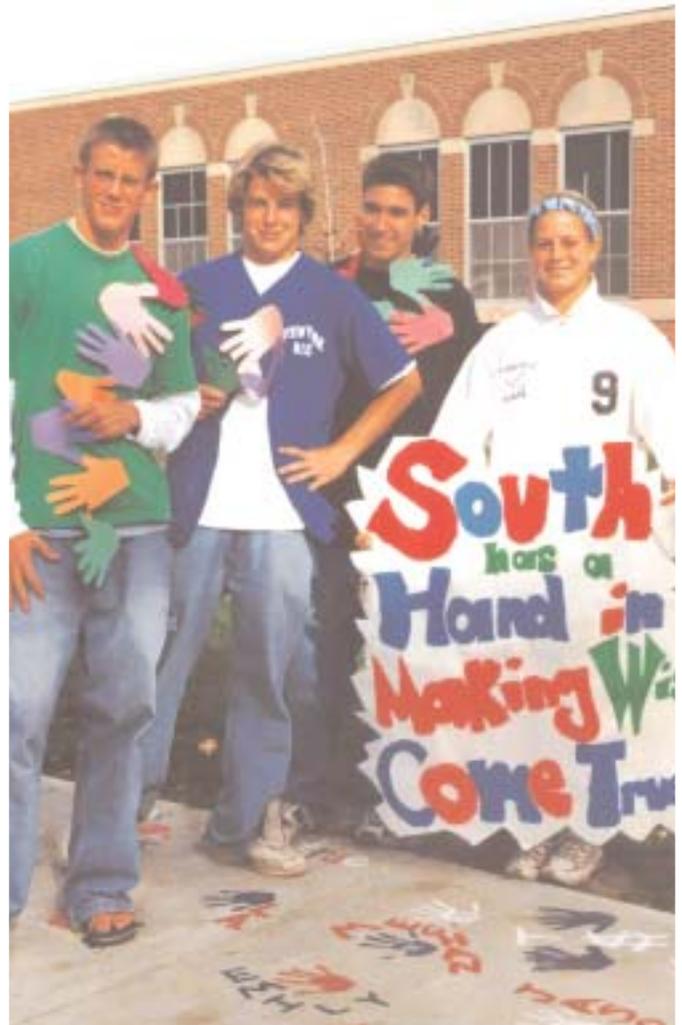
E-MAIL, FAX OR MAIL?

Regular mail is still the default method for sending out press releases, although e-mail releases have gained in popularity in the last couple of years. The advantage with e-mail (besides saving you postage) is that journalists can use your story without having to retype the whole thing. The disadvantage is that your message may get overlooked in a flood of spam mail.

The best thing to do is to contact the newspapers, TV stations and radio stations on your media list to find out who you should send your news releases to; while you're on the phone, ask whether you should use fax, mail or e-mail. Many papers and stations have contact information on the Internet; if they do, it usually also mentions what the preferred submission method is. It's still a good idea to call the paper or station to verify the information; Web sites aren't always kept completely up to date, and you can use this as an opportunity to start developing ongoing relationships with reporters.

If you e-mail a press release, type it right in the body of the e-mail message itself. Do not send it as an attached document. With all the computer viruses and worms around these days, many people are leery of opening attachments.

Work on ways to develop relationships with reporters and editors. Someone who knows you and knows the kinds of work your chapter does will be more receptive to receiving press releases than a person you contact out of the blue would be.



Press Release Contact List

Use this worksheet to decide where to send your press releases. Remember to update the list periodically (perhaps once every school year) to make sure the contact names and addresses haven't changed.

Contact name	Company name	Mailing address	Phone/Fax	E-mail	Preferred format
Newspapers (your school paper, and local and regional newspapers)					
Other media (radio and TV stations, community Web sites)					
School administration (principal, school board, guidance counselors)					
Professional and alumni members					
Local businesses and National Advisory Board affiliates					
Local associations and organizations (business, marketing or sales associations, the Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations)					
DECA contacts (your state/provincial advisor and <i>Dimensions</i> magazine)					
Publications Dept.	DECA Dimensions	1908 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191	(703) 860-5000, x231 fax (703) 860-4013	deca_dimensions@ deca.org	mail, fax or e-mail news, send actual photos (photos sent by e-mail must be high-resolution files)

When:

BEFORE OR AFTER?

WHEN TO SEND PRESS RELEASES

When should your chapter send out press releases? That depends on what you want to accomplish.

If your goal is to gain support for a chapter activity—to get more donations for a fund-raiser or to increase turnout at an event—send press releases out before the event. For a weekly paper, consider sending your PR out a month ahead of time. At the very least, try to give the paper two weeks. That way if a reporter wants to get more information to write an article, he or she will have time to do the job right.

If you're sending out press releases after a chapter activity, try not to wait too long. A month isn't too late if you're contacting the school board, but for news media, sooner is better. Sending a press release out in the first week or two after an event increases the odds that newspapers will pick up the story.

FOLLOWING UP

As part of developing ongoing relationships with journalists, make it a habit to follow up on press releases. Assign someone in your chapter to make a quick call to reporters to see if they received the release. You do not need to call everyone on your mailing list—just the reporters who might have additional questions (and whom you might nudge to write an article about your chapter).

Eight Tips to Help You Prepare for a Media Interview

If your chapter generates enough interest, you might find yourself or a chapter member being asked to sit for an interview with a local reporter or TV show. If that happens, make sure you're prepared to deal with it.

By FeatureSource

"Being interviewed by the media is a performance. The very thought may make you nervous. Before you're interviewed, know exactly what you want to say," says Rick Frishman, co-author of *Guerrilla Publicity*.

Rick insists that all his clients at Planned TV Arts, a New York public relations firm, undergo preparation and training before they're interviewed. "No director," he points out, "would send an untrained, unrehearsed actor on stage—and in PR, we're the directors and our clients are the actors. Our clients must know their lines and how to deliver them or the audience will get up and leave."

In his book, *Guerrilla Publicity*, Frishman and his co-authors Jill Lublin and Jay Conrad Levinson share their best advice on how to prepare for a media interview:

- Write down the five main points you want to cover.
- List anecdotes, facts or jokes that help you make each point effectively.
- Anticipate the questions interviewers are likely to ask and prepare answers that include your main points. It helps to study the host's prior interviews to find his/her favorite questions and approaches so you'll know what to expect and how to respond.
- Keep answers and explanations simple. Complex information tends to lose or bore interviewers and audiences.
- Never try to steal the limelight from the host or interviewer. Your job is to make them look good, while getting your main points across.
- Practice by having friends and family pretend they're the interviewer and question you.
- When you practice, videotape yourself or stand in front of a mirror to observe your performance. Be conscious of your posture, facial expressions and gestures. Ask your practice interviewer to honestly appraise your performance.
- When friends and family aren't available to help you practice, interview yourself aloud.

"I love it when media producers call me after a client has been interviewed and compliment the client's delivery and content. Not surprisingly, the clients who perform most effectively are the ones who have used or practiced our *Guerrilla Publicity* tactics—over and over and over."





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