World Eye Cancer Hope
life and sight for every child

Media Relations Guide

Attracting the media can be a challenge in this competitive media age, and effort should be put into contacting the media, to ensure maximum chance of exposure.

This practical guide to media relations will help you inform and educate the press about your fundraiser, and achieve beneficial editorial coverage of your event and the work of WE C HOPE.

This Media Toolkit contains:

- This introductory guide to Media Relations
- A beginners guide to news release writing
- A guide to verbal media communication and interviews.
- A sample news release, and template.
- A guide to photocall notices.
- Tips for community calendar listings

An introduction to Media Relations

Positive media relations are vital to the reputation of World Eye Cancer Hope. This enables us to maintain and enhance our status as a caring global organization, committed to the welfare of all individuals and families affected by childhood eye cancer. When approached and influenced correctly, the media can be a great ally.

Good media relations help to:

- raise awareness of retinoblastoma and it's early signs, therefore increasing opportunities for early diagnosis and referral;
- expose the plight of affected children around the world;
- educate about he vital work of World Eye Cancer Hope.
- Increase awareness of your fundraising event
- expand support for your event and World Eye Cancer Hope.

Editorial content: all non-advertising material in newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and other media formats is known as editorial content. This is considered to have more credibility than paid-for advertising space, because it is written by independent, and therefore impartial, journalists.

Editorial coverage of your fundraiser, prior to the event itself, can boost in kind donations, attendance on the day, and other support. Most importantly, your event provides an excellent opportunity for local media coverage of retinoblastoma, helping to broaden the reach of our life- and sight-saving public awareness program.

The Purpose of the Media: Good coverage of your event in the media can be very beneficial. However, it is no the job of the media to convey the information you wish to impart. The media exists to inform and entertain varied target audiences, and to

share information that it believes will be of interest to those audiences. If promotion of an event or organization occurs as a by-product of that coverage, great, but that is not the purpose of media coverage.

This is one of the most frequent misunderstandings about the media. Success in your mission of promoting WE C HOPE and your event requires you to take an outsider's view of your "story".

Do not assume the media will cover your event simply because you are raising funds for a good cause, or because you believe they should educate about eye cancer in children. You must present this information as part of a story, giving it relevant angle or "hook" that will capture the interest of a reader, viewer or listener.

Remember our pneumonic to RAISE good media relations:

Research: gather info about WE C HOPE, identify your target audiences and media.

Action Plan: develop your strategy.

Implement: put your plan into action.

Stay tuned: keep track of your communications with the media, and follow up.

Evaluate: following your event, assess the effectiveness of your media plan .

Research

Know our work and our website. Familiarity with retinoblastoma facts and the work of WE C HOPE is vital to the success of your media relations action plan. You may need to provide information at short notice, so read through the facts sheets and leaflets in this pack and keep them handy for reference. Knowing the layout of our website will enable you to quickly locate additional information, or efficiently direct a reporter who is asking for it. www.daisyfund.org

Determine your target audience. Who do you want to reach through the media? Consider the type of event you are hosting: will it be held in a residential community or a commercial district? Is it part of another event, such as farmer's market? Then think about the people who are most likely to attend (will they be families, shoppers, business people?), and how you can present your message so that it is relevant to them (why should they care? What will grab their attention?). You will need answers to these questions in order to identify relevant media outlets.

Identify your target media. There are many varied opportunities for editorial coverage. For example, regional, town or neighbourhood newspapers and magazines, local and regional radio and television stations, specialized media (such as baby and child, health or education publications). Choose your target media outlets carefully, based on what you know about your target audiences.

Gather contact information. Use the internet to search for relevant local, regional and national media outlets. For example, you could google "Oxford England radio" Most media outlets will have a contacts page, containing departments, postal and email addresses, telephone and fax numbers. Your local library will also be a good source of information for media contacts.

Utilise any contacts you already have in the local media. A journalist who knows you, who perhaps has run a good story from you in the past, is more likely to be receptive a provide positive coverage than one who does not know you. You have already proved you will not waste their time, but are someone who understands the way they work and what they are interested in.

Compile a list of contacts who may have special interest in your story. For example, general newsdesks, specific journalists and community affairs or calendar listing editors. Metro and national publications and radio stations usually have specialist reporters or editors, covering areas like health, education, children or philanthropy.

Call the contacts on your list to verify current details and specific contact names. Establish how each individual or department prefers to receive communiqués (email, regular mail etc), and if they have a set format (such as for community listings)

Identify established opportunities. Linking your fundraiser with an established event is likely to promote the news value of your individual story. Find out if there is an established event happening at the same time as your own, through which you can highlight your efforts, retinoblastoma and the work of WE C HOPE. For example:

- International Cancer Day (Feb 4)
- World Childhood Cancer Day (Feb 15)
- World Retinoblastoma Awareness Week (begins 2nd Sunday in May)
- Eye Health Month (May)
- Childhood Cancer Month (September)
- World Sight Day (2nd Thursday in October)

Create an information folder: This is for your personal reference, and you will add to it as you develop and implement your action plan. If you are storing some of this information in electronic format, keep it together in one folder on your computer, and ues clear names for each file. Keep all print documents together in one organized folder, so that you can locate them easily.

Your folder should contain the following:

- **Your media list:** for quick and easy access to all your media contacts.
- **WE C HOPE background information:** such as our mission and factsheets.
- **Your developed communiqués:** news releases and/or letters to the editor.
- **Photographs:** pictures of the common white pupil sign of retinoblastoma.
- **Your Action Plan:** You will develop this in the next step.
- **Communication records and notes:** You will develop these extensively during the implementation and follow up process.

Action Plan

Once you have established your target audience, compiled a list of media sources, and initiated your press pack, develop an action plan for contacting the media.

Finding your story: There are numerous opportunities for editorial coverage - news stories, features, letters to the editor, etc. However, you must be aware that media outlets receive a high quantity of information every day. So it is vital that you assess the value and strength of your story before approaching the media.

To capture the interest of a reporter, news editor or producer, your story must:

- have local news value
- emphasize a local human interest angle
- be backed up by easily substantiated facts and figures that are locally relevant
- be supported by a strong quote from a WE C HOPE spokesperson.

You have a story to tell about why you are supporting World Eye Cancer Hope. Are you a survivor of retinoblastoma, or the relative of a child affected by retinoblastoma or another cancer? Are you a school group who knows an affected child? Maybe you don't know anyone affected by cancer, but you have been Inspired by Daisy and Rati, and the desperate need to help children like them around the world. Be willing to share your story with the media, as it will create a strong human interest angle, and create a powerful local connection to the international story of WE C HOPE.

Consider how your story will interest commuters reading the paper on the train or listening to the car radio, or parents watching the tea-time news A useful exercise is to imagine how would you explain your story to these people If you were to meet them in an elevator, remembering they probably don't have any prior knowledge of childhood eye cancer, and probably haven't thought about how children with cancer are cared for in developing countries.

Write a News Release: This is a short communiqué, concisely presenting your potential news story, its relevance and value. This is the principle media relations tool, and as a result, media outlets receive hundreds of press releases every week. Busy journalises typically spend less than 10 seconds skimming through the first paragraph of a news release, so if it does not capture their interest right away, it will rapidly find its way into the waste paper basket. When you know how, writing effective news releases is not difficult. This toolkit contains a simple template and detailed guide to writing savvy news releases that gain results.

Create a Press Pack: This simple folder contains your news release, background information about World Eye Cancer Hope, and a "white pupil" photograph.

- **World Eye Cancer Hope background information:** You should attach "background Information" documents to any communiqué, including our mission, key facts about retinoblastoma and WE C HOPE. This information can be found on the printable fact sheets included in this media toolkit.
- **Photographs:** The characteristic white pupil of retinoblastoma creates an especially powerful image. The media is more likely to cover your event if they have seen such a picture and clearly understand its significance in saving sight and life. The best format is a high resolution jpg file. If you include a file on disk with a pack sent through regular mail, do also send a hard copy for immediate impact – but remember that hard copies may not be returned, so don't send precious originals. If you are telling your own story of retinoblastoma, include a picture of your child/family. We can provide you with high resolution "white eye" photographs.

Letters to the Editor

A brief letter to the Editor is a good way of highlighting your event when it is to be held in conjunction with an established event, such as those listed above. Focus on one main aspect of the established event, or retinoblastoma itself. Bare in mind that the publication reserves the right to edit, so the more succinct you are, the less likely your letter is to be cropped. Keep your letter below 250 words.

Letters to the Editor are usually only relevant for one or two days. However, if time allows, send us a copy before submitting it to the editor, so that we can provide any advice to maximise your chances of gaining the editor's full consideration.

Included with your letter, consider offering the editor the chance of receiving an article on WE C HOPE. Articles are an important tool for establishing the support

and information WE C HOPE can provide, which is of particular interest to undiagnosed children and referring family physicians. If the editor is interested and would take a pre-written article, make sure you have established appropriate "angles" and word counts, before you get in touch with us.

Consider timing

Before telephoning a media outlet, or sending in your news release, think about the best time to contact them. Certain times of day, and days of the week, are better than others. Also, you must leave sufficient time between sending your news release and the event itself, allowing journalists to gather background information and do interviews, so your story gains full consideration.

- The quietest time in a newsroom is between 10.30-11.30am
- Avoid calling after 2pm as journalists are working to a deadline at this point.
- Never call between 4-7pm, for the same reason.
- The newsroom of a daily newspaper is likely to be quieter on a Sunday.
- Do not contact a weekly paper the day before publication.
- Do not contact a Sunday paper journalist on a Monday – that's their day off.
- Establish deadlines, as everyone has different guidelines for submitting press releases. Use the following only as a general guide.

For editorial content in print media, send a press release 2-3 weeks before the event.

For editorial content on TV or radio, send a press release 5-7 days before the event.

For listing in daily publications, send your information 2-3 weeks before the event.

For listing in weekly publications, send your information one month before the event.

To enable optimal media support from WE C HOPE, please communicate with us at least one month ahead of your event.

In House Media Relations

If you are planning a fundraising event at your place of work, your best option is to utilise the support of an in-house press office or public relations department. These people work with the press every day, and are likely to have good relationships with members of the local press.

When speaking with the press/PR office, be prepared with information about retinoblastoma, your planned fundraiser, and any personal story that motivates your support of WE C HOPE. Providing a draft Press Release will help significantly, but always check with the office as to what materials they need.

Implement Your Action Plan

Now that you have a clear action plan to work with, you are ready to make your pitch to the media. In addition to the following tips, please refer to our "talking to the press" guide for advice.

Respect deadlines: submit information according to the deadlines you confirmed in your action plan, so that reporters have enough time to work on your story.

Send to a named person: You will have located this information in the research phase. If you do not have the name of a specific person, address your news release to a job title such as the News Editor, Picture Editor or Health Correspondent.

Use preferred formats for receiving information: each reporter is different. Refer to your notes to remind yourself if they prefer email, regular mail, or fax.

Offer supporting material: anticipate questions, and save the journalist research time by offering background information documents from your press kit (developed at the research stage).

Be professional: let journalists know that you are submitting your press release to other media sources.

Build relationships: make journalists feel they are welcome to contact you for further information, or to ask more questions. Remember that, in building a good story, they need your help as much as you need theirs.

Stay Tuned

Make follow-up calls: call each reporter within a few days of sending your initial press release, to confirm that it has been received by the right person. Ask if the reporter has any questions, or if they require further information. This follow-up call will establish a dialogue between you and the reporter, and this is crucial to gaining the media coverage you desire. Avoid calling a newspaper after 2:00pm, as many journalists will be working to a deadline after this point.

Keep track of all media communications: Record the following information in an excel spreadsheet, word document or note book, so that you have all the relevant information in one place. You can then easily assess what has already been done, and know what is still required.

- Media type (print, tv station etc)
- Media name
- Contact Person
- Address
- Email
- Phone and fax
- Follow-up contact details
- Comments

Status of communication – in this section, include:

- o dates and times of all telephone calls made and emails/letters sent
- o who you spoke to/sent mail to,
- o if your communiqué was passed to someone els (who?)
- o any agreed actions (call back, send info to… etc).

Evaluate Your Media Relations

When you evaluate your event, consider the success of your media relations.

- Did your action plan achieve the results you hoped for?.
- Was your strategy?
- What worked well for your event?
- What could have been done better
- What did not work well at all?
- How could you improve your media kit for future use?
- How can we improve this media toolkit for other supporters.
- Please do also share with us the media coverage you received!