How to Share Your Local Auxiliary Story Ideas and Events with Local Media
How Does Your Auxiliary Promote Itself in Your Community?

- Newspapers
- Radio
- TV
- Fliers
- Facebook/Twitter/Instagram
What’s NOT Newsworthy?

- Your meetings.
- Who was elected to various positions in your Local Auxiliary.
- When you are having a spaghetti dinner, Bingo nights, etc.

These are all good Calendar of Event, Local Tidbit items, etc. **NOT Feature Stories.**
Before you contact anyone to cover an event your Auxiliary is hosting or participating in, answer the following questions:

- Are local people involved? (yes or no)
- Is the event happening in the near future - within the next month? (yes or no)
- Will non-members be interested in attending or hearing about the event? (yes or no)
- Will the event help the local community? (yes or no) If yes, how? (describe)
- Is the activity or event unique? (yes or no)
- Does the activity or event promote a new idea or concept? (yes or no)
What is Newsworthy?

- Events hosted by an Auxiliary at a VA facility.
- Decorating graves for Veterans Day and Memorial Day; participating in Wreaths Across America.
- Assisting families of deployed troops (Hosting holiday events, i.e. Christmas parties, Easter Egg hunts, Trick-or-Treat events, offering financial assistance, etc.)
- Adopting a Unit through the VFW’s Veteran and Military Support Program.
- Collecting supplies for deployed troops.
- Meeting troops at the airport as they return from deployment and helping them complete their journey home.
What is Newsworthy?

- Members and youth who are participating in a “Buddy”® Poppy Drive or POW/MIA remembrance ceremony.
- Scholarship winners such as the winner of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest.
- Flag presentations to community groups.
- Publicizing what your Auxiliary has done to help natural disaster victims.
- National President’s Visit.
- Repairs on a Veteran’s Home/Building a Wheelchair Ramp/etc.
- Walks/Runs/Events to raise awareness/funds for Veteran Issues/PTSD.
Something to Note

- While we encourage you to share events/activities that are hosted jointly with the VFW, we are really interested in what your Auxiliary is doing in your community!

- While our mission is to support veterans, active-duty military and their families, we are two separate organizations.

- This is applicable for the National VFW Auxiliary Magazine and Facebook page as well as other media.
Once you decide something is newsworthy, how do you get it covered by news media?
How to Get Your Event Covered

- Introduce yourself and the organization to members of the media.
- Submit news releases to the media on a regular basis (i.e. monthly).
- Contact the media when something unique or unexpected happens.
- Be the contact person the media calls to get information related to the VFW Auxiliary and its area of expertise.
- Maintain contact via email with various TV stations, newspapers and other publications.
- Recognize media who have published articles by giving them a Communications Award, available free from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters website.
- Be excited about all your activities, events and programs.
Who to Contact

- At the weekly newspaper, ask for the Editor.
- At the daily newspaper, ask for the City or Metro Editor, or the Editor or columnist for the section or column where you want your article to run.
- At radio stations, ask for the News Director, if it is newsworthy; Program Director, for a talk show or the calendar.
- At TV stations, ask for the News Director or Assignment Editor if you want the station to cover an event.
- For a TV talk show, ask for the Program Director or the Producer of the show.
- If you don’t know whom to contact, ask the person answering the phone.
- Keep a list of contacts at local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations.
Suggested Media Contact Timeline

One-Two Months Prior
- Call and email to secure public service time on TV or radio.
- Call and email to arrange interviews on TV or radio talk shows.
- Email to be included on TV or newspaper community calendars.

Two Weeks Prior
- Email news release to newspapers, TV and radio. Mention if there will be a photo or video opportunity.

One Week Prior
- Email second release and Fact Sheet to Assignment Editors at TV and radio stations to encourage them to cover the event. Mention if there will be a photo or video opportunity.

Three-Five Days Prior
- Follow-up phone calls and emails to Assignment Editors at TV/radio and Editors at newspapers to see if someone will cover the event. Only do this if it is really an important event, and if there is something that is particularly newsworthy about it. Mention if there will be a photo or video opportunity.
Press Releases: What to Include

Contact Information

- Who can this reporter follow up with? Don’t forget to include a contact(s) name, email address and phone number.
- This typically appears at the top of the page above the headline.

Headline Tips

- Keep it Short
- Use Active Voice
- Avoid Jargon
- Write it Last
Press Releases: What to Include

First sentence: Get Their Attention!

When you read a book or article, isn’t a good beginning what keeps you reading? The same holds true for a press release or subject line in an email when you’re pitching your idea to the press. Make this first sentence or email subject interesting and factual.
Press Releases: What to Include

First Paragraph: Be Concise and Get to the Point

Always include the who, what, where, when and why

- **Who** – Who are you talking about? Can you include a quote from them?
- **What** – What is the event or activity?
- **Where/When** – Where and when can the reporter cover this story?
- **Why** – Why would the reporter want to cover this? How is it interesting or unique?
Press Releases: What to Include

Supporting Information

- A good release will be no longer than one page at best and a page and a half at most. Reporters scan most releases. **Less is more! Make sure you’ve included all of the important whos, whats, wheres, whens and whys.**

- Spellcheck, proofread and ask a friend to take a look!

- Provide relevant links to your website or Facebook page, a copy of the National Facts Leaflet and the National Elevator Speech where writers can learn more about your mission and what you’ve already accomplished.

- Is this a story and a photo opportunity? Say so! Include a line at the top of the release like: Photo opportunity: *(Tell the news outlet about the photo opportunity here).*

- Getting a photograph with caption information is still great publicity!
You Received Coverage. **Now What?**

- Write a thank you note and/or email to the person who covered the activity/event. If they did a great job, copy their supervisor/boss on the email.
- If photos were taken at the event, ask for them to be emailed to you or the appropriate person at your Auxiliary.
- Obtain the online link to the newspaper story or television/radio interview and post it to your Auxiliary’s website and/or Facebook page.
- Email the online link to the newspaper story or television/radio interview to your Department President and National Headquarters. If you received photos, email those as well.
- Print out a copy of the story for your Auxiliary’s Historian.