



MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT: USE THE MEDIA!

**Information and tools for FNL programs
and projects to understand, access,
and leverage the media.**

GET COVERED!

July 2007

**Funding for this project was provided by a grant from
the California Office of Traffic Safety, through
the National Highway Traffic Safety Association.**



DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
www.yli.org

This document was produced by the Youth Leadership Institute, July 2007.

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION----- 1
 WHO THIS IS FOR----- 1
 WHY MEDIA? ----- 2

GETTING STARTED ----- 3
 IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES----- 3
 UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA----- 5

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS ----- 8
 RESEARCH AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS----- 8
 CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE----- 9
 MEDIA BITES! ----- 11

IN ACTION: THE 411 ON DIFFERENT MEDIA TOOLS ----- 13
 MEDIA ADVISORY ----- 13
 PRESS RELEASE ----- 14
 LETTER TO THE EDITOR ----- 15
 INTERVIEWS ----- 16
 OPINION OR EDITORIAL ----- 17

TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES ----- 18

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES----- 26

RESOURCES----- 27

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

INTRODUCTION

Use Media To Maximize Your Impact! We often forget that media can be really helpful to our projects and campaigns. While learning how to access and use media takes some effort, the rewards are worth it: successful use of the media can help your project have a greater and more lasting impact.

Who This Is For

This media toolkit is intended for Friday Night Live Coordinators and the young people they are working with on Taking Teen Leadership Institute Home projects, Kids Buckle Up to Save Lives Too, and Every 15 Minutes and Beyond.

The purpose of the toolkit is to provide you with basic sample media tools and instruction that will assist you in obtaining media coverage to highlight your OTS funded projects.

You'll also find some ideas and strategies about how to engage parents as supporters or active participants in your projects and campaigns.

Working with the media can be tricky and frustrating at times. We may not often think of using the media because it seems too burdensome or intimidating or because we think nothing will come of our efforts. Hopefully, these tools will demystify the process of working with the media, and make it easier for you to identify appropriate media opportunities, engage youth as leaders in your efforts, garner coverage, and disseminate newsworthy information.

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

Why Media?

Whether you are working with elementary students or high school students, using media is a great way to increase the visibility of your project in the community, draw attention to the issue, engage new partners, and provide leadership and skill-building opportunities for young people.

Media is influential because it shares what is going on now and dictates what we should pay attention to as viewers and as a community. It helps us form opinions about current events, issues and people in our communities, what to do and what not to do. *Most importantly, media can reach a broad audience with speed.*

Media can help you:

- ★ Create community support about your project or issue
 - ★ Develop youth as spokespeople
 - ★ Put a new perspective on an old message
 - ★ Highlight youth leadership
 - ★ Attract new partner
-
- ★ **And all of the above can help you achieve your project goals!**

GETTING STARTED

Identify Opportunities

First you need to identify the key opportunities to use media in your project or traffic safety campaign. Whether you are working on a community campaign or school-based project, with students or parents, there are always opportunities to leverage media in order to highlight your project, the people involved, and the impact you are having on the community. Below are some ideas for your campaign:

- ★ **Project Kick-Off**–Haven't even begun? Host a project kick-off and invite the media. This is an opportune time to educate the community or school about your project, get new people involved or recruited, invite your partners, and build relationships with your local media contacts early on.
- ★ **Research/Recommendation Release**–Have you, parents, youth leaders, or others collected data or done local research for your project? Results from public opinion surveys, interviews, community mapping, and other data collection efforts are good pieces of information to share with the media and public. Host a press conference or open meeting to share your research findings with the public.
- ★ **Highlight Youth Leaders**–Media is an excellent tool for highlighting youth leadership within the project. Youth are too often covered in the news for negative reasons. Media coverage of your work will provide an opportunity to recognize youth for their leadership, educate the community about the positive things young people are doing, and provide skill-building opportunities for participants. Whether it's a school poster campaign about seat belt safety or youth advocates speaking at a local City Council meeting, media will want to cover stories involving young people's leadership.
- ★ **Be An Expert**–Did something happen in your community that connects to what you are working on? For example, did law enforcement conduct DUI checkpoints over a weekend? Did a local alcohol policy pass in your community? Is it a high traffic holiday weekend? You don't have to wait for the media to contact you, call them or send a press release first to tell them your expert thoughts and opinions on the issue at hand. Get involved in the public conversation!

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

Make It Newsworthy!

The best way to increase the likelihood that your story will be covered is to make sure it's NEWSWORTHY. From the media's perspective, a story is "newsworthy" when it has all the elements of a good story. So who decides what makes a good story? Using a set of criteria (listed below), a news editor decides if a prospective story, letter or article is worth running. Your job is to convince the news editor that your story fits their criteria. Knowing current events, trends, research, what's of current concern in the news or community, will help you frame your story in the right way to get the coverage you want. Of course, there might be many "newsworthy" stories to choose from in one day and the editor has to pick and choose between them. Be patient, and if your story isn't time-sensitive, keep in contact with the news editor to encourage him or her to run your story on a different day.

Newsworthy: The Criteria

Make sure your story fits well into at least a few of the following criteria; the more the better!

- ★ Is your story relevant to the community?
- ★ Do you have a news "hook" to draw the reader in?
- ★ Does your story use current events or research? Statistics?
- ★ Who and how many people are impacted by the problem?
- ★ Do you have a human face to your story? Quotes?
- ★ Does your issue have conflict or opposition?

Understanding the Media

First, it's important to recognize the different types of media, particularly in today's electronic culture. Using different formats of media may allow you to reach varying audiences with your message. Depending on the message, you may want to utilize appropriate media outlets for different messages.

Second, understanding the background and pressures of each will help you plan and approach the most appropriate media outlets. Below is a list of the most common media forms: news radio; television; Internet news; newspapers; and magazines and newsletters.

NEWS RADIO

- ★ Speed
- ★ Sound
- ★ Concise
- ★ Generalists

Background:

- Reporters have limited knowledge of particular fields
- Generally first place for breaking news
- Staff contacts may change often
- Looking for brief overview of story
- 15 minute interview usually translates to one or two sentence quote

Pressures:

- Lifeblood is breaking news
- Can react faster than any other media
- Limited time to tell story
- Looking for quote to wrap around story
- Need immediate response (5-15 minutes)

INTERNET NEWS

(Web Pages, Online Magazines, Chat Rooms)

- ★ Depth
- ★ Multiple sources
- ★ Localized
- ★ Images

Background:

- Limited reliability and authority
- Largely rely on secondhand reporting
- Can be hobby-based or commercial/professional
- News is kept alive for a long time

Pressures:

- Desperate for insider information, reliability is secondary
- Comfortable with "unquote source"

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

TELEVISION & CABLE NEWS

- ★ Images
- ★ Speed
- ★ Generalists
- ★ Entertainment

Background:

- Reporters have limited knowledge of particular fields
- Anchors are stationary in studio, reporters change often
- Looking for brief overview of story with graphics, no detail
- Sound bites sell
- Expect you to be able to condense a story down to two sentences

Pressures:

- Based on breaking news
- Limited time to tell a story
- Story must have strong visuals
- Action is important
- Need immediate response (30 to 60 minutes)

NEWSPAPERS

(Web Pages, Online Magazines, Chat Rooms)

- ★ Depth
- ★ Multiple sources
- ★ Localized
- ★ Images

Background:

- Staff reporters move on regularly
- Regional spin on news is CRITICAL (local spokesperson, angle, and location are valuable)
- Looking for in-depth information
- Generally develop original news stories
- Strong new angles, except with specialty editors (food, lifestyle, entertainment)
- Beat Reporter-a reporter who covers a few specific subjects; more rare
- General Reporter-most common, often cover a wide range of topics in the course of a reporting day.

Pressures:

- Completely based on comprehensive coverage of news
- Average reporter will cover three stories a day
- Deadlines are absolute
- Looking for several stories, prefer to quote outside sources for validation/authenticity
- Always following trends and looking for a local angle
- Need quick response (2-4 hours)

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

MAGAZINES & NEWSLETTERS

- ★ Depth
- ★ Images
- ★ Timeless angle

Background:

- Very specialized
- Completely based on the ability to provide in-depth coverage to specific audience
- Rely on a broad field of freelancers
- Reporters have very strong understanding of area they are covering
- Looking for complete story: charts, photos, several interview sources, background
- Often do roundups—several angles tied into a single story
- Hard to find and contact freelancers since they don't work at the publication
- Demand comprehensive knowledge of field, people and vocabulary
- Limited circulation, usually read by a small but often influential group of people

Pressures:

- Timeliness is less important than comprehensiveness
- Average freelancer will write seven stories a month
- Deadlines are often flexible
- Need reliable sources willing to provide “big picture” for their story
- Always following trends and looking for angle pertinent to specific audience
- Expect you to know what they have written in past

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

Research and Build Relationships

Do some research, and find out which news outlets and reporters consistently cover local human-interest stories, or issues related to policy, youth, education, health, and any other issues relevant to your work. This will tell you WHO you need to know and with whom to connect. Find out what has been covered recently. If there is a current story in the news that is related to something you are doing, an editor might see running a story on your work as a great way to provide more in depth information to her audience. And remember that reporters are waiting for **you** to give them the information they need. It's often up to you to let them know what's going on in the community and to tell them why it's important. They can't cover everything, and they aren't the ones with the information: you are. It's all about relationships with the media: creating and maintaining. There are opportunities to contact members of the media and build relationships with them even when you don't have a specific event or story for them to report on. Don't be afraid to contact the media and capitalize on different ways to share your message:

- Share information about your organization and what you do.
- Comment on how a national issue impacts your community.
- Comment on how a current event relates to your issue.
- Let them respectfully know they left out an important perspective (your group's) in their last coverage of a traffic safety or alcohol problem (or other issue related to your work).

Build a media contact list to help you organize and track your media contacts and any coverage you receive. Find out the numbers, emails and websites of the media contacts relevant to your story. You can obtain this information in your local phonebook or on the internet. Get the deadlines for submitting stories. Call the editors, introduce yourself and your organization, and ask about their deadlines and how they like to receive news. Most importantly, keep your media log updated with new contacts. Make sure to include community newspapers that target a specific community: geographic, ethnically focused, or age focused, etc.

For each media contact, you should have:

- Name
- News type
- Areas of interest
- Phone number and fax
- Address, email/website
- Deadline dates

See the next page for a sample media log.

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

Sample Media Log

Media Outlet	Contact	News Type	Areas of Interest	Deadlines	Phone and Fax	Address	Website	Recent Coverage
Pacific Daily Journal	Sarah Ruiz	Newspaper	Education, Student Issues	4pm, M-F	XXX	XXX	XXX	4.25.07, alcohol awareness month youth campaign

Craft Your Message

Framing your message is essential when working with the media. Getting the story covered is only half the challenge, the other half is ensuring your story is told right. The same story can be told but look and feel entirely different depending on who is telling the story or how it is framed. Your job is to tell the story in a way that promotes your project, or that counters a more negative message from some other source. Don't let the negative voices be the only ones telling the story!

Same Story, Different Message

- ★ **"Careless teen driver is in accident."** Negative, blaming message that doesn't hold the community accountable for conditions that made the accident possible.
- ★ **"The lack of traffic safety restrictions by the school create unsafe environments for our children."** A more comprehensive look at the community factors that contribute to traffic problems, including accidents.

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

Exercise – The Model Message

To assist in developing your message, answer the following three questions in small groups in as few words as possible. From your answers, put your key points into one or two sentences for your main MESSAGE. This is your key statement is to use in ALL communication. How you get your message across may change, but the elements of the message will remain relatively constant. Share this message with anyone who needs to communicate to the public what your program is all about and what makes it valuable.

What do you want your audience to know?

Why should anyone care?

Are there **action steps** are you recommending? What are you doing about this?

OUR MESSAGE:

Media Bites!

Based on how you frame the issue, you need to create media bites. Media bites, sometimes referred to as sound bites, are short, to the point statements given to the media that help you tell your story. The little “morsels” are usually no more than ten to fifteen seconds or 2 sentences at the most. They don’t tell the whole story, just enough to get your point across. Journalists often don’t have the time or space to tell the whole story, so media bites help ensure they know what is most important to report on. Media bites are easy to record and understand. If reporters do have the time, it’s your job to ensure they highlight what is most important to your story.

Media Bites Are:

- ★ Short
- ★ To the point
- ★ Memorable
- ★ Well-crafted
- ★ Relative

Media bites are really useful for interviews and when reporters call, but media bites can also be articulated in all forms. Again, getting your quote in the story is half the work. Getting the right quote is the other half.

- ★ 16-19 year olds have the lowest seat belt use rate of all drivers
- ★ Buckling up saves lives
- ★ Parents need to be held accountable for hosting underage parties
- ★ Beer ads fuel underage drinking
- ★ Low prices keep alcohol consumption high

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

Exercise – Media Bites

Further develop your group’s messaging by creating short media bites in this exercise.

Team:

Project:

Reporters Question:

Instructions

- 2 minutes 1. Each group should take a couple of minutes to study the situation and the reporter’s question
- 10 minutes 2. Together, come up with media bites. Say what comes to mind. Don’t try to make it perfect before you say it. Encourage each other. Try to make a good bite even better
- 3. Write down the bites that the group comes up with on the worksheet below.
- 4 minutes 4. Working together, the group should take a few minutes to choose the best bite.
- 5 minutes 5. Select a spokesperson to deliver the bites. The group should coach him or her to say the bites naturally.
- 6. Present the best bite to the large group in a role play with the reporter.

Group’s Media Bites:

- 1.) _____
- 2.) _____
- 3.) _____
- 4.) _____
- 5.) _____

The Best Bite:

Spokesperson: _____

Why did you pick that person? _____

IN ACTION: THE 411 ON DIFFERENT MEDIA TOOLS

Tool #1: Media Advisory

A media advisory is a tool to let the media know in advance of an event or release of information that will be happening. It is one page in length with the basic event details listed. The purpose is to entice the media to attend your event and capture a story! See how to make one on page 19.

Tips

- ✓ Stick to the media advisory template: who, what, when, where, why
- ✓ Create a catchy title
- ✓ Use organizational or coalition letterhead when possible
- ✓ Don't give away too much information for reporters to write the story without attending
- ✓ List contact information for interviews
- ✓ Highlight any visuals you may be using

Timeline

- ✓ Fax or email your advisory to your media contact list 2-3 days before and again on the morning of your event.
 - ✓ Conduct follow-up calls and/or emails to media contacts
-

Tool #2: Press Release

A press release is a tool to inform media about an event that happened in an article format. This ensures that reporters will have all the accurate information, names, pre-selected quotes if needed, and statistics if relevant for their article. Most importantly, it's how YOU tell the story. Anybody can say what happened, but your perspective and framing is the most important. See how to make one on page 21.

Tips

- ✓ List your contact information
- ✓ List spokesperson contact information
- ✓ Share what happened
- ✓ Include quotes
- ✓ Relevant stats relating to the problem
- ✓ What is being done or what you want to be done about the problem

Timeline

- ✓ Send out your release immediately after the event or activity that occurred by email and fax and/or give to reporters in a press packet at the event. Follow-up with calls to ensure it was received. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If reporters receive your release ahead of time for an event or activity, they can simply write the story without attending. Don't let this happen!



Tool #3: Letter to the Editor

A letter is a good way to reach a lot of people with few words. It can have a lot of impact with just a little planning and skill. Many people read the letter to the editor section of a newspaper, especially community stakeholders and elected officials who want to keep a pulse on community issues. A letter to the editor is a letter sent to the editor of a publication about recent events or issues relating to public concern, so that the writer can reach a public audience. Letters to the editor are a good method to spark a debate, counter a different public opinion, get attention, publicize an issue, and link to current events. See how to write one on page 23.

Tips

- ✓ Keep your letter under 200 words (follow publication's guidelines)
- ✓ Start your first sentence with a "hook" to draw people to read the letter
- ✓ Stay on point
- ✓ Explain how your problem is a community concern or problem
- ✓ Link your letter to a current event or something that is already in the news
- ✓ Include a name at the end of the letter and their association to the group or coalition he or she represents
- ✓ Proofread your letter

Timeline

- ✓ Ongoing. Research submission deadlines for weeklies or dailies. Remember that newspapers may receive hundreds of letters each day, particularly if you live in a large community. You may need to re-submit or re-draft your letter.
-

Tool #4: Interviews

Interviews can be planned or unplanned. Most often they are unplanned and reporters need a quote or comment within a few hours. If you receive a media call, it's important that you or your group's chosen spokespeople can get back to them in a few hours. An interview is a dynamic and interactive method to share your information. You have exclusive access to the public through an interview. Interviews can be done in print, news, or radio and can vary in length from 2 minutes with a reporter to 30 minutes on a local cable show. Learn how to get ready for an interview on page 25.

Tips

- ✓ Understand the objectives of the reporter (What is the story angle?).
 - ✓ Answer the questions directly and honestly.
 - ✓ Promote the program.
 - ✓ Know your talking points—you are on the spot!
 - ✓ Maintain control of the interview—keep the interview on the topic you want to discuss using your key message points.
 - ✓ Remain friendly and relaxed—don't become confrontational
 - ✓ Keep interview on a positive level (always to promote your key message points then defend).
 - ✓ Make sure the reporter understands your point. Ask them if they understand, or if they have any follow-up questions.
 - ✓ Don't say anything that you aren't comfortable seeing in print.
 - ✓ It's OK to say "I don't know" to a question. Tell the reporter that you will get back to them with the answer and then make sure to do it promptly.
 - ✓ Don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Take the opportunity to expand on your answer and provide more information, background, and perspective.
 - ✓ Don't use jargon.
-

Tool #5: Opinion or Editorial

Also known as an “op-ed,” this is an article that is the opinion of either the editorial board of a newspaper, opinion columnist, or even well-known community members. These hold more weight than a letter to the editor. Opinions written by individual writers and columnists will not represent the views of the publication. Individual columnists may contact you for a quote or perspective on the issue. However, editorials written by an editorial board of a publication will reflect the opinion and position of that publication.

Tips

- ✓ Know how often opinion/editorials are published ñ read the op-eds for a few weeks
- ✓ Know how often media outlets publish op-eds written by readers
- ✓ Request a meeting with a columnist or editorial board
- ✓ Present the problem and what you are doing about it ñ check your facts!
- ✓ Include what group or partners are involved in your effort
- ✓ Thank your editorial board if your issue does get printed with a letter and/or phone call

Timeline

- ✓ These can be difficult to obtain, but careful planning will increase your odds of having your issue reflected in this respected and highly read article. It doesn't hurt to request a meeting with the editorial board or a columnist of a local media outlet. Meet with them, present your information and inquire about their interest in writing an opinion or article in support or stressing the importance of the issue.

TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES

On the next pages, you'll find templates of media tools you can adapt for use in your work. Where possible, we've included samples of these tools as well. You'll find the following tools:

- ★ A Media Advisory
- ★ A Press Release
- ★ A Letter to the Editor
- ★ Tips Preparing for an Interview

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

WRITE A MEDIA ADVISORY!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date:

Contact Name Here
Contact Number/Email Address Here

TITLE OF YOUR RELEASE HERE IN ALL CAPITALS

WHAT: *(2-3 sentence description about the event you are promoting)*

WHEN: *(date, time frame)*

WHERE: *(location, address, and directions if needed)*

WHO: *(people/organizations/coalitions/other groups that are organizing the event or are speaking)*

WHY: *(why this is important and why media should attend, can include visuals and spokespeople here)*

(indicates end of advisory)

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

This Media Advisory comes from a Youth Leadership Institute project; your group can follow this format with content from your own campaign.



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 16th, 2006

Contact: Amanda Cue, Senior Director of
Prevention, Youth Leadership Institute
Contact by phone 650-347-4963
or email: acue@yli.org

What Girls Have to Say

Girls Partner with Health and School Officials to Problem Solve Youth-Led Research Findings

WHAT: Middle school girl researchers at Kennedy Middle School in Redwood City are hosting a press conference and meeting to release findings from a youth-led health survey focused on issues surrounding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; body image; and gossip. Members of the Girls' Ideas and Research Leadership (GIRL) Project will share their findings and partner with local leaders from non-profits, schools, the health department, and public officials to problem-solve on youth recommendations.

WHEN: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19TH 2006 @ 3:15 PM

WHERE: Kennedy Middle School Library
2521 Goodwin Ave.
Redwood City, CA

WHO: Confirmed Speakers:

XXXX	Kennedy Middle School student, GIRL Researcher
XXXX	Kennedy Community Schools Coordinator
XXXX	Kennedy Middle School student, GIRL Researcher
XXXX	Kennedy Middle School student, GIRL Researcher
XXXX	Director of Health Policy and Planning, San Mateo County Health Department
XXXX	Founder and CEO of Youth Leadership Institute

***Photo and Interview Opportunities: GIRL Project members, large findings signs. Speakers will be available following the press conference for interviews.*

###

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

WRITE A NEWS RELEASE!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date:

Contact Name Here
Contact Number/Email Address Here

CATCHY TITLE OR HEADLINE IN ALL CAPITALS

- 1st Paragraph: Describe and re-cap the who/what/when/where of the event
- 2nd Paragraph: Why this is an important story the media should pay attention to. Share data or relevant statistics about the problem (make sure you have your source to back you up!)
- 3rd Paragraph: Use pre-selected quotes from your spokespeople
- About the problem (use those media bites!)
 - Advocates for the solution or what you are doing about it
- 4th + Paragraphs: Additional quotes, statistics, or background on organizations or spokespeople
- Last paragraph: Brief, clear description of organizers of the event.

###

(indicates end of release)

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

Again, this sample comes from a project of the Youth Leadership Institute, and shows a news release (also known as a press release) "in action."



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 2006

Contact: Jane Alvarado,
(559) 255.3222
jalvarado@yli.org

Fresno County Comes Together for Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking

**Approximately 9.7 million current drinkers in the
United States are between the ages of 12-20**

Alcohol is the most frequently used drug by high school seniors

**13.1 years is the average age of first drink in California,
and the average age of first drink in Fresno County is 9.5 years**

Fresno County, March 2006: Today Fresno County, became one of hundreds of communities nationwide that held a Town Hall Meeting to alert the public of new research on the risks of underage drinking and to empower people to take action to stop it. The Federal government's Interagency Coordinating Committee for the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD) is supporting Town Hall Meetings that are taking place in communities across America on or around March 28, 2006.

The Town Hall Meeting educated parents, teachers, local officials, City mayors, youth and other community members about the impact underage drinking has on the community. Together, they discussed possible ways to address this issue.

Underage drinking is an important community concern. New data shows that approximately 29 percent of youth ages 12 to 20 have used alcohol illegally. Research has also shown that young people who begin drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.

Research indicates that families exert a great deal of influence on whether a child uses alcohol later in life. "What parents may not realize," says Charles G. Curie, Chairman of ICCPUD and Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), "is that children say that their parents' disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink."

SAMHSA reports that children and teens are less likely to abuse alcohol if parents are involved in their children's lives, make and enforce clear rules, and are positive role models.

###

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR EDITOR!

Date
Newspaper name
Newspaper address

Dear Editor,

I recently (*saw, read, reviewed*) _____
(*link to current event, story, or community issue*)

This is (*important, unclear, ironic, a problem*) because: _____

As a (*parent, student, community member, etc.*) I think: _____

The real problem here is: _____
(*focus on community health, traffic safety, community norms, messages, industry influence*)

One way to address this is: _____

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Name: _____
City: _____

DRAFT FOR THE JULY 2007 CONSORTIUM

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Here's one way you can frame a letter to an editor:

May 1st, 2007

Joe Cooley
Central Daily News
1234 Common Ave.
Commonplace, CA

Dear Editor:

The number one cause of death for youth is auto crashes. Each year we lose over 6,000 young people as a result of auto crashes. National Youth Traffic Safety Month will take place during the month of May.

More than 20% of young people below the legal drinking age reported driving under the influence of alcohol, other drugs, or both, in the past year, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. 65% of all 15-20 year-old drivers killed in crashes in 2003 were unrestrained. But 74% of the young drivers killed after drinking were not buckled up.

Students from Youth Connected and other leaders in [YOUR COMMUNITY NAME] are planning actions and events during National Youth Traffic Safety Month starting with the launch a campaign to promote traffic safety and reduce alcohol access among our friends and peers.

Local businesses and organizations are supporting us by [DESCRIBE SUPPORT OR PARTICIPATION].

We need people to step up and support our community and the work of Youth Connected. You can help prevent further youth traffic tragedies. National Youth Traffic Safety Month in [YOUR COMMUNITY] is a campaign led by Youth Connected and [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME] to increase community awareness and youth leadership on youth safety and health.

Sincerely,

Sammy Huang
Youth Connected Member

PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW!

Controlling the track of the interview

Often reporters have their own idea of what the story is before the interview starts. The reporter may try to steer the story in the direction they feel it should go. To avoid this, you can use techniques like bridging and flagging to steer the interview in the direction YOU want it to go. First, write down your answers to the following questions to help you prepare for in the moment questions.

Why is this issue important?

What are your top two media bites?

- 1.
- 2.

What are questions you might be asked?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Bridging

Transitions to re-direct the interview back to your issue. A reporter asks a question that steers away from your message. You should acknowledge the question then **bridge** to your own message.

Q: "Is this plan going to cost a lot of money?"

A: "That is not the issue here. The safety of our city's youth is currently in a crisis situation."

...or...

A: "Lets not lose sight of the underlying problem we are facing. It's that..."

Flagging

Tell the reporter what is important by **flagging** it. It is often not enough just to deliver your message; you'll also need to tell the reporter it's important. Phrases like these help highlight or "flag" the critical information:

- ✓ The big issue here is...
- ✓ What the alcohol industry really wants us to think is...
- ✓ These new traffic lights are critical because...
- ✓ I'm here to talk about...

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

What happens if everything doesn't go according to plan? With media, this is often the case. Some common challenges are listed below and suggested actions to remedy situations and follow-up.

The media misrepresents the story or your group?

- ★ Call the reporter that covered your story to let them know they were incorrect. Direct them to your media packet where all the relevant information should be. Sometimes newspapers will print corrections the next day or week.

No media shows up or picks up your story?

- ★ This can happen even after reporters make commitments to attend events. News changes by the minute. Your story could have shifted from top story to last in a matter of seconds due to unexpected events and other breaking news. Call your contact to see what happened. Email and send the editor or reporter your press release and media advisory after the event. If they didn't show up, tell them the story: what happened, the statistics, any quotes, pictures, why this is important, and contacts for follow-up questions. They will be more likely to still include the story if you can provide them with the information they need to print the story after the fact.

Your letter doesn't get published?

- ★ Try, try and try again. The newspaper gets hundreds of letters each week. Continue to write letters to your editor to show them this is an important issue. Or, try having another representative or concerned individual write a letter on the same issue with their signed name.

RESOURCES

Where Can I Find More Information?

Check out these websites and print sources for more in depth information.

Internet Resources

Berkeley Media Studies Group
www.bmsq.org

California Friday Night Live Partnership
www.fridaynightlive.org

California Office of Traffic Safety
www.ots.ca.gov

Online Social Host Resources
www.socialhost.org

The Spin Project
www.spinproject.org

Youth Leadership Institute
www.yli.org

Print Resources

Media Advocacy and Public Health, Power for Prevention
Wallack, L.; Dorfman, L.; Jernigan, D.; Makani, T. Copyright 1993 Sage Publications.

News for a Change: An advocates guide to working with the media
Wallack, L.; Woodruff, K.; Dorfman, L.; and Diaz, I. Copyright 1999 Sage Publications.

Spin Works! A media guidebook for communicating values and shaping opinion
Bray, R. Copyright 2000, 2002 Robert Bray and Independent Media Institute.



MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT: USE THE MEDIA!

Funding for this project was provided by a grant from
the California Office of Traffic Safety, through
the National Highway Traffic Safety Association.

July 2007

