

eliminating racism empowering women

ywca

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ywca week without violence media tips

Pitching stories to the news media

Before contacting the news media with a story idea, ask yourself:

- Is this the first, last, least or most of anything?
- Is it part of a trend?
- Is it timely?
- Is there a local angle to a national story or event?
- Is there a human-interest angle?
- Is there a strong visual element? (A good photo opportunity can be your back door to the front page.)

Once you've determined that you have a good story to tell, here's how to make an effective pitch:

- Know who in the local news media will be most interested in your story. (For example, if you are pitching a new program to empower women economically, the best reporters/editors to contact will be those covering social or economic issues for your local news media.)
- Keep an accurate, up-to-date media list of reporters to contact for various types of stories. (Reporters frequently change jobs within their newsrooms, so be sure to update your list at least once a year.)
- If your story involves an event, create a one-page "advisory" that lists the name of the event and the fact that the local YWCA is sponsoring or hosting it, what it is, when and where it will be, and contact information. Also include a brief description of the event, including any notable guests. Send this advisory to reporters at least two weeks prior to your event.
- If your story involves a person or an organizational achievement that is not connected to an event, use your one sheet description to tell why the person or achievement is special and how it connects to your organization's mission and helps the community. List a contact name and number.

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- Using your media contact list, mail or e-mail your information to the appropriate reporter.
- Follow up with a phone call to the reporter, detailing what makes your story unique. (Call in the mornings or early afternoons, if possible. Avoid calling on Fridays or right before a holiday.)
- During the phone call, be sure to ask if the reporter has time to talk. If not, ask when would be a better time for you to call back.
- Take no more than a minute or so to share your story. (It helps to have some talking points prepared in advance of your phone call.)
- If you reach only answering machines, leave a detailed, but short message, and follow up the call with an e-mail to the reporter that includes your story details.
- If a reporter asks to do an interview, find out his or her deadline and then promptly set up an interview with your spokesperson.
- When a reporter publishes or airs your story, send a thank you letter to the reporter with a cc to his or her editor or news director.

Using the brand message

Eliminating racism and empowering women -- everything we do connects with our mission. That simple message rings in the ears of reporters, readers and audiences and brings people to the YWCA and keeps them coming back.

- Be sure to work in the words -- Eliminating Racism, Empowering Women -- when discussing your local YWCA activities and events with the news media. Briefly explain the YWCA's commitment to both missions embodied by the logo. For example, "Our domestic violence shelters help eliminate racism, because many of our residents are women of color. We empower women by teaching them the skills they need to move out of the shelters and to a life of independence."

Contact the YWCA USA (contact information above), if you need a national perspective or assistance. Please send us news clips from stories that run.

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