



Media Outreach

While building relationships with the media can often take time, this form of outreach has the biggest potential pay-off in terms of gaining visibility for the League. Local Leagues should conduct media outreach throughout the year to serve our mission to inform and engage the public and should include League membership messages, when and where appropriate.

The Basics of Reaching Out to the Media

Create an Up-to-Date Media List

Before you start crafting pitches and contacting news sources, create a media list. A media list should include all the local media outlets in your community, along with the correct person at each office and their contact information. Much of this information can be found through searches on the internet. Remember to include all media outlets, such as social media, blogs, community websites, organization newsletters, etc. This will help you stay organized and focused when planning to reach out to the media.

Sample Media List Anywhere, US

Name	Type	Contact Person	Phone Number	Email Address
The Beacon	Local Newspaper	Sally Murphy	240-333-9900	smurphy@gmail.com
Gazette.net	Online Newspaper	Sophie Yarb, Editor	240-123-4455	sophie@gazette.net
Silver Spring Downtown Arts and Entertainment	Online Community Calendar and News	Gwen Hay, Civic Facility Manager	240-876-1234	hay@silverspring.com
The Silver Spring Singular	Community Blog	Sara Smith, Blogger	443-987-6543	silverspringsingular@gmail.com
Silver Spring Patch	Community Blog	Brandon Johnson, Blogger	343-567-0987	http://silverspring.patch.com/

To create a complete list and reach out to all local media, remember to:

- Include **minority media** outlets in your outreach.
- Get to know the writers at **community papers**. They may end up being the best way to get your message out.
- Contact your newspaper or public access TV station’s **Community Calendars**; they will usually be happy to include your event.
- Include outreach to **local blog or web forums** discussing current events in your area.



Make sure your story is newsworthy

Reporters are busy, so make sure your news story is timely and newsworthy. Reporters do not want to cover the same old story that everyone else is covering or one that they themselves have already covered. Track the work of the reporter you are targeting, gauge his or her interests, and note the stories he or she has done recently. Your story should either be something entirely new, or introduce a fresh angle on an existing issue.



Know your audience

Your pitch will only be successful if you deliver it to the right person. This depends on the medium, as well as the kind of story you are pitching.

Television - For a feature story, such as one about the League and its local activities, you need to identify the right reporter or producer who will be interested in your pitch. The easiest way to do this is to watch the news. Pay attention to the beats that reporters cover. Then you can pitch that reporter, or his or her producer, directly. Highlighting the unique benefits of LWV membership around a particular event or speaking engagement is an excellent opportunity to garner free broadcast media coverage.

Radio - For a public radio station, you may want to target a specific reporter who covers a feature or lifestyle beat. Some stations may have an assignment editor, and you can always go to the news editor. If there is a particular show that you want to target, direct your pitch to the show's producer. Again, it's useful to listen to the program that you are pitching to so that you have a good sense of the kinds of stories they do and what they've already covered.

Newspaper - Small newspapers tend to have small staffs. If the paper you are contacting is very small, the best person to receive your pitch may be the news editor. At larger papers, you will want to find the reporter covering the appropriate beat for your story, or even consider a columnist. Again, the easiest way to do this is to read the paper and track the coverage – after a few days or weeks, it will be easy to know who covers what stories.

Additional resources on working with the media (such tips on using social media) are available on www.lwv.org.

Craft a creative pitch

Reporters are constantly besieged by phone calls, e-mails and faxes from people trying to convince them to write stories. You need to stand out from the crowd. This means deciding on the best means of contact – usually e-mail or phone – and developing a pitch that is attention-grabbing and brief.

Phone - If you're going to pitch by phone, plan what you will say in advance. Most reporters will give you 15 seconds – maybe 30 – to make your case. Make those seconds count. Avoid overwhelming them with jargon and over-rehearsed talking points. Use a striking fact, or mention the name of a prominent person available for an interview. If they're interested,



they'll keep listening. But if you can't capture their interest quickly, you'll lose them, and the story.

E-mail - The same rules apply for an e-mail pitch – except that reporters can delete it without ever reading it. Create an interesting subject line and make sure the first few sentences of your e-mail are attention-grabbing. Don't write a novel – one to three brief paragraphs will do. Let the reporter know that you will call to follow up – don't leave it up to a reporter to contact you.

Note: Many e-mail addresses are set up to block e-mails with attachments. Copy and paste your text into the body of the e-mail to avoid any problems. If you are trying to share a lengthy document with a reporter, post the document online and provide the reporter with a Web address to view the piece.

Strong delivery will make or break your pitch.

Whether you're pitching the reporter by phone or following up on your e-mail pitch, consider your timing. Do not call a reporter in the late afternoon when he or she is likely to be on deadline. If you reach a reporter who sounds harried, ask when would be a better time for you to call back. Plan and practice your pitch and deliver it with confidence – but don't read it. Ask if the reporter is interested, and offer to share additional information. A reporter will rarely agree to do a story during your first call, so your goal should be to start the conversation. Be prepared to leave a brief, to-the-point voicemail message (30 seconds or less) if you do not reach a live person.

Follow up...but don't pester.

You've spoken to the reporter, shared additional resources and haven't heard anything. Give a call, or send a follow-up e-mail. Ask if the reporter thinks he or she is going to do the story, or if he or she needs anything else to make a decision. If the reporter says no, ask if you can stay in touch as things develop. Your efforts now may pay dividends later. If the reporter says yes, offer to help in any way that you can (identifying spokespeople, providing background information, etc.). After the story runs, send an e-mail or note thanking the reporter for his or her efforts.



Check out the "Tools You Can Use" section at the back of the manual for worksheets to help you and your League prepare to speak with the media!



This page left intentionally blank.