

Media Relations Handbook

July 4, 2012

Give. Volunteer. Act.



United Way
Toronto

This handbook contains tips on how to share the story of your organization's work with the community through the media. It should help you as you prepare newsworthy stories, work with reporters and respond to media inquiries or interview requests.

What is Media Relations?

Media relations means working with the media to raise the profile of your organization. Good media relations is about developing positive relationships with reporters and effectively communicating your messages.

In a city that is home to four daily newspapers and dozens of television and radio stations, the need for good media relations is crucial if community agencies want their voices heard. If done right, media relations will generate awareness of who you are and what you do.

We're here to help

If you need help reaching out to the media or responding to a media request, contact someone from United Way Toronto's communications team.

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Story pitches

Pitches are story ideas presented to a reporter, editor, or producer that they might find interesting. They are usually short phone calls or e-mails (although twitter is becoming a more common pitch medium) followed by more detailed conversations with reporters.

When pitching, be sure to have all your pieces in place: a person for the reporter to interview, a client willing to share his or her experience, a photo opportunity and background info.

Example from United Way Toronto

Hi,

I caught your article last month about Mackel Peterkin and Shaun Blake and I've been meaning to get in touch. I don't know if you're thinking of doing a follow-up on the story, but I might have an interesting take for you.

Some of the initiatives we launched through the Youth Challenge Fund focus directly on gang-exit strategies and engaging youth who have been involved with gangs. If you're interested, I can put you in touch with the leaders of some of these programs, some who were involved in gangs growing up.

What sets these initiatives apart from the more traditional service agency programming that targets young people is the fact that they are youth-led. The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) was set up specifically to get at hard-to-reach young people like Mackel and Shaun. This different approach to engaging young people puts them at the centre of community development.

As you might know, YCF is a partnership of the Government of Ontario and United Way Toronto. Since 2006 it has funded 111 youth-led initiatives in Toronto's 13 priority neighbourhoods — Jane-Finch is one of them. Youth lead a wide variety of programs — from basketball leagues to arts and culture workshops to leadership training — all with a view to engaging youth following the city's 'summer of the gun' in 2005.

I have a few specific initiatives that may provide a different take on the story of gang-involved youth, and some of the young people who lead these initiatives are pretty amazing. I am positive we can provide access to the participants, too.

Let me know if you want to hear more.

Thanks very much.



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Media Advisory

Media advisories are invitations to the media to attend an event. They include basic information about that event: the five Ws and why the media should come.

When to send one: Send media advisories to multiple reporters for events you think might generate interest — a gala, a tour, a press conference, a neighbourhood festival, etc. An advisory is typically sent to community papers a few days before an event and to dailies the day before and the morning of an event. Following up with media outlets by phone after sending out an advisory is always a good idea.

Not a press release: The media advisory is designed as a teaser to generate interest among reporters without giving away the substance of your press conference or event. If you have an announcement to make, don't give away what you're announcing. If the reporters are given all the information and quotes in a press release before your event, they won't come.

Example from United Way Toronto



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 19, 2010

MEDIA ADVISORY/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

UNITED WAY, PROVINCE AND PARTNERS TO OPEN COMMUNITY HUB IN PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOOD

*Grand opening of AccessPoint on Danforth marks important day for Crescent
Town neighbourhood*

TORONTO — The Honourable **Deb Matthews**, Ontario's Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will join **Susan McIsaac**, United Way Toronto President and CEO, **Bill Downe**, BMO Financial Group President and CEO, and **Axelle Janczur**, Executive Director, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Centre, in officially opening Toronto's second Community Hub—AccessPoint on Danforth.

This partnership involves the Government of Ontario, United Way, Access Alliance, and a number of community agencies. This project was made possible by a generous gift of \$1.125-million from BMO Financial Group.

WHAT: Grand opening of AccessPoint on Danforth

WHERE: AccessPoint on Danforth
3079 Danforth Avenue
(Just east of Victoria Park Avenue)

WHEN: Tuesday, October 19, 2010

3 p.m. Community Celebration begins, 300 people are expected to attend

4 p.m. Official program begins

4:35 p.m. VIP cake cutting/photo opportunity/media availability

— 30 —

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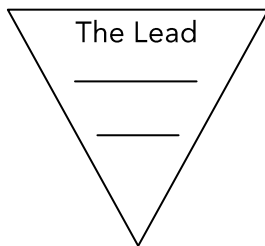
News Release

A basic media relations tool: The news release is issued to multiple news desks and reporters to attract attention to a story. It should be short, concise and simple to understand. For many reporters, it serves as a starting point — providing basic information for them to work from.

An over-used tool: Newsrooms receive hundreds of releases every day. So always ask yourself, do you have something new and interesting to say? If you don't, try reaching out another way.

Follow up: When you do send out a release, it's a good idea to follow-up with phone calls to make sure it was received and personally pitch it again. Remember, it's in your interest to make your story stand out from the dozens of other releases news editors receive daily.

How to write one: The most important element of the story must be contained in the first paragraph — the lead. The second, third and fourth paragraphs support the lead. The least important details are left towards the end of the story.



Most important facts

Supporting facts

Least important facts

Make sure your news release answers the questions: who, what, when, where, why and how? If possible limit your news release to one page. If you need to provide background information, include a separate backgrounder page. Use short sentences. Include quotes. Don't use industry jargon. Check and double check for grammar and spelling mistakes.

The average news release typically includes a quote from a senior representative of your organization or initiative. Remember to keep your quotes short and authentic, so that reporters can re-use them in their stories.

The last part of the body of the news release is the boiler plate. Boiler plates are an organization's standard description of who they are.

End your news release with "- 30 -" followed by your media relations specialist's contact information.



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A United Way Toronto Example



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UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 8:45 PM
January 19, 2012

WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGHEST, TORONTO IS AT ITS BEST
United Way Toronto campaign raises \$115-million to meet rising needs

TORONTO — The people of Toronto have responded to rising need with an unparalleled demonstration of generosity: raising \$115-million to support the community in tough times, said United Way Toronto President and CEO Susan McIsaac Thursday night.

"Without a doubt this campaign was a tough one, but Toronto is a special place," said McIsaac. "People in our community are counting on us, and I'm pleased to say that we will be able to sustain support to our network of agencies through these uncertain times."

McIsaac announced the organization's achievement with Enbridge's Janet Holder, Chair of United Way Toronto's 2011 Campaign.

"The positive energy shown throughout this campaign by an impressive 150,000 donors and 22,000 volunteers was inspiring," said Holder. "It was humbling to see what can be accomplished when so many people join together in support of the life-changing United Way agencies that are so vital to the health of this city."

Last September, United Way set a goal of raising \$116-million to help the community meet steadily rising demand for the services people turn to when they need help. A week ago, United Way issued a special appeal to the people of Toronto to help close the gap in the organization's fundraising campaign. United Way was \$3-million back of its target. In the days since, the charity has raised \$2-million.

"Despite great uncertainty this year, people in our city were united by a belief that we could build a better city and a better future for all of us," said McIsaac. "Right across our city we saw people coming together in a spirit that truly embodies the very best of community values, and we're so very grateful for their support."

About United Way Toronto

Established in 1956, United Way Toronto is a charity working to advance the common good and create opportunities for a better life for everyone in our city. Working in partnership with others, we mobilize people and resources to address the root causes of social problems and to change community conditions for the better. United Way supports agencies that provide services to strengthen individuals, families, and communities.

-30-

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Photo/Video Opportunity

If you have an event that will provide great visuals, invite TV and print media cameras by sending them a media advisory with the header: Photo/Video Opportunity.

Avoid the traditional photo of a cheque presentation. Media love fun, exciting and over-the-top unique photos. Always consider who will be in the photo and whether you can get your logo in the shot.

A United Way Toronto example



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 16, 2011

MEDIA ADVISORY/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

"RATS" RACE FOR THE CHEESE

10th Anniversary Scotiabank Rat Race for United Way tomorrow

TORONTO – Tonight, more than a thousand "rat" racers will infest Toronto's downtown streets in an effort to strengthen our community during the Scotiabank Rat Race for United Way. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the race, many runners will be dressed as rats, or in other colourful and whacky costumes.

Following the race, prizes will be awarded to the fastest finishers and best costumes.

WHAT: 10th Anniversary of the Scotiabank Rat Race for United Way

WHERE: Scotia Plaza, 40 King Street West
Adelaide Street entrance

WHEN: Thursday, June 16, 2011

Pre-race festivities: 6 p.m.
Race start: 8 p.m.
After-party: Approximately 8:45 p.m.

PHOTO OP: Over a thousand people dressed in colourful costumes poised at the Start Line.

Fastest finishers cross the line in under 15 minutes.

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Release forms: If your event doesn't have a waiver, it's good practice to ask those who might be in the photo to sign a release form. Release forms will help ensure they know how the photo will be used.

United Way Toronto's release form



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Location:

Date:

Contact (agency, event, etc.):

UWT Staff Contact:

Consent to photograph, videotape, audiotape recording, film and interview form

I, _____, give United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT), permission to photograph, videotape, make an audiotape of, film and/or interview either myself or the child/children named below, and to publish said photographs, videotapes, audiotapes, films and/or interviews in UWGT and other United Way publications/materials, including marketing and promotional materials and official websites for current and future use for the purpose of carrying out the mission of United Way.

The photographs (including negatives), videotapes, etc. shall constitute the exclusive property of UWGT and may be reproduced by UWGT and other United Ways and anyone UWGT has authorized, without compensation or payment to the individual(s) concerned or any other person.

Name of individual, parent, guardian (please print)

Address

Address (continued)

Telephone Number

Signature of individual, parent or guardian

Today's date

Child / children's name(s) _____

United Way of Greater Toronto is committed to protecting your privacy. United Way of Greater Toronto follows the ten fair information principles in the CSA Model Code. To see our complete privacy policy, visit www.unitedwaytoronto.com or call our Privacy Officer at 416-777-2001.



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Letter-to-the-Editor

A letter-to-the-editor is a short (250-300 words) response to a specific article, event or issue that was just included in a newspaper. Send letters-to-the editor to Editorial Page Editors (their name is usually at the top of the Editorial page) within a day of the original story being published.

Agency example

Steve Lurie's letter to the Globe & Mail, January 9, 2012, in response to "[Police learn how to deal with the mentally ill in crisis](#)"

The Globe folio on the law and mental health raises an important public policy issue -- the degree to which the justice system should be the default response when mental health services are in short supply. Last May the Ontario Chiefs of Police passed a resolution calling on the provincial government to invest more in community mental health services to reduce demand for police interventions. While governments across the country have funded more court support services and police crisis intervention teams, and research has demonstrated the effectiveness of these services, the fundamental problem is still access to mental health treatment and community support services.

Studies show that case management and community treatment teams for people living with serious mental illness reduce costly hospitalizations by over 50%. Yet there are over 16,000 people waiting for case management services in Ontario. Supportive housing costs far less than shelters and hospitals, yet there has been no major investment since 2005, and according to a recent study done for the Mental Health Commission, there are 520,000 people living with mental illness in Canada who are homeless or vulnerably housed. In Ontario over 42,000 are waiting for supportive housing. Paradoxically the investments in community mental health services proposed by Senator Michael Kirby five years ago would add only 0.29% to annual health spending, but would improve access and quality of care, while making the health system more efficient. Governments need to consider the social and health costs of not investing in community capacity and put more resources into diverting people with mental illness from the justice system

- Steve Lurie, Executive Director, Canadian Mental Health Association



Op-ed

An “op-ed” (opposite the editorial page) is an article written by a non-journalist that offers an expert’s perspective on an issue that is featured prominently in the news of the day.

Contact the newspaper’s Editorial Page Editor by phone or e-mail with a pitch outlining why your op-ed article is important, relevant to readers and best conveyed by your spokesperson. Send a clear, concise and well-written piece for their consideration.

A United Way Toronto example

Print Article

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Let's resolve to help each other

Susan Molsaao

As 2011 draws to a close, Toronto is experiencing very difficult economic times. While there is great uncertainty about what lies ahead, even in this environment some things are certain. One sure thing is that we can help our city through this difficult time by strengthening the community services people turn to when they need help.

Twelve months ago, most of us approached 2011 with cautious optimism. The worst of the recession seemed to be behind us. Experts suggested we were moving slowly but steadily toward better times ahead.

But at a community level, there was a troubling disconnect between what the experts told us and what front-line agencies were experiencing on the ground. Across Toronto, health and social service agencies reported rising demand even as some economic indicators appeared to be improving. By mid-year, despite our earlier optimism, economists and community agencies agreed that our city was not bouncing back as we had hoped.

This is not the situation we wanted to be in today. We're seeing a number of troubling trends that tell us a full recovery is still some way off. Unemployment remains persistently high. People now remain out of work for longer than ever before. Full-time jobs are being lost to part-time or contract work.

United Way's member agencies see the human face behind these statistics. The people who are working multiple jobs to get by. Those who have never before needed help, but now find themselves vulnerable through no fault of their own. Demand for job training and employment supports is up across the city. Just one United Way agency will serve 16,000 unemployed Torontonians this year — up almost 40 per cent since the recession began.

It's increasingly difficult to find a job in this city, but even many who are working find it hard to make ends meet. The rising cost of living is squeezing families from both ends. The essentials of life are becoming out of reach for those who are in precarious financial situations.

As the cost of basic items like gas and groceries climbs, families are forced to choose between paying the rent or buying necessities. Nearly a quarter of all people who live in high-rise towers in our city's most vulnerable neighbourhoods make this difficult choice — every month of the year. It's no wonder that some United Way agencies report a doubling in demand for food programs since 2008.

The pressure on our community caused by a weak economy is just part of the story. Falling wages, a growing concentration of poverty in the inner suburbs and serious gaps in access to services all contribute to a vulnerability that threatens to undermine our city. As we tackle the urgent needs faced by Torontonians, we must also make progress in addressing these long-term challenges that put too many families at risk of falling behind.

Even in this current economic environment many of us are doing relatively well — but at times like this we can feel helpless. The economic trends affecting our city are national, even global, in scale.

As individuals, we can't personally undo the damage of a prolonged recession and a fragile economy. But there is something concrete we can do: we can choose to come together and help one another.

At a time when so many are struggling, we can make a choice about building a better future for our city. Let us choose to give. Let us make our gift count toward building a stronger, healthier and more prosperous Toronto for us all.

Susan Molsaao is president and CEO of United Way Toronto.



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News Conferences

News conferences are reserved for times when you have a truly newsworthy story that can't be communicated adequately in a press release — usually because the issue or program is complex, sensitive and affects many people. News conferences work well for important announcements as they are a great forum for asking questions.

A news conference can last anywhere from 20 minutes to 45 minutes and can feature more than one speaker. They are typically held in conference rooms where chairs and tables are organized to feature the speaker(s) at the front and the media as members of the audience. At most news conferences, refreshments are provided and a sound system allows for radio and television reporters to record speakers.

A United Way Toronto example



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 11, 2012

UNITED WAY TO MAKE SPECIAL APPEAL AT NEWS CONFERENCE

TORONTO — With United Way's campaign wrapping next week, United Way Toronto President and CEO Susan McIsaac will host a news conference today to make a special appeal to the people of Toronto.

WHAT: Press conference with United Way Toronto's President and CEO, Susan McIsaac.

WHERE: United Way Toronto offices, 26 Wellington Street East, 2nd Floor

WHEN: Wednesday, January 11, 11 A.M.

—30—

Media Contact: Caitlin Stidwill, United Way Toronto
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Interview Briefing Note

Whether you're doing proactive or reactive media relations, it's always a good idea to prepare the spokesperson who is doing media interviews. One of the best ways to do that is to send them a brief interview briefing note with interview details and key messages.

Give your spokesperson time to go over the note and then work through a few possible interview questions with them before they speak to a reporter.

A United Way Toronto example



INTERVIEW NOTE
Susan McIsaac
January 19, 2012

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Reporter: Heather Scofield
Time: 9:15 a.m.
Length: 15 minutes max
Type: Phone interview – for print
Contact: You call Heather – 613 231 8615

Key Messages

Our research is about poverty

Vertical Poverty found that inner suburban neighbourhoods in Toronto are falling further behind – and that more and more people who live in these neighbourhoods live in high rise rental towers.

Mixed neighbourhoods – regardless of density – make our city stronger

There are growing gaps in our city — in income, in access to opportunities and in neighbourhoods. These gaps threaten to undermine Toronto's social and economic wellbeing and can lead to:

- o Fewer opportunities to build a better life and contribute to our shared prosperity.
- o A less healthy population and a rising burden on health and social services down the road.
- o A city sharply divided between neighbourhoods that are doing well and those that are falling behind.

Strong neighbourhoods — and thriving towers within those communities — mean safer streets, greater capacity for local leadership and a more prosperous economy for everyone.

Vertical Poverty identified three additional priorities to guide our efforts to build a better city:

- o Restoring mixed-income neighbourhoods – regardless of their density
- o Sustaining high-rise rental housing in good repair
- o Building community through partnerships

Towers in the inner suburbs are now home to more people than they were intended to house – but that's an issue of affordability.

In our research, density contributed to the overall wear and tear of the towers.

There is limited affordable housing stock in the city, which means that many low-income families must live together in single apartments just to make ends meet.

The increased number of people living in high-rise units puts a strain on buildings that weren't constructed to support the number of people who now call them home.

Density is not the problem

Disproportionate numbers of people with similar incomes – whether at the top or bottom of the scale – living in the same neighbourhood is problematic.

At one time, low-income families could find housing in most parts of the city and people with different income levels could share the same street. Now, people with low-incomes are concentrating in specific areas of our city and this leads to ...



Media Call Sheet

Date: _____

Time: _____

ASK THE REPORTER:

1. Name: _____
2. Media outlet name: _____
3. Description of outlet (if unfamiliar): _____

4. If TV or radio, type of interview:
 Live On tape
 In studio phone
5. Who will the interview be with? _____
6. Contact information:
 - Phone number and extension: _____
 - E-mail address: _____
7. What are they looking for?
 Background information
 Spokesperson for attribution

8. What is the story about? _____
9. Who else have they talked to, or will they be talking to?

10. If an interview with a spokesperson, how much time will they need?

11. When will the story appear? _____
12. What is the reporter's deadline? _____

DETERMINE:

- Who is the best person for this interview _____
- Who will accompany this person _____
- Do I have enough information (statistics, details, examples) to respond to the reporter's query? _____
- If not, where can I get more information or direct the reporter?
