

Local Media Tips

MEDIA TIPS

This very simple set of tips is intended for animal shelters or rescue groups that have never, or have rarely, worked with reporters.

Whether your shelter or rescue group has “media savvy” people, or if this is new territory for you, the purpose of this tool kit and the news release template is help make it easy to get the word out to your local media, so you can concentrate on the very important work of promoting your adoption event to your local media and getting your adoptable pets into good homes.

A few words about what to do if any of your local media show up at your adoption event. First of all, this is a good thing. They are looking to do a positive story. Keep in mind, though, that local TV stations, newspapers, and radio stations all work on tight deadlines and with small staff, so when they show up, they will have a tight timeframe, and will need just enough information to put together a short story. So, stay focused on the event and make it simple for the media to do the story, so they will remember how easy it was to work with your group, and with any luck, they will be ready to do your next great story.

The media will be looking for “eye candy” photos or video, so think about what you have to offer at the event. Who are the animals ready for prime time? If you have at least one “ham” in the crowd, be prepared to tell that animal’s story. Do any of the animals have a dramatic story that will tug at heart strings and help bring your group donations as well? Do any of your volunteers have cute, outgoing kids who are helping at the event?

Below are some quick pointers:

1. It is usually helpful to have one to two people who are the designated spokespeople to handle any media. That way, the rest of your group can be completely focused on the important job of getting adoptable pets into great homes.

The spokespeople are the points of contact on the news release you send to your local media. The spokespeople need to have cell phones that they keep charged and with them at all times from the moment the news release goes out until a few days after the event. Media call at odd times and may have follow-up questions. While setting up, and during the event, it is a good idea to keep the cell phone on vibrate. Keep it where you can feel the vibration: your pocket or a fanny pack. That way if it is too noisy, you don’t risk missing a media call.

2. Think sound bites. Keep your answers short and concise. Less is more. (See talking points below.)
3. Rephrase the question as part of the answer.
4. Be sure to use the full name of your group, and mention your website. Also mention that this event is part of a national event being sponsored by Best Friends Animal Society. By mentioning Best Friends Animal Society, you can leverage our name and the fact that this is part of a national event, which may help generate media coverage.
5. Does your group have T-shirts or polo shirts or ball caps with your group or shelter’s logo?
6. If not, can someone quickly make up big name labels you can put on your shirts with your group’s logo?
7. It may be helpful to jot down talking points on index cards. Just writing them down can help get

them into your head. It's even better if you say them out loud before the event. You might be surprised how much this helps you to get your important points out.

8. What is the sound bite about your organization? You should be able to describe your organization, who you are and what you do, in 30 seconds and include your website.
9. Anticipate questions. It is helpful to have a fresh pair of eyes. Ask one of your friends who is not active in animal rescue and doesn't know anything about your adoption event to help you by asking you questions.
10. Stay focused on the adoption event. If a media person asks you questions about your group or any other subjects, let them know that right now your focus is on this wonderful opportunity to match up families with great pets, but that you will be happy to talk to them at another time about other aspects of your organization and how to help homeless pets in your community.

SOME TALKING POINTS

- During the promotion, [insert your group's name] will reduce adoption fees for dogs and cats.
- Visit us online at [insert your website] to see great photos and videos of adoptable animals.
- Come meet your next furry friend at [insert next adoption event location, date, time].