



**Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week
November 11-19, 2017**

Media Outreach Toolkit

Working with the Media

Media outreach is an important component of Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Good media coverage will get your message in front of thousands of additional people and encourage them to think about hunger and homelessness.

Steps to Media Organizing

- Make sure you have a good media list. Pull together a comprehensive list of local media outlets, including newspapers, TV and radio stations, and local news websites and blogs. Campus groups should include campus newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations on their list.
- Figure out the best contact person for each outlet, along with their contact information. For TV and radio stations, you should identify the assignment editors and/or news editors. For newspapers, you should run a search for past stories on hunger and homelessness to identify reporters who are interested in these issues.
- Write a news release for your awareness week. Use the template provided later in this toolkit; just update the yellow highlighted sections with information about your organization and your events.
- At least one week before your event, call each outlet to pitch them on covering your awareness week. If a reporter expresses interest in your event, send them your news release.
- As you get closer to the week, go back to each outlet and re-pitch them on how to get involved. Keep pitching right up until the morning of your event.
- At your event, give your news release to all reporters who attend.
- Immediately after your event, email your news release to all reporters who didn't attend, then make a final round of pitch calls.

How to Make Media Pitches

- Make the calls. Reporters get a ton of emails every day. You can only use email to pitch if you have a very good relationship with a reporter.
- Be friendly!
- Make sure you're talking to the right person for the topic of your pitch.
- Always ask if the reporter has a moment to talk. If they're on deadline or busy, just quickly ask for a good time to call back.

- Have your pitch ready to go. This is the 30-second rap you will tell reporters to interest them in the story. Your pitch should deliver your message and stress the elements of your story that you think the reporter will be into.
- Don't get discouraged. Reporters rarely commit to covering something, so don't let that bother you.
- Leave the call with a follow-up plan. It could be as simple as sending the news release or background materials.
- Be prompt. If you say you are going to get information to a reporter, let the reporter know how long it will take and make sure you follow through on time.

Pitching H&H Awareness Week

To get your story noticed by a reporter, you have to stand out in some way. On their own, your awareness week events make for a decent story. However, reporters love stories that have a human interest angle, so your very best way to get covered is to offer them one. For your awareness week, that means identifying one or more formerly homeless people who now have a home and a job.

To find these individuals, you should contact local organizations that work with the homeless and ask them to connect you with former clients who have made good. The managers at these programs are often thrilled to share some of their success stories, and can act as an intermediary to identify which formerly homeless people are likely to be willing to speak with you. Not everyone they refer you to will be comfortable speaking to the media about their personal story, so you may need to ask a few people before you find one who will participate.

It's important to present this idea in an inspirational light and let people know you're not trying to be exploitative.

Sample Pitch to Homeless Shelter Director

Hi, I'm calling from the [GROUP]. We're trying to get media coverage of Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week this November, and we could use your help. There's so much negativity on the news, and we'd love to share some positive stories. I'm hoping you can connect me with someone who's used your shelter in the past when they fell on hard times -- and who now has a job and a roof over his or her head.

We'd like to see if one of those success stories would be willing to speak with the media. I know some people might be embarrassed to publicly admit they were once homeless. But I'm sure that their inspirational stories about overcoming adversity could do a lot to help those still struggling, as well as to build support for programs like yours. With their help, we can raise

awareness about the reality of homelessness in our community, and also let people know more about the groups and agencies that are working to help people get back on their feet.

Do you have any suggestions of people who I could ask to speak to the media? Would it be best for you to ask them or should I?

Sample Pitch to Reporter

Hi, I'm calling from [GROUP]. Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is coming up in mid-November, and I have a great story idea for you that will resonate with your [viewers/readers].

Many good people are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control -- from rising housing costs to lost jobs to domestic abuse.

That's what makes success stories like [FIRST NAME]'s so compelling. [Give a brief summary of the person's story about how s/he became homeless and then rose above it.]

We'd like to share [FIRST NAME]'s story with you, as well as what local groups are doing to help people in these situations have happy endings to their difficult times. Is this a story that you'd be interested in covering?

Tips for Media Pitches

- In the sample above, you'll notice that we only include the first name of your success story. This is intentional – if you give reporters the person's full name right away, the reporter may track down the person and contact them directly, at which time the reporter no longer needs to include your events in their story. Wait to share the person's information until the reporter has said that they want to cover your story.
- It's unlikely that you'll get more than two media outlets to cover the same success story. Once your local paper and one TV station have told a particular person's story, other outlets will start to see it as old news. Prioritize your outreach by pitching to the most important outlets first, giving them first crack at covering the story.
- For college groups: you can drop the success story angle when pitching to on-campus media, such as your campus newspaper. With campus news outlets, you should be able to make a compelling pitch just focused on the events you'll be holding on campus. If you do want to pitch campus outlets on a personal story, you should identify a student success story who has experienced food insecurity or homelessness and is willing to speak with the media.

News Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, November 13, 2017

CONTACT:

NAME, GROUP

PHONE, EMAIL

CITY Residents Take Stand against Hunger and Homelessness **GROUP Kicks Off Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week**

GROUP is recognizing Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, a nationwide week of action where people draw attention to poverty. Staff and volunteers from **GROUP** will spend the week holding educational, community service, fundraising, and advocacy events to address these critical issues.

“Hunger and homelessness are epidemics that sadly affect too many members of our community,” said **PERSON**, **TITLE** for **GROUP**. “We’re organizing Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week to help concerned citizens tackle these issues head on, rally public support, and call for solutions.”

Every person deserves food on her plate and a roof over her head. Unfortunately, far too many people in **CITY** experience hunger and homelessness:

- The poverty rate in **CITY** is **XX%**.
- The poverty rate among children in **CITY** is **XX%**.
- [Find these first two statistics for your city at <http://www.city-data.com>]
- Here in **STATE**, an estimated **X,XXX** people are homeless on any given night.
- [Find this statistic for your state at <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>]

Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is co-sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness. The event originated at Villanova University in 1975 and now takes place each year in hundreds of communities across the country.

For Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, **GROUP** will be holding a series of events, including:

- **DESCRIPTION OF EVENT #1**
- **DESCRIPTION OF EVENT #2**

- ETC...

For information on Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week events in other cities, visit <http://hhweek.org>.

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DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

*The **National Coalition for the Homeless** is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission: To prevent and end homelessness while ensuring the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness are met and their civil rights protected. www.nationalhomeless.org*

*The **National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness (NSCAHH)** organizes college students to end hunger and homelessness. NSCAHH educates, trains, and engages students to use a variety of strategies to address these problems, including direct service, education, and fundraising. www.studentsagainsthunger.org*