



Girl Scouts - Diamonds 2016/2017 PR Handbook

This handbook will help you with ideas, information and resources you need for working with your local media to tell the Girl Scout story in a unified voice.

Pitching your Girl Scout Event to the Media

You may have already been actively promoting Girl Scouts to your local media, or this may be a new process for you. Either way, we're excited to have you tell the Girl Scout story and are here to help you along the way!

You, as a local contact, are an important link to local media reporters and editors. We need your help to promote more Girl Scout events and opportunities in your community. To support you, we created this handbook to give you the tools to secure local media coverage.

Girl Scouts - Diamonds has council-led media outlets for our population centers that are highly visible with large scale audiences. These include:

Little Rock

- KATV
- KARK
- Fox 16
- THV 11
- Alice 107.7
- B98.5
- KSSN 96
- *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*
- *Little Rock Family*
- *Soriée*
- *Inviting Arkansas*
- *Arkansas Business*
- *Kids Directory*

Texarkana

- *Texarkana Gazette*
- *Texarkana Parent*

Northwest Arkansas

- KHOG (40/29)
- KNWA
- *Celebrate Magazine*
- *3W*
- *Peekaboo*
- *NWA Kids Directory*

Fort Smith

- *City Wire*
- KFSM
- *Do South*
- *eFort Smith*
- *Southwest Times Record*

Jonesboro

- KAIT
- *Occasions Magazine*
- *Jonesboro Sun*

Getting the Word Out

Before you reach out to your local media, please touch base with the communications team - online@girlscoutsdiamonds.org to review your materials and ensure your content and branding is correct.

Making your lists and checking them twice!

Before you start, you need to know your audience. Listeners, readers and viewers of your local media span all ages and have a variety of interests. Decide which group your information is targeting. Are you holding an event for girls of a certain age group? Are you recruiting adult volunteers? Knowing who you are reaching is key. The communications team maintains an extensive list of media contacts, so let us know if you need a name.

Next, you'll need to make a list of local newspapers, blogs, and websites to contact. Your local paper, Chamber of Commerce and any smaller magazines will likely have free community calendars where you can post your event. This will also make them more apt to then contact you about featuring your event when they see it come through their inbox.

Making the right contact is key. Make sure you are pitching your information to the right person at the business. If you aren't sure, it never hurts to ask. The internet is also an excellent source to research contact information. You can use search engines to look up specific media outlets. If you find a reporter or staff person who provides good Girl Scout coverage, make sure you add a note on your list so you know for next time.

What you should know before you contact media.

In some cases, Girl Scouts – Diamonds may be able to help secure council-wide media coverage. Please contact the communications department – online@girlscoutsdiamonds.org before you contact the media if:

- You expect more than 100 people at your event AND you will be focusing on a Girl Scout initiative such as STEM, anti-bullying, community involvement or leadership.
- Your event will feature someone notable in the community or beyond.

You are representing more than Girl Scouts in your community.

Please keep in mind that even though you are working with your local media, you are representing the ENTIRE Girl Scouts – Diamonds Council. What you say to a newspaper in Hot Springs could be read on an online edition throughout all of our regions. With that being said, it's important to have consistent messaging and branding, which is why we are providing you with a Style Guide as well.

Remember, if a reporter asks you questions that move away from the local angle you are presenting and into areas that involve council operations, fundraising or other topics that pertain to the overall council, please refer them to the communications department or contact them for guidance at online@girlscoutsdiamonds.org.

- If you are asked a question that you don't know the answer to, it is ok to say you need to confirm. Call the reporter back after you confirm the answer, or refer them to the communications department.
- There is no such thing as "off the record." Be friendly with the reporter, but remember that anything you say can be printed. Stay focused on the positive ways Girl Scouting helps girls.
- Be thorough. Anticipate what questions the reporter might have for you before you contact them. Make sure you provide your contact information and follow up and respond quickly since they often have tight deadlines.

What stories do you pitch?

So, what kinds of topics and/or events should you pitch to your local media? While we all like to see Girl Scout stories in the media, the best ones show the public why Girl Scouting is important to the local community and why it's important to support Girl Scouting by becoming a member or with financial support.

Always include photos if your event has already happened or invite the paper to come to the event and let them know there will be great photo opportunities.

Local Events. If your service unit is having an event, check with your service unit director to see if anyone is handling media promotions. Assigning a public relations coordinator in your service unit to handle all of your local media promotions is a great idea. We have a public relations coordinator tool box on our website to help get you started:

<http://www.girlscoutsdiamonds.org/volunteers/volunteer-toolbox/>

Awards and Honors. When local girls, troops and volunteers are recognized for their achievements, let the media know. Get a quality photo from an awards ceremony and send a picture with the information you share with the media.

Note: Girl Scouts – Diamonds Communications Department sends media information for all Gold Award recipients to the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* as well as the local paper for each girl. For Silver and Bronze Awards, you will need to submit to your local paper.

Cookie Program. For service units: let your community know that girls will be selling Girl Scout Cookies in your area. Work with your service unit cookie manager to gather information. If you need photos to help tell the story of the Cookie Program, let us know. Don't forget to highlight the five skills girls learn: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills and business ethics. **You should not direct cookie sales information to one girl or troop – instead promote the overall program and how it benefits your community.**

Note: The Girl Scout Cookie Program is never to be called "Cookie Sale," always Cookie Program.

Membership Recruitment. When your service unit is working to recruit new members, the media is an important way to let the public know about what Girl Scouting does for girls and the local community. Find girls who are willing to be quoted and give their testimonials.

Service Projects. Typically, media loves to show how youth are making a difference in their community.

Guidelines for girls in the media

- Always get parental permission before involving girls in media promotion.
- For safety purposes, we do not use girl's last names in the media. First names and last initials are our standard practice.
- Be sure girls are comfortable talking to and working with the media. Girls should never talk to the media alone – make sure an adult is present at all times.
- If you have girls interested in working with the media, be on the lookout for our next MOD (Media on Demand) Squad training. MOD Squad is a council-led initiative in which girls are trained spokeswomen for Girl Scouts – Diamonds.

What format should you use?

Knowing when to send a media advisory, PSA (public service announcement) or press release is key. You should find most of the sample templates you need online, but contact the communications department if you need additional help.

Use the right tools for delivering your messages

For any tool you use to deliver your news, you need to make sure you cover the basics—the 5 Ws and H—who, what, when, where, why, and sometimes, how. Some other ways to maximize the effectiveness of your materials:

- Use clear, vivid language.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- If possible, have someone unfamiliar with the topic read or listen to your information to make sure you haven't omitted any key information.
- Check for proper grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Proof, proof, proof.

Below is information to help you make the determination of how to send your story to the media.

Community Calendar Listings. These are the most easily accessible outlets to nonprofits. Newspapers, blogs and local radio/ TV stations all have calendars promoting community events. You want to keep these listings brief, including just the details: who, what, when, where and how. Keep the description of the event short and sweet, using imagination to bring the event to life.

Radio Public Service Announcements. These should be sent to smaller radio markets for larger events such as the Girl Scout Cookie Program or girl recruitment events in your area.

A PSA is a very short (usually 30-60 seconds) “commercial” featuring an organization, event or issue. If a radio station agrees to air PSAs, most will generally write/produce their own. Your job will be to make sure they have all of the information they need and that they understand what information, message and audience is most important to you and your organization.

If you do write your own suggested PSA copy, be sure to read it out loud, preferably to someone not familiar with your event or organization. Make sure it sounds good, makes sense and is the correct length.

News Releases and Media Advisories. This is the quickest way to get your message across. During the Girl Scout Cookie Program, the communications department sends a statewide release about cookie sales beginning, and provide ready-made press releases for service units to announce booth sales. You simply fill in your local information and send. For other events we’ve provided a press release template for you. Simply fill in your information and send.

A **news release** tells the press what is new, interesting, exciting about your organization and your activities. The most important consideration of the news release is its NEWS value. It must give information that’s important to the readers.

The building blocks of the news release are the 5 Ws—who, what, why, when and where. You can also include how if it’s newsworthy. Always starting with these building blocks helps ensure that no essential facts are omitted. As you are planning to write the release, list each of the facts of the story, then prioritize. Use the most important element of the story as the lead. Be sure you always include a brief description of your local service unit or troop and Girl Scouts - Diamonds (called boilerplates) as the final paragraphs.

Be sure the most important details are included in the beginning of the release since editors usually start cutting stories from the bottom to make them fit.

When distributing the release make sure the method you use will get your release to the media in a timely manner. If you’re able to hand-deliver your release and know that your contact does not mind, it’s to your advantage to make that personal contact.

The **media advisory** is a short document used to entice the media to cover an event or activity. It can be used to follow-up on information distributed earlier in a news release, or it can be used on its own. An advisory generally goes out just prior to the event or activity it promotes.

Media advisories should not be longer than one page. You want to include just enough information to get the media interested. To get the rest of the story, they’ll need to call you or cover your event.

Other Sources of Media Contacts. Organizations of all sorts have newsletters for their membership. Occasionally they may not mind printing a brief article announcing an upcoming

event or opportunity such as community service. Service clubs that fall into this category include: local churches, Rotary, Jaycees, Kiwanis, Masonic Temples and Chambers of Commerce.

Note: Some political organizations have newsletters. Always remember that Girl Scouts are non-partisan, and the name of Girl Scouts may not be used to endorse a product or to endorse a political candidate.

Maximize your publicity materials:

Local angle: Always articulate how girls in your community benefit from Girl Scouts and/or from the event/activity you are promoting.

Goals and/or Objectives: Be specific about your goals and/or objectives. Relate your goal/objectives to how it benefits girls – what will they experience and/or learn?

Quotes: If they are appropriate and interesting, quotes from someone involved with the service unit, troop or event can be used to emphasize a key message, clarify, add a human angle, etc.

Photos: Include photos if they are good quality and you know that the media outlet will accept photos. Always include an interesting cutline and identify all people in the photo.

Once your story runs

- Make note of the reporter's name and keep it for future contact. If you worked with someone who was particularly helpful and interested in featuring future information about Girl Scouts, please let the communications department know so we can both thank that person and add him/her to our list of media contacts.
- Share your results. Email your media clips or links to the communications department.
- Sometimes (but rarely), the way a reporter presents information or asks questions may come across as negative. If this happens, please contact the communications department to discuss next steps. If you are asked a question you don't feel comfortable answering, you do not need to answer it.
- Finally, give yourself a pat on the back! Securing placement for stories takes creativity and effort on your part. Getting the Girl Scout story out there helps the public see how important Girl Scouting is to local girls and the local community. This can translate into increased girl membership, adult volunteers, financial donors and other community support.