



## Unit Public Relations 101

Why a news release? It's free; News coverage creates word-of-mouth, which creates trust; Media coverage adds credibility to your unit because people believe it more than advertising; Media coverage leads to more coverage; More coverage helps you recruit more members and families.

The news media serve as a liaison to reaching target audiences within your community. They act as a filter to disseminate information about your unit to consumers, i.e., parents, youth, educators, and businesses. Garnering positive coverage in the news media can be highly beneficial because it is viewed as an endorsement by a disinterested third party, which builds credibility for your unit and the good news activities that you are engaged in. *The press wants to talk to you.* Quite frankly, they've got a news hole to fill! And the story may as well be about your unit!

*Note: Some of this information was gleaned from your National Council Public Relations Department. Their complete Guide to Public Relations 101 can be found here:*

<https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/marketing/pdf/pr101.pdf>

### Top 3 Reasons Why You Should Send Regular Press Releases

#### **1. Garners attention and awareness**

- Raises awareness by generating local news coverage for your unit.
- An effective press release controls how your unit is viewed. You can build your brand image and shape public perception through an informative official statement with facts.
- Presents the overwhelming positive impact of Scouting.

#### **2. Helps build relationships with your local media**

Journalists need stories – if you can help them with this, it could be the start of a relationship with someone in the media. Media outlets have far more reach than your unit alone, so it makes sense to use press releases to garner more attention and awareness. Sending press releases is a mutually beneficial exercise.

#### **3. Attract new members and families!**

There may be folks in your community who are unaware about your Scouting activity. News releases will help families learn more about your unit and how to find you.

### When Should You Send A Press Release?

Whenever you want to share something that's newsworthy! But how do you decide if something is *newsworthy*? Here are a few factors to consider:



- **Impact** – Is your unit conducting a Food Drive? Did you do a service project at Camp Squanto, Nobscot Scout Reservation or Camp Resolute?
- **Immediacy** – Do you have a recruitment night coming up? Popcorn Sales event? Eagle Court of Honor?
- **Recognition** – Did one of your members complete an Eagle Project? Did you have a Virtual Troop Campout?

### What Is News?

News is “new.” It’s a launch or an event that is relevant to consumers. It’s something that makes a difference or an impact. News doesn’t operate in a vacuum; rather, it’s up to you to identify and create it and then share it with the media. It has to be organized and well thought out.

An example of a newsworthy event is a Scout from your local council being chosen as a delegate for the Report to the State annual event. Or your unit embarking on a cross- country trip to take on the Philmont High Adventure Ranch. Or the community Good Turn that’s going to be conducted by your Cub Pack. If properly positioned with a news release sent to the media, these events can turn into a wealth of local coverage. But turning something seemingly ordinary into something newsworthy requires planning, time, and creativity.

### What News Isn’t

News can’t be an afterthought to generate coverage for something at the last minute or that already occurred. News is ultimately determined by the reporter/editor, not by you, so it’s important to understand the reporter’s journalist style and points of interest. In general, journalists are trying to portray an objective point of view and want to appear as unbiased as possible. News is not business as usual, nor is it promotional. It is not necessarily a new version of an existing initiative. Remember, for the media to be interested, they must feel as if they are “breaking” timely news.

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You know your local paper best! Check out their stories and what they cover – that will give you the best idea about the type of news they are looking for!

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### Recruit A Unit PR Person

Having a volunteer in your unit with the responsibility for PR will help establish a regular cycle of news. She/he will be on the lookout for newsworthy events, taking photos and sending out news releases. It’s also extremely valuable to develop a relationship with a local reporter. That way, they can also contact you if they have story ideas or questions.

### Watch The Timing

When does your local media publish? What day does it come out? Figure that your release needs to be on their desk at least a week in advance.



## Writing A News Release

The first step in writing a press release is understanding the press release format. If you use a format that a journalist is familiar with, your odds of getting published are higher. Here's an example of a typical press release format:

**Press Contact:** Name and contact details of your media coordinator or communications executive. Typically, anyone who the reporter can get in touch with to get more information. *Put this in the upper right hand corner of the first page only.*

**Contact:** Larry Bearfield  
Troop 414  
617-584-5001  
Larry@RedBearFam.com

**Headline:** Your press release headline is the first thing they'll see. Write a catchy title that clearly explains what the release is about. Use action verbs. Be direct. Be concise.

### Scouts BSA Troop 414 Headed To New Mexico For A 10-Day Backpacking Adventure

**Lead:** Your lead is the first paragraph that summarizes the most important information about your story. Usually, it runs about 30-45 words. This first paragraph has to answer the "5 Ws" as concisely as possible.

- Who: Who's involved in the news story? Which person or unit is involved?
- What: What's happening? What's it about?
- When: When did this story or event happen? When is it going to happen?
- Where: Where did or will this story or event take place?
- Why: Why is this information relevant to a reader of these media outlets?

NEWTON, MA (June 15, 2021) – Members of Scouts BSA Troop 414 will be heading to Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico on June 30 for a 10-day back packing adventure. The 12 Scouts, accompanied by two adult leaders, plan on hiking 80 miles at elevations reaching 11,000'. Philmont, located in the San de Cristo Mountains, encompasses 141,000 acres and offers Scouts a self-sufficient adventure that teaches them leadership, teamwork and Scout skills while having a world of fun!

**Body:** Detailed information provided in decreasing levels of importance. The goal of the body is to describe all the relevant details of the story and your unit's involvement in it. The key word here is relevant.

*Every great press release uses the inverted pyramid formula to do this:*

You include the most pertinent details right at the top and then get into the less vital aspects as you go on. These of quotes reinforces your message.

The Scouts have been training for the past several months as they learned how to work together as a team. They spent five weekends at Nobscot Scout Reservation



hiking to the upper backcountry where they set up their campsites and cooked their food. The next day they packed up and moved on to a new site as they simulated the multi-day experience that lies ahead.

“In the beginning, the Scouts had to discover how to work best together because they will need to rely on one another in pretty harsh environments,” said Scoutmaster Patrick Maher. “They will be experiencing high elevations with days of backpacking over rugged terrain. This adventure will be unlike anything they’ve ever done so it will test their resilience.”

After completing their adventure, the Troop plans on doing some sight-seeing that will include the Grand Canyon and the US Air Force Academy.

**Boilerplate:** A few words describing your unit to the audience. Your boilerplate is a standardized copy of what your organization is and stands for. When you write a boilerplate, you are essentially condensing facts, aspirations and marketing goals – all into one short paragraph.

Scout Troop 414 is a youth-led organization comprised of 32 Scouts ranging in age from 11 to 18. They have been organized as a Troop for 75 years and have 27 Scouts who have achieved the Eagle Rank. Troop 414 meets every Thursday night at 7:00 in the gymnasium of the Church of All Saints located at 68 Walnut Street, Newtonville.

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^ This indicates that it’s the end of the release ^

A local release should be a single page – two max. If a reporter wants more info they’ll contact you.

**Note:** *While there’s no **preferred** font for your press release, sticking to a common font like Times New Roman is a good idea. Now’s not the time for a cute typeface.*

### Who Do You Send Your Release To?

The Mayflower Council Marketing Committee has developed a Guide to Media that identifies every media outlet with contact information in every one of the 62 communities that make up our Council. Contact your Commissioner for a list of media in your town!

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**Good luck!**

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