



# VFW AUXILIARY

## **How to Share Your Local Auxiliary Story Ideas and Events with Local Media**

UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR UNCOMMON HEROES™



# VFW AUXILIARY

## How Does **Your** Auxiliary Promote Itself in **Your** Community?

- Newspapers
- Radio
- TV
- Fliers
- Facebook/Twitter/Instagram



# VFW AUXILIARY

## What's NOT Newsworthy?

- Your meetings.
- Who was elected to various positions in your Local Auxiliary.
- When you are having a spaghetti dinner, Bingo nights, etc.

**These are all good Calendar of Event, Local Tidbit items, etc.  
NOT Feature Stories.**



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**Before you contact anyone to cover an event your Auxiliary is hosting or participating in, **answer the following questions:****

- Are local people involved? (yes or no)
- Is the event happening in the near future - within the next month? (yes or no)
- Will non-members be interested in attending or hearing about the event? (yes or no)
- Will the event help the local community? (yes or no) If yes, how? (describe)
- Is the activity or event unique? (yes or no)
- Does the activity or event promote a new idea or concept? (yes or no)



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## **What is Newsworthy?**

- Events hosted by an Auxiliary at a VA facility.
- Decorating graves for Veterans Day and Memorial Day; participating in Wreaths Across America.
- Assisting families of deployed troops (Hosting holiday events, i.e. Christmas parties, Easter Egg hunts, Trick-or-Treat events, offering financial assistance, etc.)
- Adopting a Unit through the VFW's Veteran and Military Support Program.
- Collecting supplies for deployed troops.
- Meeting troops at the airport as they return from deployment and helping them complete their journey home.



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## **What is Newsworthy?**

- Members and youth who are participating in a “Buddy”<sup>®</sup> Poppy Drive or POW/MIA remembrance ceremony.
- Scholarship winners such as the winner of the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest.
- Flag presentations to community groups.
- Publicizing what your Auxiliary has done to help natural disaster victims.
- National President’s Visit.
- Repairs on a Veteran’s Home/Building a Wheelchair Ramp/etc.
- Walks/Runs/Events to raise awareness/funds for Veteran Issues/PTSD.



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## Something to Note

- While we encourage you to share events/activities that are hosted jointly with the VFW, we are really interested in what your Auxiliary is doing in your community!
- While our mission is to support veterans, active-duty military and their families, we are two separate organizations.
- This is applicable for the National VFW Auxiliary Magazine and Facebook page as well as other media.



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**Once you decide something is newsworthy, how do you **get it covered** by news media?**





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## How to Get Your Event Covered

- Introduce yourself and the organization to members of the media.
- Submit news releases to the media on a regular basis (i.e. monthly).
- Contact the media when something unique or unexpected happens.
- Be the contact person the media calls to get information related to the VFW Auxiliary and its area of expertise.
- Maintain contact via email with various TV stations, newspapers and other publications.
- Recognize media who have published articles by giving them a Communications Award, available free from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters website.
- Be excited about all your activities, events and programs.



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## Who to Contact

- At the weekly newspaper, ask for the Editor.
- At the daily newspaper, ask for the City or Metro Editor, or the Editor or columnist for the section or column where you want your article to run.
- At radio stations, ask for the News Director, if it is newsworthy; Program Director, for a talk show or the calendar.
- At TV stations, ask for the News Director or Assignment Editor if you want the station to cover an event.
- For a TV talk show, ask for the Program Director or the Producer of the show.
- If you don't know whom to contact, ask the person answering the phone.
- Keep a list of contacts at local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations.



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## Suggested Media Contact Timeline

### One-Two Months Prior

- Call and email to secure public service time on TV or radio.
- Call and email to arrange interviews on TV or radio talk shows.
- Email to be included on TV or newspaper community calendars.

### Two Weeks Prior

- Email news release to newspapers, TV and radio. Mention if there will be a photo or video opportunity.

### One Week Prior

- Email second release and Fact Sheet to Assignment Editors at TV and radio stations to encourage them to cover the event. Mention if there will be a photo or video opportunity.

### Three-Five Days Prior

- Follow-up phone calls and emails to Assignment Editors at TV/radio and Editors at newspapers to see if someone will cover the event. *Only do this if it is really an important event, and if there is something that is particularly newsworthy about it.* Mention if there will be a photo or video opportunity.



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## Press Releases: What to Include

### Contact Information

- Who can this reporter follow up with? Don't forget to include a contact(s) name, email address and phone number.
- This typically appears at the top of the page above the headline.

### Headline Tips

- Keep it Short
- Use Active Voice
- Avoid Jargon
- Write it Last



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## Press Releases: What to Include

### **First sentence: Get Their Attention!**

When you read a book or article, isn't a good beginning what keeps you reading? The same holds true for a press release or subject line in an email when you're pitching your idea to the press. Make this first sentence or email subject interesting and factual.



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## Press Releases: What to Include

### First Paragraph: Be Concise and Get to the Point

Always include the who, what, where, when and why

- **Who** – Who are you talking about? Can you include a quote from them?
- **What** – What is the event or activity?
- **Where/When** – Where and when can the reporter cover this story?
- **Why** – Why would the reporter want to cover this? How is it interesting or unique?



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## Press Releases: What to Include

### Supporting Information

- A good release will be no longer than one page at best and a page and a half at most. Reporters scan most releases. **Less is more! Make sure you've included all of the important whos, whats, wheres, whens and whys.**
- Spellcheck, proofread and ask a friend to take a look!
- Provide relevant links to your website or Facebook page, a copy of the National Facts Leaflet and the National Elevator Speech where writers can learn more about your mission and what you've already accomplished.
- Is this a story and a photo opportunity? Say so! Include a line at the top of the release like: Photo opportunity: (Tell the news outlet about the photo opportunity here).
- Getting a photograph with caption information is still great publicity!



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## You Received Coverage. **Now What?**

- Write a thank you note and/or email to the person who covered the activity/event. If they did a great job, copy their supervisor/boss on the email.
- If photos were taken at the event, ask for them to be emailed to you or the appropriate person at your Auxiliary.
- Obtain the online link to the newspaper story or television/radio interview and post it to your Auxiliary's website and/or Facebook page.
- Email the online link to the newspaper story or television/radio interview to your Department President and National Headquarters. If you received photos, email those as well.
- Print out a copy of the story for your Auxiliary's Historian.