

## TIPS FOR TALKING TO THE MEDIA

Getting media attention is not a matter of luck—it is a matter of persistence and creativity.

Consider these ideas for giving the media reason to cover your organization, event or activity:

- 1. Think about your organization or event in terms of news by leveraging an existing story to generate more interest.** For example, if a prominent celebrity or community member is diagnosed with cancer, write letters to the editor that explains how this person is one of many.
- 2. Have press events rather than press conferences.** Press conferences involve individual people talking at a podium; press events have many people involved in an activity. A rally, race or other event is more compelling because it is dynamic.
- 3. Develop spokespeople.** Credible people who can talk to reporters are a wonderful tool. In addition to cancer survivors, consider caregivers, healthcare providers or researchers who can illuminate your points.
- 4. Create events with good visuals.** If there is color, liveliness and people, the press is more likely to have a photo to run in print or online news, thus increasing your chances of good coverage. Build action into your press events.
- 5. Expand your definition of media.** Post your own blog or post on other blogs or online forums; consider small neighborhood weekly or specialty papers as media outlets; participate in call-in radio shows. All of these venues have active readers and listeners you can reach with your message.
- 6. Make it personal.** Personal experiences are incredibly compelling. They also illustrate the need for change and can be linked to larger statistics about cancer generally. Let your personal stories be the centerpiece of your message.
- 7. Make it relevant.** If you are working with a local media outlet, reference the number of people affected by cancer in your state or city, where available. Talk about local programs, events and organizations if appropriate to your story. You may also consider including information about the opinions or voting records of you members of Congress.
- 8. Suggest bold solutions.** The media will cover new ideas or innovative solutions to community problems.
- 9. Be persistent.** Build relationships with reporters who cover issues that relate to the issues your organization is addressing. Start with the health reporters, but don't forget those who cover politics and business, both of which have huge impact on cancer related issues.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Review your key messages ahead of time. Confidence in the message will increase your success.
- Think conservatively when choosing apparel. Avoid bold patterns, stripes and excessive jewelry, as they do not photograph well and may detract attention from what you are saying.
- Introduce yourself to the reporter and photographer.
- Thank the reporter before and again after an interview.
- Ask when the story will air. Do not ask them to provide copies.
- Do not consume caffeine or liquor prior to the interview.
- Do not smoke or chew gum (even during phone interviews).

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Think of the interview as a conversation.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Answer first. Explain second. Follow up with a more detailed explanation if necessary.
- Finish your point and stop talking. Do not be afraid of silence.
- Avoid one-word answers. Avoid beginning with, "Like I said before..."
- Back up your statements with facts.
- Correct any fundamentally incorrect statements made by the interviewer.
- Do not be afraid to say "I don't know." Simply say, "I don't know the answer to that, but I will find out and get back to you. What is your deadline?"
- Always repeat a key message if the reporter asks, "Is there anything else you want to tell me?"

## IN PERSON

- Look at the interviewer, not the camera.
- Try to answer in 20-second sound bites.
- Be aware that the camera may be looking at you even when you think it's not.
- Lean slightly forward in your chair with your feet on the floor or neatly crossed if sitting for TV.
- Have good eye contact with the reporter.
- Make your facial expression match what you are talking about. For example, do not smile if quoting statistics about cancer mortality.
- Do not rock in your chair or turn in your chair.
- Keep your hands in your lap or at your sides...not in your pockets or crossed in front of your chest.

## BY PHONE

- Turn off your computer monitor during a phone interview
- Sit up straight or stand, and smile.
- Have your key messages in front of you for reference.
- Turn off your cell phone. If it rings – even on vibrate – it will distract you.