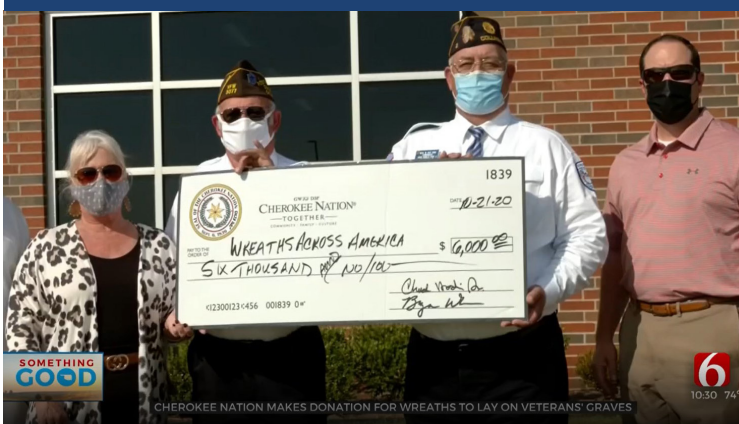


PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLKIT

REMEMBER ★ HONOR ★ TEACH



VOLUNTEER MEDIA RELATIONS

WHAT ARE MEDIA, EARNED MEDIA AND MEDIA ADVOCACY?

Earned media is publicity or exposure gained from methods other than paid advertising. Earned media is the result of sharing or pitching your story/news to media channels (reporters, producers, journalists, editors, etc.).

- ★ Media channels include newspapers, TV, Radio, Websites, Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube), Blogs, Other
- ★ Methods of receiving this media include, print, broadcast, digitally on computers, iPads or smart phones.

Media advocacy is defined as the strategic use of mass media to advance public initiatives. Through media advocacy volunteers have the ability to:

- ★ Changes the way community members currently honor veterans;
- ★ Creates a reliable, consistent stream of publicity for your WAA efforts; and
- ★ Motivate community members and people of influence to get involved.

HOW DO YOU BUILD MEDIA ADVOCACY?

- ★ Establish personal relationships with local media contacts;
- ★ Be available for interviews or background when needed;
- ★ Be open and generous with information about the mission;
- ★ Be trustworthy and accurate;
- ★ Keep them informed and up to date; and
- ★ Being pleasant, respectful, understanding, and grateful when coverage does appear.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Roles of the media:

1. Serving the community;
2. Protecting the community;
3. Informing the community; and
4. Making money and staying in business to fulfill the above.

You can work with the media by:

- ★ Informing the local media outlets/reporters about the mission and the way volunteers are sharing it locally;
- ★ Utilize relevant news pegs to insert the work you are doing for the mission to add to another larger topic, such as Veterans' Day, Military Appreciation Month, etc.;

- ★ Encourage other professionals and community members to find out more about the organization.

What the media is looking for:

- ★ Quality information (detailed press releases);
- ★ Organizations and contacts, they can rely upon;
- ★ Information in advance with timely reminders (usually 1 month in advance with reminder 2 weeks in advance); and
- ★ Understanding of their work and limitations.

WARNING: Information can have many interpretations!

WHY SHOULD YOU WORK WITH THE MEDIA?

- ★ To inform you community/general audience about the work you are doing;
- ★ To persuade your community/general audience to become involved in the mission;
- ★ To influence the media to engage and share WAA messaging; and
- ★ To do something positive for the community!

WHEN SHOULD YOU FOCUS ON THE MEDIA?

- ★ Year-round!
- ★ Key in on dates important to the media, public and your organization;
- ★ Pick and choose dates that are manageable but create a consistent message year-round, breaking down into manageable timeframes (quarterly is great)
- ★ Watch for opportunities that may arise in national news about veterans and military families and be seen as a relevant source to local media;
- ★ Pass along information about achievements and announcements, special events and other important information such as fundraising.

SETTING GOALS

- ★ Set a calendar with stories to share throughout the year;
- ★ Inform the media and the public about your events;
- ★ Get attention through use of template materials WAA HQ :
- ★ Public Service Announcements (PSA) tv and radio;
- ★ Press Releases and media advisories;
- ★ Local event materials;
- ★ Share regular content posted on HQ official media channels: Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter), Wreaths Across America Radio and website and blog content!

HOW DO YOU SET UP A MEDIA CAMPAIGN?

- ★ Prepare your agenda, calendar and media contacts;
- ★ Pay attention to area happenings throughout the year;
- ★ Seek help (WAA has resources that can offer guidance and information);
- ★ Don't leave things to the last minute in December and expect media to get involved; and most important...
- ★ Keep at it and don't give up, this is a process that takes time!

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEER MEDIA RELATIONS

WHAT ARE MEDIA, EARNED MEDIA AND MEDIA ADVOCACY?

Media, which is the plural form of ‘medium,’ are channels of communication: television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other written materials (or ‘print media’), and more often now, the Internet (which includes, Webpages, social media, blogs, and podcasts.)

These channels are used to spread or transmit information. Which in this case, will be about Wreaths Across America (WAA) and your work in the local community. As a registered volunteer, you will be acting as a local representative of WAA to the general public.

Earned Media is publicity or exposure gained from methods other than paid advertising. Earned media is the result of sharing or pitching your story/news to media channels (reporters, producers, journalists, editors, etc.).

To help WAA communicate the mission to “Remember, Honor and Teach” and to realize 100% success to honor local veterans in your community, it requires a yearlong commitment to communication and media efforts. The best way to think about National Wreaths Across America Day is to think of it like a car. If you want to drive your car, you have to go outside, turn the key, and start it up. If you drive it every day then a successful start also becomes assured. However, if you let the car sit for an entire year without starting it and then go outside and try and start it when you need it most, it’s more likely not going to work for you. Media works in a very similar manner!

Advocacy means openly supporting a certain viewpoint or group of people. In this case you are advocating to build awareness and understanding for the mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach for the specific cause to lay veterans’ wreaths on the headstone of American heroes each December. In many cases this will mean an on-going effort to persuade the local community and, in some cases, regional agencies or other entities to grant specific rights or permissions or gather donations.

Media advocacy is the use of any form of media to help promote an organizations or company’s objectives or goals, which come from the group's vision and mission.

For examples, as a volunteer, you will be advocating for Wreaths Across America, and working to lay veterans’ wreaths in December. You would try to present our mission of “Remember, Honor and Teach” as well as the effort to lay wreaths in December to the media and public in a way that:

- ★ Changes the way community members currently honor our countries veterans. You might want to make it clear who it benefits and why, or how it can impact living family, loved ones and the community.
- ★ Creates a reliable, consistent stream of publicity for your WAA group and your groups activities, including articles and news items about the veterans buried locally, the impact on local families, and about what your work entails as well as who it benefits; personal interest stories; success stories; interviews with volunteers and current and former military members, etc.
- ★ Motivate community members and policy makers to get involved. You probably have ideas about what could be done in regards to public education, participation and funding, however, without the involvement of community influencers, your message will be trapped within

the circle of your own influence. Whether you need volunteers, public and corporate support, or donations, the media can help with you with all of these.

As a media advocate, you can work with the media by:

- ★ Informing the local public about the WAA mission and WHY it is of importance to them.
- ★ Recast problems such as pandemics, political divide, and economic issues as opportunities to change and do something positive. It is a great time to ask for help to make these efforts successful by highlighting WAA's commitment to our nation's veterans which can be a very powerful and positive message. The best way to utilize the media for advocacy is to avoid negative words like "terrible, stressful, struggling or cancelled." By remaining positive and forging ahead with the help of new supporters (like the folks in the media), we can honor our heroes in the face of adversity and make them proud.
- ★ Encourage other professionals and community members to find out more about the organization, to help spread the word to other community leaders and influencers and to personally get involved.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

If you've ever watched local nightly news, you've probably seen non-profit organizations, charitable events, and community make a plea to the audience for help, donations, volunteers, and participation. The reason for this is simple: "People won't come to your party if they don't get invited." Media is your opportunity to invite people to participate, donate, partner, or sponsor.

There are many ways you can work with the media and we will discuss some of those opportunities here. However, a fair question from the start is: "why would we (the media) want to work with you (WAA)?"

The answer lies in the nature of their industry. You see, to remain relevant to their community, they have to serve the community and in some cases (such as radio) they are actually mandated to serve the community in which they are located.

So, what does serve the community mean to the media?

1. It means talking about events and happenings within the local area.
2. Protecting the residents within that local area.

For example, using the directives above: The media will broadcast a local parade that highlights groups doing good work in the community. But, not if they didn't get a permit and it will block traffic to a hospital.

You see! As part of serving the community, the media wants to broadcast your community events and messages but to help protect the community, they are very selective about who they work with.

The best way to build trust with the media is to write reporters, introduce yourselves, offer help with stories about veterans, military families or other aspects connected to the WAA mission that they may be writing about and be ready to offer resources such as: people to interview, pictures, video, and information sources like WAA official social media pages, radio stream and website.

This is also where working with a well-known national organization like Wreaths Across America comes in handy. As a TRUSTED source of information, we meet the media's need for community protection and that helps you when submitting information for their community service.

BE AWARE!

Several times we have heard the complaint: “I submitted my press release information to the media and they did nothing with it.”

Understand that there could be a number of reasons for this situation:

1. **The quality of your press release.**

The media is looking community information that will be enjoyed by their audience and speak to the positivity of the people living there (something uplifting or informative.) Also, they are looking for something that acts as easy reference with clear information, addresses, contacts, directions, and an overview of what’s happening. In some case they like folks to go the extra mile and provide the community human interest aspect of a story which includes stories of a local veteran, their family, their service to country, their service to community, or interesting facts. All these elements will help you put together a press release that will be of interest to potential media partners.

2. **They don’t know you.**

Although we all hope that everyone has heard about WAA, we can’t assume that everyone knows who we are. This is why it is important to take the opportunity to introduce yourself to local media outlets, build relationships, build trust, find the reporters most likely to report on military and veteran stories in your area and if that person doesn’t exist, help someone(s) in your area become that person.

The more you make yourself a good resource of information for a media person, the more likely they will start seeking you out for media opportunities or be willing to pass along your media information.

3. **Administration.**

All media outlets track their community service and maintain a public file of all the organizations and efforts that they helped publicize. In order to meet their administrative needs, these requests have to be submitted at least two weeks in advance (some organizations have more stringent requirements and we suggest that you consider sending them concrete information one month in advance with “a friendly reminder” follow-up about two weeks before your event).

Remember, part of the media’s thought process is to protect the community and if an event organizer sends a message about their event just a few days before it happens, internally it creates the question as to what other things are last minute thoughts including public safety, permits, funding, personnel to handle crowds and more.

4. **Resource Management.**

Continuing from the thought above, many media outlets have a finite set of resources. For example: a small TV station may only have one news van. This means, if you contacted a media outlet at the last moment, their staff, van, and cameras may already be heading off to do another story when you contacted them.

Sending your information earlier rather than later puts you on their radar/calendar and also puts you at the front of the line of other organizations and events all vying for the same attention. By being proactive rather than reactive you increase your opportunities.

A WARNING ABOUT WORKING WITH THE MEDIA!

Reporters' backgrounds and experience vary, and as much as journalists try to be objective, they have biases like everyone else (and sometime so do the organizations that they work for). Different perspectives and differing approaches on how media are presented to the community can result in different angles to each story.

For example:

Wreaths Across America Day – A great way to show your respect for those who fought for our freedoms.

Wreaths Across America Day – A great way to show your compassion for the family that miss their loved ones around the holidays.

Wreaths Across America Day – A great American story of one man who started a social movement.

Same story, three different angles!

In addition, media have to be quick studies. You may have 20 years of experience running your particular event, but the media person you're involving most likely just met you and the organization and now has to try to learn everything you know in a day or two to write a good story. They have to depend on the information they find or are given, and they're human which mean that sometimes they are going to get some things wrong, be confused, or find contradictory information through their research which then puts them in "protect the community" mode.

All of this is why it is important to:

- ★ stick to the facts,
- ★ stay positive,
- ★ offer personal experiences that people can better their lives from, and relate too,
- ★ make sure you're staying on established messaging (like remember, honor, teach),
- ★ and don't try an answer questions that you don't know the answers too!

Instead, be a valuable resource where the media can get their question answered while highlighting the positive impact that the organization has on the community.

Also, please keep in mind that you are acting as a representative of Wreaths Across America and our goal is to build positive media relationships where and whenever we can. If you get on the wrong side of media people, treat them with disrespect, make up answers, don't keep appointments, don't respond to emails and phone calls quickly (as they have tight deadlines to meet), and are given incorrect or changing information, it increases the chance of getting a negative story or worse, nothing at all as they may deem you an unreliable source and never talk about WAA.

WHY SHOULD YOU WORK WITH THE MEDIA?

Despite the pitfalls, getting involved with the media, it can yield great benefits. Newspapers, television, radio, the internet and social media have access to different and new audiences.

Some specific reasons for media advocacy are:

- ★ To inform the media and through them, the public, about who and what really contributes to

community efforts, and the choices that individuals make about the behaviors that affect the community as a whole.

- ★ To persuade the media to cover the kinds of stories that will ‘light a fire’ under other community members, so that they get involved and contribute to community-based solutions.
- ★ To influence the media to give Wreaths Across America extensive coverage, allowing you to tell your stories and live the mission of remember, honor, teach.
- ★ To give communities more control by letting residents who might not otherwise be heard have a stronger voice in the media. Shining the spotlight on a community can give its members the hope and desire to also do something positive.

WHEN SHOULD YOU FOCUS ON THE MEDIA?

You should always focus on the media. As you now know, media coverage is a year-round endeavor. In order to make a year-long effort work, you’re going to need to make a plan.

For example:

Quarter one (Jan – March) highlight volunteer and sponsor efforts with thank you’s and stories in the media all while encouraging others to get involved for the upcoming spring and summer events.

Quarter two (April - June) Execute events with your new volunteers and sponsors while fundraising. Building upon their passions and circles of influence can help jumpstart your donation efforts for Wreaths Across America Day.

Quarter three (July - September) As most people take vacations before their kids go back to school, this is a good time to get involved with the community. People are looking to get out with their families for community events such as parades and town fairs. To be at these events letting folks know we are in the community and looking for volunteers and donations for Wreaths Day which will be coming up in a few short months. It’s also a great time to see what businesses get involved in supporting local efforts for future sponsorships.

Quarter four (October – December) If you’ve done everything in the first three quarters, you will hopefully have put yourself in a good situation in terms of volunteers, donations, and sponsors as you heading into the busy season which really starts in October as you have the opportunity to approach the media with some great information about local veterans buried in your cemetery for veterans Day. From Veterans Day to National Wreaths Across America Day and beyond into Wreath Retirement Day (when your year starts all over again) will be a very active time with much attention stemming from the relationships in the media and community that you have been fostering all year.

GOOD TIMES TO FOCUS EXTRA ENERGY ON THE MEDIA INCLUDE:

- ★ During the announcement of a new project. For example, a group in Ohio mapped their cemetery using drone technology. The undertaking of this project showed others how a new technology could be utilized and at the same time drew attention to WAA and its mission.
- ★ When you have information that can be tied to community news. For example, a veteran’s birthday parade. If you know of a local veteran who is fortunate enough to have a town parade in their honor, simply by knowing his/her history and sharing it with the media you are living the mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach.
- ★ Opportunity for publicity. For example, Memorial Day Parades, Fourth of July, Veterans Day.

These are national and local events in which the local audience will already be active and gathering, and by being there we are not only raising awareness of our presence in the community but we are also showing that we are supportive of other people's efforts as much as we want them to participate in our own.

- ★ When your issue has reached national level of awareness. For example, When Arlington National Cemetery stated that they would not be holding Wreaths Across America Day. By working with the media and keeping them informed of all the latest news and developments LOCALLY while this will be happening nationally, it helped people like you step forward and get some local media attention about the local effort.
- ★ When you've achieved something important. For example, Wreaths Across America Day. It's not enough to hold the day, but to let everyone know how they contributed to its success.

Some other items that you may want to add to your calendar for outreach in your community include:

- The WAA Mobile Education Exhibit coming to your area;
- Running for Wreaths races that HQ will be hosting for anyone to participate;
- New participating location or group to announce;
- Partnerships with a new company sponsor or trucking partner in your area;
- Reached wreath sponsorship goal!

Monthly media opportunities/ideas to consider include:

January

- Wreath Retirement Day
- WAA new theme for the year
- Matching Campaign (held in 2020)

February

- The Anniversary of the Four Chaplains. WAA HQ typically host an annual event to honor these four heroes; you can share this with your local community as well to help TEACH.
- Black History Month: A good time to highlight the sacrifices of African American veterans in your community all month long.
- The Mobile Education Exhibit hits the road (2021 – starting in Texas)
- Oscar night – A great night to highlight movies about veterans, such as Saving Private Ryan which was originally the true story of the Fighting Sullivan's; the areas in which they were filmed Gettysburg and the movie Glory; actors and producers who work veteran causes such as Gary Sinise, Tom Hanks, Steve Spielberg; or the true stories of real heroes from your area!

March

- Have a float (AKA your neighbors F-150 towing a trailer you decorated) in your local St Patrick's parade.

April

- April 19th Patriots Day a day of American pride that is also a day of remembrance in Boston.
- Arbor Day and Earth Day are a good time to help your local cemetery highlight the good work that they do to keep up their grounds for Wreaths Day and to reinforce your efforts to help them by talking about wreath retirement efforts.

May

- Mother's Day, use as a news hook to tell a story about a local Gold Star Mom
- VE Day WWII
- Armed Forces Day
- Memorial Day

June

- Father's Day, use as a news hook to tell a story about a local Gold Star Dad
- June 6th Anniversary of D-Day
- June 14th Flag Day
- Juneteen (June 19) A good day to highlight the sacrifices of an African American hero in your community

July

- Wreaths Across America Giving in July Campaign – highlight Sponsorship groups across the country “doing good twice” in their community through the \$5 back program.
- Independence Day: Celebrate Patriotism in your Community.
- Olympics begin, a good time to get the local community involved in a virtual Stem to Stone road race held by HQ!

August

- August 14 the V-J day
- September
- 2nd VJ day WWII
- 9/11 flag waving, a national effort to step out your home four times and wave a flag for one minute each time.
- 24th is Native American Day: a good time to highlight the contributions of native American veterans buried in your community, if applicable.

October

- AT&T Text-to-donate program (if in your area)
- Wreaths Across America Radio's Holiday Greetings to and from the troops!
- Wreaths Across America radio Veterans' Day special program in your area.

November

- Mission BBQ Heroes Cup Campaign kickoff

- Jersey Mikes Campaign (2021, details to come)
- November 11, Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving – a good time to highlight telling stories and remembering lost family members around the family table when everyone is together.
- Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday and Giving Tuesday – opportunity to promote giving the gift of a remembrance to someone this holiday season.

December

- Dec 7th a day that will live in infamy that needs remembrance (especially for our friends in HI)
- Wreaths Across America Day – December 18th, 2021
- State House events leading up to Wreaths Across America Day
- Escort to Arlington

We know there is a lot here to consider, and suggest that you only choose events and days that make sense for your community, your history and your situation and add your own events and important dates as you see fit. Please do not to force disingenuous media in which you truly have nothing to share.

We don't make these suggestions looking so you can seek media attention, we make them so that you can wisely utilize media opportunities to Remember, Honor and Teach about the veterans in the cemetery that you serve and gain awareness for your effort to serve them. But as you can see, there are many opportunities.

Also included in this list are the many times that the national office will have press releases and information that you can use, repackage and share for your local community. If you were to offer local events and share national efforts intermixed with select media opportunities that help honor fallen heroes then you can have a full year's worth of communication in your local media.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Establish personal relationships

As we've mentioned, the first step in working with the media is to establish personal contact with at least one of the people at any media outlet you'll need to deal with. Having a personal contact means that there's a specific person to talk to whenever you call or e-mail, and that you can develop a relationship with that person.

Developing a relationship doesn't necessarily mean starting a friendship – although that can happen – but rather establishing a working relationship that's friendly and comfortable. That implies mutual respect and a willingness to help the other person. It also implies both the comfort to say “no” when you're asked to do something that you can't or that wouldn't be appropriate for your organization, and the comfort to accept a “no” to your request without it damaging the relationship on either side. Having good working relationships with people in the media will make working with them easier and more pleasant for both of you.

GIVE AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE

An important part of establishing and maintaining a relationship, and of working with the media in general, is giving media people what they need to do their jobs. That includes:

- ★ Be available when you're needed. When your contacts in the media call, answer. If you can't respond immediately, get back to them as soon as you can or locate a fellow volunteer that can. Remember, the media we receive at the grassroots level is a free and appreciated service the media provides. If we are not available or make it hard for them to do their jobs, then they can just as easily give that media opportunity to another organization.
- ★ Be open. Be as open and generous as you can with information without getting yourself or your organization in trouble. The first rule of marketing is “do no harm.”
- ★ Be trustworthy. Always tell the truth. As a representative of the WAA brand, we expect volunteers to always be truthful when discussing the program.
- ★ Be accurate. Make sure you have the facts before you make a statement. If you don't have the answer to a question, promise to get it and contact your liaison or HQ to get back to the reporter quickly. If you quote statistics, make sure they're from a recent reliable source – WAA HQ. If your information is consistently accurate, the media will turn to you as a source of information about your issue.
- ★ Alert the media to stories that they might be interested in. These might include human interest stories, awards or fundraising efforts. We urge everyone to tell the stories of your local veterans in your cemetery, not only is it a good community human interest piece, but it makes Wreaths Across America Day seem more relevant especially if you can tie it into the community.

ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT, WITHIN REASON

If you have a good working relationship with the media, they'll cover your stories, give you good publicity, and highlight your efforts. If there's a particular story you want written or aired, suggest it to your contacts and discuss it. Most media coverage is a win-win proposition: you and the media both gain. They're looking for stories to present to the public, and you're trying to get information out to

the public. Your collaboration meets both your goals, and is good for the public as well, since it gives them information about an important community issue.

The media can help not only with stories. You might want to start a letter-to-the-editor campaign to draw attention to a particular aspect of your work. You may be able to arrange with the local paper to publish a letter a day (written by participants, for the most part) for a certain period (this actually happened this year with a major paper in California.) This may be accompanied by a series of interviews on local TV, or radio interviews – all of which can be shared on your web and social media channels.

Sometimes reporters, or even whole media outlets, may take up our efforts as their own. In that (ideal) case, they may come up with ideas for stories, promotions, fundraising, and publicity. When talking to the media about naming a room in Maine after Medal of Honor Recipient COL (ret) Roger Donlon, a local reporter who knew him did a five-minute TV piece and then broadcasted live from the Mobile Education Exhibit as a follow up when it came to town.

If your media contacts turn down a request, be gracious. They may not be able or willing to do everything you ask, and that's reasonable after all. If you're really being ignored over a long period, however, it might be time to ask why, and to try to negotiate a way that you can both get what you need.

However, in the extreme cases of complete media blackout, WAA does have PR/media resources to connect with who can help you in those situations.

ALWAYS BE PLEASANT AND RESPECTFUL

You're much more likely to be treated well and to get what you want if you treat everyone you deal with – not only media people – with respect and good humor. That doesn't mean that you have to suffer abuse, but rather that you're far less likely to experience any if you don't offer any reason for it. It also means that people are much happier to hear from you and return your calls and messages if they know that they'll be talking to someone who values them.

GOALS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Agenda setting is what you accomplish when you influence what the media covers (media agenda), what people talk about (public agenda).

To set an agenda:

- ★ Let the media and public know what you are trying to accomplish,
- ★ And get the general public talking about what is important to the mission.
- ★ This step may have several stages. You may have to start by persuading the media to cover the issue at all (that's setting the media agenda).
- ★ If they're already doing so, the next stage is to draw the connection between your efforts and what it means to your community. Often, people are aware, but assume that others will take care of business and they don't need to get involved. Once people understand that the effort could impact local families, maybe friends, or who knows maybe even them, it's time to help steer the media toward reporting on your effort, and its impact.
- ★ This whole process may take some time, but it will be worth it for several reasons: you will have educated the media about your efforts (so they don't approach it in a simplistic way) and convinced them that it is truly important. They will have, in turn, raised the conscious-

ness of the public to the point where the community is ready to act.

- ★ Generate some sort of action (in media and marketing it's called "a call to action"). This is the best time to hold an event and get more people involved.

The role of the media here is to both generate and reflect public opinion that will then influence to act appropriately. Government bodies, corporations, and other large entities are subject to inertia (the tendency of a body at rest to remain at rest, or in other words, for things to stay the same.) They often need the push of a public media campaign that creates a connection and internal demand for their action before they'll move. Such a campaign can set (or reset) their sharable efforts in your favor.

Agenda setting helps you make connections with the media and the people who pay attention to them. It also sets the stage for your next step which is continuing the conversation and building towards National Wreaths Across America Day.

Shaping the Conversation

Shaping the conversation is trying to change the way people talk about Wreaths Across America. For example, we DO NOT decorate graves, we are honoring the lives of these heroes and remembering them for their service and sacrifice. Traditionally, the media tells an audience, exactly what they have already heard or read, so if you say or write it correctly there is a high probability that they will mirror what you have stated. We have a particular problem with the term "Christmas wreaths" as this is a heavily ingrained slip of the tongue stemming from the similar holiday wreaths in the same time period. The wreaths being placed by WAA volunteers are Veterans' Wreaths or Remembrance Wreaths.

Once you are able to get across your simplified message in the media, it will offer you the opportunity to get more in-depth with the community you now have the opportunity to interact with.

GETTING ATTENTION

The primary methods used to public eye include:

- ★ Eared Media - television, newspaper, and radio journalists - provide the broadest and most in-depth coverage of your organization. Placing interviews and stories is free, and the news media are reasonably credible - people take seriously what they read in the papers, or hear and see on radio and television.
- ★ Public service announcements or PSAs are similar to paid ads. However, PSAs are free because broadcasting stations use them to fulfill a regulation requiring them to 'serve in the public interest.' While PSAs can help you keep your issue before the public, they give you very little control over when and how they will air, and the content is usually short (often 30 seconds).
- ★ Press releases are write-ups - usually one to two pages - that inform the media about your news. Press releases let you control what you want to say and when, but media outlets may or may not use them, or may edit them down or change them. They may not always look the same when they go out to the public as they did when you turned them in. The WAA PR department writes many generic template press release that have a high probability of use and can be customized for your local group.
- ★ Local Events are media opportunities created by you and your volunteers that interacts with the public in some fashion (whether in person or virtual). Through these events, the mere fact that you are being proactive in supporting a cause and effort as big as Wreaths Across America is a newsworthy event worth inviting the media too.

Takeaway:

There are a lot of different ways to get the attention of the media and the general public. Which one, two, or three is right for you? What you choose to use in your media campaign depends on what you want to say, who you want to say it, and who you want them to say it to.

HOW DO YOU SET UP A MEDIA CAMPAIGN?

A media campaign needs a good plan before any action can be successful. As you gear up for a media campaign, you'll need to prepare yourself to do business with the media. It's your job as a volunteer to understand WAA's goals, mission, and to understand how you want the media to help you advance those goals.

PREPARE

Designate a media volunteer or media committee. This person or group develops and implements media outreach on the local level and works with volunteers and WAA communications to help achieve your goals. These media appointees should make sure that your message is consistent with that of national.

The media volunteers should also act as spokesperson with the media for your group. They should be articulate and knowledgeable, able to think quickly, and equipped with all the facts, statistics, and other information available about your group and national too.

You should also realize that there's no such thing as "off the record" meaning "I'll tell you this if you promise not to print or broadcast it." Assume that anything you say will turn up in a media report, probably with your name attached to it. Don't say anything to the media unless you're willing to see it made public.

Make sure that the volunteer media people communicate what they are doing to everyone in your group so that everyone can understand your message, so that if someone is approached unexpectedly by the media, they can answer questions as consistently as your appointed volunteer can, and also to have the opportunity to contribute.

BE FLEXIBLE/KEEP YOUR EAR TO THE GROUND

Even though you put a lot of thought into your media advocacy plan, be prepared to change your plans and goals if necessary (If COVID taught us anything, it was that). Remember, the news in your local area is also a great thing to follow as opportunities to advance the mission may present themselves.

What do people talk about these days, in your community and nation-wide? What are the hot topics they talk about? How much do people know about your efforts? What kinds of misconceptions do you find in public opinion? Knowing the answers to questions like these can tell you what your media efforts in your area should focus on, and how you should frame your message to get the greatest impact.

KEEP AT IT

Media campaigns never end. Sustaining your relationships with the media and continuing to get coverage of the issues you're concerned with are necessary to build momentum!

SEEK OUT HELP

Last, and most importantly, we want to remind you that you are not in this alone. We are here to help! The WAA Communications Team is stacked with knowledgeable professionals from varying backgrounds and levels of expertise. Feel free to contact us and use us as a sounding board for ideas and to learn best practices. We are here for you and we are motivated to see that you succeed as your success means we all succeed in the mission to Remember, Honor and Teach.

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Tips for preparing for an interview!

Being strategic means anticipating and preparing for hard questions, whether they're from a news reporter or even a community member who could one day become a supporter. Use these three easy steps with your fellow volunteers or others to practice your responses.

Step 1:

Brainstorm questions a reporter might ask you based on the information you have shared with them. Write them down!

Step 2:

Discuss with a fellow volunteer or member of your support team each question and how you might

answer it. Draft responses and read that back out loud to ensure you are clear.

Step 3:

Write down the top 3-5 points you want to be sure you mention during your interview ahead of the discussion. This will help you stay on point and make sure you get the messages you want shared.

Resources

Media Advocacy 101 is a website provided by the Berkley Media Studies Group that includes an hour-long keynote address by Lori Dorfman about the approach of media advocacy.

<http://www.bmsg.org/resources/media-advocacy-101/>

Media Communication Tip Sheet provides tips on contributing to the local news, tailoring language and style for the media, developing messages to reach the public, and evaluating media coverage.

Using Print Media as Advocacy is an article titled, “How to Write a Letter to the Editor,” with tips on effective communication with the media.

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