

SCOUTING MEDIA GUIDE

No-Nonsense Advice on Getting Your Scouts in the News



LOS PADRES COUNCIL, BSA

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Why we see news anchorpersons only from the waist up.

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WHY SHOULD I READ THIS?

I love Scouting. You love Scouting. Other people would probably love Scouting, too, if they knew more about it. Ah, but that's the problem: many people hardly ever see Scouting.

Scouting needs families to read stories or see pictures about all of the great things Scouts and Scout units are doing, whether it's something fun or something that's helping the community. People will join groups with which they feel comfortable -groups that they feel they know. And the only way many of these people are going to know about Scouting is by all of us telling them about it through the local media in your community.

Believe it or not, "the media" loves positive stories. I can say this, having been a television and radio news Reporter, Producer and News Director for more than 20 years. Nobody calls and complains when you run a positive story (they don't call and say "thank you", either, but that's a different topic).

Unfortunately, it's much easier to find negative news. And, when you don't have enough staff (all TV, radio and newspaper newsrooms are short-staffed, trust me), you tend to grab the most available news and events to fill time or fill space. But if we can provide easily accessible, positive stories – the press will grab them.

Your Scouts deserve public recognition for the good deeds they do, as well as the fun they're having in Scouting. But, nobody knows your Scout unit better than you do – so that means we need you to actively contribute news stories, photos, media advisories and press releases to your community newspapers, church bulletins, Homeowners Association newsletters, etc.

How do you do that? Glad you asked. I'll try to keep it fun.

John Zuchelli,

Vice President of Marketing and Communications
Los Padres Council, BSA

P.S. Throughout all this, I'll sometimes just refer to a "newspaper" – most every tip applies to television and radio news outfits as well.

“The Media”

One of the first things I was taught in Journalism school was that no matter what form it takes – newspaper, television, radio, magazine – **the media is a business**. And it’s true; without ad sales and subscribers, television news and print journalism outfits couldn’t survive. This reality can make “the business” a lousy job sometimes. However, the people who are the decision-makers in every newsroom are still there doing those jobs because of one reason and one reason only: they still feel that their job allows them a chance to serve the citizens of their community.

Folks who work in the media are always working against the clock. If you have a bad day or something unforeseen comes up, you might be able to get your boss to give you an extra day to finish your project. Not always, but most of the time. If a reporter is having a really lousy day, too bad! – the news starts at 5 p.m., no matter what and he or she had better have something to contribute to the 22 minutes of the newscast that has to be filled.

I don’t mention all of this to make you feel sorry for reporters or editors or other news managers. I mention this so that you’ll understand that if you make things as easy as possible for these folks when you submit a story – that story is much more likely to get into the paper or newscast.

So who are the decision-makers in a newsroom?

- **Newspaper:**

Editor or Managing Editor. If a paper has both, more often than not you want to speak with the Managing Editor – because that’s who handles the day-to-day news decisions.

- **Television:**

Assignment Editor. These folks are generally the gatekeepers of information that comes into a newsroom. As a result, they’re often the busiest people in the newsroom – and will want you to be brief and to the point. Notice how most TV station web sites don’t list a direct phone number for reporters and anchors? The number they list for “news” is the Assignment Desk.

- **Radio:**

News Director. Typically, radio news staffs are small and the News Director usually is the only person you can guarantee will be in the office at any point in time during the day. That makes them the best contact, generally.

All of the above people share at least one thing in common: they’re understaffed. As a result, newsrooms can’t keep in touch with all parts of the community as they’d like. That’s where you come in – giving editors positive stories about real people doing good things. Fortunately for us, Scouting provides plenty of these kinds of stories.

What “Makes” News?

Stories that happen before a newspaper goes to press or a newscast goes on the air!

If it's old, it's generally not “news” – no matter how good the story. What's old? Even a small paper may not run a story if it's as much as a week old. The paper might still run something, but it will likely just be two sentences in the “Accomplishments” section. Those kinds of mentions can still be valuable, but if you think a paper will run all four paragraphs of your two-week old story – then you'd better adjust your expectations. TV and Radio? If it didn't happen that day or the day before, good luck.

Really compelling and dramatic stories that have already happened, but that no one else has already published or aired

OK, so sometimes you can get away with a story that's “old”, but it had better be pretty amazing stuff... I'm talking “Eagle Scout pulling a man from a burning house” amazing. Even then, that might not be enough – it all depends on what the paper has already lined up for the current issue, or whether you have amazing pictures you can give TV.

Stories that involve someone from the publication's primary market

This seems pretty obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many people miss the opportunity to play this up. For instance, if you're pitching a story to the Santa Barbara News Press about a Scout that has earned every merit badge – make sure you're very clear that the Scout is a member of Troop 1, sponsored by the Methodist Church (Troop # and chartering organization are made up for this example, but you get the point).

Stories which are unique or different

A Cub Scout that wins his pack's Pinewood Derby is certainly worthy of recognition... but that recognition might only come in the form of a picture and caption, not a full-fledged five paragraph article. A Cub Scout that wins his pack's Pinewood Derby with the car that his now-deployed Army Captain father helped him build – now that's different.

Stories that you think your neighbors might want to read

Sometimes, it's just that easy.

OK, So How Do I Do This?

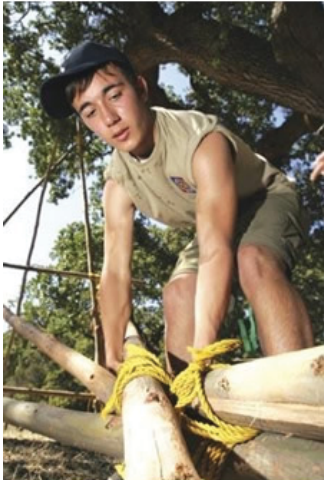
If your story is happening...	Then you should:
Two weeks from now-	Send a media advisory
Today-	Send a press release

If your story happened...	Then you should:
Today-	Send a story and picture
Yesterday-	Send a story and picture
A week ago-	Know that it's old and not "news"

Scouts learn skills for life at Tres Robles camp

Story Discussion Font Size: [-] [+]

Mike Hodgson/Associate Editor | Posted: Friday, June 26, 2009 12:00 am | (0) Comments



Nearly three dozen Boy Scouts from throughout the Central Coast are winding up a weeklong training in life skills at a camp near Lopez Lake east of Arroyo Grande.

Scouts from Buellton, Lompoc, Vandenberg Village, Orcutt and Santa Maria are among 33 from as far south as Carpinteria and as far north as Paso Robles who will graduate from Tres Robles National Youth Leadership Training at a dinner and campfire Saturday night at Camp Mabel French.

Under the supervision of three adults, the training is provided by nine Scouts who have already been through the program launched in 2005 to revamp the junior leadership training offered for 30 years by the Boy Scouts of America, said Scoutmaster David Kudija, who heads up the annual camp.

"The course has changed dramatically," Kudija said. "They used to teach them a lot of outdoor skills, but we teach them today's management skills. It's not just a middle manager in a company might do."

But Tres Robles isn't dry classroom training. Instead, Scouts are given "challenges" set up as games with a "trick" they must discover to complete the challenge.

The games range from building a raft to...

Mark Brown/Staff Zane North, 16, who lives on Vandenberg AFB, works on a catapult frame at the Tres Robles National Youth Leadership Training program at Camp French near Lopez. The training program teaches Boy Scout members leadership skills through activities, events, games and adventures. //Mark Brown/Staff



Scouts and parents, above, wave to the crowd from the Boy Scouts Pack 93 float during the Orcutt Christmas Parade on Saturday. Below, 2009 Dream Girls USA Supreme Royalty Brooke Ogilvie waves to the crowd. //Ian Gonzaga/Staff

Local... Scouts of America... organization's Cub Scout... construction," Monday through Friday... Santa Maria. In keeping with the construction... there were several woodworking projects, along with campfire cooking, sports, science and nature activities, BB gun and archery ranges.

August 4, 2009

Let's talk now about a media advisory, a press release and a story.
Turn the page, dear reader...

WRITING A MEDIA ADVISORY

A media advisory is not a full story. It can't be – because your event hasn't happened yet. The media advisory is just a fancy title for a "save the date" note about an upcoming event or story.

The following excerpt from Rudyard Kipling's poem "The Elephant's Child" is good advice on how to ensure the needed facts are provided.

*"I kept six honest serving men,
They taught me all I knew,
Their names are **Why** and **What** and **When**,
And **How** and **Where** and **Who**."*

In a media advisory, you need to make sure you provide these five W's and H" (this will come up again later). Your advisory should tell an editor:

Who is doing something?

What are they going to do?

When are they going to do it?

Where are they going to do it?

Why are they going to do it?

How are they going to do it?

Pretty easy, really. Let's look at an example:



ADVISORY FOR WEEKEND EDITORS

For more information, please contact:

(PUT NAME OF CONTACT HERE)

(Put Phone Number Here, Preferably cell), (Put E-mail Here)

SCOUTS POUND PAVEMENT TO “KEEP CENTRAL COAST FED

Scouting mobilizes Saturday to collect 100,000 pounds of food for Central Coast, CA.

Scouts from all over the Central Coast will visit homes Saturday to collect 100,000 pounds of food to help feed needy families.

This weekend will be the culmination of weeks of planning for the “Keep Central Coast Fed” Scouting for Food drive. Earlier this month, Scouts visited homes in their communities and dropped off grocery bags. On this Saturday, April 14, 2007, Scouts will return to those same homes and collect the bags, filled with donated food. The donated food will be taken to The Santa Barbara County Food Bank or other food pantries in the communities where the food was collected. So if someone donates food in Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez, Santa Maria or Lompoc - they can rest assured that their donation will help people in their area and will not be shipped somewhere else.

WHAT: 2007 “Keep Central Coast Fed” Scouting for Food Drive

WHEN: Saturday, April 14, 2007

WHERE: Scouts will collect food in areas all over the Central Coast; Main Santa Maria metro drop-off point is at KCOY TV, 1211 West Mc Coy Lane

SCHEDULE

8:00 a.m. – First Scout units will begin collecting food from homes

10:00 a.m. – Heaviest expected arrival period for Scout units dropping off food at collection points

12:00 p.m. - Scouts expected to have finished collecting and delivering food to collection points

VISUALS/SOUND:

There are 2 opportunities for visuals and/or sound:

- 1) While Scouts are in a neighborhood collecting food from homes
- 2) While Scouts are dropping off food at collection points

If you are interested in following Scouts as they collect food from homes, please contact the Los Padres Council, BSA (805) 967-0105 to find a unit most convenient for your editorial schedule.

At the main collection point at KCOY TV (1211 W. Me Coy Lane, Santa Maria), interviews will be available with Scouts and their families, as well as:

- Rebecca Fields, Scout Executive
- Adrienne Longenecker, Food Bank of Santa Barbara County

TAG/SIDEBAR INFORMATION:

If a Scout unit did not pick up your donation, please call at (805) 967-0105 to request pick up.

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Notice that I'm not leaving anything to chance here, giving an editor all of the contact information he or she might need. Plus, I have spelled out exactly "What" the event is, "Where" it will happen and "When" it will happen. You might not need to be as lengthy as I was in this example, but I think it's a good place for you to start.

One word of caution: I wouldn't submit a media advisory any more than two weeks before an event. Any sooner and you run the risk of it getting buried in an editor's file (paper or electronic). But don't wait until the day before your event, either.

Oh, and you might be wondering what the "###" means at the end of the advisory. You put that at the end of an advisory, a release or a story to let the editor know that you given him or her all of the information – and there is nothing more attached to your message.

Now, let's talk about press releases... Next page, please.

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

If a media advisory is like a “save the date” note for an event, a press release is like a “program” for an event. It should be informational, but isn’t necessarily prose.

Often a press release is meant to give a reporter or editor all of the information that a group wants them to know and possibly include in the published story. But a press release is rarely published “as is” – often because editors figure that the release is only painting its organization in the best light and not necessarily telling the whole story. I don’t think this will be a problem for you in a Scouting context, but I think it’s helpful to understand the mindset of a news editor.

Let’s look at an example of a press release:



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A WORLD OF SCOUTING CELEBRATED IN Santa Maria

Parade, ceremony mark 2007 Report to State, 100th anniversary of World Scouting

Santa Maria – A quarter million hours of service. A hundred years of Scouting.

Thousands of Scouts from across the state gathered in Santa Maria to show the strength of Scouting across the world and tell state leaders how Scouting is serving communities here in Central California, as part of the 2007 Report to State.

The Report to State kicked off with a Scout parade up Congress Avenue to the Capitol. Scout delegates gave a report to State Attorney General on the floor of House of Representatives, describing their Scout unit’s activities during the past year and the number of service projects Scouts provided in communities across Central California. According to Scouting’s “Good Turn for America” service campaign, Scouts in 2006 provided one million hours of community service in California.

“For 100 years, young men have learned the importance of character from Scouting,” said the Attorney General. “This program has taught countless Boy Scouts the value of strong families, community service, and civic activism. It an honor to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of an organization that has done so much to help build a stronger, more successful California.”

The celebration is not only happening in Central California, but also worldwide. 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America. Today, there are more than 28 million Scouts, youth and adults, boys and girls, in 155 countries (including Iraq and Afghanistan).

Scouting is proud of its proven program and the benefits it provides to young people and their families. According to research by Harris Interactive, men who were Scouts five or more years as boys are more likely than men with no Scouting experience to graduate from high school and college, earn higher annual household incomes, have lifelong friendships and believe helping others should come before one’s own self-interest.

Families interested in Scouting should visit <http://www.scouting.org/>.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCOUTS LEARN SKILLS FOR LIFE AT TRES ROBLES CAMP

Nearly three dozen Boy Scouts from throughout the Central Coast are winding up a weeklong training in life skills at a camp near Lopez Lake east of Arroyo Grande.

Scouts from Buellton, Lompoc, Vandenberg Village, Orcutt and Santa Maria are among 33 from as far south as Carpinteria and as far north as Paso Robles who will graduate from Tres Robles, National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT) at a dinner and campfire at Camp Mabel French.

Under the supervision of three adults, the training is provided by nine Scouts who have already been through the program launched in 2005 to revamp the junior leadership training offered for 30 years by the Boy Scouts of America, said Scoutmaster David Kudija, who leads the annual week long camp.

“The course has changed dramatically,” Kudija said. “They used to teach them a lot of outdoor skills. Now, we teach them today’s management skills. It’s a course a middle manager in a company might take.”

But Tres Robles isn’t dry classroom training. Instead, Scouts are given “challenges” set up as games with a “trick” they must discover to complete the challenge. Through the challenges, the Scouts learn such management skills as forming a vision for what they want to accomplish, developing “smart goals” as steps toward reaching their vision, showing leadership through four phases of team development and resolving conflicts.

They will also learn how to teach those skills to others, which is what brings back Scouts to pass along their knowledge as trainers.

“It’s really an accomplished group of young leaders who put this on,” Kudija said, noting more than half of Tres Robles graduates have become Eagle Scouts, one of whom was named the California Eagle Scout of the Year.

One recent graduate is headed for West Point, and another is going to Notre Dame, he said.

Tres Robles is open to all Boy Scouts of first-class rank, who can learn more about the program by visiting www.lpcbsa.org/ or contacting Kudija at 489-2935, 239-4408 or mrk@thegrid.net.

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See what I mean about “...all of the information a group wants a reporter to know...”? Or, if nothing else, the information might help put Scouting in a more positive light in an editor’s mind.

All right, now let’s look at news stories.

WRITING A NEWS STORY

Most of the time, when you write a news story it will be because it has already happened and you couldn't get a reporter to come cover it. That's OK – remember that I said that practically all types of media are short-staffed. That just means that it's up to all of us to make sure these terrific stories about Scouting make it to editors. Sometimes, though, you can get a paper to run a story you've written about something that's going to happen – provided it's well-written. I'll show you examples of both in a moment.

The cornerstone of a news story is to tell who, what, when, where, why, and how (see, I told you this would show up again). Ideally, every news story that you submit should answer these questions:

Who did it?

What did they do?

When did they do it?

Where did they do it?

Why did they do it?

How did they do it?

Even if you're just submitting a photo with a caption, give the editor all of the above in the caption. It will probably be too long and the editor will edit as he or she sees fit, but at least you've given them all of the information. One of the best ways to learn about news stories is to study newspapers. Notice the types of stories used and which go on the front page, the opinion page and the "inside" of the paper. Imitation can help you put together future stories without a lot of effort: just follow the style and construction of articles that you've already seen.

This isn't a textbook, so we won't go into all of the details of writing and composition, but here are some hints to keep in mind when it comes to news writing:

1. **The lead (first sentence) should generally give the reader all of the basic information about the story**, so that they don't have to read much further. This is particularly effective, because many people don't read the whole story.
2. **"Flesh out" the relevant details in descending order of importance.** Why? Because editors will generally cut a story from the bottom up.
3. **Proofread your work.** No, really. I can't tell you how many press releases I used to throw away just because I spotted a misspelled word in the first two paragraphs.
4. **Make sure your information is correct**, including the full names of local persons involved and any identifying titles they may have.
5. **The newspaper wants every story you give to an editor to be as accurate and impartial** as if it had been prepared by one of their reporters. So don't oversell - just tell them what happened and why it's important or special.

THINK VISUALLY

This won't take long, I need to make this one point to you: You read a newspaper; You watch TV.

Newspaper

It's a big plus if you have a picture to submit to a newspaper or newsletter with your story. The picture will help your story stand out in the publication and draw readers' interest. You don't have to have an expensive camera or be a professional to submit a photo to your community paper. Just try to take photos that involve more than just a group portrait, or two people shaking hands (the 'ol "grip and grin").

Since most people shoot with a digital camera these days, I'll assume that you will, too. It's probably safe to assume that you can submit your photos in a .jpg format – but it's better to call your paper and ask them what format they prefer. If you have the ability to send in a high-resolution image (.tif, .png, .raw) and the paper can use them, great.

Television

If you want TV to cover your story, you must have something visual to offer them. What's visual?

Visual	NOT Visual
Pinewood Derby races	Blue and Gold Banquets
Scouts doing a cooking contest	Scouts watching cooking contest
Scouts working on Eagle project	Scouts standing at finished Eagle project
Scouts practicing on CPR dummy	Scouts watching CPR class

I think you get the idea, *there must be action.*

Newspapers don't like "grip and grin" photos, but will occasionally run them.

If you can't offer anything more than a room full of people, TV won't cover your story.

TIPS

- You don't have to call and ask permission to submit a story to your local paper.
- Always write up your media advisory, press release or story – don't expect to call in and say "I have this great story..." and then expect the person on the other end to start taking notes. If you do, they'll cut you off and tell you, "that sounds great – please send me a release" or words to that effect.
- If you want your community newspaper to run a story about your Scout, make sure you point out in your advisory, release or story that the unit is located in the newspaper's coverage area. The Santa Barbara News Press will be more interested in a Scout unit in Goleta than Atascadero, etc.
- Always remember to include your unit's chartering organization somewhere in the release or story. We in Scouting don't do a good enough job of providing publicity for the generosity of these organizations. After all, they own the unit.
- **Cub Scouts** are in a **pack**. **Boy Scouts** are in a **troop**. **Varsity Scouts** are in a **team**. **Venturers** are in a **crew**. **Sea Scouts** are in a **ship**. **Explorers** are in a **post**.

Do:

- Get the most important information in your story in the first sentence.
- Proofread your work.

Don't:

- Start a story with a time, day, date or name.
- Use a person's full name the first time it is mentioned in a story. After that, just use their last name alone.
- Women's names should be as follows: Mary Smith, not Mrs. Ralph Smith. This is a news story, not a wedding invitation.
- If you're using a quote from someone outside of Scouting, always get them to approve the quote before you send it to the newspaper.
- No advisory or press release should ever be longer than one page.
- Write your story as if you were not involved in Scouts. Try to be objective and don't be opinionated: this improves your chances of having your story run "as is".
- Don't expect a newspaper to print your membership roster as a part of your story.
- It's OK to make a follow-up call to an editor to make sure he or she received your information. Just try **not** to be a pest. Calling every day for a week would qualify as being a pest.

A REPORTER IS CALLING ME, AND IT'S BAD NEWS

Heaven forbid you should ever get one of these calls. This would be because there is a report about something bad that is happening or has happened to a Scout or Scouting in general.

First: If this story involves your family, you have every right to dictate what information you do or do not want to release to the press. The Los Padres Council will respect your wishes. However, we need you to contact the Scout Executive right away to let us know you have been contacted by the media.

Second: If this story involves your unit, we want you to do the following:

1. Do **not** grant an Interview
2. Write down:
 - Caller's name
 - Phone number
 - Which station/publication for whom he or she works
 - Short description of the story about which he/she is asking
3. Tell the caller a spokesperson will contact them in a few minutes
4. Contact Scout Executive with the above information
5. If you can't reach the Scout Executive, contact Director of Marketing/Public Relations with the above information

Scout Executive: **Rebecca Fields**

Office: **805-967-0105**

rfields@bsamail.org

VP of Marketing/Public Relations: **John Zuchelli**

Office: **805-928-4748**

johnzuchelli@kcoy.com

Please remember: "*No Comment*" is, in fact, a comment. It tells a reporter you (or we) have something to hide. It's OK to instead say, "*I'm not ready to talk about it.*"

Also please remember: Parents and/or Scout volunteer leaders are not expected to deal with the media during moments of crisis. Please contact the Scout Executive so that we may provide you the support you deserve.

CRISIS RESPONSE - MEDIA INQUIRIES –ADDITIONAL NOTES

- You can lock the gate to a camp to keep the media off the property, but understand that locking the gate will not keep the media from shooting video or taking pictures of action happening on the property.
 - ♦ California law allows the press to take video or take pictures of people or actions happening on private property, provided the people or actions are visible to the naked eye from a public right of way.
 - ♦ For example, if a photographer standing on the side of the road outside a Scout camp can see something happening outside the Ranger’s residence, he can take the photograph. Even if the action is happening inside the Ranger’s residence - if a photographer can see it through a window, he can take the photograph.
- Never put an injured person’s life in jeopardy, but if there will be some period of time between triage and transport to a hospital – and there are people available to help – put a tarp or other covering up over the area where the patient is being treated.
- **Never say “no comment”**. That, in fact, **is** a comment – suggesting that we’re hiding something.
 - ♦ It always OK if you don’t want to talk to the press. Respond to media phone inquiries with, “I can’t talk with you right now, but give me your name and number and I will have someone call you right back”.
- News operations in “breaking news” mode will look for any bit of information to give to reporters or anchors, and will be persistent in asking if anyone on the scene can talk to them.
 - ♦ Again, your response can be:
“I can’t talk with you right now, but give me your name and number and I will have someone call you right back.”
- Do not share information about the crisis with others – even other Scout leaders – if they’re not directly involved in the crisis.
 - ♦ You should tell a parent at the scene if their child is hurt, but do it after you have them on property and away from a crowd.
 - ♦ A reporter on the scene will look to anyone to give them an interview, including other adults, leaders, and the clerk at the convenience store across the road from camp. If you give information to anyone other than those directly involved in the crisis, you will hear it or read it somewhere later.



MEDIA ADVISORY

For more information, please contact:

Name

Unit #

Phone

Email

TITLE

Subtitle or additional information to explain title (optional)

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 3 (if necessary)

WHAT: what is the story about

WHEN: date, time

WHERE: location

List any visual opportunities for your story here

###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, please contact:

Name

Unit #

Phone

E-mail

TITLE

Subtitle or additional information to explain title (optional)

(YOUR TOWN) – Text

###