

## **STEP 3: Conducting a Community Forum Communication-Involving the Media**

### **Creating a Press Release**

#### **Press Release**

A key activity in most community event plans is the development and distribution of press releases which contain important information on a particular event being planned or which share important details about a community initiative. Moreover, a press release can be a good tool for sharing success stories after an event has occurred, which continues to keep people interested in your efforts.

It's best to develop a one-page press release since most newspapers have limited space for non-revenue producing articles. And, while writing style varies from person to person, keep in mind that the basic outline of any press release tells the reader/listener:

- ✓ **Who**
- ✓ **What**
- ✓ **Where**
- ✓ **When**
- ✓ **Why**

#### **Media Contacts**

A good press release is only half of the equation. It's also important to develop a list of "media contacts" to whom you will send press releases. In many instances you will be able to fax or email the document. Be sure to include deadlines for submission in your contact list. Depending upon the event or subject you are presenting in the press release, there may be particular segments of your community you want to target, e.g., physician offices – or you may just want to "get the word out" through usual channels. Typically, your contact list will include:

- ✓ ***Local and regional newspapers, free and subscription***
- ✓ ***Local public access television***
- ✓ ***Local and regional radio and television stations***
- ✓ ***Area churches***
- ✓ ***Schools***
- ✓ ***Community Agencies***

## **Sample Pre-Event Press Release**

*(This is the typical format used)*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

<DATE>

Contacts: *Name*

*Title*

*Phone/Fax/Email info*

***(This is the person who should be contacted if anyone has questions about the information in the press release and who is available for interviews based on the press release)***

*(A “catchy” headline for your press release makes the job of the newspaper easier)*

### **[Your Town] Teams Up with the American Heart Association and Local Schools for National Heart Month Community Walk**

**WHEN:** Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, **WHO:** Mayor ----- will join the community in a **H.E.A.L.T.H.Y. Heart Walk at the [Your Town] School.** **WHAT:** This FREE event is sponsored by **WHO:** [community-based program] aimed at reducing overweight and obesity and improving the health and wellbeing of residents and employees in town. Sponsors include [list of community sponsors, or others involved in making the event happen] **WHAT:** Participants who register for the Heart Walk can show their support for a local school by pledging their laps to the school of their choice. The school with the most laps will receive a trophy and the Mayor will present the Connecticut Affiliate of the American Heart Association with a contribution in the school’s name.

***(Including historical background or context for the event helps create a clearer picture of your efforts in the community)***

This is the second event sponsored by [name of community agency/group] and will highlight the health benefits of walking indoors, and promote the Trailblazers self-paced walking program. According to ***[It’s always good idea to have a quote in your press release as it makes it more interesting to the reader]***, “The fact that February is National Heart Month gives us the opportunity to show people that walking has great benefits for your heart; it burns calories, reduces stress, improves sleep, and is a natural mood-enhancer. **WHY:** This event offers families and friends the chance to get together and do something good for themselves while having a good time; that’s what Trailblazers is all about.” Walk organizers are exploring options for a municipal space in town that can be used as an indoor course by residents year-round.

**WHEN:** The **H.E.A.L.T.H.Y. HEART WALK** begins at 10:00 AM on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at [Location Name and Address] The event is free; **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** Registration forms are available at Town Hall and Parks and Recreation and will also be distributed through the school system. Participants can register with Parks and Recreation prior to the event, and can also download the registration form off of the town’s website: **Early registrants will be entered into a special raffle.** There will also be onsite registration the morning of the walk starting at 9:30. For more information on this event, call [contact information should match what is at the head of the press release]

## **Post-Event Press Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

<DATE>

Contact: [Name, Title and Phone/Fax/Email]

### **[ School] Takes Top Honors in HEART WALK Participants Clock 555¼ Miles!**

Five hundred and fifty five miles is just ten miles shy of walking from East Hartford Town Hall to Cleveland, Ohio. Quebec City is only 480 miles North of East Hartford and Virginia Beach is only 474.

**WHAT:**In one hour **WHEN:** last Saturday morning, led by **WHO:** [Mayor ] and encouraged by the marches of John Phillip Sousa, over 200 residents of all ages participated in the **H.E.A.L.T.H.Y. HEART WALK** at [Your Town] School. State Senator [Your Local Politician and Another Locally known person] were also on hand to support and participate in the effort. **WHO:** This community event was sponsored by [Your Community Initiative or Community Group Name] led by [agency/community group] which **WHY:** aims to increase public awareness of the health risks associated with overweight and encourage residents and employees to adopt sensible eating and moderate exercise habits.

**WHERE:** Beginning in the school cafeteria, participants enthusiastically walked an indoor loop, completing as many laps as they chose at their own pace. **WHAT:**A friendly competition among schools added to the excitement. All walk participants, save one, the Mayor who choose to walk “unaffiliated,” pledged their laps to local schools. In all, fourteen schools were represented at the walk. Led by Physical Education teacher [-----] School won with a total of 836 laps (the equivalent of 159 miles). In a public ceremony later this month the school will be presented with a trophy recognizing this achievement along with a \$50 donation made on its behalf to the Connecticut Affiliate of the American Heart Association. [School] also had a strong showing at the Heart Walk, completing 576 laps (almost 110 miles).

**WHY:** The event also provided [Mayor ] and [Initiative Contact] with the opportunity to recognize several residents for “active participation in Trailblazers, ongoing commitment to a regular walking routine, and public service as a healthy role model(s).” Trailblazers is a free, self-paced community walking program. Upon joining the program, participants receive information about walking safely (available in both English and Spanish), a list of suggested walking routes in. Individuals are asked to complete an exercise readiness questionnaire and sign a participation waiver. They are then free to track the number of minutes they walk each day as they establish, or re-invigorate, a personal, regular, and steady walking “habit.” To support this healthful lifestyle, Trailblazers participants receive small incentive items for each 30 day log they return during the first 3 months of participation.

For more information on [Your Community Initiative] contact [same contact information as appears at head of press release]