

# ***Writing for Community Newspapers***



The best way to get your articles, releases, events and news stories in print is to do everything within your power to ...make life easier for the local editor or reporter.

## **TIPS FROM LOCAL EDITORS (Based on 2002 survey done in SW Region)**

- Meet with the editor and ask about deadlines and personal preferences regarding submissions. Be sure and check on the editor's preferred delivery method (not everyone likes e-mail).
- Meet deadlines.
- Well-written, concise submissions that emphasize a local connection are appreciated.
- Type articles (if you have no other way to submit something except for hand-written make sure it is legible). The editor must be able to read it to be able to use it.
- Make sure submissions are well-written (free of errors and following AP style).
- Get your information submitted as soon as possible after the event. Making it timely is vital.
- If you drop a submission by the newspaper, be sure it gets to the editor. You don't have to ask to see them personally each time you visit. Remember, they have other stories to work on.
- If something notable will be happening in your organization, notify the newspaper a week in advance. They might want to take pictures.
- Ask if there are topics the editor is especially interested in? Maybe there are other ways you could help the editor by submitting contact names or photographs, etc.
- Always respect the editor's news judgment.
- Stay in touch with the local editor, don't just call when you need a favor or have a complaint.

## **Recommendations from area editors for improving news release writing:**

- Don't bury the lead. Give the “punch” in the first paragraph. Editors (even weeklies) get 150 to 200 mailings a week (plus e-mail) and 90 percent of those get tossed.
- Use statistics when possible, the news media loves statistics.
- Keep it short and simple. One-page submissions are preferred.
- Provide strong content and use "bullets" to attract interest.
- List sources and alternative sources so the media can reach someone for follow-up.
- Localize the story in the early part of the article.
- Monday is typically the busiest day at the newspaper. Avoid going by or delivering information on Monday if at all possible.
- Consider doing follow-up stories on events ... these are appreciated.

## **Tips on column writing**

- Write the way you talk. Don't discard good English usage and grammar by being informal.
- Try to uncover an opening that will catch the interest of your readers.
- Use a variety of material, not just one subject over and over.
- Write about people. Try to tell the story through the experiences of local people.
- Write simply. Avoid technical or difficult words, long sentences, and long paragraphs.
- Don't weigh your column down with too much detail. Try to stimulate interest in a subject, but don't exhaust the subject.
- Jot down ideas, names, figures, impressions, in a note pad while visiting other people and places. This provides the very best column material.
- Be timely. Keep up with the effect of weather conditions, seasons, pointing out the significance of these conditions locally.
- Remember the people you're talking to and give them information that will benefit them in a way they can understand.
- Always get your column to the editor on schedule.