

## *Get to know the local media*

Getting University of Missouri Extension into local media can be an effective way to increase public awareness of our value and service. And typically, local media — especially in smaller towns — want to work in a positive way with community extension specialists in their area.

Your first step is to get to know the media in your area and build relationships. Start by doing your homework. Listen to and watch the news programs and local talk shows in your area. Read the business sections in your local paper.

Is there:

- A morning talk show?
- A special TV or radio news segment or special newspaper section with a subject that connects to your expertise?
- A reporter who seems to do a lot of youth, business or agriculture stories?

**There are several ways to make that first contact.**

**You can:**

1. Attend a community event that media are covering. Have a business card ready, ask for the reporter's card, and follow up later. Don't try to tell them much at the first meeting unless they ask for more.

Example: "We have an interesting program that helps young mothers in our county. When would be a good time to call?" or "Can I email you?"

2. Call the station or newsroom. It helps to know when **not** to call, such as right before or during drive-time or a show or newscast, or close to a newspaper's deadline. Set up an appointment with the appropriate person. That could be the reporter (if you've identified one) or the news director or editor.
3. Talk to someone from the media outlet at a community event, such as a Rotary Club or Chamber of Commerce meeting, or talk to someone who has worked the media and knows who to talk to.

**Suggest a specific story idea:**

Don't give the media a laundry list of ideas; pick one or two with impact and a human touch. Have ideas that are tied to upcoming events or issues, not past events.

**Keep in touch:**

1. By keeping in touch with the reporter, you become the go-to person on various topics on slow news days.
2. If a crisis breaks, the reporter will feel comfortable working with you and not against you on the breaking news event.