

ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR COMMUNICATING NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION

PRESS RELEASES - Getting *your* news in the news

Get the information out early—at least 7 days in advance if you want just an announcement of the event and as much as 2 weeks in advance if you want the event announced in a special weekend section. If you want actual news coverage of your event, get a first announcement out 2-4 weeks in advance.

Include a contact person—newsrooms are busy places, so without a specific contact name your release or announcement might get lost in the shuffle.

E-mailing your release. Send your press releases or PSAs to Marcia and she will forward them on to news organizations. When e-mailing your news release, always send it as text within the message, not as an attachment.

Follow-up. Although Marcia will e-mail your news releases, she sends them to just one contact at each media outlet. For this reason it is a good idea for the neighborhood to follow-up with particular contacts at the newspaper or other news organization.

Direct Contact. Follow-up on e-mailed releases by contacting reporters directly over the phone. Check the company directory (usually available on-line) in order to find the right person. Contact the editor of the particular section of the newspaper where you believe the information will appear (ie. *Community, Go, Weekend, Neighbors*, etc.) Don't hesitate to contact more than one reporter at the same newspaper, but be sure that you are contacting only those contacts reporters are likely to have an interest in the event.

- Always be sure to ask them whether *now* is a good time to talk.
- Have a press release in hand and ready to send, just in case they haven't already seen your release—or can't find it. A press release will also help *you* remember all the details of what you need to communicate.
- Have any other contact information—such as phone numbers of those folks who the media might want to photograph or interview.

A picture is worth 1000 words. If your event will provide a good photo opportunity—lots of kids, color, action or other visuals—you may contact a news photographer directly. Let them know what it is about the event that makes it photo-worthy. When appropriate have pictures ready to send out upon request.

What to include in a press release:

1. **The release date.** If there is a day on which the news should be announced, that is the “release date.” If you want the information to appear on the news or in print before the event write “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.”
2. **A contact.** This includes all the information the newspaper will need in order to contact the appropriate person from your organization who can answer questions. Provide a name, day and evening phone numbers and/or times when they can be contacted at those numbers. E-mail, voice mail, pagers or other means of contacting them may also be included. Reporters usually need information as soon as possible so this person needs to be easily accessible.
3. **A tagline or subject line.** Think of a news headline—something that in one short statement summarizes your bit of news and hooks the interest of the reporter. For example: “Longfellow Garden Walk Scheduled for July 13” or “Open House for Preservation Award-Winners.”
4. **The city in which the story originates.** Obviously you will use Iowa City, Iowa. You will type the city and state right before you begin typing the description of the event. This may seem unnecessary, but it lets the reporter or newsroom easily identify the story as a local one.
5. **A short description of your event or story idea.** Reporters are always pressed for time, so keep your copy short and to the point. Two or three paragraphs is usually all you need. Basically you want to answer who, what, where, when, and why. The who being not only who will appear or speak but who should attend and why it is important.
6. **An indication of where the press release ends.** At the end, write '-end-' or '# # #,' to signify that there is no more copy or information in the release. Again, this may seem silly, but it lets the reporter know that he/she shouldn't be looking around for another page of information on your event.

See example of a press release at the end of this information.

For more information on writing press releases or public service announcements visit <http://www.press-release-writing.com/newsletters/t54-psa.htm>

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Public Service Announcements or PSA are targeted to radio and TV stations. A requirement of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is that stations donate a certain amount of airtime to serve the public and the community. Most public radio and TV stations have a community calendar for which they will announce events to the public. PSAs are similar to press releases only shorter. A PSA typically announces a community event for a non-profit organization.

A PSA should be sent out two to three weeks in advance of when you want it aired. Here is what you need to include in a PSA:

1. Instead of putting "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" on the top left hand side of the page as you do for a press release, type "PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT" at the top center of the page.
2. Provide the date on which you would like your announcement to begin airing.
3. Include the name, phone and email the contact person as well as hours when they are available. Again, this needs to be someone who is accessible and available to answer questions or provide more information.
4. Supply a concise title for your event or subject matter typed in bold letters.
5. Write a brief summary of what you want aired or the exact copy that you would like to have read.
6. State what type of coverage you seek. Think about where and when you have heard other similar PSAs. Include "Community Calendar" or "Program Director" or "On Air Interviews," depending upon which kind of coverage you seek. Stations don't necessarily use these subject areas, but common sense says it will increase your chances of getting your PSA to the proper department.
7. At the end, write '-end-' or '# # #,' as you do in a press release.

All PSA should be addressed to the Public Service Director, and this is who you should follow up with.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

August 25, 2003

For more information contact: Sarah Walz, president Cupcakes for Education
466-2222 (daytime) or email Sarah@cupcakes.org

10,000 Cupcake Sale to Benefit Higher Education

Iowa City, Iowa—Students from the University of Iowa will attempt to sell 10,000 cupcakes during the Iowa Hawkeye's Big Ten opener on Saturday, Sept. 1. The goal is to raise \$10,000 to offset shortfalls in student aid due to state and federal budget cuts. All proceeds of this cupcake-a-thon will benefit the general scholarship fund of the University of Iowa. The bake sale will take place at the intersection of Melrose and Grand Avenue from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

This record-setting bake sale is sponsored by Cupcakes for Education, a non-profit organization comprised of students from all three of Iowa's state universities. The group's motto is "saving Iowa's higher education system one cupcake at a time." Bake sales on the University of Northern Iowa and Iowa State Campuses will take place on September 7 during the conference openers for UNI and Iowa State.

More than 150 students will participate in the UI bake sale, with representatives from more than sixteen student groups including sororities, fraternities, student government, and special interest groups. Several well-known faculty and staff are also pitching.

For information about the bake sale, contact Sarah Walz or visit the Cupcakes for Education website at www.acupcakeisaterriblethingtowaste.org.

END

SAMPLE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Public Service Announcement

Begin airing by August 28

For more information contact: Sarah Walz, president Cupcakes for Education
466-2222 (daytime) or email Sarah@cupcakes.org

10,000 Cupcakes for Higher Education

What do cupcakes and university degrees have in common? Find out this Saturday, during the Hawkeye football game when students from the University of Iowa sell 10,000 cupcakes for education. All proceeds will benefit the general scholarship fund at the University of Iowa. The bake sale will take place at the intersection of Melrose and Grand Avenue from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday, September 1. Show your support for higher education in Iowa by buying a cupcake. Remember, if the state legislature won't fund higher education, cupcakes will!

END

WHO TO CONTACT IN THE MEDIA

Contact information for all the media change regularly so it is always best to check the web site of the news organization that you are attempting to contact.

If your event is one that will provide great visuals—things like garden tours, art displays, kids, action, etc.—you can contact a news photographer directly.

Iowa City Press Citizen

Call 337-3181 and ask for the extension of the reporter or section you want to reach. You can view a directory of reporters and editors on the Press Citizen web site at <http://www.press-citizen.com/aboutpc/directory.htm>.

If you have a news tip or story idea, please call or e-mail an appropriate reporter or editor:

Vanessa Miller, City Government Editor, ext. 610

vmiller@press-citizen.com

Tricia DeWall, Life Editor, ext. 418

tdewall@press-citizen.com

Reed Dunn, Features Editor, ext. 610

rdunn@press.citizen.com

Vida Brenner, News Assistant, ext. 606

ybrenner@press-citizen.com

If you want to announce an event or organizational meeting, e-mail Kristi Chambers at kchambers@press-citizen.com or FAX your announcement to Kristi's attention at (319) 834-1083. *Try to get this to her at least one week in advance.*

The Gazette

The Gazette provides extremely helpful information for getting your event in the paper directions. This includes an Adobe PDF file called "Getting the Word Out" with tips on writing a news release and who to contact with your news information. This information is attached, but you can also find it at <http://www.gazetteonline.com/services.aspx>.

To view the comprehensive list of editors and writers go to http://www.gazetteonline.com/services.aspx?art_id=2

Story suggestions:

If you have a story idea or suggestion, contact staff directly:

- ♦ **Eastern Iowa news including Linn and Johnson counties:**

1-800-397-8212

E-mail: metro@gazettecommunications.com

♦ **Community news:**

Phone, toll-free: 1-800-397-8212

E-mail: community@gazettecommunications.com

♦ **Entertainment news:**

Phone: (319) 398-8329

E-mail: features@gazettecommunications.com

♦ **Features news:**

Phone: (319) 398-8386

E-mail: annette.schulte@gazettecommunications.com

Community News Advertiser

Editor: Shelley Oehler, 301 E. Market Street, Iowa City, IA 52241

Phone: 319-339-3162

e-mail: iowacity@gazettecommunications.com

FAX: 319-354-1266

IOWA CITY'S WEB SITE

Subscribing to Newsletters/Neighborhood Association News through the City's web site

People can subscribe to neighborhood newsletters or any other news neighborhood associations wish to provide online at

<http://www.icgov.org/subscribe.asp>. They will be notified whenever a new newsletter or a neighborhood announcement is posted to a web site. This works just like subscriptions to the City Council meeting packets. Neighborhood representatives should encourage their members to subscribe to this service by announcing it through your newsletter or by e-mailing members.

City Channel 4

Find information on their web site at <http://citychannel4.com>. City Channel 4 produces and cablecasts local shows of interest to the Iowa City community. Many of these programs are made by the Cable Division and shown only on this channel. Some of these programs are made by the City Channel's Community Television Service, which produces programs for nonprofit organizations in Iowa City and the surrounding area. Some of the programs produced and/or shown on City Channel 4 include the Iowa City Council meetings, League of Women Voters Candidate Forums, Johnson County Board of Supervisors meetings, Senior Center TV, Iowa City Arts Festival, Iowa City Jazz Festival, Coralville City Council meetings, and many more. They always welcome new opportunities.

Although they will sometimes cover events on short notice, you'll have the best luck if you contact City Channel at least two to three weeks in advance.

You can contact the City Channel at

10 S. Linn St (Tower Place, 3rd floor), Iowa City, IA 52240

Cable-TV@iowa-city.org or info@citychannel4.com

Channel 4 offers a number of services:

Community Television Service: This service enables any nonprofit organization in the Iowa City area to have a video program or Public Service Announcement (PSA) produced for them. This is the only service of its kind. The Community Programmer works by request. When he receives a request by a nonprofit organization, he works closely with that organization to ensure that their needs are met as best as possible in terms of the resources available to him and the Cable Division of the City of Iowa City. He then works with that nonprofit entity to try to determine where that video program or PSA can get airtime. Contact Ty Coleman at 356-5454 to find out how to schedule this service.

Channel 4 can also post short PSAs in their programming. Again, plan to contact them 2-3 weeks in advance.

InfoVision Channel 5: An interactive service that you, a cable TV subscriber, can watch and call up with your touch-tone phone. With the buttons on your phone you can control and access 75 categories of information and graphics from InfoVision database of information about Iowa City and the surrounding area. Everything from jobs to transportation to the arts and much more!

The Avatar Show: An interactive, call-in program that cablecasts live, *Avatar* focuses on local and global topics important to the Iowa City community. Recently they have interviewed organizers with the Englert Theatre. Show topics reflect the true concerns of the community since viewers, help select the topics. Scot West. is the host and guide. During the show, he responds to phone calls and e-mails. This show might be an ideal way to get out information about what neighborhood council does and why neighborhood groups are so important. Contact Info: 356-5439, Ext. 4 or Fax: 356-5439
email: avatar@citychannel4.com

Iowa City Public Access TV

PATV will train local citizens to produce their own television shows or videos, and provides a channel on which to cablecast your program.

Live and Local is a bi-weekly, live call-in series which addresses local issues in the Iowa City area. The show is hosted by a moderator and is produced by Public Access Television staff and volunteers. Again, this might be a good forum to get the word out on large issues such as what neighborhood council does or why the neighborhood groups are important. The show is cablecast on Channel 18, Mondays at 7:30 pm and Saturdays at noon. If you have any ideas for show topics, call René Paine at 338-7035.

Public Access Television, Inc. 206 Lafayette St., Iowa City, IA. 52240
(319) 338-7035 or Fax: 338-8456
email: patv@avalon.net or visit their web page: <http://www.patv.tv>

KCRG TV

It's best to fax these folks at 319/368-8505—this will reach the newsroom. Fax to the attention of the reporter or subject area to which your news will appeal. You can also e-mail them at newsreleases@kcrq.com. You can follow up with a phone call at 337-9999.

KGAN TV

Still working on this one.

Radio Stations

WSUI/KSUI Public Radio/NPR

The University of Iowa, Broadcasting Services
710 South Clinton Street, Iowa City, IA 52242-1030
(319) 335-5730 Fax: (319) 335-6116
e-mail wsui@uiowa.edu or ksui@uiowa.edu

KRUI Student Radio from the University of Iowa

krui@uiowa.edu

335-9525.

379 Iowa Memorial Union

Iowa City, IA 52242

KXIC and KKRQ (both Clear Channel stations) should be contacted by fax at 354-9504. You can follow up by phone at 354-9500.

KCJJ prefers to be faxed press releases and PSAs at 354-1921. You can also e-mail at kcjam@aol.com or mail to Box 2118, Iowa City, IA 52244. Follow up by phone at 354-1242.

Temporary Signs

Posting temporary signs near key intersections or outside popular businesses or meeting places is another way to announce events and meetings. Neighborhood Services is currently providing disposable laminated signs that can be mounted on a stake. Wetherby has used these to announce movies.

Other alternatives may be to use realtor type signs. A quick search on the internet turned up realtor type signs that can be posted in yards. The frame alone costs \$25.00-\$29.00 (signsandstripes.com). Neighborhoods could use the frames and interchange homemade announcements printed on posterboard. It may be worth contacting some local realtors to see if they have some old frames they would like to donate.

Another, more expensive option is a temporary a-frame sign similar to what restaurants use to announce the day's menu. Another quick search of the web

yielded a two-sided a-frame sign that uses wet erase markers. These cost \$130.00 (ssgraphics.com.) Unfortunately, this alternative doesn't sound very weather-resistant.

Bulletin Board Posting and Newsletter Distribution

A number of businesses provide bulletin boards where groups can post announcements. Of course any public/city building will allow postings (once they have been screened), including the public library, city hall, and the recreation center. Always check at the front desk or information stand to find out what their policy is before you post your sign.

Also, grocery stores like HyVee (screens postings) and New Pioneer allow postings. Downtown you can post at Prairie Lights, Zephyr Copies, Java House, Bread Garden, and at Bloomington St. Laundry as well as on street posting pillars (these are the skinny kiosks). Do not post on light posts or large kiosks downtown.

Check with neighborhood businesses, churches, and schools to see if they would be willing to distribute or have newsletters available. The public elementary schools usually have a weekly distribution of materials that are sent home with students. Check with school secretaries to see how you can get your newsletter or other information sent included in these packets.