



Joining Forces For Women Veterans Summit Toolkit

Section IV: Media Guide

This section is a guide on how to interact with the media to garner attention and interest about your Summit. It contains information on:

- A. Working with the Media to Gain Attention and Credibility (pp. 1-2)
- B. Tips for Working with the Media to Promote an Event (p. 2)
- C. Quick Tips for Using a Media Advisory (pp. 2-3)
- D. Writing and Using a Press Release (pp. 3-4)
- E. Pitching Your Story by Phone (p. 4)
- F. The Press Kit (p. 4)
- G. Taking Care of the Reporter (p. 4)
- H. Op Eds and Letters to the Editor (pp. 4-6)
- I. Public Relations on the Internet and Social Media (p. 6)

Attachments: Sample Press Release, Sample Media Advisory (pp. 7-9)

A. Working with the Media to Gain Attention and Credibility

No matter what your goals and objectives are, getting coverage can help you promote and gain support for your organization and ideas. While most organizations develop a media plan when promoting an event, it is important to maintain relationships with members of the press throughout the year. Visit the BPW Foundation [press room](#) to see examples of press releases and BPW in the news. Here are some ideas on how to develop an ongoing media strategy and plan.

Here are some ideas on how to develop an ongoing media strategy and plan:

Devise a Strategy for Positive Media Coverage: Develop a calendar of media events to highlight your projects using ready-made news hooks like your JFWV Summit, [Veteran's Day](#), [Mother's Day](#), [Memorial Day](#), or [Women's History Month](#). Suggest [year-end summaries](#) of key stories/issues related to women veterans. Research reporters' interests and past articles. Cultivate relationships with members of the press, suggesting ideas for feature stories, "expert" responses to breaking news, and guests for their shows. Set up [teleconference briefings](#) with reporters, to brief them on your activities related to the subjects they cover. Write and submit [opinion columns](#) to newspapers and magazines. Utilize [Congressional testimony](#) as the basis for press releases. When applicable, join [coalition efforts](#) that support your message with the

media. Be on the look-out for creative opportunities to link your group to other activities in your community and state. Finally, consider contributing content and material to special advertising supplements included in some publications. [Click here to see the “Hiring Vets” advertising supplement](#) from a recent issue of Forbes Magazine.

Attract Editorial Endorsements and Columnist Support: Set up meetings with editorial boards of local papers to encourage them to take a stand on your issues. Send columnists ideas for op-ed pieces. Encourage local newspapers and TV stations to endorse events that bring publicity and funding to your issue.

Build Media Skills of Spokespeople: Train your spokespeople by practicing and honing your message and image into a persuasive, articulate presentation. Develop profiles of members willing to share their stories with the press—have guidelines to protect their privacy.

Include Evaluation Methods: Make sure your communications plan includes mechanisms to evaluate your media activities and goals. Evaluation methods might include: measuring increases in membership, funding or visibility.

B. Tips for working with the Media to Promote an Event

1. Understand your issue and goals; you want a clear and concise message.
2. Create a list of journalists who are interested in the topics you will be discussing. Read the newspapers (both traditional and web-based), watch television and listen to the radio to determine who is interested in your issues. Gather addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail address for those reporters you want to contact. When compiling your list don't overlook neighborhood papers, and other organizations' newsletters and publications (i.e. Veteran Service Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, community bulletin boards).
3. Issue news releases for the announcement of an event, such as the formation of an [organizing committee](#) or [confirmed speakers](#). Put together [press kits](#) that make it easy for the media to extract key information for their stories. Circulate newsletters and leaflets in high circulation areas such as community bulletin boards, sports clubs, restaurants, doctor's offices, etc.
4. Consider using alternative media such as window signs, posters, websites, email listserves, etc.

C. Quick Tips for using a Media Advisory

A media advisory is one page that simply states the facts about the Summit (see attached sample on page 9), or provides [detailed subject matter information](#). It is used to tell assignment editors the essentials of your event, for example the time, place and participants. The advisory should be followed up with a [press release](#) and phone call.

- List the event, its participants, the date and location. Be sure to include the name and phone number of a contact person for the press. Briefly spell out the purpose of the event. Are you releasing new research findings? Protesting government actions? Let broadcasters know if you'll have video or a live feed. It should be short.
- Write a strong headline and lead sentence that peak reporters' interest. Don't reveal the news you'll be releasing, but do provide a tantalizing glimpse that gives them reason to attend.

- Fax or e-mail your advisory to reporters who cover the issue, and to editors, news directors, bureau chiefs and TV/radio producers. Also send it to the daily calendars (daybooks) or wire services.
- Follow up with a phone call giving the essential details of your event—make sure your pitch is tight and persuasive. Leave a message if the journalist isn't there.

D. Writing and using a Press Release: Some Things You Should Know

In addition to the following suggestions, please be sure to check the sample press release provided below.

What is newsworthy?

- The [announcement of the upcoming event](#).
- The [announcement of an advisory committee](#) planning the Summit.
- The [announcement of who the Summit speakers](#) will be.
- Information about the topics being discussed and why they are important to your community; is there something happening in your community that you can tie the forum to?

What will get a reporters attention?

- Make it unusual; such as pronouncing that it is the first Summit of its kind in the community
- Emphasize how the issue effects people in your community
- Tie it to a theme or issue already in the news
- Try to find a human interest angle

What is a good format to follow?

- A [press release](#) should include all the facts necessary for reporters to file a story, so that reporters will rely on your release as they write their stories. Write in a fluent, newsy style that conveys authority.
- Your headline should grab reporters' attention, and your lead sentence should summarize what's most newsworthy or the news "hook".
- First paragraph should contain the five W's (who, what, when, where and why).
- Second paragraph should expand on the information provided in the lead paragraph.
- Third paragraph should include a quote from an organization representative.
- Final paragraph should include information about your organization.
- Print the news release on organizational letterhead. Include contact information and your website if you have one.
- Send to reporters who got the media advisory.
- Send out the press release on letterhead stationery of the sponsoring group.
- Do not send attachments by e-mail unless requested. Keep all information in the body of the e-mail.
- If sending the same press release to multiple recipients, be sure and put the addresses in a "Blind Copy" line.

E. Pitching Your Stories by Phone

- Follow up your press release with a phone call and "pitch". Be ready to resend the release, since the reporters often will say they haven't seen it.
- Make your calls in the morning. This gives you a better chance of talking to reporters instead of their machines. It's also when most editors and producers decide what to cover in their evening news or next-day's paper. The afternoon in a newsroom means deadlines when no one has time to talk.
- Use pitch calls to build relationships. Get to know the journalists who cover your field. Make a habit of calling them with your group has response to breaking news and with quotes for their stories. Suggest possible interviews with experts, as well as "ordinary" people who give a human face to complex issues. You can also suggest getting together to discuss additional story ideas and angles.

F. The Press Kit: Things to Include

At the event or meeting provide a reporter with a [press kit](#). This allows you to give her/him information in addition to the details about the forum. Items you might include are:

- [Press release](#) on the event
- [Fact sheet](#) about the Summit and/or your program
- [Fact sheet](#) about BPW Foundation
- Fact sheet about your local organization
- [Fact sheet](#)/Issue Briefs about women veterans
- [Biography on officer/s](#) or speaker/s
- Business card with contact information including phone, address, e-mail and website

G. Taking Care of the Reporter

- When reporters come to your event welcome them and, if possible, have an escort who is knowledgeable and friendly.
- Introduce the reporter to the key participants and provide them with relevant materials.
- If an article appears about your event you may write the reporter a note thanking him/her for their interest and reminding them of other topic areas BPW can provide information about.

H. Op Eds and Letters to the Editor

[Op-ed columns](#) and letters to the editor give you the opportunity to communicate directly to the public including influential decision-makers, and shape or frame a debate in your own words.

Op-Ed Quick Tips

An op-ed is a column or guest essay published in the opinion section of a newspaper (“Opposite the Editorial” page). Most are between 500-750 words, and most outlets will take submissions by fax, e-mail or mail. Here are some of the criteria for the top 100 newspapers. But check your papers website or call to find out the specifics for that publication. After your Summit, you could write an op-ed on findings, points of agreement, results and the like.

- Op-eds should be timely, lively and present strong arguments. They are looking for an unusual or provocative opinion on a [current issue](#), or a [call-to-arms](#) on a neglected topic. Op-ed editors *are not* looking for event announcements, promotional materials or generic ideas.
- Determine your goal and audience. It could be [summarizing your Summit](#), [starting a grassroots campaign](#), [passing legislation](#), [increasing funding](#), or educating the public on an issue.
- Figure out what you want to say and in your best “voice” be able to summarize your point in a single, clear sentence. Use your local president or a member expert to sign the column's byline.
- The first sentence should get the reader's attention.
- Be timely. [Link your op-ed to a holiday](#) or anniversary, a [newly-released report](#), an [end-of-year summary](#), or your Summit.
- Be short and specific. Eliminate unnecessary words, repetitious or stray ideas. Have others read and critique it for you. Restate your key point or argument at the end.
- E-mail and/or fax are fastest methods. Include a short cover letter with your name and title, affiliation, address, e-mail, and day and evening phone numbers.
- Once it's been sent, don't call the newspaper or magazine repeatedly but do check to be sure they received it. Be ready to make updates and revisions just before publication.
- If your op-ed is rejected, don't be discouraged. Send your op-ed to another news outlet. [Post it on your blog](#) or facebook page. Keep writing and submitting pieces. Often it is just a matter of your op-ed being at the right place at the right time.
- If your piece does get published, send copies to partners, supporters, funders, reporters, elected officials, colleagues and other allies. An op-ed can serve as a springboard to talk-show appearances, panel discussions and a host of other opportunities.

Letters to the Editor Quick Tips

Letters to the editor allow you to offer a [short rebuttal](#), enhancement or missing perspective to an article or commentary in the paper. Most letters should be 150-250 words.

- Respond quickly to the article you've read (note the headline and date it ran).
- Make your points short and specific.
- Point out something they didn't cover and report on the importance of event or activity
- State important facts that back up your point.
- Identify the author and their affiliation. Include full contact information and day and evening phone numbers.

- Respond quickly. Send it by e-mail in the body of the text, not as an attachment. Check on the papers website for specific submission rules.
- Many media outlets have online reader forums and interactive online discussions with reporters. Some news magazine shows encourage viewers to respond while a show is on air, and then read selected e-mails in real time.
- These e-mails should be short, clear and punchy—only a few sentences should be used.

I. Public Relations on the Internet and Social Media

The explosive growth of social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn has transformed the practice of communications. Before these sites arrived on the scene, people consumed news in a much different way: they were passive consumers, while journalists were the actors, dictating the news of the day. Therefore, organizations interested in promoting a product or idea simply worked the media channels to amplify their message.

Today, organizations intent on communicating a message can no longer simply distribute a press release, then sit back and wait. They must meet today's new "active" news consumers where they are – on news sites, [blogs](#), and social media sites - and engage with them (ask questions, spark conversations, share news, etc.) in order to build credibility and loyalty. Increased credibility leads to an increase in influencers who will help spread the organization's message.

- Use the Internet as an enhancement, not a replacement for personal contact. Even though you may e-mail your press release still follow-up with a phone call. Leave complete but concise messages on the reporter's voice mail.
- Remember that bloggers are just as important to your media outreach as other news outlets. Bloggers appreciate it when you spend time getting to read and learn about their blog, offering comments and engaging with other readers before jumping in to promote your news item. Once you've done that, a good next step is offering the blogger a compelling, substantive "[guest post](#)" for their site.
- Do not send attachments by e-mail unless requested. Keep all information in the body of the e-mail.
- If sending the same press release to multiple recipients, be sure and put the addresses in a "Blind Copy" line.
- Utilize your [website](#), [blog](#), or [Facebook page](#) to promote your events and post your press releases.
- Share information on local community listserves and topic-specific discussion boards.

BPW Foundation
1718 M Street, NW, #148, Washington, DC 20036
tel: 202.293.1100; fax: 202.861.0298
foundation@bpwfoundation.org
www.bpwfoundation.org
www.womenjoiningforces.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/BPWF4WomenVets
Twitter: @BPWF4WomenVets

Copyright June 2011 BPW Foundation, All Rights Reserved

Press Materials

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

(Use your letterhead)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(DATE)

CONTACT: (BPW CONTACT)
(PHONE NUMBER)
E-MAIL ADDRESS

Foundations Join Forces for Women Veterans

National Summit Will Address the Unique Needs of Women Veterans

Washington, DC, August 2, 2010 -- Every day, women in the military are willing to lay down their lives for our country. But when they return home, they often are misunderstood, underutilized and sometimes forgotten. Research reveals that, as a nation, we somehow are missing the mark when it comes to supporting women veterans during a difficult and challenging transition in their lives.

BPW announced today that the Disabled American Veterans Charitable Service Trust (DAV) has joined McCormick Foundation in supporting Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation's *Joining Forces for Women Veterans*, a national Summit to raise awareness, create an action plan and launch a fund to help support solutions for women veterans who are challenged in their transition to civilian career, family, and community lives. The Summit will build on existing research as well as best practices of successful programs and policies.

"BPW Foundation's premise, as supported by our research, is that women veterans are unique and should be considered separately," says Roslyn Ridgeway, chair of the BPW Foundation Board of Trustees. "The impact of military service on these women as workers, spouses and family caretakers cannot and should not be underestimated."

The Summit will be held October 21, 2010 in Washington, DC. It is scheduled as a full day meeting with approximately 40 to 50 participants, including women veterans, government, community and corporate representatives. The topic areas are employment and careers; family and community re-integration; and homelessness. Public policy will be integrated throughout the program. As a result of the Summit, an ongoing fund will be established to support programs and services for women veterans.

"During the past 10 years, we have learned that their scope of responsibility in the service, along with the skills and talents that make these women great soldiers, has strengthened their value as employees and leaders," says BPW Foundation CEO, Deborah Frett.

"However, the transition back to civilian life can be difficult and involves challenges that are unique to them as women," Frett continued.

In addition to assistance from McCormick Foundation and DAV, BPW Foundation also will leverage its support base which includes Congressional committee members, Administration officials, coalition partners and key agency officials.

BPW Foundation believes in the power of a united stakeholder voice to recognize and create the systems and programs that focus on women veteran's success. This Summit is the launch of a multi-year initiative leverage public and private support to implement solutions.

Today there are more than 1.8 million women veterans in the United States and that number is growing exponentially. These 'sheroes' are four times as likely as non-veteran women to be homeless, suffer a more than 7.1 percent rate of unemployment and a divorce rate that is sometimes higher than the national average and leave these women with primary responsibility for caring for children.

"These women return to lead roles within their families, communities and the U.S. workforce. BPW Foundation believes it is our duty to support them," Ridgeway added.

BPW Foundation is seeking public and private partners to supplement the McCormick and DAV investment and help launch this initiative. To get involved, contact BPW Foundation at womenvetsummit@bpwfoundation.org

Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation partners to create successful workplaces that practice and embrace diversity, equity and work-life balance. BPW Foundation is a 501(c)(3) research and education organization. Through our groundbreaking research and unique role as a convener of employers and employees, BPW Foundation leads the way in developing and advocating for policies and programs that "work" for both women and businesses. www.bpwfoundation.org

The McCormick Foundation is a nonprofit organization committed to strengthening our free, democratic society by investing in our children, communities and country. It was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Col. Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the Chicago Tribune, who believed that philanthropy and service to others strengthens the civic health of our communities. The Foundation is one of the nation's largest charities, with more than \$1 billion in assets. To learn more about the McCormick Foundation visit www.McCormickFoundation.org.

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation's disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation's disabled veterans and their families. For more information, visit the organization's Web site www.dav.org.

- # -

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

What:

- Joining Forces for Women Veterans (JFWV) Summit hosted by (name of partners)
- To raise awareness of issues impacting women veterans and to begin community-level research and problem solving around the issues. The Summit will frame the key issues, support discussion and crystallize ideas about how women veterans, employers, and others in the community can partner to help successfully reintegrate women veterans into civilian lives.
- Joining Forces for Women Veterans is a grassroots initiative developed by the BPW Foundation to bring together local business, government, educational institutions and veterans' organizations in the community to identify, act on, and resolve the everyday issues challenging women veterans.

Why:

- Women represent 8% of the military and are the fastest growing veteran population. Yet, tools and programs are still largely designed with men in mind and do not necessarily meet the unique needs of women veterans.
- Women veterans are four times more likely than non-veteran women to experience homelessness.
- The military expends great resources training its soldiers to be the most skilled, efficient, disciplined and adaptable employees possible. Yet when soldiers return home, they are often told their skills do not translate into the civilian world
- By bringing together the key players, JFWV helps communities address these issues.

Who:

- Name dignitaries and participants.

When:

- Date and time information. Be sure to include particulars such as press conference at (time), luncheon at (time), and dignitaries available for interviews at (time).

Where:

- Include the address.

Contact:

- Name and phone number, daytime and evening. Website if there is information about the program listed.