

Writing and Using News Releases

News releases are a basic media outreach tool. A release should provoke interest, be connected to something concrete and include a local angle. Begin with a short, attention-grabbing headline. Just as important is a well thought-out "news hook" — a compelling reason for the media to pursue a story. The news hook, best included in the first — or "lead" — paragraph, provides direction to the rest of the release. The remaining paragraphs should answer the following basic questions:

Who?
What?
Where?
When?
Why?
How?

Make releases concise and objective. Include a quote from a Rotarian authority figure — district governor or club president — and explain the event or project as accurately as possible.

Limit releases to one or two pages. If you are sending a release to a television station, think of its visual needs. Suggest good visuals such as hands-on work, unusual events, or celebrity appearances.

When possible, ask a club member with writing or media experience to assist you. Distribute your news release one week prior to the event. For news release examples, visit the PR Toolbox.

Provide photographs

A quality black-and-white or color photo can improve the chances of your release being used. Take photos that show action or tell a story. Use a professional photographer if possible. Include a caption, taped to the back of the photo, describing the scene; name everyone pictured from left to right.

Using fact sheets and background materials Sometimes there is more information than can fit in a one-page news release. When that happens, provide a media kit that includes your release, fact sheets, and other background materials, such as brochures, bios, flyers, and photographs.

Rotary International has developed fact sheets on various topics to aid your local PR efforts. For example, to publicize a local literacy project, send a news release on your local program and complement it with the fact sheet on Rotary and literacy.