

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Promoting your Schools Tree Day event through the media is a great way to rally parents and let the community know how your school is getting involved.

Who are your local media outlets?

- Local newspapers
- Local radio and TV stations
- Community & business newsletters
- Websites or blogs promoting events and activities in your community

How to approach your local media

Media outlets are really supportive of local events but you need to provide them with plenty of notice. Contact them by phone first to tell them about your event and then send them a media release.

For newspapers, ask to speak to the editor. If you're calling the television station, ask to speak to the chief-of-staff, and for radio, talk to the producer of the specific show you wish to target. For websites and blogs, simply send the owner or author an email with the information you would like them to publish.

When you speak to a media contact, keep your chat short and snappy, limiting conversation to the exciting school event you have planned and when and where it is taking place. After the phone call, send the contact a media release to support your case (ask for an email address when you're on the phone to them). A template media release, which allows you to insert details of the school's event, is available on your Coordinators home page <http://treeday.planetark.org/coords/media>. Simply tailor it for your event before sending.

Approach the media with plenty of lead-time and remember to ask the media contact what their deadline is when you speak to them. By working with their editorial schedule, you will maximise your chances for coverage.

Story Angles

Make sure you tell the media that your story has a local focus and remind them what a great cause it's all in aid of – Schools Tree Day!

Other story angles that might get the media's attention include:

- A tree planting that commemorates a special event or individual at the school or in the community
- Numbers and statistics – maybe your school is planting its 1,000th seedling or has been participating in National Tree Day for 10 years
- Benefits to the community and environment – if your school is aiming to achieve a particular goal or working to repair a natural asset, either on your school grounds or at an external site, tell the media about it

- VIPs at your event – perhaps the local MP or Mayor or a well-known identity in your community has committed to attend your event. Make sure you check with the VIP's office for permission before contacting the media with this kind of story.

Images

Providing local newspapers with great photo opportunities or sending them a good quality photo after your event will greatly increase your chances of securing a story. In some cases, the local newspaper might send a photographer out to the site. It varies with each publication and its resources. If they don't, you can send one or more of your own images to the newspaper after the event. Just make sure you provide high-resolution photos (at least 1MB in size). Remember to capture:

- Local heroes and VIPs
- The official planting

Make sure you provide the newspaper with the full name of everyone in your photos, along with your contact details should they wish to obtain a quote from you.

Guidelines involving students

1. Permission: Ensure students involved in any activity with local media have permission to be filmed or appear in photographs.
2. Dress to impress: Remind students who are going to take part in any promotions to wear their full school uniform. This will allow your school to be clearly identified in the newspaper or on the nightly news.
3. Ready, set, go: Local news crews and photographers have to cover multiple stories each day so their time is limited. The easier you make the experience for them, the more likely it is your school will end up in the paper or on the nightly news. Make sure you select and brief your spokespeople and students before the event so they are prepared for possible interviews and photo shoots on the day.

Good luck!