

FRIENDS OF THE POOR® WALK

Media Coverage & Tips



Generating media coverage is one of the most important things you can do to help support the important work being done by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Positive media stories about the Friends of the Poor® Walk, for example, especially pre-event coverage, can help to:

1. Encourage more people to participate, either as walkers and/or donors; and
2. Highlight the Society's accomplishments and the good works of your Council or Conference, which, in turn helps to recruit others to support or join SVdP.

Here are some basic steps to help you develop media interest in the Walk:

- 1. Identify the media outlets in your community and the reporters most likely to cover the event, and put together a distribution list with the name, title, and contact information, including e-mail addresses.**

The people at those outlets who decide what stories will get coverage will vary from outlet to outlet:

- *Newspapers*: Managing Editor or Editor. Also include anyone who takes photos for the publication.
- *TV*: Assignment Editor/Managers. They decide each day what stories will be covered and by which reporter. Also include the producers for talk and interview programs.
- *Radio*: Editors or Program Manager.

Note: Every media outlet functions on a “news cycle.” In other words, they have different lead times when they start to research, prepare, and publish/air stories. You want to be ahead of that curve when you're offering a story idea. TV stations, for example, are used to doing “breaking” stories and stories that occur within the same 24-hour time period. A newspaper reporter, on the other hand, may work on a story idea a few weeks before it's published.

- 2. About four weeks ahead of the event, write and send a news release.**

Hard copy and snail mail are fine, but e-mail is quicker, cheaper and easier for them to edit, especially the print reporters. Consider the following for your subject line:

News Release: 13th Annual Friends of the Poor Walk Scheduled for September 24, 2022

- 3. About one to two weeks before the event, write and distribute a media advisory.**

National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.

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4. About a week before the event, phone or e-mail the reporters in your community to inquire about coverage.

Three important points to note about calling someone in the media:

- a. Usually, the best times to call a reporter or editor are between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- b. If you get the reporter in person (versus voicemail), the first thing to ask, after introducing yourself, is: "Are you on deadline right now?" This demonstrates that you understand their work and respect their deadlines.
- c. Instead of asking, "Did you get the release [or advisory]?" Ask: "Is there any other information I can share?"

NEWS RELEASE

A news release usually has five parts:

1. Contact Information: Name, phone number, cell phone number and e-mail address.
2. Headline: Sum up what it's all about.
3. Lead Sentence: 5 W's: Who, What, When, Where and Why.
4. Body of the Release: Additional details and, perhaps, a quote from the one of the primary organizers.
5. Boilerplate: A description of the organization, what it does, how many members, how many people are served/helped by your Conference or Council. Add the Walk website or a phone number at the end.

MEDIA ADVISORY

1. Typically used to preview or announce an event.
2. Organizes separates the information into columns based on the 5Ws: What, When, Where, Who and Why
3. Usually kept to one page. (Single spacing is OK for an advisory.)
4. Can be distributed on its own or following a release to serve as a reminder to the media.

ADDITIONAL TIPS TO CONSIDER

1. In the weeks leading up to the Walk, place an announcement in your parish newsletter or website, as well as any publications produced by the Archdiocese in your area.
2. Set up a table with a banner to recruit participants after some of the Masses. If you need a banner, visit the Walk website (fopwalk.org) for logos and artwork.
3. Most media outlets, including TV and radio stations, have online community calendars that allow people to post notices about events, including the Walk.
4. Respond **promptly** if a reporter calls or e-mails for an interview or more information. Remember: The media work on deadlines, so it pays to respect those deadlines.

5. If you get the opportunity to do an interview, write down the two or three key points that you want to make. Rehearse them until you have them down pat and can say them in your sleep! And have an “elevator pitch” ready: What’s the most important thought you want to leave with your audience? When you’re (almost) done being interviewed and the reporter asks, “Is there anything else you’d like to add?”, that’s when you use your elevator pitch — even if you’re repeating what you said earlier in the interview. Often, that remark can wind up as the story’s lead sentence.
6. Rather than a pre-event letter to the editor of your local newspaper (which rarely gets printed), consider a “thank you” to the community in a letter to the editor after the event.
7. Ask on-air media personalities for on-air time to discuss the event. Invite one of the local stations to do a live remote broadcast from your Walk site.
8. Recruit a high-profile personality (an elected official, a sports figure, or even a local media personality) to host the event kick-off. Invite elected officials such as the mayor, city council members, board of aldermen, county representatives, state representatives, etc.
9. Share Walk information on your Conference/Council social media, and ask organizers and participants to post something about the walk periodically on their own social media, including a link to register and/or a phone number to call.

NEED HELP? IDEAS? WORDSMITHING?

Contact the National Council Communications Team at (314) 567-3993, or by emailing Jill Pioter (jpioter@svdpusa.org) or Michelle Boyer (mboyer@svdpusa.org)