



## Tips for attracting local media attention for your AFTD event

Thank you for deciding to host an AFTD awareness event this year! We want you to be able to impact as many people as possible with your event(s). That's why we've compiled advice for attracting the attention of media in your area:

### 1. Identify Local Media

Start your media plan by compiling a list of local and regional media- newspapers, TV stations, magazines, community monthlies/weeklies and calendars- paying particular attention to reporters with a health focus. If there are local health bloggers, support groups or students looking for civic projects, consider them as well. Civic engagement websites like Congress.org is one example. To find city and state local media contacts you can go the following link: <http://www.usnpl.com>. Collect:

- Name of news/assignment editor, health reporter, general assignment reporter, club organizer
- Email address for contact or general news account (ex: [news@watv.com](mailto:news@watv.com))
- Phone number for newsroom or reporter
- Verify requirements for writing a Letter to the Editor of Op/Ed piece for your local newspaper (word count, publication dates, etc.)
- Look for morning show segments or special publications which might cover your event in advance. If these exist, contact casually by phone a month or so beforehand.

### 2. Prepare and Send a Media Advisory

Think of this as the “save the date” for the media, sent prior your news release. It's a short announcement offering a quick impact statement of why your event is important, and the who-what-when-where-why of your event. Keep it short- reporters are busy and are less likely to read lengthy advisories. This is where you identify a contact person (probably yourself).

- Send (email) to the media two weeks prior to your event.
- Offer a sentence or two describing local impact and why it's important.
- Provide name, contact number, times and address for event.
- Send to as many journalists as you like. It's okay to send it to more than one reporter at the same outlet.
- Be sure to notify property owners or any other stakeholders hosting this event that the media is invited.

### 3. Prepare and Send a News Release

Using our Toolkit sample, draft a press release for your event.

- Lead off the press release with a powerful statement telling reporters why they should *care* about your event. Ex: “Imagine you're a 50-year-old who can no longer recognize your own children.”
- If you're concerned with the formality of the language in your release, consult [AP Style](#) newswriting, the preferred format for journalists. It is more casual and conversational than other style formats.
- Include powerful quotes in this release. Some reporters may use your release as the basis for a written story, so think of it as storytelling, offering them content they may repurpose.

- Provide contact names, day-of-event phone (cell) numbers, event address and description of activities.
- News photographers will want to know what kind of “action” video/photo is available. This can make the difference for news organizations seeing value in your story. If there is a particularly visual element to your event, let them know what and when that will happen, i.e. “Girl scouts will begin selling hot cider at 1 pm.” Or “The local basketball team will begin serving at The Food For Thought dinner at 6 pm.”
- Local news media want stories with *local relevance*. This can tell the struggles of a local person living with AFTD or an event in memory of someone who lost their life to AFTD and how many people it will affect in the future.
- Emphasize the *impact* of your event as one of many happening across the country in a movement to build awareness about a serious disease. This gives you momentum. Your community is part of this movement, playing a role in a bigger picture. Provide a link or a quote from the AFTD organization, to validate that bigger picture.
- Later in the release, offer some “Quick Tips” provided in the Toolkit. These are useful nuggets reporters can insert in stories.
- Releases are typically one page in length- short and to the point. But don’t worry if your release goes to two pages.
- Check all the URL links provided in the release, double check phone numbers, addresses, dates, etc. You don’t want them to show up on the wrong day/location/time. This happens.
- Most releases are typically emailed, but you can fax or send by postal mail.
- Print out paper copies of this release to hand out to reporters on the day of the event.

#### 4. Prepare for Media Interviews

If you are the contact person, expect to be interviewed and prepare others to be interviewed as well.

Reporters frequently require more than one source. Someone must be willing to speak on record.

Reporters are looking for an everyday “Joe” to share their story.

- Consider your answer to this question: why this is important? Reporters can convey the concrete, nuts and bolts facts of this story to their audiences; they need you to share the emotional impact of why this event is happening and why it’s important. Share feeling words.
- Be sure to have a casual, easy way to explain FTD as a disease (refer to the Toolkit).
- News interviews are supposed to feel like conversations. You’re not giving the State of the Union address. Remember, you know this material, talk as if you are sharing your thoughts with your best friend.
- Consider a call to action in your interview: what can the public do to help out? Is there an upcoming event or a way they can get involved? Journalists are usually looking for a way to advance their stories beyond today.
- If you have received clearance from a venue to hold your event there, be sure they are aware that you invited the media.
- It is okay to call a newsroom the day prior or the morning of the event to be sure they have all the information they need to cover it. Use phone calls sparingly, though, and do not call close to airtime (i.e. don’t call at 4:55pm if the news station has a 5pm newscast).
- Prepare to take photos of your event in case media are unable to show up. Sometimes you can pitch them your own material after the fact.

## 5. At the Event

Be prepared ahead of time on the day of your event. Reporters sometimes show up early to an event in order to obtain an interview ahead of time so they do not have to stay for the entire event.

- Start your event on time. Journalists are often on very tight schedules and cover several stories a day. Be prepared to offer an interview prior to the start of the event, or in the middle of it. Do not waste their time.
- Walk up and introduce yourself to the media. They're used to being approached by organizers who will point them in the right direction for interviews and visuals. Be friendly, casual and accommodating.
- Don't worry about running the interview; reporters will ask you questions.
- Look at the reporter during an interview, not directly at the camera.
- Encourage everyone at the event to be comfortable being videotaped or photographed in the background. Photographers can not visually capture your story if volunteers are running away to avoid being on camera while they serve cider.
- The reporter may ask a lot of questions that do not make it into the story. They are gathering background information. They may ask you to repeat an answer, this is just so they can capture the best version of your answer.
- Don't be surprised if reporters can not tell you when the piece will publish or air- it might get bumped to another show/day if breaking news occurs. Always be appreciative of their time.
- Be sure to promote any upcoming events to the attending reporter. If you can make a personal connection and obtain a business card, that will help ease future coverage.
- Take photographs and possibly a couple video interviews. Sometimes print and blog media will accept content submissions.

## 6. Follow Up

If you feel the event was covered concisely, be sure to send a thank you email or hand-written note to the reporter or editor or photographer, thanking them for their excellent coverage.

- In a thank you note, remind them of another opportunity to cover your cause.
- If there was an error in their report, politely thank them for coming to the event, but inform them of the error and ask if they can correct it in the online version. Only for very egregious errors would there ever be a formal correction.
- Share the online story on your social media and encourage your friends to do so, also. Again, promote another upcoming event or call to action.
- Submit photos and a recap of the event and its impact to blogs and print media for their consideration.
- Never burn a bridge because media were unable to attend. They might consider it next time.

This guide is courtesy of Sally Winter, an Indianapolis Public Relations Specialist who lost her mother, Lolly Phillips, to FTD in 1993.