

Publicizing Your Event

If your Event Proposal Form has been accepted, and you've already begun planning a great event, the next step is publicizing your event – the key to pulling together a successful event! Here are a few tips on getting the word out:

Determine Your Audience: While there are some events that everybody can enjoy, many events will be geared toward a specific group of people. Determine who this group includes before you start to spread the word, and that will help you find the right avenues to reach your target audience.

Finding Your Best Tools: Once you know who your event is for, the next question is how to let them know about it. There are several tools that can help:

The Postal Service: send mailed invitations to specific individuals on your guest list

E-Mail: a cheaper and quicker option than postal mail, e-mails also let you send personalized invitations to specific individuals, and send follow up messages easily

Event Websites: there are several web sites that list upcoming events, including local sites (like grnow.com in Grand Rapids) and news sites – event web sites can help you get the word out if you don't have specific attendees in mind (open to the public)

Media: send a press release to TV and radio stations, and printed publications to get your event in the news, both up-to and day-of event, such as having the radio station broadcast live at your event (*please provide Guiding Light Mission staff your press release for review prior to releasing it*)

Word of Mouth: talk about your event to friends and family at church, at your childrens school, at work. Encourage others to help spread the word.

Sponsors: ask event sponsors to distribute/display flyers about your event in their store or to their clients. Be sure to include basic information (who, what, when, where, why) and contact information in your communications.

Media Tips: Know who to contact. Which papers or newsletters have events calendars or sections about local happenings? Which reporters focus on community events or fundraisers? Feel free to reach out to Guiding Light Mission staff for help with your media relations. Contact Jessica at 616-451-0236 or Jessica@lifeonthestreet.org for input.

Talking to Reporters: Reporters are usually quite busy, and when you reach one, your goal should be to interest them in your news quickly by sharing a few key details. Once they are interested, ask if you can provide them a press release (*please have your press release approved by Guiding Light Mission staff prior to sending*) with more information (ask for their e-mail address and send via e-mail).

After Sending Your Release: follow up to see if it is being pursued or if you can offer more information. If a journalist calls you for additional information, or otherwise expresses interest in your news, get them what they need as fast as possible, and reach out to Guiding Light Mission staff for additional support.

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Press Release Tips: In general, your release should not exceed one page. Include as much local information as you can. Mention any high-profile local figures who may be attending. Try to include a quote from a suitable person.

Title: Keep it short and to the point, eye-catching and interesting. Include a local angle. Type in block capitals. Contact information: **Include your name, phone number (and cell phone if applicable) and e-mail address at the top of the release.**

First Paragraph: This is the most important, so make sure you list all the vital information here: who, what, where, when, why.

Key Messages: Make sure you include clear details about the event and Guiding Light Mission.

Presentation: The release must be typed with no errors with your contact details clearly typed at the top. Always proofread the release before you send it out or, preferably, have someone else do this for you. At the end of the text, type three number signs: # # #.

Have your release reviewed by Guiding Light Mission staff prior to distribution. Contact Sharice at 616-451-0236 x17 or sharice@lifeonthestreet.org.

Follow Up: Be sure to follow up with your attendees and get them event details and information, and tickets if necessary. If possible, send thank you letters to attendees, sponsors, and volunteers with information on how much money was raised and what it will be used for. Good follow-up helps bring them back to next year's event or future fundraisers!