



Media Guide

Autism Canada

Plan Your Own Event Communication Tips

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Thank you for supporting Autism Canada. Holding a special event for those living with autism is a great way to achieve your philanthropic goals, build community spirit and raise awareness for the autism cause. We all need to join together to affect real change. By holding a fundraising event for Autism Canada, you are making a difference in the lives of people affected by autism.

Now it's time to get the word out about your event and show how Autism Canada, with your help, works to achieve its strategic objectives.

Autism Canada's Strategic Objectives:

A national knowledge hub.

We strive to provide current, timely and useful information and direction to families and persons with ASD.

Influence public policy at the national level.

Together with ASD partners across the country, we take a leadership role to influence public policy at the national level.

Facilitate collaboration and sharing among member organization.

We work with our Provincial and Territorial Council to provide them with current, timely, and useful information and help them build fundraising and awareness capacity.

Build greater capacity and competencies in health care and in other critical sectors such as education, justice & senior care.

We are committed to increasing the knowledge, capacity and competencies of some of the primary sectors with which people on the Spectrum interact over the course of their lives, specifically, health care, education, justice and senior care.

Support and promote medical and non-medical research.

We champion evidence-based research by bringing together researchers from around the world.

Ensure financial sustainability.

Our financial sustainability will be enhanced through increased focus on fundraising and targeting relevant grant opportunities from foundations and/or governments.

Tagline:

See the Spectrum Differently

- See the potential in people living with autism.
- See and understand behaviour as a form of communication.
- See and respect the person as an individual first.
- See the opportunity to work together to make a difference.

HOW TO ACHIEVE PUBLICITY THROUGH MEDIA COVERAGE

We hope these media guidelines help you share your great idea with the rest of the community and increase participation in your event.

No matter what size your activity or event, the media is an excellent means for informing your target audience and the general public about your event. Believe it or not, you can achieve coverage of your event without spending money on advertising. Media often have a mandate to cover stories and/or events at the local and community level.

There are several ways to achieve publicity through media:

1. Pre-event publicity — community events listings in local newspapers, TV and radio.
2. A pre-event story pitch with an irresistible hook can turn into an editorial story and call to action for readers.
3. Encourage media to attend your event so they will cover it with a media advisory.
4. Event day-of or post-event publicity — send a media release with photos to highlight success stories during or immediately after your event.

Media type and who to contact:

Media Type

Community radio stations
Local television stations
Local daily newspapers
Community newspapers
Newsletters: schools, churches, libraries
Community message boards or websites

Contact Person

News Director
Assignment Editor, News Director
News or City Editor
Editor in Chief
Newsletter Editor
Webmaster

COMMUNITY EVENTS LISTINGS

Community events listings are text-based advertisements that appear for free in either print or broadcast mediums. Although there is no charge for this announcement, the newspaper will decide when, where and if it will be printed.

Tips for event listings

Submit your announcement via email two to three weeks in advance. Include the basics in your announcement: WHO, WHERE, WHAT, WHEN, WHY, CONTACT, PHONE, COST.

Sample Community Event Listing

DATE

Bowling for Autism
Bothwell Spirit

Dear EDITOR

Can you please post the following event benefiting Autism Canada in your community listings section?

Zone Public School will be hosting a “Bowling for Autism” event to raise funds and awareness for autism research and their Family Support and Resource program for individuals with autism and their families.

Bothwell residents are invited to support the children at the school by registering a team and joining the fun, which will include Team Theme and other contests, a lunchtime music concert, and a silent auction from 10:00am to 2:00pm at Bowlerama (1227 Main Street, Bothwell). For more information, please phone 555.555.5555.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Phone
Email

Smaller newspapers, such as the Bothwell Spirit in the preceding example, are more likely to print out longer versions of what you send them as they have fewer demands for space. However, if you were sending the community listing to a larger paper, like the London Free Press or the Toronto Star, you would want to send a shorter posting to ensure key message retention.

For example:

Bowling for Autism event team registration now. Call 555.555.5555 for information. Proceeds benefit Autism Canada.

STORY PITCH

Pitching a story to local media is a great way to publicize your event through editorial coverage. Here's what you should do when formulating your pitch:

- Establish the angle (what is the most newsworthy element of your story)
- Interview your subject: human interest stories are more likely to be picked up
- Summarize points of the interview with your key messages
- WHY should they run the story?
- Email the story pitch to the editor or a reporter
- Follow up 24 hours later with a phone call or email
- Confirm receipt of story, answer any questions and make any clarifications

Sample Story Pitch

Dear Reporter,

I'm writing to propose an exclusive story about an inspirational story about a family's son that has attained an optimal outcome and how they are now helping others. The Smiths own a restaurant in the heart of Calgary and they are launching a "Change for Autism" event for Autism Awareness Month throughout October.

The Smith's son was first diagnosed with autism just before his third birthday and at that time they were offered little hope. With no language and no eye contact, they set up a home based one-on-one attitudinal and educational program based on the principals of Applied Behavioural Analysis. They also implemented dietary changes and supplements. After three years of treatment, Christopher has started grade one with no special curriculum or educational assistant. The Smith family wants to support Autism Canada as they strive to be a national hub of knowledge.

Through the month of October, Smith's Family Restaurant will have donation boxes at each table encouraging customers to donate their spare change. Customers will also be able to make donations with their credit cards.

"Autism Canada was the only organization that gave us hope for an optimal outcome," says Mr. Smith. "While we didn't know if Christopher would attend school and have friends, we knew it was possible."

I sincerely hope that you will be interested in covering this amazing story. I would be happy to coordinate an interview with you and Mr. Smith. I will follow up with you tomorrow.

Best regards,

YOU

MEDIA ADVISORY

Media advisories are straightforward memos to editors; a listing of facts to persuade the editor or news director to attend an event. An advisory uses short, bulleted items highlighting the 5 W's: who, what, when, where, and why.

Sample Media Advisory

ADVISORY

Bike Sit: Local Chatham Kent Police braving the heat for autism

- When:** Date
11:00am – 6:00pm
- Where:** Real Canadian Superstore
1500 St. Clair Avenue, Chatham
(in front of store, in the parking lot)
- What:** Chatham Kent Police cycling team will be riding on stationary bikes for seven hours to raise funds and awareness for children and their families living with autism.
- Why:** Chatham Kent Police cyclist Cst. John Smith's daughter has recently been diagnosed with autism. He'd like raise funds for research.
Goodtimes, a support program funded and operated by Autism Canada.
- Who:** Chatham Kent Police cycling team

Note: Great photo opportunity, riders will be available for interviews while riding.

All proceeds benefit Autism Canada.

For further information please contact: Your name and contact information.

MEDIA RELEASE

A media release is a concise communications tool that informs the media of your newsworthy event that is designed to generate a story or article. A release is intended to get reporters interested in the story so that they contact you for more information and report on it. For post-event releases, send a couple of high resolution photos that capture the essence of the event. Be sure to write a caption for the photo, including who is pictured doing what, plus a photo credit.

When you're writing the release, please:

- Answer: **WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHY** and **HOW**
- Emphasize the most important information in the first two paragraphs
- Be accurate on all facts especially names, locations, dates and contact information
- Media releases should be one page in length and no more than two pages
- Use a headline
- Ask someone to proofread the release for accuracy and typos

Media Release Sample

MEDIA RELEASE

<City> Students Don't Communicate to Change Lives

DATE (City) — The Ursuline College “*Don't Communicate to Change Lives*” event in Chatham Ontario proved to be a tremendous success, raising more than \$<amount> for autism awareness. The annual fundraiser took place on <insert date> where students came together for one day and did not talk, text or email one another to raise awareness and funds for autism.

Money raised through “*Don't Communicate to Change Lives*” supports educational programs that empower families and the most promising autism research.

About “*Don't Communicate to Change Lives*”

The “*Don't Communicate to Change Lives*” event was a day event where students spent a day not communicating with their friends. They want to experience what it was like to walk in the shoes of many living with autism. The event opened with the inspirational announcement to all the students in the morning and ended with a moving gathering in the auditorium for all those who participated.

About Autism Canada

Autism Canada is the national voice for families and individuals on the spectrum. It is a volunteer led organization providing treatment and resource information, and influencing related health care and government policy.

To learn more about autism, visit our website at www.autismcanada.org or contact us by email at info@autismcanada.org.

MORE TIPS ...

- Proofread — have someone go over your material to ensure accuracy, spelling and grammar.
- Make your news release stand out from all the others.
- Make the headline short, eye-catching and to the point.
- Include the most important information in the first sentence or paragraph (assume your reader won't go beyond the first paragraph).
- Send your news release early in the day, as close to 9am as possible.
- Use e-mail whenever possible and include the release in the body of your e-mail, not as an attachment.
- Include clear contact information and be available when you say you will be.

FOLLOWING UP WITH THE MEDIA

When you contact the media, introduce yourself and ask the following questions:

- Did you receive the media advisory/release I sent?
- Are you or someone else from <media outlet> interested in a story about my event?
- Are you interested in an interview?
- Try not to call on a deadline day.

Good luck with your media outreach.

And thank you for joining Autism Canada!