

Public Relations Timeline

Conducting media relations surrounding your local Arthritis Foundation events is the perfect opportunity for your chapter to build relationships with local media. As you know, Walk to Cure Arthritis provides the opportunity to continue conversations with local media beyond a one-day event to a year-round conversation about the arthritis and the Arthritis Foundation mission to prevent and cure this debilitating disease.

The following is a suggested timeline for implementing public relations efforts year-round.

One Month After Event

- Begin developing a presentation that highlights this year's results including number of attendees, money raised, etc. This will serve as an opportunity to follow-up with current sponsors and open the conversation for you to discuss opportunities to deepen your relationship throughout the year
- Work with appropriate volunteers and staff to identify and set up meetings with potential media sponsors and local companies
- Send thank you notes and results to any media who either attended or showed interest in this year's event. This first contact will help keep the door open for interaction throughout the year

Three Months After Event

- Meet with event chair and Arthritis Foundation staff to plan event awareness efforts.
 - Awareness Efforts to Consider:
 - Provide tip sheets to sponsors and local companies that can be sent to employees
 - Offer radio and TV stations health and wellness content to add to their website on a monthly, quarterly basis
- Send a note to your media contacts from the last event. Continually watch media for their stories so you can comment on an article or piece when you next contact them. Invite them to other events you may be having in your chapter without asking for media coverage or donations

Four Months After Event

- Finalize plan of action for public relations and marketing efforts and review with staff
- Include the following when outlining your plan:
 - **Identify a local spokesperson** for your chapter who would be comfortable and available for an interview. Potential spokespeople may include:
 - a. Local Arthritis Chapter representative (e.g., Chapter President or other staff)
 - b. Life Improvement Series Instructors or participants
 - c. Rheumatologists or medical expert
 - d. People with arthritis, volunteers, local walk honorees, etc.
 - **Develop media pitch angles** that would be of interest to the media any time of year. Keep in mind: media want to know about the larger story or arthritis and its impact. When speaking with media use the event as a timely reason to speak with media and a call to action, but also present the bigger picture of why arthritis should be important to the

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reporter. A few examples are included below:

- a. [Arthritis is the most common disability in the U.S.](#)
 - Offer information about arthritis and its prevalence
 - Provide local expert who can add insight and local statistics
 - Offer personal story for human interest appeal
- b. Personal/Volunteer Stories
 - Offer personal stories to print, TV and radio for human interest appeal and a look into a life with arthritis

Five Months After Event

- Create or update media lists
- Include TV, radio, and print publications that you think would be interested in covering the Arthritis Foundation and/or Walk to Cure Arthritis. Include contacts that cover health, fitness, and community events
- Begin securing media sponsors

Five Months Before Event

- Provide newsletter articles to sponsors and participants/teams for inclusion in their company newsletters
 - Topics may include local Event Chair, other volunteer leaders, local honorees, or sponsors
- Include newsletter article in your chapter's newsletter
- Send calendar announcement to community calendars
- As sponsors are secured, distribute new sponsor news release
- Order TV and radio PSAs through your Arthritis Foundation staff

Four Months Before Event

- Distribute radio and TV PSAs (ask stations to run PSAs from two months before the event through event day)
- Touch base with media that covered last year's event and provide information regarding this year's event

Three Months Before Event

- Send out calendar announcements
- Pitch a local human-interest story in conjunction with timely topics in the news. Examples include local youth honoree story or Juvenile Arthritis Camp. Pitch his/her story to local radio and TV program directors and to feature editors at daily and weekly newspapers.
- Distribute release on event to long-lead publications, specifically local magazines

Two Months Before Event

- Meet with logistics chair to ensure all standard event day components (such as signage, emcee/entertainment equipment needs, etc.) are ordered and set-up is assigned to a committee member
- Follow up with TV and radio to confirm PSAs will run

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- Make media follow-up calls with long-lead publications
- Write feature article on your event honoree for chapter newsletter (if applicable)
- Hire a photographer or appoint a responsible volunteer or staff member to take pictures on the day of the event. Use the pictures during post-event outreach

One Month Before Event

- Follow up with TV and radio to confirm ads/PSAs will run
- Distribute release to local short-lead media including TV, radio, dailies and weeklies
- Make media follow-up calls to determine interest
- Draft message points for emcee/speakers pre- and post-event announcements; have approved by staff and coordinate with appropriate individuals
- Make arrangements for volunteers to staff media check-in booth

Three Days Before Event

- E-mail or fax media alert to assignment desks, daybook editors and newspaper photo and feature editors. Specifically target community-focused reporters and photographers at each outlet with a goal of securing on-site attendance at the event
- Plan to send the media advisory to all local TV assignment desks. Follow up to determine interest for on-site attendance the day before the event to see if it has been included on the calendar
- Confirm event-day details (arrival time, parking information, etc.) with emcee, media, photographer, and entertainment

Event Day

- PR/marketing chair ensures standard event components are in place
- PR/marketing chair is stationed at media sign-in table, coordinates media coverage
- Ensure identified spokespersons are on-site, available for interviews and comfortable with messaging
- Facilitate on-site interviews as necessary
- Ensure that photographer captures media-genic photographs (e.g., action shots, candid, images of walkers, etc.)

Immediately After the Event

- Send post-event news release or professional-quality photo with a photo caption to media (e.g., top fund raisers, team photos to corporate newsletter, etc.) The press release should include information about the event such as number of participants, amount raised, a quote from local Arthritis Foundation spokesperson
- Contact media if any unique stories develop from event day and provide post event information as well as photos
- Secure newspaper clippings and tapes of coverage for merchandising to sponsors and other supporters and the share with the National Office
- Develop event recap report to provide to sponsors and local companies involved in this year's event

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Creative Ideas for Consideration

- Is there a local celebrity tie-in with the event? Perhaps involvement from a local newscaster or radio personality? If so, consider promoting their participation to the media.
- Are there any volunteers affiliated with the event that would be willing to share his/her story with the media? Such heart-warming stories will help paint a better picture of the importance of the event and the Arthritis Foundation.
- Are there any quirky participants involved in the event? If so, you could offer up these people as potential interviewees when pitching the media advisory. Ideal candidates could include arthritis patients, mother/daughter or father/son teams, or someone who is participating on behalf of a friend or family member that has arthritis.
- Do any of your sponsors have an executive who is passionate about arthritis and plans to participate in the event? If so, you could pitch a profile of him/her to local business outlets following the event. Media outlets often times feature executives with interesting hobbies in their coverage.
- Who raised the most money for the event? Use their story in post-event outreach to local community publications.