



# Getting Publicity for Good Works

## *Finding the News Hook*

Ami Neiberger-Miller, APR  
Steppingstone LLC

**step•ping•stone**

[step'ing-stOn"], -n.

An advantageous position for  
advancement toward a goal.



# Today's Presentation

- I. News coverage – who wants it, keys to media success, why a news hook is so important, creating a media advisory, how to avoid common mistakes.
  
- II. Talk to a real reporter  
Lori Montgomery  
*Washington Post*
  
- III. Apply what you learned today to a case study

# Four Keys to Successful Media Coverage



1. **TIMING** – You notify media about the event before it happens.
2. **QUALITY** - The information you send out is accurate, professional, and contains a clear news hook.
3. **TARGETED** – You send your news release/advisory/pitch to the right reporter at the right outlet.
4. **RESPONSE** – You respond to media requests.



# What Stops Nonprofits From Getting Coverage?

- No one at the nonprofit has relationships with working reporters.
- No one is asked or assigned to invite media to the event.
- Media are notified “too late.”
- The event has no apparent visual.
- The news release is sent to the wrong people and/or the wrong outlet.
- There is no obvious news hook.



# What is news?

Events, people, and ideas that are:

- **Timely** – happening now or very soon.
- **New** – unique, different, never done before.
- **Important** – affect lots of people.
- **Progressive** – improve the way we live, learn, work, and do things.
- **In Conflict** – involves tension or struggle.
- **Human interest** – people feel or react when hearing it.
- **Local** – happening in your community, to your community, with your community. Or apply to a larger issue beyond your community.

# What is a news hook?



A news hook is a nugget of information in a press release, media pitch, or news advisory, that is real news.

It gets the reporter's attention. It makes the reporter sit up and say – I know there's a story here and these people will help me get it.

A news hook is often the #1 determining factor in whether a reporter follows up on a news release or story pitch.



# News Hook Example

At the request of the Department of Justice, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is setting up a toll-free hotline and website at its offices in Alexandria, Virginia to reunite children and their families in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.



# Before you write your hook, know the basics

**You must communicate:  
5 Ws & the H**

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?



# Typical Media Advisory

Dateline - Headline

2-3 sentences (includes news hook)

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

Photo/Video Options

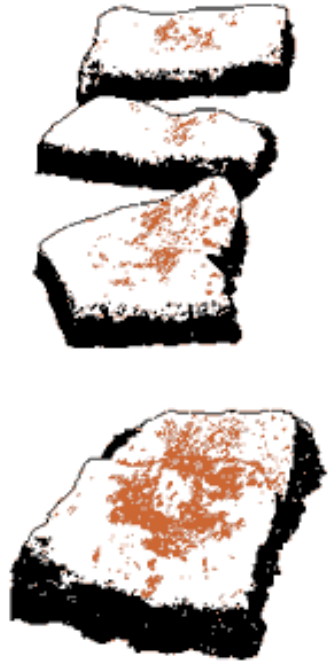
Contact information

###



# News Release (Full-Blown)

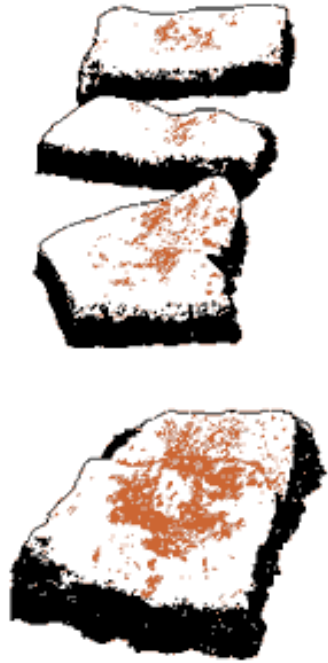
- Headline spells out hook.
- Italicized 2<sup>nd</sup> headline may add emphasis or details.
- Lead sentence (includes news hook).
- Answers the 5 W's & the H questions in a narrative form.
- May include quotes from key people in the organization.
- May reference a report, statistics, etc.
- Photo/video opportunities
- Contact information
- ###



# Email Pitch

- Strong headline in the subject line, clearly identifies itself as a story idea.
- Assume the reporter will only read the first line of the email.
- The news hook is in the first sentence.
- Maximum of 3 sentences in the pitching paragraph.
- Ok to say why this reporter is the right person for this story.
- You may copy a news release below or insert a link for more info.
- No attachments. No spamming. No carpet bombing.

# Phone pitch



First sentence – spells out the news hook.

Second sentence – why it's relevant to the reporter/the media outlet, or more details.

Third sentence – asks the reporter to cover the story.

# Example: Sister Cities International Union Station Young Artists Exhibit

## DIPLOMATIC POUCH

a bimonthly e-mail news column

### Showcasing Sisterly Love

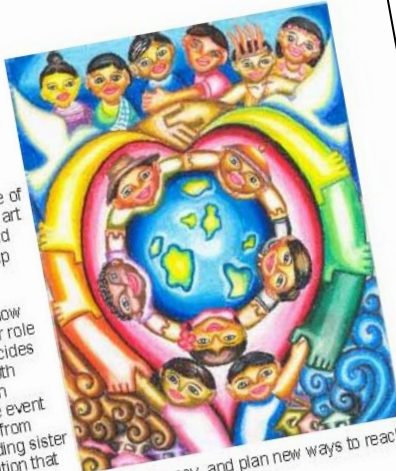
If your summer travels happen to take you through Union Station this month, be sure to get a glimpse of a free new exhibit featuring 83 original works of art by youth from around the world that runs through July 15.

"The Sister Cities International Showcase of Young Artists" features original works of art by people ages 13 to 18 centered around the theme, "What does global citizenship look like?"

The vibrant display, which illustrates how young people view the world and their role as members of a global society, coincides with the Sister Cities International 50th anniversary conference being held in Washington from July 13 to 15. The event will bring together 1,200 delegates from around the world to honor outstanding sister city programs, advocate for legislation that will expand the number of international exchanges, attend the National Summit on Citizen Diplomacy, and plan new ways to reach out in peace and understanding.

Began in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to strengthen partnerships between the United States and communities abroad, Sister Cities International now represents more than 2,500 communities in 134 countries.

To coincide with the Sister Cities International 50th anniversary conference, Union Station is featuring an exhibit on global citizenship by young artists ages 13 to 18.



washingtonpost.com

### Take the Kids

Saturday, July 15, 2006; Page C09

*Art With Heart and a Global Perspective* This is your last day to see the Sister Cities International Showcase of Young Artists. With globalization getting a bad rap for things such as global economic "monopolies," it's nice to see it working in another way: bringing young artists from all over the world together to facilitate understanding and global responsibility. Artists ages 13-18 created the 83 artworks in this exhibition from the Sister Cities International competition. Through their pieces, the commissioned artists were asked to answer the question, "What does global citizenship look like?" Sister-city communities submit one piece by a local young artist and another from each sister city abroad. A panel of judges selects the winners based on originality, composition and interpretation of the theme. Sister Cities International is a nonprofit citizen diplomacy network that creates and strengthens partnerships between U.S. and international communities. Free. Today. Union Station, West Hall, 50 Massachusetts Ave. NE. 202-



Sibongile Ngcobo was part of the Sister Cities International celebration last month in Chicago. (By Nam Y. Huh — Associated Press)

### Also In Style ...

- [The Sideman](#)
  - [Sitcom Gowns And Drama Duds](#)
  - [At Emmy Parties, You Win Some ...](#)
  - [The Cradle Will Rock, to Metallica](#)
  - [Fractured Funny Bone](#)
- [Style Section](#)

### SAVE & SHARE

[Tag This Article](#)

[Saving options](#)

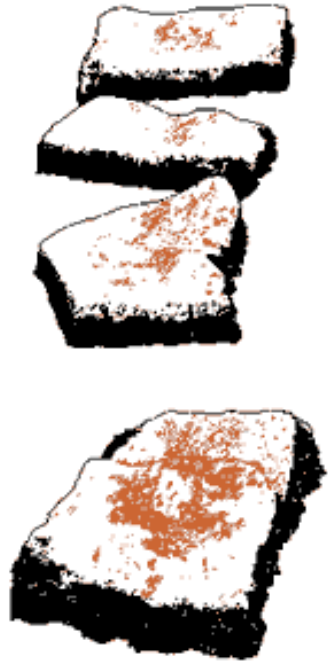
[Powered by Del.icio.us](#)



# Four News Hook Killers

- **PLACEMENT** – The news hook is buried four paragraphs down.
- **JARGON** – internal code, acronyms, or buzzwords not used in common speech.
- **EGO/POLITICS** – You wrote the release to assuage an ego or address an internal dispute.
- **PROMOTIONAL** – Too much like an ad.

# Service Learning Special Considerations



- **BIG PICTURE** - Show how your project impacts a larger problem.
- **PITCH EARLY** – Don't wait until your project is almost over.
- **RIDE THE WAVE** – Issue a media advisory for national days of service. Holidays are often good times for coverage for service learning.
- **VISUALS** – Can make or break a story.

# National Days of Service



Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday - January 15, 2007

National Volunteer Week - April 15-21, 2007

National Youth Service Day - April 20-22, 2007

Join Hands Day - May 5, 2007

My Good Deed (One Day's Pay) – September 11, 2007

USA Weekend Make a Difference Day - October 27, 2007

National Family Volunteer Day – November 18, 2006, November 17, 2007

# Meet a Real Reporter

Lori Montgomery

The Washington Post



*Lori will speak for about 5-10 minutes,  
and then we will open the floor for  
questions.*



# Case Study Practice

- Break into small groups.
- Review case studies.
- Come up with a solution.
- Explain to the class what you would do to generate media coverage for these situations.



# Recommended Resources

- Selling Goodness: The Guerilla PR Guide to Promoting Your Charity, Nonprofit Organization, or Fund-Raising Event. Michael Levine, 1995
- Making the News. A Guide for Activists & Nonprofits. Jason Salzman, 2003.\*\*\*
- Publicity for Nonprofits. Sandra L. Beckwith, 2006.

# Contact Information

*Ami Neiberger-Miller*

*Phone 703.404.4312*

*Fax 703.404.4313*

[ami@steppingstoneLLC.com](mailto:ami@steppingstoneLLC.com)  
[www.steppingstoneLLC.com](http://www.steppingstoneLLC.com)



**step•ping•stone**

[step'ing-stOn"], -n.

An advantageous position for  
advancement toward a goal.