



# THE HARRY POTTER ALLIANCE

THE WEAPON WE HAVE IS LOVE

## Chapter Charms – Guides for Chapters

### GETTING MEDIA

#### Why do we want local media attention?

- ★ To introduce people to the Harry Potter Alliance and your chapter
- ★ To interest potential new members
- ★ To support social issues and causes
- ★ To attract attention from local politicians, who want to know what people in their districts care about
- ★ To attract attention from local activist groups that you can partner with in the future

#### 1. How To Get Local Media To Cover Your Story

There's no sure-fire way to get local media to cover your events. However, there are a few ways to make sure that news sources (whether for newspaper, radio, TV, or blog) know what you're up to:

**Write a Press Release/Media Advisory** – Use the sample press release and media advisory on the Resources Page to write a press release about your event.

- ★ If you want media to **BE** at the event:
  - send a media advisory about a week before.
  - send a press release the day of the event or day after.
- ★ If you don't want media present, only to write about the event:
  - send the press release before the event to give enough time for reporters to become interested.
- ★ Don't forget to double and triple-check the spelling and readability. Then proceed to send the advisory/release by email, fax, or mailing to as many newsrooms as you can.

**Contact Newsrooms Directly** - Most newsrooms have contact information on their website, so if you don't know someone who works for a local media outlet, send an email with your event information. Be sure to follow up with a phone call no more than a day or two later. If you can't find a direct email address or phone number, call the newsroom and ask for the assignment desk.



**No Media is Too Small** - Don't forget about community and school newspapers, local radio stations, and even local blogs! Make sure to emphasize that it's an event organized by a local group; local media loves to boast about the important and creative things organized by people in their community!

**Follow up on your initial email** - Reporters are very busy people and smaller, local stories sometimes slip through the cracks. Make sure you follow up by phone so that you know they're receiving the information you sent them. Sometimes inboxes get too full too quickly, or nargles cause emails to never show up in the first place. For this reason, the phone is your best friend when following up.

**Target specific beats and subjects** - Find the section of the news source that is most applicable to your event, such as entertainment or Making a Difference. Also, when you meet with your reporter, be sure to ask them what other subjects interest them so you know what they might be interested in for future coverage.

**Appoint a Muggle Media Relations Liaison** - When you have one point-person for all of your media contacts, it's not only easier to keep track of who you've reached in the past, but it also allows reporters to have a consistent contact with your chapter as well.

**Make a media database** - Now that you have all of those great resources, keep them all in one place. This makes it easier to get in touch with your media contacts for your chapter's next event. Google Docs has all sorts of tools that work perfectly for this type of task.

## 2. How to talk about your Event

Reporters and news directors/editors (the people who decide which stories are published) hear about hundreds of events every day, so you want to make sure you grab their attention, and fast! Here are a few key things to talk about, as well as some tips on how to say these things!

**Play up uniqueness** - You're a Harry Potter activist group! Chances are, they've never covered anything like that before! Mention how unique your event is compared to similar events (like fundraisers or raising awareness for an issue) done by other groups, or even how it's different compared to other events your chapter has planned in the past.

**Focus on community impact** - overall effect on your community or what makes it unique/helpful to your community.

**Student/Community groups** - Your chapter is really a diverse group of people. Let them know a bit about the demographic of your chapter – it makes for an interesting story angle.

**Be confident** - You're putting on a really fantastic event – be proud of it! Confidence makes it evident that you've really got everything together, and that they really need to be there to cover it.



**Keep it quick** – Know what details you want to say beforehand so that you can get your message across quickly. The more concise your explanation, the easier it will be for the person on the other end to understand what you're doing. Here is an example of how Andrew Slack, founder of the HPA, typically explains the organization to media:

*“The Harry Potter Alliance uses parallels from Harry Potter to inspire over 100,000 Harry Potter fans to act as heroes in our world. Together we've sent five cargo planes to Haiti, donated over 55,000 books across the world, raised enough funds to protect thousands of civilians in Darfur and Burma, and have done significant advocacy for human rights and marriage equality. As we grow, we've been featured by the New York Times, LA Times, NPR, Australia's Today Show, Newsweek, and JK Rowling praising us in Time Magazine. Recently we won first place in a very competitive contest on Facebook, earning \$250,000 to create an even bigger community that harnesses the power of popular culture to foster social change.”*

## ONE WAY TO START THE CONVERSATION:

“Hi, my name is (your name) and I have a story idea for you. I'm the leader of a Harry Potter social activist group in (place). We're a group of Harry Potter fans who get together to work for different causes like (example 1) and (example 2) that show up in the book series.

Community impact sentence

On (date) we're having an event where we'll be (brief description). We're expecting about (##) people to come. I've got a press release here that has more information on the event – is this something you think your station/paper/etc. would be interested in covering?”

*They may say no; if that's the case, politely thank them for their time and move on to the next person on your list.*

*If they are interested, make sure to have all the information you need to answer their questions and don't forget to ask about following up:*

“When would be a good time to follow up with the person who will be working on (date of event) and what is the best way to contact them?”

Thank you very much for your time, and I will be in touch with you soon!”



### 3. Following Up

After your initial contact, it's very important to follow up, both for your event and for future contacts.

**For this event** – Ask if they received your initial email and ask who will be working in the newsroom on the day of your event. Follow up with a call the *DAY BEFORE* the event, around the time that your event is scheduled to take place so you'll be likely to speak with the person who will actually be reporting on your chapter's event. Finally, call the morning of the event to remind them when and where it will be happening. Typically:

- ★ Reporters for big papers and most local papers decide a day or two in advance. Some wait until day of if they don't have a large staff.
- ★ Local TV news decides morning of.
- ★ Weekly TV programs or magazines decide a week or two beforehand.

**Send your press release** - If you started out with a media advisory for the event, then be sure to send a press release to the reporter the day after the event.

**Write a thank you note or email** - If your event gets covered, make sure to let them know how much you appreciate it and that you hope to work with them again.

**Keep in touch with the reporter** - Did you work with someone specifically? Make sure you have their individual contact information so that you contact them first about your next event. This way, they're more likely to remember you and appreciate the tip!

