



The Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual & Transgender
Community Center



BRAKING THE CYCLE 2007

Media coverage of Braking the Cycle not only helps to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and the ride, it could also help you with your fundraising! If you have never talked to the press before, pitching your story to a news outlet seem like a daunting task, but the truth is, it's not a complicated thing to do. So we created a step-by-step guide to writing a concise, well-structured press release.

Journalists are bombarded with faxes, e-mails and letters containing an incredible number of worthy stories. Your goal is to capture their attention in the first 10 words and to realize that good stories sometimes need an assertive little nudge to get on the air or into print. So whether your pitch is on paper, via e-mail or in person, we suggest that you take some time to create an effective strategy.

Step 1. Know Your Facts

Enclosed are materials to help you create a complete and accurate overview of the event and of the current state of HIV/AIDS in the United States. We do not suggest that you list every fact in your press release, but you may want to pull out one or two that speak to you. When you talk about the ride, make sure you state how far you are riding and how much money you intend to raise. This is not a stroll around the block, it is a commitment of your time and energy; people should have the opportunity to witness your dedication.

- About HIV/AIDS and The Center
- Braking the Cycle Fact Sheet
- Press Release Template

Step 2. Create Your Pitch

Why will this story interest the audience? What is the “news angle?” Make sure you mention why you are riding; that personal angle is often the “hook” for the story that the writer needs. The first person you have to sell your story idea to is the journalist and he or she is primarily interested in generating stories that sell papers or attract viewers. **Remember, the first 10 words need to capture their attention, the rest just needs to hold it.**

Whenever appropriate, identify yourself as part of the audience or community—maybe this is going to your alumnae newsletter or the local paper you've been reading for the last 10 years. Are you the community little league coach or neighborhood dentist? Include your relationship to the audience in your press release.

Step 3. Include the Six Tenets of Journalism

Your press release or letter should answer the six basic tenets of journalism.

- **WHO** are you? Are you a butcher, baker or cabinetmaker? A couple of sentences about who you are (especially ones that establish your link to the audience) are imperative.
- **WHAT** are you doing? Braking the Cycle is a good bet.
- **WHEN** is it happening? Although the event is scheduled for September 28th through 30th, your goal is to raise funds and you are doing that right NOW. Establishing an immediacy of action will help get your story told. “NOW” is newsworthy, so establishing present action is a good idea. Are you holding a fundraiser in two weeks? Want to invite a journalist along for your first 50-mile training ride? Come up with a compelling reason why your story should be covered now. If you need ideas, remember you can always call Blake.
- **WHY** are you riding? For your brother? Your friend? Yourself? Are you riding because you’ve learned how pervasive and preventable AIDS is and you want make a difference? What is your motivation? Is it a person you know or the image of someone you do not know that you are trying to help? The facts outlined above will add statistical validity to your release, but only you can create the image, the face, the story.
- **WHERE** is this occurring? You should definitely state that Braking the Cycle is traveling from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to New York City. However, if you are hosting a fundraising event of your own, maybe a friend owns a hair salon and has agreed to donate all the proceeds from haircuts between 1:00 and 5:00 on Saturday to your fundraising effort; you need to let people know where and when to go!
- **HOW** can the readership or audience help? They can make an on-line donation directly to your rider account (you should mention your rider number). As an additional resource and to learn more, please include Braking the Cycle contact information:

Web sites:

www.brakingthecycle.org

www.gaycenter.org

E-mail:

bstrasser@globalimpactpro.com

Address:

Braking the Cycle
c/o Global Impact Productions
127 West 26th Street, Suite 401
New York, NY 10001
Phone: 212.989.1111
Fax: 212.807.1853

Step 4. Scroll and Send.

Start scrolling through your rolodex and then head to the internet. Ideally you are on friendly terms with a few journalists and can hand them your story over lunch; warm leads are always more effective than cold calls. Most people aren't so lucky, but don't let that stop you. In lieu of a personal connection (and in addition to them), the internet is a great resource. Most news outlets have a general e-mail address where you can send story ideas. This is a fast, inexpensive way to distribute your pitch. If you're more comfortable with snail mail or faxes, those methods have worked for many years, too, so send away!

Step 5. Follow Up

Getting your story published or on-air is not a tennis match. Sending out a letter and waiting for the press to call you back is probably not going to work. The ball is still in your court. You are going to have to take the initiative, pick up the phone, and follow-up. Remember, journalists (especially ones with larger audiences) are besieged with story ideas and a quick phone call can help keep your pitch alive and at the top of the heap. If the answer is no, move on and remember that if you don't ask, the answer is always no. You have to give each outlet the opportunity to say "yes" by following up. Keep the faith and keep trying.

Step 6. LET US KNOW!

If you do manage to get your story published, please send us a copy of your piece. If there was something in particular that contributed to your success, let us know so that we can pass that information on to other marchers.

We would like to be involved with stories that are picked up by larger media outlets in order to support your story. If a major outlet is doing a piece about your story, please contact:

Anthony Ramos, Director of Communications
The LGBT Community Center
aramos@gaycenter.org
212.620.7310, ext. 227

Generating media interest is not easy, but it is a tremendously powerful educational and marketing tool. If you have a good story to tell, we encourage you to pitch it to the media. GOOD LUCK!