

Media Relations for Support Groups

Introduction

Building successful relationships with media outlets in your community will assist with:

- Generating publicity for your Support Group's activities
- Raising awareness of Parkinson's and the challenges facing people living with the disease
- Attracting new members for your Group

Media outlets include:

- Print publications and their web sites
- Regional television
- Commercial radio
- Community radio

Experience tells us that local newspapers and community radio are the most effective outlets for publicising Support Group activities – mainly because they have a very local focus.

Also don't overlook social media. Many suburban and regional print and radio outlets have their own Facebook pages as well.

What is news?

When they receive an invitation to an event or a media release, a journalist will always ask themselves:

- Is this new?
- Is this unusual?
- How is this interesting or significant?
- Is it about people?
- Is it important in some way to my readers, listeners or viewers?

Holding a regular Support Group meeting in your town or suburb is not new or unusual (unless you are brand new Group). That kind of information is best submitted for Upcoming Events column of your local newspaper.

To a journalist routine matters are not news.

Try to find something new, different and significant to your local community. This could include:

- Having a prominent local guest speaker at your Group meeting – such as a pharmacist, a financial planner, the new doctor in town, or a visiting expert on Parkinson's.
- Arranging a Regional Walk in the Park – its significance, when, where and how you will promote it
- Marking World Parkinson's Day on 11 April, followed by Parkinson's Awareness Month
- Undertaking an unusual form of fundraising – not just a routine raffle
- Achieving something that is a large number by local standards – number of new participants in your Group, a fundraising record, number of kilometres covered by all walkers participating in your Regional Walk in the Park etc.
- Lobbying your local MPs or Local Government for more Parkinson's funding or other forms of support.
- Cooperating or partnering with a local service organisation to raise awareness of Parkinson's in your community

The Parkinson's NSW Digital & Marketing Team can help you with ideas on how to publicise your activities – including sharing examples of what other Support Groups are doing.

Please email marketing@parkinsonsnsw.org.au or phone 8051 1900 for assistance.

Writing a media invitation or release

Once you have established the news angle you want to use (see above), turn your attention to identifying these pieces of information:

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How

Every professional journalist is trained to seek out the 'five W's and one H' for every story they write. Along with news appeal, it is what they look for in every invitation or media release they receive.

In order to be successful at media outreach, you need to meet journalists' professional needs.

Media Invitations

Media invitations are usually sent by email, although they can also be mailed or printed out and dropped at the office of your local media outlet. Your invitation should:

- Emphasise the news angle
- Stimulate the journalist's interest
- Include logistics (but put these at the end, not the beginning)

Example of Media Invitation

Plan to take 200,000 steps for Parkinson's

Tarrytown Parkinson's Support Group and its supporters plan to take 200,000 steps for Parkinson's at the annual Regional Walk in the Park on Sunday, 25 August.

The Group expects 50 local walkers to cover a 3-kilometre course around James Park to raise funds for Parkinson's research and essential services.

There will also be four-legged walkers to provide both doggy affection and photo opportunities.

We are inviting people to bring their pets because pet ownership encourages exercise – and exercise is second only to medication for controlling Parkinson's.

What: Parkinson's Regional Walk in the Park – Tarrytown

When: Sunday, 25 August at 10am

Where: Assemble at the rotunda in James Park for a 10.30am start

Who: Mayor Jill Smith will fire the starting pistol, then join the walk with her family and colleagues

A total of 50 participants have registered to participate.

The event will be followed by a picnic in the park with free entertainment provided by the Tarrytown Songsters and the Oom-Pha-Pha Brass Band.

Note: Media opportunities will include local walkers in fancy dress, pets participating, the entertainment, and interview opportunities with Mayor Jill Smith and Peter Pickle, Leader of the Tarrytown Parkinson's Support Group.

For more information:

Support Group Leader Peter Pickle

M: 0433 876 543

T: 02 3456 7890

Media Releases

Media releases are essentially pre-written stories for journalists to use as-is, or as the basis for their own story. They are very factual and – like media invitations – must cover the ‘five W’s and one H’.

It is also important to note that media releases are written in the ‘pyramid style’ with the most important information or news angle first, then the next most important, and so on down to the smaller, less important details.

It is also good to enliven media releases with relevant, newsy quotes from an appropriate spokesperson.

Also, don’t forget to add standard content about Parkinson’s and Parkinson’s NSW at the end of the release – along with contact details so the journalist can check details or request additional information if required.

Example of Media Release

10 August 2019

200,000 steps for walkers, one giant leap for Parkinson’s

Tarrytown Parkinson’s Support Group and local supporters plan to take 200,000 steps for Parkinson’s at the annual Regional Walk in the Park on Sunday, 25 August.

The Regional Walk is one of 12 taking place in regional communities throughout the state with the support of for-purpose peak body Parkinson’s NSW. It aims to raise \$10,000 locally to fund Parkinson’s research and essential services.

The Tarrytown Support Group expects 50 local walkers to cover a 3-kilometre course around James Park to raise funds for Parkinson’s research and essential services.

There will also be four-legged walkers joining in the fun. Walkers are invited to bring their pets because pet ownership encourages exercise – and exercise is second only to medication for controlling Parkinson’s.

If you want to join the Tarrytown Parkinson’s Regional Walk in the Park, register at the rotunda on Sunday, 25 August at 10am for a 10.30am start. Wear fancy dress to brighten the occasion if you wish.

Mayor Jill Smith will fire the starting pistol, then join the walk with her family and colleagues. Following the walk there will be a picnic in the park with free entertainment provided by the Tarrytown Songsters and the Oom-Pha-Pha Brass Band.

“Parkinson’s is a progressive, degenerative neurological disease. There is no cure so Parkinson’s NSW and Support Groups like ours focus on raising money to fund

services that improve quality of life right now for people living with the disease,” said Peter Pickle, Leader of the Tarrytown Parkinson’s Support Group.

“This is particularly important for communities like Tarrytown because health outcomes for people living with Parkinson’s in regional areas are poorer than those for people in urban centres.”

About Parkinson’s Disease

Parkinson’s is a progressive, degenerative condition of the central nervous system. Nerve cell damage in the brain causes dopamine levels to drop, leading to the symptoms of Parkinson’s.

Parkinson’s symptoms include tremors, slow movement, stiffness and loss of balance. Also fatigue, apathy, depression, disturbed sleep, loss of sense of smell, and issues with speech and swallowing.

Symptoms can be managed with medication, exercise and other forms of therapy and support. However, as yet there is no cure.

About Parkinson’s NSW

Parkinson’s NSW is a for-purpose organisation striving to make life better for people living with Parkinson’s, their families and carers.

It hosts the annual Parkinson’s Support Group Conference, and also provides essential [services](#) such as [counselling](#), [Support Groups](#), an InfoLine supported by Registered Parkinson’s Nurses, education, and fundraising for research. Its mission is to improve the quality of life of people affected by Parkinson’s, while advancing towards a cure.

For more information:

Tarrytown Parkinson’s Support Group

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T: 02 3456 7890

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Parkinson’s NSW

John Back

Communications Coordinator

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Following up

Send out media invitations a minimum of one month in advance. This allows time for follow-up requests for information if required.

For a weekly publication or community radio, send a media release at least one month or a minimum of three weeks in advance.

Then follow up by telephone or email to the target journalist a week after you have sent the media release.

Other actions

When publicising events, also consider placing notices on community bulletin boards. These are hosted online by your local City or Shire Council, or in hardcopy format on the bulletin boards of local pharmacists, medical practices, libraries, community centres and supermarkets such as Woolworths or IGA.

See also the *Community Outreach* section of this *Support Group Manual* for more information.