



Media Guide

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Creating UCT Awareness

Creating positive awareness of your UCT council in your local community is vital. Recognition of the volunteer community service your council members engage in can generate interest in your council – and might help jumpstart membership. Establishing awareness can:

- Increase understanding of UCT and our mission and programs
- Build a positive image of your local council and its impact on the community
- Position your council members as community leaders
- Attract new volunteers and members

UCT councils throughout the U.S. and Canada are busy making a difference in local communities by volunteering and supporting causes and charities that help others. Countless individuals with intellectual disabilities, children, hungry families, the homeless, cancer patients, veterans, seniors and others have all been helped by UCT. So, let your community know how you're helping!

The UCT Media Guide is designed to provide you with tips to create awareness in your community. Not sure where to start or what to do? We're always here to help. Contact Linda Fisher at the home office at lfisher@uct.org or at 800.848.0123 x1130 with any questions you might have. She can walk you step-by-step through the process!

Getting Started

Ask a member or two to volunteer to coordinate your UCT local council's media efforts. Ideally they should be active members who are willing to commit time to promoting your council. Here's some of what they'll be responsible for:

- Developing positive relationships with local media representatives
- Sharing information about your council's projects and events with local media through press releases, media alerts, public service announcements, etc.
- Taking action photos and/or shooting video of council projects and events to distribute to the media

While it might sound daunting, it's really easier than you think! The UCT Media Guide is full of tips to help with local council promotion. Start small and take on more responsibility as you feel more comfortable.

Establishing Media Relations

The first step in promoting your local council is to get to know a little about the media outlets in your area – who to contact, how to contact them, and when. Make a list of newspapers, radio, and TV stations and contact names if you have them. Include email addresses and phone numbers. If possible, contact each outlet to find out the editor or reporter responsible for covering community service and volunteer events. Ask for deadlines to put on your list for easy access. Make sure to update your list frequently since people tend to move around a lot.

Whether you live in a small community or a large one, make it a point to get to know who your local newspaper and TV reporters are. Facebook and email are good sources for contact. Keep in mind that small town media outlets in particular like community-oriented, feel good stories that larger outlets might not cover. Student reporters are always looking for good stories to cover, so if there's a college or university in your area, make sure to alert the school newspaper and/or TV station about your events. You can also contact the school's Journalism, Communications, or Media Studies departments.

Most outlets prefer to receive information by email, but it's a good idea to verify that. In general send information to the following:

- Small daily, weekly, or university newspapers - managing editor, or local reporters
- Large daily newspapers – Managing editor, community events reporters
- Radio and TV stations – Assignment editor or public service director; meteorologists are always looking for good community stories too.

Meet the press

Developing personal relationships with local media representatives can help with promoting your local council. If you have the time and the inclination, here are some helpful tips for doing so:

- Arrange a short face-to-face visit with news editors, assignment editors, and public service directors to introduce yourself and UCT. Don't visit close to deadline or take too much of their time. Ask if they have any directions they want you to follow when submitting information and add these to your media list.
- Let them know what UCT is and what we do - give specifics about your local council. Leave them with the most updated UCT fact sheet, available from the home office, and if your council has a website or Facebook page, make sure to share the address.
- If you have a big event coming up that's likely to draw a large number of people, ask your local TV or radio station to be a media sponsor. It's free visibility for them, and if they're an involved sponsor, they'll be more willing to promote your event. See the **How to Get Media Sponsorship** section of this guide for tips on how to establish a media partnership.

12 Tips for Writing & Distributing a Press Release

Press releases are an essential element of media relations. Editors are flooded with potential stories and pitches on a daily basis, so making yours stand out from the pack is important. Follow these 12 tips to write a great press release that will make your local council interesting to reporters looking for stories – and contact the home office with questions or for help if you need it!

1. One page is best - and two is the maximum.

Shorter is usually better. Limit yourself to one page, although two pages is acceptable. This will also force you to condense your most important information into a more readable document - something editors and reporters are always looking for.

2. Include contact information.

Always include a name, email address and phone number on the release (preferably at the top of the page). The words “For immediate release” and the date should be typed at the top of the first page as well so the editor knows that the information should be used as soon as possible.

3. Grab attention with a good headline.

A strong headline (and email subject line when you send out the release) will pull in reporters seeking good stories. Your headline should be as engaging as it is accurate. Try to include UCT in the headline, any subhead, and in the body of the first paragraph for better visibility.

4. Get right to the point in the first paragraph.

Editors and reporters are busy people, so you should assume they'll only read the first sentence and then scan the rest. Get the message of your press release out quickly. Every important point should be addressed in the first few sentences. Subsequent paragraphs should provide supporting information.

5. Include hard numbers.

Pack your press release with hard numbers that support the significance of your activity or event. Include sponsorship dollars, numbers of members/volunteers involved, and the number of people you're impacting. This will make your press release more compelling.

6. Make it grammatically flawless.

Proofread your press release - and let a few other people proofread it as well - before sending it out. Even a single mistake can keep an editor or reporter from taking you seriously.

7. Include quotes whenever possible.

Including a good quote from someone in your council or an individual involved in your event can give a human element to the press release, as well as being a source of information in its own right.

8. Include photos whenever you can.

If a print reporter wants to do a story about your event, chances are they'll appreciate some high resolution photos related to the event, if you have them. Make it easy for them and attach a few along with your press release.

9. Feature a video about the event discussed in the press release.

If you have a video that's directly related to the pitch in the press release, make sure to include a link to it in the press release.

10. Post your press release on Facebook and be available to answer questions.

Post your press release on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks and be available throughout the day to address comments and answer questions.

11. Include UCT information as the last paragraph of the release.

Make sure to include the following boilerplate at the end of your release:

About UCT: UCT (United Commercial Travelers) is a fraternal benefit society driven by its members and their commitment to community service across North America. Members decide on a local basis which causes and charities to support and how to best meet the needs of their communities. As a 501c8 non-profit, the organization's charitable efforts are made possible through the sales of its insurance products. Visit www.uct.org to learn more.

Include "###" at the end of every release to indicate that it's finished.

12. How to distribute your press release

Send your press release by email, and use formatting sparingly. Put the release in the body of the email, not as an attachment. Just type the release into the email message or copy it from a Word document and paste it into the email. Use your headline as the subject line of the email. If you've written a good "grabber" headline, this will help your message stand out in the editor's email inbox. Photos can be emailed as attachments, if necessary. If you must fax or mail the release, make sure to print it on UCT letterhead. If mailing the release, allow an extra week for the postal service to deliver it.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 2, 2019

Contact: Linda Fisher / lfisher@uct.org / 800.848.0123 x1130

UCT COUNCIL BRINGING HOLIDAY CHEER TO LOCAL INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Williamsport, Pa., Dec. 2, 2019 – UCT's (United Commercial Travelers') local Williamsport Council 350 will be bringing Christmas cheer to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Lycoming County by helping to sponsor the annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance.

The dance will take place from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 at the Christian Life Center at 601 Market Street in Williamsport and is open free of charge to individuals with special needs throughout Lycoming County. DJ Steve Hunter of Flashback Entertainment will be on hand to spin the dance tunes, and pizza and other refreshments will be provided.

"Bringing happiness to others during the holidays is a great feeling," said UCT Council 350 member Pat Turner. "Helping individuals with intellectual disabilities is UCT's top community service effort, and helping to support this dance that attracts over 100 attendees each year is one of our ways of contributing to that."

In addition to the Christmas dance, UCT members in Williamsport support the American Rescue Workers' Christmas Gifts for Youngsters, Join Hands Day, Camp Victory, and the Lycoming County Historical Society's summer camp for youth.

About UCT

UCT (United Commercial Travelers) is a fraternal benefit society driven by its members and their commitment to community service across North America. Members decide on a local basis which causes and charities to support and how to best meet the needs of their communities. As a 501c8 non-profit, the organization's charitable efforts are made possible through the sales of its insurance products. Visit www.uct.org to learn more.

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Getting Attention Through Media Alerts

A media alert is generally a tool to get attention for an upcoming event. It's more brief and to-the-point than a press release. It's usually used in tandem with a press release with the media alert being sent out a few days before the event. An editor should be able to scan it quickly and understand the basic what, who, when, where, and why of the event. Here's the down and dirty on creating media alerts:

Set up the top of the media alert like you would a news release with "Media Alert" featured prominently in the top center of the page. The contact information (name, email address and phone number) should appear on the top right of the page.

Center the title of your media alert. Keep it simple and try to make it catchy.

Keep the media alert to one page – the shorter and clearer, the better. Outline the details of the event using What, Who, When, Where and Why as the headers for each section.

WHAT: Describe the event in one or two sentences. If you need to have more than two sentences, figure out a way to bullet the information.

WHO: Describe either who is involved or who is sponsoring the event or project.

WHEN: List the date, time(s) and price, if relevant.

WHERE: Provide the address, with directions, if necessary.

WHY: Add additional information here. Make sure to include who the event will benefit and how it will impact the community.

Make sure to include links to your UCT local council website and social networking sites.

Distributing your media alert

As with most media activities, timing will play a large part in distributing your media alert. Ideally you'll have already sent out a press release weeks in advance to relevant media outlets. The media alert will serve as a "last minute reminder." Generally you'll want to send the alert around two days in advance of the event.

Email the alert the same way you email a press release. If you're unable to email the alert, make sure to fax it. If you must mail the alert, don't delay – newspapers and broadcast stations won't use "stale" news.

If you're able, make follow up calls to provide additional information that will interest the media in covering the event.

Sample Media Alert

Contact: Linda Fisher / lfisher@uct.org / 800.848-0123 x1130

- MEDIA ALERT -

UCT COUNCIL 350 SET TO BRING CHRISTMAS CHEER TO LYCOMING COUNTY INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

UCT's (United Commercial Travelers') local Williamsport Council 350 is making the holidays a little brighter for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Lycoming County by helping to sponsor the annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance coming up this weekend. Come out and join us if you can!

WHAT: The annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance. The event is open free of charge to individuals with special needs throughout Lycoming County. Pizza and entertainment will be provided.

WHO: UCT's Williamsport Council 350

WHEN: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Dec. 13, 2019

WHERE: Christian Life Center, 601 Market Street in Williamsport

WHY: UCT is a fraternal benefit society driven by its members and their dedication to community service across North America. Members decide on a local basis which causes and charities to support and how to best meet the needs of their communities. The organization's charitable efforts are made possible through the sales of its insurance products.

Williamsport Council 350 has been giving back to the local community for decades. In addition to the Christmas dance, UCT members in Williamsport support the American Rescue Workers' Christmas Gifts for Youngsters, Join Hands Day, Camp Victory, and the Lycoming County Historical Society's summer camp for youth.

Learn more about UCT at www.uct.org. Follow UCT at www.facebook.com/UCTinAction.

How to Get Media Sponsorship

Non-profit organizations like UCT that hold fundraising and/or special events often request media outlets for sponsorship to help promote the event. Sponsorship may involve free promotion or discounted advertising space, or both. Although your local council may be involved with charity work, media outlets won't look at this sponsorship as a charity venture, but as a full-fledged business transaction. Adopt a professional approach in preparing a sponsorship proposal to request support for your cause. Here are seven steps to follow in obtaining media sponsorship:

1. Browse the websites of radio stations, TV stations and newspapers you consider to be potential media sponsors. Check to see if they specify sponsorship guidelines that tell you what kinds of events they generally sponsor.
2. Plan your event in keeping with the criteria specified by media outlets wherever possible. For example, if you know a radio station gives priority to an event that's taking place in a particular area, pick a venue for your event in the same part of town. If you know a TV station prefers supporting causes related to children, host an auction of paintings by children with disabilities rather than a wine-tasting fundraiser.
3. Fine-tune the details of the event such as the dates, timing and the venue. Determine the strategy to use to promote your event. Prepare a list of guests including local celebrities and well-known personalities you plan to invite to the event. Arrive at a figure for the number of people you expect to attend.
4. Prepare a media sponsorship proposal in which you give relevant information such as the name, contact and web address of your local council, and a brief description of the cause you support. Provide details of the event, the promotional strategies you plan to use, and the number of people you expect to attend the event.
5. Highlight the benefits to the media in the sponsorship proposal. Benefits may include placement of their logo on banners, printed material, and other promotional material, website links, acknowledgement of sponsorship through on-site announcements, and placing logos on give-away items. If feasible, offer opportunities for the radio or TV station staff to anchor the event, opportunities for exclusive interviews with celebrity guests, or backstage passes.
6. Send the sponsorship proposal to potential media outlets by email or fax several months before the event. Call them within five working days to confirm receipt of the proposal.
7. Approach multiple media organizations for sponsorships. Although many media outlets ask for exclusivity as one of the sponsorship conditions, this generally applies to that particular medium. For example, if you get sponsorship from one radio station, you cannot approach another one, but you certainly can still contact a TV or print sponsor.

Sample Media Sponsorship Proposal

REQUEST FOR MEDIA PARTNERSHIP WITH WNEP-TV

Concept: UCT's Williamsport Council 350 is seeking a partnership with WNEP-TV to help promote our annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Lycoming County. UCT is a fraternal benefit society headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, whose members throughout North America impact their communities through volunteer community service. Williamsport Council 350 has nearly 100 members dedicated to giving back to the local community. In addition to the Christmas dance, members in Williamsport support the American Rescue Workers' Christmas Gifts for Youngsters, Join Hands Day, Camp Victory, and the Lycoming Country Historical Society's summer camp for youth.

The Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance is open free of charge to individuals with special needs. DJ Steve Hunter of Flashback Entertainment will be on hand to spin dance tunes, and pizza and other refreshments will be provided.

Event details:

- Date: Dec. 13, 2019
- Location: Christian Life Center, 601 Market St., Williamsport, PA
- Time: 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Proposal parameters: We are seeking WNEP-TV to join us in promoting the Christmas dance by providing the following:

- 10-second voice-over spots to run during your broadcasts two weeks prior to the event
- Promotion on your community calendar one week prior to the event
- Brief mentions of event live on-air during newscasts the day before and the day of the event
- Coverage the evening of the dance

WNEP-TV will receive:

- Exposure through Christmas dance print materials and signage and on UCT's Williamsport Council 350 website and Facebook pages (efforts estimated to reach over 1,000 community residents).
- Increased community goodwill with "cause marketing" – demonstrating a particular commitment to improving the lives of individuals with special needs in Lycoming County.

Questions: Contact Linda Fisher / 800.848.0123 x1130 / lfisher@uct.org

Using Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

PSAs are brief (10, 20 or 30 second) messages aired at no charge on radio and TV stations as a community service. They must be about an event or project that benefits the community, not just your local council.

Radio and TV stations are required to broadcast a certain number of PSAs throughout the year to promote non-profit organizations or cause-related activities so take advantage of it! PSAs can be sent to radio stations as either ready to be aired audio or as live copy script to be read by an announcer. Allow at least 2-4 weeks lead time to promote an event or project.

When writing a PSA, brevity and clarity are of utmost importance since at most you have 10 to 30 seconds to communicate your message. Messages about UCT community service projects, helping individuals with intellectual disabilities, fundraising events that benefit the community, and public events sponsored by your local council are appropriate subjects.

As a general guideline, a 10-second spot will have approximately 20 words and a 30-second spot will have approximately 65.

PSAs need to:

- Get the listeners' attention.
- Show how listeners will benefit from doing what you suggest.
- Tell listeners where to go, what to do, when to do it, and where to go for more information.

Public access TV stations air PSAs and often will also run videos of council activities, post council events on community bulletin boards, and have council members participate in community talk shows. Contact the public service director at your local cable station regarding program opportunities.

Contact the news or public service director at your local TV or radio station to learn the station's scheduling and format requirements - and to find out if they can assist you with production.

Sample PSAs

30 Seconds

The annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance is set for 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 at the Christian Life Center in Williamsport. The dance is a free event sponsored by UCT's Williamsport Council 350 for individuals with special needs throughout the county. DJ Steve Hunter of Flashback Entertainment will be spinning dance tunes, and refreshments will be provided. The dance draws hundreds of individuals each year. Come out and join the fun! Call 800.848.0123 x1207, for details.

20 Seconds

The annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance is set for 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 at the Christian Life Center. The dance is a free event sponsored by UCT's Williamsport Council 350 for individuals with special needs. DJ Steve Hunter of Flashback Entertainment will be spinning dance tunes, and refreshments will be provided. Come out and join the fun! Call 800.848.0123 x1207, for details.

10 Seconds

The annual Lycoming County Special Needs Christmas Dance is set for 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 at the Christian Life Center. The dance is a free event sponsored by UCT's Williamsport Council 350 for individuals with special needs. Come out and join the fun! Call 800.848.0123 x1207, for details.

6 Tips for Dealing with Electronic Media

Finding yourself in front of a microphone for radio or TV is right where you want to be when promoting your local council. It can also be a bit nerve wracking if you're not used to it! No worries - here are a few tips to keep in mind and keep you calm:

1. The average sound bite is generally between six and 20 seconds. Make your point quickly and speak authoritatively.
2. If a reporter seems to be letting you speak longer than you anticipate, it's usually because he or she is waiting for a quote to use on air. Just remain natural and authoritative. The reporter will likely select the best possible quote for the airwaves later when editing.
3. Become familiar with UCT's key messages. The more you know, the easier your words will flow when you're speaking into a reporter's microphone.
4. Anticipate questions and practice concise answers. Every word counts.
5. If a TV camera is present, remain calm and remember to look at the reporter – NOT the camera. Interviewees appear more natural on the air when they're not looking directly at the camera. A good reporter will position him or herself at the right angle to make this easy for you.
6. Pass these tips along to anyone from your local council who may be speaking to a member of the electronic media. Say "thank you" if an editor gives your council a positive or lengthy piece in his or her medium. Make sure to send an email or a card thanking them for the attention paid to your council.

UCT Key Messages

When talking to the media and others in your community about UCT and your local council activities, it's helpful to know what messages you need to convey about our organization. The key messages below should be used whenever possible in all media releases and alerts, interviews, projects where the media might be present, and in talking to the general public:

- UCT (United Commercial Travelers) is a fraternal benefit society driven by its members and their commitment to community service across North America. Members decide on a local basis which causes and charities to support and how to best meet the needs of their communities. As a 501c8 non-profit, the organization's charitable efforts are made possible through the sales of its insurance products.
- Being a UCT member means having access to a variety of leadership, networking and social opportunities as well as a number of products, benefits, discounts and programs.
- Over the past three years UCT has donated more than \$3 million to causes, awarded more than \$300,000 in scholarships and volunteered more than 210,000 collective hours of service to communities and causes.

How to Take Attention Getting Photos

You should try to take photos at every local council community service event or project and include at least one with each press release. It's true that every picture tells a story! Most photos you submit are reflections of the story you're telling about your local council activities and community service projects. Make sure those photos are true reflections.

Here are some tips for great photos:

Be creative. Action-oriented photos and close ups attract more attention than posed or staged photos.

Limit group shots to five people or less. Get good, clear shots of members working, not posed photos of members preparing to work. Whenever possible, incorporate into your photos the people you're working with and for.

People like photos of individuals working together on an activity. Whenever possible, show that the activity "belongs" to your council - include a UCT banner or volunteers wearing UCT apparel in the shots you take.

Submit photos with a caption that explains who, what, when, where, why and how. Make it short but descriptive, and write in the present tense.

Make sure the image file format is high resolution to ensure good quality. Most print publications require a photo of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) to reprint. JPEG, TIFF and PNG files are the best and most widely accepted formats.

Additional Promotional Ideas

There are a number of other, easy ways to make your community aware of UCT and your local council. Here are some simple promotional ideas:

- Distribute flyers or fact sheets about your council and its activities. If you're holding a fundraiser, hand out information detailing how the money raised will be used in your community. If you have a local council website, make sure you have a fact sheet that community members can download.
- Display UCT banners at all public events. When holding events and fundraisers, make sure to wear UCT apparel and hand out promotional items with the UCT logo front and center.
- Create council websites, Facebook pages, YouTube channels, Flickr accounts, etc. Get upcoming UCT council events on TV and radio station community calendars.
- Work with your local chamber of commerce to include local council brochures in welcome packets. List your council's contact information on online community directories.
- Invite representatives of community organizations and causes to present information at local council meetings, and offer to present information at their meetings.

Contact Us

Kate Chillinsky kchillinsky@uct.org
800.848.0123 x 1148

Linda Fisher lfisher@uct.org
800.848.0123 x1130

David Knapp dknapp@uct.org
800.848.0123 x1108

Anita Neal aneal@uct.org
800.848.0123 x1100

Home Office:

1801 Watermark Drive, Suite 100
P.O. Box 159019
Columbus, OH 43215-8619

Phone: 614.487.9680
Toll-free: 800.848-0123
Fax: 614.487-9688

www.uct.org

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