



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, 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 the home office's **Public Relations Department** at lfisher@uct.org or at **800.848.0123 x1130**, with any questions.

Getting Started

Ask a member or two or three 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 are some of the "tasks" 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 shooting video of council projects and events to distribute to the media

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

Establishing Media Relations

Before crafting information to present to the media, it helps to know a little about the outlets in your area. Knowing who to contact, how to contact them, and when is key.

Compile a media list for easy reference

Make a list of newspapers, radio, and TV stations in your area - and contact names if you have them. Include email addresses and phone numbers. Contact each outlet to determine who their contact person is for community service and volunteer events. Ask for deadlines to put on your list for easy access.

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 or weekly newspapers - general assignment editor
- Large daily newspapers - community events reporter
- Radio and TV stations - news and/or public service director

Make sure to update your list frequently. People in the media tend to move around a lot.

Meet the press

Developing personal relationships with local media representatives will help with promoting your council. Here are some helpful tips:

- Arrange a short face-to-face visit with news 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 UCT local council. Leave them with the most updated UCT fact sheet, and if your council has a website or Facebook page, make sure to share the address.
- If you have a big event coming up soon 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.

13 Tips for Writing & Distributing a Great 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 critical. While the format for a press release is basic, the content of the release should be anything but. Follow these 13 tips to write a great press release that will make your UCT council look attractive to reporters looking for stories.

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 via Web search engines.

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

Editors and reporters are busy people, so you must 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. Add a link to your council's Flickr or other photo sharing account where high resolution images related to the press release can be downloaded.

If a print reporter wants to do a story about your event, chances are they're going to want high resolution photos. Make it easy for them and compile a slideshow in advance of the press release. Digital reporters will likely appreciate a selection of photos to choose from as well.

9. Add a link to your council's YouTube channel featuring a video about the event discussed in the press release.

If you have a video that is directly related to the pitch in the press release, feature the video on your YouTube channel on the day of the press release and include a link to your channel 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.

Always include the following boilerplate at the end of your release:

About UCT: UCT is a non-profit financial services membership organization. UCT members give back by engaging in community service projects, or by buying an insurance policy – or both. UCT's non-profit status means that instead of paying dividends to shareholders, insurance operations help support members' local community service efforts across the U.S. and Canada. Include “###” at the end of every release to indicate that it's finished.

12. Provide access to more information.

Provide relevant links to your council's website, where prospective reporters – and readers - can learn more about what you do and what you've accomplished. Also keep in mind that reporters might want to browse past content you've posted on social networking sites. Make sure to prominently place social networking links or icons on your release that link directly to your online communities.

13. 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 USPS to deliver it.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 4, 2014

Contact: Linda Fisher / lfisher@uct.org / 800.848.0123 x1130**3RD ANNUAL UCT WINTER HOCKEY FESTIVAL SET TO HIT THE ICE!**

CROFTON, Maryland, Dec. 4, 2013 - Take nearly 300 special hockey players, a brand new outdoor rink, a little bit of snow (we hope), a whole lot of enthusiasm, and what have you got? The 3rd annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival for American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) athletes!

The UCT Winter Hockey Festival is a two-day event that will bring together 20 American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) teams from across the U.S. The festival, sponsored by UCT for ASHA players with developmental disabilities, will run Jan. 18-19, 2014. All games will be held at The Gardens Ice House at 13800 Old Gunpowder Road in Laurel, Maryland. Games start at 8 a.m. both days. For a look at highlights from the 2013 UCT Winter Hockey Festival, [click here](#).

Members of the United States Naval Academy Women's Hockey Team will be on hand from 3-6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 18, to sign autograph throughout the afternoon. They will also drop the ceremonial puck and medal participating athletes during the festival's opening ceremonies taking place at 5:30 p.m.

ASHA is a volunteer-driven association created especially to benefit hockey players with developmental disabilities. According to ASHA President Mike Hickey, the special hockey athletes participating in this year's festival are no ordinary hockey players - they're extraordinary in their accomplishments. "While skill sets vary according to age and experience, these incredible ASHA players all share the unique challenge of living with developmental disabilities," he explained. "You'll see some friendly competition when these players are on the ice, but you'll see a lot of cooperation too. Special hockey is unique in that it's designed to give players the chance to develop self-esteem, social skills and teamwork – and to just have fun."

UCT, a non-profit membership organization with a focus on community service, is based in Columbus, Ohio, and is a longtime supporter of individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. A partnership was formed in January 2010 between UCT and ASHA, and UCT is helping to promote special hockey nationally. To kick off the fourth year of being ASHA's proud sponsor, UCT will present a \$20,000 donation to the organization at this year's festival.

About UCT

UCT is a non-profit financial services membership organization. UCT's more than 50,000 members give back by engaging in community service projects or by buying insurance policies - or both. UCT's non-profit status means that instead of paying dividends to shareholders, our insurance operations help support members' local community service efforts across the U.S. and Canada. Visit www.uct.org to learn more, or follow UCT on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UCTinAction.

About ASHA

Created in 2000 for players with developmental disabilities, the American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) gives people of all ages and abilities a chance to learn and grow by playing hockey. There are currently over 50 ASHA programs in more than 30 cities throughout the United States. For more information, visit www.americanspecialhockey.org. Follow special hockey on Facebook at www.facebook.com/specialhockey and on Twitter at [@specialhockey](https://twitter.com/specialhockey).

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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, to-the-point and factual than a press release. It's usually used in tandem with a press release with the media alert being sent out the week of or 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 crafting 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 2-3 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 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 -

SPECIAL HOCKEY ATHLETES GET SET FOR THE 3RD ANNUAL UCT WINTER HOCKEY FESTIVAL JAN.18-19, 2014

Twenty teams from around the United States will face off at the Gardens Ice House in Laurel, Md., for the third annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival Jan. 18-19. Held in partnership with the American Special Hockey Association, the tournament will draw teams from throughout the Northeast, Midwest, and East Coast. Special hockey is for people with developmental disabilities, and the UCT Winter Hockey Festival is a showcase of sportsmanship, camaraderie, and inspiration.

WHAT: The 3rd Annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival for special hockey athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Twenty special hockey teams are expected to take part in this year's special hockey festival.

WHEN: 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Jan. 18 (Opening Ceremonies at 5:30 p.m.); 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Jan. 19

See the full tournament schedule at

http://americanspecialhockey.org/public/files/2014_uct_whf_tournament_schedule_22.pdf

WHERE: The Gardens Ice House, 13800 Old Gunpowder Road, Laurel, Md.

WHY: ASHA is a volunteer-driven national hockey association created especially to benefit players with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Some of the most common of these disabilities are autism, Down syndrome, Tourette syndrome, cerebral palsy and ADD/ADHD. ASHA teams are comprised of male and female athletes of all ages and are broken down into skill levels as opposed to age or experience. Playing on special hockey teams gives players the chance to develop social skills and practice teamwork. There are currently over 40 ASHA programs with more than 1,500 athletes throughout the U.S.

UCT, a non-profit membership organization based in Columbus, is a longtime supporter of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The 3rd Annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival kicks off year four of our partnership with the American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) and our commitment to helping promote special hockey nationally and locally. The hockey festival is designed to support this effort by providing special athletes a unique opportunity to play hockey outdoors.

[UCT.org](http://uct.org)

www.Facebook.com/UCTinAction

www.Flickr.com/UCTinAction

www.YouTube.com/UCTinAction

How to Get Media Sponsorship

Non-profit organizations like UCT that host fundraising 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 UCT 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, television 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 television 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 television 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 television or print sponsor.

Sample Media Sponsorship Proposal

REQUEST FOR MEDIA PARTNERSHIP WITH 13abc TV

3RD ANNUAL UCT WINTER HOCKEY FESTIVAL FOR SPECIAL HOCKEY ATHLETES

Concept: UCT is seeking a partnership with 13abc TV to help promote our third annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival. UCT is a 501(c) (8) non-profit financial services membership organization with more than 50,000 members in the U.S. and Canada that impact their communities through volunteer community service.

The UCT Winter Hockey Festival is a community event sponsored by UCT for special hockey athletes with developmental and intellectual disabilities that are part of the American Special Hockey Association (ASHA). UCT is the proud sponsor of ASHA. Special hockey - and The UCT Winter Hockey Festival - gives players the chance to develop social skills, practice teamwork and have fun by playing hockey. Twenty special hockey teams from throughout the Northeast, Midwest and East Coast are expected to take part in this year's festival.

Event details:

- Date: Jan. 18-19, 2014
- Location: The Gardens Ice House, 13800 Old Gunpowder Road, Laurel, Md.
- Times: 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Jan. 18 (Opening Ceremonies at 5:30 p.m.); 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Jan. 19

Proposal parameters: We are seeking 13abc TV to join us in promoting the third annual UCT Hockey Festival by providing the following:

- 10-second voice-over spots to run during your broadcasts two weeks prior to the event
- Promotion on 13abc TV's 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 day of the festival

13abc TV will receive:

- Exposure through UCT Winter Hockey Festival print materials, signage, ads and festival program; and UCT and ASHA websites and Facebook pages (combined sponsors efforts estimated to reach over 10,000 community residents).
- Increased community goodwill with "cause marketing" – demonstrating a particular commitment to improving the lives of individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

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 television stations as a community service. They must be about an event or project that benefits the community, not just your UCT 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 audio-tapes (ready to be aired) 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 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

Special hockey athletes are getting ready to hit the ice Jan. 18-19 in the 3rd Annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival at The Gardens Ice House! The festival is an event that brings together American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) teams across the Northeast, Midwest and East Coast for friendly competition - but these are no ordinary hockey teams. ASHA players are male and female athletes of all ages with developmental and intellectual disabilities and teams are broken down into skill levels as opposed to age or experience. Come join the fun! Call 800.848.0123 x1207, for details!

20 Seconds

The third annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival for special hockey athletes is coming to The Gardens Ice House Jan. 18-19. The festival is an event that brings together American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) teams from across the Northeast, Midwest and East Coast. ASHA players are male and female athletes of all ages and skill levels with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Come out and support them! Call 800.848.0123 x1207, for details.

10 Seconds

The 3rd Annual UCT Winter Hockey Festival for special hockey athletes is coming to The Gardens Ice House Jan. 18-19. The festival is an event that brings together American Special Hockey Association (ASHA) teams from across the Northeast, Midwest and East Coast. Come out and support them! Call 800.848.0123 x1207, for details.

6 Tips for Dealing with Electronic Media

Finding yourself in front of a microphone for radio or television is right where you want to be when promoting your UCT 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 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 is a non-profit financial services membership organization. UCT members give back by engaging in community service projects, or by buying an insurance policy - or both! Through volunteer service, UCT members strive to make a difference in local communities. Members decide on a local basis which causes and charities to support.

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.

Our non-profit status means that instead of paying dividends to shareholders, our insurance operations help support members' local community service efforts across the U.S. and Canada.

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 370,000 collective hours of service to communities and causes.

How to Take Attention-Getting Photos

You should try to take photos at every UCT 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. Many outlets just won't print check presentation pictures.

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 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 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

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[UCT.org](http://uct.org)

www.Facebook.com/UCTinAction

www.Flickr.com/UCTinAction

www.YouTube.com/UCTinAction