

## OKLAHOMA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

# Working with News Media

Every news media outlet (newspaper, radio, TV) is a unique business with its own policies concerning what they will run, how they will accept material, and deadlines for when material must be submitted.

1. **Contact the media outlet with a telephone call.** Explain that you represent your OREA local unit and would like to submit news information. Ask to whom it should be submitted and the method that they prefer – written copy, fax, e-mail, etc. This gives you a chance to make an introduction and them the opportunity to let you know their contact preferences. Make note of the contact numbers and any other relevant information on the enclosed News Media Contact List. Keep the completed list for your working reference.
2. **When you have a news item, meeting announcement, story idea, etc., send it to the news media outlet.** Bear in mind, though, that the media outlet may or may not use your item, and, whatever their decision, respect it. Do not be upset if the media outlet does not use the piece. Try again next time.
3. **When you have a news items, meeting announcement, or story idea, always put it in writing.** You may be tempted to just call the news media and tell them about your news item, but in most cases it is important that it be submitted in writing in the form of a news release or e-mail message. Why? Because your written message serves as their written record. Even when you do know reporters or news people well enough to call them to discuss a news item, back up your phone call with a written communication. They will appreciate it!
4. **Understand that media outlets will rarely use your submitted news release exactly as you have written it.** In most cases, it is their policy to rewrite the material. Understand that this is standard practice and do not be upset when your material is rewritten – just so that basic facts, dates, etc. are presented correctly!
5. **Make sure that any items that you submit to the news media are properly written with no spelling or grammatical mistakes.** You represent all teachers and the news media expects you to write correctly. If you do not, it will catch their attention in a negative way!

6. **When your news item contains names**, be absolutely SURE that they are spelled correctly!
7. Be sure that all **dates, times, and addresses** are correct!
8. Be sure that every news release or e-mail announcement is **dated** AND that it contains the **name and contact information** of the person who is sending it!
9. **If written press releases are more than one page long, be sure that each page is numbered.** Staple any press releases that are mailed or delivered.
10. **Keep the language in your news releases simple.** Do not use educational jargon. As a former educator, you may automatically use educational terminology, but news people may not know the words or acronyms that school people regularly use.
11. Be sure that your news announcement or media invitation to an event is sent to the news media **several days PRIOR** to your planned event.
12. **Treat all news media fairly and equally.** Send the same material to all news media on the same day. Do not show partiality to one news media outlet over another.
13. **Never ask a newspaper reporter to let you see their work before it is printed.** It is not proper for you to ask.
14. **Always return news media phone calls in a timely manner.** Remember that all reporters work on absolute deadlines. Be friendly and be helpful.
15. **Don't say, "Off the record..." when speaking with a reporter.** Unless you know the reporter very, very well, your "Off the record" comments may be quoted.