

News Releases and Story Pitching

Generally, there are two direct ways to let editors and reporters know that you have a story: sending a news release and pitching a story.

News Release

If you have an event, special activity, or call for volunteers, submit a news release to your newspaper's local news editor, your TV station's local news assignment editor/producer, or your radio station's producer. A follow-up call is recommended, especially if you want the media to show up to the event.

Here are some tips for writing news releases:

- Try to keep your release to one page, double-spaced
- Always include your contact information in case the media has questions
- Put the most important information first in case an editor has limited space
- Include photos and quotes if you can. Make sure you have each person's permission in writing—or parent's permission for children.

Story Pitch

If you would like to see a longer, feature story about your program with interviews of volunteers and participants, you should pitch a story. You can write a letter or email to share your story idea. Start the letter with a quote about your feeding site or another introduction that will catch their attention. You can also list potential story ideas—try to list at least three.

A follow-up call is okay, and make sure to offer help setting up interviews and times to visit the feeding site. A successful community program is often a welcome break from some of the routine coverage, so you may be surprised at the reception you receive.

Here are some tips for writing a pitch letter or email:

- Keep it short and simple. Be direct about your story idea and offer to help.
- Put the most important information first—the five W's: who, what, when, where, and why.
- Always include contact information for a person who can be available anytime.
- Always offer to help set up interviews, site visits, gather photos, etc.
- Try to have at least three story ideas in your letter. That way, if they don't like one, you have more to offer.

Check out the following pages to find different templates for news releases and a pitch e-mail for all media.



Sample News Release for a Kickoff Event

Summer Food Kickoff set for **[insert date]**

[Your city's name here in all caps]— With summer right around the corner, it's time to think about how children who receive free or reduced-priced lunch in school will eat healthy while school is out. **[Your organization's name]** provides free meals to children during the summer. You can come for a day of fun with your family to the kickoff event and learn more about summer meals.

[Event name] will be at **[location]** on **[day of the week, date]** from **[start time]** to **[end time]**. There is no cost to attend. More information is available at **[phone number, Web site, etc.]**.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture partners with local organizations like **[Your organization's name]**, to provide free meals to children when school is out for the summer. Any child under age 18 may come and eat.

For more information about the national Summer Food Service Program, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer>.



Summer Meals Toolkit

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Sample News Release for Donations and Volunteers Needed

You Can Help Feed Kids This Summer *Donations and Volunteers Needed*

[Your city's name here in all caps]— Summer is coming and you can help feed kids while school is out. **[Your organization's name]** provides free meals to children during the summer. Volunteers are needed throughout the summer to help serve meals, supervise children, and do outreach in the community.

This summer, meals will be served at **[location]** on **[days]** at **[times]**. Contact **[organization's name]** at **[phone number, Web site, etc.]** for more information about volunteering or donating to the Summer Food program.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture partners with local organizations like **[Your organization's name]**, to provide free meals to children when school is out for the summer. Any child under age 18 may come and eat.

For more information about the national Summer Food Service Program, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer>.



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Sample News Release for Openings of Summer Sites or New Sites Created

Summer Food Program Feeds Kids For Free

[Your city's name here in all caps]— With summer right around the corner, it's time to think about keeping children healthy while school is out. **[Your organization's name]** provides free meals to children during the summer.

This summer, meals will be served at **[location]** on **[days]** at **[times]**. There are no income requirements or registration. Any child under age 18 may come to eat. For more information, contact **[phone number, Web site, etc.]**.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture partners with local organizations like **[Your organization's name]**, to provide free meals to children when school is out for the summer. For more information about the national Summer Food Service Program, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer>.



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Sample Pitch Letter or Email for All Media

Dear **[editor or reporter's name]**:

Each summer, children wait for the last bell of the school year. Summer is an exciting time for children to enjoy playtime with friends, a week at camp, a family vacation, or time at the pool. However, for many children who receive free and reduced-price meals at school, summer can mean hunger. Just as learning doesn't end when school lets out, neither does a child's need for good nutrition.

[Your organization's name] provides free meals to children during the summer as part of the USDA Summer Food Service Program. This summer, meals will be served at **[location]** on **[days]** at **[times]**. There are no income requirements or registration. Any child under age 18 may come to eat.

I encourage **[media station or paper's name]** to cover our feeding site since many children in the community could benefit from the program. **[Include free and reduced-price lunch stats if you have them]**

You may find the following list of story ideas helpful: **[Include your own story ideas, based on your feeding site. Some samples are below.]**

- A general story about our site that includes interviews with our staff and volunteers
- A day at **[location name]** story that gives first-hand experience about your visit
- A profile of a needy family, whose children come to the site for meals

I am happy to help set up a visit, interviews, or provide more information. Thank you for considering our story ideas.

Sincerely,

