



PROMOTING YOUR CLUB AND ITS EVENTS

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



CREATE A BUZZ



Having a smart approach to publicity is a great starting place for creating a buzz and promoting your club and its events. Using local and other media can be a very rewarding and cost effective way to get the word out about an upcoming club cause, service or event.

Working with your local media can be beneficial if you are looking to increase interest in a breed, prevent restrictive dog legislation, publicize a new class or program being offered, or looking to gain new club members, and more.

This e-book focuses on how to work with various media outlets and how to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with them. The media is a great vehicle for reaching out to the public with your messages. A strong relationship with them will help ensure that your club has the opportunity to play a leadership role in securing the continued approval of dog-related activities and the rights of dog owners.

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WHO'S WHO? MEDIA LISTS

Creating a media list is the first step in publicizing your club's events. Do your homework and send press materials to the right people.

You will know the major local media outlets that are in your area. Often there are major daily, regional or weekly newspapers, a few TV stations or affiliates and several radio stations.

TIPS FOR CREATING A MEDIA LIST

- Reference past coverage – search for your breed or club’s name on Google’s News Search feature. Create a list of writers and outlets who have covered your club.
- Call or email the news or assignment desk of local media outlets and ask who would be the most appropriate contact for the information you have and note that person’s contact information.
- You may need multiple contacts at one outlet depending on the angle of the story (Lifestyle, Calendar/Events, Pets, Education, Business editors, etc.). Once you have developed your media list save it and periodically update it.
- Don’t forget your local cable TV stations as they are especially interested in community events and have event calendar listings.
- There are lots of websites and online guides that specialize in things to do with families or kids. Make sure these are on your contact list and check to see if you can add your event to an Event Calendar on their website.
- If you can’t find the information you need, AKC’s Communications Department can assist. Please email communications@akc.org or call (212)696-8343 and we will be happy to help. The communications team would be happy to assist in creating a media list for your club.

GETTING THE WORD OUT



Your first communication with the media is often through press materials like media alerts and press releases. Your goal in preparing these materials is to provide accurate information in a timely manner that is easy to understand. Highlight an angle that makes your story stand out.

TIPS FOR CREATING PRESS MATERIALS

- Always put press materials on club letterhead or create your own by using the “Header” function of MS Word.
- Keep it simple, no more than two pages.
- Use a consistent format from one release to the next, including fonts, spacing, etc.
- Include contact information. The voicemail and email you provide should be checked at least twice a day. Cell phone numbers are ideal as they allow a reporter direct and instant access to your club’s spokesperson or event organizer, increasing the likelihood of coverage.
- Templates for press materials are included at the end of this section.

PRESS RELEASE

For an announcement requiring detail and background on a potential story, a press release is usually the best format. This should provide the most important information a reporter needs to know and should be limited to two pages.

The key to a successful press release is presenting the information objectively, highlighting only what's relevant, and keeping the most important facts up top. The lead paragraph should contain only the “who, what, when, where and why” of the story.

If the headline and first few paragraphs don't grab the reporter, they won't keep reading.

MEDIA ALERT

A media alert is used when you wish to make a brief announcement of an event, date, time and location.

Media alerts work well for events that are virtually self-explanatory and offer good visuals that will appeal to photographers and TV camera crews.

Don't forget to include a contact number, including a "day-of" event number, such as cell phone. Send the alert a day or two before the event to get short-lead media (TV, wire services and daily newspapers) to put it on their assignment schedule.

You can also use your media alert to submit a "calendar listing" about your event. These entertainment or weekend calendar sections are often compiled much earlier than the rest of the newspaper so be sure to send it a few weeks in advance.

PITCH EMAIL

A pitch email outlines a story idea to the media and why it's relevant to their audience.

A pitch email is a less formal way to seek coverage and is an ideal alternative to a press release for ongoing topics not tied to specific events (such as therapy dogs, how puppy buyers can find a responsible breeder, etc).

This is a really great way to approach media outlets that have a longer preparation time than daily or weekly schedules.

Club Logo Here

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: DATE

Contact: NAME

Phone: 555-555-1234

Email: EMAIL

[INSERT ENTRY] DOGS CONVERGE ON [CITY] TO COMPETE FOR [TYPE OF EVENT/AWARD HERE] ON [INSERT SHOW DATES HERE]

-- Meet Some of AKC's Breeds and Talk to Responsible Breeders --

[YOUR CITY, STATE], [DATE] – [CLUB NAME HERE] is pleased to announce that it will hold its [NUMBER SHOW HERE i.e. 2nd, 13th] annual AKC licensed [EVENT] in [CITY] on [DATE] at [INSERT SHOW LOCATION]. [ENTRY #] dogs will compete for the [AWARD i.e. BEST IN SHOW, HIGH IN TRIAL, ETC.] [LIST ADDITIONAL EVENTS HERE SUCH AS COMPANION EVENTS IF OFFERED AND THOSE ENTRY TOTALS].

“We are delighted to welcome spectators back to [CLUB NAME]’s annual [DOG SHOW/TRIAL] in [CITY NAME],” said [SPOKESPERSON NAME], [SPOKESPERSON TITLE] of [CLUB NAME]. “Not only is this a fun activity for families but it is the perfect place to talk to breed experts about topics such as training, grooming and the right breed for your lifestyle. An AKC dog show is also a great place to start your search for a responsible breeder.”

[SHORT PARAGRAPH: LIST AND DESCRIBE ANY SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS HELD AT THE SHOW SUCH AS CGC TESTING, DOG SHOW TOUR INFORMATION OR SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCES]

[SHORT PARAGRAPH: INSERT SPECTATOR DETAILS HERE SUCH AS PRICE OF ADMISSION, SHOW HOURS FOR SPECTATORS EACH DAY, WHETHER THEY CAN BRING THEIR DOGS, ETC.]

[SHORT PARAGRAPH: INCLUDE CLUB INFORMATION HERE SUCH AS YOUR MISSION STATEMENT, REMINDER OF PAST COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS. BE BRIEF. INCLUDE A LINK TO WEB SITE WHERE THEY CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CLUB AND SHOW IF AVAILABLE.]

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[SHORT PARAGRAPH: INCLUDE CLUB INFORMATION HERE SUCH AS YOUR MISSION STATEMENT, YEAR FOUNDED, ETC. BE BRIEF AND ONLY INCLUDE INFORMATION.]

Club Logo Here

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: DATE

Contact: NAME

Phone: 555-555-1234

Email: EMAIL

NATION'S LARGEST GATHERING OF [BREED] TO COMPETE IN [CITY]

-- Meet Some of the Country's Best [BREED] and Talk to Breed Experts --

[YOUR CITY, STATE], [DATE] – [CATCHY OPENING LINE]. The [CLUB NAME HERE] is pleased to announce that it will hold its [NUMBER SHOW HERE i.e. 2nd, 13th] annual AKC licensed National Specialty on [DATE] at [INSERT SHOW LOCATION]. [BREED] breeders and exhibitors from across the nation will be in [CITY], [DATES] to compete for the top prize.

"We are excited to welcome some of the best [BREED] from all over the country along with all of our exhibitors," said [CLUB SPOKESPERSON]. "This is a great opportunity for current and potential [BREED] owners to seek advice from breed experts."

The [CLUB NAME] is the national club designated by the American Kennel Club as the authority over the [BREED] in the United States. [INCLUDE AN INTERESTING FACT ABOUT THIS BREED]

[SHORT PARAGRAPH: LIST AND DESCRIBE ANY SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS HELD AT THE SHOW AND SPECTATOR DETAILS HERE SUCH AS PRICE OF ADMISSION, SHOW HOURS FOR SPECTATORS EACH DAY, WHETHER THEY CAN BRING THEIR DOGS, ETC.]

Every year, each AKC recognized breed has its own competition called the National Specialty. National Specialties are essentially a dog show only for that breed, which is sponsored by that breed's parent club. A National Specialty is a great way to learn about a specific breed that you may be interested in. For more information about the [CLUB NAME] or the [BREED] visit {CLUB WEBSITE}.

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[SHORT PARAGRAPH: INCLUDE CLUB INFORMATION HERE SUCH AS YOUR MISSION STATEMENT, YEAR FOUNDED, ETC. BE BRIEF AND ONLY INCLUDE INFORMATION.]

*******MEDIA ALERT*******

REQUEST FOR COVERAGE

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

Club Logo Here

**SEE HUNDREDS OF DOGS COMPETE AT
THE PUTNAM COUNTY KENNEL CLUB DOG SHOW**

The [CLUB NAME HERE] brings dog lovers the *annual [EVENT NAME]*! Hundreds of dogs and their owners will get the chance to strut their stuff in the show ring **[DATE]** at the [LOCATION AND ADDRESS] from **[TIME]** each day. The event is great for the whole family with free admission.

SPECTATORS CAN: (Edit this section to match the events occurring at your show)

- Meet and greet a variety of different dog breeds. Visitors can learn about responsible dog ownership and speak with breeders, owners and handlers.
- Watch the judging of various breeds in Conformation and cheer for your favorite.
- See young owner-handlers compete against their peers in the Junior Showmanship Competition.
- Watch owner-handlers compete in a special series called the National Owner-Handled Series. These exhibitors are striving for a spot in the finals at the AKC National Championship presented by Royal Canin in Orlando in December.
- Obedience and rally trials will test dogs understanding of commands, as they maneuver hurdles & retrieve articles.
- Watch canine athletes show off their extreme water skills in a Dock Diving competition. Your dog can also try dock diving for a fee.
- Participate in a free dog show tour.
- Watch dogs and handlers negotiate an obstacle course while racing against the clock in the Agility competition and participate with your dog in a free course in *My Dog Can Do That*.
- Watch owners take their dogs through the AKC Canine Good Citizen Test (CGC).
- See puppies getting started in the sport in the AKC Sanctioned 4 and under 6 Months Puppy Competition.

SHOW DETAILS:

- **Admission:** [PRICE OF ADDMISSION]
- **Show Program:** Find full event details here [INCLUDE LINK TO CLUB WEBSITE].

MEDIA CONTACT:

- [NAME]
- [PHONE]
- [EMAIL]

[DATE]

(SAMPLE PITCH EMAIL)

Dear Mr. Smith:

The sport of purebred dogs is a popular pastime for many families. The unique character of the sport, that sanctions competition between amateurs, professionals, youngsters, men, and women, also brings a very positive economic impact to local communities on a regular basis. Our [CLUB NAME HERE]'s annual show -- which brings in over 1,000 out-of-town dogs and travelers -- is scheduled for [DATE].

The American Kennel Club registers nearly one million dogs each year, many that participate in sports including dog shows and agility trials. Each year, there are more than 22,000 of these events, with three million dogs entered each year, and the numbers continue to grow steadily.

On average, a local economy will benefit by nearly \$1 million when a dog show comes to town (see enclosed brochure). An analysis conducted by the AKC shows that people who participate in a dog show spend money locally on car rentals, dog supplies, entertainment, gasoline, lodging and meals. With more than 3,000 AKC conformation dog shows held each year, the benefit to American communities is more than \$3 billion annually. Clearly there are no economic dog days when this sport comes to town!

We would be happy to put you in touch with some of the local businesses with whom we work each year. The various hotels filled with dogs and their owners, restaurants hosting social events being held throughout the weekend, and numerous vendors selling their wares on site will all reap the benefits of this "dog extravaganza."

We trust a story on the economic benefits of dog shows in your local community will engage your readers and offer local businesses ideas on how to cater to the incoming canine crowd. Thank you for your consideration. I will be in touch shortly to discuss this with you.

Yours Truly,
Jane Doe

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

A white dog, possibly a Bichon Frise, is sitting on a light-colored carpet. The dog is looking upwards and to the left. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall image has a soft, slightly faded appearance.

Press materials, relationships with press and timing are all crucial when working with the media.

MEDIA TIPS

- Tailor your pitches to the media by using a human-interest story. For example, don't say "our club is great," but rather, "our club members have raised \$5,000 for K-9 bulletproof vests".
- Send a variety of news items throughout the year, not just a big release about your annual dog event.
- Provide a small calendar listing about your event, regular training classes, or other events that your club holds throughout the year. Consider including a photo from a past event.
- Set a specific time and place to meet reporters at your show and be prepared to make introductions and answer questions. Provide them with a copy of the event catalog, fact sheets about your club, or any other AKC material you deem appropriate.
- The key to establishing good media relationships is your availability and responsiveness. Reporters usually work on tight deadlines, so the sooner you respond, the more likely you are to get media coverage for your event.
- Understand the varying needs of media. Television news broadcasts often air multiple times a day and work on a very short lead-time. Wire services and online outlets are constantly being updated. Daily newspapers have their front-page stories being prepared right up until they go to print, while features (i.e., the Home or Lifestyle section) may be prepared well in advance.

MEDIA TIPS

- Even if you have previously pitched the story, send a media alert to assignment desks and editors a few days prior to the event.
- Often, in order for a press release to get from the editor's desk into print or on-air, you have to contact the editor to follow-up.
- Once you have a media contact, have a list of talking points in front of you to help you highlight all the important facts. Be brief and to the point. Explain why the story should be of interest – “localize and humanize.”
- Following-up is crucial to getting coverage, but there is a fine line between follow-up and being pushy.
- A great way to introduce yourself is to read/watch/listen to what a reporter covers and reference it. “Hi, this is Jane from the Canine Kennel Club – I just saw the story you did on the local shelter and thought since you are interested in pet or animal- related topics, I'd call you about this idea I have...”
- It's best to select one or two people within your club to continually make contact with the media. Over time, they will begin to build relationships with the media and they will eventually see them as a resource and spokesperson. They will think to call your club whenever a dog-related story comes up.

TALKING POINTS



Talking points tailored to your event are a great way to communicate your points to the media.

CLUB TALKING POINTS

We encourage you to tailor these sample talking points below to relate specifically to your club and/or event.

Our event or club builds greater public awareness about _____ (i.e. training, breeding, responsible dog ownership, etc.)

Our kennel club has been part of the community for ___ years, has over ___ members (name any prominent community members such as politicians, clergy, etc.) and hosts ___ events annually.

Dogs provide many services to the community including therapy and assistance programs and our club helps celebrate the human-canine bond.

The annual event provides a fun, safe community activity for local families and is good for the local economy. Our kennel club is a member of (or licensed by) the AKC.

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

TALKING POINTS

Following are some general messages and talking points about the AKC and the sport. We encourage you to use these as well as reference the AKC web site for statements about controversial issues such as commercial breeding or dog bites

- The AKC is an organization for people who love dogs. The AKC is a not-for-profit organization established in 1884, and is the principal registry for purebred dogs in the U.S., registering hundreds of thousands of dogs annually.
- The AKC encourages the enhanced enjoyment of your dog through activities that you can both participate in, sanctioning more than 22,000 events annually, including conformation, agility, obedience, rally, tracking, herding, lure coursing, hunt test, field and earthdog trials and more.
- All the dogs at AKC events are AKC registered, enrolled as Canine Partners or listed as a Purebred Alternative Listing dog. As a pet owner, even if you don't plan to show your dog, AKC registration is important as it allows you to mark your dog's place in the history of its breed and opens the door to various AKC services that enhance your relationship with your dog.

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

TALKING POINTS

- AKC registration fees help support numerous programs and services that benefit all dog owners. The AKC is a “club of clubs” not a club of individuals. The AKC and its more than 5,000 affiliated clubs educate the general public and support canine causes through programs such as encouraging basic training for all dogs, promoting the proper care of your dog and supporting health research that benefits all dogs.
- The AKC Humane Fund is committed to supporting the health and happiness of dogs across the nation. Every day, we work hard to give back to dogs on a broad and sustainable scale through education, grant making and outreach promoting responsible pet ownership.
- The AKC Canine Health Foundation is dedicated to advancing the health of all dogs and their owners by funding scientific research and supporting the dissemination of health information to prevent, treat and cure canine disease.
- Donating to the AKC Humane fund or AKC Canine Health Foundation can also be a helpful talking point when pitching stories about your club.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

A fluffy, light-colored dog, possibly a poodle or similar breed, is walking on a leash. The dog is the central focus of the image, with its head and front legs clearly visible. The background is a plain, light-colored surface, and the overall lighting is soft and even.

To generate as much media interest as possible for your dog show, add a media-worthy special attraction, such as an action-packed demonstration or unique presentation.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AT A DOG SHOW

- If your mayor or councilman owns a purebred dog, name him “Honorary Chairperson” of your event and invite him to present the Best of Breed trophy for his breed.
- Have a petition drive for signatures in support of/or against any legislation your club might be working on. If your dog club is a member of the state federation of dog clubs, invite federation representatives to the show and promote their appearance to the media.
- Invite local chapters of Search and Rescue and Guide Dog organizations. Ask them to put on a demonstration during the lunch break or before Best in Show, or give them a donation and schedule a check presentation during group judging.
- Mark milestone anniversaries with commemorative trophies, posters or logos by local artists. Invite them to the show for signings and presentations.
- The media love pictures of children and dogs so be sure to invite local Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and/or 4-H clubs to attend as special guests. You can also ask them to serve as volunteers at the event.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AT A DOG SHOW

- Look to holidays and special months to tie into dog shows. For example, February is Pet Dental Health Month sponsored by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Invite a local vet to have a booth at your show.
- You can use non-pet holidays to create attractions as well. For example, October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Invite a local American Cancer Society chapter, donate vendor space for its booth, and have them put out a press release touting the community outreach at your show.
- If you offer 4-6 Month Beginner Puppy Competition, Best Puppy in Show or Bred-By Exhibitors groups at your show, pitch it to the media as a special competition such as the “puppy extravaganza” or “breeders showcase” for photo opportunities.
- Sponsor a fun class for entrants, like a costume contest, or best-dressed holiday dog. Pitch this to the media as a family-fun attraction.
- Offer show tours, AKC Canine Good Citizen® tests, or Meet the Breeds events.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS BEYOND THE SHOWS

Increase press coverage throughout the year by creating stand-alone special events to raise awareness of your club. Having events or continuing activities outside the club's annual dog show demonstrates your club's value to the community.

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS BEYOND THE SHOWS

- Distribute plenty of flyers in local stores to publicize the events as well as sending press releases and media alerts to the media.
- Create a “K-9 Law Day” and donate a bulletproof vest to an area K-9 police officer or raise funds to purchase a K-9 Officer for your town.
- Schedule canine demonstrations, such as Agility, Obedience or Field Tests, at local fairs or parades and/or set up tables and offer information to potential dog owners.
- Contact town officials and ask if your club and dogs can participate in local parades such as Labor Day, Christmas, etc.
- Host a “Photo with Santa Day” for pets in your local area.
- Utilize a public park or library front lawn for an AKC CGC test or Meet the Breeds.
- Plan Therapy Dog visits to local hospitals, veteran homes, and elderly housing.
- Send a Canine Ambassador or other club representative to teach kids (schools, camps, and clubs) about becoming involved in the sport.
- Raise money and donate trash cans, benches, pooper-scooper dispensers, etc. for a local dog park (have your club’s name and website printed on the items).
- Host a Responsible Dog Ownership day to help educate the public.
- Ask your local city official to issue a proclamation recognizing your event.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PITCHING STORIES

- Is your club involved in rescue or does it have a separate non-profit foundation for fundraising to highlight?
- Has a rescued or adopted shelter dog gone on to win obedience, agility or field titles?
- Do you have any outstanding junior handlers in your club?
- Does your club provide opportunities for community involvement such as obedience training classes, visiting hospitals and/or senior citizens with Therapy Dogs, or hold match shows or field trials?

AWARDS

- Has a local dog done something heroic? Can you honor that dog, or nominate it for an AKC Award for Canine Excellence (ACE)? For an ACE application visit www.akc.org/events/ace-awards
- What are your club members doing to educate the public?
- Has a member of your club been awarded a Community Achievement Award? If not, nominate someone at: www.akc.org/pdfs/CAANominationForm.pdf
- Has your club donated gifts or time to local community groups, such as the public library?

DISASTER RELIEF

- Writing letters to local media and holding a fundraiser for donations to AKC Reunite and the AKC Pet Disaster Relief program are great ways to alert your community about the importance of helping the canine victims of natural disasters.
- Write a pitch letter about the importance of including the family pet in disaster planning and why an evacuation kit just for your pet is important.
- Offer a club spokesperson and press kits to the media. Press kits should include: fact sheets about AKC, your club's history, AKC Reunite, event press releases, disaster planning check-list and your spokesperson's biography.

AKC RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP DAY

- The Flagship AKC Responsible Dog Ownership Day is held in September each year. AKC clubs and organizations are encouraged to hold local events to emphasize the importance of responsible dog ownership all throughout the year.
- AKC Responsible Dog Ownership Day offers clubs the opportunity to gain publicity, legislative visibility, and community contacts by holding events, which may include CGC tests, obedience/agility demonstrations, rescue booths, Meet the Breeds, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is a great tool to reach your audience and generate buzz around your upcoming event.

- Create a Facebook page for your club. Post photos and updates all year, not just when your show is happening. Include general dog information, such as training tips, fun facts, photos. etc., not just event specific posts.
- Add an event to your club's Facebook page to help promote your show and build excitement.
- Start an Instagram account for your club. Post fun photos from your show and other events throughout the year.
- Create a Twitter account. Tweet about your event, information people should know, and share photos.
- Create a user-friendly website for your club. Post information about your show, as well as meetings and how to join. Remember to keep it up to date and include links to all your social media pages.
- Designate one person to manage your social media pages and website to maintain consistency. This person should know the tone, messaging, and social media goals your club has.

AKC RESOURCES

AKC.org is an invaluable resource to help promote your club's event. Visit www.akc.org to learn more.

- Sign-up for AKCommunicates! the e-newsletter for the latest in public relations tips and news from the AKC Communications Department.
<http://pages.akc.org/ManagePreferences.html>
- For more information on AKC Responsible Dog Ownership Days.
<http://www.akc.org/rdod>
- For more information on Club Publicity Templates.
www.akc.org/clubs/promote/media-resources/
- To get more information or somewhere to direct the media to for “facts and stats” pages, AKC news, archived press releases and spokesperson biographies.
www.akc.org/press-center/
- To contact the AKC Communications Department Staff either with questions, needing help getting started or where to send journalists for further quotes email communications@akc.org or call 212-696-8343.
- Send your event re-caps to the AKC Communications team to be included in AKCommunicates! communications@akc.org

**THE AKC IS HERE TO
HELP YOUR CLUB
SUCCEED!**

