



## Introduction to news release preparation

Positive media coverage is one of the most important promotion tools used by Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois. Publicity in the form of a news article, accompanied by a picture of Girl Scouts in action, grabs people's attention and gives them the opportunity to learn about the wonderful experiences found in Girl Scouting. When Girl Scouts are in the news it:

- Increases our visibility in your community.
- Signals value for the Girl Scout Program.
- Boosts our membership.
- Increases financial support

**What's the challenge?** At Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois, our marketing and communications department does our best to report interesting stories, the latest news and important information relating to Girl Scouting in both states. But, with almost 20,000 girl and 5,000 adult members, it would take considerable resources in staff time, energy and funding to issue media releases on everyone's activities.

**You can help!** As a Girl Scout volunteer, you may be interested in promoting your Girl Scout troop's news and activities in local newspapers, on local radio or TV stations, on your local cable TV system or on Web sites. This Girl Scouts of Eastern Illinois and Western Illinois publicity fact sheet is designed to support you in those efforts and provide useful information, news release assistance and more.

Thanks for reviewing this information. We hope you can use it to get the publicity you desire. If you have questions or need help, e-mail Chuck Gysi, director of marketing and communications, at [ChuckG@GSEIWI.org](mailto:ChuckG@GSEIWI.org) or call him at 309.283.2359 (office) or 563.260.9366 (cell).

## News release information

Please review the following tips and information before writing your news release.

**Is it news?** While many of your Girl Scout activities are interesting, not all are going to be newsworthy. Remember that reporters, editors and news directors get a lot of news releases and they are going to review your submission for its news value to determine whether or not it gets into the newspaper, on the radio or on TV.

**Before you begin writing** your release, review these news release guidelines. They are a short style guide that you may find helpful.

### News release guidelines

When dealing with the news media and the general public, Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois requires high-quality communications that signal value for our organization. The following guidelines will ensure consistent messaging, image and branding.

The following elements should be included in your news release.

Our organization name - Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois

At the top of your news release (a plain block format is perfectly acceptable), include a headline for your news release (i.e., Girl Scout Troop 336 collects teddy bears for child care center), include a contact person in case someone with the media has a question about your news release, the date you send out the release and include a photo caption for any included or attached photos, including the associated file names of photos when more than one are attached via e-mail. On the very top line, type in capital letters FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. This tells editors that the information can be used immediately.

#### Writing guidelines:

Establish that your troop (or individual girl) is part of the Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois organization by linking them together in a sentence. Example: *Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois Troop 888* (note our use of the word AND and not the ampersand – & – in our council’s name.)

Write your news release like a reporter – in the third person and using declarative sentences. For example, instead of: *My Girl Scout Troop went to the Mouse Trap Museum last Saturday, “reporting” on the event might read: Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois Troop 888 toured the Mouse Trap Museum in Catville on Saturday, Oct. 23.*

Use a clear, simple writing style so your message is easily understood.

Quotes must be used with quotation marks. End-of-sentence periods, exclamation points etc., are positioned inside the end quotation mark. Example: “I thought the museum was so great!” said Suzie Daisy. “We got to see many interesting mouse exhibits.”

Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois always must be spelled out when first used in copy and then may be followed by the acronym – GSEIWI. “GSEIWI” then may be used in the remainder of the text.

Time should be written as follows: 1 a.m. / 4:15 p.m. (lower case letters, period following each initial, one space between number and first initial, no zeroes after the top-of-the-hour times).

Don't abbreviate days of the week, but do abbreviate the following months when used in conjunction with a date: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. - spell out March, April, May, June and July.

Use of ampersand (&), instead of spelling out "and" is not acceptable within the body of text. Example: Jack and Jill -- not Jack & Jill

Review the content to make sure it is well written, grammatically correct and spellchecked. This is essential.

Photos used must be complementary, consistent with our brand and of high quality to facilitate clear reproduction. Copyright IS an issue.

### **More tips:**

When you submit your news release, use simple white 8.5-by-11-inch paper. Don't use color paper or paper with a design in the background. This is distracting.

You can submit your news release to most media properties these days by e-mail. It's best NOT to use a Yahoo or Hotmail account because your e-mail might wind up trapped in spam filters on the other end. Some radio stations prefer faxes. It's best to contact your local media in advance, ask for the editor (at newspapers) or news director (at TV or radio stations) and ask how they prefer to receive your news release. You also can feel free to drop it in the mail and send it, or drop it off at their offices.

The e-mail address to use at most media properties can be found on their websites (Google their newspaper name or call letters to find them). Smaller papers may have only one e-mail address. Larger papers will have numerous editors, but perhaps one address for submitting news releases. Be sure to use the subject line when you send your release and use something such as this:

NEWS RELEASE: Girl Scout troop visits Mouse Trap Museum

It is suggested that you copy and paste the text of your news release into the body of the e-mail. That allows the news staff to copy and paste it on their end into the program they use for editing news. It also is recommended that you attach a copy of the news release in Microsoft Word (use a version that is 2003 or older - smaller papers may not have Microsoft Word 2007 or newer and they won't be able to open your attachment) so that editors can save it as a text file, if they wish.

If your news release is for an important event, it won't hurt to follow up with a call to the newsroom to ensure they received it, if it hasn't appeared in print or on the air within a week's time frame.

A sample news release is at the end of this file.

### **Writing your news release**

**Write a catchy title** - also known as the "headline." The headline is what attracts attention and makes people want to keep reading. The title should be one line and in bold type. Use a capital letter only on the first word and all proper nouns.

**Know your audience** and use a clear writing style so that your message is easily understood.

**Your lead – or first – paragraph** should be no longer than three lines in length and it should answer the five Ws of journalism – who, what, when, where and why. You also can include the “how.” Think of the lead paragraph as a way to give quick facts and subsequent paragraphs are used to fill in the details.

**Use a quote from your spokesperson** in your third or fourth paragraph. Quotes should be to the point and used to add support to your story. Be sure to include quotation marks and list the person’s name, title and organization. For example: “All the girls in my troop were looking forward to visiting the Mouse Trap Museum,” said Suzie Jones from Troop 867. “We used the proceeds from our cookie sale to pay for the trip and everyone had a great time.”

**Try to limit your release to 300 words** or less on one page. Don’t indent paragraphs, single space within paragraphs, but add a line between paragraphs. If you must use a second page, write “– more – ” at the end of the first page and center it. At the end of your release write “– END – ”, or use the symbol “###” centered below the text.

**Proof your release** several times before sending it out! Check your facts, spelling and punctuation. Remember, you are representing Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois and need to be mindful of our reputation so make sure your story is well written and that the release is well organized.

### Submitting photos to newspapers





### A picture is worth a thousand words

**Including a picture with your news release** increases the chances that your news will get printed. Here are some helpful tips:

- Take some time to look at newspaper or magazine articles. Are there photos that catch your eye? What do you like about them?
- Take pictures that support your event and try to take a lot of pictures so you will have many shots to select from.
- Unless your intent is to wow people with the number of girls at your event, avoid those dull group shots if you can. Posing everyone in a picture has its place but action shots are more fun and can make your event look more interesting. Get in close to capture faces and actions. The quality of the action – such as girls laughing – does much better to catch editors’ eyes instead of, for instance, a craft project at a table.
- Only submit bright, focused, good quality photos. Pictures should be saved as .jpg files and be at least 180 dpi (dots per inch) and preferably 300 dpi. The higher the resolution (dpi) the more they can be enlarged. That might make a difference between your photo going on the front page or being buried on an inside page.
- Don’t embed photos in Word documents. Attach them separately in e-mails, clip photos to printed releases or include digital images on a CD.

**When writing the photo caption**, describe what is happening and spell names correctly. People in the photo should be identified from left to right.



Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois Troop 466 of Catville recently held a pizza supper to raise funds for their troop's trip to the Catville Museum of Science. Enjoying a big bite are Girl Scouts, from left to right: Mary Might, Frannie Fish and Gina Green.



Members of Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois Troop 555 from Catville participated in the King Arthur Archery Course. Waiting for their turn with the bow and arrow are Girl Scouts, from left: Lili Little and Sarah Sure.

### Questions? Need help?

Again, if you have any questions about preparing your news release for the media, please contact the marketing and communications department of Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois by calling 309.283.2359 (office) or 563.260.9366 (cell) and speak with Chuck Gysi, director of marketing and communications.

Next page: Sample news release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Susan Brown  
Troop leader, Girl Scout Troop 336  
309-788-0833 home | 563-555-1212 cell | sbrown@troop\_336.org

### **Girl Scout troop gives teddy bears to child care center**

Members of Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois Troop 336 in Catville have donated teddy bears to the Little Angels Day Care Center.

The teddy bears were purchased with funds from Girl Scout Cookie sales that the troop earned earlier this year. The day care center recently sustained damage from a powerful wind storm and lost many of their toys.

“We were so glad to be able to donate these new toys to the Little Angels center,” troop leader Agnes Jones said. “The girls felt really good about helping the younger children who suddenly were left without a lot of their familiar toys and stuffed animals.”

Last year, Girl Scout Troop 336 donated funds from their cookie sale proceeds to purchase new flowers for Scratch Park in downtown Catville. The flowers were planted by troop members and members of the Catville Garden Club.

**- END -**