

Celebration on the Hill 2006

Media Coverage FAQs

(Updated 6/30/06)

How much media coverage of Celebration on the Hill is expected?

A lot. Celebration 2002 yielded a total of 1,096 newspaper stories, 743 television stories, and 183 radio stories – or 2,022 media hits. The on-site video news feed and satellite media tour generated 434 stories on 203 television stations in 109 media markets reaching 16.9 million viewers. These stories generated 39.9 million media impressions and would have cost an equivalent of \$1.1 million. We expect to exceed those figures this year.

Are we planning to attract media coverage of Celebration prior to the event itself?

Yes. There are numerous opportunities for Celebration media coverage prior to the event. Media coverage is not only possible, it is essential. Building up interest in Celebration among local and regional reporters before the event will only help to boost coverage of the event itself. All in all, more media coverage before, during, and after the event will mean more exposure for the Society's efforts to make cancer a national priority among government officials at the national, state, and local level.

What efforts are underway for pre-event media coverage of Celebration?

There are a number of opportunities for media attention leading up to Celebration. First, Divisions are encouraged to announce their **Celebration Ambassadors** to the media and share each Ambassador's personal story with reporters. Each of the 4,000 Ambassadors who will travel to Washington for Celebration has a compelling cancer connection. At the same time, each will represent thousands of cancer advocates back home who recognize the government's critical role in the fight against cancer. Virtually any event involving an Ambassador – a meeting with a lawmaker, a Relay For Life Wall of Hope signing at the shopping mall, participation in a 4th of July parade – could be pitched to the media. Ambassadors, working with their Division staff partners, will also be encouraged to meet with local reporters and editorial boards and to write letters to the editor about Celebration itself and/or cancer issues in the news.

Another major component of our pre-event media efforts is the **Relay For Life Wall of Hope** (also known as the **American Cancer Society Wall of Hope**). An estimated 5,000 Relay Wall of Hope banners will be sent to Washington for dramatic display on the National Mall during Celebration on the Hill. The banners are a powerful symbol of local representation at the event in Washington. They will be best utilized in combination with Ambassadors, the personification of the fight against cancer. Signing the banners represents a personal endorsement of the Society's efforts in the war on cancer and the Society's legislative goals emphasizing the government's role in the fight against cancer. Divisions have been encouraged to promote the banners by chronicling their journey from local Relay events to various regional ACS events and finally to Washington. The culmination of that journey could be embodied in a send-off event at the state capitol, where banners from a particular state would be displayed to form their own Relay For Life Wall of Hope before being sent to Washington for Celebration. Ambassadors, legislators, policymakers, and others could sign the banners and hold a press conference touting their support for the war on cancer.

A third pre-event media opportunity is **Celebration itself**. The event and all of its components add up to the largest and most aggressive effort ever in support of the need for legislation and policies that will help win the war on cancer. As excited as we all are about Celebration, the media will be too.

Who is responsible for organizing media events in advance of Celebration?

Division marketing and communications staff, in conjunction with their advocacy colleagues, are planning local media events to highlight Celebration. Ambassadors, too, are encouraged to think about ways to engage the media in their communities, and to coordinate with staff to plan events. Questions about local media outreach should be directed to members of the Celebration Marketing/Communications Implementation Team.

The Celebration Bus received an enormous amount of media attention leading up to the 2002 event. Will our media efforts be hampered by its absence this year?

The Celebration Bus was a huge hit with Society staff, Ambassadors and other volunteers, the general public, and certainly the media. Even though the bus is not a part of Celebration this year, we expect even more media attention to this Celebration than the last. The Relay For Life Wall of Hope was conceived with the idea of appealing to the same sense of local pride and engagement in Celebration as the bus. The momentum and anticipation around the Relay For Life Wall of Hope will only build as the banners make their way around local events and finally to Washington as part of a national monument.

What media opportunities will there be at Celebration itself?

Expect reporters to be *everywhere* at Celebration. Individual reporters and their news outlets will focus on the aspect of Celebration that most interests them, such as the Celebration Ambassadors, the legislative issues at stake, the Relay For Life Wall of Hope, the Relay For Life event around the Capitol reflecting pool, the activity in state tents, the on-site visits by lawmakers, and the speakers and entertainment on stage.

As a Celebration Ambassador, how will I know whether and how to talk to reporters at Celebration?

Members of the Celebration Marketing/Communications Implementation Team will be informing Ambassadors about pre-arranged media opportunities at Celebration, including on-camera interviews via satellite, on-site on-camera interviews, and radio and print interviews via telephone and on-site. In addition, Ambassadors should anticipate ad hoc media opportunities in the state tents, at the Relay For Life Wall of Hope and luminaria ceremony, around the Relay track, and during their meetings with lawmakers. In short, Ambassadors should be prepared to talk with the media at any time during Celebration. Most reporters will be wearing press credentials.

As a Celebration Ambassador, what should I say to reporters?

Reporters are most likely to be interested in the story of why you became involved with the American Cancer Society and how you became a Celebration Ambassador. Tell them about your experiences with Relay For Life and the Society, what those experiences mean to you, how you feel about representing your community at Celebration, and – last but certainly not least – why it is important for lawmakers and government officials to be involved in the cancer fight.

Should I emphasize the same legislative priorities to the media as I do to lawmakers?

Yes. The basis of our legislative asks for Celebration on the Hill is the challenge goal issued to the nation in 2002 by the National Cancer Institute. The goal, which has been endorsed by bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress, is to eliminate death and suffering from cancer by the year 2015 so that cancer becomes a disease people live with rather than die from. Talking about the 2015 challenge goal will help us to define the progress that's been made in the war on cancer, the promise that exists, and the cost to families and the public if we fail to act. We will be asking lawmakers to:

- **Invest in the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP)**

This program, administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has been enormously successful at providing low-income, uninsured, and underinsured women access to lifesaving breast and cervical cancer screening tests. At current funding levels, this program can serve only 1 in 5 eligible women. In addition, the program could be facing budget cuts. We are asking Congress to reauthorize the program and increase its funding this year and every year until it has the resources to meet the need.

- **Boost federal funding for cancer research and programs**

One of the core elements of the Congressional Cancer Promise is the need to increase the nation's commitment to research. Recent cuts in funding for the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute threaten the impressive progress we have made in recent years in the war on cancer. We are emphasizing to lawmakers that Congress must devote the resources that put us back on track toward reaching the goal of eliminating suffering and death from cancer.

- **Sign the Society's Congressional Cancer Promise**

The Congressional Cancer Promise outlines the steps Congress must take in the near term to put the country on track toward accomplishing the 2015 goal. We will be asking lawmakers to pledge their support for specific legislative proposals that 1) elevate prevention, early detection and survivorship, 2) increase the nation's commitment to research, and 3) expand access to care.

I'm an Ambassador but have never spoken to the media, or I get nervous at the thought of talking with a reporter. What should I do?

The most important thing to do is relax. As an Ambassador, your appeal to the media is based on the topic you know better than any other – yourself. You've been selected as an Ambassador because you have a compelling story to tell. So when talking to reporters – or to lawmakers, Society staff, or anyone else at Celebration – tell your story. Whoever the audience, they'll be interested to hear it.

What if a reporter asks a question I don't know the answer to?

Reporters respect honesty, so you should never feel pressured to answer a question you don't know. Simply reply "I don't know," or "I'm not sure." If you can give the reporter information

you *do* know about a related topic, do so. Then direct the reporter to an appropriate staff member or volunteer who can answer the reporter's initial question. NEVER lie, guess, or make something up to a member of the media. You should always feel free to direct reporters to Steven Weiss, the Society's senior director of communications and media advocacy. He can be reached before Celebration at 202/661-5711 or steve.weiss@cancer.org. He will be on-site on the day of Celebration and reachable on his cell phone at 202/276-8772.

What if I am asked about the costs of Celebration, such as how much money is being spent on the event and whether the event is a wise use of our resources?

We will not defeat cancer without government funding for cancer research and programs, or without the support of lawmakers for policies that protect and promote public health. We believe strongly in the importance of engaging elected officials at all levels of government to solicit their help in the fight against cancer – a continuous effort that is capped by Celebration on the Hill.

Feel free to respond to any Celebration-related question by explaining the enormous sense of pride that surrounds the event. However, specific questions relating to financial or legal matters should be answered by an American Cancer Society representative from the National Home Office. Please refer these questions to Steven Weiss, the Society's senior director of communications and media advocacy (contact info above).

Where will be a good place to meet up with reporters on the day of Celebration?

Reporters looking to talk to representatives from your state will naturally go to your state tent on the day of the event. There will also be a media tent and a broadcast tent set up south of the main stage on the National Mall where reporters will be able to pick up information about Celebration, ask questions of Society staff, plug in their laptop, make photocopies, use a phone, get a drink of water, etc. The broadcast tent will be a place where Ambassadors can wait for their on-camera satellite feeds or conduct interviews. If the communications staff person from your state has set up an interview for you on the day of Celebration on the Hill, be sure to check with him or her for the exact location you should report to.

My Division is bringing local reporters and/or camera crews to Washington, D.C. for Celebration. Whom should I talk to about that?

Divisions are invited to bring local/regional reporters and/or camera crews to Celebration. We will make every effort to determine the reporters' needs in advance of the event, particularly when it comes to technology. If you have questions about local reporters attending Celebration, please direct them to a member of the Celebration Marketing/Communications Implementation Team.

What resources will be available to local media on the day of Celebration?

We will be offering local television and radio stations the opportunity to interview Ambassadors on the National Mall. These opportunities will be handled by a vendor working with the Society at Celebration. We are also offering television stations footage, or "b-roll," of Celebration 2002 that they can incorporate into stories about this year's event. In advance of Celebration, local media also will receive general information about the event and state-specific facts about cancer, Ambassadors, and Celebration itself. For more information, please contact a member of the Celebration Marketing/Communications Implementation Team or Steven Weiss, the Society's

senior director of communications and media advocacy, at 202/661-5711 or steve.weiss@cancer.org.

What about national media?

Reporters in Washington, D.C. and at print and broadcast outlets with a national reach are being aggressively courted to cover Celebration. Magazines and other outlets with long lead times were being contacted in late spring, and other outlets will be contacted with a save-the-date notice and accompanying information in early summer. We will continue our outreach to national media through Celebration itself. In addition, we will be reaching out to Congressional press secretaries to encourage the participation of lawmakers, which will enhance national and local media opportunities.

Will we be reaching out to foreign language media and media targeting specific populations?

Yes. Our outreach efforts will extend to a wide variety of media outlets. Members of the Celebration Marketing/Communications Implementation Team have been asked to submit the names of Ambassadors who might appeal to foreign language or specialty media.

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