

Make a Splash

with your

Summer Food Service Program



Media and Event Guide

for Sponsors

using the

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Campaign



Mountain Plains Region
Summer Food Service Program



If you have any questions about administering the Summer Food Service Program, or if you need assistance in planning your event, please contact your State Agency.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800)795-3272 (voice) or (202)720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Media Outreach	5
Step 1: Select a Target Audience	6
Step 2: Brainstorm Story Ideas	7
Step 3: Planning Your Eat Smart. Play Hard. Event	8
Step 4: Prepare Materials and Information	11
Step 5: Develop a Media List	12
Step 6: Identify Spokespersons	14
Step 7: Contact the Media	14

Appendices

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Materials

- **The Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Website**
- **Power Panther Costume Order Form**
- **Picnic Activity Sheet Spanish**
- **Picnic Activity Sheet English**
- **Power Panther Mask**
- **MyPyramid Coloring Sheet**

Sample Outreach Materials

- **Newsletter article in English**
- **Newsletter article in Spanish**
- **Billboard/Public Transportation Ad**
- **Flyer in English**
- **Flyer in Spanish**
- **Door Hanger**
- **Letter to businesses asking to publicize SFSP**

Media Materials

- **Event Media Advisory**
- **Sample Event Agenda**
- **Talking Points**
- **SFSP Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Sample E-mail Text for Reporter**

INTRODUCTION

The need for publicity

As a sponsor of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), you are well aware of the substantial need the program fills for hungry children during the summer.

Additionally, as a sponsor, the issues of hunger and nutrition are never far from your mind. However, not everyone is aware of the potential that the SFSP has to help children in your community. Many parents may not even be aware that the program exists.

For that reason, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), all state departments of health and education that run the SFSP, and you, the sponsor, continue to want to publicize the program so that more children are taking advantage of this great program.

Ways to publicize the program

As a sponsor – whether you are a non-profit organization, a school, a church, or any other community organization – you are well-acquainted with the challenges of community outreach, raising public awareness, and ‘getting the word out.’

There are numerous ways to reach out to your community and constituents, and it is always fun and challenging to develop new ideas for effective outreach.

One of many great opportunities for you to publicize the SFSP is to use the Power Panther mascot, the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ message, ideas and resources in this booklet, and the free materials available on the FNS website. You can find some of these items in the Eat Smart. Play Hard. Appendix. Additionally, for your convenience, there are other examples of outreach materials included in the Sample Outreach Materials Appendix.

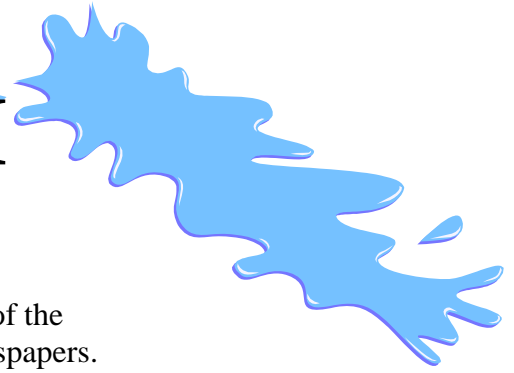
This booklet will focus on one primary area of outreach – Media Outreach, including planning an SFSP event at your site. A number of items referenced in the text are contained in the Media Materials Appendix.

This Booklet

This booklet includes specific ideas about publicizing your program and your event, but it also contains broader principles about Media Outreach that you may apply to other programs or events that you work with both during the summer and the school year as well.



MEDIA OUTREACH



Why media outreach?

One of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to inform members of the community about the SFSP is through local television, radio, and newspapers.

What is media outreach?

Media outreach takes many forms — from a simple call to a reporter to suggest a story, to a formal press release or an organized event. All can be effective.

Match your media efforts to what works best in your community. This booklet will focus on promoting an Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ event.

Why would the media be interested in covering the Summer Food Service Program?

The SFSP has several compelling sides, with the most important being that it is a program for children. Anything that helps children can make a good media story. Additionally, the program is about the strength of a local community working together to help those who are less fortunate. It has all the elements of an interesting story that local media want to cover. Your local media have both a community responsibility and a business interest in providing readers and viewers with valuable information.

What does media outreach involve?

In promoting your Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ event, you should follow these steps:

1. **SELECT** a target audience.
2. **BRAINSTORM** story ideas.
3. **DEVELOP** a media list.
4. **PREPARE** materials and information.
5. **IDENTIFY** spokespersons.
6. **CONTACT** the media.



STEP 1 SELECT A TARGET AUDIENCE

Select your audience(s). Determine whom you are trying to reach before you begin your outreach.

Generally, you are trying to reach the parents or other caretakers of children who are able to benefit from the SFSP. You are trying to increase the participation in your program.

In addition to parents, you are trying to reach summer camp coordinators, community organizations, community centers, day care providers, camp directors and others.

GOALS

Before you begin your outreach, establish some simple goals for your effort.

Examples include:






- **Educating people** about which children are eligible for the SFSP – that is, **all** children ages 1 – 18.
- **Reminding people** that the meals are free.
- **Educating people** about the nutritional content of meals at the SFSP.
- **Reminding parents and caretakers** that it is not only important to eat well, but also to get enough exercise.
- **Promoting the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™** message. Reserve the Power Panther for a visit!
- **Informing people** about the other activities occurring at your site, in addition to meal service.
- **Encouraging more children to attend** your site by planning a special activity. This can be as simple as having a fun guest speaker, inviting a local dignitary or hero to visit the children, inviting a balloon designer or other entertainer, creating your own wellness theme, or partnering with the local zoo or community garden.

Reserve the Power Panther costume for free – kids love the character! (see order form in Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Materials Appendix.)



STEP 2 BRAINSTORM STORY IDEAS

Although much of the news covered on TV or in the newspaper is unanticipated, you can sometimes generate interest by calling the media with a compelling story, or, in this case, hosting an event that you hope will attract media attention.

FIVE COMPONENTS OF A NEWSWORTHY STORY	
	TIMING: The word <i>news</i> means exactly what it says: things that are new. In this electronic age, people are used to receiving immediate news updates. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it's no longer interesting. Think ahead to upcoming actions, events, holiday or seasonal stories, and volunteer appreciation stories — and plan your media outreach in advance so reporters can get the story while it is still news.
	SIGNIFICANCE: The number of people affected by a story is important. If a significant number of people in your community are eligible for the Summer Program yet are not tapping into the benefits, this will be considered newsworthy.
	PROXIMITY: The closer the story hits to home, the more newsworthy it is.
	PROMINENCE: Famous people get more coverage simply because they are famous. But celebrities do not have to come from Hollywood — they can be local politicians, prominent business owners, hometown sports heroes, or key community leaders.
	HUMAN INTEREST: Human interest stories appeal to the readers' emotions. Talking about the benefits of the SFSP through a first-person account is a good way to personalize what readers or viewers might otherwise think is merely a government program that has no relevancy to their lives.

So why is the SFSP news?

- **Timing:** The SFSP is a very timely story in the summer because it has a very specific time component to it. That makes the urgency greater.
- **Significance:** No one can argue that feeding hungry children is not an important mission.
- **Proximity:** The SFSP is an excellent local story. Children in every community are hungry, and sites are available in many communities. This gives the media the opportunity to interview local people, visit local sites, and localize a national issue.
- **Prominence:** This is where a spokesperson, local celebrity, or some other high profile person comes into play, calling greater attention to the story. It is extremely helpful to get an interesting local person to attend or keynote your event.
- **Human Interest:** Once again, feeding hungry children is by its nature a human interest story.

STEP 3 PLANNING YOUR EAT SMART. PLAY HARD.™ EVENT

1. Reserve the Power Panther costume from the Mountain Plains Regional Office. Go to the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ website, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/>, or more specifically to the Power Panther Zone and click on Costume, or type in this address: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Zone/costume.html>. Print out the request form, fill it out completely, and fax it to 303-844-6203, to the attention of Public Affairs. You will be notified via email whether the costume is available on the dates you selected. Because of high demand, the costume may not be available. Nonetheless, you should still proceed with the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ theme for your event.
2. Find an interesting guest or entertainer to attend your event. Local athletes are a great choice; it doesn't matter what level. High school, college, minor league, or professional athletes all can speak to the importance of good nutrition, exercise, and getting all meals in during the summer. The FNS Regional Office has contacts with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) and the National Wrestling Coaches Association and may be able to help arrange a visit from a rodeo contestant or wrestler.
3. Contact the Regional Office for free Power Panther materials.
4. Spend some time on the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ website. It contains games, cutout toys, songs, and other tools for your event. Please see the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Appendix.
5. Read and follow the other information in this guide about hosting a media event.



THINGS TO CONSIDER REGARDING YOUR EVENT

When is a media event or press conference appropriate?

Media events or press conferences are used to convey information and attract attention. They allow you to deliver time-sensitive news to many media outlets at once.

What are some examples of things that might warrant an event or press conference?

- Kickoff of the program;
- Record high or low number of sites;
- Greater need or attendance than usual; or
- Visit by a dignitary, celebrity, or special guest.

At what time should I plan the media event?

Check your local calendar listings before planning an event to make sure it doesn't conflict with another major media event. The optimal time to schedule a media event or news conference is 10 a.m. – but the best time for your Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ event will be lunch or breakfast time, as this is what you are trying to publicize!! The best visuals will be children attending the site and enjoying their meal.

Outdoor events: Consider the weather and noise and arrange for an alternate indoor site.

Indoor events: Think about space. You will need room for TV cameras and other media, guests, and your own audiovisual equipment. Know beforehand where electrical plugs and light switches are located.

Whom should I invite?

In addition to your speaker/main attraction, consider inviting community leaders, including the mayor, local council members, school board members, or even notable nutritionists to attend and make comments, if available. Not only will this make your event more appealing to the media, but it also demonstrates that improving nutrition in your area is a community effort.

The media usually take an interest in the human side of an issue. See if you can identify a family that has a positive story and is willing to tell about its experience.

How should I invite the media?

The most common way to invite media to a press conference is with a media advisory (see sample in the Media Materials Appendix). The advisory gives enough details about the event to pique an outlet's interest, but not so many that it gives away the entire story.

Send your advisory to the assignment editor or reporter about one week before your event. On the morning of your event, follow up with the reporter or assignment editor and be sure to include on-site contact information, such as cell phone numbers and exact site location. Assignment desks often do not know whom they will send until the day of the event.

Useful things to do in advance: (use your judgment; some of these entail more work than necessary; you can keep it simpler if you choose)

Prepare signage such as banners and podium signs that can be placed prominently in front of the cameras and photographers. Be sure to properly position signage (you do not want it blocked by speakers, equipment, etc.).

Spokesperson(s): Assign one or two spokespersons, such as the head of your organization or a local dignitary, to speak and/or answer media questions at the event. Brief your spokespersons before hand, ensure names are pronounced correctly and make sure they are approved to speak in front of the press. In addition to having official spokespersons, the media will be attracted to a story that puts a human face on the issue of hunger. Approach this issue with sensitivity and prudence. Be sure all your spokespersons speak clearly and are easily understood.

Prepare an agenda. Decide the order of the speakers, the length of their remarks, and who will act as master of ceremonies. Keep each person's remarks to no more than 10 minutes and plan on having no more than three speakers. A sample agenda is provided in the Media Materials Appendix.

What should I do on the day of the event?

Set up a table for media and guest sign-in and press kit distribution.
Greet the guests as they arrive and provide them with assigned seating and other pertinent information.

Start on time, even if attendance is sparse.

What should I do after the event?

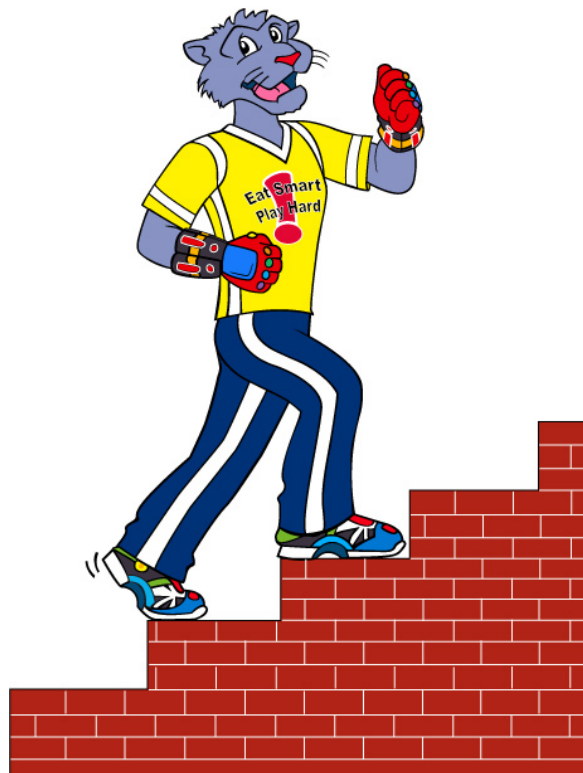
Send thank-you notes or letters to the guests and special speakers.



STEP 4 PREPARE MATERIALS AND INFORMATION FOR PRESS

A press packet should contain any background information that would provide research, data, or other facts to help a reporter put a full story together. This includes the event agenda, the media advisory, and correct spellings of participants' names. The following is a list of items that may be included:

- Agenda (Media Materials Appendix);
- Media advisory (Media Materials Appendix);
- SFSP FAQs (Media Materials Appendix);
- Biographies of speakers and interviewees;
- List of local sites;
- Sample Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ materials. (Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Materials Appendix)



STEP 5 DEVELOP A MEDIA LIST

Determine the best TV channels, radio stations, and newspapers for reaching your target audience by researching the answers to the following questions. Then begin to create a short media list, which is a list of local news media organizations and their contact information.

Do the people in your target audience:

- Watch particular TV channels?
- Listen to certain radio stations?
- Read local community papers or daily newspapers?

The initial list you come up with should be the outlets that you, your friends, community members, and school or SFSP participants might tune in to.

You can check with your partner organizations to see if they already have a list that they are willing to share.

For more in-depth resources, you may use the following:

POINTERS FOR DEVELOPING A MEDIA LIST
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check the local phone book for listings of television and radio stations, local daily and weekly newspapers, and magazines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the U.S. newspaper List website at www.usnpl.com.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check the local library for media reference books, such as the Bacon's Media Yellow Book or the News Media Yellow Book.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check newspaper and television websites. Search their online archives to find names of reporters who have covered stories on hunger, nutrition, poverty, or the Summer Food Service Program in the past. Review the articles previously written or stories broadcast by the reporter to get a feel for her or his style and areas of interest.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask your clients about their preferred local media sources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add Reporters' names to your list when you read a story or meet a reporter working on a story about hunger or community groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add the local offices or bureaus of national media organizations. These are typically located in State capitals or large cities. Wire services like the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and the Scripps Howard news Service provide articles to local newspapers. Large radio and television networks also distribute stories to local affiliates.

As you build your media list, add the names and contact information (phone, e-mail, fax, address) for specific individuals within each organization. These individuals may include reporters, editors, and/or producers. By appealing to specific individuals, you are more likely to get a response. Double-check to make sure your contact names are up-to-date.




Call the main number of the newspaper or station and ask the operator for assistance.

On your list, also make note of publication deadlines so you can contact editors and reporters well in advance of when you hope to actually see your story in print.

Below are the best people to consider contacting at your local media outlets.

CHOOSING THE MOST APPROPRIATE CONTACT

There are a number of individuals within a news organization who shape what is printed or broadcast. People to include on your media list are:

APPROPRIATE CONTACTS	
<p>NEWSPAPER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporters who cover health, social, and family issues,• Writers for the calendar or community events page,• Community columnists,• Editorial page editors, and• Assignment editors who direct reporters or photographers to cover events.	
<p>TV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporters/on-air personalities,• Planning/assignment editors,• News broadcast producers, and• Producers of morning shows or community programs.	
<p>RADIO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• News directors,• Assignment editors,• Public affairs show hosts and producers, and• On-air personalities or commentators.	

Keep in mind that each media outlet may have a separate staff that writes for its web site, and remember to include smaller media outlets, such as local cable access TV stations, community newspapers, and local parenting magazines and tabloids.

STEP 6 IDENTIFY SPOKESPERSONS

Official Spokespersons

Identify people whom the media can interview about the story. These may be local health experts, nutritionists, school principals, or human services providers. Be sure you have the full name, title, and contact information of these individuals readily available. Be sure that your spokespersons are approved by their organizations to speak to the media, and that they:

- Know the Summer Food Service Program;
- Are available to appear on television or radio and to be interviewed by the print press;
- Are comfortable speaking to media;
- Are able to clearly communicate the point you want to get across;
- Can respond effectively to questions; and
- Will be considered credible, trustworthy sources of information by viewers or readers.

Sample talking points are in the Media Materials Appendix.

Testimonials

To add a human interest angle to the story, try to find people in your community who would be willing to share their SFSP stories with the media and talk about how the support helped their children and their families during the summer. Speak to your partners to see if they can help identify someone like this.

Once someone has been selected, make sure the person is comfortable telling his or her story and has a positive experience to share.

STEP 7 CONTACT THE MEDIA

What are some helpful tips on contacting reporters?

Select the most appropriate reporters for your specific story. Do not bombard reporters with story ideas that are not relevant to the reporter's beat or specialty. For example, if you are pitching a story about your SFSP event, do not contact the reporter on your media list who covers local crime. Try to contact education or human services reporters.

Find out how reporters like to be contacted and respect their time. Ask if a reporter prefers phone calls or e-mails. Reporters may keep odd hours and juggle several assignments at once. Be respectful of their schedules and how they like to receive information. If you need to send out a press release or media advisory to a mass list rather than individual names, be sure to put e-mail addresses in the blind copy (bcc:) field to avoid sharing e-mail addresses with all the other recipients.

Review your talking points before you call reporters. Have your ideas ready since most reporters are extremely busy and will give you only a minute or so to make your case before deciding if they are interested.

Make sure your e-mail subject line is descriptive but concise. Include a short (about two paragraphs), catchy pitch along with your contact information. (See example in the Media Materials Appendix). Make the reporter’s job as easy as possible by providing the most important information in the first paragraph. Include a link to the SFSP on the FNS website (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/>), as a reporter will often visit the web site for insight before calling back.




Avoid using all caps or excessive punctuation. Reporters avoid anything that looks like unsolicited email or “spam.” Avoid using attachments when contacting a reporter for the first time, as he or she may suspect the attachment of containing a computer virus. Copy and paste relevant text into the body of the e-mail.

Introduce yourself fully on phone calls. Reference previous conversations, if applicable, to jog their memory as to whom you are and why you’re calling. Ask whether it is a good time to talk. If they cannot talk, offer to call back later at their convenience. If they have time to talk, get to your point quickly and gauge their level of interest based on the response. If they are not interested, they will let you know.

Be reliable. Nothing will squelch a media relationship faster than a promise you cannot deliver. Do your best to get reporters what they need in advance of their deadlines. However, if you won’t be able to come through, let them know as early as possible.

Follow up. Although some reporters will provide coverage after one phone interview, that is frequently not enough. It is important to be in front of reporters on a consistent basis with compelling information that demonstrates what you are pitching is viable, credible, and worthy of coverage.

Be sure to offer reporters the additional elements they would need to round out their stories — photos, web site information, toll-free numbers, and additional resources, if necessary.

WHAT ARE REPORTERS' DEADLINES?		
<p>PRINT: Call a newsroom between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when reporters are most likely not in planning meetings or working against a 5 p.m. deadline.</p>	<p>TELEVISION: Call assignment or planning editors after 10 a.m. and before 3 p.m., but not in the hour or so before a noon newscast. It's best to call the assignment desk after the morning planning meeting, which usually ends between 9:30 and 10 a.m.</p>	<p>RADIO: Call early, around 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. After that, staff often has planning meetings, but you can start calling again after 10 a.m. News directors, reporters, and producers are often gone by the afternoon.</p>
		

Know when to keep at it and when to let go. No matter how passionate you are about a story, some reporters will never buy in. A good way to circumvent a quick “no” is to pitch by phone rather than e-mail (unless that is a reporter’s preference).

This will get you better results and allow you to build the relationships you need to ensure consistent success. When using the phone, leave one message only, and then continue to call at different times of the day until you are able to speak to the reporters. Once you have them on the line, it is much easier to make your case, as you can engage a reporter in a conversation and handle questions or objections as they arise.

TIMING YOUR OUTREACH		
TYPE OF OUTLETS	DESCRIPTION	TIMING
MONTHLIES	Monthly publications are typically magazines, often designed to appeal to a particular segment of the community. They are not as focused on time-sensitive news events, and are therefore good channels for communicating “big picture” stories and features.	Stories created for monthlies must often be written 3 to 6 months prior to publication date.
WEEKLIES	Weeklies can come in a magazine or newspaper format, and often are distributed free at grocery stores or other popular community locations.	Plan on contacting weeklies 2 to 6 weeks before you hope to see your story in print.
DAILIES	Dailies are defined as local newspapers that focus on breaking news, although they are also good outlets for in-depth features.	For feature stories, plan on contacting dailies 2 to 3 weeks before you hope to see your story in print.
BROADCAST	Broadcast outlets include television and radio. Broadcast news tends to provide live coverage of news events, and relies on images or audio sound bites to tell the story. Broadcast outlets can also be interested in longer stories, particularly for morning or community shows.	For feature-length stories, contact the producer of the segment you are pitching 2 to 3 weeks before you hope to see your story on the air.

