

Spirit of Youth Teen Action Council members review nominations and choose one example for media spotlight and recognition.

Spirit of Youth cofounder Becky Judd says, “By getting these stories to the media, we are changing the perception of teenagers from troublemakers to problem-solvers. Anonymous phone surveys and evaluations have shown that after hearing repeated positive stories about youth, adults have more positive perceptions about youth.”

Youth also learn journalism skills, conduct research, and provide a youth perspective on topics of interest on a monthly radio show as part of the Alaska Teen Media Institute. The Institute functions as a teen newsroom where youth work as reporters, editors, and producers, under the guidance of an experienced journalist. Some of their stories have even been broadcast nationally and have won awards in journalism competitions against adults. Judd says that the teen media project “helps adults better understand youth perspective.”

The typical youth project coordinator or participant is busy—and modest. Even if organizers have time to publicize their media initiative, some think it will look as though they’re arrogant for suggesting that an accomplishment is newsworthy. But the purpose of publicity isn’t for the benefit of the youth or adults involved in the activity—it’s to educate members of the community who don’t have direct, positive interactions with youth. And it’s our responsibility to promote the good news about youth and youth programming, because while we notice asset-rich youth every day, we can’t assume others do.

GET WRITING!

Start with these newspaper column ideas for getting the word out to local media outlets:

- Uncover little-known stories about young people’s contributions in the community.
- Focus on youth service projects initiated both locally and far away.
- Highlight leadership opportunities available to youth through community organizations.
- Recognize citations and honors awarded to local young people.
- Spread the good news about youth beyond the football score and honor roll!

PUBLICITY CHANNELS

Try these publicity avenues for getting the word out to the community at large. Don't be concerned if you're not a professional writer. Simple, direct language is all that is required.

- Columns in community and school newspapers
- School newsletters and e-mail communications
- Community education bulletins
- Public service announcements on local TV stations and public access cable channels
- Radio station programming, promotions, and public service announcements
- Direct mail campaigns or tip sheets included in utility bills
- Bumper stickers
- Local business window stickers
- Web logs (blogs)
- Refrigerator magnets
- Brochures
- Youth and adult partner presentations introducing assets to civic groups

Spin Supportive Perceptions about Adults

“Always see the potential that lies within every kid. We all have something inside of us, but if no one sees it, then we are less likely to harness that potential and use it. Adults should know we look up to them for advice and constructive criticism.”

—ASHLEY PRATTE, 17, MANCHESTER, 2006 NEW HAMPSHIRE HONOREE,
PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

The same philosophy that emphasizes the importance of publicizing youth accomplishments holds true when spinning perceptions about adults. A community might employ a first-class public relations plan for educating adults about the great things youth do. A majority of