

# **Working with the media**

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**Northshield Media Relations Deputy**

Whether planned or not, dealing with the media can be daunting.

While the media is not the enemy, they are not your friends. Some members are there because they are curious and have a genuine interest. Other members have been assigned the duty and might just think we are strange.

Also, some media outlets are interested only in sensational coverage rather than portraying the SCA accurately.

During this session I hope to give you the tools to be more comfortable and more prepared to work with the members of the media.

## **Unplanned contact**

*Scenario:* Your group is holding a meeting or practice in an area park when a reporter shows up unexpectedly. What do you do?

Remember the goal of any press contact is to present the SCA in a positive light.

- Introduce yourself. Hopefully, they will introduce themselves. If not, please ask them nicely who they are and what publication and/or media company they work for;
- Get their business card;
- Be polite and friendly. It is easier to create a positive image of the SCA and your group when you are positive, and;
- Avoid being hostile and confrontational.

Reporters are curious and if you are hostile and/or confrontational, they will wonder what you are hiding and will likely attempt to find out what it is.

Take advantage of the curiosity and introduce them our world.

## **Planned**

*Scenario:* You are the press liaison for an event and you are looking for press coverage and to invite the public for tours.

There are two ways to invite the public: a press release or a calendar announcement.

A press release will include more details than a calendar announcement and needs to be pre-approved, which is covered later in this handout.

Calendar announcements only include the who, what, where and when of the event. It does need to be pre-approved by kingdom Media Relations Deputy.

When creating a press release, please use the press release examples found on the SCA.org website (<http://sca.org/officers/media/private/>) to send to your local media outlets.

In my personal experience, small town newspapers will run the press releases as written.

Once your press release is done, please forward it to the event autocrats, the media relations deputy, the local seneschal, kingdom chronicler, and the kingdom seneschal for approval before releasing it to your selected media outlet.

The rule of thumb I use for press releases:

- one month prior to the event, send your press release in for approval.
- Three weeks (minimum), send your press release into the media outlet.

If you are just looking for press coverage, consider giving the press a personal invitation by calling or emailing. Please keep the same time frame in mind.

## **Invited press at the event**

Per SCA Corporate, media members are considered "guests" and are escorted by SCA representatives to answer questions and explain things. They will need to sign waivers but the fees are waived as long as we ensure they don't wander around alone at an event where our participants are entitled to their own privacy.

Be prepared.

Talk to the media member coming out to the event and let them know the best day and/or time to come out.

Know what activities are going on when the reporter or photographer is expected. Think about what activities will photograph well, think action and colorful.

Before the reporter/photographer arrives, plan who you want them to talk to, choose people who are knowledgeable and passionate. If possible, talk to the people you want to be interviewed and see if they are okay with talking to the press.

Try to pick people who represent the SCA in all types of activities. Keep in mind what impression you want to leave the reporter with at the end of the day when picking your interview subjects. If the people you selected are in their cups or are overly enthusiastic, please reconsider.

If the reporter wants to talk to someone that might not portray the SCA in the best light, please use subtle distraction to get them interested in someone or something else.

Things to keep in mind during any media contact is to keep the emphasis on the SCA being family-friendly.

When talking about fighting, remember to include the importance of safety and training  
Mention the educational component of the SCA.

Please avoid giving the perception the SCA is cliquish, exclusive or party animals by not including mention of households or the parties.

### **Broadcast media**

Per SCA Corporate policy, any coverage from national/high end media, including magazines, professional and student filmmakers & documentarians, and reality TV shows must be approved by the Kingdom Media Relations Deputy.

For requests that are not just news coverage, the Kingdom Media Relations Deputy may need to seek approval from SCA Corporate.

### **What you need to do after any media contact**

If you have any contact with the media, please make sure you report that contact to the Kingdom Media Relations Deputy.

### **Bonus information**

#### **Other ways to advertise your event to the public**

In addition to press releases, you can send event announcements to radio stations, newspapers, city website's or Facebook sites (please make sure the Social Media Deputy is aware of this). If you are doing a demo with other groups, see if they will post something on their social media or if they have event calendars.

### **Questions? Concerns?**

Please feel to contact me at [tsartemis@aol.com](mailto:tsartemis@aol.com). On Facebook as Tamsyn Seamarke or my cellphone at 612-695-6761.

If you are at an event and need a quicker response, please private message me on Facebook. Most of the time my cellphone lets me know when I have a message.