



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

Working With The Media On Behalf of YFU

The media can be a great tool in getting out YFU’s message. Cultivating a “gaggle” of friendly reporters is vital to maintaining YFU’s public profile in your local community. Sharing positive (and interesting) stories about students, families, and schools is highly recommended – especially if you can tie the story back into a larger context. [For example, contact local media and offer to connect them with an international student who held a fundraiser to help his/her hometown following a natural disaster, or a YES student when the Middle East is in the news.]

The most successful way to get positive media placement is by establishing relationships with the reporters and editors of your local publications/outlets. To cultivate professional media relationships, do your homework and find out who is writing about study abroad, exchange, community events, etc. Make an effort to reach out and introduce yourself. When you get to know someone personally it helps to establish trust and credibility. If possible find a mutual acquaintance who can introduce you to someone at the outlet. Prepare a brief, well-crafted email that introduces you, your proposed story and gives background about YFU. We know that cultural exchange opens minds and hearts, enables learning that transforms lives, and ultimately helps to make us citizens of one world. Share the stories of the families, students, volunteers and local community that reflect this. Articulate why the reporter should be interested in YFU and explain the relevance of our organization to their audience.

There are times when reporters pursue a negative media story and play ‘gotcha’ journalism. YFU has some of the highest safety standards in the industry, but situations can occur over the course of the year, so it’s important to be prepared. If approached by a reporter about a potentially negative story, courteously refer them to the YFU Spokesperson. Do not attempt to argue with them or explain details pertaining to a specific student/family situation, as YFU protects the privacy of the families and students in our community. Simply inform the reporter that the Spokesperson is the best person to contact. In the event the Spokesperson is unavailable, the inquiring reporter will be directed to an alternate person of contact.

Important tips for handling potentially negative media inquiries:

- In instances regarding any potentially negative incidents involving a student, immediately direct them to the Spokesperson.
- Never tell a reporter, “No comment” (using this response can make it seem as though you have something to hide) – just say in a friendly tone that you’d like to refer the reporter to YFU’s Spokesperson.
- The Spokesperson handles all policy related questions pertaining to YFU’s safety standards and qualifications.
- Even if you have established a relationship with a reporter, don’t assume that you’re speaking off the record. Presume everything you say is on the record.

Should you find yourself cornered regarding student safety, you may use the following and connect them with the YFU Spokesperson.

YFU’s top priority is (and always has been) the safety of the young people placed in our care.

YFU Spokesperson
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