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Holding a Media Event

(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)

A media event is an activity intended to generate news coverage. It can be a press conference, rally, direct action, stunt, etc. Most people think of the "news" as something that happens "out there" in the world. The corporate media generally feels like a one-way street, with information flowing from talking heads and experts to the passive viewer sitting in her living room watching TV. Organizing a media event puts the power to create news back into the hands of the people. As the saying goes, "If you don't like the news, go out and make your own!"

Hints

- Determine if your event is newsworthy. The more of the following characteristics it has, the more likely it will get coverage:
 - Novelty
 - Conflict
 - New data, symbol of a trend
 - Simplicity
 - Humor
 - Prominent figure involved
 - Action
 - Bright props and images
 - Local impact
 - Holidays, anniversaries.
- Build your media event—site, speakers, visuals—around your message and slogan.
- Make it fun. If you don't look like you want to be there, why should the press?
- Don't be afraid to employ stunts. Sexy and trendy events almost always take precedence over "serious" policy discussions with the media (unless maybe you're a super famous policy guru).
- Consider timing. Is your event competing with other things going on at the same time? If you want reporters to show up, it is best to stage an event on a Monday through Thursday, between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M.
- Find an effective location. Consider the following questions when choosing a location:
 1. Is the site convenient? Reporters are busy and won't travel far for an event.

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- 2.** Is your site too commonly used for media events? Try to find a unique location, if possible.
 - 3.** If your event is outdoors, do you have a backup location? A little rain or bad weather won't ruin an event, but severe conditions will. Also consider if it is possible to postpone it if the weather is very bad.
 - 4.** Do you need a permit? Check with the local police department.
- Arrange to have photographers and videographers take pictures of your event.
 - Display a large banner or sign with your organization's logo.
 - The event should last 15 to 45 minutes.
 - Distribute information about your issue and organization at the event.
 - Remember equipment. Will you need a megaphone, podium, or portable microphone?
 - Have spokespersons ready to be interviewed.
 - Find out which reporters attended the event by circulating a media sign-in sheet. Follow up with the no-shows with a phone call and by faxing or emailing a press release.