

## READY, SET, GO! AUGUST IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER...

BY TONI BRISTOL

As our COVD president, Dr. Carol Scott said in her article, it is time to start preparing for our annual August is National Children's Vision and Learning Month campaign. We have some exciting things planned for this year.

To make sure you are able to move into action as soon as the materials are released there are some steps you can take now:

1. Assign someone on your staff to be in charge of getting the press release out as soon as it is received. Ideally this person would also complete steps 2 through 11.
2. Make a list of all the newspapers in your immediate community and surrounding areas.
3. Get a copy of each of these papers.
4. Skim over each paper (especially the human interest, education and health sections) to find reporters who are writing articles similar to the stories you hear in your practice. For example: A story about a child who was struggling with some physical handicap and was helped by a local doctor; or, a student who was failing and is now succeeding because of vision therapy. When you find a story that is inspiring, write a note to the reporter thanking him/her for writing such an inspiring piece. Do not propose a story at this point. There will be time to follow-up later.
5. Make a list of these reporters. When you can't find a specific reporter that stands out, make a list of the editors AND their FAX numbers.
6. Make a list of all local TV and radio stations; including, if possible, their producers and FAX numbers.
7. Local reporters often prefer to write their own story interviewing local

people. Reporters also work on their own time schedule. There are times when you may have less than 24 hours to make yourself and some patients available for an interview. So it is helpful if you can put together a list of patients who would be willing to talk with the press and have their child featured in a TV news spot or in the local paper. Keep this list handy and updated so you can quickly find someone to be at your office at a moment's notice.

8. Be sure to download COVD's public information kit from the website and have it ready to give to the reporter or editor along with the press release. **Even if you have downloaded the kit before, be sure to download the current version.**
9. Most importantly, when the press release arrives you need to ACT right away and FAX it to everyone on your list.
10. Follow-up with a call to the editors, producers and reporters, and ask "Did you get the materials I sent you?" Expect them to say they didn't see it or receive it and plan on re-sending it. Ask them if they prefer the release be sent by FAX or e-mail, and send it the preferred way. Follow-up again either later that day or the next day.
11. If they want to put a local spin on the story, you can suggest a patient or two and their parents. Mention that their experiences were similar to those described in the press release.

In addition, your state coordinator will be given materials to send to your Governor to request a proclamation. You can also submit the same

materials to your Mayor. The value of a proclamation is it gives you another reason to contact your local press. If you need any additional help on this please contact the COVD office.

There is a lot more that can be done to fully take advantage of this observance. The goal for this article is to get you started. If you aren't sure what else to do or have any questions about implementing these suggestions, please feel free to email me at [ToniBristol@ExpansionConsultants.com](mailto:ToniBristol@ExpansionConsultants.com). Also, if you are not on the COVD email blast list, please email the COVD office immediately at [info@covd.org](mailto:info@covd.org) and make sure you are on the list, as the press release and other materials will be sent via email.

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