



## North Carolina Urban Forest Council Tree Board Press Kit

### Contacting the Media

Our media world has changed dramatically in the past 5 years. Newsrooms are shrinking and many news outlets are struggling to even survive. Keep this in mind when you are pitching your story. You want this story to be as complete and intriguing as possible.

**WHO:** You want to pitch your story idea to the best person. To find the contact information for your local news outlets go to their website and scroll down to the very bottom of the page where they will often have a “Contact us” link and then look for staff or department lists. Once you find specific reporters and editors/producers, look for these titles:

- Newspapers - News Desk Editor, Lifestyle reporters, Features reporters, Community reporters
- TV - Producers
- Radio - Producers

Keep it local! You only need to pitch your story to local TV, newspaper and radio outlets. Statewide media outlets will not pick up your story.

**WHAT:** The modern newsroom is a tough beast. Remember that reporters have to be able to pitch your story to their editor to get it covered for the day. It’s not enough to get the reporter excited - you have to give them the tools to sell it in to their editor.

Here are some sure tips to make your news pitch the most effective:

1. **Share all the details** - A press release is not a time for a big reveal or keeping secrets. Lay it all out there.
2. **Prioritize important information** - Use an inverted pyramid style of sharing information - get all the important information up front and leave small details for the bottom.
3. **Make it News Worthy** - Reporters need a hook to pitch this story to their editors to get coverage. Help them out by pointing out what makes this a “must-cover story.” If you can’t add at least one of these features to your press release, it probably will not get picked up:
  - a. Important people - i.e. Mayors, prominent business people, etc. will be planting the trees.
  - b. Timeliness - i.e. is this a planting in a controversial area in town? Is there a national story that you can localize the impact to your community?
  - c. Unique story - i.e. Will all your volunteers be ex-military or disabled? Will you be planting rare trees?
  - d. Impact - i.e. will there be an impressive amount of trees planted? Will this beautify an eyesore in town?
4. **Make it visual** - If the story doesn’t have enough of a news hook, they might just send out a photographer to get a picture. Make sure to describe the type of photos and video they will be able to capture at your event.



**WHEN:** Timing of your news pitch is finicky. It highly depends on the outlet:

- Monthly magazines 4-6 months before your event
- Weekly newspapers 2-3 weeks before your event
- TV News a week before your event
- Radio 2-3 days before your event
- Daily newspapers 2-3 days before your event

Pitching your story is all about the follow-up:

- Following the time schedule above, email your story to the reporter you have selected.
- Follow-up that email 2 days later with an innocent statement of "I hope we'll be able to work on this story together." This email is usually gold - you will get the most response off this email. The reporter should let you know if they will be sending out a team to the event.
- The day before the event, call all the reporters on your list that have not responded and ask if they will be attending the event.
- Day of the event, call all the reporters who confirmed they are coming to share final details.
- A few hours after the event, send all reporters on your list a post-event wrap-up (even if they didn't attend the event) with brief details and photos/video.

**HOW:** Now use this Press Release Shell to pitch your story!



## Press Release Shell

Having a press release shell handy is invaluable for quick media outreach. Drop some details into this press release shell to announce tree planting events to the media.

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### For Immediate Release

#### Contact:

[Contact Name, Title]  
[Contact Phone]  
[Contact email address]

### Tree Planting Project Brings [Number] New Trees to [Location or Neighborhood]

[City], North Carolina – [News worthy lead using one of the highlights above - i.e. “Mayor Johnston will be planting 20 trees at corner of Walnut and Spruce to beautify Belletown.” OR “Over 100 volunteers will pick up their shovels to plant 25 trees to add shade and a bit of green to Main Street.”]

[Tree Board] is planting [number] trees in [neighborhood or city] that will provide shade, beauty and environmental to the community.

#### Event Details:

[Tree Board Name] Tree Planting  
[Date], [Time]  
[Location Address]  
[Number and types of trees being planted]  
[Number of volunteers]

#### Photo and Video Opportunities:

[Outline what type of visuals they can get for the story - i.e. Kids planting trees, Dog digging holes, Veterans shoveling dirt]  
[Quote from director of Tree Board organization about value of this tree planting to their community]  
[Paragraph about your Tree Board using the key messages]  
“INSERT QUOTE HERE,” said [Tree Board Leadership].  
This project is sponsored by [list local and statewide sponsors].

**About [Tree Board Name]:** [Share your mission statement and website.]

#### Media Resources:

- Read about economic benefits of trees to their community: <http://www.arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm>
- Calculate tree benefits with this beta tree benefit calculator: <http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator/mapselect.cfm>

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## Creating Your Own Buzz on Social Media

Don't wait for the media to pick up your story, make a little noise on your own through social media. Make sure to get the word out about tree plantings via your social media channels - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.

**You do not have to create a social media account to fulfill this request for this grant. Only use these tools if they are useful for your organization.**

If you have a blog or a website for your organization, feel free to use the press release shell and modify it for these platforms.

Here is some easy copy-and-paste ready content. You do not have to use these word for word, please be creative:

### Facebook

- "Like" this update if you love trees! Then, check out these photos from the Tree Board's tree planting event [date] at [neighborhood or location] in [city]. [Attach a photo or link to Facebook album]
- We are thrilled to receive a grant from NC Urban Forest Council's Tree Board program to plant beautiful young trees at [neighborhood or location] in [city]! Read about this wonderful program: <http://www.ncufc.org/tree-legacy.php>
- Have you ever thought about how hard trees work to keep our community healthy and beautiful? We received a Tree Board grant to plant young trees at [neighborhood or location] that will help control air pollution, recycle water, prevent soil erosion and more in our community. Want to help plant these gorgeous trees? Email us at [email address]!
- "Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago," said Warren Buffet. We're investing in our community's future beauty and health by plant trees at [neighborhood or location] in [city] with support from the Tree Board: <http://www.ncufc.org/tree-legacy.php>

### Twitter

- We received a Tree Board grant to plant trees in [neighborhood or location]! Check out these photos: [link to tree planting photos]
- Love trees? You'll be glad to learn about the new trees we planted in [neighborhood or location] with our Tree Board grant!
- Tree planting was so much fun! Learn more about the Tree Board and how trees benefit our community: <http://bit.ly/WJMhwM>
- Trees are important for the health and beauty of our community. We're excited to plant the Tree Board trees! <http://bit.ly/WJMhwM>

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