

## TIPS FOR TALKING TO THE MEDIA

*By Mika Moulton and Gayl Murphy*

**Be Available:** Journalists work with strict deadlines and editorial requirements, and it's not uncommon for a story's deadline to be pushed forward by an editor. To secure the interview, you will need to work with the journalist's scheduling needs. If a journalist can't get in touch with you easily, they will move on to the next opportunity. You want/need your missing loved one's story out there!

**Tell Your Story:** Be concise. Don't go into great detail. You only have about 1 minute to make an impact. It is helpful to speak in short sentences. Sentences with a single one point in them are best.

**Be Prepared:** Make sure you have at least 3 main points you want to get across. Be honest and straightforward.

**Be Ready for the Questions you know will come:** You can't predict the questions but you know what type of questions you will be asked. Be sure you are ready.

Questions you don't know the answer to: Response: "Interesting question. Here's what I can tell you..." and then share what you know.

Don't speculate – stick to the facts

Don't bad-mouth the local law enforcement or media.

**The question you've already answered:** Sometimes reporters don't get the answer they want, so they'll ask the same thing – just differently. Be sure to stick to your message and don't get exasperated. Just politely answer the question the same way you did last time. (If your tone gets snippy, the reporter can use that against you.)

**Project Confidence:** Make eye contact with the interviewer and project credibility.

**Relax and take your time.** Speak in a concise but conversational style that conveys your knowledge. Pause when needed to gather your thoughts. Let the interviewer finish each question before responding. Take a deep breath and think before you speak. Ask for clarification if you do not fully understand a question. Remember that it's okay to ask the journalist questions or pause before you answer.

**Provide Visuals:** Television dominates the news. Bring clear, large photos of your missing loved one.

**When the story runs, consider following up with a brief note thanking them and letting them know you're available for future inquiries.**

**Physical Appearance:** Dress appropriately. Do not wear large dangly jewelry. Do not wear low cut tops or sleeveless tops. Blue looks good on everyone on TV. Do not wear stripes or polka dots. Business clothes are best. Make sure your clothes are spot free. High Def shows everything now. If you wear dark colors, check and brush off your shoulders before the camera goes on. Be sure your hair is not in your face. Women – blend makeup if you wear it and use neutral colors.

**Consider Your Posture.** Sit up straight, don't slouch. Remember the BBC rule – bottom in back of chair. Leaning slightly forward means you are interested and serious about the need to find your child.