

APPENDIX 7

CRIME STOPPERS AND THE MEDIA

by Cal Millar

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Crime Stoppers began as an effort to utilize the media to help solve a brutal slaying during a robbery of a university student who was working part-time as a gas station clerk. Although progressive detectives have always considered the media as a useful investigative tool, the introduction of a reenactment and a reward by Greg MacAleese gave birth to a unique system in the battle against crime. MacAleese, who worked as a newspaper writer before turning his talents to law enforcement, recognized the power of the media and knew it could play a vital part in assisting police.

However, what began as a simple exercise to solve the 1976 murder of Michael Carmen at the gas station in Albuquerque, New Mexico developed into an international crime detection program responsible for the arrests of thousands of people in cases of murder, robbery, assault, burglary, fraud, rape and many other felonies. Crime Stoppers has also led to the recovery of billions of dollars in stolen property and illicit drugs.

The program has succeeded because of a unique blend of cooperation involving the police, the public and the media. Each group has an equal share in the three-way partnership and the program cannot operate without full participation. The media's principal role is to serve as a link between the police and the public. Media coverage builds public support and lends credibility to the concept.

Regular coverage in newspapers, on radio and on television stresses the need for citizen involvement in fighting crime. The coverage also reminds potential informants that a system exists to provide police with information about criminal activity and the possibility of a cash reward when arrests are made.

Involving the Media in a New Program

Although the media is a vital component of Crime Stoppers one cannot assume newspaper publishers or owners of broadcast outlets will automatically join a new program. Once the nucleus of a Crime Stoppers board has been established in a community those representatives must start working immediately to cultivate the local media. There is a great deal of confusion as to who Crime Stoppers should be targeting when it comes to the media. Obviously in the formation stage, members of the Crime Stoppers steering committee should be making contact with the decision makers at the various media outlets. At local newspapers discussion should take place with the publisher and at broadcasting stations, they should be talking to the owner or general managers.(This is not a time to be dealing with the working press, unless you wish to invite specific individuals to become members of the Crime Stoppers board.)

The steering committee will have to adopt a strategy to demonstrate the importance of having involvement from the community's newspapers, as well as radio and television

stations. Crime Stoppers should be offered simultaneously to all media outlets to avoid complaints of favoritism. The founding board, the chief law enforcement officer and the coordinator assigned to develop Crime Stoppers in the community should invite all media executives to a meeting to discuss tentative plans. This will serve to introduce the concept privately and give key media representatives the opportunity to determine how they want to be involved. The importance of a professional presentation cannot be stressed enough. Arrange the meeting at a neutral location, possibly at a conference facility in a local hotel where lunch can be served. Make sure the room is equipped with the proper video apparatus if promotional tapes or Crime of the Week reenactments are to be shown, It may also be useful to have an overhead projector to display various newspaper columns and logos from a variety of programs.

Each guest should be provided with an information package containing written material detailing what is covered during the verbal presentation. Be prepared for tough questions and also be prepared to ask the news executives for their personal endorsement of the program and a commitment that they'll be making space for Crime Stoppers within their media.

Although a commitment is important, don't be surprised if they ask for time. They will probably have to consult with senior staff members and others, including those in editorial and news departments, to make sure such involvement will not conflict with existing plans and budgets. While asking for a commitment make sure they are aware of the need for promotional stories as Crime Stoppers is being developed in the community. You should also suggest that they could help promote Crime Stoppers in its formative stages by informing the public of your plans. This is a legitimate news story. It is likely that after this initial meeting with publishers and owners you will start receiving calls for interviews from street level reporters. At this stage you will be faced with selling Crime Stoppers to media representatives who will be more sceptical than favourable. However, with the myriad statistics that have unfolded since Crime Stoppers began, the job of selling the concept to the media has been greatly enhanced.

You may also be invited to meetings with editors and news directors to detail for them how Crime Stoppers works. Fully explain the program, but no attempt should be made to force the media to accept a specific format. You should also not seek assurances the Crime of the Week columns will appear word-for-word as released by the Crime Stoppers coordinator. The Crime of the Week is nothing more than a news release and will undergo whatever editing and rewriting that is deemed necessary. The steering committee and coordinator should be aware that in many communities certain mistrust may have developed between the various police agencies and the media through the years, and this barrier cannot be broken down overnight. However, history has shown that Crime Stoppers has helped develop more cooperative attitudes between the media and police. Improved relationships have resulted in the media projecting a more positive image of police in the community.

When more than one media outlet agrees to join Crime Stoppers, each will attempt to develop a format to give the appearance the program is exclusive to the publication or broadcast station. Newspapers may design their own logos to promote Crime Stoppers columns and items; radio stations could record unique themes, and television might produce elaborate introductions for the Crime of the Week. In their own way each media outlet is trying to convey a message to the public that their medium will give the best portrayal of Crime Stoppers. This is healthy competition and no attempt should be made to stifle the creativity of local media outlets in their attempt to sell Crime Stoppers as a product to the community.

During the initial meeting with various media representatives give examples of how various outlets throughout North America handle Crime Stoppers material. They should be shown logos and videotapes of crime reenactments. This will help convince media executives the concept is a viable crime fighting tool which is utilized in hundreds of communities. Consideration should be given to inviting an editor or news director from a community currently involved in Crime Stoppers to help explain the concept. Founding board members will also find it advantageous to bring in a coordinator or experienced board member in an effort to acquaint the local media with Crime Stoppers. The program cannot be oversold when trying to attract media involvement. After the initial introduction to Crime Stoppers, arrangements should be made for private meetings with newspaper publishers and broadcast executives who have not committed support. Should they have any concerns, they may be more willing to discuss them in the privacy of their offices than in an open forum while you are selling the program.

Some news executives have voiced concern that support of Crime Stoppers is nothing more than getting into bed with the police. Since Crime Stoppers is a community program operated by a citizen board with the aim of solving crime in a community, one can immediately prove an arms-length relationship with the police. Rather than getting into bed with the police, the news organization would be joining with residents of the community to guarantee the streets remain safe for everyone. At the same time, it can be shown that Crime Stoppers is nothing more than a follow-up report on unsolved crime. The news outlet is being asked to do nothing other than report on a crime and appeal for people to help get it solved.

Getting the Media Involved

Crime Stoppers with the Crime of the Week reenactment is ideal for television, but many programs succeed with radio and newspapers. Medium to large communities are encouraged to obtain television involvement since there is tremendous impact when a real-life crime is brought via videotape to the living rooms of the community. It is very dramatic. Most people will be aware of the crime, but they have no idea how it was committed or what the victims went through. Television will serve to promote the Crime Stoppers concept and get the public involved. At the same time the program will have a beneficial effect for television stations carrying the Crime of the Week. Not only will the

public recognize stations that have joined the fight to reduce crime, but ratings will increase as people tune in to see which unsolved case is being highlighted.

Although carrying a reenactment every week is beneficial to the station, it will also require a strong commitment in both time and money. The station will be required to videotape on location and to guarantee the segment will be run in regularly scheduled spots each week. The most ideal time slot will be in local newscasts since such shows have the highest audiences and the position will add to the credibility of Crime Stoppers. Locating the Crime of the Week in local newscasts achieves three positive aspects. Ensuring attentive audiences since viewers are more likely to watch the Crime of the Week along with other news stories, instead of being played as public service spots in usually isolated and low-rated time slots. Ensuring a peak audience period when people tune in at news time to watch what has happened in the community. Providing legitimacy or a blessing of Crime Stoppers by the television news department and executives of the station.

Although television stations will attempt to get an exclusive agreement to carry Crime Stoppers, there are many communities where outlets have agreed to cooperate in the interest of fighting crime. In some cases a station produces the Crime of the Week and makes tapes available to other television broadcasters. In other centres a station provides raw videotape and other stations edit the material to suit their requirements. (Communities utilizing this concept have noticed quite a competition among television stations to see which outlet can produce the best Crime of the Week package.) Although not recommended because of time constraints, some Crime Stoppers units work separately with competing television stations to produce independent reenactments of the same crime.

The pooling system is the best approach and often results in extra promotion from television outlets as they attempt to sell their station as the place to watch Crime Stoppers. Although some television stations make a remarkably strong commitment to Crime Stoppers, exclusivity does not always guarantee they will promote the program both on the screen and through other forms of advertising. If the board is forced into making an exclusive arrangement for the reenactment with one station, the Crime of the Week news release must be distributed to all media outlets. This will avoid charges that the police, as public service employees, are showing favouritism to one television station and will also ensure the widest possible coverage for the Crime of the Week.

Arrangements should also be made to allow other television stations to interview the coordinator or investigator regarding the Crime of the Week, or give an opportunity for a reporter from a competing outlet to do a stand up report or walk through at the crime scene. Stations deciding not to carry crime reenactments will appreciate the opportunity to provide coverage of the Crime of the Week for their viewers and will likely give promotion to other Crime Stoppers events.

Consideration should be given to sharing videotapes of the reenactment produced by the commercial television outlet with the community's cable stations. This will allow the tape to be broadcast frequently during the entire week. Some arrangements should be made with the cable facility to give credit to the commercial station that produced the Crime of the Week reenactment. If your community is served only by a cable channel, you are encouraged to make use of whatever facilities the outlet can provide. Most cable stations operate on extremely low budgets and are not in a position to provide on-location reenactment productions, but they can give studio time for the coordinator to make on-camera television appeals. Cable stations are also valuable in providing assistance with promotion for the Crime Stoppers organization and various fundraising activities such as auctions or jail and bail telethons.

Consideration might also be given to having the local community college and the school's drama or theatre program produce the Crime of the Week as a regular project that can be part of their term mark.

If the Crime Stoppers program uses a police video unit to produce the Crime of the Week, that should be distributed to all news outlets. The production of video tape is nothing more than turning the information on the Crime of the Week into an electronic news release. Every precaution should be taken to avoid criticism by the media of how the Crime Stoppers program operates.

Although less dramatic, newspapers provide the most extensive coverage for various Crime Stoppers programs. They have the space in news columns and apart from the Crime of the Week produce reams of stories documenting the activities and successes of local programs. It is important to make sure the media, especially newspapers, are immediately aware of incidents involving Crime Stoppers. News is an extremely perishable commodity and aptly defined in the saying: Today's headline is tomorrow's history. Nothing will alienate an editor faster than seeing a news item on television which wasn't made available to meet his paper's deadline. Because television has such a high profile in many Crime Stoppers programs, the coordinator sometimes forgets to share an item of interest with all news outlets. It should be remembered that newspapers have the space to devote to Crime Stoppers and are in a position to provide readers with details that the electronic media do not have time to include.

There is also a need for photographs and coordinators should be aware that when they are calling out television cameras to record a giant drug seizure or a significant arrest, the photographers from the newspapers should also be invited. The news media is an equal partner in the Crime Stoppers concept and all segments should share the coverage. Coordinators should be reminded to use extreme caution when alerting the media to an arrest or other event stemming from a Crime Stoppers tip. Nothing should be done to jeopardize the identity of a caller. The media should be given no information that in any way would allow someone to guess who may have called the Crime Stoppers

program. Protecting the identity of the informant is paramount and must be considered in all decisions.

Newspapers should make a commitment to carry the Crime of the Week on a specific page and emblazoned with a logo. If the editor cannot designate a page, the paper should at least guarantee that the column will be in the same section and, if possible, a pointer on page one telling readers where to find the Crime of the Week. Writers should be reminded to routinely use the Crime Stoppers tip line number in stories detailing unsolved criminal activity. Editors should be encouraged to provide feature coverage for the program, including profiles on board members, how Crime Stoppers is affecting the local crime rate, and interviews with senior police officials and other municipal executives on the value of the program. Any positive publicity is obviously good for Crime Stoppers.

The onus is on the board and the coordinator to keep the media informed. Never assume news outlets are aware of what your organization is doing. Always assign a board member or the coordinator to contact the media of a newsworthy activity and make sure invitations to cover events are followed up with reminders. This doesn't mean the media will provide coverage of all the happenings of your Crime Stoppers program, but at least they'll have a chance to decide if one warrants coverage. There's no way you'll get coverage if you don't tell the media what your program is doing.

At the same time make sure you know who will be speaking for the Crime Stoppers program. The coordinator, because of his public service position, has to respond to media questions, but there should also be a board representative appointed to handle media inquiries. It is important to have only one board member assigned to this position to insure the media does not get a variety of answers to questions. This helps protect the integrity of Crime Stoppers. If someone on the board, other than the designated spokesperson, receives a call from the media he/she should direct the reporter to the person assigned to handle inquiries. The reporter should not, in this case, be directed to the coordinator since the media representative has already come to the board for an answer.

Since most boards do not have the luxury of having a professional public relations person to handle media inquiries, your spokesman will have to be guided simply by common sense. The media is a full partner of Crime Stoppers, and there is no need to consider its representatives as the enemy. Answer all questions truthfully and in a forthright manner. If a mistake has been made, just admit it. Never be evasive, but if you are not in a position to answer a question, say so and give an explanation. Even when dealing with a negative situation make sure to present some positive facts about the program.

When identifying the print media in a community, one should not only consider the daily newspapers, but should include weekly publications, television magazines, trade papers, house organs, shopper advertising flyers, and most important, publications from the ethnic press. Prepare a mailing list and make sure all these publications receive the program's

news releases. All publications are put out for one purpose and that is to be read. You will definitely increase your audience through these newspapers and magazines. In smaller communities, consideration should be given to distributing material through church bulletins and other neighbourhood or service publications, Utilize every possible method of reaching citizens with a message about Crime Stoppers. News releases should be written in a style that can be printed by smaller publications without too much editing. You can also be almost certainly guaranteed that any feature items will be published in community and weekly newspapers and smaller publications.

Local radio is probably the most seldom used outlet for Crime Stoppers, but can be one of the most effective. It has the ability of carrying messages into area homes 24 hours a day. Not only can radio stations broadcast the Crime of the Week on a regular basis over a seven-day period, but they can also broadcast public service announcements to help build the profile of the local Crime Stoppers group and promote fundraising. The coordinator can be somewhat creative in coming up with novel approaches for the broadcast of the weekly crime appeal, especially if there are several stations in the local area. Various radio stations would welcome somewhat different formats that would give the appearance they are carrying Crime Stoppers on an exclusive basis. Like other media outlets, radio stations are also competitive and work hard to create special images to attract audiences. The advantage of utilizing as many radio stations as possible is that each outlet usually has a distinctive audience, quite often based on age. For example middle of the road stations attract a more adult audience while rock radio caters to the teenaged crowd. The aim of Crime Stoppers is to get the message out to everyone, so no opportunity can be overlooked.

Rather than reading a prepared Crime of the Week script over the airwaves of a music station, the coordinator could come on live with the announcer and do some kibitzing while making the appeal. There is also the opportunity to reach audiences at various hours by putting the Crime of the Week on tape for use whenever they have a free spot. Board members and coordinators should be encouraged to appear on local talk shows and public service broadcasts to help inform the community about the program.

Through the years, various Crime Stoppers programs have received millions of dollars worth of free publicity from the traditional media outlets. It cannot be stressed enough that the media are partners in Crime Stoppers and have shown a willingness to fully cooperate in assisting this crime-fighting concept.

There are many other forms of media within a community and the boards public relations committee should have the task of identifying what's available and how the media can be used to assist the program. Some of the common facilities are:

Billboards - Outdoor advertising firms offer free space when available to charitable and service organizations. Companies operating billboards or bench and bus shelter ads will

often provide space and free or at cost posters, or will make arrangements to have the sponsored by a company on behalf of a charitable organization.

Grocery Bags - Many food chain stores carry public service messages on the paper or plastic bags given to customers at checkout counters. Contact the local store managers to make arrangements to print Crime Stoppers messages on bags.

Newspaper Ads - Many local companies will sponsor an advertisement for a charitable organization or will carry a promotion about the group as part of their own ad. Newspapers will sometimes be willing to prepare a supplement in the paper promoting a local organization. This publication which is usually distributed as part of the daily newspaper will contain stories about the group and a series of ads which are sold by the paper's advertising staff. This is an excellent method of promoting a special event such as an auction or golf tournament when publicity is vital. Discuss the idea with the newspaper's advertising manager.

Get an Ear - This may sound strange, but it's a term familiar to newspaper publishers. An ear is a little box in the top corner of a newspaper's front page. Many publications use this spot to promote organizations. Talk to your newspapers and see if they'll put Crime Stoppers and the tip line number in this spot on a regular basis.

Street Banners - There's nothing like having your message visible to everyone driving along main street. Many municipal councils will allow non-profit organizations to put up signs for special occasions to promote the group or an event. It's free space and obviously extremely visible.

Notice Boards - Have a variety of promotional items from posters to index size cards which can be put up on anything from store windows to bulletin boards. It's an idea to have the cards printed on both sides so they can be read from either direction if they're on a window. Many printers will produce material at no cost if they can include their name on the product.

Postage Meters - Many companies will allow a Crime Stoppers message or logo on outgoing mail. This form of advertising goes on the letter as it passes through the postage meter. Since most large firms have extremely high volumes of mail your program's message will be getting wide distribution. The local police department should be first on your list to promote Crime Stoppers with a postage meter message.

Bumper Stickers - This form of advertising is an excellent method for Crime Stoppers to get the message out across the community. They are like travelling billboards and can be affixed to police and other municipal vehicles as well as being distributed to local citizens and taxis. The message can also be in languages that may be common to your area to help promote Crime Stoppers to the ethnic community. A supply of bumper stickers can

be donated by a local company or prepared without cost by a printer. Make sure the stickers are waterproof and properly laminated to stand up outdoors.

Crime of the Week

The Crime of the Week is the heart of Crime Stoppers and must be selected with care. It is almost always an unsolved case where investigators have reached a dead end. Most police departments have many unsolved cases and can provide a variety of different crimes for the audience. This is important since a steady diet of the same type of crime will likely reduce public interest in the Crime Stoppers program.

In selecting the Crime of the Week, especially when starting a program, the coordinator should select crimes where people are involved rather than where a business is the victim. The audience will be more sympathetic when you create the idea Crime Stoppers is helping people rather than solving business crimes. Don't show a lot of burglaries of businesses or even armed robberies unless they are done from the victim's point of view. In order to perpetuate public support of the program it will be best to continue being victim sensitive in every Crime of the Week. Also, avoid running a series of crimes committed by individuals from the same minority group that could create an erroneous impression of bias.

It is the responsibility of the police department to decide the Crime of the Week. In some cases the coordinator determines the crime, while some communities have set up a selection committee comprised of commanders from various police divisions. The committee system is the best approach and removes the pressure from the coordinator in finding a suitable crime.

Reenactments can promote crime prevention, such as showing a recent sex attack to discourage a rapist and warn women to be careful, or to alert people about residential break-ins at Christmas. However, when selecting a crime try to keep in mind difficulties that could be encountered trying to stage the event. Most important, before any steps are taken, the coordinator must obtain permission of the victim or the next of kin if the case involves a homicide or fatal hit-and-run accident. Failure to contact victims and obtain permission can result in some extremely adverse publicity for the Crime Stoppers program. Imagine the effect if a rape victim or businessman publicly complains that they were shocked to see their crime reenacted by Crime Stoppers without their permission. If permission cannot be obtained, the best possible advice is to select another crime. It is also imperative to receive permission of the owner of any property where the reenactment will be videotaped.

Crimes should be selected a couple of weeks in advance to make all arrangements and to give the television station ample production time. Usually the reenactment is staged between five to seven days before the actual broadcast date. To avoid problems in case the crime is solved prior to airing, it is recommended to have a back-up Crime of the

Week, possibly a generic case regarding break-ins or drug related crimes. All Crimes of the Week should end with information about Crime Stoppers, including an assurance of anonymity, the offer of a reward and the telephone number. The tag line might read: Crime Stoppers is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 this week for information leading to an arrest of a suspect responsible for this murder. Call Crime Stoppers at 222-8477. . . . That's 222-TIPS. Remember, you don't have to give your name or testify in court. Crime Stoppers will also pay for information about any other serious crime. Our number again, 222-8477.

A one-week time limit to pick up the reward has been adopted by some programs to put pressure on people to call in immediately. Without a time limit, individuals with information about a serious crime might feel they have money in the bank that can be drawn at any time. The seven-day deadline makes the value of the information perishable. Several major crimes have been cleared from tips received late on the seventh day.

Police department personnel should personally deliver Crime of the Week news releases to all media outlets to guarantee deadlines are not missed. Make sure the release time is clearly indicated.

Some communities allow the newspapers to run the Crime of the Week a day before it is aired on television. This system gives the newspapers a competitive edge, but for the advantage they are asked to inform readers in the Crime of the Week column when the reenactment will be broadcast on the local television station. The newspaper appreciates the opportunity to be first and the television station enjoys the extra publicity.

The key to Crime Stoppers public relations is to influence everyone who has interest in a program. Apart from the general media and the public, a special effort should be made for the education of police officers, prosecutors and judges who are directly affected by the program. Despite the efforts of the three identified partners, Crime Stoppers will not succeed without the cooperation of individuals such as those identified above in the justice system. Prepare an information package and organize training sessions or seminars to fully acquaint local law enforcement members and people in the judiciary.

Police officers, and in particular investigators, must appreciate how Crime Stoppers works and what it can accomplish for them. It is imperative they understand the identity of tipsters is not available and that information received through Crime Stoppers is nothing more than raw intelligence. In most cases the tipster will have provided the investigator with a target and it is the responsibility of that officer to come up with evidence to make an arrest. In order to protect the integrity of the program, investigators must be responsible for developing evidence to obtain a search warrant or to make an arrest.

Information from a Crime Stoppers tipster cannot be used as evidence so the investigator must locate witnesses and evidence to provide corroboration in court proceedings.

Call takers should not transfer a tipster to an investigator and those responsible for probing a case should never attempt to learn the identity of anyone who contacts the Crime Stoppers program.

Selling Crime Stoppers to police officers in the lower ranks might be difficult before a program is off the ground, but it is important to have their cooperation. A training precis can be developed for in-service training sessions and individual officers could be invited to attend board meetings. The coordinator could also spend time visiting various precincts and divisions to discuss the program with police officers, or they could be shown videotapes that have already been produced which explain the Crime Stoppers concept. More important, however, is the direct experience where officers receive information from Crime Stoppers that allows them to make an arrest.

The chief law enforcement officer must be fully cognizant of how Crime Stoppers operates and publicly announce his commitment to the program. The chief's commitment must be communicated to those under his command and individual officers should make it clear they share the same dedication. In reaching this understanding, many of the potential internal problems will be eliminated before they can occur. Once the program is operational, it is essential the coordinator have direct access to the department's chief to keep him informed on the progress and success of Crime Stoppers. The chief should also be invited to participate in all public functions involving Crime Stoppers. This will reinforce to the community that the police department is an equal partner in Crime Stoppers.

It is important that the police chief maintain an open door policy with the board of directors to be available to discuss any matters that might arise. Cooperation among all partners is vital to the success of Crime Stoppers.

The board's public relations committee should develop a strategy to approach local prosecutors and judges to acquaint them with the Crime Stoppers concept and to answer any questions. It will obviously be beneficial to the program if these individuals know how Crime Stoppers works.

To ensure cooperation between your program and other law enforcement agencies in the same or adjoining jurisdictions, a courtesy call should be paid to the chief executive of each agency even though it may not be directly participating at the time. These agencies should also include the local offices of federal and state investigative units such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service and the State Police. (In Canada it would include the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada Customs and any provincial law enforcement agency.) The resources of Crime Stoppers should be offered to these agencies and an invitation extended to use the Crime of the Week appeal in the media if they should have a major unsolved case. In doing so, you will create a sense of good will between Crime Stoppers and the neighbouring law enforcement units as well as opening the doors to their offices for both aid and assistance

to the program.

Crime of the Week

The Crime of the Week reenactment will offer a challenge to the coordinator and the television station. This form of appeal is an extremely important component to the Crime Stoppers concept and effort must be made to present a factual, but also polished presentation of the unsolved crime to the public.

However, apart from running reenactments, the television outlet should also be encouraged to produce public service announcements, a documentary on the local Crime Stoppers program, follow-up stories when cases are cleared, along with updates or progress reports on the successes, public relations efforts and fundraising projects. Dealing specifically with the reenactment, the program will achieve the best production results if the station assigns the same personnel to Crime Stoppers projects. If the station cannot supply the same camera crew ask for the same producer to help ease production problems. To be effective, the Crime of the Week reenactment should be documented as closely as possible to detailing the incident, including the sequence of events, the dialogue and the action. The closer the portrayal of the crime in both accuracy and mood will create a better possibility of solving the crime.

The purpose of the reenactment is to help trigger a response from someone who may have information about the crime. The appeal is being made to people who, in some cases may not have even known a crime was being committed. Therefore, it is important to make the video both legitimate and realistic. Cases have been cleared by a witness who learned through a Crime Stoppers appeal that the fight he saw was really a mugging, or the college kids horsing around was in reality a rape.

In preparing a script for the reenactment, the coordinator should review copies of the occurrence report and discuss the crime with the investigators to get additional details. If possible, it is best to share the information with the television producer who can then accurately plan the shots that will be needed in the reenactment. **SPECIAL NOTE:** If the proposed Crime of the Week will run longer than the ideal 60 to 90 seconds, or if graphic sexual or violent scenes are required, the coordinator should clear the script with the station manager prior to the taping.

A complicated crime with multiple suspects and various locations may require more television time, but such length may not fit with the station's broadcast format. Also, the station may insist on warning people with a disclaimer reading Viewer Discretion if reenactments contain sexual or violent situations. The coordinator should discuss these concerns with the station's manager, executive producer or news director for guidelines to help meet the prevailing community standards. Should a graphic portrayal be needed to help resolve a crime, the coordinator should be prepared to explain why such material is necessary.

Experience has shown the possibility of discrepancies between the police occurrence, the statement of various witnesses and previous news accounts of the crime. For the sake of accuracy, it may be advantageous to have a witness or the victim at the reenactment to confirm facts and the sequence of events. There is also usually no information on police reports about the physical description or clothing worn by the victim, so they can also provide this information to help make the video appeal more realistic. If such witnesses are not available, it should be remembered that detectives will often have photographs taken at the time of the crime and such pictures can be invaluable in helping get the right actors and actresses to stage the crime. Composite sketches of suspects or mug shots of prime suspects can also help cast characters closely resembling those involved. Police drawings of suspects and photographs taken by security cameras at the time of a crime can also be included in reenactment to help jog the memory of a potential tipster.

Casting

Volunteer actors may be found in little theatre groups, school drama classes, the police department and even shopping malls. Most criminals don't resemble the gangsters depicted on the silver screen.

They are everyday people and look alikes can be found almost anywhere. To make the reenactment most realistic, it is important that the key actors resemble suspects involved in the crime. They should be the same size and shape, approximately the same colouring, and have similar features. An exact match is next to impossible, but the closer the better. It's an idea to have a collection of moustaches, wigs and make-up to help alter the appearance and make a person better fit the character being played. The ability to act is less important. Usually scenes will be short and most people can play a part for a brief time. Obviously, certain scenes are more difficult, but many amateurs respond well, especially if the sequences are shot in chronological order. Reenactments of sex crimes will require some acting ability since amateur performers may not appear too realistic. These individuals may also not be willing to participate in such a crime.

Location

Try to shoot in the exact location where the crime occurred. Obviously, the owner's permission and cooperation are necessary. Most people want to see criminals brought to justice and are willing to assist Crime Stoppers, however, if the owner of a property will not cooperate, it doesn't mean the reenactment cannot be completed. Just look for an alternative site that can be made to resemble the true location in the important details through selection of camera angles. Take the producer along when looking at the site to allow him to get an idea of camera positions, electrical sources and potential problems such as the need for traffic or crowd control. If using an alternative location, remember you can always establish the crime scene by shooting the building exterior from the street without facing legal complications.

Props

Clothing and other props are vital to create the realism and detail needed to trigger the memory of a potential witness. Most of the pertinent items can be borrowed. Some items, such as a piece of clothing, might have to be damaged while staging the crime, so a small budget may be required to handle these needs. If a program advertises that all donations are used for the reward fund, it is possible to purchase props with money generated through interest gained on these funds. Good camera angles and simulation can often give the impression of something occurring and also prevent items from being destroyed. Auto dealers and individuals will likely lend vehicles if the program has liability insurance. Even if the program doesn't have its own insurance the television station will have substantial liability protection. You might also consider having a folding sign that can be set up at video recording locations to alert the public that the camera crew is shooting a Crime Stoppers reenactment.

It is important to even match the type of weapon used in the crime. Most police forces have a variety of guns and other weapons that are kept for display purposes. These weapons can be made available for reenactments. It is the responsibility of the coordinator to provide the necessary weapons and blank ammunition to help re-stage the crime.

Shooting

Most camera crews will record the reenactment with portable videotape equipment which is quite versatile and can be used almost anywhere. Although cameras can record under extremely low light levels, it may be necessary to provide some additional lighting to balance a scene. Make sure there are adequate power sources or portable generating equipment available at the various scenes. The reenactment should also be shot at approximately the same time that the crime occurred, but it should be remembered that twilight can have a nighttime appearance if a location, such as a bar, is not available in the evening. The producer should prepare a "short list" of the scenes to be recorded by the camera. It is desirable to have the investigating officer on hand to ensure the details are correct. Having the investigator directly involved also helps create good internal relations and lets the officer know Crime Stoppers is working on his case. It is sometimes desirable to have the victim or witness on hand to serve as a technical advisor and assist with the dialogue and action. Some victims have even played themselves in reenactments, although this is discouraged since it could create problems when an arrest is made and the case goes to court. A victim might also take the opportunity during a reenactment to try and change the facts to make his involvement more flattering.

Editing

Scripting the crime of the week should be a cooperative effort between the coordinator and the television producer, but the editing is the responsibility of the station. The producer can lend expertise to help build drama and get attention in the reenactment appeal, but the coordinator must ensure the script contains the pertinent detail and is extremely accurate. The appeal should be no longer than 90 seconds and the editing should produce a tight, fast-moving visual presentation of the crime. Surveys have shown that news viewers lose

interest when items are too long. When putting the crime of the week package together hit the audience with lots of detail and a chronological sequence of events.

Narration

A television station staff member or the coordinator may do the narration of the reenactment. Using the police department's Crime Stoppers personnel, however, has many distinct advantages. The appearance of a police officer lends instant credibility to the appeal and putting the coordinator on camera gives him an identity with the public. The Crime Stoppers coordinator becomes a local celebrity who is welcomed into the homes of thousands of people each week. People meeting the coordinator in public are instantly reminded of Crime Stoppers, and informants who call feel comfortable when they are talking to a friend rather than an unfamiliar voice. There are some disadvantages. The policeman will lose some of his privacy and in the future will not be able to perform undercover work. He's also not a trained television performer and it may be time consuming to have the coordinator read the narration properly. Crime Stoppers should not object should the station decide to have a professional announcer read the script.

Finishing Up

Having the opening and closing segments recorded at the crime scene greatly adds to the mood and provides a form of packaging for the Crime Stoppers reenactment. When played in newscast, the viewers will instantly recognize the video as the crime of the week appeal. The word reenactment should also be superimposed on the screen when the crime appeal is aired to avoid confusing viewers. It is also important to include the Crime Stoppers logo and telephone number during the presentation of the item.

Follow Up

When an arrest results from a crime of the week tip all the media should be notified by the coordinator. The announcement can be made in the form of a news release or simply through a series of telephone calls to the various outlets. Make sure you do not inadvertently give one news organization an advantage by allowing them to give out the information before others have a chance to use it. In other words, be aware of news media deadlines and make sure by calling the television station to let them know about the item for their 6 p.m. newscast, you don't miss the newspaper's 11 a.m. publication time. Be fair to all news outlets that participate in the program. Also, remember to give ample credit to the investigating officer. Detective Inspector Des Rowland made the arrest after investigating information provided by Crime Stoppers.

Crime Stoppers will gain a lot of extra support if everyone involved in a case receives credit. Since information obtained from a tipster to the Crime Stoppers line is from an anonymous source, it cannot be used alone as the basis for an arrest. The investigator has to do a lot of digging to develop leads and obviously deserves credit for his work,

Other Promotion

The continued success of a Crime Stoppers program will depend on acceptance from the public. People have to know the program is working to help keep the community safe. Initially, the image comes from the value of Crime Stoppers programs in other areas and the promise of success in the local community. Promises, however, will not last long and the program has to quickly show its worth. There is a definite need for the public to be kept informed of the progress being made by Crime Stoppers. Publicizing the effectiveness is not only good for Crime Stoppers, but it also allows the media to take a bow and pat itself on the back for assisting a community crime-fighting program. When statistics are reported to the board they should also be distributed to the news media. The local newspaper could even be asked to print a chart showing the statistics achieved by Crime Stoppers. The same information could be used in public service spots by radio and television. Editorial comment is welcome in any medium.

Rather than issuing a list of numbers which is obviously boring to readers or listeners, the statistics can be made more interesting with comparisons. The release could read: Crime Stoppers cleared 1,095 cases, or three crimes a day, since the program was launched here last year. Another method of highlighting the program is to show the dollar value and cost effectiveness of the program. Crime Stoppers has recovered more than \$200 for every dollar paid out in rewards in our community.

Public Relations

The coordinator because of his daily contact generates most publicity for Crime Stoppers with various media representatives. However, it is not the sole responsibility of the coordinator to promote Crime Stoppers. The board must establish a public relations committee and assign the responsibility of contacting the local media to one of the members. The job of public relations doesn't end with getting media publicity, but actually involves promoting the program in a variety of ways through the community.

One of the first tasks of a public relations committee will be to design a pamphlet to promote the program and explain the role of Crime Stoppers to the public. The pamphlet should contain a hard-hitting and hard-selling message designed to solicit both tips and funds. Among the salient facts that must be included is that Crime Stoppers offers anonymity and the possibility of cash rewards for information leading to arrests. The pamphlet should tell how reward funds are raised through donations and include a strong pitch for financial support. You don't have to re-invent the wheel when planning a pamphlet to promote your program. Contact some established programs and ask for examples of material they've printed and change a few words.

One of the media outlets, possibly the television station, may donate pamphlets, especially if they are mentioned as one of the partners in the program. Many municipalities have their own printing departments that can produce copies of simply designed pamphlets. Printing can be expensive, so it's to your benefit if someone will provide the material, especially when a program is starting up.

Getting the Most from a Public Relations Committee In most volunteer organizations

people will discover that only certain individuals will carry out responsibilities. Rather than having the committee chairman constantly trying to motivate members of his group to fulfill tasks, more success might be achieved if a format is established where duties are defined and individual committee members assigned to oversee specific projects. This system doesn't mean every member will follow through and produce results, but it will increase the output of the committee and encourage other volunteers to get involved with Crime Stoppers. The concept is simple. A single board member is assigned to establish groups to assume the responsibility for a specific project under the public relations umbrella. Typical sub-groups for a committee might include: media relations, public speaking, pamphlets and posters, mall displays, outdoor advertising, ethnic media, in-house publications, schools, colleges and universities, and special projects. Your committee will obviously identify other areas of responsibility in addition to these key sub-groups. Each group is responsible for managing its area of responsibility through the year, and although operating independently, they still maintain contact and work with the other units of the committee. The format not only allows more to be accomplished by the entire public relations committee, but also provides a system of checks and balances which helps motivate everyone involved.

The following shows the mandate of the various groups and the liaison which must be maintained for an effective operation.

News Media -This group is responsible for preparing news releases for newspapers, radio and television stations on a regular basis, including statistics and other pertinent information. They should prepare copy for public service announcements and help obtain material for videotape television promotions.

They must maintain liaison with other groups in the public relations section to determine needs and obtain any publicity that may be required.

Public Speaking -This group must target service clubs, organizations, churches as well as cable television and talk show type radio programs to let them know Crime Stoppers has speakers available. They should organize speeches as well as resource material, possibly slides or videotapes, to enhance a speaking engagement. Members must arrange speaking dates and send out letters to thank the group they addressed and detail how they can assist Crime Stoppers. They must maintain liaison with the news media section to obtain as much publicity as possible for presentations.

Pamphlets and Posters - This group should arrange the design and content of promotional material along with printing on a complimentary basis. They should obtain display holders and arrange for distribution of pamphlets and posters. It is important to keep contact with those displaying material to re-stock when necessary. They should also be responsible for thank you letters to those assisting the group. They must maintain liaison with other groups in the public relations section to determine various needs and help obtain any necessary material.

Mall Displays - This group should send letters to malls, city hall and businesses to inform people Crime Stoppers has a display that can be set up. Book dates and manpower, if necessary, and arrange to have booths set up at a location. They should also send thank you letters to anyone providing a site for a display.

They must maintain liaison with the news media group, pamphlets and posters and the school group to obtain publicity, get necessary material and provide the display booth when necessary.

Outdoor Advertising - This group must identify billboard, transit advertising and electronic sign companies to request donated space for Crime Stoppers messages. They should determine the location of the advertising message and send thank-you letters as well as determining other forms of recognition.

They must maintain liaison with the news media group to get publicity whenever possible about outdoor advertising, especially when messages are being installed and signs unveiled.

Ethnic Media - This group must identify foreign language publications in the community and distribute news releases. Arrange for sponsored ads in these publications and follow up with letters of thanks. They should also identify ethnic organizations and determine whether promotional material needs to be translated into their language.

They must maintain liaison with other groups in the public relations section to determine their needs and obtain any publicity in foreign language publications.

In-House Publications - This group must identify in-house publications at various companies and organizations in the community and distribute news releases. They should also attempt to obtain complimentary advertisements and feature stories about Crime Stoppers. These publications might also be willing to send out Crime Stoppers literature inserted in the magazine or newsletter. They must maintain liaison with all other groups in the public relations section to determine if there are any special needs connected with local business or other publications.

Schools, Colleges and Universities - This group must be responsible for obtaining publicity for Crime Stoppers in various educational institutions. This can be obtained through displays, presentations, special days or other high profile events. They must maintain liaison with the media section, pamphlets and posters, mall displays and the public speaking group to arrange whatever is necessary to help promote Crime Stoppers within the school community.

Special Projects - This group must be responsible for any special activities for the Crime Stoppers program, including organizing the annual awards banquet, media recognition,

parties, seminars and participation at fairs, exhibitions, shows, parades and other high profile events.

They must maintain liaison with the news media section, the mall display group and the pamphlet and poster section to assure publicity and to obtain the necessary promotional material and displays for various events.

A Final Note

Just a reminder: Never buy time or space with the media. Your funds should be devoted to paying rewards. Media representatives are good citizens and will provide assistance as a public service. Get their firm commitment to Crime Stoppers and they'll gladly offer additional promotional assistance apart from using the Crime of the Week.

At the same, allow the various media outlets to consider methods of financially profiting from Crime Stoppers. Let them consider getting sponsors for Crime of the Week appeals and provide the opportunity to have newspapers produce advertising supplements at feature Crime Stoppers week in January or any other events that your program sponsors through the year. All companies are now concerned about their bottom line and Crime Stoppers should welcome the opportunity to assist a partner make some financial gain. We will all be winners in the end.

Don't be outraged if Crime Stoppers doesn't get proper credit on a case or if it occasionally gets an unfavourable story. Contact the editor or news director and present the facts in a calm, rational and helpful manner. Always voice an objection to complaints about the Crime Stoppers, but unless the story is grossly in error, there probably won't be a retraction or a correction story. However, you'll find there will be better reporting on future stories. Never react in anger or righteous indignation since they will only create a negative effect, and one bad item will likely have no real long-time effect on the program.

Also, remember to protect your good name. Never allow Crime Stoppers to be associated with questionable organizations. When raising money your board should also avoid becoming involved in potentially illegal activities as simple as an unlicensed bingo or lotteries and raffles. Even with the best possible relationship, the media cannot protect the program if they cross the line and create a bad public reaction. Stay away from shady promoters offering to raise money through telephone solicitation for a percentage of what's raised. Crime Stoppers has a good reputation with the public and we should all work to maintain that image.

Advantage of Association with Crime Stoppers

Advantages for television stations:

Crime is of great interest to the viewers. Crime of the Week helps build the audience. Projects a strong image of community involvement by the station in the fight against crime. Provides increased involvement and improved relations with the police department and officers on the force..Provides the opportunity for follow-up on unsolved crime. Allows the opportunity to give crime prevention messages and involve the public to help battle crime. Can help maintain or improve the ratings of the station. The Crime of the Week replaces an item in the newscast and is produced at about the same cost. Provides station with positive community service material during license renewal hearings.

Advantages for Radio:

Crime is of great interest to the listeners. Crime of the Week helps build the audience. Projects a strong image of community involvement by the station in the fight against crime. Provides increased involvement and improved relations with the police department and officers on the force. Provides the opportunity for follow-up on unsolved crime. Allows the opportunity to give crime prevention messages and involve the public to help battle crime.

Can help maintain or improve the ratings of the station. The Crime of the Week replaces an item in the newscast or an on-air feature with low production costs.

Advantages for Newspapers

Crime is of great interest to the readers. Crime of the Week helps build the circulation. Projects a strong image of community involvement by the newspaper in the fight against crime.

Provides increased involvement and improved relations with the police department and officers on the force. Provides the opportunity for follow-up on unsolved crime. Allows the opportunity to focus on crime prevention stories and tell citizens how to protect themselves against crime.

Responsibilities of the Media

Responsibility of Television Station:

Crime of the Week will be run each week on the same day in early and evening newscasts. It will not be preempted. Once a successful format, location, and time for the Crime of the Week have been established they will not be changed without the consent of the Crime Stoppers board.

As Crime Stoppers program is getting started, the station will run stories describing how it works, the success in other cities and how it is funded. The station will run follow-up stories on the progress of the program. Station will run promotional announcements for

the Crime of the Week. Station will run public service announcements promoting Crime Stoppers and how to get involved.

The station will provide a producer, equipment and necessary personnel to produce the Crime of the Week. They should provide the same producer and preferably the same camera crew, to improve the product and reduce production time. Maintain the integrity of the program by not divulging confidential information or jeopardizing Crime Stoppers through early release of details to be shown in weekly reenactments.

Responsibility of Radio Stations:

Crime of the Week will be run every week on the same day in several newscasts. It will not be preempted. Once a successful format, location, and time for the Crime of the Week have been established they will not be changed without the consent of the Crime Stoppers board.

As Crime Stoppers program is getting started, the station will run stories describing how it works, the success in other cities and how it is funded. The station will run follow-up stories on the progress of the program. Station will run promotional announcements for the Crime of the Week. Station will run public service announcements promoting Crime Stoppers and how to get involved. Maintain the integrity of the program by not divulging confidential information or jeopardizing Crime Stoppers through early release of details to be shown in weekly reenactments..

Responsibility of Newspapers:

Crime of the Week will be run on the same day each week and possibly the same position in the newspaper. Once a successful column format and logo have been designed for the Crime of the Week it will not be changed without the consent of the Crime Stoppers board.

As Crime Stoppers program is getting started, the newspaper will run stories describing how it works, the success in other cities and how it is funded.

The newspaper will run follow-up stories on the progress of the program. The paper will run promotional ads to help promote the entire Crime Stoppers program. Maintain the integrity of the program by not divulging confidential information or jeopardizing Crime Stoppers through early release of details to be shown in weekly reenactments.

Division of Responsibilities

Police:

Selection of the Crime of the Week. Clearance of the reenactment with victims and location. Obtaining an offence report and other documents. Determining what information will be released in the Crime of the Week. Securing major props, including vehicles and clothes. Securing weapons and blanks. Arranging for security and traffic control at the

crime reenactment site. Approving the script and video material in the Crime of the Week for accuracy and detail.

Television Station:

Location of actors for re-creation.

- (a) Setting time for the reenactment depending on the schedules of production crews and actors.
- (b) Securing all production facilities, crew and materials.
- (c) Maintaining and applying make-up to actors, including wigs and moustaches supplied by-----
- (d) Crime Stoppers..Providing a shot list prior to the reenactment for the coordinator and investigator.
- (e) Produce and direct actors and crew during the video taping, although the coordinator will have final approval of the scenes and segments. Write script and edit the Crime of the Week.
- (g) Write introduction for anchorman.
- (h) Final approval of segments in accordance with taste and compliance with community standards.

Joint Responsibility:

Location of smaller props for recreations.

- (a) Securing or locating necessary clothing.
- (b) Generation of publicity and public relations for the Crime Stoppers program.
- (c) Maintaining high quality and standards for Crime of the Week reenactments and follow-up items on the program.
- (d) Maintaining a good working relationship among the three partners, the media, the police (e) department and the Crime Stoppers board.

Note: Additional publicity can be gained by inviting media representatives involved in the program to reenactments with the view of preparing feature articles or getting photographs which can be used in Crime of the Week columns. Board members should also be invited to see how reenactments are put together so they can appreciate the work being done by the various media for Crime Stoppers.

Samples of Generic Promotional Material

News Release:

Fighting crime isn't just a job for the police. Everyone can join the battle through Crime Stoppers. The citizen-supported program allows people to tell about criminal activities without getting directly involved. Anyone with information can call the Crime Stoppers number 1-800-222-TIPS and tip off police without giving their names. Cash rewards of up to \$1,000 are paid for tips leading to arrests in serious cases. The local Crime Stoppers program was established in (date) and has achieved an impressive record of

arrests. Coordinator (name) said tips have led to the arrest of suspects in crimes including murder, rape, robbery, burglary, assault and drug trafficking. (List the program's cumulative statistics.) The program's board chairman (name) said Crime Stoppers is cost-effective and definitely helps keep our community safe. Less than \$70 is being spent to resolve each case called to Crime Stoppers, he said. If you call Crime Stoppers with information you are speaking to a police officer. He will not ask your name, but will take the information and assign you a code number.

Since Crime Stoppers does not know your name, you will be asked to call back after the police have had time to investigate your tip and determine if the information led to an arrest. You identify yourself only by your code number and if an arrest was made, you are eligible for a cash award. Unlike most reward programs, Crime Stoppers pays on arrest and not on conviction.

A volunteer board of directors, made up of citizens in the community, determines the amount of the reward and makes payment to those who provide information. Police are not involved when rewards are paid. Crime Stoppers is a registered charitable organization and board members are responsible for raising money for rewards. Donations are tax deductible. Board member (name) said it is important for people to take an active part in the battle against crime.

The news media also play a vital role in Crime Stoppers. The program is promoted through appeals for information on unsolved crimes in newspapers and on radio and television. "Crime Stoppers needs the help of everyone to combat crime," said Police Chief (name). "You can help keep our streets safe." If you have information about serious crime call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

Additional Background

Crime Stoppers was originated in September, 1976 by a New Mexico detective, Greg MacAleese, while trying to solve the murder of a young gas station attendant in Albuquerque. MacAleese, who was born in 1947, arranged with a local television station to broadcast a reenactment of the killing and offered a reward from his own pocket for anyone who would call anonymously with information. As a result of this appeal MacAleese had enough evidence in 48 hours to arrest two suspects. The Albuquerque Police Department continued to appeal for help in other unsolved cases and soon formed the first Crime Stoppers unit under the direction of MacAleese. Other police departments adopted the Crime Stoppers concept and MacAleese was asked by the governor of New Mexico to operate a state-wide program. He also helped form an international office to establish units throughout North America and other parts of the world. MacAleese moved to Texas at the invitation of the governor to set up another state-wide Crime Stoppers program and later moved to serve as executive director of Dallas Crime Stoppers. He was recognized in 1984 by *Esquire Magazine* as one of the 272 people under the age of 40 who had a significant and positive impact in the United States. He has also been

described as a pioneer in crime reduction and a person in the forefront of getting citizen groups to assist the criminal justice system.

MacAleese said Crime Stoppers fights fear and apathy that prevent citizens from giving police information about criminal acts.

Reviewing

The media is a partner of Crime Stoppers and has demonstrated its willingness to work with the police and the community to combat crime and maintain safe streets. Although a partner, it's quite often the forgotten element and the one which is most often short changed. At times board members and coordinators take the media for granted and do not appreciate the level of support that is being delivered. In reality, the media can only assist Crime Stoppers to the personal comfort level of each outlet. These organizations are businesses and have a responsibility to guard their bottom line on behalf of shareholders and employees. They can't give away the store, but they can provide a reach that no program could ever hope to achieve on its own initiative.

Appreciate what each media outlet does for Crime Stoppers and recognize it for its efforts. The key is for each program to work closely with their local media and establish goals with the aim of giving Crime Stoppers the greatest possible level of exposure. It must be remembered that the media has served as one of the three major components of Crime Stoppers since the concept was originated in 1976. Today, one of the most important functions of a coordinator is to help maintain a proper relationship with the media. Without media support Crime Stoppers will flounder. To create a positive rapport a coordinator must fully understand the needs of the various media and strive to meet all deadlines. It's also important to maintain an open dialogue and listen to all concerns.

The most common complaint from media representatives about Crime Stoppers is that the Crime of the Week didn't reach the newspaper office on time.

The worst sin a newspaper reporter can commit in the eyes of an editor is missing a deadline. A coordinator won't get much respect from the people who put a newspaper together if the Crime of the Week doesn't reach the editor's desk in time for publication. Find out when the copy is needed and make sure you get it to the newspaper early. It's also vital to be aware of policies that govern a newspaper. If the media won't use a picture of a wanted person, there is no value asking them to run a Crime of the Week column that includes a photograph of a suspect you are seeking. In that case, you'll have to make sure your appeal carries a full description.

Also be aware of any editorial concerns or campaigns. Have they recently ranted against arsons, graffiti or the nighttime robberies of variety stores?. Your Crime of the Week would be considered timely and get more prominence if it featured the type of crime which the newspaper had highlighted in an editorial.

Newspapers, like all media outlets, are chronicles of current affairs and are not titillated by history. They want Crimes of the Week that are newsworthy and not what would be considered a crime flashback. Obviously Crime Stoppers is stepping in to resolve a stale case after investigators have reached a dead end, but that doesn't mean the Crime of the Week isn't noteworthy.

The Crime of the Week is a news story. It should contain new and fresh information that may jog a reader's memory or encourage someone to come forward with information. Put out some facts that haven't previously been reported.

Writing for Crime Stoppers

The Crime of the Week column should resemble any other story or feature column appearing in your local newspaper. Read the newspaper and see how paragraphs are structured, the length of articles, the flow of the story and the target age of the audience the publication seems to be reaching.

The most important aspect of any newspaper story is the lead. You have to capture the attention of the reader and maintain interest as they scan your article to the end. Don't fall into a pattern of leading off all Crime of the Week appeals with a standard format. Look for the most important aspect of the crime and highlight it in the opening paragraph.

After developing a lead which grabs the reader, the next step is to begin building the article block by block. Remember although all newspaper stories are structured after the 5 W's and H formula, which answers who, what, when, where, why, and how, it's not necessary to have all elements in one paragraph.

Start with the most important facts and just keep adding. Ensure all facts are accurate, words spelled correctly and the Crime of the Week appeal meets all legal tests..Avoid repeating words, include photographs if possible and determine if it's appropriate to have a first person statement included in the Crime of the Week appeal from a victim. Always look for new angles and fresh approaches to help maintain interest on the part of the media and encourage editors to give the Crime of the Week a more prominent position in the newspaper. Your aim should be front page.

News Releases

One of the most powerful tools that Crime Stoppers has in its publicity generating arsenal is the ability to effectively communicate with all levels of the media.

Crime Stoppers, because of the unique partnership which has been created, is in the position of not having to beg for media attention. However, this is not something which can be taken for granted and something which everyone involved in Crime Stoppers must work to maintain. We do not want the media or the public to consider Crime Stoppers as mundane. It is vital to maintain an effective flow of information through the media to the public and this can be achieved through properly presented communication.

The news release, communiqué or whatever term is popularly used for the written information packages which your program produces for the media, is the industry standard for communicating messages. Although a basic form of communication, news releases are not something which should be thrown together without thought. Any documents produced by your Crime Stoppers demonstrate the professionalism of the organization and the respect you show for your media partners. You must also remember that in this information age, the news media is bombarded with releases not only from agencies, companies and organizations in your community, but from all parts of the state or province, other areas in the nation and literally from around the world.

News releases also come through the mail, courier, fax, private newswire services, email or other electronic or computer driven delivery processes. Consideration must be given to ensure your release demands attention. Again, despite the unique relationship Crime Stoppers may have with the media, you are still competing for space in newspapers and on the airwaves of radio and television stations. This does not mean you have to limit the release of information to only the most major events.

Instead, you must be much more creative and make your media releases both newsworthy and something which grabs the attention of news directors or editors. You do not have to sensationalise facts or produce Pulitzer prize winning prose, but rather make sure the lead paragraph demands attention.

Consider events that require generating a news release to the media. Obviously the Crime of the Week appeal, any fundraising initiatives, crime warnings, personnel changes, special appointments, announcements of upcoming events, the highlighting of promotional activities, the receipt of large donations, to recognize awards achieved by the program. News releases can be put out for anything, but do not overdo the situation.

(Format for a News Release:)

News Communiqué

For immediate release.

This would be the lead paragraph in your news release. It should introduce the subject, create interest and highlight the most important aspect you are attempting to promote. This is not an opportunity to sell Crime Stoppers. You are alerting the media to some news. The remainder of the news release should be developed block by block and answer the type of questions you would expect if holding a news conference. Again, you're not specifically promoting the program, you are giving the media news which you hope they will distribute to the public.

The exposure you receive from this release will put the spotlight on Crime Stoppers. Again, building blocks. The remainder of the release should contain information that you believe is newsworthy and may gain exposure through media attention.

There's no problem having a quote or two from a company representative. When quoting someone, you should include their full name, title and association with the organization.

"This is an example of how quotation marks should be used," said Sergeant John Smith, coordinator of the Southeastern Crime Stoppers program. "It is important to remember to always fully identify when exact words are spoken," Smith said. "You cannot underestimate the power of a personal statement." You should make sure all words are spelled correctly, facts are accurate and there's nothing in a release which will cause any legal complications. It is also important to use only one side of a page. -30-

Contact: James Paterson,
Chair,
Southeastern Crime Stoppers
Office: (613) 000-0000

After hours: (613) 000-0000. Suggested News Release for Crime Stoppers Month
Crime Stoppers programs around the world have adopted January as Crime Stoppers Month.

Since first being proclaimed in 1986, Crime Stoppers Month is used by programs to highlight efforts to combat crime and keep communities safe. The proclamation of January as Crime Stoppers Month also allows programs to recognize the contributions of the police, the media and citizens in helping Crime Stoppers achieve the success it has in resolving crime, recovering stolen property and taking illegal drugs off the streets. Dr. Alan Pratt, president of Crime Stoppers International, describes Crime Stoppers as a citizen operated organization developed to encourage people to provide anonymous information that helps police solve crime.

Pratt said since the establishment of the first program at Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1976, Crime Stoppers has grown into the largest community volunteer crime fighting organization in the world. "Crime Stoppers receives no direct financial support from government at the federal, state or county level and the board of directors are responsible for raising the funds to pay rewards and administer program in the various communities," Dr. Pratt said. This year, William Clinton, president of the United States, sent best wishes to the more than 1,000 Crime Stoppers programs operating today.

United States Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii acknowledged the services provided by Crime Stoppers and described figures related to the number of arrests and amount of drugs and stolen property seized as a result of tips to Crime Stoppers as impressive. And Patsy T. Mink, a member of the Congress of the United States, from Hawaii, is putting forward a resolution to commend Crime Stoppers for its work in helping to keep communities crime free.

A statement issued on behalf of the Home Secretary in Great Britain said the government endorses the work of Crime Stoppers and its valuable contribution to the fight against crime. Crime Stoppers is one of the most effective and efficient programs available to assist police in the fight against crime, said (local coordinator's name and name of program.) (Coordinator's last name) said anonymous tips to our Crime Stoppers program during 1998 provided information that has helped solve a number of robberies, sexual assaults, break-ins and drug related crimes. (You might want to provide some detail on individual cases resolved by tips to the program during the last year and indicate officials figures will be released when they are compiled later this month.) (Should also include any other newsworthy events which occurred during 1998, such as recognition through CSI or other awards to the program or individuals.).

(Name of Board Chair) said the accomplishments of Crime Stoppers both locally and on an international basis demonstrates what can be achieved through a partnership which brings the police, the public and the media together in a concerted effort to reduce crime. "Crime Stoppers is a truly remarkable program," (last name of chair) said.

-30-

CONTACT: Coordinator's name
Phone (000) 000-0000

