

NEW JERSEY DISTRICT OF KEY CLUB INTERNATIONAL

Publicity Toolkit

A practical guide for Club Editors and Webmasters

How to spot a story, write a press release, and get your club covered.

2026–27 SERVICE YEAR

Prepared by the New Jersey District • njkeyclub.org

Start Here

You have one of the most visible jobs in your club. Editors and webmasters control whether the work everyone else does is ever seen by anyone outside the room.

What this guide is for

Most club service goes unreported. Not because it isn't worth covering, but because nobody told the people who cover local news. Local papers in New Jersey are short-staffed and actively looking for community content. A well-written release from a high school service club is genuinely useful to them — it is free, local, positive, and photo-friendly. You are not begging for a favor. You are handing an editor something they need.

Your job in four steps

STEP	WHAT IT MEANS
Spot	Recognize which of your club's activities is actually a story. Most aren't. Some are.
Write	Turn it into a press release an editor can publish with almost no editing.
Send	Get it to the right people, at the right time, with usable photos.
Post	Put it on your club's site and social channels so it lives somewhere permanent.

Before you do anything else

Talk to your faculty advisor. Every school district has its own rules about who may speak to media, which students may be photographed, and who has to approve an outgoing release. Those rules override everything in this guide.

The public contact on anything you send is your advisor — never a student. Your name can appear as the author. Your email and phone number should not appear in anything sent to a news outlet.

What's Newsworthy — and What Isn't

Most club releases get ignored because they announce that something happened, without saying why anyone outside the club should care.

The five tests

Run your idea through these. If it clears at least two, you have something. If it clears none, post it to social media and move on.

TEST	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
1. Impact	Something measurably changed. Hours served, dollars raised, meals delivered, people helped. Numbers turn an activity into a result.
2. First or milestone	A first, a big round number, an anniversary, a record. "The club's 1,000th service hour" is a story. "The club served" is not.
3. A person at the center	One member, one recipient, one advisor with a specific story. Readers connect to people, not organizations.
4. Timeliness	It's tied to something happening right now — a season, a holiday, a local need, a news event people are already following.
5. Local relevance	It affects readers in that paper's coverage area. A town paper cares about your town. Say the town's name.

Not a story yet — and how to fix it

WEAK VERSION	STRONGER VERSION
We held our monthly meeting.	Sixty students packed a classroom to plan a food drive that will stock the borough pantry through winter.
We elected new officers.	A sophomore was elected club president — the youngest in the club's 22-year history.
We volunteered at a 5K.	Twenty-two members ran the water station at Saturday's 5K, which raised \$8,000 for the county food bank.
We're collecting canned goods.	Club sets a 2,000-can goal and asks residents to drop off donations at three locations by Dec. 10.

The honest test

Read your headline to someone who has never heard of Key Club. If the reaction is "okay, and?" — keep digging until you find the number, the person, or the first.

How to Write a Press Release

A press release is not an essay and it is not a social post. It is a news story written for a stranger, in third person, front-loaded so that an editor can cut it from the bottom and lose nothing important.

The inverted pyramid

Put the most important information first and the least important last. Editors cut from the bottom when space runs short. If your best detail is in the final paragraph, it will not survive.

WHERE	WHAT GOES THERE
Paragraph 1	The whole story in about 35 words. Who, what, when, where, why.
Paragraph 2	The detail that proves paragraph one. Numbers, scale, specifics.
Paragraph 3	Quote from a student leader. Motivation and emotion — not facts.
Paragraph 4	Context. Why this project, what the need was, what happens next.
Paragraph 5	Quote from an advisor, principal, or partner organization. Credibility.
Paragraph 6	Call to action. How to donate, attend, join, or learn more.
Boilerplate	Two short paragraphs: about your club, about Key Club International.

Headline rules

- Eight to twelve words. Active verb. No club jargon.
- Lead with the result, not the club name: *Key Club food drive stocks borough pantry for winter beats Wall Township Key Club holds annual food drive.*
- No exclamation points. Ever. They read as a release written by someone unsure the news is interesting.

Style basics editors expect

- Third person throughout. Never "we," "our," or "you" outside of a quote.
- Spell out numbers one through nine; use figures for 10 and up.
- Dateline uses the AP state abbreviation: **WALL TOWNSHIP, N.J. —**
- Times are lowercase with periods: 7 p.m., not 7PM.
- Spell out **Key Club International** on first reference, and end the release with three centered pound signs — **###**. Never use DCON, ICON, LTG, or division numbers; no reader outside the organization knows what those mean.

SECTION 04

Fill-in-the-Blank Template

Copy this structure exactly. Replace everything in brackets. Delete nothing.

	FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
	[Date sent]
CONTACT	[Advisor name], Faculty Advisor [Advisor school email] • [Advisor phone]
HEADLINE	[Eight to twelve words. Active verb. Lead with the result.]
SUBHEAD (optional)	[One line adding the number or the detail the headline couldn't fit.]
LEAD	[TOWN], N.J. — [In about 35 words: what the club did, when, where, and what it accomplished. If the reader stops here, they should still have the story.]
SUPPORT	[The numbers. How many members, how many hours, how much raised, how many people served, over what period.]
QUOTE 1	"[Something a student leader says that a fact sheet could never say. Why they showed up. What surprised them.]," said [first and last name], [title] of [Club Name] Key Club.
CONTEXT	[Why this project. What need it addressed. Who the club partnered with. What happens next.]
QUOTE 2	"[A line from the advisor, principal, or the partner organization that confirms the impact]," said [name], [title].
CALL TO ACTION	[How readers can donate, attend, volunteer, or learn more. Include a date and a location if there is one.]
BOILERPLATE	[Club Name] Key Club is a student-led community service organization at [School Name], sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of [Town]. The club has [number] members and completed [number] service hours during the [year] school year. Key Club International is the largest and oldest service program for high school students, with members in more than 30 countries. The New Jersey District includes more than 130 clubs and over 10,000 student members.
	###

Keep the whole thing to roughly 400 words. One page. An editor deciding between your release and four others will take the one that needs the least work.

Getting a Quote Worth Printing

The quote is the only part of your release that a reporter cannot write themselves. Make it count.

A quote should say something a fact cannot. If the sentence could be rewritten as a statistic, it isn't a quote — it's data wearing quotation marks.

EXAMPLE

Don't "We are very excited to give back to our community and we look forward to many more service projects."

Do "I joined for the service hours. I stayed because the woman I deliver meals to on Thursdays now knows my name."

Don't "This event was a huge success and we thank everyone who participated."

Do "We thought we'd get 300 cans. We stopped counting at 2,000 and had to borrow a truck."

Three questions that produce usable quotes

- "What surprised you?" — surprise produces specifics.
- "What was the moment you remember?" — forces a scene instead of a summary.
- "What would you tell someone who thinks this is just for service hours?" — gets honesty instead of a slogan.

Two rules that are not negotiable

Get permission before you quote a member by name. Ask directly: "Can I use your name and this quote in something we send to the newspaper?" Get a yes, in writing if you can.

Never invent or clean up a quote. You may trim filler words. You may not add words the person didn't say. If a quote needs to be improved, go back and ask a better question.

Photos and Permission

A release with a good photo is several times more likely to run. A release with a photo you didn't have permission to take is a problem for your school.

What makes a photo usable

- **Action, not lineups.** People doing the thing beats people standing in a row holding a check. If you must shoot a group, shoot the action first.
- **Faces visible and lit.** Avoid backlighting, hats pulled low, and dim gyms. Move toward a window.
- **Horizontal and high resolution.** Shoot landscape. Send the original file, not a screenshot and not something re-saved from a group chat.
- **Fill the frame.** Get closer than feels natural. Three people doing something specific beats forty people from across the room.
- **No filters, no text overlays, no stickers.** Papers cannot run edited images.
- **Caption every photo.** Names left to right, grade level, town, what is happening, where, and when. A photo without a caption usually doesn't run.

Permission rules for photos of minors — read this every time

1. Check with your advisor *before* sending any photo of a member to a news outlet. Districts maintain lists of students who may not be photographed or identified. You will not have that list. Your advisor will.
2. Written parent or guardian consent is required before a photo of a member under 18 goes to media. A verbal yes from the student is not enough.
3. Never pair a member's full name with their school and hometown without consent.
4. Photos taken at a service site may need permission from that organization too — especially hospitals, shelters, senior facilities, and anywhere involving other people's children. Ask before you shoot.
5. When in doubt, don't send it. There is no story worth this.

Where to Send It

Aim at the outlets most likely to say yes. A small weekly that prints your release in full is worth more than a county daily that ignores it.

OUTLET	ODDS	NOTES
Local weekly paper	Highest	Chronically short on local content. Best odds by far. Find the editor's name — not a general inbox.
Patch (town site)	High	Community submissions are built into the platform. Free to post.
School district comms	High	Newsletters, website, and social. They want good news about students and usually run it as submitted.
Sponsoring Kiwanis club	High	Their newsletter and social, plus the Kiwanis district. They are your partner — tell them first.
NJ Key Club district	High	District social media and newsletter. Send to the District Editor so your club shows up statewide.
County daily	Medium	Briefs and calendar sections. Longer odds on features unless the story is unusually strong.
Local radio	Medium	Community calendar segments. Send short — three sentences.
Local TV	Low	Only for large or visually striking events. Needs a week of notice.

How to send the email

- **Subject line = your headline.** Not “Press Release” and not “Key Club.”
- **Three sentences in the body, then paste the full release below them.** Never send a release as an attachment only — many editors won't open it.
- **Attach two or three photos** at full resolution, or link to a folder.
- **Send Tuesday through Thursday, in the morning.** Avoid Friday afternoons.
- **Follow up once, after four or five days.** Once. Not twice.

Pitch email, three sentences

Hi [Editor's first name] — students at [School] collected 2,000 canned goods for the [Town] food pantry last week, enough to keep it stocked through February.

Full release is below and three photos are attached, all cleared for publication.

Our advisor, [Name], is available for questions at [email].

Timing and the News Calendar

The best release sent late is worthless. News has a short shelf life and weekly papers have hard deadlines.

Deadlines to work backward from

TYPE	SEND	WHY
Upcoming event	2–3 weeks ahead	Weeklies close about a week before publication. Anything under a week rarely makes it in.
Event recap	24–48 hours	After two days it is no longer news. Write the release before the event and fill in numbers after.
Milestone or award	Within a week	Less time-sensitive, but momentum still matters.
Fundraiser	3–4 weeks ahead	Readers need time to act. Repeat the deadline in the headline and the call to action.

Predictable moments worth covering

Plan around these instead of scrambling. Confirm current dates with the district before publishing anything.

MONTH	TYPICAL STORY
Sept	Club kickoff, membership drive, first project of the year
Oct	Fall service projects, Fall Rally, dues milestone
Nov	Key Club Week, holiday food and coat drives
Dec	Holiday service, toy drives, year-end totals
Jan	MLK Day of Service, officer elections
Feb	Winter service projects, DCON preparation
Mar	District Convention — awards, election results, delegations
Apr	Kiwanis One Day, spring cleanups, Earth Day projects
May	Officer installation, senior recognition, scholarship announcements
Jun–Aug	International Convention, summer service, year-end impact recap

For Webmasters

Your site is where a parent, a reporter, or a prospective member goes when they want to know if the club is real and active. Most club sites answer neither question.

The six things every club page needs

- **Who you are** — two sentences, plus the Kiwanis sponsorship and the school.
- **When and where you meet** — specific day, time, and room. This is the single most searched piece of information on a club site.
- **How to join** — dues amount, deadline, and the first step.
- **Upcoming events** — with dates. An outdated events page is worse than none.
- **Recent service** — three to five recent projects with photos and hour totals.
- **Contact** — the advisor's school email. Never a student's personal email or phone.

Maintenance that actually gets done

- Update once a month on a set date. Put it on your calendar now.
- Archive every press release under a "News" or "Press" section. This is how reporters verify your club has a track record.
- Post the release to the site the same day you email it out.
- Check the site on a phone. Most of your traffic is mobile.

Privacy and accessibility rules

- **No student last names** paired with photos unless you have written consent on file.
- **No student contact information** published anywhere on the site.
- **Alt text on every image** — describe what is happening, not "club photo." This is a legal accessibility requirement for school-affiliated sites in many districts.
- **Readable contrast** — dark text on light backgrounds. Gold text on white is not readable; use blue for text and gold as an accent only.

Social media, briefly

Post the photo the same day — social has no deadline advantage to waste.

Tag the school, the sponsoring Kiwanis club, the partner organization, and the NJ District. Tagging is how a club post becomes a district post.

Write captions with the same facts a release would carry: what, where, how many, how much.

Anything that would embarrass the club, the school, or a member does not go up. When you are unsure, ask your advisor before posting, not after.

Brand Basics

Consistency signals that a club is organized. Improvised logos and off-brand colors signal the opposite.

Colors

**Key Club Blue**

#003F87

Headlines, body text, primary fields

**Key Club Gold**

#FDB913

Accents and rules only — never body text

Gold is an accent. It is nearly unreadable as text on white and should be used for rules, bars, and highlights — not paragraphs. Confirm exact values against the current Key Club International brand standards before producing anything printed.

Type

Key Club International's brand typeface is **Gotham**. It is a licensed font and most schools will not have it. Use a geometric sans as a substitute and stay consistent: **Poppins** or **Montserrat** (both free through Google Fonts) are the closest matches. In Google Docs or Canva, pick one and use it for everything.

Logo rules

- Get official logo files from the district. Do not pull one off a Google image search.
- Never stretch, rotate, recolor, or add drop shadows and outlines.
- Never create a custom club logo that modifies the Key Club mark. Club-specific artwork should sit alongside the official mark, not replace or alter it.
- Leave clear space around the logo equal to the height of the letters.
- On dark backgrounds, use the approved reversed version — do not invert it yourself.

Before You Hit Send

Work down this list every time. It takes two minutes and prevents almost every common failure.

- ☐ Advisor has reviewed and approved the release.
- ☐ Advisor's name, school email, and phone are the listed contact — no student contact info anywhere.
- ☐ Headline is under twelve words, uses an active verb, and has no exclamation point.
- ☐ Town name appears in the dateline and in the first paragraph.
- ☐ The lead paragraph works as the whole story on its own, with at least one specific number.
- ☐ Both quotes are approved by the people who said them.
- ☐ Every named member under 18 has parent or guardian consent on file.
- ☐ Photos are horizontal, high-resolution, unfiltered, and captioned with names left to right.
- ☐ No jargon: DCON, ICON, LTG, division numbers, and Kiwanis-family acronyms are all spelled out or removed.
- ☐ "Key Club International" is spelled out on first reference, boilerplate is current, and the release ends with ###.
- ☐ Release is pasted into the email body, not attached only.
- ☐ Subject line is the headline.
- ☐ It is Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday morning.

The five mistakes that sink most club releases

1. Written in first person. "We collected" instead of "The club collected."
2. Sent too late. A recap that arrives a week after the event is not news.
3. No numbers. "Many students" and "a lot of food" tell an editor nothing.
4. No contact information, or a student's personal contact information.
5. No photo — or a filtered, vertical, low-resolution one pulled from a group chat.

Questions and Support

You are not doing this alone. Use the district before you get stuck.

Who to ask

WHO	FOR WHAT
Your faculty advisor	Anything involving permission, school policy, student privacy, or approval to send. Always your first stop.
Your Lieutenant Governor	Division-level questions, connecting with other club editors, and getting your story shared beyond your club.
District Editor	Review of a draft release, submission to district publications and social channels, and access to brand assets.
District Webmaster	Website questions, club page listings, and technical support.
District Administrator	Policy questions, media requests involving the district, and anything sensitive.

Send us your coverage

When your club gets published — print, online, radio, anywhere — send the link or a photo of the clipping to the District Editor. Club coverage rolls up into the district's annual reporting, award submissions, and sponsorship conversations. Your story helps every club in New Jersey.

District contact: [insert district email] • **Web:** njkeyclub.org

Caring — Our Way of Life

New Jersey District of Key Club International