HOW TO FIND GREAT STORIES

This can be one of the most challenging parts of the job! Here are five tips for encouraging people to report on their events and share their stories with you:

1. Develop a content strategy as early in the year as possible by looking at the conference and local church calendars for interesting events.
2. Contact event organizers ahead of time and ask them to write a short article and assign someone to take photos. Give them a desired word count and what "focus" you would like. Ask them to get comments from at least two attendees.
3. Make sure they know the submission deadline and how to submit their story and photos (including photographer's name).
4. Always keep your eyes and ears open for personal stories that are unique and encouraging.
5. Remember to sincerely thank every person who helps you and let them know how their work will make an impact.

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STORY IDEAS FOR YOUR CHURCH NEWSLETTER

1. Spotlight a ministry department such as Youth Ministries, Prison Ministries, community services, etc.
2. Spotlight a member, teacher, or student. Also spotlight the oldest church member, newly baptized member, extraordinary achievement, conversion story, testimony, new ministry/departmental leader.
3. Focus on a theme such as prayer, women in ministry, education, evangelism, summer camp, health, religious liberty.
4. Assign guest editorials such as a departmental director to coincide with a theme; school principal, student/alumnus, parent, or pastor (can be organized months ahead).
5. Report on trends and plans of your organization: tithe updates, baptisms, conference initiatives, statistics, program updates, needs.
6. Spotlight conference entities such as schools, supporting ministries, community initiatives, camp, and retreat centers, etc.
7. Ask a question of the month. And run answers with photos of members of different ages, ethnicities, church positions and genders.
8. Recap camp meetings, retreats, graduations, and other annual events. Provide many pictures ... members love to see themselves.
9. Set up great stories. Talk to your ministries leaders and help them plan creative events that may lead to a great story. Network wherever you go to find story leads.
10. Anticipate, Anticipate, Anticipate. Consider your deadline, consider the date of your event, and decide whether to run the story before or after. If before, get a photo of the intended speaker and musicians and share a short profile of them. If after arranging for a good photographer and writer to be present.

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