



**How to Get Public Service  
Announcements**

**Placed in Your Community Media**

**For**

**Year of Languages**

**Ambassadors**



## PSA CAMPAIGNS

By Jackson Bain and Sandy Bain

First of all, thank you for agreeing to be an Ambassador for **The Year of Languages!** One of your most important jobs is to get Public Service Announcements used in local media in your community. (PSAs) are used as free advertising. They can be played on radio and television stations and inserted in newspapers, magazines, and other print publications. PSAs are generally sent to the media's public service director. He or she evaluates them and makes the decision about their use.

Television, radio, and print PSAs are the cornerstone of **The Year of Languages** campaign. The television, radio and print PSAs have been carefully created to assure they will deliver this important Year of Languages message to our various target audiences. But no matter how well conceived and executed, the public service announcement will not be effective unless it actually reaches its intended audience. Therefore, it is crucial to the success of the campaign to get them aired. You can play a key role in making this happen by contacting the local media in your community and asking them to run the PSAs.

**Please note** that as a **Year of Languages Ambassador**, you have public service announcements prepared for television, radio and print media. The print and radio versions are on the labeled CD's in the YOL Ambassador package. For radio, there is an additional printed script for live announcer spots to be given to the radio station.

The television PSA is given to you to show to TV public service directors, and it is in a VHS (home video) format. If they agree to run the PSA, you will want to order a Beta SP copy from ACTFL to provide a broadcast quality videotape.

**There are some very simple steps** to increase the chances of getting **The Year of Languages** PSA's run in your local newspapers, television stations, or radio stations:

**1. Identify your most likely media outlets:**

This means you should get a list of local media in your community, even though you think you might know them all. You can obtain such a list at your local Chamber of Commerce, or even in the front "Community Guide" sections of your local Yellow Pages, or under "broadcast media", "radio stations", "television stations" or "newspapers" in the Yellow Pages.

**2. CALL! Ask for the decision-maker who handles PSA's!**

Now, call the station or newspaper directly, and ask for the individual who handles public service announcements. In some newspapers, it may be the advertising department, but it is not the "classified" advertising department. In television and radio stations, ask for the "community service director" or "public service director".

**3. In 15 seconds, tell them why they should care about The Year of Languages!**

Right at the start, quickly explain the reason for the call, the importance of the issue to YOUR community and ask to set up a brief meeting to show them the PSA's you have in hand. Here's a sample conversation:

**YOU: Hello, thanks for taking my call. I teach language at \_\_\_\_\_, and I wanted you to know about a year-long public service campaign here in \_\_\_\_\_ and across the country called "2005 - The Year of Languages". It's a very important program aimed at increasing foreign language knowledge in our community, and its designed to encourage kids – and their parents – to support foreign language instruction here in our schools. I have a Public Service Announcement that we hope you'll consider running – and I'd like to bring it to you in person. When are you available?"**

When it comes to these telephone calls, please - be a little pushy! You will have a far greater chance of placing your ads if you meet personally and discuss the ads – along with local events you may be considering during **The Year of Languages**. It is far better to hand the videotape, print material, or radio CD to the media outlet's community relations, public affairs or advertising director rather than just mailing them off, because personal contact is memorable and demonstrates a serious local commitment to the campaign.

### **3. Write! Put your request on paper, and send it to a person, not a title!**

A key step in bringing the program to the public in your community entails writing a letter to radio and television stations and to local newspapers and magazines promoting its placement — a “pitch letter.” A pitch letter is nothing more than a strong letter that tells your story and sells the campaign’s local importance to the media. A sample PSA pitch letter is provided in this section. Whether you adapt this sample or write your own, be sure to cover the following points:

- Keep it brief, no more than one page.
- Get to the point quickly but engagingly.
- Show how and why the issue is important to the people in your community.
- Explain who is supporting the program.
- Indicate that it is timely, e.g., the program is timed to coincide with the national year-long celebration of **The Year of Languages**.
- Underscore that the actions suggested in the broadcast and print PSAs simply remind the audience that language education is becoming increasingly important to everyone on the community.
- Close the deal: Ask that the ads be aired/printed during **The Year of Languages**.
- Mention that you will be contacting them to request a meeting, and to follow up on your request.

Here is a sample pitch letter for **The Year of Languages**:

*Sample Print/Broadcast PSA Pitch Letter*

Date

Ms. Jane Friendly  
Public Affairs Director  
Anytown Newspaper, WANY TV/WANY Radio  
Anytown, USA 12345

RE: 2005 - The Year of Languages in     *(your town)*    

Dear Ms. Friendly:

Here in     *(your town)*    , we have a wonderfully diverse community, and all indications are that in the near future, it will be even more so. The fact is, the world is shrinking, and the more important fact is this: English is not the world's only language.

Interestingly, 75% of all Americans, including 69% of those who didn't study a foreign language, think it's very or somewhat important that the average American be able to speak and understand a language other than English.

And yet, language education in our community falls far short of the level in similar communities overseas. In Japan, 62% of high school graduates are at a high level of fluency in English, German, French, Chinese or Hindi. How many students in our town are fluent in Japanese?

The world is coming to our door, and we are not really ready to meet them.

Through 2005, we will be staging highly-visible events here in our community to celebrate **The Year of Languages**. These events are also being staged across the United States, and will include national media coverage, as well.

We have produced a public service announcement to remind your *(viewers/listeners/readers)* in our area that learning another language is vital to the economic as well as social health of our community. It's a simple message, that urges parents to encourage their kids to learn a new language, reminds adults of the value of languages in business and in the community, and reminds students that learning languages is easy – and its fun. And by the way, the youngsters in the PSA are adorable!

I would like to meet with you at your earliest convenient time to discuss our year-long events, and to show you the PSA for your consideration of its use. I will call you in a few days to arrange that meeting, and I hope you will be as excited as we are about our coming celebration of **2005 - The Year of Languages**.

Sincerely,

*Name. Language Teacher*

*School District - Telephone number*

The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages

### 3. Is that an ally I see before me?

All right, you've arranged the personal meeting, and you're sitting in the office of the public affairs, community service or public service director. While you're there, propose to that decision-maker at the media outlet that they partner with you and other local organizations supporting **The Year of Languages**. The reasons for them to do so include lots of local visibility among their important target audiences, and broad community service recognition on an issue that is important to everyone. Get creative! Listen to their ideas, and explore ways you might stage interesting and crowd-pleasing community events together during the year (supported, of course, by additional runs of the PSA).

### 4. Find and Recruit Other Allies:

Your discussion with any media community affairs or public service director will have even more impact if you have additional community allies that already have expressed support for **The Year of Languages** campaign. For example, the local Chamber of Commerce should have a strong interest in providing their name and access to their members in support of the campaign. Here's why: every local Chamber is interested in attracting new businesses to the community, and language skills are an especially valuable attractant to international business enterprises.

Don't stop there! You can also find other language instructors, schools and non-ACTFL members to sign up as allies for **The Year of Languages** in your community. Don't forget the civic clubs – especially Rotary International, Kiwanis International, Lions, Jaycees, etc. All have international reach and global interests. Contact the club's program director and ask to make a presentation at one of their luncheon meetings, then ask for the club to become a named "Partner" for **The Year of Languages**.

How about the local medical community? Local hospitals always need to help patients who do not speak English, and that care is made more difficult with such a language barrier. Contact the local hospital's community affairs director or administrator and propose that they agree to be names as allies, as well.

There are many more ally and “Partner” possibilities, of course. There may be a German, French, or other international social club in your town. Find them, recruit them to be partners in **The Year of Languages**. All allies can help you gain usage of the PSAs. They can provide support for the campaign by writing letters or contacting the PSA director to urge free placement of your ads.

## **5. Networking Works!**

Never underestimate the power of “six degrees of separation” – the theory that everyone in the world is just six people away from you. Do any parents of your students have contacts in the local media? Are they members of the local civic clubs? Don’t be bashful about asking for connections – the winner from all this networking will be the community in which everyone lives.

## **6. Don’t forget city magazines.**

Many larger cities support a magazine focused on issues of interest in the community. Atlanta, San Antonio, Milwaukee, and Des Moines all have city magazines – and there fore, are examples of additional media outlets you should contact and push for usage of the print PSA ads. Please note that deadlines for local magazines are often two or three months in advance of the publication date. The most effective way to contact a magazine editor is by phone or a letter explaining the ads. Working to place PSAs in local magazines at different times throughout the year will extend the life of your program.

## **6. The All-Important Follow-Up:**

Call the media outlet a few days after delivering the materials to see if they have been reviewed and if the outlet plans to run them. If so, find out when, and make a note of their response. If they have not yet reviewed them, ask when you should follow up to determine their interest (this is a good time to pitch the PSAs again, pointing out their timeliness and importance to the community)

Send information, reprints, articles, studies, or similar relevant information to your list of public service directors - even if they are not running your PSAs. It keeps them informed about the initiative and helps keep the subject in mind.

## **7. What makes the PSA decision makers in the local media say “Yes”?**

Here are some important facts:

Print and broadcast public service directors view issues relating to children to be the most important issues addressed by public service announcements, in a study by The Advertising Council. They are already interested in our issues.

Public service directors consider a number of factors when selecting which PSA’s to air or print. All ranked the importance and relevance of a PSA’s message to their station’s specific audience as the most important criteria. Television and newspapers generally appeal to broad audience groups. But radio station formats are very different, and they attract different audiences.

Think about this: which radio stations would have the best target audiences for The Year of Languages messages? Clearly, those will be the stations whose listeners are parents, or community decision makers or students. That means you would approach radio stations with an all-news, all-talk, adult music format or – for students – pop music and stations.

The same study found that public service directors typically determine the importance of social issues by word of mouth or through their own involvement in local events. More than 90% reported having at least some involvement in their community, and – among broadcast respondents - about half reported responsibility for developing or producing their station’s public affairs program.

All media reported a preference for “localized” PSA’s with a local non-profit organization or school reference for more information for the audience.

## **GETTING USAGE FOR TELEVISION PSAs**

Here are some simple rules to consider when planning on producing and distributing **The Year of Languages** public service announcements for television, with the expectation that they will be aired, and the audience will respond favorably to the messages contained in the spots:

### **1. KNOW WHAT LOCAL STATIONS WANT**

There are roughly 1,400 broadcast TV stations and 10,000 cable TV stations in America today. Each has its own PSA material preferences. If a station wants a Beta video tape, send them Beta, not VHS or what you think they want. You'll increase the chances of getting airtime.

### **2. CABLE RULES!**

Don't simply think over-the-air broadcast stations in your community – remember that the smallest communities usually have a cable provider (or two) with a studio and a limited amount of cable airtime available for LOCAL PSA's. Treat them as you would an over-the-air broadcaster for a simple reason: 86% of American television viewers receive their TV signals via cable, not over the air. Those cable providers hold the key to a huge amount of potential PSA airings!

### **3. PUT PIZZAZZ IN YOUR PACKAGE**

CBS network alone received 17,000 PSA packages a few years back. The demand for network airtime increased 40% in six years. The competition is tough, and you've got to outsmart them to get on the air. Your Year of Languages presentation could be part of the answer, because it's the first thing the public service director sees.

Consider using a memorable device to deliver the PSA. As we've said before, bringing the PSA personally is the most memorable action, if you can schedule a meeting with the PSA decision-maker. If you cannot meet them personally, consider hand-delivering the PSA to the media offices in some memorable packaging, such as gift wrap

made of a colorful world map, with a ribbon-attached note saying that the package contains the PSA and reminding them of how small the world is becoming.

- Include some brief facts on foreign language instruction in your community, and some broader facts about the need for increase language instruction. Also include some background information about **The Year of Languages**, ACTFL and other partner organizations in the package.

- Include ACTFL's IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit number: **M-75-EO 1771**

This will save stations a lot of time trying to decide if you qualify for airtime or not, and if they have to think too much, they'll toss your PSA aside and choose one they don't have to think about.

#### **4. BUILD GOOD STATION RELATIONS; INVOLVE THE MEDIA**

If a public service director takes the time to use the PSA, send them a thank you note. Take them to lunch. Send them **The Year of Languages** premium items or unique certificates of appreciation. Have their photo taken with you awarding the certificate. Send the photo with a caption to the local paper. Again, how could the media outlet partner with you and the campaign? Station or newspaper contests for kids? Fun community events? Get creative, and let us know what works best in your town!

Use briefings, luncheons, or whatever works. The point is, don't always go to the stations asking for a handout. Make them a part of your campaign in some imaginative way. Maybe you can get their news department to do an editorial on your issue; maybe there's a way to tie the weatherman into your campaign; see if they will do a remote to cover your special event. **The Year of Languages** in your community should feature a regular series of small, but interesting events, involving both children and the adults. Each of these may be an opportunity for the station or newspaper to get involved.

## **GETTING USAGE FOR RADIO PSAs:**

Despite the explosive growth of XM-satellite radio and CD-players in new vehicles, good old broadcast radio has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity over the past few years. Although no one can pinpoint why more Americans are turning to a low-tech medium in a high tech era, its portability and its ability to cater to specific program tastes may be two underlying factors for its success.

There are more than 11,000 radio stations in the country today. About two-thirds of them use public service announcements (PSAs). Before offering PSAs to stations, however, there are a variety of details to consider:

- Selecting stations that reach your primary and secondary target audiences.
- Determining which format of station actually use PSA's (many do not).
- Finding out who makes decisions about running PSA's.
- Setting up a meeting to pitch the PSA, and explore a potential partnership.
- Developing an evaluation procedure to help you measure usage and local campaign impact.

### **Selecting Stations**

Unlike television, which is a general interest medium, radio programming is aimed at listeners with particular interests, making it easy to segment stations by ethnicity, age, educational level and lifestyle. The list below includes the major radio program formats and the approximate number of stations in each format:

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Adult Contemporary                | 1,899 |
| African - American/Urban          | 153   |
| Classical                         | 409   |
| Country/Western                   | 2,630 |
| Educational (high school/college) | 113   |
| Jazz/Big Band                     | 153   |

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Middle-of-the-road (MOR)        | 875   |
| Oldies                          | 580   |
| News/Talk                       | 667   |
| Religious<br>(Gospel/Christian) | 660   |
| Rock/Album Rock                 | 1,011 |
| Spanish                         | 594   |
| Top 40                          | 369   |

On this list, you would probably choose to contact the News/Talk, Adult Contemporary Rock/Album Rock, Middle of the Road, Oldies, and other stations that actually use PSA's.

**REMEMBER: You will leave them with a CD with the :30 second long “Why Learn Languages” spot on it.**

**You will also leave them with the single page that follows. It contains two announcer scripts which they can put into the announcer's book for use on the air.**



## RADIO READER PSA's

:15 seconds

ANNCR: To succeed in this shrinking world, (town's) children need to communicate in more than one language.

For our kids' sake, it's time to speak up for language education. Find out how at [YearOfLanguages.org](http://YearOfLanguages.org).

Brought to you by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

:20 seconds

ANNCR: Now, more than ever, (town's) children need to learn another language.

They need to be able to communicate...to understand...to compete in the global environment.

For our kids' sake, it's time to speak up for language education. Find out how at [YearOfLanguages.org](http://YearOfLanguages.org).

A message from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

## **GETTING USAGE FOR PRINT PSAs**

PSAs for newspapers are similar to PSAs for the radio, in that they are used to present an important issue to the general public. Although there is no charge for this announcement, the newspaper will decide when, where and if it will be printed. Public Service Announcements in local newspapers are used to fill empty space on the page after all the advertisements and editorial copy has been placed. Therefore, they need to be offered to the newspaper in a variety of sizes so one of the PSA's might be just right for that big hole on page 12!

### **How to Submit a Public Service Announcement for Print:**

1. Contact the newspaper's public affairs director and (again) meet with them personally. Explain the impact of language education in your community and determine his or her interest in running your **Year of Languages** PSA.
2. Be prepared to present a compelling argument for your issue. Newspapers get these requests daily, so show them how this issue is beneficial to their readers and to the local community as a whole.

Make sure you find out the newspaper's requirements before submitting your PSA. What is the preferred size? Is camera-ready art work required? Will photos be accepted?

You are providing **The Year of Languages** PSA's on a CD, in a commonly-used format for newspapers. Since almost all newspapers can use this format, the PSA's should be technically right for your distribution papers in your community.

### **Remember:**

- Lead time is short since many newspapers publish daily
- Find out to whom you should submit your PSA and how far in advance he or she needs to receive it.
- Title and job function of media contact will vary

- Local newspapers prefer issues important to their communities and connected to local non-profit organizations.
- Send package to Advertising Director or Publisher, not to editor.
- Submit the PSA to the correct person on time.
- Protect contents of package with "chipboard" to ensure ads don't get damaged in mail.
- Suggest a partnership and ally relationship with the paper! Your cause of language education will make a lot of sense to the paper's editorial board.
- Send a letter of appreciation to publisher or ad directors using your material.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Separately from distributing the PSA's, we recommend you submit brief letters to the editor of your local paper about **The Year of Languages** at appropriate times, (no more than four over the year, and only if relevant or timely). In making your case about the need for more language education, these letters should always contain information that relates to your community, including such data as current language enrollment in your school district, and current international business activity in your town (available through your local chamber of commerce).

Most important, such letters should be sent in relation to a recent news story that reflects the need for foreign language (and foreign culture) education. Is a new international company coming to town? Pulling out of town? Was there a newspaper feature article recently about a specific international community in your town?

Such letters to the editor should conclude with a call for support to parents, a call of encouragement to students, and a call for cooperation with allies.

Here's a sample letter to the editor. This is only a sample, and should not be used as shown. Follow the rules noted above to make the letter community-relevant and timely.

## Letter to the Editor Sample

Editor

Morgan Messenger

Berkeley Springs, WV

Date:

Dear Editor,

The article in this week's Morgan Messenger on the new international business opening in our industrial park was good news, indeed. Moreover, it demonstrates that Morgan County is already standing on the world stage in attracting new business investment – and jobs – to our community. The question we must now ask ourselves is: “Are we really prepared to appear on that global platform?”

There are 108 students in Morgan County high schools currently enrolled in foreign language programs, out of a total high school population of 1,877. The languages they are taking include Spanish (62%), French (28%), and German (10%). Our new neighbors and the new business located here is from Japan, and we have few, if any speakers of that language in our county, to my knowledge.

All of this points out a single fact: the world is shrinking, and Morgan County needs to be far better prepared to meet, do business with and make friends with our new neighbors. 2005 has been called The Year of Languages, with a national and local education program going on in big and small communities across the country. The program is sponsored by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Morgan County citizens should support the growth of foreign language education here, because more people who know how to communicate in more languages means new opportunities, new jobs, and new friends.

Sincerely,

*Teacher name*

*School district*

**Sharing the Best Practices for The Year of Languages:  
What Works? What Didn't?**

One of the most important drivers of a successful local campaign for **The Year of Languages** is knowledge of what methods, ideas, and inspirations were successful in other communities.

That's why we ask you to let us know your experiences with this campaign, and allow us to share your knowledge with other Ambassadors for **The Year of Languages**.

Simply email your comments and ideas to [headquarters@actfl.com](mailto:headquarters@actfl.com), or mail it to:

Media Outreach  
**The Year of Languages**  
ACTFL  
Suite 210  
700 S. Washington St., Suite 210  
Alexandria, VA 22314

and we will get that information to other Ambassadors, either through a regular email or a quarterly newsletter.

We also want to know your successes; please tell us what media outlets you met with, and gained agreement to run the PSA's. Simply send that information to us at the same email or regular mail address.

Thanks!

**Final Tips on Your Local Campaign**  
**For The Year of Languages**

As we've noted above, the competition for **The Year of Languages** PSAs is fierce. Each day, the nation's radio and television stations, newspapers, and magazines are deluged with requests for free time or space for public service announcements (PSAs). Organizations, large and small, write, call and visit media outlets to encourage the media to give their program or announcement special attention. Most of these PSAs are not selected and the reasons are many and varied. Among the most important reasons are poor message design and irrelevant subject matter.

According to surveys of broadcasters, they use three primary criteria in selecting PSAs: sponsorship, relevance of the message to the community, and message design. Quality concerns range from muddy messages to poor execution. Subject problems include topics that are of little interest to the general public or are too complex to lend themselves to brief delivery.

In addition, some well-produced, relevant ads receive less attention than they deserve because of poor presentation to the media outlet. For your **The Year of Languages** initiative to succeed in your town, we ask for your commitment to work hard to get them used. The subject matter certainly is important to the people in your community; language education benefits just about everyone. Yours is a local program — something highly desirable to the media — with national support. The PSAs are well-executed. They are based on careful, thorough research and have excellent production value.

Think of it this way: the allies you develop, the media contacts you make – all will serve you well not only throughout **2005 – The Year of Languages** – but throughout the years to come, as well.