



# Michigan Arbor Day Alliance

The Michigan Arbor Day Alliance (MADA) promotes and facilitates Arbor Day through a progressive network for the stewardship of forestry and natural resources in Michigan's communities.

Since 1993, MADA has provided educational programs and services to communities throughout the state. Some of the services and resources provided include:

- Free Arbor Day Educational Materials
- Annual State Arbor Day Celebration at Potter Park Zoo in Lansing for second and third grade students
- National Arbor Day Foundation Fifth Grade Poster Contest for Michigan
- Annual Arbor Day events directory
- Provide municipalities, libraries, parks or individuals with ideas for hosting an Arbor Day Celebration
- Provide network opportunities to organizations that can offer Arbor Day assistance
- Promote Arbor Day and the importance of trees at seminars, workshops, tradeshow & conferences
- Membership Program

Membership in MADA is open to all organizations whose programs engage the public in the planting, care and/or appreciation of community trees.

**For further information, contact MADA at [www.miarbordayalliance.com](http://www.miarbordayalliance.com) or write**

Michigan Arbor Day Alliance  
551 Courthouse Dr. Ste 3  
Charlotte, MI 48813

Tel: 517-543-5848 x 5



# Michigan Arbor Day Alliance

Dear MADA member,

We are truly looking forward to your participation in Arbor week activities this year! Inside this kit are ideas, helpful hints, sample documents and forms, and professionally designed promotional tools to draw attention to your Arbor Day events.

Since 1993, MADA has been dedicated to the promotion and celebration of Arbor Day throughout Michigan. The Michigan Arbor Day Alliance is a coalition of organizations, agencies, and individuals dedicated to the promotion and celebration of Arbor Day.

MADA's efforts to improve the community have been enhanced by involvement of organizations such as: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Eaton Conservation District, Arboriculture Society of Michigan, Metropolitan Forestry Consultants, Consumers Energy, Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, Lansing Board of Water and Light, Ingham County Parks and Recreation, Potter Park Zoo, Adams Outdoor Advertising, Meijer, and City of Lansing Parks and Recreation-Forestry Department. We are deeply grateful for the continued support Michigan Arbor Day Alliance has received from local businesses and concerned citizens and look forward to working with our members in the future.

This year, MADA looks forward to welcoming new members to the alliance. We hope for another successful Annual State Celebration at Potter Park Zoo in Lansing.

If you have comments, questions or requests concerning Michigan Arbor Day Alliance Program contact us at 517-543-5848 x5 or email [miarborday@gmail.com](mailto:miarborday@gmail.com). We are always pleased to hear from our members and eager to learn about your latest achievements.

I extend my best wishes for an outstanding Arbor Day celebration in your community!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hunnell  
Program Coordinator

P.S. If you are interested in having an Arbor Day banner for your celebration please contact us!!!



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# Arbor Day History

The first Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska on April 10, 1872. J. Sterling Morton, a pioneer and journalist championed the idea of a “tree planting holiday” in the Nebraska territory. The Arbor Day celebration has since grown, and is now a nationally-observed day for planting trees.

Morton advocated tree planting by individuals and by civic organizations for the public good. Prizes were offered to counties and individuals for properly planting the most trees. It is estimated that Nebraskans planted over 1 million trees that first Arbor Day.

J. Sterling Morton's love for trees came from his life in Michigan. Morton's family lived in Detroit and he attended public school in Monroe, then later Albion College (Class of 1850) and the University of Michigan (Class of 1854). Morton missed the array of vibrant green trees he grew up with in Michigan and continued to plant them throughout his life.

Today, the most common date of state observance for Arbor Day is the last Friday in April. Several U.S. presidents have proclaimed a national Arbor Day on that Friday. There are a number of state Arbor Day celebrations at other times to coincide with the best tree-planting weather.

In 1885, the Michigan Legislature resolved "that the Governor is hereby requested to call the attention of the people of the state to the importance of planting trees for ornament and by naming a day upon which the work shall be given special attention to be known as Arbor Day."

Until 1965, the Upper and Lower Peninsula had separate Arbor Days in the spring because of the difference in weather conditions for tree planting. Governor George Romney proclaimed an Arbor Week for the last week in April 1966. In his proclamation, Governor Romney broke with the traditional one day, "Because of the increased interest in and the importance of the statewide 'Keep Michigan Beautiful' program, one or two days do not afford enough time and opportunity for a full and proper observance of Arbor Day."

"It is well that we bring attention to our trees and the need to continue to plant them about our homes, our places of business, our industries, our schools, our highways, and throughout the landscape so that their majesty will reflect our appreciation of the grandeur of nature and further the culture and economy of our state."

Each year the Governor and Michigan Legislature proclaim the last week in April as Arbor Week and Arbor Day as the Friday of that week.



# Why MADA?

## **Why Michigan Arbor Day Alliance?**

**Michigan Arbor Day Alliance promotes community health and well-being while educating citizens on issues related to conservation.**

Michigan's state forest system is the most extensive in the United States, and serves as an important economic resource. Forests also provide wildlife habitat, wood products, watershed protection, and recreation opportunities. With these facts in mind, each year the governor and Michigan Legislature proclaim the last week in April as Arbor Week and Arbor Day as the Friday of that week. Michigan Arbor Day Alliance attempts to educate citizens and businesses about the importance of trees.

The benefits of increasing the abundance of trees are numerous:

- Michigan's timber products economy provides approximately 150,000 jobs statewide.
- Michigan has increased property values and reduced energy costs through numerous community and city tree plantings.
- Increasing abundance of forests encourages biodiversity and habitat for wildlife.
- People spend more time outside in green areas with trees, contributing to community strength and unity.



# Benefits of MADA

## **Benefits of Joining MADA**

Becoming a member of Michigan Arbor Day Alliance has many benefits:

- Identify your community as ecologically aware
- Materials to help your Arbor Day Celebration be successful
- Access to the latest news in Urban Forestry
- See your Arbor Day Celebration Story posted on our website
- Receive an Arbor Day banner
- Networking
- Ideas, tips and more!



# Planning Your Arbor Day Event

## **PLANNING YOUR ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION**

### **Begin With Goals**

Arbor Day is a long standing tradition that helps remind us of the significance of trees and their role in community health and well-being. Your Arbor Day celebration should be well organized and engage partners and the community. A successful Arbor Day event will showcase your organization's accomplishments and be reflective of Arbor Day's message.

### **Assemble a Local Arbor Day Committee**

An important component in organizing a successful Arbor Day celebration is selecting an Arbor Day committee. The role of the committee is to provide support, assistance and resources in the planning of your Arbor Day event. Volunteers, business partners and local government officials will be valuable participants in your event. Local schools, nurseries, and neighborhood groups are other examples of organizations that may provide resources, such as time and money, into completing your Arbor Day celebration.

### **Choose an Event**

How will you celebrate Arbor Day? Tree-planting events are held throughout Michigan, and can be useful as fund-raising events, as an educational and social activity, and helpful to recruit more Arbor Day patrons. Michigan Arbor Day events include programs where seedlings are distributed to citizens, school children, or Arbor Day participants.

### **Scheduling your Celebration**

When choosing a date for your Arbor Day celebration, remember to consider other events taking place in the community. Convenient timing is important in recruiting the maximum number of participants. Throughout the planning of your Arbor Day event it is important to keep the local media up-to-date, and consider the media in scheduling.

Consider partnering with a similar cause to strengthen your event!

## **Where will the Event be held? Location, Location, Location**

It is important that your Arbor Day event is held at a location accessible to the whole community. Your community members are important resources and they may help to provide space for the celebration. Visit a site before making a final decision. Make sure the site can accommodate your celebration and anticipated attendance.

## **Define Event Goals**

What outcomes do you hope to achieve with your Arbor Day celebration? Brainstorm with your committee to determine desired outcomes for your event. Develop a sound plan that will produce a successful celebration, and evaluate your strategy's effectiveness in reaching desired goals.

## **Media and Publicity**

Throughout the planning of your Arbor Day event it is important to keep the local media informed. Doing this can help encourage local support, as well as providing an avenue to get your needs met. Before sending press releases or public service announcements out, make sure to establish a personal relationship with those people you are sending material to. A marketing and media-relations plan increases your organization's visibility and generates positive exposure for your organization.

## **Funding**

When organizing an Arbor Day event, funding or in-kind services, materials and time are important issues that need to be addressed early in the planning process. First, develop a realistic budget that identifies all event needs. Once they have been defined, start tapping into the resources that the Arbor Day committee members have access to. In addition to the Arbor Day committee, look into soliciting donations, materials, equipment or time from businesses or corporations in the area.

## **How to Create an Effective Plan**

- Determine objectives and tasks that need to be completed in order to reach goals.
- Utilize all your volunteers and committee members! Assign people to specific tasks and set deadlines.
- Involve the media. Look for creative ways to engage the community and publicize your event. Prepare a media kit for your organization.
- Use a checklist to make sure all resources needed to achieve your goal are available.
- Create a contingency plan- things can go wrong.
- Provide detailed instructions on how to run the event in case the coordinator is not available.
- Develop a detailed agenda for your Arbor Day Event. Utilize maps and time-tables.



# Event Execution

## **Celebration Day**

After all of the planning, Arbor Day has arrived. To prepare for a smooth celebration, you should walk-through the event beforehand. Make sure your committee members and volunteers are well-informed and are notified of any last minute changes. Take pictures of the celebration, and share the pictures with members of the community, partner organizations, and the media. Show your appreciation for all of those involved by creating customized certificates acknowledging their efforts.

## **Evaluate**

During your event, make sure to step back and evaluate the process. Involve your committee and volunteers in conducting an evaluation of the celebration. You may also send out surveys to community participants assessing their satisfaction with the event.

- What areas of planning the celebration were successful?
- What could be improved next year?
- Were our goals achieved?
- Did our event produce the desired impact?
- Did we generate enough media coverage for our event?
- How could we gain more publicity next time?
- Did we recruit new patrons or get more funding?

## **Show your Appreciation**

After your Arbor Day celebration has come to an end, be sure to publicize your accomplishments. At the end of the celebration, conclude with a polite request for future donations or volunteer commitments.

- In the month following your celebration, mail or email event photos to all involved committee members and volunteers,
- Thank your volunteers, sponsors, and all other sources of support for making the event possible.

- Inform the media of the success of your event through a post-event summary. The summary should involve your accomplishments, who participated, why Arbor Day is important, and your upcoming events.
- Provide prospective donors, grant officers, and community affairs executives with a summary of your celebration.
- Send a donation request letter to all prospective donors. This letter should highlight the year's achievements and identify next year's goals.

## **Arbor Day Event Ideas**

Here are some suggestions for a successful Arbor Day Celebration. You can find more ideas on our website....

- An Arbor Day celebration can be a simple and brief gathering or an elaborate all-day event. Decide the scale of your event
- Many Arbor Day Events include programs where seedlings are distributed to citizens, school children or Arbor Day participants. View our website for information on resources that are helpful when looking for trees.
- Your celebration can be a fun and memorable experience for adults and children alike. It is especially meaningful to children if they understand the history of Arbor Day and have learned the significance of trees prior to the ceremony being held.
- Have a tree sale that offers popular, high-quality trees at decent prices.
- Sponsor a Community Contest: A photo, poster, or poetry contest can be helpful in engaging the community and bringing attention to your event.
  - Ask local businesses to donate prizes for contest winners.
- Host an Arbor Day hike or nature walk. Organize a group of people to walk through a local park or neighborhood and have someone lead the hike who is knowledgeable about local flora and fauna.
  - If the hike is targeted towards children, have a contest for who can identify the most tree species.
  - Involve a scavenger hunt in the hike- when individual identifies item on list, the guide or an adult can sign their list.
- A basic celebration may include greetings by a school principal or community leader, a reading of the history of Arbor Day and engagement of the local community.
  - Children and adults may sing songs and read poems about trees, planting trees, and Arbor Day
  - Plant a tree together and demonstrate proper tree care. Children may be asked to help covering roots with shovelful or handful of soil.

- Place a small tag or sign close to the tree listing participant's names
  - A principal or community leader may be asked to close the ceremony with a poem, song, or brief statement about community-health and trees.
- A more elaborate community festival may include:
- Decorate the area with balloons and posters
  - Distribute Arbor Day materials including information pamphlets and memorabilia
  - Ask local businesses and organizations to host booths and donate prizes for celebration.
  - Provide entertainment for children with “nature and tree oriented” arts & crafts, face-painting, and story-telling.
  - Contact local park or business to reserve area and coordinate with local-government and police to ensure safety and legitimacy of event
  - Send RSVP invitations to local officials and involve them in celebration. Make their role in celebration (such as speech giving) clear in the invitation.
  - Your celebration can be made more festive by inviting a local band to play or bringing in local entertainers like clowns and mimes.

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**



# Arbor Day Checklist

## CHECKLIST FOR ARBOR DAY EVENT PLANNING

This checklist highlights important parts of your event planning and should help your organization process.

- Discuss event ideas with Arbor Day Committee and volunteers
- Make an organized plan on how to prepare for your event
- Create a budget
- Assign individuals and committees with tasks and deadlines.

Different Tasks to be completed may include but are not limited to:

- Selecting Site for event
  - Prepare site (making sure adequate parking, restrooms, etc.)
  - Recruiting community involvement and volunteers
  - Fundraising
  - Marketing and media coordination
  - Acquisition of equipment (trees, tools, other materials)
- 
- Secure the participation of local businesses, community organization, and other possible funders
  - Show appreciation for partners and involved community members
  - Create an Arbor Day Proclamation
  - Provide volunteers with certificates of participation after the event.
  - Invite local officials, school principals, and other community activists and speakers to the event.
  - Develop contingency plan- schedule a rain-date if your event is outdoors.
  - Provide all individuals with finalized schedule of event
  - Download free Arbor Day materials online and order promotional products, such as bumper-stickers, T-shirts, and banners.

- \_\_\_ Ask important questions- What could go wrong, and how will we handle it? Who is bringing what? How will we distribute educational materials? Where will guests sit? Where will the media sign in?

### **Day of Event Checklist**

- \_\_\_ Make sure all organizers arrive early so you can run through the final plan and address any last-minute glitches.
- \_\_\_ Start the event on time, and ensure plans go according to schedule.
- \_\_\_ Check sound and lighting equipment
- \_\_\_ Recognize and thank all partners and volunteers
- \_\_\_ Committee members and volunteers should be clear on their role in the Arbor Day celebration.
- \_\_\_ Event Clean-up
  - \_\_\_ Return borrowed Equipment
  - \_\_\_ Assign clean-up duties

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**



# Promotional Tools

## **EVENT PROMOTION AND PROMOTIONAL TOOLS**

### **Promoting your Event**

One of the most important tasks during Arbor Day will be promoting your celebration to the residents, partners, and general public. You can refer to the Media relations section of this planning kit for tips on how to get the attention of traditional media.

Aside from the traditional media, there are many creative, effective and relatively inexpensive ways to publicize your Arbor Day celebration. This Planning Kit contains ideas for tools you can use to spread the word. Some are featured in this Planning and Promotion Kit and are also downloadable from the Michigan Arbor Day Alliance website ([www.miarbordayalliance.com](http://www.miarbordayalliance.com))

Available tools include templates for:

- Press Release
- Sample Resolutions and Proclamations
- Checklist for Event Planning and Execution
- Sample Fact Sheet about Trees

You will also find in this Kit:

- Sample scripts for talking with the media
- Photography guidelines

## **Other Tools You Might Consider Include The Following:**

### **Fliers**

Fliers can be used as announcements, invitations or signs for bulletin boards and yards. Mail them to residents and give them to schools and local organizations to distribute. Ask local businesses to display fliers in their storefronts. Localize them with your organization's logo and be creative by adding clip art.

### **Certificates**

Michigan Arbor Day certificates (included) are a simple and effective way to thank volunteers, partners and staff. They also work well as awards for contests or participation. They can be framed for a quick and inexpensive recognition gift.

### **Letterhead**

Letterhead can be used as you correspond with the many partners and special guests who are helping you make this year's Michigan Arbor Day celebration the best yet.

### **Resolutions**

Resolutions and proclamations are a highly effective way to involve your local city council or mayor in Arbor Day and to spread your message. They help record Michigan Arbor Day and your organization's accomplishments in the records of your town, county or city. Resolutions may also be useful in alerting elected officials to your work.

The process of putting forth a resolution:

- Contact your city council representative and find out if he or she would be interested in introducing this resolution before the council.
- Once you have confirmed that he or she will do so, provide information about Arbor Day and your organization's programs to the city council. The resolution will then be introduced and the city council will vote on it.

## **Proclamations**

The process for securing a proclamation is very similar to putting forth a resolution. A proclamation only requires one signature (usually the mayor) and does not require a vote.

The process for securing a proclamation:

- Send a formal letter to the mayor's office asking if he or she would be interested in signing a proclamation for Michigan Arbor Day.
- Provide a copy of the sample resolution you would like the mayor to issue.
- Provide information about your organization's mission as well as your plans for Arbor Day.
- Place a follow up phone call with the official's office.
- If the mayor agrees to participate, be sure to alert the media and invite partners and community leaders to the signing.

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**



# Media Relations

## **GETTING STARTED**

Celebrating Arbor Day provides an excellent opportunity to work with the media to highlight the accomplishments of your organization. Different media tools such as photo ops and press conferences enable you to spotlight your organization's success and future plans.

Visibility of your organization can be used to attract new partners or customers and reward volunteers or recognize funders. Presenting a responsible and consistent image assists in controlling the public's opinion of your organization. Provide the media with newsworthy materials that clearly communicate your messages and demonstrate your availability to assist them in producing a story.

## **KNOW YOUR RESOURCES**

### **Establish Print and Broadcast Media Contacts**

One of the first steps in capturing the media's attention is to develop a list of appropriate media contacts. Media contact information can be obtained from lists on the Internet, in the public directories or the library.

Identify reporters and news outlets that typically cover your type of event or organization. Small newspapers can be useful in targeting a specific audience and marketing at a neighborhood level.

Your media list should include contact information for all types of media, including radio, TV, magazines, trade publications and newspapers. First determine a media outlet's target audience, and make sure they are appropriate. Contact information including name, reporter's or editor's name, address, phone number, fax number, email address, and submission guidelines, preferences and deadlines should be obtained from all relevant media outlets. Make sure your list is up to date.

## **Photography**

Photography is a valuable tool that can be used to capture events and accomplishments can be recorded throughout the year. Photos are one of the most effective ways to inform the public of your name and message. Photographs can be used in a variety of ways:

- To give to the media for coverage.
- To design exhibits and bulletin boards.
- To record the before-and-after appearance of your project area.
- To post on your website, volunteer blogs and social networking sites.
- To illustrate your organization's achievements in your annual report.

Michigan Arbor Day offers a great opportunity to capture volunteers planting trees, your board members working together, or your board president cutting the ribbon at a new pocket park. Photos can easily be transformed into a presentation you can share online.

## **How to Take Good Photographs of your Event**

Plan on taking plenty of photos at your Arbor Day Celebration. If possible, hire a professional photographer or ask a local photographer to donate his or her services. Think in advance about how you would like to use the pictures you take. Where will you use your photos? Whatever your purpose, be mindful about what you are shooting and how it might ultimately look.

Digital cameras make it easy to eliminate photos you don't want, but they can make you forget basic rules such as taking time to compose the picture, framing it well, and having the focus where you want it. You will also need a high resolution (at least 200 dpi) digital camera if you intend to use the photos in a high-quality publication. If you are shooting 35 mm, you can get your photos on a CD first, which also enables you to edit photos and ignore photos you don't want.

Pictures can either be posed or candid. Candid photos have a greater emotional appeal, but posed photographs are sometimes easier to take than candid. Even if you prefer candid, you should get a posed picture with your principal funders, executive director, mayor, and resident leaders, plus the Arbor Day banner.

The key to securing continuing media support is establishing credibility. Reporters, editors and media partners recognize and appreciate sources with experience or an understanding of how the process works. The key to establishing and developing a positive working relationship with the media is credibility. If the reporter gets to know you as credible, dependable and trustworthy, you are on your way to a long-term relationship that can bring much-needed attention to your organization's work.

The reporter also benefits by having you as an expert in your field and as a good source of news and information. Whether it's to pitch a story, confirm an interview, provide new details, or follow up on an advisory, each encounter you have should contribute toward developing this relationship. Always remember to thank the reporter personally and in writing for any coverage they provide.

## **Work the Angle**

Increase your chances of receiving media attention by making sure your story is newsworthy.

You might also tie the story to a recent local headline, national story or emerging trend. Interesting or surprising statistics lend credibility. Provide a fact sheet about Arbor Day and the benefits of trees. Outlets usually plan seasonal features that might be relevant. Articles that reveal secrets (insiders' tips) or solve common problems in an innovative way can work. Of course the event itself might provide all the excitement needed to generate interest!

## **Identify Your Voice**

It might be useful to establish a publicity committee to help with your media outreach efforts, but you should decide in advance who will speak for your organization. This includes deciding who will make media calls (one person calls each contact—no doubling up!), respond to inquiries, and serve as the media spokesperson, handling any interviews.

You may also wish to identify a back-up spokesperson in case the lead person is unavailable for follow-up calls.

Make sure that anyone who will work with the media is prepared. Try to establish a rapport with the interviewer prior to taping and let the interviewer know what you would like to stress and what you hope to accomplish. Be succinct and repeat your primary messages.

Try to respond to questions with direct answers (“sound bites” are helpful!). Illustrate key messages with stories about real life situations. Stay focused. Look directly at the interviewer, not at the camera. Make sure to thank the reporter for his or her time.

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**



# Media Tools

## **MASTER THE MEDIA TOOLS**

There are many tools you can use to help with your media outreach:

- Pitch Letter
- Media Kit
- News Releases
- Media Call Sheet
- Public Service Announcements
- Letter-to-the-Editor
- Op-Ed
- Media Advisory
- Arbor Day Fact Sheet
- Sample Fact Sheet about Trees
- A Phone Call

### **Pitch Letter**

A pitch letter is used to spark a journalist's interest in your story. Pitch letters are usually addressed to a specific editor or journalist. Pitch letters should be tailored to a specific audience and convey why your story will be of interest to readers or viewers.

- Have an intriguing lead.
- Keep the letter to one page.
- Address the letter to a specific editor by name and personalize as much as possible.
- Communicate why your story would be of interest to readers or viewers.

- Send pitch letters out about two weeks before the announcement.
- Indicate when you will follow up with a phone call and be sure to keep the appointment.

### **A Photo for your story**

You must create a visual story to make your celebration appealing to news and media outlets. A group of enthusiastic volunteers provides a great visual. If possible, hire a photographer or videographer to capture the celebration. Before and after pictures of your project area will help to show the project's impact. Pictures of individuals can be great at conveying emotion and make for an interesting story.

### **Showcase High-Profile Participation**

Invite local political leaders and congressional representatives to attend your Arbor Day celebration, and arrange for interviews with the press. You will increase public awareness of your celebration, and also gain political support.

Make your participant informed of your purpose and your organization's accomplishments and needs, and of how they can positively support the community through their ongoing involvement.

### **Explore the Web**

Story ideas can also be communicated to media outlets through "e-pitching-" sending information to reporters via email. Sending an e-mail will save paper, time, and is the preferred means of communication of many reporters. Use this opportunity to provide a link to your website — as well as to Michigan Arbor Day Alliance ([miarborday.citymax.com](http://miarborday.citymax.com)).

Be sure your website is up to date, and make information you want the reporter to see easily accessible. A link to your news release and media information should be on your organization's home page. From the news release, you could link to details about your

Arbor Day event, your organization's success as part of the national Arbor Day network, your organization's positive impact on the community, partners and funders that have contributed to the organization's success, and to any other content that might help build your story. Ask your partners to post information about your celebration and links to your website on their websites. Utilize community resources and explore online media outlets that might pick up your story.

### **Media Advisory**

A media advisory alerts the media of an event or press conference that gives information about your celebration. The Media Advisory is concise and should include the place, date, time and purpose of an event or press conference and who to contact. The media advisory should be distributed to media assignment editors in the morning three to four days prior to your event and then once more the day before your event. Place a call and confirm that the assignment editors have received your media advisory and ask whether they will cover your event.

- Include your organization's name, phone and fax number of a well-informed contact person. Also include individual's e-mail address.
- Give basic information such as event place, date, time, purpose and contact information.
- At the bottom of the page, type ### and center it. This indicates the conclusion of our message.

### **Press Release**

The press release is the day-of-event notice that documents all the important features of your celebration. It should include references to sponsors, speakers, participants, and partners. Make your celebration newsworthy by putting thought into your news release. Try to include one or two quotes from someone with a vested interest in your organization. The news release should be limited to two pages, but one page is desirable. An effective press release should start with a catchy and cogent headline to spark the interest of the reader. Spend some time thinking about the angle and try to make it newsworthy. To summarize some key points:

- Include name, phone, mobile, fax, email, website of a well-informed spokesperson.
- Include the basics: who, what, when, where and why in the lead of your release.
- Type “-more-” and center it at the bottom of every page except the last.
- Type and center ### at the bottom of the last page.
- Some media outlets will need a longer lead-time than others, perhaps four to six weeks in advance. A fax or email reminder one to two days in advance of your celebration may also be appropriate.
- Follow up with a telephone call within one week.
- A release can also be sent immediately after the event. Such a press release would include photos or important details about the outcome.

### **Media Call Sheets**

A media call sheet can be used to record details about your contacts with media outlets. Be sure to have multiple call sheets available for unsolicited phone calls from news organizations.

### **Public Service Announcements (PSA)**

Public service announcements are non-commercial announcements or advertisements used by both print and broadcast media. PSAs should be written in :10, :20 or :30 second spots.

- Telephone various stations’ community affairs representatives or public service directors to gauge their interest in your PSAs and find out how to effectively place the spot.
- Photos and visuals should be provided as slides or matte photos.
- Use action verbs to make the PSA conversational.
- Make the PSA triple-spaced and use only upper case letters.
- Run the PSA three to four weeks out and make sure it’s at the station at least 10 days prior to the start date.
- At the bottom of the page, include the date the media should stop broadcasting the PSA (“the kill-date”).

- Be sure to thank the editor and individuals involved at the station(s) that run your PSA.

### **Letter-to-the-Editor**

Write letters to local newspapers about your organization and your Arbor Day events. Letters to the Editor sections are the most popular sections of the newspaper. Encourage your partners or residents to write letters, and supply them with your fact sheets, brochures and annual report.

- Identify your subject, state your position and support your point of view.
- Your letter to the editor should be succinct and address the facts.
- Fax or email your letter to the editorial page editor.
- Write a thank you letter if they print the letter.
- The letter-to-the-editor should be 200 words or less.

### **Op-Ed**

The op-ed page (so named because it appears opposite the newspaper's editorial page) is usually read by those you most want to reach in the community, including business leaders and policymakers. Of course, that's why placing an op-ed can be so difficult, especially in larger newspapers, but it can be well worth the effort. Here are some guidelines for op-eds:

- Provide a timely hook. Editors are interested in op-eds that offer a fresh perspective about what is currently in the news.
- The editor or op-ed may be able to provide some advice about how to improve your chances for success. Don't hesitate to call in advance and ask for help.
- Utilize your support. An op-ed signed by a local leader may be more effective—and more likely to get placed. You can ask this individual if he or she is willing, and offer to provide our sample op-ed for his or her staff to edit.
- Make the op-ed about 750 words long, with straightforward language, logical, persuasive reasoning and a hopeful tone.
- An op-ed is usually only offered to one publication at a time.
- Fax or mail the op-ed to the editorial page editor.
- Place a follow up phone call.
- Write a thank you letter if they run your op-ed.

## **Media Kit**

A media kit is a comprehensive promotional packet containing information about your organization and/or event. Its purpose is to provide reporters with an intriguing story to write about, so it should contain information, story ideas and facts that would be of interest to their target audiences. A media kit usually contains a wide variety of materials (listed below). Take care in choosing only the materials relevant to achieving your goals:

- Cover letter
- Photos (5x7 or larger if possible, or provide a disk with good-quality digital photo(s); photos should include names and descriptive captions)
- Michigan Arbor Day press releases
- Arbor Day (and other) fact sheets
- Michigan Arbor Day media advisory
- Any brochures you may have about your organization
- Biographies of key individuals and high-profile participants
- Video, audiotapes, or sound bytes
- Your organization's profile and mission statement
- Products and services brochure
- Sponsor and/or partner list
- White papers
- Copies of clippings from prior press coverage
- Testimonials
- Suggested interviews

## **A Follow-up Phone Call**

Always follow up with a phone call from you or another spokesperson (board member, resident, volunteer PR professional or student intern). A phone call is the most effective way to gain the media's attention and get them interested in your organization.

When placing a phone call to a media outlet, be well prepared. Being well prepared may entail having a loose script in front of you and access to all event details, benefits of joining your organization, and memorized key points. You may be better prepared and more comfortable if you have a trial run of the phone call with a colleague or friend. Get to the point and limit the pitch to your basic story idea in 20 seconds or less.

Make sure you call at a convenient time, and always call when scheduled. Secure all event details with the reporter and offer to make photo and/or interview arrangements. Make sure to thank the reporter if they chose to cover your event.

If the reporter is not interested, ask that the information about your organization remain on file for the future.

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**

## Sample Phone Script

It is helpful to identify an individual who is reporting events or issues similar to yours, and call them directly. You can also obtain press contacts from colleagues from other local nonprofits or environmental organizations.

Editors and assignment editors can be useful in informing the media of your celebration. If you contact a large news outlet in a major city, ask for the assignment editor or the news desk and launch into your pitch whenever someone answers.

*Hi. My name is **[insert name]** and I am the **[insert title]** at **[insert name of organization]**.*

*We are having an event **[state when]** that I think you would be interested in covering. **[Describe event and participants]**. This is one of our most important events of the year **[or season]** and will include many new volunteers who will help to make real improvements in our community. The project and people involved would make a great story **[with some great visuals for your paper/station]**. You could also use this as an opportunity to report on the many benefits of planting trees and conservation efforts aimed at preserving trees are getting a lot of attention in communities across the country. Our event is part of Michigan Arbor Day Alliance, a national celebration of organizations like ours that are doing tree planting all around the country during April.*

*I'd like to send you some information about us and our event in hopes that you would be interested in covering it. What would be the best way to get it to you?*

When speaking with the media, it is not always appropriate to recite a script. Be prepared to answer any question the reporter or editor may ask. Have informational and media materials ready to fax, mail or email immediately. Also be prepared to repeat your script or to leave a short, voice mail message with the basic information and an indication that you are sending over more details. The voice mail should always include your contact information.

*Hi. This is **[your name]**. I spoke with you **[or a colleague of theirs and state when]** and wanted to remind you of our event on **[state date and time]**. I just sent you a media advisory with all the particulars and wondered if you have any questions or would like additional background.*

Know the facts and be prepared to respond to questions. If the editor or reporter doesn't have interest in this event, thank him or her for their time and let him or her know of any upcoming events. Welcome future phone calls and questions and be polite no matter what their response. It is important to build a long term relationship and establish credibility. This will foster future support of your organization and events.

Reminder calls and emails confirming event details and providing updates and changes can be made the day before and on the morning of the event.

Remember that weekend TV reporters and camera operators are busy, and assignments are often not finalized until the last minute. Try to accommodate their needs and plan on providing action footage whenever they do show up.

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**



# Partnership

## **The Benefits**

Involving community members and partners in Arbor Day festivities is a vital step in the process of creating, enhancing and sustaining relationships that will contribute to your organization's success well into the future. Partners might be volunteers, community leaders, local businesses and vendors, other nonprofits, government agencies and officials, or any community member touched by your organization.

Partnership may provide your organization with an opportunity to obtain volunteer support, direct funding, in-kind donations, visibility and networking opportunities, and access to additional resources. It is important that you inform your potential partners of the benefits of partnering with your organization. Benefits may include contact with potential customers or constituents, media exposure, networking opportunities, increased sales, or goodwill.

## **Involving Your Partners**

Arbor Day celebrating enables partners to participate in a tangible event that displays your organizations past accomplishments and looks forward to future goals. Arbor Day is also a chance to recruit new partners into your organization and to involve current partners and volunteers in new ways. You should provide your partner with a well-detailed event plan that makes it easy for them to participate.

## **Designate a Partner Contact Person**

Assign each partner to a specific, well-informed contact person within your organization. This person will initiate contact with potential Arbor Day partners, work to ensure that their needs are fulfilled and see that they are kept engaged.

## **How to Involve your Partners**

The major role of the partner coordinator will be to determine and develop the types of activities in which your partners would like to be involved. These activities should be relevant and beneficial to both parties. Research your potential partner—match your benefits to partner goals and needs and then tailor the request or proposal to reflect the organization's mission and goals.

## **See Existing Relationships in New Ways and Invite New Partners**

Arbor Day is an opportunity to interact with existing partners in new ways and to involve them in the activities of your organization. Your Arbor Day celebration also provides the occasion for local business people who have not previously been involved with your organization to celebrate your accomplishments and to participate in a community event.

## **Communicate Clearly**

Create a detailed partner communications strategy for each type of partner. Provide your partner with a reliable contact and be readily available and responsive to partner needs, suggestions and questions. Make sure you let partners know how and when you will be communicating with them. Make your goals clear and be consistent when communicating expectations, deadlines and deliverables. Obtain commitments and event details in writing.

## **Partner Evaluation**

Ask all partners and stakeholders involved to evaluate your celebration and their overall experience. Have them share personal anecdotes and suggestions.

## **Say Thank You**

It is very important that you thank all individuals who support your Arbor Day efforts. Be creative. Cards, letters, email, website recognition, media recognition, phone calls,

photos, specialty items, prizes, awards, certificates and public recognition all work to thank your patrons. This could be the most critical step in securing future support from your partners.

**Use available space to make notes and write down ideas.**



# Additional Resources

Below is a list of possible organizations that may be valuable resources in planning your Arbor Day Celebration.

- **Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD):** Local Environmental Contact/ Possible resource for seedlings & trees.  
(<http://macd.org/>)
- **National Arbor Day Foundation:** Educational Materials  
(<http://www.arborday.org/arborday/>)
- **Michigan Garden Club:** Potential Partners, volunteers, knowledge base.  
(<http://www.michigangardenclub.com/>)
- **High School and University Environmental Clubs:** Volunteers, youth involvement
- **Local Libraries:** Educational Materials, expanded knowledge base, & community resources
- **Arboriculture Society of Michigan (ASM)** - knowledge-base, tree care informational materials, contacts (<http://www.asm-isa.org/home.html>)
- **Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Urban and Community Forestry:** Resources, knowledge, tree care information  
(<http://www.michigan.gov/dnr>)
- **Conservation Chapters:** Educational Materials, workshop opportunities, informational booths at events
  - ◆ Michigan United Conservation Clubs (<http://www.mucc.org>)
  - ◆ National Wildlife Federation (<http://www.nwf.org>)
  - ◆ No Child Left Inside (<http://www.cbf.org/>)
  - ◆ Michigan Botanical Clubs (<http://www.michbotclub.org/>)

## **Tips to Keep Your Event Green**

- Encourage attendees to carpool, bicycle, walk or take public transportation to your event
- Establish a secure place for bike parking
- Set-up recycling stations
- Compost food waste
- Serve condiments in bulk instead of individual packages
- Use as little disposable products as possible
- Consider E-Invites instead of large paper mailings
- Limit giveaways to items that can be recycled only
- Set-up an arts and crafts exhibit made from recycled materials
- Make double sided handouts
- Give attendees the option to return or recycle unwanted handouts at the end of the event
- Use name badges that can be re-used and collected for the next year's event
- If providing food, consider local producers
- Provide watering stations and reusable containers instead of bottled water
- Make arrangements to take excess food to a local food bank or shelter
- REDUCE, REUSE, RECYLCE