

A Positive Pivot The Salvation Army

Challenge

Annually, The Salvation Army in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky (TSA) engages the community with events and fundraisers that attract media attention to further its mission of meeting human need without discrimination. When the pandemic emerged in the early spring of 2020, O'Keeffe PR had to pivot to further amplify our strategic communications plan when TSA's services were needed more than ever. In addition, we weren't sure how long this would last, so our plans continued to evolve rapidly and in tandem with the mission-critical priorities of The Salvation Army USA affecting all local communities.

Solution

We pivoted to focus on the prioritized mission of TSA during the pandemic. Providing emergency food assistance to families, children and individuals has always been a core value of TSA, and in 2020 it was needed more than ever. We compared the meals provided just during the first few weeks of the pandemic and found that the number of meals we provided in just six weeks' time were double those of the previous year.

This was extraordinary news and we needed to get the message out to the public that the immediate donations to The Salvation Army were having a profound effect on hunger locally. We invited the news to come to Salvation Army food pantries to see officers and volunteers in action. We offered interviews with key TSA personnel throughout the pandemic. They were able to offer key insights to the media on what it was like on the front lines of the pandemic. TSA continually looked for positive stories that we could share with the community; volunteers delivering meals, teenagers organizing fundraisers, and generous donations from local companies. We expanded our regular pitching efforts to include radio, thereby getting our story in front of a greater audience.

Results

We had a record number of media placements for the year. In 2020, TSA had 70 individual media stories, with many stories running multiple times over a 24-hour period. Those numbers include:

- 28 Major interviews of TSA personnel
- 54 TV placements
- 3 Radio placements
- 13 Print placements

The number of distinct stories increased by 300% over 2019. This demonstrates that, even in the face of extreme uncertainty, a well-thought out and executed media strategy can offer significant benefits and help to ensure that your message is heard by those who need to hear it.



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