

Finding Fun and Fitness

The repeated f's in the "headline" make it snappy but not over the top

Play outside or watch TV inside? When given the option, children around the country are choosing indoor activity; a choice that health officials fear is contributing to childhood obesity.

The first two paragraphs act as the "lead." They describe the problem and the solution implemented by WFSU and its community partners.

WFSU's Kim Kelling Engstrom and her community partners in Tallahassee, Florida have a solution: geocaching. Often described as a high-tech treasure hunt, Kelling Engstrom sees geocaching as a way to entice kids into exploring nature while exercising their bodies and minds. "It's a great way to teach kids about mapping and navigation while promoting fun, physical activity." With that idea, the "Kids Hunt for Health" initiative was born.

"Kids Hunt for Health" has already reached over 1,000 youth. This fall, even more will experience geocaching when WFSU and the Tallahassee YMCA present a hunt at SUPER FAMILIES DAY, a celebration encouraging families to be active. Characters from the new PBS broadcast SUPER WHY! will also join the fun.

This story is formatted with a sidebar to highlight ongoing activity. A sidebar is also a great place for another quote or to reiterate one that's embedded in the body of the story.

Two paragraphs make up the "main body" of the story. They describe the general activity, give a few details about the tools used to teach geocaching, survey data and an explanation of the fantastic results.

WFSU and its partnering coalition of schools, neighborhood centers and parks created a series of activities to introduce geocaching to families and educators. Using the PBS NOVA and Geocaching.com Web sites, participants learned to use the hand-held GPS tool and sampled kid-friendly geocache hikes.



A photo taken at one of the geocache events visually demonstrates the success. It clearly shows what the kids are doing, making the story more real.

The "summary" of the story includes a direct quote from the community partner that further emphasizes the success of the initiative.

The results of "Kids Hunt for Health" were fantastic, said Kelling Engstrom. Participant surveys showed that over half the youth said they would rather be outside geocaching than inside watching TV, and over half hoped they would geocache again with their families.

Laurie Molina, Ph.D., coordinator of the Florida Geographic Alliance and one of the partners in the initiative, agreed with the assessment. "It was fabulous! ...And anyone can do this with a little training and some practice. Really you just have to be smart enough to turn the GPS on and then turn the kids loose with it."

How do you write a story of impact?

Think about your audience first

The audience for this story is a community partnering organization. They'd like to include the story in their newsletter. A staff member of the organization is a major "character" in it for that reason.

Choose the important piece

This story features "Kids Hunt for Health," a major initiative at WFSU Public Television. We can't write about all the activity components in the story, so we've chosen to focus on the component that achieved the best results: the geocache hikes.

Remember: people connect to people

Direct quotes from the employee at the public television station and the community partner demonstrate the excitement they feel about the activity and compel the reader to care about it.

Make it personal

Data from participant surveys is interspersed with anecdotal information, which makes the story personal. Photos also make the story "real" and help the reader become involved in it.

Follow a journalistic style.

Headline: Make it memorable and include action words ("jamming" with the youth in need, "sparking" a community to action).

Lead: Quick overview of the problem and the need for a solution. Also, hint at the positive result(s) of your activity so your audience understands its value early in the story.

Main Body: Give the key details of the activity, how the impact played out, what changed and who benefited. Demonstrate its value with data and quotes from those involved.

Summary: This is a great place for more data or a powerful quote, something you'd like to highlight. It should emphasize the "feel good" tone of the story.

Photos or video: Visuals are extremely important. They add depth to the story and help to involve the audience. Make sure you invite a professional photographer and/or videographer to some of your activities.