Engage local TV and radio

You can help spread the message of Spirit Day by reaching out to your local TV news stations and letting reporters know why you and millions of Americans are going purple on October 21. Here are some ways you can craft a story, pitch it to a broadcast outlet, and ensure that your Spirit Day activities get the spotlight they deserve.

- Local news broadcasts often air human interest-driven pieces, so sharing a unique story about your personal stance against bullying and the work being done in your community to create an inclusive and affirming environment for all people will grab a journalist’s attention.

- Frame your story in a way that appeals to media outlets. This will help them see why your story is newsworthy. You can focus on an event you’re holding for Spirit Day and why you are holding it, or tie the day’s message of acceptance to an issue in your community that speaks to local interests.

- A pitch – the way you package your story for the media – should be informative, interesting, and brief. Journalists and reporters will be working on a deadline, so make yourself available by providing contact information and having your message prepared. (See a sample pitch on p. 10)

- Once you have a pitch together, choose the broadcast outlet(s) you want to contact. Do your research by watching a few episodes of a given program to see if and how they handle issues like bullying or the LGBTQ community, or identify the outlets you have previously seen cover these topics. Find out if the station has covered Spirit Day before. Outlets with a record of fair, accurate and inclusive reporting are the best place to start pitching your story.

- Next, email or call the outlet(s) you chose. Contact producers, segment producers, news producers and assignment editors first, and know that you may need to try many departments before reaching the right person. If you know of a reporter that has covered Spirit Day previously, contact them and gauge whether they are willing to follow up on your previous work. Ideally, your story will air on or close to Spirit Day, so contact programs as far in advance of their production time as possible to better your chances of air time. Newsroom contact information is usually located on the outlet’s website.

- If you or people who are part of your story will be interviewed, prepare yourself and everyone else with straightforward and engaging talking points about the history of Spirit Day, what it involves, why you are participating, and what others can do to join the effort to end bullying. Remember that the media is a microphone for your message to reach others, so speak to the audience and not the interviewer. For example: “I am wearing purple for Spirit Day in a stand against bullying and to show my support for all young people.”

- Televised stories have a visual component, and having your purple as visible as possible will draw viewers’ attention. Wear purple, have purple signs, etc.

- Once your story has aired, follow up with the reporter and producers, and thank them for helping you share the message of Spirit Day. Your professionalism and gratitude can open doors for future coverage of LGBTQ stories.

- And do not forget to send GLAAD the link to the piece, so we can share it with the world.

Engage local newspapers

On October 21, Americans may find their favorite print and online news outlets going purple with articles and stories about Spirit Day and the movement to counter bullying of LGBTQ youth. You can help make this happen by reaching out to print and online media, pitching a well-framed story, and urging your community to go purple and take part in Spirit Day. Below are the tools you’ll need to effectively communicate your ideas to journalists and ensure that your message reaches your community.

- Print and online news outlets tend to give stories a longer, more in-depth platform, so consider how you can show as many dimensions of Spirit Day as possible in your story. This might mean mentioning why Spirit Day is important to different facets of your community, or by detailing the different ways that individuals and institutions can get involved.

- If you are submitting an op-ed, or guest opinion piece, follow all guidelines provided by the news outlet (usually provided on the outlet’s website). Generally, op-eds are 500-800 words, provide an intriguing opinion on a current topic or inform about a neglected topic, and contain a personalized message. Include relevant facts, but avoid an impenetrable or alarmist tone. This is a great opportunity to discuss issues like bullying and the needs of LGBTQ youth, which demand attention.

- When pitching your story to a reporter or editor, be brief, informative, and engaging. Confidently state why Spirit Day matters and convey why your particular piece or story is newsworthy. If pitching an event you want covered by print news, focus your attention on the “who, what, when, where and why,” with little extraneous information. (See a sample pitch on p. 10)

- Look at past coverage of Spirit Day, LGBTQ issues, or youth and bullying by the outlet(s) you plan to pitch. Was their coverage fair, accurate and inclusive? The outlet(s) with such coverage are the best place to start.

- Contact reporters who have covered issues relevant to your story if possible, or reach out to assignment editors and section editors. Small community papers may have a busier staff – be patient, persistent, and offer to help anyway you can.

- Respect deadlines by contacting outlets at appropriate times. For daily newspapers, reach out in the morning before reporters are on deadline for the following day’s stories. Earlier in the day and earlier in the week are usually best. Weekly newspapers have more predictable news cycles, so do your research and contact your chosen outlet(s) with enough advance to secure space for your story.

- If you are being interviewed for a print outlet, have your message prepared with concise and punchy talking points that explain what Spirit Day is, why and how you are participating, and how others can get involved. Tie the day to a relevant local issue around LGBTQ youth or bullying, if possible. Though it is print news, you should condense your message into sound bites that readers will digest easily and remember.

- After your piece runs, follow up with the reporter(s) and editor(s) you worked with and thank them for helping to spread the message of Spirit Day. Your professionalism and gratitude can open doors for future coverage of LGBTQ stories.

- As always, send GLAAD the link to the published story, so we can share it!
Sample pitch

Use the template below to contact your local print and broadcast news outlets. Be sure to include information about a local angle, such as a list of those people in your community that will be participating in Spirit Day.

SUBJECT: Join millions and go purple for anti-bullying on 10/21

Dear [NAME],

On October 20, millions of Americans will once again wear purple on Spirit Day in a stand against bullying and to show their support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth. Spirit Day is the largest, most visible anti-bullying campaign for LGBTQ youth in the country, and GLAAD, the nation’s leading LGBTQ media advocacy organization, is empowering youth to get others involved in this movement. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, LGBTQ youth are particularly vulnerable. This year, we are rallying everyone to show them support and love.

Would [OUTLET NAME] like to participate by going purple and sharing information about Spirit Day and anti-LGBTQ bullying on 10/21/21?

Among those who participated in previous years were public officials across party lines nationwide, 2021 included Vice President Kamala Harris, Celine Dion, Lena Dunham, Jake Gyllenhaal, Drew Barrymore, Jonas Brothers, The Cast Of HBO’s We’re Here with corporations like Target, Visible, Wells Fargo and as well as Disney/ABC, Comcast NBCUniversal, ViacomCBS, WarnerMedia, TikTok, Telemundo, and hundreds more schools, celebs, national landmarks, companies, nonprofits, and teams.

Possible ways you can participate:
• Publish or broadcast a story about Spirit Day, with information about local participants including [LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN YOUR AREA]
• Highlight the ways the pandemic has affected LGBTQ youth in your area with a feature in your publication
• Ask anchors to wear purple on air and share with viewers why your outlet supports Spirit Day.
• Turn your website’s logo purple and/or turn your Facebook and Twitter profile pictures purple [Tool here: glaad.org/spiritday]
• Share information about Spirit Day with your audience through social media channels

This year, Spirit Day is poised to be bigger and better than ever, with dozens more notables participating. Additionally, hundreds of celebrities are expected to take part again this year.

Today, 7 out of 10 LGBTQ students experience harassment while at school. Of the disproportionate number of LGBTQ students bullied in the past year, less than half of those targeted sought help from their schools, and even when cases were reported, school officials rarely acted. Spirit Day shows LGBTQ kids, teens, and young adults that there are people they can go to for help and acceptance.

For more ways to participate, including a list of participants, please visit glaad.org/spiritday.

[YOUR NAME]