

Using Photos in Your Advocacy Efforts

Is a picture really worth a thousand words? When it's a photo of a well-respected, local notable, and that person is pictured with an advocacy message about your library, it sure is! His or her visible association with your library instantly adds a measure of value in the eyes of many people. If the photo actually depicts the individual at your library, that's even better.

There are two kinds of photos you can use along with your advocacy message: those that already exist, and those you take yourself. If a local notable agrees to become a visible supporter of your library *and* agrees to let you use his or her image along with his or her advocacy message, the person may tell you how you can acquire a stock photo or may send you one he or she already has. This is certainly good, but even better, are photos that actually relate that person directly to your library.

For example, let's say your local notable or celebrity is a children's author or illustrator, and his message is all about the importance of the library as an early literacy place for each young child in your community. Think about how much more effective that message will be if the photo shows the author sitting with children in your story or puppet area, rather one that looks like a picture his agent uses over and over. It makes perfect sense. Here's another example: What if your local notable is a small business owner, and her advocacy message is that the library has the resources she needs to find vendors, attract customers and build her business? Photographing her using the library's computers or a business reference book will be far more eye-catching than the standard head shot she had taken for PR purposes. Got the idea?

Sometimes local notables are already coming to your library for programs or presentations. Ask them if, while they are there, you can take some photos and gather an advocacy statement for future use. That way, you will be able to build a file of spokespeople without having to go to the extra step of a cold solicitation.

You've learned that, if you want to ask a local notable or celebrity who is *not* scheduled to visit your library to be a visible advocacy spokesperson, the first thing to remember is to have *the right person* make the initial contact. The individual who makes the contact should also ask about using photos. If the notable says, "Certainly!" and a photo-taking session must be scheduled, that task can be assigned to the library director or manager, or another member of the library's staff, who can work out the details with the local notable. The person making the contact should tell the local notable why the library is asking for his or her help and explain how their support for your library will create a win-win situation for both the library and for the local notable.

Click [here \(PDF\)](#) for examples of three *real* local notables – John Coy a children's/young adult author, T. Mychael Rambo, an actor & vocalist, and the Elizabeth, Colorado Fire Department - who were glad to lend their names and faces as library advocates for this toolkit.

As with simple quotes, when you have a photo along with an advocacy statement, you can get a lot of mileage out of it:

- You can print posters and/or bookmarks with the local notable's photo and advocacy message, and make those available in your library branches.
- You can post your local notable's photo and advocacy message on your library's website.
- You can send out a press release to local media who might find that your library's creative advocacy initiative makes an interesting news story. If you send the media a story after you have photographed your local notable or celebrity, send a copy of your photograph with the press release.
- If you have an advocacy budget, you can purchase an ad in your local newspaper and use your local notable's picture and advocacy message that way.
- You can include a link to your library's website on its Facebook page so your Facebook readers can click and be directed to your local notable's image and advocacy message on the library's website.