

Community Television: A Resource for all Social Workers

Jacob Berelowitz, LMSW

Throughout the history of the social work profession, social workers have successfully advocated for and implemented changes in the social environment. In fact, some would say the distinct focus on person in the environment is one of the defining characteristics of social workers. In many interdisciplinary settings, social workers are viewed as the experts on available resources and their applications. One powerful resource for the dissemination of social work related information to the public is community television.

For Whom Is This a Valuable Resource?

Community television can be utilized to present many different kinds of material and therefore can educate audiences about a variety of issues. Although social workers practice in many different kinds of settings, this resource can be effectively adapted to the cause of most forms of social work.

As an example, I broadcasted an interview with Dr. Frances Brisbane, Dean of SUNY Stony Brook University School of Social Work, in which she discussed the mental health challenges faced by family caregivers. The purpose of this broadcast was two-fold. It was directed at the professional, academic, and political community to increase awareness of the necessity for funding, research, and programming for family caregivers. Additionally, it provided easy to understand dialogue that could benefit family caregivers and their friends.

Child, family, and school social workers can take advantage of videos that have already been developed by health departments which include material directed at specific age groups. For example, the NYC Health Department has a video of youth speaking to youth about peer pressure and the associated consequences. They also have videos available addressing the necessity of the elderly adjusting their lifestyles related to exercise and nutrition.

Clinical social workers can supplement their individual work with broader community service. Psychotherapy sessions whether group or individual, can be broadcast on air (with consent of the client) exemplifying for the larger community how talk therapy goes far beyond the misconception of being solely an on your back couch session with questions and answers surrounding a relationship with the parent. Additionally, broadcasting some definitions of services and description of available services can provide a greater awareness of mental health characteristics and the advantages to seeking help, and

where that help can be found. Finally, in addition to original material, many government organizations and pharmaceutical corporations have excellent educational videos that are available at no charge and can be broadcast to a large audience through community television.

Some social workers teach classes about how to make a budget, deal with anger, or develop other life skills. What we would normally view as workshop material, can be broadcast to a greater audience, on community television, providing a foundation of understanding which would then support subsequent treatment.

Another advantage of using community television is self portrayal of social workers. There is often discussion in the social work community of how to improve the ways that the public and the media perceive social workers. Public television provides such an opportunity. If the media does indeed play a large role in forming the public's view of social workers, then what better way to neutralize that impact than with a very similar tool; community television.

How Does It Work?

There are community and university television stations situated throughout the country including 21 in the state of New York.

Baldwinsville: Baldwinsville PAC-B

Cobleskill: Shopez Access, Inc.

Easthampton: LTV, Inc., Fairport Area Community Television FACT
Ithaca College Television

Tompkins County: Ithaca PEGASYS, Lockport Community TV LCTV

Mamaroneck: LMC-TV, Mayville Access Channel 5,
New Castle Community Television

New York-Bronx: Bronxnet

New York-Brooklyn: Brooklyn Community Access Television BCAT

New York-Manhattan: Manhattan Neighborhood Network

New York: Columbia University Student Television CTV

New York-Queens: Queens Public Television QPTV

Ossining: GO-TV Greater Ossining Television

Potsdam: WCKN Television

Rhinebeck: PANDA Community Broadcasting

Scarsdale Cable TV (Channel 71)

Staten Island Community Television Public Access Channels

Webster Community

The purpose of these television stations is to provide any individual within their community with the opportunity to broadcast video and reach a large amount of people in the same way that the major television networks do on a daily basis. If you can harness the power of more than one station then that increases the publicity of the message that you are conveying. For example, by broadcasting my interview with Dr. Brisbane on Brooklyn Community Access Television (BCAT) as well as Queens Public Television (QPTV), the interview reached close to a million people, providing psychoeducation on a mass level.

Gaining access to your local community television station and beginning to broadcast is not difficult. Most public television stations require a few months of basic training prior to allowing a member of the public to use their expensive studio equipment. However, this is not a lengthy or expensive training process and once completed it allows the person to use state of the art equipment similar to those used to create your favorite television shows and movies. Additionally if you are more comfortable creating video content without the studio, community television stations will air a certain amount of video content created by a resident of their neighborhood at no charge.

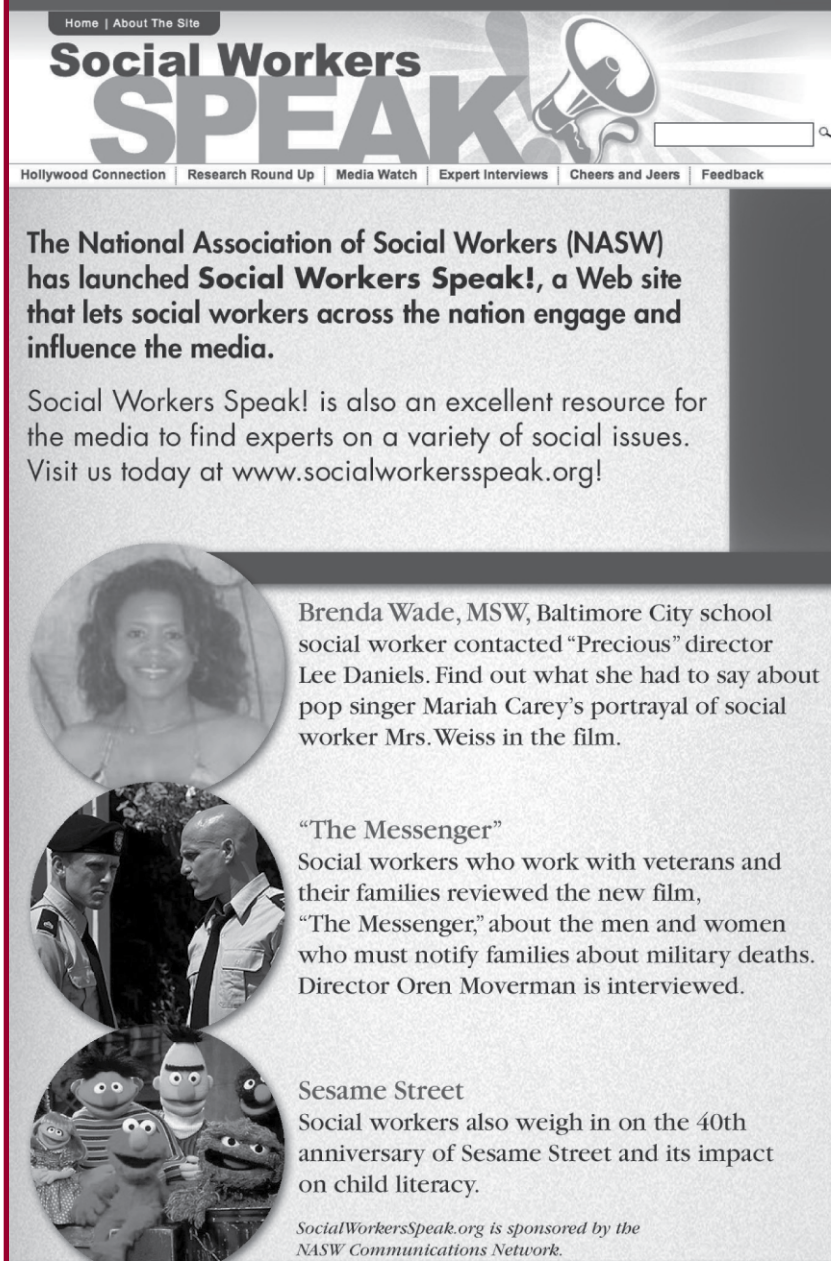
Another value of this investment of your time in creating video content is that you can use the videos in many other ways. It can be set up on a video monitor in a clinical setting (the waiting room), at a conference, or at a workshop at which you are presenting.

A Few Tips

One of the guidelines of community television stations is that the content cannot promote any product or individual and therefore no commercials are allowed. Additionally, community television stations are limited to featuring content from residents of their community. Usually, they will require documentation of residency before airing your content. However, in most cases, community television networks are willing to air content as long as it is presented to them by someone that does live in their community even if that individual did not produce the video content. Using this method, if you are part of a social service organization then you

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New Web Site Connects Social Workers to the Media



Home | About The Site

Social Workers SPEAK!

Hollywood Connection | Research Round Up | Media Watch | Expert Interviews | Cheers and Jeers | Feedback

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has launched Social Workers Speak!, a Web site that lets social workers across the nation engage and influence the media.

Social Workers Speak! is also an excellent resource for the media to find experts on a variety of social issues. Visit us today at www.socialworkerspeak.org!

Brenda Wade, MSW, Baltimore City school social worker contacted "Precious" director Lee Daniels. Find out what she had to say about pop singer Mariah Carey's portrayal of social worker Mrs. Weiss in the film.

"The Messenger"
Social workers who work with veterans and their families reviewed the new film, "The Messenger," about the men and women who must notify families about military deaths. Director Oren Moverman is interviewed.

Sesame Street
Social workers also weigh in on the 40th anniversary of Sesame Street and its impact on child literacy.

SocialWorkersSpeak.org is sponsored by the NASW Communications Network.


National Association of Social Workers
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can ask colleagues that may reside in the area of another community television network and they can submit your content for you.

Prior to beginning a community television project, be sure to educate yourself about relevant copyright laws. That being said, if you reach out to the owner of the copyrighted material and explain that you intend to use it for community television as a public service, in the majority of cases they will allow you to use it with paying a fee. Acquiring a blanket or unlimited release of information from any individuals appearing in your video is also recommended. It will provide you with the opportunity to maximize the effect of your content by reusing it in different ways.

Community television is a unique, powerful, and accessible medium for communicating social work related information to the public. From community organizers to clinical social workers, it is a resource that all social workers can add to their repertoire of methods for promoting environmental change.

For More Information & Resources on Community Television please visit my website: www.talktherapytv.org *Click on Links*

Jacob Berelowitz, LMSW, is Host and Producer of Talk Therapy Television. He can be reached at jacob@talktherapytv.org

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