

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL MEDIA

International Open Homes, Listening Hearts Weekend – June 2005

1. Phone your local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Ask to speak to the editor or news editor. Briefly explain that you are calling about the *International Open Homes, Listening Hearts Month* to be held in June.
2. Explain that: *“Initiatives of Change is an international network of people working towards positive change (beginning with themselves), as a means of encouraging cooperation and understanding between people of different cultural and faith backgrounds – locally and globally.”*
3. Tell him/her that you would like to send a press release on the local aspects and details of the weekend. A sample press release follows that may be used as is or modified.
4. Ask for the deadline for copy.
5. Then, send your press release to meet the deadline, including local information and your name, phone number, and email address at the bottom of the release (see sample press release).
6. You might ask if the editor would like a photograph to go with the story. If so, set up a “photo-shoot” with a small multicultural group of friends and photograph them enjoying a friendly cup of tea together. Ensure that you keep it tightly focused on the group. It may be that the newspaper would like to take their own photo of the group (ask which is preferred) and maybe the local television station might like to film the group, as well.
7. After the event, send another press release telling what happened on the day. An example: *Twenty-five residents in the D.C. area invited people of a different culture to share a meal and conversation for the International Open Homes, Listening Hearts this weekend as means of creating greater understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds and faiths. Several churches, mosques, synagogues, and/or temples also took the opportunity to learn more about each other’s cultures and faiths over a shared meal this weekend. etc. etc...*
8. Letters to the Editor of newspapers is also an effective way of communicating information to your local community.

The International Open Homes, Listening Hearts Month will be held during June in future years.

*For further information on dealing with the media,
please contact Will Jenkins at the National Office of Initiatives of Change in Washington, D.C.
(202) 872-9077 or will.jenkins@us.iofc.org*

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES WITH FOOD AND STORIES: A GLOBAL CELEBRATION ON JUNE 2005

Around the world during the first weekend in June, people will be joining to counter violence and injustice. But this is not a global protest against something; it is a united action *for* something: building community. Individuals and groups throughout the US and around the world will be celebrating the third annual *Open Homes, Listening Hearts*. On this weekend, people are encouraged to reach out to others with whom they normally do not interact—usually of a different race, ethnicity, or religion—and welcome them into their homes for a meal and personal storytelling.

Open Homes, Listening Hearts was established by Initiatives of Change, an 80-year-old network of people working for reconciliation and justice in over 50 countries. Other civic and religious organizations are helping to promote *Open Homes, Listening Hearts*.

Yehezkel Landau, faculty associate in Interfaith Relations at Hartford Seminary and cofounder of the Open House Center for Jewish-Arab Coexistence in Ramle, Israel, calls *Open Homes, Listening Hearts* “a laudable initiative that allows people from all walks of life to contribute to peacebuilding and mutual understanding in our troubled world.”

The goal is for people in our often-disconnected communities to hear and be heard without judgment or blame. Deeply held beliefs and attitudes are usually formed by specific personal experiences. So the focus of *Open Homes, Listening Hearts* is to discover these experiences through personal storytelling. Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa once told members of Congress that this kind of storytelling is the most effective way to heal the divisions and wounds of history in the US.

Last year, people from Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles crossed cultural and religious borders with food and stories. Naila Sherman, an Arab-American, joined one event in Arlington, Va. “It was great to see the interaction between groups—and generations,” she says.

Events around the world involved hosts and guests from Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, Croatia, the Republic of Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Korea, Kosovo, Mexico, Turkey, and Venezuela; among them were Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and people of no particular faith.

People of all backgrounds and faiths can host an event. Contact Initiatives of Change or visit www.openhomeslisteninghearts.org for stories and information on what is being done this June in homes across the country.

*An International Day of
Open Homes, Listening Hearts*



Initiatives of Change
1156 15th St., NW, Suite 910, Washington, DC 20005
202.872.9077

Press Contact: Will Jenkins <info@ohlh.org>