

PROMOTING *your* CHAPTER

TOPS® transformed your life, and you've seen how it helps others. Now, it's time to share the inspiration and success of TOPS® with your community. It's time for community outreach.

Reaching out to get your community involved can be as simple and personal as inviting a neighbor or a friend to a meeting, but it can also be participating in a health fair, hosting a healthy picnic or walk at a park or holding an open house.

Just remember that people are busier than ever, so they may not make it out to an open house for something they're not sure about. Don't be discouraged. Whatever you do, it's just important to let people know that your chapter is available so they think of you when they are ready to make a change.

REMEMBER:

Your personal transformation and weight loss are the best promotion for your chapter and for TOPS®. Don't just talk about living a healthier life—walk the walk, and others will follow you!

Every community is different, so tailor your outreach efforts to your community's needs. You don't have to start from scratch. Your Coordinator and Area Captain are here to help you.

MEDIA

Promoting your chapter with local media is a great way to spread the word. TOPS® creates professionally written press releases each month, which your Coordinator and Area Captain can share with you.

Use community calendars. Most newspapers, TV and radio stations, local magazines and community websites run community calendars. These are free listings, and your monthly meeting should be highlighted. Detail the time,

date and location of your meetings and explain that TOPS® assists with weight-loss and healthy living. (Not everyone knows that TOPS® stands for Take Off Pounds SensiblySM.) If you have a special guest speaker one month, make sure to include that in your community calendar listing.

Share member successes. Local reporters and columnists love to hear success stories—especially when they are dramatic or uplifting. Compelling member stories can be your news hook (reason for writing about your specific meeting or event) for pre-event publicity. Success stories can also be timely right around holidays and New Year's resolutions.

Develop media contacts. Identify media who specifically write or cover health and lifestyle issues. Newspapers, radio and TV stations and magazines have websites, and most can help you find reporters who cover these issues. Your local librarian might also be able to help you identify local media and their contact info. Letting reporters know that you are available to be interviewed as a source for stories about weight loss, holiday eating, New Year's resolutions, etc. can be helpful to them, and being a reliable resource not only makes their jobs easier, it promotes your chapter and your members.

Try cable access. Another good media promotion is to offer your local cable affiliate a TOPS® chapter meeting as a community access program idea.

Be clear and consistent. Be sure to send a unified, professional message about TOPS®. Check the professionally designed tools in the Members Area of www.tops.org under Chapter Team Tools/Promoting Your Chapter. And always, always be sure to share current, local contact information with listings and program promotions, including a name, telephone number and email address.

BROCHURES, POSTERS AND MORE

Don't worry about designing or printing materials. We've got you covered. Your Coordinator can provide free, professionally made posters, promo cards, brochures, etc. to help make your event a success. Check them out on the back page of this brochure. These materials can help you grow your chapter and share the message of *Real People. Real Weight Loss.*® Plan to allow at least two weeks for materials to arrive in time. Use only the latest materials and brochures—the old ones are best put in the recycling bin.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Promoting your chapter is a year-round endeavor, but the two best times to schedule promotion and outreach are:

December and January: *New Year, new you.* People start regretting holiday indulgences and start thinking about setting their resolutions.

August and September: *Back to school, back to a healthier you.* By the end of summer, people yearn for change and embrace healthier living. Help them get back on track and refocused on eating healthy and living well.

HEALTH FAIRS

Many local organizations sponsor health fairs. Making an enthusiastic TOPS® presentation or hosting a table at a health fair can be a great outreach event. People coming to a health fair are ripe for recruitment.

At a health fair, be sure to present a professional and consistent message about TOPS® weight-loss support and wellness. Remember that less is more. When it comes to your display, you want it to be a billboard—not a bulletin board. Your Area Captain or Coordinator can explain this and share tips for success at health fairs.

Whatever you choose to do, make sure it's fun for both your chapter and prospective members. Fun encourages new members to join.

OPEN HOUSES

Hosting an open house can be a fun way to reach new members. You may want to hold your open house as part of your regular meeting, or you may choose another date or location, depending on your members' preferences. You might also want to host a joint event with other TOPS® chapters in your area. To find them, ask your Coordinator or use the "Find a Meeting" button on the home page of www.tops.org.

Your open house meeting should include lots of inspiration. Share your members' success stories, especially KOPS® members, if you have them in your chapter.

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Every community plans annual events to promote healthy living. Partner with these events, so you can bring attention to our message of support and information. Your chapter will be viewed as a good neighbor, and you'll have an opportunity to recruit new members.

Some local events can be community celebrations or information nights at local community centers, and your chapter can join as a sponsor or host a table.

Most communities also host various walks to benefit health-related causes or nonprofits. Walk as a group of TOPS® members, sponsor a water booth or contribute with some promotional materials in the gift bags of participants.

Parades are also a fun way to promote your chapter. Promote healthy living in a TOPS® float, carry signs with the TOPS® logo and contact info or wear shirts and be a walking promotion.

EVENTS 101

Health fairs, walks and special speaker nights at your chapter are all great ways to be active, have fun and share the TOPS® message. These events can invigorate current members and foster team building, promote your chapter and increase membership. To make your event a great success, use the talents and creative abilities of your members, and involve them in planning and hosting an event.

Take good photos. Photos can be a good promotional tool. Submit them to *TOPS News*, but also send them to local news outlets for recognition and promotion of member successes.

Plan ahead. A good event usually is planned at least eight to ten weeks in advance to allow for successful promotion. Order posters at least four weeks ahead of time.

Get the word out. Place notices and posters in medical clinics, community centers, coffeehouses, churches and other gathering spaces. Send press releases to local media, especially event calendars (newspapers, community newsletters, TV and radio stations, community websites and local bloggers).

Have fun. The whole point is to introduce people to TOPS® and invite them to join your chapter, and they'll be more interested if they (and your members there) are having fun. Be friendly and have outgoing members ready to greet and welcome guests. Learn the needs of your guests and speak directly to their interests when discussing how TOPS® can help. Be sure to have a sign-in sheet to get contact information from all your guests so that you can follow up.

Keep it healthy. Refreshments can be quite welcoming, but make sure they're light and healthy. You don't want to send mixed messages or confuse them about the focus of TOPS®.

Follow up. After the event, debrief as a chapter and review what went well and what could be improved. Thank any speakers, volunteers and media. Follow up with every guest who attended to thank them for coming. Ask them if they have any questions and invite them to join. A simple note with your chapter's regular meeting time,

day and location can be a good reminder. Set up a plan to follow-up with contacts a month or two after the event.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Organizations such as Rotary International, Optimists, Lions Clubs, etc., all hold weekly and monthly meetings, and most need guest speakers. If you have any members who love sharing their success stories and enjoy public speaking, this is a great way to publicize your chapter and gain new members. Sharing your personal success story or tips for healthy living, all with a connection to TOPS®, can be an effective way to promote your chapter. (Before the holidays is a great time.)

Medical groups often offer free classes and host guest speakers on a variety of healthy living topics, so this is another great avenue to recruit new members and promote your local chapter. Church groups, women's groups and other community clubs are also possibilities.

SHARE THE WORD

When you promote your chapter successfully, we want to know about it. Share your original ideas with us and inspire other chapters through *TOPS News*. Send us your stories, ideas, photos and results to share@tops.org. The more we share, the more we grow!

We appreciate your enthusiastic efforts to share our message about the Real People of TOPS®!

Thank You!

Promoting TOPS® In Your Community

Are you getting ready for an open house for your TOPS® chapter? Will you be hosting a booth at a local health fair? Do you want to share the TOPS® message in your community? TOPS® has *free* tools to help you grow your chapter.

Request these free brochures, posters and promo cards from your Coordinator. Be sure to destroy any older versions you might have on hand. Please note, designs may vary from those shown.

Thank you for your help in spreading a united message about the real people of TOPS®!



Powerful Support for Weight Loss and Lifelong Health

Concise, thorough explanation of TOPS®. Ideal for sharing in waiting rooms of healthcare offices, through community resource centers, with neighborhood welcome services and other resources.

(PI-028)



Take Control of Diabetes

Great information for anyone with diabetes or prediabetes.

(PI-071CD)



Healthy Eating for Families

Tips to help children, teens, parents and grandparents develop healthy attitudes toward food and fitness. After all, healthy living is a family affair. (Formerly Healthy Eating for Teens)

(PI-068)



Emotional Eating

Encouraging insights to recognize and resolve the emotional eating issues that can sabotage weight-loss efforts.

(PI-071E)



Poster: PI-095



Poster: PI-095A



Promo Cards

These attractive business cards come in sets of 25 with plenty of room on the back for chapter information.

(PI-099)



TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY

**www.tops.org
(800) 932-8677**