

Live in 3, 2 and 1...

O.D.'s segments on morning show increase visibility of practice and profession



Dr. Friedman stands with Rebecca Kelly, PR director for the NJSOP. Seated, left to right, are Kerri-Lee Halkett, George Mallet and Jennaphr Frederick, on-air personalities at Philadelphia's Channel 29.

Sometimes people stare when **Kimberly Friedman, O.D.**, Moorestown, NJ, passes by. She looks so familiar, but they can't quite place her. So she helps them out: they've probably seen her on *Good Day Live*, a morning TV show on the Fox affiliate in Philadelphia. About once a month, Dr. Friedman does a live segment for the show on eye care and vision issues.

It all came about fortuitously two years ago. Dr. Friedman was in line to become the first woman president of 102-year-old New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians (NJSOP). The association had just hired **Rebecca Kelly** as director of public relations, and it had completed a successful drive to amplify oral medication authority for O.D.s. "We were looking for some redirection. We decided that internally and externally, we were not giving enough attention to public relations," Dr. Friedman says.

So Dr. Friedman began outlining monthly ideas for vision care issues and Kelly turned them into monthly print and video news releases. For example, a release on the Nike Maxsite™ lens corresponded to the opening of baseball season. While she had the added cachet of being NJSOP president when the PR effort started, the gig with *Good Day Live* has continued after her term came to a close.

Because it is live TV, there can be some surprises. For example, for one segment the topic was diabetes awareness. Dr. Friedman was expecting a general interview, but the host had

Type 1 diabetes, so he zeroed in on specific questions about diabetic retinopathy. "It wasn't a problem, but it wasn't what I was expecting," she says. For another show in early 2005, she brought her daughter **Leanne**, then age 9, for a show on young children and contact lenses. "The producers were nervous because a rule of thumb in live TV is don't use kids. But she was terrific, demonstrating how to insert and remove contact lenses," Dr. Friedman recalls.

Live TV can also fall victim to other news events. Dr. Friedman has had tapings interrupted or canceled at the very last minute because big news was erupting elsewhere. And she's also been called at the last minute to fill in where some expected event failed to materialize. "You have to be flexible," she says.

The media publicity has had two results. "Personally, the phone rings in my office a little more. People call and say they want an appointment with the doctor they saw on TV." And professionally, from the society's perspective, "our effort is to show what an optometrist is and does. We're not just glasses salespeople, and we want people to know that optometrists are *the* primary eye care doctors," she says.

To see Dr. Friedman's television appearances, watch the videos at www.njsop.org. 

Media Savvy

Dr. Kimberly Friedman benefited from having a professional public relations staff person from the New Jersey Society of Optometric Physicians (NJSOP) cultivate a media plan. "In a smaller market, though, an individual O.D. could use the same formula," she says.

- Identify the local print, radio and TV media. Learn who the news or assignment editors are and make contact with them.
- Develop ideas. "Initially, we were in a defensive mode because of some bad press. But we were able to turn that into a more proactive mode quickly by using general health topics." Some seasonal ideas could be UV exposure and its effects on the eyes; allergens and the eyes; and back-to-school fashion with cosmetic contact lenses.
- Create a press release or a note to the assignment editor, outlining why it's a good story and how you can contribute to it.
- Practice your answers and keep them short. Have a staff member ask you some questions like a reporter might, then work your answers into short sound bites. 



Dr. Friedman and George Mallet prepare for a live segment.