

August
2004

A report from the Montgomery Chapter of the Public Relations Council of Alabama

ARE YOU PRCA'S NEXT IDOL?



Mark your calendars for this year's PRCA-Montgomery professional development seminar, "PRCA Idol" Workshop & Starr Awards, set for Friday, August 13, from 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year's workshop gives attendees the opportunity to participate in an intensive, interactive program on strategic communications planning!

We are thrilled to have Alan Ulman (pictured left), senior vice president of Corporate Communications at Ketchum-Atlanta, as our keynote speaker and modera-

tor. Mr. Ulman will kick off the workshop with a look at Ketchum's six planning tools; participants will then break into groups to put the tools to use to fashion strategic communications plans for four to five different community organizations in the Montgomery area. The result: PRCA members learn in both theory and application while needy community groups get the benefit of our collaboration! After the luncheon and awards program, each group will present its plan. The workshop will wrap up with a panel presentation on resource development, "Learn to Swim in the Incredible Shrinking Resource Pool." Register now by downloading the registration form from www.prcamontgomery.org.

Agenda

8:15 a.m. - **Registration**

8:30 a.m. - **Welcome**

Pledge, National Anthem, Zebulon Zipper

9:00 a.m. - **The Essential Tools of Strategic Communications Planning**

Alan B. Ulman, senior vice president, Corporate Communications, Ketchum Atlanta

10:15 a.m. - **Break**

10:30 a.m. - **Group Problem-solving: Applying the Ketchum Planning Tools**

Alan B. Ulman

12:30 p.m. - **Lunch/STARR Awards**

2:00 p.m. - **Showcasing Community Communications Plans**

Alan B. Ulman

3:00 p.m. - **Be a Star: Learn to Swim in the Incredible Shrinking Resource Pool**

Panel members: Eve Loeb, Director of Development, Alabama Shakespeare Festival Karen Sellers, Exec. Dir., Sunshine Center Megan Frazer, Gen. Mgr., Sales & Marketing Montgomery Biscuits Darold Dunlavy, Exec. Dir., Mental Health Association in Montgomery.

4:00 p.m. - **Adjourn**



President's Message

PRCA IDOL WORKSHOP

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 2004

8:15 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

AIDT | ONE TECHNOLOGY COURT

REGISTRATION:

PRCA MEMBERS \$65.00,

NON-PRCA MEMBERS \$75.00,

STUDENT MEMBERS \$35.00,

LUNCH ONLY \$20.00

I've always loved Friday the 13th - Paraskevidekatriaphobia notwithstanding. Not that I'm one of the estimated 21 million people with some degree of irrational fear of Friday the 13th. Any fears I've entertained have been, I firmly believe, completely rational. And yet the sixth day of the week and the number 13 both have foreboding reputations; their coincidence portending more misfortune than some can bear. Folklorists say it's probably the most widespread superstition in America (and no doubt in other parts of the world, as well) — some people won't go to work on Friday the 13th; some won't eat in restaurants; many wouldn't think of setting a wedding on the date.

But me? I love it. In fact, Friday, August 13, 2004 promises to be one of the best ever! And it can be for you, too, if you register to attend this year's Montgomery Chapter professional development workshop and Starr Awards extravaganza. Melanie Beasley and a cast of, well, lots of folks have organized a whimdoozie of a program, headlined by Ketchum Atlanta's own senior vp. Alan B.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join us in welcoming **Mike Sherman** as PRCA-Montgomery's newest member. Mike is the communications director at Summit America LLC.

PRCA VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed for the Humane Shelter, either visiting nursing homes with a pet, or helping the Shelter with public relations activities. Volunteers must be trained at the Shelter either the second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. or the second Saturday at 8:30 a.m. Volunteers attend the class and purchase a volunteer t-shirt for \$7.00. Please call Lenore Vickrey, 272-8622, if you are interested.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the Inmate Storybook Project at Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women. We help the inmates read a book on tape for their child, which they then mail to their child with a note. This is done once a month on a Saturday morning. Please call Lenore Vickrey, 272-8622, if you are interested.

President's Message *Continued from Page One*

Ulman. His presentation on strategic PR planning promises to be one of the most in-depth and hands-on sessions we've ever hosted, so please plan to attend!

While Mr. Ulman dominates the morning, the afternoon will kick off with lunch and our own Starr Awards ceremonies. Your newly elected (we hope) slate of officers will be installed, followed by a dynamic panel discussion featuring some of the area's top practitioners as they present their methods for "getting by with less."

It is said: If 13 people sit down to dinner together, all will die within the year. Many cities do not have a 13th Street or a 13th Avenue. Many buildings don't have a 13th floor. There are 13 witches in a coven.

But August 13 is gonna be great! See all of you PR Idols there!

Doug Freeland

Note: If you change jobs in the year, don't forget to let us know about it. Simply download the Membership Update Form from www.prcamontgomery.org and send the completed form to Stacy Benefield via fax, 270-9527, or postal service, AlaHA, 500 North East Blvd., Montgomery, AL 36117. Also, be sure to let us know about promotions, awards and special projects in which you're involved so we can share it with the membership — email susan@squareroot-inc.com.

MEMBERSHIP SNAPSHOT

Total Membership:.....124

Number at July Meeting

Members:27
or 22.3% of membership

Visitors:7

Total34

CHAPTER MEETING

PRCA IDOL WORKSHOP & STARR AWARDS

Friday, August 13, 2004

8:15 a.m. - 4 p.m.

AIDT | One Technology Court
Montgomery

PRCA members \$65.00,

Non-PRCA members \$75.00,

Student members \$35.00,

Lunch Only \$20.00

to register, go to
www.prcamontgomery.org

HIPAA's Changed Everything, Including PR!

Meeting Wrap-up By Kathy Midgley, VP of Programs



The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), signed into law on August 21, 1996, included new protections for millions of Americans and their families. The law, when originally enacted, offered health insurance coverage to America's workers who lose their company's health insurance. The HIPAA of today protects the privacy of patients and keeps confidential patient information secure.

So, what does all that have to do with PR professionals in the health care industry? Adam Kelley, Corporate Communications Manager for Children's Health System, explained the PR chaos created by HIPAA. "The hospital's first responsibility has always been to protect each patient. Since our patients are generally minors, we often have policies in place that are more restrictive than the ones spelled out in HIPAA and this is endlessly confusing to the media. We spend a large amount of our media relations time each week educating media about what information they can and cannot expect to receive from us.

"People, especially media, are generally confused about HIPAA and what it requires of the provider. With this in mind, one of our goals this year is to visit every radio station, television station, and newspaper in the state and explain what HIPAA means to them and their news coverage. It's been like handing them food when they're hungry. They often want to know why everything has changed, and some even think we're making this all up to restrict their access."

What has changed, as far as PR is concerned? The old pre-HIPAA way of doing business reflected Children's Hospital's desire to be personal and caring...while not breaking the bank. Due to its

small advertising budget, Children's often exceeded expectations to media on medical inquiries, one of the principle duties of a hospital's PR department, and, in turn, used that good will to help advocate on behalf of the children. When a call came in to inquire about a patient, they reported on the patient's condition, often in great detail. When calls were received from media, information was shared. Out with the old - in with the new. The new equation eliminated one of the department's most effective tools, the building up of good will, which in turn helped communicate the needs of the patients and their families.

Next to pictures of his family, a wallet-sized card created by his own department reminds Adam what he is allowed to report. These rules easily fit on a card the size of a driver's license because they are short and sweet. "Good, fair, serious, critical, or undetermined." Like many hospitals, information on patients receiving treatment from Children's Health System is closely guarded and, other than these one-word condition statements, only released if the patient or their family gives permission. Also, families now have the option of "opting out" of the system, which means the media department has no way of knowing their health information. Try explaining that to a reporter who witnessed the patient enter the hospital.

Furthermore, information is only given out if the inquiry specifically identifies the patient by name. In the past media would often not know a patient's name, but could describe where an accident or nature of injury. That's no longer the case.

Scenario number one: Adam receives a phone call from a police officer that was on the scene of an accident involving a child. The officer calls to check on the child's condition because he/she is deeply concerned. Children's media department is not allowed to confirm the child is a patient there, or give any information concerning their condition. Instead, the officer must get this information from the Risk Manager.

Scenario number two: A young mother abandoned her newborn outside a popular restaurant in Birmingham. The mother was admitted to the hospital for care. Officers from the police department arrived at the hospital to arrest the mother for the crime of abandonment. Children's Hospital was required to tell the police officers they could not confirm her admission. The news reports that "Children's Hospital is hampering the investigation." Not exactly the image they were looking for!

"This has been the biggest challenge we've faced in several years—communicating in the age of HIPAA," Kelley said. "More calls than ever are now sent to Risk Management. HIPAA has definitely been a challenge to everyone involved in the health care industry."

THE PUBLICITY HOUND*

by Joan Stewart

No Formality in Email Pitches

You won't catch publicist BL Ochman addressing her media contacts as "Ms." or "Mr." if she's sending a pitch letter by email or snail-mail. She'll never write "Sincerely" at the bottom of an email pitch, like most people would when writing a formal letter.

In fact, her salutation to a journalist might start with something as informal as "Hiya." She does that for two reasons:

- First, before sending a pitch letter, she'll always try to call and establish a relationship first and give the journalist a heads-up that the pitch is on its way.
- Second, she says email is no place for formality. "Email is a very intimate kind of a medium. When you're dealing with a new medium, you need a new approach to it. To take a formal business letter and put it into an email is nonsensical at this point."

I know some of you disagree vehemently with her strategy. But it works. Her short, chatty pitch letters have landed her clients on national TV shows and in major newspapers.

When I worked as an editor, I never cared whether people addressed me as "Hiya Joan" or "Dear Ms. Stewart." All I wanted was a good story idea and a quick pitch that didn't waste my time.

BL has lots of other tricks for pitch letters, which she prefers over news releases to get a journalist's attention. When she was my guest during a teleseminar called "How to Write a Pitch Letter More Powerful Than a News Release," she showed us how she rewrote a rambling 708-word news release she found on the Internet and turned it into a 127-word tight, bright and to-the-point pitch in the "who, what, when, where, why" format. We used it as one of three handouts to show how you can inject life into long news releases by cutting them and turning them into pitch letters.

**Reprinted from "The Publicity Hound's Tips of the Week," a free ezine featuring tips, tricks and tools for generating free publicity.*

JOBSOURCE



DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Troy University

(Posted 6/15/2004)

Troy University seeks an individual to manage and direct the university relations, public affairs, publications, and media relations for the University. Primary responsibilities include supervising the Office of University Relations, overseeing all PR communications of the University and for the Chancellor, and directing all media relations. Three to five years university experience in public relations or related field required. Salary range: commensurate with qualifications and experiences. Review of applications begins immediately. Troy is an AA/EEO employer and encourages applications from individuals with disabilities, females, African Americans and other minorities.

Send letter of application, resume and college transcripts to Human Resources, Troy University, Troy, AL 36082.

FREELANCE WRITER

Alabama State University

(Posted 6/9/2004)

Description: Alabama State University seeks a freelance writer to cover daytime, evening and/or weekend events for a national newsletter. Send e-mail inquiry, resume and rates to debardelaben@asunet.alasu.edu.