

December
2004

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

IS IT CHRISTMAS TIME ALREADY?

Marketing geniuses say that it is so you know what that means. It is time for our annual Brantwood Christmas Party.

Join us as we celebrate the season with our friends from Brantwood Children's Home on Monday, Dec. 13 at 5:30 p.m — in lieu of our regular monthly meeting. This is one of our favorite events of the year!

If you haven't signed up to buy a gift for one of the Brantwood kids, contact Peggy Collins today (242-4545).

You should have received a list of the kids and their wish lists by e-mail. (If you did not receive the list, please contact Peggy). Before you shop, please let Peggy know which child you wish to surprise this year. The best part is shopping for that special gift. Be sure to wrap your gift and bring it to the party. If you can not attend the party, please make arrangements to get your gift to the party.

Brantwood, located on the Upper Wetumpka Road, provides a safe, home environment for abused and neglected children, ages 10-18, in an effort to provide the stability they need to lead productive lives as adults. We will have pizza, soft drinks and a lot of fun! The kids there really enjoy the attention, and we can deliver!

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DETAILS:

Brantwood Christmas Party | Monday December 13, 2004

5:30 p.m. | Brantwood Children's Home | Upper Wetumpka Road

\$15 Donation for those not purchasing gifts

RSVP by Thursday, December 9 to Kay Yarborough (334) 260-2500

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www.prcamontgomery.org

2003:

BRANTWOOD PARTY

A LOOK BACK



"He really does exist," exclaims then president Doug Freeland after seeing Santa Clause make his appearance. Membership chair Stacy Benefield is his witness.



Nancy 'Scottie' Mitchell keeps the kids on their toes as she shows them a few moves on the dance floor.



Santa and his little helper take a moment to pose with his fans.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Johnson
Executive Director
Children First Foundation

Check your feet for frogs!

I recently thought I was losing my mind. I've thought it before. It would not be a surprise. It is a frequent possibility. This particular 'I-think-I'm-losing-my-mind' day was different; it left a lasting impression on me. As last spring approached, I was walking toward my front door when I noticed the sidewalk was moving. Yes, moving, as in shifting—traveling—in motion. Knowing the day had been long and the stress level high, I assumed the exhaustion level had led to strained eyes and mental hallucinations. I've had them before. It would not be a surprise. It is a frequent possibility. A good night's rest with renewed spirit would surely dispel any extreme fatigue that had set in. Wrong. Next morning, walking toward my car, the sidewalk was still in motion. Upon closer inspection, I found that I had not lost my mind...not this time. Thousands, and I'm not exaggerating, of tee-niny pollywogs, you know—tadpoles—tadpoles that could easily sit atop of an eraser head and have room for friends—tadpoles that still had a hint of a tail but had leapt out onto dry land, were jumping about. Enjoying their new-found life and the warmth of the sun, it was truly a sight to see. My concern for their continued existence and opportunity to reach full-fledged-frogdom, coupled with my fear of a phone call from PETA, led me to tip-toe carefully to my auto.

Stressful day passed and welcomed evening came. I forgot about the frogs. (I know there is an enormous biological difference between frogs and tadpoles, but bear with me—I call all tadpoles, frogs, and all mice, rats.) Plopping on the sofa and removing stylish-but-agony-provoking shoes, to my disgust and dismay, I found frogs on my soles—dozens of frogs on my soles! Frogs who would no

longer enjoy the warmth of the sun or the light of the moon. Frogs who had gone on to meet their Maker. My daily warning to the kids became, "Check your feet for frogs!"

Every day I go out into the world and attempt to make a living for children who've grown very accustomed to wearing clothes, eating food and sleeping indoors. I get busy. Sometimes I get so busy doing all I do that I forget there are "little people."

There are children in need of a hug, teens in need of a mentor, elderly in need of a listening ear.

There are underprivileged, undeserved, under-fortunate. There are people in need of attention, but are overshadowed and overlooked in the craziness of everyday life.

There are "tad-poles" that, if we're not careful, will be crushed with our steps.

The tadpoles taught me a lesson. Did I hurt anyone with my

actions today? Was there someone in

my path—screaming for attention, but I was too busy to notice? I've slowed down. My family would argue with that statement, but I feel I have. I'm still busy and do too much, but I'm also always looking-cautious that someone, somewhere, lives in fear of being stepped on. We have opportunities through PRCA to help underprivileged, undeserved, under-fortunate. Brantwood is one such opportunity. Please take time, one hour to be exact, and donate it to someone in need. This Christmas season and during the coming year, check your feet for frogs!

La vie est un beau voyage.

Kathy

DON'T FALL FOR THIS ONE

provided by Joan Stewart*

It's an old reporter's trick--one of the best in the book. The cops use it too. So does one of my doctors.

It's called silence. And it's designed to make you talk about something you don't want to talk about. Beware of it the next time a reporter is interviewing you, either on the telephone or face to face.

It goes like this. The reporter asks a question about a sensitive topic, or something you don't want to talk about. You start to hem and haw and try to avoid answering. But instead of asking you another question, the reporter treats you to a big helping of silence.

You start to squirm with discomfort. What do many people do when they feel uncomfortable? They start talking. About anything. Before long, you've spilled the beans about something you shouldn't be talking about. As for the reporter, mission accomplished.

Crisis counselor Jonathan Bernstein says savvy Publicity Hounds should be aware of the power of silence during interviews and understand that it's sometimes a trap.

You should know about other tricks too. Like the forgotten tape recorder.

It goes like this. A reporter asks if it's OK to tape-record a sensitive interview with you and an associate. You say yes. Halfway through the interview, the reporter excuses herself to use the restroom. But she intentionally doesn't turn off the tape recorder. You've forgotten about it, however, and it's taping everything you and your associate are saying while the reporter is out of earshot, possibly to be used later in the story.

Jonathan, a former newspaper reporter, knows all the tricks. He also knows the top 5 mistakes people use in bad-news situations, what to do if you suspect the reporter has an agenda and is out to get you, tips for dealing with dumb or unprepared reporters, and precautions to take if a reporter is inside your building. He explained them all during the telephone seminar "How to Keep the Media Wolves at Bay." It's available as a CD, cassette tape or an electronic transcript you can download and be reading immediately. Read more about what it includes at http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/marketing-tapes/media_wolves_atbay.htm

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

Montgomery Chapter News is a monthly publication for PRCA-Montgomery members. Be sure to visit prcamontgomery.org for the latest news information. Send all job announcements, news items, and comments to kathy@alabamachildrenfirst.com and indicate "PRCA" in the subject line.

HOLIDAY STORIES

provided by Joan Stewart*



'Tis the season to tie your story ideas to the holidays. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Media everywhere are looking for inexpensive, unusual gift ideas. If your product or service would make a good gift, suggest it as part of a "round-up" story focusing on several products. (Use the word "round-up" because it's journalist lingo.)
- Friday is the official start of the holiday shopping season. Can you suggest tips that will make shopping safer and hassle-free, whether it's at the local shopping mall or over the Internet?
- This time of year, many nonprofits are needed more than ever to help deal with an increasing number of drunken drivers, teen suicides, battered women, and families with empty cupboards. What's your nonprofit doing to gear up for heavier demand during the holidays?
- In mid-December, the media will start doing stories on New Year's resolutions. What tips can you offer to help people set realistic goals and keep them? Or do you think the holidays--complete with overspending, overworking and overeating--are a lousy time to make resolutions that stick? If you do, let the media know your contrarian viewpoint.
- Consumer debt is at record levels. How can consumers keep spending under control when those little pieces of plastic are oh-so-easy to use?
- Job-hunters often take a break during the holidays. Yet that's one of the best times to look for a job because the competition isn't as fierce. Offer tips on what job-hunters should be during the holidays to find that dream career.

Some of these story ideas are perfect for television. TV reporter Shawne Duperon says the month of December is one of the very best times to pitch stories. That's because it follows the hectic November sweeps period, when TV news crews are exhausted. They're eager to get back into the regular day-to-day grind, and they're looking everywhere for ideas.