

November
2004

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

THERE ARE TIMES YOU SHOULD JUST TURN THAT CELL PHONE OFF!

written by: Michelle Powell Huntsville Times



I can't tell you how many times I've been in a meeting where cell phones are chiming. What's worse, some people answer their phones and proceed to carry on their own conversation right there in the midst of the meeting. What's worse yet is when their voices are louder than

those participating in the meeting. I once sat next to a woman who carried on a loud conversation while others were making presentations. Everyone was looking at her while she only made eye contact with her feet, her fingernails and her watch. How utterly rude!

I recently entered a ladies room while at a networking event at a local hotel and heard a voice speaking but saw no one. OK, two ladies are talking through the stalls, I thought. When I entered an empty stall, I realized I was hearing only one voice and one side of a conversation. The woman next to me was on her cell phone. Now this put me in a strange predicament. I didn't want to embarrass the woman with sounds of running water (etc.), which her conversation partner no doubt would hear. So I did the courteous thing and waited for her to finish her call. Knowing she was in the wrong and too embarrassed to show herself, she muttered "I'm so sorry..." with some explanation I didn't care to hear.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is a time and a place for everything. Sometimes there is just no place for a cell phone. Sometimes you must resist the urge to answer that call. Just turn that darn thing off!

Michelle Powell is a certified etiquette trainer and president and CEO of Professional Manner LLC, which provides group training and personal coaching on business and social etiquette. E-mail her at professionalmanner@netzero.net.

PRCA

Fall Student Mixer



The two Nancys (Nancy Dennis and Nancy 'Scottie' Mitchell) pose with AUM Chapter Vice President during PRCA-Montgomery's Fall Student Mixer.



AUM chapter advisor Blair Gaines along with PRCA board members Peggy Collins and Kay Yarbough discuss industry tips and tricks with students.



These PR students had no problem networking! In fact, they took advantage of this opportunity by making sure they met every practitioner there!



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Johnson
Executive Director
Children First Foundation

Poll, Please

A CNN/Gallup poll taken one month and ten days after the tragic events of September 11th revealed that a whopping 88 percent of respondents approved of the way George W. Bush was handling his job as president. Exactly three years later, that approval rating has dropped by 37 points. Regardless of the basis for the numbers having changed so dramatically and regardless of which side of that approval poll your opinion would have registered, polls are enlightening. They are created for numerous reasons, one of which falls in category number five of Webster's definitions: to canvass people's opinions.

PRCA was established to unite those engaged in the practice of public relations in promoting high standards of public service and conduct; to exchange ideas and experiences; and to collect and disseminate information of value to public relations practitioners and the public. As a chapter, we meet monthly to share those ideas and gain new information, as well as team up periodically to share PR talents and wisdom with our communities and offer a helping hand in community service, when we can. Generally, less than 50 percent of our membership is actively involved in fulfilling our chapter's mission. In the next couple of weeks, you will receive an e-mail taking you to the monkey...the Survey Monkey, that is. This poll will be quick and easy (no dangling or pregnant chads!), and results will be immediate. Please take a few minutes to help us understand what we are doing right and which areas could use some evaluation and improvement. We are completely open to constructive criticism and look forward to working with you to shape our chapter into an organization that continues to make a difference.

See you on November 8th!

Kathy

MEMBERSHIP SNAPSHOT

Total Membership:..... 121

October Meeting Numbers

Members:31
or 25.6% of membership

Visitors:3

Total34

CHAPTER MEETING

IVAN'S AFTERMATH

November 8, 2004

Guest Speakers:

JAN ELLIS

Alabama Power

DARRYL GATES

Alabama Rural Electric Association

KATHRYN GIBSON

Alabama Electric Cooperative

RSA Plaza Terrace | 11:45 a.m.

Members \$12, Non-members \$25*

**Non-members will receive the \$12 rate for their first two visits.*

Hurricane Ivan left millions of people without electricity — creating a PR nightmare for those in the power industry. Join us as PR experts from Alabama Power, AREA, and AEC explain how they weathered the PR storm (and Hurricane Ivan).

HELPING ONE OF OUR OWN

BY KATHY JOHNSON

In the hubbub of daily activities, we often get too busy to remember that time is brief and life is precious. It is sometimes only upon hearing of death that we pause a few moments to reflect on our priorities and on how precious life really is.

One of our faithful members, Emily Wheeler, lost her brother in a tragic accident on October 16. Twenty-eight year old Russell Matthew Wheeler fell off a 23 ft. tree stand.

Not only was he a brother and son, he was a husband and father of three small children (ages 8, 3, and 3 months). Russell's wife, Natalie, and their three children, will be moving in with Emily's parents. In order for that to happen, an addition needs to be added to their home.

At this most difficult time in their lives, they are trying to pull together to survive. The board of PRCA Montgomery is recommending that chapter members who would like to help do so by contributing to the purchase of a Lowe's gift card.

This will help the family with much needed building materials. If you would like to donate, please bring your contribution to our monthly meeting on November 8, or mail a check (payable to PRCA) to me at:



Kathy Johnson

**Children First Foundation, 309 Bell Street, Suite B
Montgomery, AL 36104**

We would like to have all donations in by November 12, at which time we will purchase the card and take it to Emily and her family.

If you prefer to purchase an individual card, you may do so by visiting Lowe's or by going to their web site at:

<http://www.giftcards.lowes.com/gc1/default.asp?> You can bring your gift card to the November meeting or mail it to me at the above address by November 12. This way, all donations can be sent at one time.

DUES MUST BE PAID BY DEC. 31

The third and final membership dues notice will be e-mailed in November. The final deadline for paying dues is Dec. 31. After Dec. 31, those who did not renew and wish to continue their membership will have to apply to the organization as a new member. There will be no exceptions to this policy so please do not delay in sending in your renewal.

After making corrections to your contact information on your renewal invoice, don't forget to log on to PRCAonline.com to make those corrections to the state database. Also, please complete and return to Stacy Benefield an update form if you've changed jobs recently. The form is available on-line at PRCAMontgomery.org and in the members only section of PRCAonline.com.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Stacy Benefield, vice president of membership, at 272-8781 or sbenefield@alaha.org.

SPRF WEB SITE

The Southern Public Relations Federation Web site features an on-line database. Since this database is only updated twice a year, it is still best to go to www.praonline.com for the most current information about PR professionals in Alabama; however, the SPRF database is a great resource for accessing a regional network of PR professionals. The database will next be updated in February. The following information is needed to access the database:

username: sprf | password: greatprday

TIME OF CHANGE

You may notice in this month's "Membership Snapshot" that our membership total has decreased from our year-end peak of 127 to only 121 as of print. This is a normal occurrence during the renewal process as some members have relocated or choose not to renew for another reason. Members who have requested to be removed or who have left their jobs leaving no forwarding information are removed immediately. On Dec. 31, the remaining non-renewals will be deleted as well.

The renewal process is still ongoing, but renewals are coming in steadily, and I'm confident we will continue to enjoy a high retention rate (more than 80 percent of PRCA-Montgomery members renewed in 2003-2004).

In addition, I hope we can experience the growth in 2004-2005 that we did last year. We ended the year with six more members than the previous year. Our goal is to do the same or better this year, and you can help by telling your friends, co-workers and associates about PRCA and bringing them to a meeting. Also, you may forward the names of prospects to Stacy Benefield, vice president of membership, so she can send them an information packet about PRCA. The prospective member packet will be expanded this year to include an extensive list of PRCA membership benefits. Contact Stacy at 272-8781 or sbenefield@alaha.org.

FODDER FOR BIOS

*provided by Joan Stewart**

A frustrated Publicity Hound wrote last week, asking how she can write an interesting bio, even if she doesn't have any "newsworthy" accomplishments.

"How can you write a bio when you don't have an MBA, have never received any awards, and haven't appeared on TV or radio or in magazines?" she asks.

Bios or professional profiles are one-page narratives that should be at your website and in your media kit. Those that include long lists of college degrees, awards and media appearances are just plain boring. I'd much rather read a bio that includes inside information about the person's likes and dislikes, how they have helped other people, their hobbies, the one greatest accomplishment in their life, or the lifelong goal they haven't yet achieved, their hero, or their favorite food. Yes, you can include information about education and awards earned, but please don't bore. You can also write more than one bio, depending on what it's being used for. Write a more casual and light-hearted version that you can use as your introduction if you're a professional speaker, for example, and a more formal version.

If your bio needs rewriting, here are things you should consider including:

- Who is your hero? And why?
- What one event in your childhood had the greatest effect on your life?
- If you weren't doing what you do today, what other job would you have?
- What "lesson from mom" do you still live by today?
- What's the one thing you want to accomplish before you die?
- If you could spend a week anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- Do you have a pet and if so, what lessons has your pet taught you?
- What's the worst mistake you ever made in life that taught you a valuable lesson?

For examples of great bios, and more tips on how to rewrite yours, see "Special Report #46: Tips for Rewriting Your boring Bio" at <http://publicityhound.com/publicity-products/reports.html>

PROTECTING YOUR GOOD NAME

*provided by Joan Stewart**

These days, your good name can be damaged within a matter of minutes.

It can happen if a blogger posts an entry about you, your company or non-profit, on the Internet. Minutes later, it's picked up and either repeated or referred to on four other blogs. The next day, you start getting email messages from friends and business contacts, asking if the nasty rumor they heard about you is true. Then customers start calling. And before long, the rumor has spun out of control and you start losing business.

What to do? Crisis manager Judith Hoffmann says PR-savvy companies regularly search the Internet to learn what people are saying about them—good and bad. And when they find the source of the rumor, they devise a plan for either confronting it, ignoring it, or monitoring it.

How you react could mean the difference between whether the rumor finds its way onto the front page of your local newspaper, or simply dies.

Judith will share strategies on what to do and how to do it during a teleseminar titled "What to do When Someone Damages Your Good Name" from 4 to 5 PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, Nov. 10.

For 17 years, Judith was the manager of public affairs for a chemical manufacturing company that made one of the smelliest chemicals known to man. Consequently, if an operational upset caused an odorous release, she had to deal with upset neighbors as well as the media. With microphones in her face and reporters digging for a story, she managed many crises including a bomb threat, an overturned railcar, and an employee injured on site. So she can really show you how to get off the hot seat in a crisis.

Read more about what you'll learn, or order the CD or cassette tape if you can't attend by clicking here: <http://www.PublicityHound.com/teleseminar.htm>

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