

# PUBLIC RELATIONS COUNCIL OF ALABAMA

## 2007-08 ANNUAL REPORT



**MEMBERSHIP:** VP-Membership Janet Griffith, reports PRCA ended the 2007-08 year with 519 members (463 Active, 21 Associate, 9 Sustaining, 8 Charter, and 18 Student) as of Sept. 30, 2008. This represents an increase of 7 members total. Actual new membership for the year was 106. Actual renewals for the year were 413. PRCA exceeded its new member objective of 92 and its renewal objective of 356. Please note: There will be a short year from Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2008, in preparation for a new fiscal year that will run on the calendar year from January to December starting in 2009.

	MEMBERSHIP	2007-08 GROWTH
PRCA TOTAL	519	+1.37%
MOBILE	142	+7.58%
MONTGOMERY	120	-4.76%
NORTH ALABAMA	78	-8.24%
BIRMINGHAM	72	+5.88%
EAST ALABAMA	55	-1.79%
WEST ALABAMA	52	+15.56%

**TREASURY:** As of Sept. 5, 2008, Treasurer Brad Fisher reports the organization is in good financial standing with a total of \$19,675 in checking. PRCA has a total of \$57,987 in investments (\$20,006 in bonds, \$35,876 in CDs and \$2,105 in a Money Market account).

FY 2007-08 (AS OF 9/22/07)	BUDGETED	ACTUAL
Expenses	\$34,643	\$24,934.86
Income	\$37,400	\$35,928
Net Income/(Loss)	\$2,757	\$10,993.86

**CHAPTERS:** The organization completed the year with six chapters.

### Birmingham

**Membership (As of Aug 31, 2008):** Ended the year with 71 members. This number consists of 52 returning and 19 new members. Every member received membership certificates to both PRCA and SPRF.

**Treasury:** The Chapter is in excellent financial standing with total assets of \$16,969.21 as of August 31, 2008. These assets are a result of: 1) net profits from every meeting conducted during 2007-2008; 2) Profit from our professional development seminar conducted in June; and 3) CD investments totaling, with interest, \$2,152.18.

**Programs:** The Chapter hosted luncheon meetings each month, which included programs geared toward advancing the public relations profession and networking. Total attendance for the year at these meetings (October 2007-July 2008) was 418, averaging 34 people per meeting.

**Professional Development:** The Chapter hosted a professional development seminar in June on the topic of *Impact of New Media* with panelists Julia Crigler, Lawler Ballard Van Durand and Jeremy Flint of Kinetic Communications, Justice Mitchell with Luckie & Co. Approximately 80 people attended.

### 2007-08 STATE OFFICERS

Deborah Geiger, APR-Mobile, *President*

### VICE PRESIDENTS

Nan Baldwin, APR-Birmingham, *President-Elect*

Adam Kelley, APR-Birmingham, *Immediate Past President*

Jody Seal, APR-Birmingham, *Programs*

Lucy Arnold Sikes-West,

*Communication*

Denise D'Oliveira, APR-Mobile,

*Accreditation/Ethics*

Janet Griffith-West Alabama, *Membership*

Jennifer Jenkins, APR-Mobile, *Projects*

Peggy Collins-Montgomery, *Secretary*

Brad Fisher, APR-West, *Treasurer*

Veronica Carter-North, *Students*

### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Jena Ogiba, Birmingham

John Atkinson, East Alabama

Sonia Robinson, North Alabama

### CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

Dana McGough, Birmingham Chapter

Susan Rak-Blanchard, Mobile Chapter

Monty Vest, North Alabama Chapter

Leigh Krehling, East Alabama Chapter

Lori Quiller, Montgomery Chapter

Susan Bishop, West Alabama Chapter

### SPRF REPRESENTATIVES

Deborah Geiger, APR

Jennifer Jenkins, APR

Adam Kelley, APR

Nan Baldwin, APR

Michael Tullier, APR

Accreditation: Currently the chapter has 11 Accredited members. The Chapter initiated and conducted an 11-week accreditation study course/support group in conjunction with PRSA from February through April. VP-Accreditation Jody Seal, APR, and Helen Todd, APR, (PRSA & PRCA) jointly led this course.

Communications: The Chapter used e-mail newsletters and the Chapter's Web site ([www.prca-b.com](http://www.prca-b.com)) to communicate with members. Meeting reminders were sent before the RSVP deadline every month. Our media coverage included *the Birmingham News*, *Birmingham Business Journal*, *Birmingham Magazine* and *Black & White*.

Projects: The Chapter selected programs that benefited non-profit organizations in our community. Members have judged over 50 PR and newsletter entries for Civitan International. Members provided a home-cooked meal and toured the Amelia Center, which provides counseling services to recently bereaved parents and children. This was an incredibly worthy organization that the chapter hopes to work with in the future.

Students: Chapter members spoke at various UAB-PRCA meetings throughout the year, with topics of effective PR and the benefits of being involved in PRCA and submitted a comprehensive internship directory detailing opportunities with members. The Chapter also provided a student scholarship to attend the 2007 State Conference.

Awards: Helen Todd, APR received SPRF's Practitioner Achievement Award, after having won PRCA's Practitioner Achievement Award in 2007. Carl Carter, APR was named a Senior Practitioner by the Southern Public Relations Federation.

### East Alabama

Philanthropy: The chapter recently held our 5th Annual Corporate Spelling Bee in Auburn, Ala. The event benefits the Lee County Literacy Coalition. The event was a huge success, grossing \$8,700, with a total of 19 teams participating. In addition, the event was spotlighted in the October 7 Special Edition (Around The States) of *USA Today*. The chapter also just completed interviewing and writing copy for the United Way's new campaign. Our chapter worked with Ellis-Harper Advertising to develop copy. The ads will begin running in September 2008. The chapter also worked with The Boys & Girls Club and the Child Advocacy Center this year.

Students: The chapter held a planning session with AU professors to determine how we can better work with student chapter. Planning is in progress. Communications: Sam Williams redesigned the website this year. It went live September 15, 2008.

### Mobile

Membership: The state's largest chapter increased its membership by 26 new members, with four more in the pipeline. The Chapter's silent auction fundraiser, Think Blue, is targeted to area CEOs and educates the key benefits PRCA can offer professionals heading up public relations efforts.

Accreditation: Held the Chapter's Lunch & Learn APR sessions with interest from 16 members, and averaged eight people per session. Chapter APRs helped lead the sessions. To date, two readiness reviews were conducted. The Chapter conducted its "State of PR" membership survey gauging input on responsibilities and monetary compensation, skill utilization, staff sizes, etc. and posting the results on the web site.

Programs: The Chapter focused on topics and speakers appealing to a wide range of professionals, especially senior practitioners. Top three programs included: "Communicating with the Nexters" presented by Dr. Stephen Rockwell, professor, University of South Alabama, who offered technology updates and how the next generation is challenging our traditional methods of communication. A total of 58 attended. "What's New with Print Media," a five-member panel of the Mobile area's print editors discussed trends, changes, etc. followed by a question and answer session. A total of 66 attended. "Lessons from Southern Living" presented by Dianne Young, executive editor of features, who offered a visual tour of the graphic updates for Southern Living's new look. A total of 63 attended.

Projects: Sponsored the 2007 Media Mixer (hosted every other year by area Chambers), an after-hours event drawing local media from photo journalists to news anchors to assignment editors to deejays. PRCA - Mobile members helped plan and conduct the successful mixer in conjunction with Chamber staff. There were more than 400 attendees, including 100 plus members of the media representing radio, newspaper and television. The Chapter's Toolkit, the annual half-day professional development seminar, drew more than 70 attendees in June. The event included three speakers and a networking session. Topics included Technology and Public Relations and PR Meet Advertising, Advertising Meet PR. Event proceeds are contributed to the Chapter's student scholarship fund. Held the first joint PRCA, AdFed and Press Club Christmas Party.

Community Service: The Chapter took on a community service project aimed at the alumni of America's Junior Miss program. It included a PR plan that included a web site, moving responsibilities internally and an alumni-based newsletter. In its second Annual Silent Auction Fundraiser & Luncheon, Think RED, PRCA raised funds to benefit South Alabama CARES (the local AIDS support agency, and thus the color Red) and as well as its own student scholarship award. The silent auction held 22 items and raised more than \$2,100. Previously, Think PINK raised money for Breast Cancer. And in 2008, Think BLUE will raise money for the Down Syndrome Society of Mobile County.

Students: The annual Student Social drew participants from three universities, one as far away as Baton Rouge. The event offered students one-on-one advice from professionals on their resumes, interviewing skills and networking. Made Student Chapter presidents honorary PRCA members opened the lines of communications with regular e-mails and newsletters. Presented a \$500 award to Alyse Granier with Spring Hill College. A second \$500 award will be presented in the Spring. Worked with University of Mobile on reinstating its student chapter (pending).

Communications: Maintained the Chapter's newsletter and sent it to members either via e-mail or through the post office. Created a Member News column in the monthly newsletter. Updated the Chapter's web site.

Historian: Prepared to lead the board of directors through the new guidelines for PRCA's Chapter of the Year competition. Documented meetings with photos and archived meeting and member announcements.

Administration: Nominated Mobile's & the state PRCA's first Educator of the Year. Sharee LeBlanc Broussard, APR is a professor at Spring Hill College and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Southern Mississippi. Awarded scholarships to Toolkit and the state conference. Updated the bylaws to reflect current policies.

### **Montgomery**

Membership/Accreditation: PRCA-Montgomery ended the year with 10 new members. One member received Accreditation in Public Relations.

Programs: The chapter held its annual kick-off social in September 2007...food, fun, fellowship and the initiation of the new board of directors. The chapter hosted 10 monthly chapter luncheons averaging more than 35 members each month. Speakers included Tim Lennox, host of Alabama Public Television's "For the Record;" Sonny Brasfield, assistant executive director of the Association of County Commissions of Alabama; Dana Beyerle, Montgomery Bureau Chief of The New York Times; and many more notable public figures.

PRCA After Hours, a quarterly after-hours networking and social program, began in December 2007 and traveled to several locations in the city in 2008. The program was successful and will continue.

Philanthropy continued to thrive in Montgomery. In December 2007, the chapter donated \$250 each to The Salvation Army and Brantwood Children's Home. Following the EF-3 tornado that ripped through Prattville, nearly \$400 was collected during the announcements at the March luncheon to be donated to

The Salvation Army for their ongoing efforts for the Prattville residents. Later in the year, a food drive collected much-needed canned goods and staples for The Montgomery Area Food Bank.

The chapter's annual educational workshop was the most successful one-day professional development event in several years. Speakers included Patti Hill, founder and CEO of BlabberMouth PR; Tom Barnes, senior vice president of Fleishman-Hilliard; and Marty Sullivan and Quentin Riggins of the Business Council of Alabama.

#### **North Alabama**

**Communications:** The chapter website is undergoing updates and redesign. The chapter will be transitioning from a hardcopy newsletter to a soft copy/electronic newsletter given the cost and the fact that the Buzz is not being produced currently.

**Fundraising:** A gift basket raffle raised approximately \$80.00. These funds as well as the upcoming silent auction that will be held during the Sept. membership meeting will be designated for member benefits including scholarship funds to attend the state conference.

#### **West Alabama**

**Community Service Projects:** During the spring, the chapter hosted PR Toolbox- a PR educational program open to all professionals in the field, targeting non-profits and small businesses. At the annual Christmas party, the chapter partnered with ADFED to collect school supplies for local school age children- the heART Project. For Easter, the chapter participated in the Operation Easter Bunny project and collected over 200 baskets for the Department of Human Resources. The chapter also partnered with ADFED, Rotary of Tuscaloosa and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama in assisting with the establishment of the West Alabama's Literacy Council.

**Chapter Growth:** The West Alabama Chapter has seen unprecedented growth in the last few years. In an effort to continue growth and have successful retention of members, the program chair has focused on having stellar speakers each month. This has led to increased meeting attendance. In addition, the communications chair has re-developed our newsletter through the services of constant contact. The Chapter is excited to have four board members serving on the 2009 PRCA State Board.

**Financial Investment:** For the first time in our chapter's history the chapter was able to invest funds generated from hosting the state conference. In the early establishment of the chapter, a budget was maintained and as funds and membership decreased, there was a lapse in the up keep of the budget. This past year we established a functional budget and invested funds from hosting the state conference to ensure future success. In addition, the chapter also increased luncheon fees from \$12 to \$15. For recruitment purposes, the chapter leadership felt it was important for first time guests to eat free, however after the fee is \$20 after the first visit.

**PROGRAMS:** Plans are in the works to schedule at least one teleseminar on a social media-related topic for PRCA members in the last quarter of 2008. Based on participant feedback, more teleseminars may be scheduled for 2009. PRCA began researching these teleseminars as a professional development opportunity that wouldn't require travel at a time when many companies are cutting back on expenses such as travel. As soon as the teleseminar details are finalized, members can expect to see information via e-mail and/or PRCAonline.com.

**ACCREDITATION/ETHICS:** PRCA congratulated Kay Yarbrough (Montgomery) for joining the ranks of accredited members during 2008. Her achievement brings our organization's total number of APRs to 47, still the largest within SPRE.

The Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery chapters held accreditation awareness sessions this year that were attended by 30+ members (including APRs). Birmingham's accreditation chair Jody Seals, APR, and Helen Todd, APR, led an 11-week study group for candidates. The chapter plans a full-day Jump Start prep session on Oct. 30 and is exploring the possibility of conducting a second study group over the next three months. Pat Hartman, APR, Mobile's accreditation chair, conducted a chapter survey to provide direction for local study sessions that were subsequently held bi-weekly over a three-month period with

support from other Mobile APRs. Two Readiness Reviews were conducted in Mobile including one for a PRAM member. Pat has also offered to lead a second study group this fall.

A full-day, state-sponsored accreditation event was held as a pre-conference leadership session and was facilitated by Michael Tullier, APR, UAB president; John Forde, APR, current SPRF accreditation chair and UAB board member, and Carol Mann, APR, past SPRF president and also a former member of the UAB board. Dave Rickey, APR, Fellow PRSA, delivered the luncheon keynote address on professional ethics and leadership. A dozen accredited members from throughout the state are scheduled to attend in support of participating candidates.

**PROJECTS:** Each year for more than two decades, the Public Relations Council of Alabama (PRCA) has honored its top overall chapter as measured in the areas of programs (educational value); membership recruitment, retention and participation; promotion of public relations internally and externally; projects; community involvement and other special events; and accreditation and professional development. In recent years, Chapter of the Year guidelines received much criticism with large chapters feeling penalized in some categories and small chapters feeling handicapped in other categories – specifically in the areas of membership retention/recruitment and accreditation. While judges used the same rating system for each chapter, small chapters just couldn't compete with large chapters in some areas (accreditation), and vice versa (membership participation).

Modeled closely after the American Advertising Federation (AAF's) Club Achievement competition, the new COTY guidelines for PRCA's 2008 Chapter of the Year competition allow chapters to compete in and win awards in eight individual achievement categories including: Public relations education, Communication (promoting public relations externally and internally), Projects, Chapter management, Membership, Programs, Accreditation, and Public service.

Guidelines ask chapters to state objectives in each area, how they will achieve those objectives, and their success. Additionally, a "Chapter of the Year" is chosen. The Chapter of the Year would be determined by the total score of their entries in the eight categories. The competition allows chapters to use best practices in public relations planning by setting objectives in each area, developing tactics to achieve those objectives, and measuring success by objective. The COTY Award ceremony will be held in Birmingham in April 2009.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** The greatest impact to PRCA's communication efforts were made when SPRF debuted a new website in May 2008. The site was redesigned and upgraded and now includes features previously unavailable on the site (a content management system, RSS feed, mp3 capability etc.). The goal is to offer Chapters free web hosting a beta test this year is successful.

Now for the first time, the SPRF database serves as a single master database for each PRCA Chapter, and any chapter in SPRF. Members can easily access the new database using their own email address as a username and create their own password. The ease of use is one of the greatest benefits. Custom searches, reports and excel files are very easily downloaded representing a tremendous leap forward for our organization.

**STUDENTS:** With a renewed enthusiasm to energize our student chapters, PRCA waived student chapter dues this year. Student Medallion award entries, the Bettie Hudgens Student Chapter of the Year and Michael K. Simmons Student of the Year awards were presented at the Annual State Conference. With a plan in place, PRCA will be surveying students and faculty to change our entire approach to how the organization serves students. 2009 should be a dramatic year of change in this regard.

**2008 PRCA CONFERENCE:** PRCA-Montgomery hosted the 2008 PRCA State Conference at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa at the Convention Center. The Montgomery Conference Committee worked for more than a year to bring nationally known speakers such as Dr. David Bronner, Dr. Joe Trahan, Dr. Sarah King, Tim Lennox, and many others to the conference that was held Oct. 2-3. The conference kicked off with an immersion course, an APR Boot Camp, for the first time as a pre-conference activity the day before the conference began.

Committee: Lori Quiller, Montgomery chapter president, conference committee chair; Jim Plott, Medallion Awards chair; Peggy Collins, conference registration chair; Lara Lewis, publicity chair; Nia Johnson, student activity chair; Mary Kelley, finance director; and Bill Cunningham, Scottie Mitchell, Lori Moneyham and Kay Yarbrough, speaker chairs, and Diane Christy, door prizes.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** As president for 2007-08, I am honored to have served this organization. Time and time again, I was astonished and humbled by our volunteers who offered help when needed, worked without being asked, and made contributions above and beyond volunteer job descriptions. It was my goal this year, to leave this organization better than we found it, and with this year's conscientious, hard-working board, I am happy to report we have been able to do just that. Thank you for your time, service and membership to this organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah York Geiger, APR  
2007-08 State President

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