



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

PRCA MONTGOMERY Membership by the Numbers

by Stacy Benefield

MEMBERSHIP SNAPSHOT

Total Membership
123

November Meeting
Attendance
31 or 25.2 %

November
New Members
1

At press time, 72 percent of PRCA-Montgomery members had renewed their membership for the 2003-2004 fiscal year (Oct. 1-Sept. 30). In addition, 12 new members have joined our organization this year, giving us a total of 99 members in good standing. However, since non-renewing members are not officially taken off the roster until the end of December (unless they request removal or have changed jobs with no forwarding information) our official membership count is 123, meaning we still have 24 members on the roster with outstanding dues. It's not too late for these members to pay their dues and continue their membership in PRCA-Montgomery. 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.

So far this year, we're doing great recruiting new members, and we're doing pretty good keeping the members we have. The area that's not looking so hot is membership participation. Of 123 members, only 31 people attended our November meeting, and three of them were guests.

We'd like your help. First, if you haven't been coming to meeting, come! Our VP of Programs does a great job of selecting speakers that are relevant to PR and relevant to PR in Montgomery, not to mention the networking opportunities you're missing. If you have a complaint or suggestion about the meetings and PRCA-Montgomery activities in general, bring them on! Simply e-mail sbenefield@alaha.org. If you'd rather be anonymous, come to the January meeting and christen the new "PRCA-Montgomery Comment Box." Second, if you are coming to meetings (THANK YOU), please invite a PRCA friend that hasn't been in a while.

In addition to the new comment box, we'll be initiating new things throughout the year to aid in membership recruitment, retention and PARTICIPATION. We're looking forward to another great year.

NEWMEMBERS

PRCA-Montgomery has one new member to welcome this month – Laura Ahmann, a PR specialist with Hyundai.

HELP WANTED!

Public Relations Internships Wanted!

By Nancy S. Mitchell
Student Liaison

As part of its ongoing attempt to build relationships with our student members, the Public Relations Council of Montgomery is serving as a clearinghouse for information on internships available in our area. PRCA members should send pertinent information on their internship to Nancy Mitchell, our Student Liaison, and the information will be posted on the PRCA web site.

Letters have been sent to all of the PRCA Student Chapter Advisors statewide, department heads of various colleges, as well as other public relations programs across the state informing them of this valuable service. We hope to increase student participation with our PRCA chapter and through this service, assist them in their academic endeavors.

scottiem@bcatoday.org
wk: 240.8717

Money-Making Ideas?

Do you have a money-making idea? Melanie Beasley, chapter fundraiser, is asking for any ideas to help generate funds for the Montgomery Chapter during the upcoming year. You can forward your ideas by email, melaniebeasley@mc-ala.org.





Does PR Really Exist?

I received an odd little letter from a PRCA student member recently. Given the season, I thought I'd share it with you, along with my reply (in which I borrow heavily the writing of Francis P. Church).

Dear Mr. Freeland,

I am 18 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no such thing as a public relations profession. My professor says, "If you see it in The Montgomery Chapter News, it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there public relations, and are there jobs?

-- Virginia Hamm

Virginia, your little friends are completely nuts. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe unless they see. They are plumb out of their little minds, and should see their counselor, change majors and become marine biologists.

Yes, Virginia, there is public relations. It exists as certainly as cheese-in-a-can, green ketchup and vanilla Coke exist, and you know that they abound and add confusion to your shopping trips. Alas! how dreary would the world be if there were no public relations! There would be no crisis communications management then, no publicity, no image enhancement, no marketing, no advertising, no media relations, no fundraising to make tolerable this existence. We should have no Web sites, except for highly technical stuff put together by graphics-hating computer geeks and of course those that come up accidentally when you do a search for "door knockers."

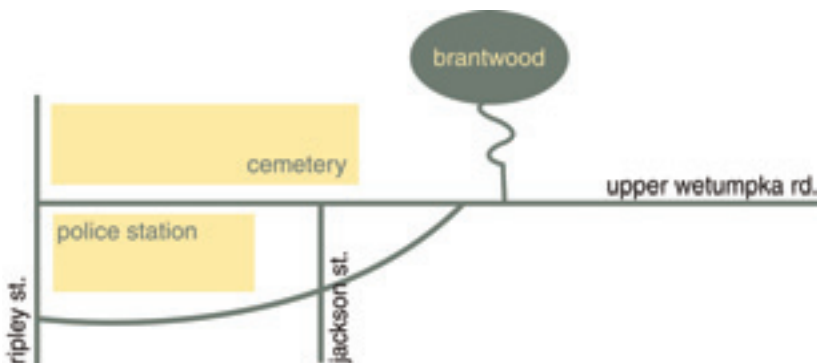
Not believe in PR! You might as well not believe in root canals. Nobody sees public relations, but that is no sign that there is no public relations. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? OK. Bad example. What about telemarketers?

You tear apart the digital camera see what makes the picture inside, but now you're out a camera. Believe you me, only your faith in public relations as a profession can offer you such a boundless arena of different tasks all rolled up into one job. And there are jobs, too, Virginia. There are newsletters to publish, new releases to write, videos to produce, calls to make, lawmakers to lobby and on and on.

Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, you bet it is.

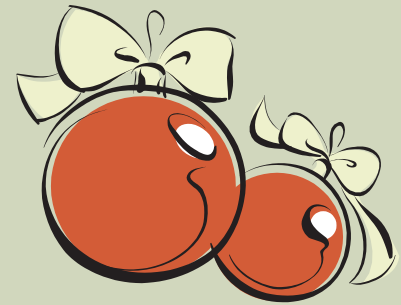
No PR! It lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, we will continue to influence public opinion!

Doug Freeland



CHAPTER MEETING

DECEMBER 15, 2003



Brantwood Christmas Party

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

Members \$15 (without gift)

Nonmembers \$17

RSVP: pcollins@tourism.state.al.us

RSVP Deadline: Noon

Thursday, December 11, 2003

Join us as we celebrate the season with our friends from Brantwood Children's Home on Monday, Dec. 15 at 5:30 p.m. 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 Lenore today (lenorev@frazerumc.org). We have several kids whose names have not been chosen.

Brantwood, located on the Upper Wetumpka Road (see map), 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. The kids there really enjoy attention, and we can deliver! We'll have pizza and cokes, and Sheila Jackson has promised to come and sing carols for us! If you can't come to the party, but want to buy a gift anyway, contact Lenore to make those arrangements.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

2004 Events Calendar

All Chapter meetings are located at the RSA Plaza Terrace, 770 Washington Ave at 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. unless stated otherwise. Dates are subject to change. Be sure to check www.prcamontgomery.org for up-to-date event information.

Chapter Meeting: January 12, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, January 8, 2004

Chapter Meeting: February 9, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, February 5, 2004

Chapter Meeting: March 8, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, March 4, 2004

Chapter Meeting: April 12, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, April 8, 2004

Chapter Meeting: May 10, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, May 6, 2004

Chapter Meeting: June 14, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, June 10, 2004

Chapter Meeting: July 12, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, July 8, 2004

Seminar & Starr Awards: August 13, 2004; Alabama Industrial Development Training, One Technology Court, Montgomery, RSVP deadline for seminar, August 6, 2004

Chapter Meeting: September 13, 2004; RSVP deadline for chapter meeting, September 9, 2004

2004 PRCA State Conference - Birmingham: September 30 - October 1, 2004; More details later

No October Chapter Meeting



Nancy Dennis, past president and the chapter's nominee for the Philip R. Forrest Practitioner of the Year Award, received two honors during the November meeting - one announcing her as the Chapter's Practitioner of the Year and a plaque for her contributions as the chapter's president.



Gail Alsobrook, executive director for the Montgomery Riverfront Development Foundation, updated members on the recent developments to the downtown area during last month's chapter meeting

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.

THE PUBLICITY HOUND*

Blogging 101

They're called blogs, short for weblogs, and smart Publicity Hounds will start paying attention to these online journals.

My friend BL Ochman, a New York City publicist, has been writing about blogging almost every week in her excellent discussion list called I-PR, short for Internet Public Relations (subscribe at <http://www.adventive.com/subscribe.html>)

BL has convinced me that corporate PR people need to understand how to monitor the more than 2 million blogs so they can keep tabs on their company's reputation and also get valuable publicity. Authors, speakers and consultants can create their own blogs as a way to be recognized as experts in their fields.

Even journalists are blogging. If one of them happens to work at a media outlet where you want coverage, you should be reading their blog regularly because it will tip you off to issues the journalist thinks are important.

Yet BL says too many PR people mistakenly grumble about blogs and dismiss them as foolishness.

"It doesn't matter if you like blogs," she says. "It doesn't matter if you agree with the opinions of the people who write them. What matters is that some of the more than 2 million blogs have become quite influential, meaning that journalists read them and write about what is in them."

Not all blogs, she says, are rantings or diaries. For PR people, the ones that count are business, media and marketing blogs, par-

ticularly those like Up2Speed <http://www.up2speed.com> and Boing Boing <http://boingboing.net> which digest the contents of other blogs and traditional media worldwide and comment on it.

"Bloggers delight in scooping traditional media outlets with news, rumors and opinions," BL says. "That's one place where PR opportunity can be."

Copy Editing

Before you send your news release, op-ed piece or article to the media, how closely do you edit the copy? If you aren't familiar with the most common copy mistakes, you might not recognize them when you see them. Here's a short list of some of the most frequent errors and how to fix them.

- **Factual errors.** Before your release goes out the door, pick up the phone and call every telephone number listed in it, even if you're sure they are correct. Cut and paste URLs from the release into a browser window to see what comes up.
- **Spelling.** Don't rely only on spell-check to point out your errors because it won't recognize incorrect homonyms such as "there" and "their." Ask a friend or co-worker who is an excellent speller to read your copy. Or read it yourself, starting at the end of a sentence and reading backwards, out of context. That way you won't miss transposed letters and common spelling errors.
- **Hype.** Remove all superfluous adjectives, adverbs and phrases such as "remarkable," "cutting-edge" and "the only one of its kind" that describe your product or service. Just stick to the facts.
- **Correct names and titles.** Is it the Retail Clerks' international Union or the Retail Clerks International Union? Is it the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints? The very best resource book--the one most journalists use--is the Associated Press Stylebook 2003. Buy it at www.apbookstore.com

JOB SOURCE

Marketing Communications Specialist

Max Credit Union | (posted 11.07.2003)

Responsible for all written communications and provide support for all marketing projects. BA in Marketing, Public Relations, or Communications. Writing skills a must. PC proficiency required. Self-starter with great organizational skills. Excellent benefits package. Salary commensurate with experience. Please send resume to:

Human Resources Dept., P.O. Box 211115,
Montgomery, AL 36121-1115. EOE.