

February
2004

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

Chapter Sponsors Mardi Gras Float

by Susan Cline & Lee Bridges,
PRCA Members



AUM students show off their Mardis Gras attire during the parade (photo courtesy of AUM)

To get in the spirit of Mardi Gras, the AUM student chapter is feverishly working hard on their float entry for this year's AUM "Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler" parade. Since this is a costly task, the students have asked the Montgomery chapter to become a sponsor for this year's entry. How could we resist! The board voted unanimously to help support the AUM student chapter with this festive tradition.

This is AUM's 10th annual "Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler" celebration, featuring a traditional Mardi Gras parade with throws, Feb. 13. The event, which is free and open to the public, also will feature children's amuse-

ments and live music. Entertainment includes Aitken's Best Performing Arts, the Capital City Stompers, the AUM Senator Sensations and the Montgomery Biscuits' mascot, Big Mo. Vendors will be on site selling T-shirts, beads and other Mardi Gras souvenirs.

AUM initiated Mardi Gras in 1995 as a means of thanking the community for its support and encouragement of AUM. In past years, the event has attracted 10,000-20,000 people. The food court will open and entertainment will begin at 5 p.m. The parade will start at 7:30 p.m. with fireworks immediately following.

PRCA member and Professor of Mass Communication at AUM Blair Gaines said, "The parade is a project which brings students together and a time to invite the community to our campus. There are rides and activities for young children and usually the student volunteers who man them. We really have a nice mix of students and perhaps future students coming together. I encourage everyone in the Montgomery area to make plans to come!"

For more information, call Kristen McLendon, marketing coordinator in University Outreach, at (334) 244-3915.

AUM's Mardi Gras has become a major attraction for the Montgomery area (photo courtesy of AUM)



Valentine Surprise Raffle

Surprise Your Loved One on
Valentine's Day!

By Melanie Beasley, Fundraising

Feb. 14 is the traditional day to celebrate Valentine's Day, but some lucky person will take home a beautiful basket of Valentine's delights after the next meeting of PRCA on Feb. 9 thanks to the generosity of a number of local businesses, including LWT Communications, Eastdale Mall, Jubilee CityFest, and others. And, a special thanks to Cindy Scott of LWT, Anna Tadlock of Eastdale Mall, Sherry Ward of ASF and others for their help on this project

PRCA members are selling raffle tickets at the modest price of \$2.00 each for a chance to win. So far, as many as 175 tickets have been sold. If you need additional tickets, call Melanie Beasley at 832-1270.

The Valentine's gift basket is full of neat surprises including:

- \$50.00 gift certificate to LaJolla Restaurant
- Birthday party for up to 25 at the Eastdale Ice Rink
- Weekend passes to Jubilee CityFest
- Two tickets to the ASF presentation of Macbeth
- The basket also includes several decorative items, a bottle of top-of-the-line Chardonnay, and the traditional chocolates.



MABC MEMBERS JOIN PRCA

Those of you who attended our January meeting learned of the demise of PRCA's longtime sister organization, the Montgomery Association of Business Communicators.

Originally affiliated with the International Association of Business Communicators, MABC thrived for many of its 30+ years before entering a decline which culminated in its board suspending operations earlier this month. I was on that board, and it was not an easy decision to make. It was made easier by your board's offering membership to MABC members, two of whom have already applied and been approved.

MABC fought hard, but couldn't overcome dwindling membership and participation from the members it retained. Before the end, paid membership had sunk to 20 and speakers were frequently greeted by attendance under half that number.

"Our small numbers made it more and more difficult to attract speakers and to even have a place to meet," MABC president Hank Schmitt wrote in the final MABC newsletter. "With little attendance at meetings and very little participation in MABC special events....we lost our reason for being."

Our PRCA chapter hasn't lost its reason for being. In fact, it's right there on our web site: We were established to unite those engaged in the practice of public relations in: promoting and maintaining high standards of public service and conduct; exchanging ideas and experiences; and collecting and disseminating information of value to public relations practitioners and the public.

But MABC's story might illustrate the natural evolution of professional organizations. Early enthusiasm is high, but members come and go. Some become active and stay that way; others get involved for a bit and then vanish when their hitch is up. Some attend every meeting, others never even shown their faces. Over the years, active members get tired of doing all of the work, and eventually take themselves out of the picture. And it is, I think, the loss of these long-time, experienced members that does the most harm.

Our PRCA chapter is a long way from losing its reason for being, and we have the potential to remain a vibrant and relevant organization well into this century and beyond. But as MABC proved, we also have the potential to cease to matter.

We have the potential to remain a vibrant and relevant organization well into this century and beyond. But as MABC proved, we also have the potential to cease to matter.

Let us know why PRCA matters to you, and what we can do to matter more. If your PRCA membership already doesn't matter, or matters little, please tell us why, and what it would take to change your mind. We'll continue to survey the membership over the coming months.

We pledge to fix what's broken, polish what works, and make a positive difference to you if you help us. Let us see you all at our February meeting, huh?

Doug Freeland

CHAPTER MEETING

FEBRUARY 9, 2004

NEVER A DULL MOMENT: PR AND THE AG

Guest Speaker:

Attorney General Bill Pryor

RSA Plaza Terrace | 11:45 a.m.

Members \$12

Non-members \$25*

RSVP: pcollins@tourism.state.al.us

RSVP Deadline: Noon

Thursday, February 5, 2004

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

About the Program: When Attorney General Bill Pryor took office seven years ago, he was the youngest Attorney General in the United States. Pryor was reelected to his second full-term in 2002, with the highest percentage of votes of all statewide candidates. He provides legal representation for the State of Alabama, its officers, departments, and agencies. The Attorney General defends the State in all lawsuits in which the State is named as a defendant and represents the State in all court proceedings wherein the constitutionality of a state statute is challenged. Pryor also issues legal advice in the form of formal or informal written opinions to authorized public officials and agencies. We are honored to have Attorney General Pryor share what life is like as Alabama's attorney and give us insight into how he handles the massive amounts of PR that are required from his office.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

PRCA TAKES ACTION!

By Lenore Vickrey, VP of Projects

Your PRCA chapter is involved in a number of service projects in the community. Look over this list and let us know which one you want to help with. Please contact Lenore Vickrey, VP-Projects, lenorev@frazerumc.org, to get on board!

Pet Therapy - Hickory Hill Assisted Living, Prattville.

We take a puppy or kitten from the Humane Shelter and go visit with the residents. Best time to do this is during the week, but since most of us work during the day, we can also go in the evening after about 6:15 p.m. We stay about 30 to 40 minutes each visit. The residents love the animals and talking to other folks, especially children. A great project for and your kids!

Bedtime Story Project

Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women

Volunteers go once a month on a Saturday morning to the prison to help the inmates read stories, which are recorded on cassette tapes, to be given to their young chil-



dren. Volunteers must be approved and go through a background check. Contact Lenore for more information. This project is coordinated by Aid to Inmate Mothers.

50th Anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott Stamp Petition Drive

Volunteers are needed from time to time for various events, but the main focus of this project is to help the committee prepare for the stamp approval and with PR as the 50th anniversary approaches in 2005.

Share the Road Campaign

A committee is working on an awareness campaign to alert drivers to the need to give right of way to cyclists. This campaign was precipitated by the death in 2002 of Dr. Jim Glassner, a Montgomery eye physician, who was riding his bicycle when he was struck by a motorist. If anyone is interested, contact PRCA member Darryl Gates at dgates@areapower.com.

About our Speaker, Attorney General Bill Pryor



Bill Pryor took office as Attorney General of Alabama on January 2, 1997. He was appointed by Governor Fob James to complete the term of Jeff Sessions who was elected to the United States Senate. At the time, Pryor was the youngest Attorney General in the United States. On November 3, 1998, Pryor was elect-

ed to a full four-year term. On November 5, 2002, he was reelected, with 59 percent of the votes (the highest percentage of all statewide candidates), to a final term as Attorney General.

An experienced courtroom lawyer, Attorney General Pryor has tried civil and criminal cases in state and federal courts and has argued before the Supreme Court of the United States, the Supreme Court of Alabama, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

Attorney General Pryor has a record of prosecuting public corruption and white-collar crime, streamlining death penalty appeals, and as a leader of reform of both the juvenile justice system and criminal sentencing.

All Hands on Deck

By Melanie Beasley, Fundraising

Bored with your life? Looking for adventure? Then spice things up by serving a stint on the U.S.S. Conference Planning Committee. We need to set sail soon to plan for our August 13 annual conference. We need yours ideas, your enthusiasm, your commitment, and maybe even a mop to swab the deck. If you're willing to serve, call or email Melanie Beasley at 832-1270 or melaniebeasley@mc-ala.org by February 6.

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.

THE PUBLICITY HOUND*

Comment on the Candidates

If you think the media fired on all cylinders just before the Iowa caucuses, wait until you see what's in store during the next two weeks.

Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry's surprise victory in Iowa is fueling already intense media interest in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

What does this mean for Publicity Hounds?

It's an ideal time to comment on how the positions promoted by the remaining candidates will affect your particular cause or issue. The New Hampshire primary on Jan. 27 and primaries in Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina on Feb. 3, plus caucuses that same day in New Mexico, Virginia and North Dakota, mean many more print and broadcast stories and commentary.

Here are ways to claim your share of the publicity pie during the next few weeks:

- Write letters to the editor
- Write opinion columns for local and national newspapers
- State your opinion in your favorite online discussion forum, if appropriate
- Call your local TV station and offer yourself for an on-air interview to comment on the candidates
- Tell the media which way you are leaning, even if you are still undecided, or if your favorite Democratic candidate has pulled out of the race.

The State of the Union address presents yet another publicity opportunity because President Bush touched on a variety of controversial topics, from the war in Iraq to education and health care.

When I worked as a newspaper editor, I was sometimes disappointed that more people didn't take advantage of the editorial pages. Sources were so busy chasing after the beat reporters that they often never stopped to weigh in with their own opinion. And there I sat with a letters to the editor page to fill and only one or two letters in the hopper.

Best Places to Work

What better way to attract job-hunters to your company than by flaunting your award as a "best place to work"? Specifically, a prestigious award from Fortune magazine designating your company as one of the "Best 100 Places to Work."

Getting on the list isn't easy. But the editors at Fortune are willing to hear your pitch. If you think your company should be on the list, send a brief explanation explaining why to <mailto:100best@greatplacetowork.com>

The magazine then sends an employee-opinion survey to randomly selected employees from all candidate companies. It also sends a questionnaire to each candidate company and asks for details about the company's people policies, practices and philosophies. The magazine evaluates each company on both the employee surveys and the company questionnaires, with the employees' opinions accounting for two-thirds of the total score.

For more information, or to see which companies have made the list in previous years, visit

<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/bestcompanies/articles/0,15114,563546,00.html>

Smart companies already are preparing for the tight labor market predicted for the next decade and beyond. Even if you can't make the Fortune 100 list, there are lots of other publicity tactics you can use to position your company as an employer of choice. Read some of our best tips at

<http://www.publicityhound.com/publicity-products/marketing-tapes/creativerecruitment.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 susan@squareroot-inc.com and indicate "PRCA" in the subject line.