

JANUARY  
2003

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

## PRCA MONTGOMERY SHARES CHRISTMAS SPIRIT WITH BRANTWOOD CHILDREN'S HOME

by Doug Freeland, VP of Programs



PRCA members shared their time by getting to know the Brantwood children.

They were dying to say thank you!

"From the bottom of my heart, thank you! I can't possibly begin to tell you how much it meant to the staff and children at Brantwood and to me that you showed up in record numbers for the party," explained vp of projects Kathy Midgley. The next day, Ed Montoya, executive director for Brantwood, told Midgley that the kids were up late playing with their gifts and the staff had to make them go to bed.

As usual, Santa boogied with the crowd, leading children and adults in favorite Christmas tunes before yielding the musical chores to PRCA's own Lynn Perett-Cox. But Santa wasn't the only adult shaking up the dance floor. Brantwood teens gladly shared the hottest dance moves with chapter members. Maybe you can teach an old dog new tricks.

But it would not have been a party without our very generous event sponsors, Domino's Pizza and Chappy's Deli. Thanks to them, there was plenty of pizza and cookies to go around.



[left to right: Santa leads the children and adults in a round of Christmas favorites; One of Santa's little elves helps a Brantwood teen open her gifts; Rosemary Blackman learns more about this Lee High School football player]

## ABOUT BRANTWOOD

For more than 85 years, Brantwood Children's Home has provided residential foster care, academic assistance and counseling for up to 30 youth, aged 10-20, who are neglected, abandoned and/or abused.

Despite these children's unfortunate circumstances, their stories of success continue to encourage new residents.

Like the story of one young man who prior to living at Brantwood, had nine placements within 11 years. His behavior problems were more than care-givers could bear until he became a Brantwood resident.

While at Brantwood, he excelled as a football player for Robert E. Lee High School and earned the Bryant Jordan Student Athlete Scholarship. One Lee football coach reached this young man through the Fellowship of Christian Athletes where his involvement restructured his attitude towards life. He completed high school and went on to play football for Troy State University.

Today, he is a physical education teacher at a Montgomery County school and returns often to Brantwood to show the residents that they too can make something good out of a bad situation.

This story is just one of many. More than 95% of Brantwood residents complete high school and many go on to pursue a higher level of education.

But this successful program does not run on encouragement alone. There are many ways the community can help. Whether it is by volunteering or through financial support, one person can make a difference. To learn how you can help, contact Teresa Green, 334.265.0784.



The Public Relations Council of Montgomery now is an incorporated nonprofit entity. The articles of incorporation to become a 501 (c) (6) corporation were filed with the Montgomery County Probate Court on Dec. 12th. Each of the local chapters of the Public Relations Council of Alabama have incorporated at the request of the state board.

What does this mean? Well, it makes us eligible for certain tax exemptions, frees the board from individual liability and gives us a more professional status. As a result, we'll have to go to a line-item budgeting, store our board minutes and financial reports for seven years and make an annual report to the membership.

Line-item budgeting requires that any member seeking reimbursement from the chapter fill out a check request form. A printable form for this purpose will be posted on our Web site under the membership area, so please use it whenever you seek reimbursement. Of course, before you make any expenditure on behalf of our chapter, please seek permission from our treasurer, Carol Gunter.

Copies of the articles of incorporation will be available for your review at our January meeting and you can now read our bylaws online also under the membership area at [prcamontgomery.org](http://prcamontgomery.org). All of this official, legal business puts me in the mood to make some New Year's resolutions for our newly incorporated PRCA chapter. Your board has set some simple, but important goals for this year:

- SEEK GREATER MEMBERSHIP PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES**  
Did you know PRCA chapters are rated each year based on the percentage of members who attend our meetings? For the past several years, our average meeting attendance has been under 50 percent. Our goal is to break that cycle this year. Please make every effort to make our monthly meetings. Our VP for Programs Doug Freeland has some exciting programs planned that you won't want to miss.
- INCREASE PROFESSIONAL IDENTIFICATION OF MEMBERS**  
If you have five years or more experience as a public relations professional, you can seek senior status and/or accreditation. Please speak with our VP for Education and Accreditation Linda Lee if you are interested in either.
- HAVE EITHER A COMMUNITY SERVICE OR PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICE PROJECT EACH MONTH**  
Our compassionate VP for Projects Kathy Midgley has big plans for us. Stand by for details.
- IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH MEMBERS**  
Communications Officer Susan Cline has done a superb job in revamping our Web site and newsletter. If you have any other suggestions for improving communications, please let her know.
- INCREASE STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTION WITH PRCA MEMBERS**  
We now have four student PRCA chapters. Make sure you take every opportunity to interact with and mentor these young people.

These shouldn't be hard resolutions to make, especially if it is a team effort. See you at our January meeting!

*Nancy King Dennis*

## CHAPTER MEETING JANUARY 13, 2002

### WHAT'S COOKIN' IN JANUARY? A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS!

Guest Speaker: Kendall H. Haywood  
Alabama Industrial Development Training

11:45 a.m. | RSA Plaza Terrace  
\$12 | member  
\$15 | non-member  
RSVP: January 9  
[pcollins@tourism.state.al.us](mailto:pcollins@tourism.state.al.us)



Have an appetite for the good life? Hungry for a more satisfying PR career? Then join us in the PRCA

kitchen this month while we dish up all the ingredients you'll need to build your own Recipe for Success for 2003.

Our master chef will be Kendall H. Haywood, and she's preparing a veritable smorgasbord of tips for putting your success at the top of life's menu.

Training coordinator for Alabama Industrial Development Training since 2000, Haywood has travelled the state instilling management teams at companies large and small with communications, team building and a variety of other management skills. Haywood will be bringing 12 years of training experience in a variety of areas, including education, government and healthcare, to our table.

And if you can swallow one more metaphor, we'll promise you this: It'll be food for thought.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### DON'T DELAY!

#### DEADLINE FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DEC. 31

You won't want to miss the coming year with PRCA-Montgomery. We've kicked off our new membership year with a fantastic new board that is excited about the possibilities for growth within our organization and has plans to get our membership excited, too.

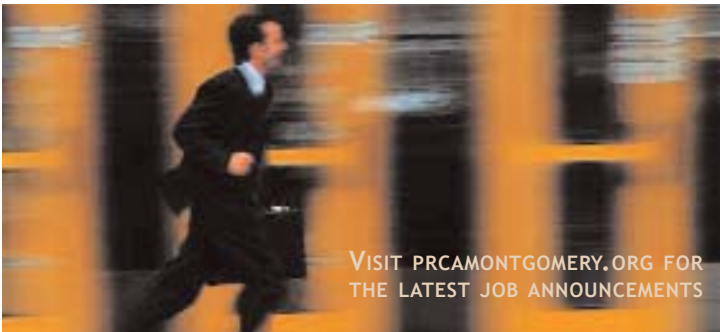
PRCA members who do not renew their membership prior to Dec. 31 will be deleted from the database, with no exceptions. Those who experience a lapse in membership must re-apply as a new member and pay the appropriate fees if they wish to rejoin.

When renewing, don't forget to include the invoice with corrections to your employer and contact information. If you would like another invoice, we will be glad to e-mail, fax or mail it to you. If you have any questions, please contact Stacy at 272-8781 or sbenefield@alaha.org.

### WELCOME BACK!

Pending approval from the state board, PRCA-Montgomery would like to welcome back Melanie Beasley. Melanie is the public information officer for Montgomery County.

## JOBSOURCE



VISIT [PRCAMONTGOMERY.ORG](http://PRCAMONTGOMERY.ORG) FOR  
THE LATEST JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Family Sunshine Center (Posted 12/19/2002)

The Family Sunshine Center is seeking a full-time Public Relations Specialist. Responsibilities includes writing articles, layout, design, printing and mailing procedures for the FSC newsletter; coordinating media events and writing scripts and public service announcements when necessary; attending and assisting in coordinating the monthly Associate Board meetings; and maintaining the FSC web page to name a few (more details available online at [prcamontgomery.com](http://prcamontgomery.com)). Contact Tara Johnson, Outreach Supervisor 206-2121 or fax 206-2111.

*Let us help you fill your vacant PR position. Job announcements are printed in PRCA-Montgomery's monthly newsletter and posted on its web site. E-mail details to [susan@squareroot-inc.com](mailto:susan@squareroot-inc.com)*

## MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

### PRCA MEMBERS TAKE TOP MABC HONORS

The Montgomery Association of Business Communicators (MABC) tapped PRCA-Montgomery members for all three of its top communications honors, naming Doug Freeland its Communicator of the Year for 2002 in ceremonies Dec. 10 at the RSA Plaza.

Chapter past president |ethics Hank Schmitt captured the organization's Communication of the Year award, and Jill W. West earned the MABC President's Award.

Other PRCA members earning awards included Darryl Gates, Anne Graham and Lenore Vickery. Gates earned a Gold Award for "Alabama Living," a monthly publication of the Alabama Rural Electric Association of Cooperatives. Graham received a Silver Award for the State Department of Education's Milken Media Kit. Vickery took home a Silver Award for Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church's Frazer Family News newsletter.

Freeland, media services manager for Alabama Industrial Development Training and v.p.-programs for PRCA-Montgomery, also earned a Gold Award for feature writing and three Silver Awards for video production and direct mail.

Freeland holds a BA from the University of South Carolina, and began his career as a news reporter, columnist and photographer for The Newberry Observer in Newberry, SC. In 1984, he left his post as The Observer's associate editor to become editor-in-chief of The Prattville Progress. In 1986, he joined AIDT as technical editor and media specialist and was named to his current position in 1989.

He is a member and past president of the Alabama College System Public Relations Association, immediate past president of MABC and serves on the PRCA State Board as member-at-large. He is also a Southern Public Relations Federation senior practitioner.

Schmitt, director of marketing for the Montgomery Area United Way, earned the Communication of the Year Award and a Gold Award for his "Heart of Alabama CFC 2002 Video" used for the 2002 Combined Federal Campaign, the official workplace charitable campaign for all 13,000 military personnel and federal employees in Autauga, Elmore, Lee, Macon and Montgomery counties. He also received a Gold Award for the MAUW 2002 Kickoff Tabloid. Schmitt was also installed as MABC's president for 2003.

West, public information officer for the Montgomery Housing Authority, earned a Gold Award for the quarterly "MHA News," She earned the MABC President's Award for outstanding achievement for her "Public Relations Education Course for Housing Executives."

## THE RULE OF SEVEN

by Joan Stewart, *The Publicity Hound\**

If you're following up after sending a news release or story pitch, you have seven chances to convince the media to use your idea. If--after seven phone calls, e-mails or faxes--you still can't convince them, let it rest for two or three months, then try something different.

That's the advice from Jill Lublin, who interviewed dozens of journalists throughout the U.S. while researching her book "Guerrilla Publicity."

Here's what not to do. Don't call and ask "Did you get my news release?" Instead, say, "Hi. This is Jill. I sent you information several days ago on...."

The phrase "I sent you information" is media-speak for "I sent you a news release." Rather than asking when the news release will be printed, suggest instead a unique angle that will appeal directly to that media outlet's audience. It might be an expert who lives in the newspaper's circulation area. Or an interesting visual for television. Or someone in your organization who would be a great radio talk show guest. If possible, in your follow-up call, state the problem the media audience faces and explain how you can provide the solution. Do it all within 15 to 20 seconds.

*The follow-up call would sound something like this:*

"Hi. This is Jill. I sent you information several days ago on how expectant mothers can solve back problems with a few simple

exercises. I wanted you to know that two expectant moms who are patients of chiropractor Dr. Richard Jones live in your circulation area and would agree to be interviewed about how the exercises alleviated their back pain. Does this sound like something you are interested in?"

If they say yes, you've succeeded. If they say no or they aren't sure, ask if there's another angle to the story they might want to pursue, or if they need more information.

Be succinct. Be specific. Be polite and patient if you don't get an immediate answer.

## LUNCH AT THE LANDFILL

by Joan Stewart, *The Publicity Hound\**

Pretend for a minute you're a reporter. Which of these two pieces of mail would pique your curiosity?

- An invitation to a news conference to hear an anti-litter group talk about the major role it played in passage of a state law that forces dump trucks to cover their loads when driving into and out of landfills.
- An invitation to "Lunch at the Landfill."

When I worked as a reporter, I got lots of invitations like the first one. Most went right into the wastebasket. But lunch at the landfill? I'd be first in the chow line because I couldn't wait to see what they'd serve.

That's exactly the kind of reaction Keep Tennessee Beautiful received several years ago when it invited local reporters to "Lunch at the Landfill." It was a creative alternative to a boring news conference that resulted in fabulous publicity.

"We invited all the media, gave them lunch in a zipper-lock bag and cookies in a zipper-lock bag, all tied up in a brightly colored fabric square that doubled as a napkin, and put it into a plastic container with a lid," said Edith Golson. "When lunch was over, we gathered up the napkins, attached them with a safety pin, called the reporters' names and gave them the napkins as door prizes."

Reporters usually show righteous indignation when they are given ANYTHING for free. But this event was so much fun that they didn't dare complain.

"Everybody got to take home their plastic containers and two plastic bags to reuse," Edith said. "The media loved it."

During lunch, Keep Tennessee Beautiful gave away copies of their annual report and updated reporters on what they would be doing during the coming year.

People who host traditional news conferences usually treat the media like cattle. Herd 'em into the barn, lead 'em to the trough, then herd 'em back out again so that everyone leaves with the same dull story. Is it any wonder reporters hate news conferences and often refuse to attend them?

Be sure to visit [prcamontgomery.org](http://prcamontgomery.org) for the latest news information. Send all job announcements, news items, and comments to [susan@squareroot-inc.com](mailto:susan@squareroot-inc.com) and indicate "PRCA" in the subject line. Hard copies printed by ColorBox Press (formally known as Digital Color Printing). 334.420.0146 | [colorboxpress.com](http://colorboxpress.com)



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