



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

Brantwood, A Christmas to Remember

by Lenore Vickrey



Nancy Mitchell shows off her moves

The Brantwood Children's Home Party was a great success! Thanks to all who brought presents and danced and hung out with the kids. Thanks especially to Nancy Mitchell, for helping set up the tables (and dancing!), and Sheila Jackson, who brought goodie bags for all the kids, PRCA members and the wonderful band of talented Troy State students Henry Everett, Larry Thomas, David Everett and Stefan Gainey. Her two assistants from the City of Troy, Wanda Moultry and Catherine Jordan, also came and had a good time. We had an abundance of pizza, thanks to Stevie B's and Dominos, cookies from Chappy's, Pepsi products from Buffalo Rock, and paper products from the Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church kitchen. We gave at least 6 leftover pizzas to the band and the kids, who appreciated them!

Thanks also to Santa (Charlie Colvin) who gave out candy canes and led us in some rousing Christmas carols.

"He does exist," said a shocked Doug Freeland as he watched Santa enter the room.



Member Sheila Jackson brought Christmas cheer from Troy State University



Santa presents a special gift to Brantwood in honor of Hank and Linda's recent nuptials



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 toward 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.



APR UPDATES

Get Accredited in 2004!

So you've been thinking about becoming accredited? Well, what better time than the new year to set your sights on this "mark of distinction!"

As you may know, the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations underwent big changes in 2003 and now, more than ever, is a true test of public relations knowledge, skills and abilities. If you've been in full-time PR for several years (five years is recommended) and you're ready to take the plunge, here are the nuts & bolts:

1. First and foremost, go to www.accreditationboard.org. This PRSA "sub-site" is chock-full of information and can be reached, by the way, through our own www.prcamontgomery.org!
2. Download, complete and submit the application form (with a \$25 application fee) to PRSA.
3. Order the study guide (\$25) from the web site and decide on which texts you will purchase to study. Begin studying! (Study courses can be arranged).
4. Complete the Readiness Review questionnaire, schedule your Review with Linda Lee, APR, and prepare your Review portfolio.
5. Participate in the Readiness Review (with three APR panelists). They will determine if you advance to the written examination, or if you need further study.
6. Schedule your written exam.
7. Pay fee (\$385, of which \$100 is reimburse by PRCA) and take the exam at Sylvan Learning Center on Zelda Road.

The good news is that everything can be scheduled at YOUR convenience at any time of year—AND the big fee is not due until you sit for the written exam! If you have any questions, please contact Linda Lee, APR, VP Education/Accreditation, at 271-3804 or llee@onlinemep.com.



About our Speaker, Judge Sue Bell Cobb:

Sue Bell Cobb, formerly a resident of Evergreen, now resides in Montgomery, Alabama, where she sits on the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals. She graduated from The University of Alabama, where she obtained a degree in History, receiving the highest scholastic award in that field of study, the Phi Alpha Theta Scholarship Key. In 1981, she earned her Juris Doctor Degree from The University of Alabama School of Law and was a member of the Bench and Bar Honor Society, Farrah Law Society and the Moot Court Board.

CHAPTER MEETING

JANUARY 12, 2004

The Roy Moore Controversy

Guest Speaker:
The Honorable Sue Bell Cobb

RSA Plaza Terrace | 11:45 a.m.
Members \$12
Nonmembers \$25*

RSVP: pcollins@tourism.state.al.us
RSVP Deadline: Noon
Thursday, January 8, 2004

**Nonmembers will receive the \$12 rate for their first two visits.*

About the Program: What if you got a phone call tomorrow morning alerting you that, "Thou shalt not be able to come to work today?" Besides being ecstatic, you might wonder how such chaos was created to the point that it was nearly impossible to get through the media and crowd. That is exactly what Judge Sue Bell Cobb, who sits on the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, dealt with for weeks during the controversy surrounding Judge Roy Moore and the Ten Commandments monument. Media and spectators from across the country traveled to witness the events that unfolded with Judge Moore's trial. Judge Cobb will share an insider's view of what the media and PR professionals did right, and what they could and should have done better. Thou shalt not want to miss this one!

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Nonmembers to Pay \$25 for Luncheon

The board of the Public Relations Council of Alabama Montgomery Chapter has voted to increase the nonmember fee for the chapter's monthly luncheon meetings. As we encourage members to invite prospective members to meetings, guests will continue to enjoy the regular \$12 fee for their first two meetings. After attending two meetings during a six-month period, nonmembers will be required to pay \$25 to attend subsequent meetings if they do not become a member. The board hopes this new policy will protect the value of membership in the PRCA-Montgomery, as well as encourage interested individuals to not delay in joining our organization. Please feel free to contact Stacy Benefield, vice president of membership, at 272-8781 or sbenefield@alaha.org if you have any questions.

Why Join PRCA?

It's more than lunch!

The most visible benefit to membership in PRCA-Montgomery is our monthly luncheon programs. As a professional organization, PRCA-Montgomery is devoted to providing a regular meeting time conducive to networking with our peers, as well as learning from the knowledge and experiences of excellent speakers. But you have the opportunity to get a lot more out of PRCA than a meal and a lecture.

For instance, did you know that when you join PRCA-Montgomery, you're really joining three different organizations with three different sets of membership benefits? Our chapter is one of six local professional chapters belonging to PRCA, the state's longest operating and largest group of public relations practitioners. Our statewide organization of more than 500 members joins with members of sister organizations in Louisiana, Mississippi and northwest Florida to form the 900-plus-member Southern Public Relations Federation. Please visit the state PRCA Web site (www.prcaonline.com) and the SPRF Web site (www.sprf.org) for more information about these organization and membership benefits.

Look for more on PRCA membership benefits in future editions of this newsletter. Next month: Accessing a regional network of PR professionals.

Uncle Doug Wants You!

...to come to a PRCA-Montgomery meeting that is.

This year, the PRCA-Montgomery board is focusing on member participation. Right now, we're working to compile a list of "Most Wanted" so we can get them back to attending meetings regularly. We're not exactly sure of our strategy for using the list at this point, but we'll let you know when we have a plan. In the meantime, if you KNOW SOMEONE or ARE SOMEONE who hasn't been coming to meetings, bring them to the January meeting so we can scratch their name off our list!

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MEMBERSHIP BRIEFS



Thanks to all the members of PRCA - Montgomery who contributed to a gift to Brantwood Children's Home in honor of our wedding. We sincerely appreciate the gesture as well as the incredible food several PRCA members contributed to our wedding reception.

Linda and Hank Schmitt

If you change jobs in the year, don't forget to let us know about it. Simply download the Membership Update Form from www.prca-montgomery.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@squarerooroot-inc.com.

THE PUBLICITY HOUND*

A Reporter's Trick

Here's an old reporter's trick. It was one of my favorites--one I used when I was on deadline, desperate, and needed to pry information from an uncooperative source. Or sometimes I'd use it when I nailed down the story, but my editor demanded confirmation from a second source.

I'd tell the source what I knew about her company, but intentionally changed some of the facts by making the situation sound worse than it really was. Sometimes, rather than just tell me I was off-base then explain why she couldn't comment, the source would get so rattled she would eventually tell me what I wanted to hear. More savvy sources would point out the incorrect information. Then, after I probed further, they'd tell me a few more facts...then a few more...until I got the confirmation I needed.

That's only one of the ways reporters try to loosen your lips. Most veteran reporters have a big bag of other tricks, and they'll use them if they have to, particularly if you are being interviewed as part of an investigative series, or for a story that will put you in a less than favorable light.

Teach Your Boss PR

Ask some PR pros what it's like trying to teach their CEO the value of public relations, and their response all too often is, "Well, it's like Dilbert talking to the Pointy-Haired Boss."

Five years ago, when those kinds of PR people wrote asking for help, I often told them, "Find another job." But that's difficult in today's glutted PR job market. So the next best thing is to teach your boss the value of PR.

Dan Collins, director of media relations for Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore and an accredited public relations practitioner with nearly 20 years experience, says PR people don't need to suffer in silence anymore.

"Sister Helen Amos, originally president and CEO, and now our Board Chair, once said to me, 'I work for Dan,' because she had gotten so in tune with what we were doing to help promote her, the hospital and the Mission of the Sisters of Mercy," he said. "Getting your CEO's buy-in to what PR is all about and how it can help starts with communication. Do your homework, state your case and show examples of how PR can help the bottomline, and you will make converts to your cause."



Shoot Your Own Photos

If you're planning a special event this year, don't overlook a critical step that can save you hours of anguish and many lost publicity opportunities.

Recruit your own photographer to shoot photos at the event. Many publicists and event planners have failed to take that simple step. Instead, they cross their fingers, hoping a photographer from the local newspaper shows up. When the photographer never arrives because there was more pressing news, the publicist has to explain to the higher-ups what went wrong. And they have no recorded images to use when promoting next year's event.

Take matters--and a camera--into your own hands. Recruit someone within your organization to photograph the entire event. Or, if you can afford it, hire a freelance photographer who can do it for you, leaving you free to attend to other details. You can usually find names of freelancers by calling the photo department at your local newspaper.

After the event, send prints with captions to your local daily and weekly newspapers, weekly shoppers, trade magazines, newsletters and other publications. Then post them at your website where the media can find them. Use the photos for next year's media kit. You can even use a Polaroid camera to take photos of participants at your event, then give them the photos as a thank-you. I've heard of groups that do this at events such as charity balls, and attendees love this thoughtful little touch.

Post Script: If you're thinking of photographing your next groundbreaking, ribbon-cutting or check-passing, please put the camera away until you can come up with something more creative. Those kinds of events--and the resulting photos--are more potent than sleeping pills.

**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.