



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

ONE PERSON, A TAPE RECORDER AND AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE by Hank Schmitt

“Volunteers like me did little more than hold a tape recorder, make sure the recording was good and offer a smile. In two and a half hours, I helped 18 women read their books, with most of those readings taking less than five minutes.

—Hank Schmitt

Long, long ago, when I was young, there was an oldies song with the title "Little Things Mean A Lot."

That phrase took on an entirely new meaning for me recently. A tape cassette is not a "big thing." Neither is giving a couple of hours of my time considering that those 180 minutes helped keep 18 families together.

How has this happened? All I did was join volunteers from Aid to Inmate Mothers (AIM) to help with their storybook project. We met at the forbidding gates of Tutwiler prison for women – no watches, wallets, cell phones or jewelry was allowed inside. We took tape recorders, a ton of cassettes, and several dozen children's books, all provided by AIM.

The concept behind the storybook project is simple: A mother or grandmother who is

serving time at Tutwiler can qualify to come to the prison's chapel one Saturday a month; there, they choose a book which they read on tape to their children or grandchildren at home. The women then send the taped story and the storybook to their children.

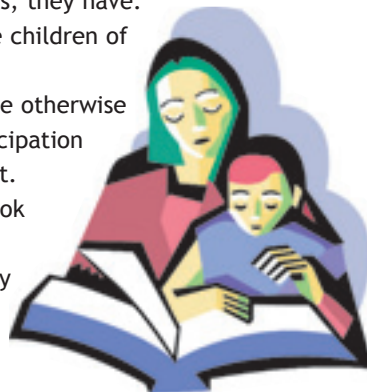
Volunteers like me did little more than hold the tape recorders, make sure the recording was good and offer a smile. In two and a half hours, I helped 18 women read their books, with most of those readings taking less than five minutes. Not a big thing? Consider the impact this has on the child who desperately misses the woman whose voice he or she gets to hear. Just maybe it helps hold that family together until mama or grandma can pay her debt to society and get home again.

I've been told that the storybook project "shouldn't be wasted" on Tutwiler inmates because these women have done something wrong; yes, they have. But so have I. I have no right to judge them; they are children of God just as I am.

We all are required to find ways to help people we otherwise wouldn't know; I would respectfully suggest that participation in AIM's storybook project is a good way to do just that.

If you would like to participate in the AIM storybook project, please contact Kathy Midgley. You will be required to fill out a questionnaire and be approved by the state Department of Corrections two weeks before the reading date, so start the application process as soon as you can.

The inmates, the kids, and your heart will thank you for it.



SPRF

DEADLINE!

**Annual Lantern Awards
Thursday, June 5, 2003**



As agents of change, you are encouraged to showcase your talents and energies by entering this year's awards competition. The entry booklet is now available on the SPRF Web site, www.sprf.org. Deadline for this year's awards competition is Thursday, June 5, so don't delay in downloading the booklet, which includes general information about the awards, deadlines, how to enter and costs. Judging by last year's record-breaking entries, the 2003 competition will recognize the most significant PR programs and publications in our four-state region. The award ceremony will take place during the SPRF|PRCA Annual State Conference October 23 - 24, 2003 in Auburn, Alabama.

APR UPDATE by Linda Lee, APR

RE-ENGINEERED ACCREDITATION EXAM LAUNCHES JULY 1

New, exciting things are happening in the world of public relations accreditation! Effective July 1, public relations professionals around the country will have access to a new and improved benchmark of public relations knowledge: the new Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations (APR).

A bit of background:

This re-engineered exam is the result of many, many hours of hard work on the part of 56 accredited volunteers from the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB), the Public Relations Society of America, and UAB Partner Organizations such as the Southern Public Relations Federation, of which we are all members. The process began about three years ago, and has involved the collaboration of three national certification testing firms, psychometrics experts and panels of subject-matter experts who created new test questions based on the practice of public relations in the 21st century--all of which have been scrutinized for clarity and accuracy. The exam was then beta-tested by 125 candidates across the country in March to further refine the final product. The result is a credible and relevant test of the knowledge, skills and abilities of today's practitioner that employs current best practices in professional certification testing.

Down to basics

The new exam will be multiple-choice and will take two and a half to three hours to complete, and can be taken at the candidates' convenience (no longer limited to twice a year) at a local testing center (Sylvan Learning Center on Zelda Road in Montgomery). Prior to the written examination, candidates must undergo a Readiness Review (which takes the place of the former oral exam) with three accredited panelists. This session will include a portfolio review and assessment of the candidate's readiness to take the written portion. The panelists will mentor the candidate by providing guidance on which areas to focus further study. As before, the exam is open to members with a minimum of five years of full-time public relations experience, and as of now, the price remains \$385, \$100 of which is reimbursable by PRCA (thank you, State Board!).

For more information visit WWW.PRCAMONTGOMERY.ORG and click on "Accreditation" or call Linda Lee, APR chair 271-3804.

Media Buying - About the Speakers:



David Allred is a partner with LWT Communications, a marketing and advertising firm located here in Montgomery. He is active in the business community and a member of the Montgomery Rotary Club and the Montgomery Advertising Federation. In 1992, David graduated from Huntingdon College with a degree in Finance and a girlfriend named Glenda, a 1991 Huntingdon graduate.



PRCA member Cindy Scott handles Business Development and Public Relations for LWT Communications. She is a 1991 graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in Public Relations. Cindy's previous experience includes more than 12 years of sales, marketing and PR responsibilities with stints at Eli Lilly & Company and Omnicare, Inc. She is a member of the Montgomery Advertising Federation, PRCA and Millbrook's First United Methodist Church.

CHAPTER MEETING JUNE 9, 2003

MEDIA BUYING

Guest Speakers:

David Allred & Cindy Scott
LWT Communications

11:45 a.m. | RSA Plaza Terrace
\$10 students & first time guests
\$10.50 members (with RSVP)
\$12 members (at the door)
\$14 | non-members
RSVP: Thursday, June 5
[pcollins@tourism.state.al.us]

Media buying is easy. Just pick up the phone and call the media, offer them money, and you're all set, right? Ha. You'd better take care of a few things first, such as:

- Planning your advertising
- Evaluating available research to help define your targeted customer and how to best reach them
- Negotiating advertising rates
- Establishing an advertising schedule
- Building promotions around your advertising schedule and a lot more

Join us on June 9 when David Allred of LWT Communications, LLC explains the complexities of media buying!

And as a special added attraction, Cindy Scott will tell us about LWT's CreateAThon, a life preserver of creativity for businesses adrift in a sea of...uh, er... uncreativity!

MEETING NEWS



WE ARE READY FOR OUR CLOSE-UP!

Thanks to Leland Whaley, Director of the Alabama Film Office, for giving us the director's cut on film production as economic development at our May meeting.

Given the success of the just-wrapped production of Tim Burton's "Big Fish," Leland is hoping to land even bigger fish in the state, and thinks he has just the right bait. Leland, a Emmy-Award winning broadcaster and political consultant in past lives, outlined his plan for introducing economic incentives for film productions similar to those offered in other industries.

This, along with new curricula in Alabama colleges and universities, will help build a base of talent in Alabama to lure and grow full-time film and video producers.

Hey, we're ready for our close-ups. Mr. DeMille!

MEMBER BRIEFS

KATHY MIDGLEY MAKES A CHANGE

Kathy Midgley announced recently that she is now the executive director and lobbyist for the Children First Foundation. Midgley, formally executive director for the Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, will now be working closely with the legislators, as well as serving as the director of the foundation. Midgley's response to the change, "I'm excited about the chance to be a voice for those who can't come to Montgomery and speak for themselves--the children of Alabama. I have a lot to learn, but I can already tell, I'm going to love it!"

SQUARE ROOT SOLUTIONS SPOTLIGHTED BY INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

Susan Cline announced that the new media agency she represents, Square Root Solutions (SRS), is this month's partner spotlight for the internationally known Web technology company, Ektron. Cline explained, "We are just one of many agencies who uses Ektron's products. To be selected for this is an honor for us and a great way for SRS to continue to grow as a new media| Web technology agency."

SUBMIT YOUR MEMBER BRIEFS!

PR practitioners are great at promoting others but not themselves. It is time to change that attitude! PRCA-Montgomery wants to tout your accolades! Include promotions, awards, etc. You can submit member briefs via email to susan@squareroot-inc.com. Please type "PRCA Member Briefs" in the subject line.

PRCA TAKES ACTION - updates

BUS BOYCOTT 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Craig Cornwall has been meeting with the Bus Boycott group and has helped devise these short-and long-term goals.

Short-term:

1. Michael Boatfield and Cornwall will speak to targeted civic and community groups about the stamp project.
2. Try to get some volunteers to be present at the summer riverwalk downtown and petition signatures for the stamp.
3. Generate a PRCA professionally designed brochure and petition request that can be passed out to groups at speaking engagements
4. A Web site petition sign-up page to collect names and information for future contacting.

The long-term goal includes producing media kits building awareness and promoting events.

SHARE THE ROAD

The Share the Road project committee held an hour-long focus group with several members and officers of the Montgomery Bicycle Club on April 23 at Huntingdon College. Out of that meeting, a nucleus of a public relations plan was formed targeting May 2004 as the kick-off for a comprehensive Share the Road campaign in the Montgomery area. Because May is known nationally as Bicycle Safety Month, this will be the perfect opportunity to promote this new safety movement. This project will also be coordinated with the City of Montgomery's plans to begin designating bike routes throughout the city in the fall of 2003. The next step of the campaign is to develop visuals with the help of the bike club. The plan is projected to be completed by December of this year.

BEDTIME STORES

Upcoming Tutwiler dates through the end of September are as follows:

- May 31, 2003
- June 28, 2003
- July 26, 2003
- August 23, 2003
- September 27, 2003

If you would like to find out how you can participate in one of these projects, please contact Kathy Midgley by email: kmidgley@bellsouth.net. Also, if you are or have volunteered your PR services in 2003, please let Kathy know.

MAKE THE MOST OF AWARDS!

by Joan Stewart, *The Publicity Hound**

The next time you win an award, don't start grumbling if all you get is a four-line mention in your community newspaper.

Most companies write the standard, boring news release that deserves no more than the standard, boring four lines of type. They fail to mention the story behind the story. Their news release never answers the question "Why?"

Let's say you just won the "Widget Manufacturer of the Year" award. Perhaps you identified a customer need and filled it. Or maybe you increased market share thanks to a successful online marketing campaign. Or maybe you found a way to boost profits by using robotics on the assembly line. Those are examples of the story behind the story, and all of them are a heck of a lot more interesting than a dinky little announcement that you received a gold plaque at a convention.

Here are 8 creative ways to publicize your award:

- Write a tip sheet that ties into the problem you solved. Example: "10 Ways to Cut Manufacturing Costs"
- Explain in a written or telephone pitch, and in just a few sentences, the before-and-after story. What was the problem before you tackled it, and what happened afterward?
- If one of your employees wins an award, explain why they won it and suggest a profile story. In your pitch, tease the reporter with an interesting fact. Example: The No. 1 salesperson listens to motivational tapes every day in the car on her way to work.
- If your product wins an award, offer a story about the person who invented it, or the creative team that conceived the idea.
- Offer interesting statistics, bar charts or pie charts that help tell the story.
- Offer a free special report via email explaining in-depth the solution to a problem that led to the award.
- Get onto the speaking circuit and talk about how other people can learn from what you have accomplished.
- Check the editorial calendar for your local business journal and see if they have a special section devoted to your industry. If so, you can suggest a feature story on your company that piggybacks off the award.

**Reprinted from "The Publicity Hound's Tips of the Week," a free ezine featuring tips, tricks and tools for generating free publicity.*

Footnote: Please don't submit the standard, boring photo of you receiving the award at the convention. In the news business, this is known as the "grip and grin" shot. You're gripping someone's hand while you're looking straight at the camera, grinning. These are horrible photos. Instead, how about a photo of one of your employees working alongside a robot on the assembly line? Also, don't take up valuable space on the news release with an inane quote from the Big Cheese at your company stating how proud he is about winning the award. That's not news. That's stating the obvious.

REWRITING YOUR BORING BIO

by Joan Stewart, *The Publicity Hound**

I'll bet you can't remember the last time you read somebody's bio and said to yourself, "Wow, this is really clever!" Most bios I read (including my own) are more potent than sleeping pills. Some of the most talented authors write the worst bios. Why, oh why, do we make ourselves sound so boring?

I cracked up when I read the bios below, submitted by Kit Behling and Mark Borowski of Milwaukee. They appear on the back page of the booklet they wrote called *Facilitating Effective Meetings*.

"Kit Behling facilitated her first meeting at age 8, when she tried to organize a neighborhood Muscular Dystrophy carnival. The meeting got derailed when Buffy Taggart punched Timmy Harrison. Even so, Kit received kudos for getting the group through the agenda and back to kickball in record time. Since then she's facilitated hundreds of effective meetings and never had another one end in a fight."

"Mark Borowski is best known for meeting regularly with 60,000 screaming fans at Lambeau Field. He facilitates cheers and exhortations and almost always succeeds in carrying out the agenda at hand. In addition, he facilitates meetings of smaller groups in other settings where shirts are worn but face paint is not."

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. Hard copies printed by ColorBox Press (formally known as Digital Color Printing).
334.420.0146 | colorboxpress.com

