

November  
2003

Public Relations Council of Alabama

**MONTGOMERY**  
CHAPTER NEWS

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

**2003**

## **SPRF-PRCA State Conference Review** by Doug Freeland



### **Best in Show**

winner Jill West proudly displays her honors following the Medallion Awards ceremony during last month's SPRF-PRCA State Conference.

"Subject to Change" was the theme for this year's joint PRCA-SPRF Conference, and the East Alabama Chapter dealt with change as only a conference host can.

A strong turnout at the last minute, AV equipment challenges, a California presenter who thought Auburn was in Birmingham, and ongoing renovations at the Auburn University Hotel and Dixon Conference Center kept Michael Tullier and his team busy. But when the lights went up at the end of the Medallion Awards ceremonies, all agreed that the conference was a resounding success.

Sure, Martha Stewart, Barbara Bush and Harry Potter all canceled at the 11th hour, but East Alabama fielded a roster of terrific presenters who

explored the changing role and position of public relations in today's environment.

Mobile's Carol Mann joined the ranks of the state's top PR practitioners as winner of the 2003 Philip R. Forrest Practitioner of the Year Award, and the East Alabama Chapter was awarded the Sharon Heflin Chapter of the Year honor.

The Montgomery Chapter, with 23 registered attendees, garnered 13 Medallion Awards, and Jill West captured

Best of Show to mark the second year straight a Montgomerian has brought the top honor home (Susan Andres won BOS last year).

Next year's event will be engineered by the Birmingham Chapter, so mark your calendars now for Sept. 30-Oct. 1 and get ready to ride those rails to Sweet Birmingham!

Chapter members Nancy Dennis, Kathy Midgley, Stacy Benefield, Julie Debardeleben, Nancy Mitchell, and Lenore Vickrey were caught creating award-winning PR pieces - again!



## **THE WINNER IS?**

### **MEDALLION AWARDS**

**Jill W. West**, "Changing the Face of Public Housing," Montgomery Housing Authority

**Marty Sullivan & Nancy Dennis**, "2002 Statewide Elections," Business Council of Alabama, Montgomery Chapter

**Lenore Vickrey, Jason Otis & Johnny Boyd**, "2003 Frazer Pictorial Calendar," Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church

**Lenore Vickrey**, "Frazer Family News," Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church

**Jerry deBin, Kim G. Nix, Billy Pope, Gaylon Gwin & Katrina Williams**, "Outdoor Alabama Magazine," Alabama Department of Conservation

**Office of University Relations**, "ASU Today," Alabama State University

**Marty Sullivan & Nancy Dennis**, "BCA Governmental Affairs Conference," Business Council of Alabama

**Business Council of Alabama**, "BCA Quick Connect," Business Council of Alabama

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### Montgomery Chapter Dominated Attendance at PRCA State Conference

Hats off to the East Alabama chapter for hosting a whimsical doozy of a joint SPRF/PRCA conference last month, and for capturing their first ever Heflin Award for Chapter of the Year! Not bad at all for a chapter that just turned five years old! Congrats to Michael Tullier (our new state president) and all the crew back east. And forgive me if I say that Montgomery will always be the Chapter of the Year in my book!

Great speakers, evolving facilities and a band that almost rivaled last year's trio (I'm shameless, I know) combined for a great opportunity to see old friends and make new ones.

We had plenty to be proud of ourselves, including having the largest cadre of professionals in attendance at the Auburn University Hotel and Dixon Conference Center. Twenty-three Montgomery PRCA members registered, and many took home top honors in the Medallion and Lantern Award competitions. In fact, the Montgomery Housing Authority's Jill West captured Best of Show. To all of you who won, a big yeehaw and yahoo!

And also a special thanks to Shelia Jackson, whose "Seat of Salvation: A Comfort from Danger" went for \$50 and netted our chapter \$12.50 in the silent chair auction!

Mark your calendars now for next year's conference in Birmingham, Sept. 30-Oct.1, 2004. Note that the dates have changed to correspond with our official fiscal year as a 501 (c) nonprofit corporation.

Your new chapter board will be taking office at our November meeting (again, note the change in date to accommodate Veteran's Day). We'll also have a great program featuring Gail Alsobrook of the Montgomery Riverfront Development project. She'll give us the latest on the Biscuits, the Amphitheater, convention center, a new hotel, and answer any questions regarding the PR aspects of all that's happening.

And as always, come prepared to volunteer at the November meeting. Kathy and Lenore Vickery (VP, projects) will be looking for all the help they can get as we plan for our annual Christmas pilgrimage to Brantwood Children's Home.

We're hoping for a great year, and we've got lots of new members to help us get there. I encourage all members, young and younger, to attend our meetings and pitch in to help where you can. It may be trite to say, but we'll get as much out of our PRCA affiliation as we put into it. We promise to do our best to make your membership worth the effort! See ya!

Doug Freeland

## CHAPTER MEETING

NOVEMBER 17, 2003

### Riverfront Development

#### Guest speaker:

**GAIL ALSOBROOK**

Executive Director,  
Montgomery Riverfront Development  
Foundation

RSA Terrace Plaza

11:45 p.m.

Members \$12 | Nonmembers \$15

RSVP: [pcollins@tourism.state.al.us](mailto:pcollins@tourism.state.al.us)

RSVP Deadline: Noon

Thursday, November 13, 2003

## Upcoming Events

### COMMUNICATIONS CONTEST

The Montgomery Association of Business Communicators (MABC) is inviting all PRCA members to enter their best work in the organization's 2003 Communications Contest. You should receive an entry form shortly by snail mail or a .pdf is available on the PRCA - Montgomery Web site under the events section.

The contest awards entry deadline is Monday, December 1...awards will be presented on Tuesday, December 9. For more information, contact Lenore Vickrey at 272-8622.

### SCHMITT AND HILL WEDDING - DECEMBER 6

Hank Schmitt and Linda Hill would be honored if you attend their wedding, Saturday, December 6 at 3 pm in the main sanctuary at Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church with a reception following. They ask only your prayers and your presence – not your presents.

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

### Anderson, Bazinet named SPRF Senior Practitioners

PRCA-Montgomery chapter members Suzanne Anderson, APR, and Belinda Bazinet were honored as Senior Practitioners at the 2003 Southern Public Relations Federation (SPRF) awards banquet on Friday at the PRCA/SPRF conference in Auburn. The senior practitioner designation was established to honor members of SPRF who are recognized by their peers as veteran public relations professionals with high ethical standing. Candidates are nominated and selected by their local chapter if they meet three of these four criteria set by the Federation: 15 years of full-time public relations experience; accreditation; officer or board member at chapter, state or SPRF level; and recognition of professionalism as evidenced by such awards as Practitioner of the Year, Lantern Award or similar honor.

Anderson and Bazinet join the Montgomery chapter's already strong contingent of senior practitioners: Susan Andres; Charles Barnette, APR; Rosemary Blackmon, APR; Bill Cunningham; Julie Debardelaben; Doug Freeland; Darryl Gates, APR; Minnie Lamberth; Linda Lee, APR; Holley Midgley, APR; Marty Sullivan; and Paul Till, APR. Congratulations, Suzanne and Belinda!

### Beasley Named Chapter's Fundraising Chair

Melanie Beasley, public information officer for Montgomery County, has graciously and gallantly agreed to head our money making efforts this year – an effort that traditionally comprises our August seminar and whatever else she thinks of to raise money.

If you have any innovative ideas for fundraising, please forward them to Melanie, [melaniebeasley@mc-ala.org](mailto:melaniebeasley@mc-ala.org).

### The Winner Is? *continued from page 1*

#### Medallion Awards - Award of Excellence

**Alabama State University**, "The Inauguration of Dr. Joe A. Lee," Alabama State University

**Business Council of Alabama**, "BCA Publications," Business Council of Alabama

**Lenore Vickrey**, Jason Otis & Johnny Boyd, "2003 Frazer Pictorial Calendar," Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church

#### Medallion Awards - Certificate of Merit

**Stacy Benefield**, "Rural Hospital Series," Alabama Hospital Association

**Business Council of Alabama & Alabama Business Broadcast Center**, "Alabama Scrap Tire Study Commission," Business Council of Alabama



*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](http://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](mailto:susan@squareroot-inc.com).*

## THE PUBLICITY HOUND\*

### Piggybacking Off Disaster

When disasters such as the California wildfires capture the headlines for an entire week or more, is it opportunistic, sleazy or just plain wrong to piggyback your story off the disaster?

That's what a reader in San Diego called to ask last week. She and her husband own a nursing home, and she thought the local TV stations--or perhaps even the network news--might be interested in knowing how nursing home staff deal with elderly patients who become upset when they see the news reports on TV and hear others talking about the devastation. She hoped that the tips she could pass along might be able to help viewers whose elderly parents also need to be comforted.

Go for it, I told her. TV stations and print media are always looking for unusual angles to breaking news stories. There's a chance the San Diego media would be so consumed covering the hard-news angle of the story that they wouldn't have much time to devote to the feature aspect. But if they liked the idea and didn't have time to pursue it that day, there's always a chance they'd use it in several

days when they need a fresh angle.

Another idea, I told her, was to visit the websites of the local network news shows and email her story idea to them.

When should you refrain from piggybacking off disasters? When your pitch is clearly self-serving. Immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks, a few businesses created products such as tacky patriotic trinkets designed to rake in the bucks quickly. Then they faxed news releases to hundreds of media outlets. The publicity backfired and they were chastised.

There's nothing wrong with piggybacking story ideas off disasters as long as it's in good taste--particularly when you are offering tips and good advice that can help others.

### Piggybacking Off Hollywood

Keep your eye on what's happening in Hollywood, and use every opportunity to piggyback your story ideas off movie star news and gossip.

Today's hot news item--actor Robert De Niro has been diagnosed with prostate cancer that was discovered during a routine exam--would be a great opportunity for doctors to pitch a story about the importance of annual physicals.

If a movie star breaks her ankle in a ski accident, and you're a ski instructor who wants publicity, publish a tips list on the 8 biggest mistakes novice skiers make.

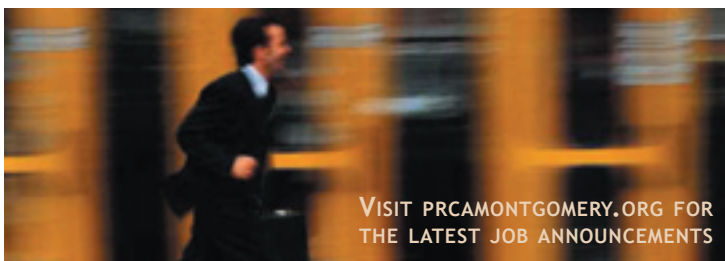
Publicity Hound Jerry Broach of Edgewood, Kentucky offers another idea. Know which movies will be released soon. Then tie your story idea to the movie. Thanks, Jerry, for sharing these three valuable websites where you can find that information:

<http://upcomingmovies.com>

<http://movies.searchwho.com>

<http://imdb.com>

## JOBSOURCE



### 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.

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

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).  
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