

September
2003

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



MEMBERS SHINE AT STARR AWARDS

Area practitioners were honored for their stellar work during the 3rd Annual Montgomery Public Relations Council of Alabama's Starr Awards program. Twenty-three awards were given out during the awards luncheon held August 12 at the Alabama Industrial Development Training. Out of the twenty-three awards, eight were first place Starr Awards - named after Starr Smith, Montgomery PRCA's founder.

Montgomery PRCA practitioners receiving the Starr Awards were: Alabama State University, *The Inauguration of Dr. Joe A. Lee* (Total Program); Frank Mastin Jr., Alabama State University, *Man Loses Bet with God* (Feature Stories); Lenore Vickrey, Johnny Boyd and Jason Otis, *Frazer Calendar* (Publications for Special Events); Jerry deBin, Kim G. Nix, and Billy Pope, *Outdoor Alabama* (Magazine Three Color); Lenore Vickrey, *Frazer Family News* (Newsletters Three Color); Kris Kendrick, Laura Hicks and Guy Cutting, *Aronovliving.com* (New Media); Marty Sullivan, Nancy Dennis (BCA) and Susan Cline (Square Root Solutions), *BCA Quick Connect* (E-newsletters)

The Best of Show award was chosen from the Starr Award winners. Best of Show is determined by the judges to be the best of the best. This year's Best of Show was awarded to Marty Sullivan, Nancy Dennis (Business Council of Alabama) and Susan Cline (Square Root Solutions) for the *BCA Quick Connect* (E-newsletters).

Certificates of Excellence were awarded to: Montgomery County Commission, Melanie Beasley, *County Government Week 2003*, (Total Event Campaign); Alabama Retirees' Association (Total Image Campaign); Frazer Christian Television, Courtney Johnson, "Just Believe" (Writing for the Media Broadcast News Story); Frazer United Methodist Church, Lenore Vickrey, "Prayers, therapy help child to walk on his own" (Writing for the Media Feature Stories Internal); Alabama State University, Mona Taylor, *Automotive Suppliers Vie for Business* (Writing for the Media Feature Stories External); Nancy Dennis and Marty Sullivan, Business Council of Alabama, *Alabama Today* (Magazine Three of More Color); Alabama Rural Electric Cooperative, Darryl Gates, *APR Alabama Living* (Magazine Three of More Color); Alabama State University, "ASU Today" (Newsletters Three or More Colors); Frazer Christian Television, Courtney Johnson, "Amazing Grace" (Television 30 second spot or less); LWT|KBK New Media, Laura Kelley, *Earthelements.com* (New Media - Interactive Website - submitted by Laura Hicks LWT/KBK New Media); Montgomery County Commission, Melanie Beasley, *Commissioner's Speech to Junior ROTC* (Potpourri)

Fast Times at PR High

It was back to the basics for area PR practitioners during the professional development seminar "Fast Times at PR High," hosted by the Montgomery chapter. Teachers battled the usual shenanigans, note passing, paper football games, etc. But when the first day of classes ended, these instructors felt like they made a difference in their students future careers.

To kick things off, Coach Freeland began the session with his own version of calisthenics followed by a very spirited pep rally (until principle Dennis' showed up with the rules). Things began to settle down once homeroom began and the students were ready to learn some new tricks.

For those truant students, you will want to catch up on your assignments by purchasing a CD presentation of the event including sessions presented by Linda Tilly (Alabama Partnership for Progress and Voices for Alabama's Children), Michael Tullier, APR, Susan Cline (Square Root Solutions), George Winters (Winters & Associates), Chief of Police John Wilson and Robert Fouts (Fouts Photography). Also included are never before seen footage of PR High practitioners - all for the low, low price of \$20. VHS tapes are also available at \$10 per session. Contact Laura Hicks at 244-9933 or lhicks@lwtkbk.com for more information.



I'm finding it hard to believe my year of service as your president is almost over. You've impressed me so much this year with the generosity you've shown with your talent and time.

Early in the year, our vice president of projects challenged us to reach out to our community in ways we've never done before. The reach of our members has strengthened the bond between women in prison and their children, taken a step toward better safety for area bicyclists, spread happiness to residents at a local children's home and generated pride in our city's role as the birthplace of civil rights. Individuals in our chapter also have used their professional skills to assist the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform, the American Cancer Society, Cub Scouts, Habitat for Humanity, Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, Girl Scouts, Jubilee CityFest and the YMCA to name just a few. The Public Relations Council of Montgomery certainly has reached out and touched the community around it. Thank you Kathy Midgley for sharing your spirit and motivation for service with us and inspiring all of us to realize that one person can make a difference in our community.

Other chapter goals for the year also have been met. Thanks to Peggy Collins, we now know everyone at our chapter meetings because all we have to do is look at their nametags. Thanks also to all of you who served on committees to help make our projects, our membership goals and our professional development successful. Twenty-six new members joined our chapter this year (Stacy Benefield put together a great package to welcome our new members) and we have three more total members than we had last year. Our 80 percent retention rate is the highest of any chapter in the state.

We soon should have two new senior practitioners - Suzanne Anderson and Belinda Bazinet. You both are too young to have 15 years of public relations experience. And although none of our chapter members achieved accreditation this year, we certainly all know more about the process and have been inspired to seek a higher professional plateau, thanks to our education officer Linda Lee. Because of the leadership of Carol Gunter and Laura Hicks, our treasury now has a healthy \$1525.12 in it and we graduated from PR High with greater knowledge of how to sway public opinion, plan strategically, overcome public relations obstacles, use digital photography and communicate via the Internet.

Doug Freeland certainly outdid himself to make our monthly meetings lively and informative. In one year, we've covered the elements of success, how to ply our profession and win awards for it, crisis communications, promoting our state and city through the film industry and media buying. Michael Boatfield did his part to publicize all of our chapter endeavors.

Several of our members have reached out to our Troy State and Auburn University at Montgomery student chapters, sharing their path to the profession with Troy members and attending AUM's activity fair in hopes of attracting new members to that chapter.

And communication with the membership has improved vastly through our new Web site and the rapid reach of our e-newsletter developed by Susan Cline. Our Web site and newsletter rock! Let Susan know if you agree. You've challenged me, you've inspired me and you've made me look good. Thanks for being consummate professionals and a great group of friends.

Nancy King Dennis

CHAPTER MEETING

SEPTEMBER 8, 2003

THE GREAT TAX DEBATE

Marty Sullivan vs. Bob Gambacurta

11:45 a.m. | RSA Plaza Terrace

\$12, Members | \$10 Students

RSVP: Thursday, September 4, 2003

[pcollins@tourism.state.al.us]

Dennis to Represent Chapter in State Award Competition

Nancy King Dennis, director of publications for the Montgomery-based Business Council of Alabama, was recently selected by her peers to represent the Capital City in a statewide award competition. Each year, nominees are selected from six areas of the state to be considered for the Philip R. Forrest Jr. Practitioner of the Year Award presented by the Public Relations Chapter of Alabama.

The award is the highest honor bestowed by the PRCA to a single practitioner. It is given to recognize outstanding public relations practitioners. Nominees are judged based on their community service involvement, professional activities, examples of their work and career achievement.

Dennis, along with the five other nominees from across the state, will be recognized for her talents and dedication to the profession of public relations at PRCA's annual conference, Oct. 23-24, in Auburn, Ala. One person will be named Practitioner of the Year and go on to compete on a regional level with practitioners from Louisiana, Mississippi and northwest Florida.

Dennis is the recipient of several local, state and regional awards recognizing publications she has produced for BCA. Before joining BCA six years ago, she worked as a journalist or newspaper editor for 17 years, also earning many awards, including a share of a Pulitzer Prize won by the news staff of the former Alabama Journal.

DEBATESPEAKERS



Marty Sullivan

Press Secretary
Alabama Partnership for Progress

On July 7th, Marty Sullivan began working as press secretary for the Alabama Partnership for Progress, a nonpartisan, grassroots coalition of organizations and individuals working for passage of the Education Excellence and Government Accountability plan that will go before Alabama voters in a public referendum on September 9th.

On September 10th, Marty will return to the Business Council of Alabama in her capacity as Vice President for Public Affairs. In that position, Marty is responsible for all media relations and internal and external communications activities for Alabama's largest association of business and industry.

Marty has more than 20 years of experience in public relations and journalism. Prior to joining the BCA in 1996, she operated her own public relations firm for six years; worked in corporate communications for two major Montgomery area companies; and covered state government for the Montgomery advertiser/Alabama Journal.



Bob Gambacurta

Public Relations, Media Relations & Political Consultant

Bob Gambacurta served as Press Secretary to Alabama Gov. Fob James, Jr. (April 1998 - January 1999). As a Cabinet-level advisor and spokesman for Governor James, he responded to political crises, natural disasters, election year politics, even a state funeral for Gov. George Wallace. He maintained a good working relationship with local, state and national media. He regularly conducted one-on-one sessions with a dozen reporters and because of his extensive broadcasting background, received high marks for his on-camera TV and live radio interviews.

Since the end of the James administration (January 1999 - present) Gambacurta has served as a public relations/media relations/political consultant to a number of clients dealing with a variety of issues.

Gambacurta provided fund raising, internal and external communications and political consulting services for the Auburn Trustee Improvement PAC (ATIP) from its inception in May 2001. He helped raise more than \$500,000, developed all print materials, helped grow the membership base from 50 to more than 1,000 supporters and assisted in the development of a 32,000 alumni data base. He wrote the membership newsletter, wrote and distributed news releases on ATIP activities and endorsements.

MEMBERSHIPUPDATES

Early Birds Dodge Increased Rates

Dues invoices for the 2003-2004 membership year in the Public Relations Council of Alabama were mailed on Aug. 13. Please note the deadline for remitting dues as billed on this invoice is Sept. 30. After Sept. 30, members with outstanding dues will be billed at an increased rate, in accordance with a dues increase recently approved by the State Board of the PRCA, effective Oct. 1, 2003. Please allow proper time for delivery of your payment to ensure receipt by Sept. 30. Members remitting payment as billed in this invoice after Sept. 30 will be billed an additional \$15 as required by the new state policy.

Members should have received more information about the dues increase from State PRCA President Patricia Y. Hartman, APR. Please contact Stacy Benefield at 272-8781 or sbenefield@alaha.org if you have any questions.

Welcome New Members!

PRCA-Montgomery would like to welcome the following new members.

- **Denise Edmisten**, public relations and promotions director, American Red Cross
- **Steve Wolfrom**, manager of community and business development, Central Alabama Electric Co-op

MEMBERBRIEFS

"About Schmitt"



Congratulations to our very own **Hank Schmitt** on his recent engagement to the lovely **Miss Linda Hill**. Although a date has not been set, Schmitt revealed the happy event will take place sometime following the new year.

Linda, who works for the Alabama Department of Public Safety, has served as an unofficial member to PRCA. She has donated her time to the organization by helping with last year's state conference event and with the Aid to Inmate Mothers project.

PRCA - Montgomery extends its warmest wishes to them both!

THE PUBLICITY HOUND*

Rules for Online Articles

If you're submitting articles for online publications, don't make the mistake of thinking you should follow the same rules you follow for getting articles published offline. Or you'll blow your chances of ever getting them distributed on the Internet.

Here are three major differences:

- If you want something published in a print publication, you should usually pitch your idea first. Then if the editor says yes, send the article according to the number of words the editor wants. Not so when you submit articles to online portals. Because you don't know which editors are searching through the portals, you simply submit your article, then wait to see who bites.
- When writing headlines for articles that will be used in print publications, or for news releases, longer headlines can be very effective because you can give editors more information about what the story is about. Sometimes you can even use a subhead just under the main headline. But headlines for online publications must be no longer than just a few words.
- Follow-up is critical when you're dealing with editors of print publications. But if you submit an article to a portal, then follow up, you'll be viewed as a pest.

Continued - Starr Awards

Certificates of Merit were awarded to: The Montgomery Advertising Federation, Laura Kelley, Addy Chair, The Addys (Total Event Campaign - submitted by Laura Hicks, Addy Co-Chair); Alabama Rural Electric Association of Cooperatives, Michael Cornelison, AREA 2002 Annual Report (Publications - Annual Report - submitted by Darryl Gates, APR); The Alabama Education Retirees' Association, The AREA Voice (Newsletters - Three of More Colors); Montgomery County Commission, Melanie Beasley, MCC Leading Edge (Newsletters Three or More Color).

Special Thanks to Seminar Sponsors

Leslie Bailey's Silver Spoon Cafe, Davis Printing and the City of Troy Tourism - Student Council level sponsors; LWT Communications, G2 Video and LWT/KBK New Media - yearbook level sponsors. Goodie bags were provided by McKee Group Inc, and in-kind donations were received from Boosters, Inc., The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Prattville Wal-Mart, Royal Cup Coffee, The Business Council of Alabama, Bruno's Bakery on McGehee Road and Skinner Printing.

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

Don't Blame the Reporter

Reporters get blamed enough for inaccuracies in news stories - sometimes rightly so. Most Publicity Hounds don't know, however, that mistakes in print and broadcast stories are often caused by other people in the newsroom. So if you don't like what you see, don't call the reporter and start screaming into the phone. Find out who committed the error and complain to the guilty party. Here's a list of things the reporter is often NOT responsible for:

- **The Headline** - Reporters seldom write their own headlines. Copy editors write them. If you have a gripe with the headline, call the copy desk.
- **Photo Captions** - Copy editors usually write these, too.
- **Unflattering Photos** - Photographers, photo editors or copy editors usually decide which photos to use.
- **Teasers** - If you see a front-page item that teases a story in an upcoming edition, or a "live at 11" teaser on TV that's inaccurate, call the media outlet and ask who wrote it.
- **Editorials** - If a newspaper prints an editorial unfavorable to your cause or issue, don't berate the reporter who wrote the original story. Editorials are written by editorial writers or members of the newspaper's editorial board. If you don't like an editorial, you have the option of responding with a letter to the editor.

If any of these mistakes happen to you, please don't punish reporters by giving your news tips to the competition, or by refusing to talk to them again. It can come back to haunt you later. Remember, never fight with people who buy their ink by the barrel.

Newspaper editorial boards should be one of your prime targets if you are mustering media support for a particular cause or issue, or if you're embroiled in a bad-news story and you want to explain your side to the key decision-makers at the paper.

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).
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