

## Character in Public Relations...

Aristotle wrote, "Character is how you act when no one is looking." Those are some mighty powerful words written very long ago that I think are still pertinent today. But, doesn't it just make you want to cry, especially to think about how many of today's business leaders seem to have lost their character...their ethics and morals...and still lead some of the most powerful companies?



Lori Quiller

A very good friend of mine, Kay Yarbrough, recently gave me an article from *Convention Forum* magazine entitled, "Ethics in Management – Doing the 'Right' Thing." If you've seen the skit for the 2008 PRCA State Conference, we poke some fun at some of these bigwigs...in jest, of course, but asking a very big question: Whatever happened to ethics and character in management and doing the right thing?

Earlier this month, the "leaders" of Big Oil testified before the U.S. Congress about their record profits on the backs of the rest of us suffering to squeeze every tiny drop of fuel from our gas tanks. These "leaders" could have used a good PR strategy prior to giving their testimony, which basically boiled down to, "Uh, we feel the pain at the pumps, too." Yeah, the rest of us are *really* sure that you do, boys. Somehow, I had a very difficult time imagining them driving off in their hybrids.

And, just this week, one of President Bush's press secretaries published a scathing account of his behind-the-scenes view of the White House during the early stages of the Gulf War, the

liberation of Iraq, and the war on terror. This guy, who so championed the Bush administration, was the public face of the Bush administration for countless press conferences and several years, turned the tables...not so much because of his conscience, but because of a promise of a tidy sum and a tour of the speaking circuit at the end of the day. Sour grapes after all these years? Or, something else?

You've got to admit...our jobs may not always be the most exciting jobs out there. Golly-gee-whiz! In today's world, it's a rollercoaster ride for some!

As public relations practitioners, we've probably all been in situations in which we've had to walk that fuzzy gray line between right and maybe not-so right, yet not necessary, entirely, altogether wrong. It's not a great feeling by any stretch of the imagination. We do our best, pull from our experiences, our knowledge, our personal codes of ethics, and forge ahead hoping for the best.

We are trained for so many different scenarios. The key word here being "TRAINED." We didn't just come by this gift lightly, so we shouldn't use it lightly, either.

So, if we professionals on the local level spend so much time training ourselves, what has happened to the Big Dogs on the national level? Have they stopped trying to do the right thing, or has the motto, "It's just business," taken over?

We all know that ethics, character, and especially morals, are not guaranteed in life or at work. The best that we can hope for is to do the right thing, even when no one is looking.

### CHAPTER MEETING

## Talk Back LIVE!

### Not Your Typical Media Panel Discussion

(Turn to page 3 for details)

**Monday, June 16\***  
**RSA Plaza Terrace**  
**11:45 a.m.**

Panel Moderator  
**Charles Barnette, APR**  
**Barnette & Associates**  
**Public Relations**

Members: \$12  
Non-members: \$20

RSVP to Diane Christy  
[dchristy@ascpa.org](mailto:dchristy@ascpa.org)

RSVP Deadline:  
**Noon Friday, June 13**

*\*Please note the change of date for this meeting.*

### SPECIAL NOTE

*Members who make reservations for chapter luncheons but fail to cancel by noon the Friday prior to the meeting ARE responsible for payment. We will invoice you!*

## Member Profile...

**Su Ofe** is associate vice president for communications and marketing for Huntingdon College. Armed with a Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree



from The Maryland Institute's College of Art and a Master's degree in Education from Marycrest College in Davenport, Iowa, Su uses all her skills in her current job for an array of tasks. For some time, she was a one-woman show, handling media relations, college photography, internal and external communications, the College magazine (writing, editing, shooting and selecting photos), media and photography archives, strategic planning, writing for college publications, event planning and publicity. Today, you can add Internet responsibilities to her bag of tricks. The webmaster reports to Su, and they are redesigning the site.

### ***Do you have any tips to being a top PR practitioner?***

**Su:** The first tip I would share is to listen. Listening will make you aware of good stories, sharpen your thinking skills as you consider questions to find out more information, build trusted relationships, and make you aware of needs different audiences experience so that you can address those needs in future communication. The second tip is to be an advocate for your workplace and for its administration – always presenting the most positive stories to others and never lapsing into negativism. If the PR person is bad-mouthing a place when she/he is off-stage, but talking positively about it on stage, which source of information would you believe? The third tip is to tackle the most important tasks that will make the biggest impact first. Those of us who have too few people to handle

all that needs to be done in a comprehensive marketing and communication program have to learn how to prioritize and keep a good sense of humor about it all.

### ***What are the top four skills needed in PR?***

**Su:** I think what makes me successful in this position is a combination of creativity, writing ability, a deep belief in and enthusiasm for Huntingdon and for private higher education, and a sincere interest in people and their stories.

### ***From where did your interest in PR originate?***

**Su:** Higher education is like a ministry to me. I can't think of a better way to share all the good education can do for the world than to be its #1 cheerleader.

### ***Why did you join PRCA?***

**Su:** I joined PRCA so that I could network with others in the profession and learn through sharing. I always come away from a meeting wishing I had time to get to more meetings and to talk with my colleagues and at other institutions more frequently.

### ***What experience most shaped your career?***

**Su:** I began working in higher ed as a work-study student at my undergraduate alma mater 27 years ago. Technically, I have never left college! My first job out of college was as a director of admissions at a small art school in Silver Spring, MD. From there, I moved to similar positions at colleges in Iowa, Pennsylvania and, initially, Huntingdon. Working in admissions gave me the mindset that it was my responsibility to learn about every corner of the campus and every person on it in order to market it to others. Communication/marketing/PR were a natural progression from admissions when I moved into this arena eight years ago. Now, I am also a consultant

in higher education marketing and a writer for higher education publications.

### ***What would you like to be doing in five years?***

**Su:** I have to be honest and say that I love working in colleges so much that I hope to still be at one – probably this one, since my daughter will be a freshman here in the fall – five years from now. I hope to have more staff by then, though!

### ***What was the greatest lesson you learned through PR?***

**Su:** That everyone and everything has a story, and that there are ways to tell those stories that make others want to listen.

### ***What is your greatest achievement?***

**Su:** My daughters. Corny, I know, but true. At work, in my eight years in this office, Huntingdon has purchased and added the Cloverdale campus; housed the production offices and accommodated a great deal of the filming for the feature film, "Big Fish;" changed presidents and administrations; launched a band and dance team; weathered the whims of audience interest and allegiance; achieved five straight years of record enrollment increase; increased the full-time faculty by at least one-third; launched an evening degree completion program that is offered at a number of locations around the state; enjoyed five years of unprecedented success in fundraising; built and improved facilities; and the list goes on. In short, there has been a great deal of change, but the college is strong, vibrant, and growing, and the sense of community here is deep. I'd like to think that good communication has played a role in that.

Join us for our June monthly meeting on a **different** day...

## Talk Back LIVE! Not Your Typical Media Panel Discussion.

Concerned by the local media's coverage of events happening in our area? Then, you definitely need to attend the June meeting for "Talk Back LIVE! Not Your Typical Media Panel Discussion." This will not be the typical panel discussion. Instead, we have arranged an interactive, professional session, and we want YOU to participate!

As PRCA-Montgomery members, you expressed your concerns about our media's coverage of local events. We responded.

**Charles Barnette, APR**, of Barnette and Associates Public Relations will guest moderate our panelists of senior representatives of print and broadcast. You'll hear what the future of local media is and have

an opportunity to voice your concerns and frustrations about dealing with the media. But, be forewarned, our panelists will have the same opportunity to speak out about what they think about the PR professionals they deal with on a daily basis as well.

You'll have a chance to site some examples of where PR professionals can help the media cover the news. The truth is that we need each other, and we need to know how to work together.

Make your reservations before **noon Friday, June 13**, by e-mailing **Diane Christy** at [dchristy@ascpa.org](mailto:dchristy@ascpa.org) and join us on **Monday, June 16**, for this very different media panel.

## Welcome New Members!

The Montgomery Chapter continues to grow! If you know of anyone who would like to join the Montgomery Chapter, please contact **Belinda Bazinet**, vice president of membership, at [Bazineta@MAXWELLAF.MIL](mailto:Bazineta@MAXWELLAF.MIL).

- ★ Suzan Gossett, Public Education and Development Coordinator, Group Homes for Children (*transfer from Birmingham*)
- ★ Josh Carples, Information Specialist, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
- ★ Katherine Dantz, Owner, Image Crafters
- ★ Edith Parten, Communication Director, Alabama Tourism Department

## Mark Your Calendars...

Mark your calendars for the 2007-08 Montgomery Chapter monthly meetings! All meetings are at the RSA Plaza Terrace beginning at 11:45 a.m. There is free parking in the parking deck. Cost to attend meetings is **\$12 for members** and **\$20 for non-members and guests**. *RSVP your attendance to **Diane Christy** at [dchristy@ascpa.org](mailto:dchristy@ascpa.org) no later than noon on the Friday prior to the Monday meeting.* Those who make reservations for chapter luncheons, but fail to cancel by noon the Friday prior to the meeting, **will** be responsible for payment.

**June 16\***   **July 7**   **Aug. 4**   **September TBA**   **Oct. 2-3 PRCA State Conference**

**\*Change of date for June only**



**PRCA Montgomery** is a monthly publication for PRCA's Montgomery Chapter members. For the most up-to-date information, visit [www.prcamontgomery.org](http://www.prcamontgomery.org). Please send all job announcements, news items, updates and comments to Neil Probst at [nprobst@capnhq.gov](mailto:nprobst@capnhq.gov) and indicate "PRCA" in the subject line.