

BLUE RIDGE

PRSA Public Relations Society of America



A membership publication of the Blue Ridge Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America

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IN THIS ISSUE

April Preview, 1

Message from President, 2

Development Tip, 4

PRSSA Spotlight I, 5

New Lynchburg Chapter, 6

PRSSA Spotlight II, 7

Accreditation Journal, 8

Luncheon Info, 9

April 16th Luncheon
sponsored by:

ND&P

Crisis PR: Behind the Scenes

PRSA April 2009 Program Preview

Pat Philbin, Ph.D., APR, former head of external affairs for the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, shares wisdom and experience to help you be prepared for the next crisis.

Pat has nearly 25 years experience in strategic communication; government, congressional and public affairs; organizational/business development; and innovative leadership with top-level, senior government officials and company executives, including crisis communication, media relations, marketing communications, brand management, government relations and strategic planning.

Pat currently has his own consulting business, Strategic Communication Solutions, LLC, but also serves as a Senior Associate with PIER Systems and as a member of Firestorm Solutions Expert Council, a risk management company called in by Virginia Tech immediately following the April 2007 shootings.

During 2006 and 2007, Pat served as the Director, Office of External Affairs for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). His responsibilities included the direct



John P. "Pat" Philbin, Ph.D., APR

oversight and management of four of FEMA's lines of business: the Offices of Congressional Affairs, Intergovernmental Affairs, International Affairs and Public Affairs. He also managed the Employee Communications Program as well as the Private Sector Office.

Prior to joining FEMA, Pat worked for Anteon/General Dynamics Information Technology as a Technical Director where he served as a consultant in strategic communication to the Department of Defense's Business Transformation Agency, directing and assisting

Continued on Page 3

Blue Ridge PRSA

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Radford University	Christine Johnston
Virginia Tech	Kelly Simons
Liberty University	Kristen Riordan
JMU	Aimee Bateas
Lynchburg College	Sarah Ridgeway

Message from the President

- Beth Kolnok

Greetings Blue Ridge Chapter,

We have certainly started off the year on a very active note!

Member Luncheons

With a wonderfully successful member luncheon under our belt, we can look forward to more of the same in the upcoming months. Many thanks to the hard work of our Programs Chair, Thomas Becher, APR, who will continue bringing us speakers that offer valuable and useful information for advancing in our profession.

With that being said, the April program will host Pat Philbin, APR, former head of FEMA public affairs. He'll provide a behind-the-scenes look at an agency that routinely handles crises and how you can implement some tips in crisis communications.

Public Service – LVRV

As we continue our partnership with Literacy Volunteers of the Roanoke Valley (LVRV), we are gearing up for another exciting fund-raiser, the 4th Annual Scrabble Tournament. Our chapter is funding two teams (3 players per team) again this year.

Thank you to Shelly Whitaker, Michelle Brauns, Linda Staley, Heidi Ketler and Traci Crockett for volunteering to represent the Blue Ridge Chapter PRSA during this entertaining spelling challenge. It will surely be a fun time for all as we support this great cause.



Beth Kolnok, BRC-PRSA
2009 President

APR

I want to wish the best of luck to the six Blue Ridge PRSA Chapter members that have embarked on the journey to accreditation for 2009. I know they are in great hands with such a strong and informative APR Committee.

LinkedIn Group

The Blue Ridge Chapter's LinkedIn group is off and running. This is a great way to connect with members and discuss a variety of topics. We certainly encourage all of you to join this exclusive group. A link to the Blue Ridge Chapter LinkedIn site is located on the home page of our website: www.prsa-blueridge.org.

PRSSA Chapters

Our PRSSA Chapters – Virginia Tech, Radford, Lynchburg, Liberty and JMU – have been hard at work this semester as well. Between hosting speakers, planning informative and educational events, attending and networking at our luncheons and planning to attend

Continued on Page 4

Speaker...

Continued from Page 1

communication efforts to Capitol Hill, the Government Accountability Office, and the general public.

Pat also served for more than 21 years in the Coast Guard, retiring as Chief of Public Affairs in 2004.

Other notable staff assignments include serving as the Deputy Chief of the Coast Guard's Strategic Analysis Staff, Press Assistant to the Commandant and Chief of Coast Guard Media Relations. Operational assignments involved more than seven years of shipboard experience, including command of two Coast Guard cutters.

Pat holds a Doctorate in Communication from the University of Maryland, a Master of Science in Public Relations from Syracuse University, and a Bachelor of Science in Government from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He also holds an Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) and is a member of the Public Relations Society of America.

Pat and his wife, Erin, have four children and reside in Northern Virginia.

The Blue Ridge Chapter of the PRSA thanks ND&P for helping to make this luncheon possible!

PRSSA SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION

In celebration of the 41st Anniversary of PRSSA, the Blue Ridge Chapter of PRSA would like to continue last year's Special Membership Promotion.

The Blue Ridge Chapter will waive its Local Chapter dues for PRSSA Members who join PRSA National (Associate Member, PRSSA Graduate \$60 per year).

PRSSA Members can join PRSA up to five months before their graduation. The membership promotion will be offered to the first ten PRSSA Members who join PRSA National.

To join PRSA & our Blue Ridge Chapter, just go to www.prsa.org, and click on membership.

The Blue Ridge Chapter will reimburse the Local Chapter dues to the first ten PRSSA Members who join.

If you have any questions, please contact Jeanette O'Neill:
jeanette.oneill@footlevelers.com



The Blue Ridge Chapter is excited to offer sponsorship opportunities for programs and professional development (PD) seminars again in 2009!

With current attendance of luncheon programs and PD seminars at approximately 60 participants including members, guests and students, the cost of only \$250 is worth every penny to have the exclusive opportunity to speak to the area's finest public relations professionals.

Mark your calendars for
our next 2009 meeting:

noon
April 16*
Hotel Roanoke

Upcoming Luncheon Dates:

June 11
August 13
October 8
December 10

**Note: the April luncheon is on the 3rd Thursday due to room availability at the hotel.*

Professional Development Tip

Former television journalist and current PRSA member John Carlin put together several tips on pitching for us, and on short notice too. Thank you, John!

The closer you get to the woods, the harder it is to tell the “forest from the trees.” That said, I have been walking toward the forest that is public relations for three months now, and thought it might be well to relate a former television journalist’s perspective before the “forest” swallows me up and the trees overtake me.

Ironically, the more immersed one becomes in a new career, the better the perspective on the old one. I am perhaps in a unique place in that transition, where both sides seem relatively clear. Thus, some observations on the media that may not be understood and/or remembered by my PR brethren:

- We in PR labor over the editorial decisions journalists will make on our story pitches. While this is good, remember that, especially with television, the ultimate decision may come down to staffing. Not enough crews = no coverage for your client. This is especially true in light of recent layoffs and furloughs.
- Ratings count. Strategize all you want about follow-up opportunities to stories you’ve pitched, but ask yourself if you would care enough to see endless coverage of this topic. Chances are it’s one and done.
- Ratings count II. This can work in your favor if coverage is the last thing you want. Ask yourself, “Does this story have legs?” While you, your organization or your client may worry that the whole world is dying to know how xyz story turns out, it may actually be yesterday’s news faster than it’s tomorrow’s. Count your blessings.
- TV stations don’t like “officials.” Organizations often jump through hoops to attract the Congressman/State Senator/Bank President etc. to their event. They believe it gives their organization credibility and that it will attract the media. It might. But, it’s more likely the TV crew will either interview the official on something not related to your event or walk right past that person to talk to the little old lady who is impacted by the story.

Happy Pitching.

Message...

Continued from Page 2

the National conference, our students are getting a great deal of value out of their membership and are well on their way to being ready to enter into the “real world.”

Join A Committee

There’s still time to join a committee and become more involved in PRSA. Please feel free to either contact each committee chair directly or contact me if you are interested in becoming a committee member.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the April 16th luncheon.



PR QuickStart: a free Web-based training program developed by the Council of Public Relations Firms and PRSA Counselors Academy.

PR QuickStart provides a basic overview of public relations and the public relations agency business.

www.prquickstart.org

PRSSA Student Spotlight



Name: Kelly Simons
Age: 23
College: Virginia Tech
PRSSA Member Since: 2007

College and Career

Why did you choose PR as a major?

I really like the idea that PR is a hands on field. Your job is different from day to day and the fact that the PR field incorporates writing, public speaking, advertising, and planning really interests me. It encompasses a lot of different fields that generate successful products and relationships.

What have been the highlights of your college experience?

My biggest highlight would be getting accepted into the Communication Department. I originally started out as a psychology major and now that I am continuing with communication, I will be receiving a dual degree for both programs which I am very proud of. I have really enjoyed being a member of PRSSA and getting elected vice president and president was a great highlight for me.

What is your career dream for the future?

I would love to be an event planner for a big corporation or work in corporate

communications. I find both fields very interesting and both are well respected fields in the business world.

Personal Low Down

Where are you from? Newport News, VA

Pets? None right now

Outside interests/hobbies? I love playing sports and I love traveling. Getting outside and getting involved in anything outdoors is always great. Traveling to places I have never been to is one of my favorite things to do.

Favorites

Food? Anything Mexican I love. I also really love sushi and Italian food.

Music? I have no favorite singer or band, but I like all kinds of music. My music selection is very eclectic.

Vacation Spot? I visited Miami recently and would love to go back but, in terms of being close and affordable, Nags Head.

Fun & Bizarre

What's your most embarrassing moment?

Falling during the 55m hurdles run at my indoor track invitational.

If there were reincarnation and you had a say, what would you come back as?

I would come back as a dolphin. I love being in the water.



Lynchburg College Update: A Vibrant PRSSA Chapter Is Born!

- Nicole Stephens, LC PRSSA vice president; and Dana Esposito, LC PRSSA historian

It has been a busy year for the Lynchburg College Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America! With an ever-growing membership base – including 22 new members this semester (for a total of 35 members) – we have been incredibly active as a new organization on campus.

Fall 2008 saw our charter achieve national approval. Through a successful “Meet and Greet,” hosted by the new PRSSA executive board, and recommendation letters sent out to prospective members, the chapter is constantly becoming more active and exciting!

Last semester also brought speakers to our chapter, including PRSA members from the Blue Ridge Chapter! This semester, we have decided to host fewer speakers and to focus our efforts on starting a student-run firm.

Our college’s local restaurant/bar, the Corner Café, provided the chapter with chili and condiments to sell to cold flag football players and fans at the Turkey Bowl. In return, the chapter decided to help the struggling Corner Café with publicity.

It has been an exciting challenge. Our first project was to brainstorm creative, low-budget PR and marketing ideas. Now, we have a few ready to go and are excited to see progress soon!

The ideas include starting a Mugholder’s Club, where members can have their own mug to use each time they come in to Corner Café. To launch this club, PRSSA will host a mug-decorating party and members will receive reduced food prices. Punch cards are also being implemented to entice new customers. For every ten punches, Mugholder’s Club members will get a free order of cheese fries.

Another current project is with S&K Menswear in the local mall, where the manager is also a member of our PRSSA chapter. We designed flyers to promote the company’s “Prom Party” for people buying or renting tuxedos in late February. We also are designing flyers that will encourage students to use S&K Menswear for their tuxedo needs during the prom season.

We have been approached by other organizations, both on- and off-campus, to represent them and help with PR and marketing, but right now our focus remains on the successful completion of our

projects with the Corner Café and S&K Menswear. We hope to start an established firm next year, and are open to suggestions on possible improvements and fresh ideas.

We also are interested in lining up speakers for the upcoming year and hope to host members from around the region. It’s great to see where PRSSA can take you!

Our general board is very excited about our current projects, and has been working hard to ensure our chapter has a great first year. Our executive board is comprised of upperclassmen and faculty advisor Melissa Bogacik, all of whom have put in many hours to launch LC’s PRSSA chapter.

We are excited to send our vice president, Nicole Stephens, to the National PRSSA Assembly in New Orleans in March, and can’t wait for the new information, contacts and ideas she will bring back.

LC’s PRSSA chapter has seen great results so far. Now, we look forward to the rest of this spring and the upcoming events we are planning!



PRSSA Student Spotlight



Name: Sarah Ridgeway
Age: 24
College: Lynchburg College
PRSSA Member Since: October 2008

College and Career

Why did you choose PR as a major?

I have always loved interacting with people and knew that I wanted to pursue a career in communications. PR was perfect for me, since I could be creative and proactive with problem solving while working with others.

What have been the highlights of your college experience?

Recently, one of my research papers was selected to be presented at the Eastern Communication Association's Conference poster sessions in Philadelphia, PA. That was quite a surprise, but overall being the first president of LC's PRSSA has been a huge highlight. Going in, I was nervous that I wouldn't do the job well.

We have had such an outstanding beginning, I can't express how fantastic it has been and how much this organization has come to mean to me. I owe much of the success to the other officers who have spent just as much time and effort as I have in making our mark on LC history.

What is your career dream for the future?

In the beginning, I hope to work in New Jersey or Pennsylvania either in a small firm or a non-profit organization to get my feet wet. Eventually, I would love to work at a respectable firm dedicated to improving intercultural and global communication. When I retire I want to have a small farm and teach riding lessons to children.

Personal Low Down

Where are you from? I am from Locust Dale, VA, a small rural town in Madison County. I have lived there my entire life.

Pets? Growing up on a farm means a full house: five dogs, one cat, two lovebirds, four chickens, two Death Valley burros, and one Quarter horse, Sunny, who is my pride and joy.

Outside interests/hobbies? When I am not working on PRSSA, I spend most of my time coordinating and participating on the Equestrian team. I love to run and when I get a chance, cook a tasty meal and settle down with a good book or a classic movie.

Favorites

Food? I live for food, I love to eat. All food is good.

Music? I also live for music and dancing. I listen to every kind except for death metal.

Vacation Spot? Harvey Cedars, NJ, on Long Beach Island. Last year, I was lucky enough to spend the entire summer there.

Fun & Bizarre

What's your most embarrassing moment?

Because I am clumsy and klutzy I embarrass myself at least once a day just living. I have lost track of the "most embarrassing" moment.

If there were reincarnation and you had a say, what would you come back as?

This is definitely a tough one. I would want to come back as a hummingbird. They are such exquisite little birds, their wings move so fast and they have a brilliant color. Hummingbirds are also extremely strong. You would have no idea, judging by their size, that they annually migrate to Mexico and Central America!

Blue Ridge Six face fears and dive in!

Six Blue Ridge PRSA Chapter members have embarked on the journey to accreditation in 2009. They signed up for the online study course, an interactive forum that helps APR candidates pace themselves and understand the prescribed study materials.

Accountants have their CPA. Architects have their AIA. Formal credentialing processes exist throughout the medical, real estate, financial and other industries.

“APR” after one’s name is, likewise, a mark of distinction. It means the individual has met the rigors of coursework and an examination, and has achieved a high degree of competence and ethics in the practice of public relations.

Making the commitment to “go for it!” is a big step and often delayed or never taken because of fear of failure and the unknown. Some wait for the “right time,” which never comes. Some feel they don’t have the proper education or experience. Some don’t believe APR is worth the time involved.

All of the “Blue Ridge Six” faced similar self-defeating thoughts. But, desire to pursue professional development and increase their credibility prevailed.

Are you ready to go for the APR? Do you think you might be ready, but you’re not sure? Then you need to test the waters.

The APR process is designed for those with five to seven years of professional PR experience. However, it is not necessary. If you are confident in your desire to sharpen your PR knowledge

and skills, and absorb the study material, you are ready.

While the PR accreditation process is not easy, resources are at the ready. The online study guide is one of them. The 22 APRs within the Blue Ridge Chapter are here to serve as mentors.

The next big step for each of the Blue Ridge Six is to submit the application for accreditation. When the application is approved, the clock starts ticking. The APR candidate then has a year to prepare for and take the examination.

Enrollment in the PRSA accreditation program is rolling for Blue Ridge Chapter members. You can sign up for the online study course and submit your APR application anytime you want.

Are you ready to go for the APR? Do you think you might be ready, but you’re not sure? Then you need to test the waters. Contact Heidi Ketler, Blue Ridge PRSA Chapter APR chair, at (540) 774-0607 or hketler@verizon.net.

Way to go Blue Ridge Six! Now, it’s time to start the clock!

WWW.PRACCREDITATION.ORG

Why do **accredited** professionals earn nearly **20% MORE** than their colleagues?*

* 2005 PR Week-Korn/Ferry International Salary Survey.



Heidi E. Ketler, APR

The Blue Ridge Chapter
Public Relations Society of America presents

Pat Philbin, APR, Former Head of FEMA Public Affairs
on
"Crisis PR: Behind the Scenes"

April 16th Luncheon, Hotel Roanoke
Sponsored by: ND&P

Fees & Information

Chapter Members: \$22
Students & Interns: \$17
Non-Members: \$30

Note: The luncheon is April 16.
There is a \$5 LATE FEE for reservations made after Monday, April 13.

Parking at the Hotel Roanoke is \$3 for self-parking, \$5 for valet.
Parking on Wells Avenue is free.

Please make check payable to Blue Ridge Chapter - PRSA

Mail reservation form and money to:
Alison Drennan
PR & Special Events Coordinator
Commonwealth Catholic Charities
541 Luck Avenue, Suite 118
Roanoke, VA 24016

Alison_drennan@cccofva.org
342-0411

RSVP online at:
www.prsa-blueridge.org

If you require a special meal (e.g. vegetarian) or have a food allergy, please indicate this when making your reservation.

Your Name: _____

Company: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Number of members attending (\$22 ea): _____

Names: _____

Number of students attending (\$17 ea): _____

Names: _____

Number of non-members attending (\$30 ea): _____

Names: _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please check if this is your first BRC-PRSA meeting.