

September 2008

Volume 9, Issue 1

# The Relay

a publication for PR students

## What's Inside

page **2**

Richard Fox visit

page **3**

Vaughn's internship with NASCAR

page **4**

IABC/Indianapolis

page **5**

PRSSA plans and members

page **6**

PRSA meeting in Normal

## Eastern graduate named *PR News* Student of the Year

By Mike Leon

*PR News* Student of the Year, an honor only few students receive, recognizes the accomplishments of public relations students. Little did he know, Matt Kelly, a 2008 Eastern Illinois University graduate, would be among the chosen award recipients for 2008.

This year, *PR News* accepted entries from across the nation in search of outstanding public relations students and named only four with the honor of *PR News* Student of the Year.

Kelly's nomination came from Eastern Professor Terri Johnson, Matt's instructor and adviser.

"[Being nominated] was the honor in itself," Kelly said. He told of how Prof. Johnson had helped him throughout his college career by providing both direction and recommendations to guide him towards success today. "If it weren't for her, I wouldn't be here right now," he said.

Kelly established himself as an outstanding PR student while at Eastern. He represented the school's Public Relations Student Society of America chap-



Cory Dimitrakopoulos and Matt Kelly attended the Spring 2008 Journalism Banquet. They worked together at The Agency.

ter as president at the international PRSA/PRSSA meeting in Philadelphia and was associate director for The Agency, Eastern's student-run PR firm. Kelly also co-founded a university chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (UMADD), called Respect for Youth, at Eastern. In 2007, Kelly received the Mary Kelly-Durkin Agency Scholarship, an award given to the top PR student working for the Agency.

Kelly also became involved in Greek Life his last year at Eastern. He became a founding father of Eastern's Beta

Theta Pi chapter. After speaking with recruiters, Kelly applied for a scholarship offered by the organization, which he later received. He mentioned the strong bonds he developed while involved with the fraternity.

"It's a different kind of friendship," he said, "not something you buy." Kelly explained how the time management involved with a fraternity has helped him adapt to the busy schedule he holds now.

Kelly will be honored as

See GRADUATE, pg. 2

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some hire PR officers."  
— Daniel J. Boorstin

# Fox shared experience, advised Eastern students

*PR specialist Richard Fox returned to Eastern to teach students about public relations.*

*By Michelle Simek*

Eastern alumni and public relations specialist Richard Fox returned again to Eastern Illinois University on September 17 to speak to students and see old friends.

Graduating in 1971, Fox wrote for the Daily Eastern News and used his marketing and journalism experience to work as a PR practitioner in the health care field for more than 30 years. Now retired, Fox travels as an adviser and mentor to students entering the field.

Fox also founded and funds the Fox-Thornburgh Visiting Professionals Fund. He established this fund to “honor Dr. Daniel E. Thornburgh and bring professional journalists and public relations practitioners to campus,” explained Nancy Page, employee in Eastern’s Philanthropy office.

While visiting, Fox spoke to a few journalism classes about his career and experiences in the field. He also gave students the opportunity to set up individual appointments to speak to him about anything they wished, including their resumé.

“The most useful information [he gave me] was when

he told me that the career field I am interested in, online journalism and Web site design, is something that is in demand,” said Kyle Pruden, junior journalism major.

Although interviews with Fox were short, ten students spoke to him about the field and their resumé.

“Mr. Fox really had a strong sense of perspective that helped me get my mind straight on what I’ll be doing when I get out of school,” said David Crossett, senior communications major. “He went over my resumé and gave me some feedback on the wording and readability as well.” Fox also advised Crossett to begin his career in a general job and move his way up to a more specialized field. Crossett was also “able to ask him a lot of questions about the field and he provided a lot of information specifically about his own career path and successes in the health care field,” he said.

Fox also was the guest speaker during The Agency’s weekly meeting. His best advice for students included being different than other potential employees, contact and keep a mentor in your desired field of



*Richard Fox explains how public relations continues to grow to members of The Agency, Eastern’s student-run PR firm. PR in health care and other industries brings new job opportunities for upcoming graduates.*

public relations and be able to possess general knowledge in clear writing and good communication.

“Health care PR is an up and coming field. There are many opportunities to work in various organizations,” he said. Fox explained his job experiences in that specific area with students, but ensured that all fields are growing significantly.

Fox also said, “Internships are just as important as course

work and GPAs. Students can be truly successful, in their desired field, when they let the love of PR enter their soul.”

After speaking with The Agency, Fox met with old friends for dinner. Although he only spent one day at Eastern, many students felt the impact of his advice, professionalism and knowledge of the field that will help them throughout their careers as students and as PR professionals.

## From GRADUATE, pg. 1

*PR News* Student of the Year along with the other three winners at the PR People Awards Luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 6. Although Matt has graduated, the Journalism department and The Agency are still helping the award winner

by conducting fundraisers for his traveling expenses. The Agency will be selling chocolates in hopes of easing Kelly’s expenses for traveling to the nation’s capital.

“We can’t use university funds for a student that is no longer here,” Prof. Johnson

said. “We know it’ll be really expensive.”

Along with the chocolate sale, Eastern professors have also offered donations to Kelly. Financial donors also included Dr. Dan Thornburgh, the chair emeritus of the journalism department, and Richard Fox, an alumnus who met Kelly when he visited last year.

Kelly is currently enrolled in the PR masters program at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., after which he hopes to become involved in a PR agency.

As for current PR students at Eastern, Kelly advises, “The more you do, the more you get to do,” and he added, “Don’t hold anything back.”





Leah Vaughn, pictured with Nascar driver Jason Leffler, interned with Gateway International Raceway this past summer. She traveled to cities such as Nashville, Tenn., and Indianapolis to help the Public Relations Director at Gateway.

## Vaughn gains professional experience with NASCAR

By Hannah Plevka

Doing 20 laps around the track in a two-seat, late model dirt car was one of Leah Vaughn's favorite memories of the summer. As she got in the car, Vaughn, senior communications major, was shaking while professional NASCAR driver David Stremme laughed at her. She told Stremme not to do any donuts, but about five laps in, she felt the back end of the car coming around and screamed.

Once it was all over, she wanted to do it again. Vaughn left Eastern early for the summer to serve as a public relations intern at Gateway International Raceway in St. Louis.

Vaughn said events were always happening at Gateway, which hosts NASCAR Nationwide and Craftsman Truck series races as well as NHRA drag races, and stories and press releases always needed writing.

"NASCAR has its own language, so at first, I had to adjust my writing to fit their stan-

dards," said Vaughn.

Vaughn coordinated autograph sessions and made sure drivers were on schedule for interviews. She received the opportunity to keep points for the local drag races. She traveled to Nashville, Tenn., and Indianapolis for NASCAR races throughout the summer.

"Our interns are given large responsibilities and are expected to perform professionally using the training we provide them," said Brandon Mudd, the Public Relations Director for

Gateway. "We provide them with real-life experience."

Interviewing Don Garlits, who "is the biggest thing in drag racing history," was the highlight of Vaughn's summer. She also got to interview NASCAR drivers David Ragan and Carl Edwards. They remembered her at the races the next week because, "NASCAR is one big family, everyone knows everyone," she said.

Vaughn said she did not

See NASCAR, pg. 4

# Journalism professor, students represent Eastern at IABC/Indianapolis bridging generations meeting

By Cory Dimitrakopoulos

Last Tuesday, the International Association of Business Communicators, Indianapolis, held its Homecoming 2008 Luncheon in Indianapolis, Ind.

Professor Terri Johnson, who is a past president in the IABC/Indianapolis chapter, former chair of the IABC Educator Academy, and currently serves on the IABC/Indianapolis Past President's Council and the International IABC Accreditation Council, was joined at the event by journalism students Cory Dimitrakopoulos and Michelle Simek.

IABC president, Julie Freeman spoke to an audience of IABC members, past members and public relations students about the importance of bridging the gap among generations.

Included in the generations Freeman spoke about were the Traditionalists (1900-1945), the Baby Boomers (1946-1964), the Generation-X (1965-1980) and the Generation-Y (1981-1999), a group that includes most college students.

Throughout her presentation, Freeman covered topics such as the most effective ways to

reach each generational group, whether it be via newspaper, telephone, e-mail or television.

"Anyone who wishes to communicate any message has to start by understanding the mind set of his or her audience. For example, if I am a Generation Y'er, I might be more likely to believe information from a friend or colleague, rather than official company publications [like a brochure]. A Traditional would put more weight in communication that comes from the company head rather than an employee," said Freeman.

Generation Y'ers, also known as Millennials, she explains, are a realistic generation who rely heavily on technology and who do not command authority, but prefer to collaborate with others.

"I think it's important for young people, especially those going into public relations, to know how to reach their older audiences. Freeman's presentation really opened my eyes to that," said Simek.

Freeman continued, "Understanding one's audience means how they want to receive mes-

sages, from whom and how [the message] should be worded. We are coming to understand that different generations have different preferences."

Several students from universities including IUPUI and Ball State University attended the luncheon in addition to those from Eastern. Each student was presented with the opportunity to network with professionals and members of IABC.

"With a focus on health care-related public relations, I got the chance to speak with several wonderful women in areas of communication with companies like Ball State University Center for Media Relations, Saint Francis Hospital and Westview Medical Campus," said Simek. "I plan to keep in touch with all of them. Overall it was a great networking experience."

IABC/Indianapolis has upcoming events for managing a relationship with executives and writing for the Web in October and November. For more information on the events, visit <http://www.indyIABC.com>. EIU students are always welcome to attend IABC events.

*Julie Freeman, spoke to professionals and students at the IABC/Indianapolis meeting. Freeman discussed ways to shrink generational gaps.*



---

## From NASCAR, pg. 3

have a least favorite part about the internship. However, after working from 5 a.m. until 11 p.m., she did not think she would be able to handle the internships. "But I ended up loving it," she said.

After doing a few weekend internships in Nashville,

Vaughn heard about other available internships. She found this internship on Gateway's Web site, interviewed over spring break and was offered the internship. This was her first internship, and she hopes to do another next spring for motorsports or drag racing. "Hav-

ing an internship is important because of the experience you gain," said Vaughn, "and NASCAR requires that you have at least one before you are hired for a real job."

Gateway offers internships in every department and allows the interns to choose what where they want to work, such as PR, marketing, finance and ticketing. "We encourage the interns

to work in the department that most closely mirrors what they want to do post-college," said Mudd. He believes that internships are crucial to learn both theory and application.

"You get to see how the things you learn in the classroom are used in a real-life setting and the students get to actually apply their knowledge," he said.





*PRSSA names Elizabeth Morin (left) vice president and Whitney Elders (right) national liaison starting the fall 2008 semester. Morin and Elders filled the two available positions in the ten member executive board.*

## PRSSA plans for semester, names new board members

*By Krista Henery*

Like many jobs after college, careers in the public relations field require much more than just classroom lessons. For students interested in pursuing a job in the public relations field, getting involved and job-like experience is the key to success after college.

Public Relations Student Society of America at Eastern, the Dan Thornburgh chapter, enhances students' knowledge of PR and provides access to professional development opportunities for members.

"The group provides hands-on campaign experience, professional development and networking opportunities for students that are interested in PR as a career option," Dr. Bri-

an Sowa, PRSSA co-adviser, said. "The group also provides exclusive access to internship and job information as well as opportunities to attend regional and national meetings to meet other students and professionals in the field."

Since Fall 2007, Danyelle Parker, junior communication studies major, has served as program chair and secretary of Eastern Illinois University's Public Relations Student Society of America chapter, an organization for students interested in public relations. Through hard work and determination, Parker has been elected chapter president.

"I have always loved being involved, but never thought I would hold this position," Parker said. "I plan on sitting as

president until I graduate in fall of 2009." She believes her drive and passion helped her reach her goal of becoming president. With a new position, Parker said she has new ambitions for improving the chapter.

"I want there to be more of a relationship between students and faculty, more fundraising and more student support in other departments on campus," Parker said. "It's not just for communication studies or journalism majors."

Sowa said Eastern's PRSSA chapter plans to invite several professional guest speakers to talk to students at their meetings. He also said the organization is also working on several fundraisers and service cam-

See PRSSA, pg. 6

## Eastern's first public relations director dies

*By Danielle Scott*

Roy K. Wilson, the first Director of Public Relations and Alumni Services at Eastern Illinois University, died Sunday, Sept. 21, 2008.

The Roy K. Wilson Scholarship, honoring him, is an annual award for journalism students. Past recipients include Holly Frejlich, Sara Wagoner, Angelita Faller, Heather Smith and Cory Dimitrakopoulos.

Wilson, a Charleston native, graduated from Eastern in 1936 and received his master's from the University of Illinois.

He joined the National Education Association in Washington, DC, and later became the Director of Press, Radio and Television for NEA in 1947.

During this time, news media covered education poorly. To improve education coverage, Wilson founded the Education Writers Association with six other individuals.

Other accomplishments include becoming the first Executive Director of the National School Public Relations Association, consulting for the Educational Research Services, founding the Academy of Lifelong Learning at USC Aiken, developing the SPECTRA.

Professional memberships included the Public Relations Society of America, Education Writers Association, National School Public Relations Association, the American Association of School Administrators and the National Press Club.

Other memberships included Illinois Rotary Club and the Aiken Kiwanis Club.

# PR professional discusses reputations at September Central Illinois PRSA meeting

By Michelle Simek

Reputations can make or break companies. With a good reputation, companies can grow and prosper. However, with a bad reputation, companies can lose customers quickly.

Michael Chersonson, APR, 2009 CEO and Chair-elect for National PRSA, explained "Reputation and its impact on the bottom line" at the September Central Illinois Chapter Public Relations Society of America meeting in Normal.

Chersonson has worked in the field of public relations for 18 years. He is the author of three studies focusing on the impact of reputations. His expertise has covered almost every category in the field including marketing, event management and crisis communication according to a press release written by



Michael Chersonson spoke at the PRSA meeting about "Reputations." Dr. Sowa and Rachel Fisher from Eastern attended the meeting.

Elizabeth Kerns, the President-elect for the Central Illinois PRSA Chapter.

Four faculty and staff members from Eastern Illinois University attended this meeting and encouraged others to attend because the meeting was a great "opportunity for students to go to a PRSA meeting and meet actual PR professionals and network for possible future opportunities," said Danyelle Parker, president of PRSSA on Eastern's campus.

Even though no Eastern Il-

linois University students attended the meeting, Professor Terri Johnson, APR, CIPRSA Chapter president; Dr. Brian Sowa, CIPRSA chapter board member; Rachel Fisher, interim director of Eastern's Student Community Service Office; and Marta Ladd, a retired journalism professor teaching at Eastern's Parkland campus represented Eastern.

CIPRSA meets four times a year, inviting students to attend to network and learn from professionals' experiences.

## From PRSSA, pg. 5

paigns for this semester.

Eastern's PRSSA chapter also welcomed two new members this fall to fill the vice president and national liaison positions.

Elizabeth Morin, sophomore communication studies major, joined the public relations organization this year and has already been elected vice president.

"I am very proud to hold the vice president position," Morin said. "I'm glad I have this responsibility and that I'll be able to make choices for this club."

Morin added how she cannot wait to start networking and building long-term friendships by being a member of PRSSA.

"Networking will be a huge

part in helping me with my career," Morin added. "I enjoy everyone in the group and it seems like it's going to be a great year."

For senior communication major, Whitney Elders, this is also her first year with PRSSA. Elders was chosen to serve as the chapter's National Liaison this fall and could not be more enthused.

"I am really excited about holding the National Liaison position," Elders said. "Having the ability to network with hundreds of professionals in the public relations field will be undoubtedly beneficial to my future."

As National Liaison, Elders will have the opportunity to at-

tend the National Convention in Detroit this October. She hopes attending this convention will open doors for her future.

"The daily workshops will enhance my understanding of the field," Elders said. "I hope to walk out of the five day convention with a better grasp on where I want to be in a year."

Elders will also represent Eastern at the PRSSA Delegate Assembly in the spring.

PRSSA meets bimonthly on Monday night starting at 6 p.m. in Martin Luther King Jr. University Union's Effingham Room.

The next meeting is Oct. 6. For more information, contact PRSSA President Danyelle Parker at [dlparker@eiu.edu](mailto:dlparker@eiu.edu).

## General Information

This is the official publication for public relations students at Eastern Illinois University.

Printed in the Journalism Office of the Buzzard Building.

### Editors:

Leah Vaughn

[lmvaughn@eiu.edu](mailto:lmvaughn@eiu.edu)

Danielle Scott

[dmscott@eiu.edu](mailto:dmscott@eiu.edu)

Student Director:

Cory

Dimitrakoplous

Associate Director:

Barbara

Harrington

Faculty Adviser:

Terri Johnson

**The Agency**  
Eastern's Top Public Relations Firm