

# The Relay



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Issue 3

## Focus on PR as a profession

This issue offers a description of various opportunities for students interested in learning more about public relations as a future profession.

### Students go to Indianapolis to watch pros at work

By **Krissy Peters**

The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) traveled to Indianapolis for Hoosier Half Day with a Pro to gain hands-on experience in the professional world of public relations. Seven PRSSA members and their faculty adviser, Terri Johnson, departed from Buzzard's east parking lot at 5:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 10.

The seven students included Danielle Alexander, Katie Benjamin, Kimberlee Boise, Steve Cook, Genevieve Cyr, Lisa Flam and Krissy Peters.

During Hoosier Half Day with a Pro, students had the opportunity to observe a PR practitioner, ask questions and attend meetings with their assigned professional for the morning.

"The most exciting part of the day was thinking of myself doing what my professional was doing, picturing myself sitting around that meeting table someday," said Lisa Flam, a senior speech communication major, who shadowed Robert Schultz at the Indianapolis

Convention & Visitors Association.

Schultz, Director of Public Relations and Communications, is on the local organizing committee for the National League of Cities, an event hosted soon in Indianapolis. Welcome banners, entertainment, volunteer recruitment and training, scheduling, gifts, transportation and an opening press event were several items discussed on the committee agenda.

One student, Steve Cook, worked with professionals at

State Farm Insurance, and another attended the 2005 NCAA Women's Final Four Media Operations Meeting. Four students learned PR career tips at the Borshoff Johnson Matthews (BJM) firm. This progressive, creative, detail-oriented firm provides PR and marketing communications counsel to about 60 companies and organizations conducting business in Indianapolis and in other surrounding areas. Its mission is to partner with clients in

order to achieve the clients' business goals through relationship building and results-driven communication. Some areas BJM specializes in are health care, education, culture/sports/entertainment and advocacy/public affairs. For twenty years BJM has conducted in-depth research, planned and implemented major campaigns for foundations such as the American Hunger Relief, Indianapolis Colts and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

"People (students) were split up into areas which interested them. I

worked with an agency since that is where I want a career. Through interacting with professionals at BJM, I learned more of what people (employers) are looking for in a résumé, how to interview for a company and what questions to ask," said Katie Benjamin, senior Speech Communication major and president of PRSSA.

After seeing first-hand what PR practitioners do on a daily basis, a luncheon concluded the day. Nearly 100

**Half-Day continued on page 3**



Photo by Bob Schultz

**(Back from left) Stephen Cook, Krissy Peters, Kimberlee Boise, Lisa Flam, guest speaker Chuck Underwood, Katie Benjamin, Professor Terri Johnson, (Front) Genevieve Cyr and Danielle Alexander networked and witnessed many possible job opportunities at the Half Day with a Pro program.**

## Students travel to Big Apple for convention

**By Krissy Peters**

Six students from Eastern's Public Relations Student Society of America chapter joined approximately 1,500 PRSSA students from across the nation in New York City in October for the PRSSA national conference.

Attending were PRSSA chapter president, Katie Benjamin, vice president, Genevieve Cyrs, and members Lisa Flam, Meghan Neubauer, Danielle Alexander and Rachel Savas. Also attending were two PRSSA EIU chapter advisers, Dr. Brian Sowa, Communication Studies, and Professor Terri Johnson, Journalism.

The conference, from Oct. 22–26, featured workshops on topics including résumé building, traveling, tourism, fashion, food-based PR and how to succeed in a career after college. Successful professionals presented the information during these seminars.

Professionals gave advice and insight to people at round tables, as well. Experience through internships and networking was a topic often emphasized.

"Based on jobs not posted, referrals are crucial and networking is key," said Benjamin.

In fact, according to a corporate communications reputation seminar, 73 percent of employers depend on word of mouth to fill job spots. Benjamin also mentioned that all

agencies do a writing screening, where applicants may be required to have skills in one or more of the following areas: press release writing, copy editing with AP style, business letter drafting, idea pitching and event planning.

Employers, according to one of the seminars, like to hire PR people over others because they are good at dealing with complex issues, have access to the top and are influential in shaping policy.

Students not only attended workshops, they also listened to famous people. The national conference is held in conjunction with the PRSA national conference.

Donald Trump was one main attraction. Some students enjoyed what he had to say, while others did not.

"If you fail, get back on track. He (Trump) has been bankrupt a number of times and he wasn't afraid to admit it," said Benjamin.

In contrast, Lisa Flam, a senior communication studies major, was not inspired by Trump's presentation. "He was a creep. I did not like anything he had to say. I was not amused," Flam said.

Trump entertained a combined PRSSA/PRSA audience of about 4,000 with 12 secrets

for success. About every third "secret" was a comment on getting a prenuptial agreement or other female bashing comment or a paranoid joke. Most of the audience enjoyed his talk, but flinched at his jokes and his language, which

**Big Apple continued on page 4**



*Photo submitted by Katie Benjamin*

**(From left) Danielle Alexander, Genevieve Cyrs, Lisa Flam, Rachel Savas, Katie Benjamin, Meghan Neubauer found time to enjoy the big city while at the PRSSA national conference.**

## Two words could lead to a new lifestyle for some

**By Sara Wagoner**

"Live Smart," those two simple words will become the new campaign across campus for SONOR. SONOR strives to promote positive social norms to college students concerning alcohol and related issues by using non-conventional social norming and social marketing methods.

SONOR is a student-run public relations, marketing and advertising group. You might recognize them as the creators of "That Guy."

Each week the group creates and distributes a publication promoting responsible drinking behaviors. "That Guy" has gone campus-wide and is familiar by most on campus students. The group had distributed flyers, calendars and

cards that have all featured "That Guy."

Next semester "That Guy" will hand over the keys to a new campaign: Live Smart. The campaign is designed to highlight the positive aspect of responsible drinking. The new campaign will be implemented in December to all Carman Hall residents and will go campus-wide at the beginning of next semester.

Early next semester students can expect to see blue rubber bracelets like the famous yellow "Live Strong" bands all over Eastern's campus. The bracelets will be handed out to all on-campus students for free in order to promote the new campaign.

## Half-Day continued from page 1

students, mostly from universities in Indiana, attended this event. Chuck Underwood, the guest speaker and president of The Generational Imperative, spoke on "The Generations Dynamic."

Currently in the United States, five generations exist: G.I.'s, Silents, Boomers, GenX and Millennials. Underwood's presentation focused on Generation X.

According to Underwood, Generation X is the least nurtured generation in history. These people are between the ages of 23 to 39. They are typically categorized as a lost, under-achieving, slacker generation, therefore establishing core values of independence and self-reliance. They dis-

tance themselves from older generations. They believe marriage is disposable and they develop an "us-against-them" attitude. They are into volunteering and being there for their children.

"Many Xers grew up with quality items. They had their own room, their own TV, car and computer. They have developed refined, expensive tastes over the years," Underwood said. "You can't fool them with non-quality products."

Attitude, anything cynical, fun or retro will catch the attention of a Generation Xer. Generation X is a strong female generation in which girls are encouraged to do and be what they want. During the 1970s girls surpassed guys in schooling and more women's sports are available due to Title IX.

Researching generations is important in order to properly target consumer behavior. Also, stories or publications, which take a generational angle are popular. PR practitioners are interested in catching the eye of their intended audience.

"I thought it (Underwood's presentation) was phenomenal! He spoke to the professionals in the audience as well as the students. Everyone in the audience could relate to what he was speaking about. He spoke in layman's terms instead of using heavy professional lingo," said Katie Benjamin.

Though the day was short, students got a glimpse of what their future holds and got to network with a variety of professionals, many of which invited the students to return for more experience.



*Photo by Terri Johnson*

**Krissy Peters (left) and Lisa Flam shadowed Robert Schultz at the Half Day with a Pro at the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association.**

## PRSSA, Lamda Pi Eta and Communication Assoc. help local shelter gather food for the needy

### By Jacob Sweet

With the holidays approaching, many people start thinking of those that could use a little help for the holiday season. With that in mind, PRSSA, Lamda Pi Eta & the Communication Association held a food drive for the Charleston Hope Shelter which aids those that may lack money for food.

Collection boxes were placed in the Communication Studies office and in room 1751 of Coleman Hall. The president of Lamda Pi Eta, Heather Ross reported that they had filled three boxes.

Katie Benjamin of PRSSA said the drive ended Nov. 17 with a turnout a little less than expected but thought this was because the drive was done so quickly. In the end they brought two full boxes and three bags of food to the shelter.



*Photo by Jacob Sweet*

**Bags and boxes full of goods were given to the Charleston Hope Shelter with the help of three campus groups.**

## Big Apple continued from page 2

was often in poor taste.

Other outstanding speakers, whose comments were in much better taste, were Larry King, of Larry King Live, and Ken Auletta, author and journalist. Auletta, who has written for The New Yorker for 14 years also wrote "Backstory: Inside the Business of News."

While in New York City, conference attendees said they went to many sites and tourist attractions. They saw a professional luncheon fashion show, saw the Broadway play, "Rent," and went to a ballet.

Danielle Alexander got up early and carried a "PRSSA at EIU" sign outside the CBS Early Show. She was on the air

twice holding the sign and EIU was mentioned on the show.

Overall, the students had a great time in New York City, sharpening their public relations skills. Since they are all seniors, attending the PRSSA National Conference not only helped them realize what they can expect in the near future as they begin their careers, but also allowed them to add the professional development activities to their résumés.

They, and other supporting PRSSA members, participated in fundraisers to help defray the cost to attend the conference, including a car wash at Domino's and a coupon fundraiser at Pizza Hut.

## Fright Night concert a success

By Chris Sobut

Halloween and a symphony orchestra draw no comparison. On Oct. 31 that all changed when the Eastern Symphony Orchestra hosted a "Fright Night" concert in the McAfee Auditorium. Fright Night was sponsored by the EIU Music Department and the College of Arts and Humanities.

Dr. Brian Sowa and Dan Crews were in charge of promoting the show. "Sowa's special events class worked together to design the flyers, and my job was to get the word out," said Crews, publicity director of the College of Arts and Humanities. Crews distributed more than five thousand flyers to elementary schools

from Charleston to Marshall, Ill.

"PR students did a big job promoting as well," said Sowa.

Crews worked with Dr. Richard Rossi on a scary music theme for the show. The orchestra was able to perform the Harry Potter soundtrack while clips from the movies were being shown. "We wanted the orchestra to show kids a different type of music," said Crews.

Besides the concert, a Halloween costume contest was held and it was coordinated by Ashley Hall. "I couldn't say enough about her effort. She was just tremendous," said Crews.

Press releases and advertising generate success for any operation; after all, advertising is where the money is. Hard work paid off for "Fright Night" as a big crowd was on hand. "The turnout was huge, a couple hundred more than expected," said Sowa.

Hard work and determination can be assets to a team's success.

Knowing that something good is done thanks to dedication is as good a feeling as any. No matter if it's athletics or in the office, there are unsung heroes everywhere. "All the credit goes to the students. Without them none of this would have happened. Dan and I just kind of stayed behind the scenes," said Sowa.

Success in this case came from a total team effort.

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"We wanted the orchestra to show kids a different type of music."

—Dan Crews,  
publicity director

If you have an idea for a story you'd like to see in The Relay, contact Jessica at: [jncaudle@eiu.edu](mailto:jncaudle@eiu.edu)