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the newsletter for public relations minors

'05 alum directs Ill. AMVETS PR

By Becky Peadro

How would you like to have a great job straight out of college? How about a job that puts you among those in charge of an entire state organization? This is reality for Eastern alum Ashley Walz.

"I was extremely lucky to get a job right out of college," Walz said.

Walz, a Charleston native, is the public relations director for Illinois AMVETS, a non-profit veteran's organization in Springfield. Not only is she the sole PR person, but she also helps the administrative assistant and two other departments, and helps with memberships and programs. Although Walz says her job is usually unstructured compared to college, she is constantly in her office and works primarily with veterans.

Walz used several strategies throughout her job search. Once she decided to move to Springfield, she looked through the area's classifieds and Web sites, in addition to calling contacts who lived there.

"The job fell into my lap, really. I visited the state's job match site and put my résumé on the site. AMVETS was looking for a PR person on the list of matches and gave me a call. I had two interviews, both of them over two hours each. During the second interview, the staff looked through my portfolio and résumé and I sat in on a meeting and was asked to offer suggestions. At the end of the interview, they offered me the job," Walz said.

Walz is in charge of a monthly newsletter, covering everything from the stories to the photos and layout. She also creates several brochures that involve all aspects of Illinois AMVETS. Other responsibilities include writing annual reports, doing all visual and PowerPoint presentations for meetings, making Web site changes, taking photos, and handling all the press releases for the state.



Alum Ashley Walz, now PR director for the Illinois AMVETS, felt lucky to get a job right out of school.

Looking back, Walz is thankful for the professors and experiences she had while in college.

"Eastern is really lucky to have such a great group of journalism professors. I feel like I learned a lot from all of the professors I had. Terri Johnson was particularly helpful with the PR aspect of journalism, and she was great about sending internships and job openings my way. Brian Poulter always encouraged me to be creative and he taught me a lot about Photoshop, which I use on a daily basis," Walz said.

Walz believes her college experiences trained her for the real world. "I do feel that in many

I do feel that in many respects, college did prepare me for the real world. The writing skills I learned are invaluable..'

Walz

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Gain networking skills in PRSSA

By Katie Hull

The Dan Thornburgh Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America welcomes students to join the chapter of a nationwide professional organization, Public Relations Society of America.

PRSSA allows students to begin their



future in a professional setting. Through PRSSA, students can network with many public relations practitioners, which offers them the opportunity for success. Guest speakers, state chapter meetings and national conventions are a few examples of what a member of PRSSA is exposed to.

PRSSA provides students a chance to apply the skills they learn in the classroom to situations in the public relations field. Each year the chapter here at Eastern holds an event as a service project. In the spring of 2005, PRSSA created a Pizza Crawl around Charleston and donated more than half of the earnings to the American Cancer Society. This spring, PRSSA will create a campaign to fundraise for the Coles Animal Rescue and Education Center.

PRSSA is open to anyone interested in public relations. The deadline for new members is Feb. 20. The dues are \$50. The next meeting is Feb. 20 at 6 p.m. in the Arcola/Tuscola room on the third floor of the University Union. Contact Dr. Brian Sowa, bsowa@eiu.edu, or Prof. Terri Johnson, tjohnson@eiu.edu, faculty advisers, for more information.

Sonor offers hands-on PR work

By Sara Wagoner

Looking for a way to get involved and build your portfolio? Sonor could be your answer. Sonor marketing, advertising and public relations agency strives to promote healthy behaviors regarding alcohol and other drug use on Eastern's campus, while providing members with opportunities for professional growth in a business atmosphere.

Brought to you by the students of:



Students may be familiar with past Sonor campaigns such as "Don't be that guy!" and "LiveSmart." Sonor members are responsible for researching, developing and carrying out the campaigns targeted at on-campus students.

The group meets one or two times a week to discuss campaigns and wants to be more active this semester. The group is looking for eight or nine dedicated students to help carry forward the ideas and goals of the organization into next year.

Ideal candidates are graphic design, journalism, marketing, advertising, public relations and communication studies majors/minors, but all students are welcome to join.

Adam Testa, senior journalism major and past Sonor president, said Sonor helped develop his skills in more than one area.

"Sonor helped me develop my portfolio. When I interviewed for an internship in the summer of 2004, I could apply Sonor to almost any question they asked," Testa said.

Sonor adviser Lauren Kluge said Sonor is a great way for students to get involved while meeting new people.

"Socially, personally and professionally, Sonor is a great way to get experience in a student setting and just a fun way to get involved," Kluge said.

For this semester, Sonor is hoping to establish a team that will design and begin carrying out a new campaign. The focus of the campaign will be up to the team to create, promote and implement.

"There is so much we can do, there is no limit that I see with this group," Kluge said. "The main goal will be to make a difference on campus."

Those students interested in joining Sonor, may contact Lauren Kluge at lnkluge@eiu.edu.

State's problems topic at PRSA

By Ashley Meyer

Economic and educational problems facing Illinois were the topics of the Central Illinois Public Relations Society of America January meeting in Springfield.

The change to a lower paying service economy and inability for undereducated to make a good income were explored by Mike Lawrence. The former press secretary and senior policy adviser to then-Gov. Jim Edgar, Lawrence is currently director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University.

He analyzed two reports detailing these problems and he explored ideas to help solve them. Lawrence blamed no specific administration but said the problems have grown over time.

"Does Illinois have the resources to meet these challenges? Do we need a different revenue structure?" he asked.

Lawrence says that Gov. Rod Blagojevich has inherited a tough situation but he thinks that more leadership is needed and more realistic programs need to be developed to address the problems.

Lawrence says that Illinois will not be able to do well without eagles, leaders who soar, instead of ostriches, hiding their heads in the sand, in the executive and legislative branches.

"Illinois needs to soar economically," he said. Lawrence called for adequately funding education but said money isn't the only answer. Educational administration needs to be streamlined.

"We need to invest in the young, but don't send them the bill," Lawrence said. He also suggested that Illinois could consider taxing services since it is moving to a service economy. He says that Illinois could raise \$1 million by expanding the sales tax to services, while exempting health care services. He also suggested that with Illinois income tax, which is one of the lowest of all the states, Illinois could consider income tax changes.

"Pledging not to increase taxing is reckless and ridiculous," Lawrence said.

He urged the media not to cover the horse race but to cover the substance of the race in

more detail — Offer the candidates more air time, go beyond the eight second sound bite. The media and the public need to look for eagles and become the wind beneath their wings. He also said that addressing the issues may put politicians at risk but not addressing the issues puts Illinois children at risk.



From left, Karen Korsgard, the president of Central Ill. PRSA, Joan Walters, former colleague, and Mike Lawrence, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University, stand together at the Central Illinois PRSA meeting on Jan. 26 in Springfield.

While recognizing good work by several media on issues, Lawrence said Illinois needs more consistent reporting and more aggressive media.

In discussing the role of family, he says the ideal used to be "Sacrifice for your children. Now, it's bill our children, and we do what we want," he said.

The former reporter (25 years), who still writes columns for several newspapers, shared his concerns with about 40 members and guests of the Central Illinois chapter. Many present were former employees and colleagues. The meeting was at the Indigo Restaurant.

"Mike's experience in Illinois politics — combined with that of his experience both as a reporter, and as a spokesperson and press secretary — offered an insightful presentation to those who attended our January event. He has seen a tremendous evolution in media coverage, and, as such, is able to provide thoughts for serious consideration by those of us currently in the field, no matter on which side of the table we sit," Karen Korsgard, APR, PRSA CI president, said.

DON'T FORGET COMMUNICATIONS DAY!
FEBRUARY 22, UNIVERSITY UNION
PR & CRISIS COMMUNICATION PANEL: 11 A.M.

Kidwell's next venture with EIU

By Chris Sobut

Last December, Dave Kidwell was set to retire after 34 years as sports information director at Eastern.

But when Eastern asked him to come back and work as a volunteer, Kidwell could not pass up the opportunity.

Kidwell is currently volunteering as assistant athletic director in the Athletic Department, doing sports information and marketing, working with sports like men's basketball, football and indoor/outdoor track and field.

He says there are few differences from his old position and his current position.

"Nothing much around here has changed, I still do the same things that I was doing before," Kidwell said.

Some of those things include writing press releases, preparing media guides and coordinating information with other colleges and universities.

Kidwell also added teaching to his résumé in the fall of 2005 when he taught retired journalism professor Howard Price's sports and the media course.

"It worked out really well and it was a great experience for me," Kidwell said.

A colleague noted how important Kidwell's continued presence is. "He is a wealth of information, always there for support and

guidance," said Amy Reis, director of marketing and promotions in the sports information office, which promotes Eastern athletics throughout the community, faculty and students.

Reis admits that having Kidwell around during her first year at Eastern has been a breath of fresh air.

During his tenure at Eastern, Kidwell and his staff have made sure that Eastern athletics has been promoted and his work has not gone unnoticed.

"I feel that Dave and his staff have done a great job promoting our sport at Eastern and in the community," said Frank Graziano, Eastern women's rugby coach.

As for his future at Eastern, Kidwell will continue work as a volunteer and will be helping out the lettermen's club, as well as doing some fundraising for the athletic department.

"I am just taking things one day at a time and I plan on helping out EIU for the next few years," Kidwell said.



Dave Kidwell



The Relay, the monthly news-letter for EIU PR minors

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respects, college did prepare me for the real world. The writing skills I learned are invaluable, as well as experience with presentations and public speaking. Specifically with my current job, all the coursework using Photoshop, InDesign and Quark was a major benefit. I wouldn't have my job now without knowing how to run those programs," Walz said.

Walz offered some insightful advice to current students in the field. "Do an internship. I didn't, and I can't tell you how many times I wished I had. Doing an internship allows you to get that real world experience before you actually join the workforce," Walz said.

She also encouraged seniors and recent graduates to constantly pursue their job search. "Don't get discouraged if you don't find something right off the bat. I may have gotten a job initially,

but I sent out more résumés and received more rejection letters than I care to admit. Also, always bring a portfolio. Everything you did in class can be used towards your advantage," Walz said.

Walz is also currently attending graduate school at the University of Illinois at Springfield. She plans to graduate with a master's degree in communication in May 2007.

"After I get my master's, I'd like to get a few more years of non-profit PR work, and then perhaps move on to a private PR firm. I think eventually I'd like to end up teaching at the college level," Walz said.

Walz graduated in the spring of 2005. She majored in English, minored in journalism and was involved with The Agency, where she edited and designed the Eastern Illinois High School Press Association newsletter, The Reporter.