

# The Relay

a publication for PR students

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Katie Benjamin

## Ingram speaks to PRSSA about the importance of interviews

By Danielle Scott

"Interview — a word that makes you quiver," Diana Ingram, a professor in the communication studies department, said at a Public Relations Student Society of America meeting. With the end of the semester nearing, many students search for summer internships and new jobs. Ingram explained ways to prepare for interviews, and questions you should expect interviewers to ask.

Although many students think there is a specific formula for interviews, no such formula exists. "There is no one golden rule for interviews," Ingram said. Since each interview is different, preparation is key for each interview. Many students become nervous on interviews because they feel the employer judges them.

"[Remember] you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you," Ingram said. Even though they determine whether you are the correct fit for the company, you also need to decide whether the company is right for you.

Tony Curcuro, a sophomore political science and Spanish major said, "Don't over think the interview, treat it like a nor-

mal conversation." During the interview, the questions may be difficult. However, preparation usually pays off.

Even though you list all your qualifications in a resume, you need to explain your experiences during interviews, she explained. When the interviewer asks what campaigns you participated in, students should not stutter. Simply explain the campaigns and your contributions to each campaign. The interviewer can determine how much you participated in a campaign by your hesitation and explanation of the questions. Even though you may have participated very little in a campaign, never lie about your experiences. "Don't ever lie, be honest," Ingram said.

Besides verbalizing your resume, make sure you know yourself. "The number one interview question is 'Tell me about you,'" Ingram said. Instead of telling your life story, determine key points relevant to the position. Employers want to know why you chose that specific position and any experiences you have related to the position. Other possible questions include "why did you choose the college you attended?" and "why did you choose

your major."

Even though many students interview with companies in-person, some companies use phone interviews. According to Ingram, people tend to be more nervous during phone interviews because they cannot see the nonverbal cues the interviewer gives.

In addition, people do not take phone interviews as serious as in-person interviews. When being interviewed over the phone, Ingram suggests that you dress as you would for an interview. To get away from distraction, go to a quiet place where you can focus on the interview.

Ingram also explained the best way to create your cover letter and resume. Although many people use the shotgun method for distributing cover letters and résumés, which means you use the same cover letter and résumé but change the company and company contact, you need to take the time to personalize the information for each job. By personalizing the information, you give the interviewer information relevant to the job. Ingram said, "Time is money; get to the point."

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"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some hire PR officers."

— Daniel J. Boorstin

# PRSSA plans 'Heroes Rock' benefit concert for the Red Cross

By Hannah Plevka

The Public Relations Student Society of America Dan Thornburgh chapter decided to help the Coles County American Red Cross chapter by increasing awareness and by fundraising for the Red Cross chapter by hosting a benefit concert.

"The purpose is to raise awareness and funds for the American Red Cross, Coles County Chapter for disaster relief and the Heroes Campaign, which is a program that recognizes local heroes nominated by community members," said Danyelle Parker, a junior communication studies major and PRSSA president.

"Heroes Rock" benefit concert will be held Thursday April 2 from 7-10 p.m. in Eastern

Illinois University's Seventh Street Underground. Four bands will be performing in this order: Lauren Phillips and the Screwdrivers, Little Boy Junior, Al Schubert and the Staff Blues.

Besides coordinating the bands, PRSSA is also working collecting prizes to be given away throughout the night, according to Katrina Zaret, a senior journalism major and PRSSA webmaster and historian.

PRSSA has already begun to publicize the event. The publicity committee created and will soon hang fliers throughout campus. In addition, they will send press releases to various media outlets.

The committee created a Facebook group and event, which will keep members up-to-date on the event. Using Fa-



cebook also allows PRSSA to encourage others to invite their friends.

T-shirts will be available to purchase the night of the event. \$5 tickets will be available in

advance or at the door. Food will also be available for purchase.

For more information, contact Danyelle Parker at [dlparker@eiu.edu](mailto:dlparker@eiu.edu).

## Calendar of Events

**The Agency - meetings every Wed. at 6:30 p.m. in Buzzard Hall Rm. 2434.**

**PRSSA - meetings at 6 p.m. in the Effingham Room of the union**

### April

**2 - 'Heroes Rock' benefit concert**

**7th Street Underground, 7-10 p.m.**

**6 - PRSSA meeting**

**20 - PRSSA meeting**

**30 - PRSA meeting in Peoria at 6 p.m.**

**Contact Terri Johnson for information**

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When it comes to physical appearance, Ingram and student participants advised students to watch how they dress and groom themselves. "You have to be comfortable in your own clothes," Ingram said. Try your outfit on before the interview. If you keep pulling on your outfit, you should wear a different outfit. These nonverbal movements can be distracting to the interviewer.

If you are worried about overdressing, Terri Johnson, associate professor of journalism, suggests going to the company days before the interview and watching how people are dressed. Once you determine the style of the company, dress one-step above. Katrina Zaret, a

senior journalism major, added, "Keep your hair off your face. Interviewers want to see your eyes."

Before going to the interview, make sure you have a portfolio of your work. Extra copies of your work and transcripts are often necessary for the interviewer to review later. Remember, do not give anyone the originals. When it comes to reference letters, do not use them too often. Some companies may ask to see reference letters, but others may not.

"The job market has always been tough, you just have to work harder now," Ingram said. Preparation and personalization are very important when finding jobs.



## The Agency campaigns for two organizations

*The Agency, Eastern's student-run public relations firm, strives to increase awareness for two local non-profit organizations, the Children's Advocacy Center and the County Animal Rescue and Education Center.*

*By Cory Dimitrakopolous, Barbara Harrington, and Christina Guadiana*

Each semester, The Agency looks for organizations in and around Charleston to work with. Since both the Children's Advocacy Center and the County Animal Rescue and Education Center are non-profit organizations that have worked with Eastern students in the past, they seem to be great choices.

The Agency approached CAC in early September with the hopes of joining forces to launch an awareness campaign for the Center. CAC helps abused victims share their stories by coordinating the investigation, advocacy and medical services for child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse in Central Illinois.

When The Agency contacted Pam Riddle, director of CAC of East Central Illinois, she explained a fundraising and awareness Champions for Children Walk the Center was hosting in Charleston in May. This seemed like a great event for The Agency to get involved, and they felt they would be able to lend a hand.

It is easy for those on the out-

side looking in to underestimate the amount of work that goes in to an event of this caliber. From creating media lists and fliers, to pitching donation ideas to local and nation-wide businesses, The Agency has been involved in the planning process.

The Agency has Rachel Fisher, interim director of Student Community Service at Eastern, who has been a fantastic role model and business partner. She is passionate and enthusiastic about this event and her high energy helps The Agency stay focused on the tasks at hand.

The Agency joined a board of local businesspeople, including members of the Coles County Health Department, Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center and Kid's Hope United, to help implement the event.

In an effort to raise money and awareness for CAC, The Agency is holding a raffle for a chance to win a complementary print and Web site design package from SiPep Design. With a fundraising goal of \$750, The Agency is approaching more than 100 businesses in the Charleston, Mattoon and Champaign communities. The raffle will be held in April and

all proceeds will go to the CAC of East Central Illinois.

The Champion for Children Walk will take place Thursday, May 14 at 9:30 a.m. and begins outside of Old Main. Breakfast and refreshments will be served beginning at 8 a.m. outside O'Brien Stadium for participants. Those interested in participating in the Walk can contact Pam Riddle at [childadvocacy@consolidated.net](mailto:childadvocacy@consolidated.net).

The other organization, C.A.R.E., is the animal shelter located in Charleston, Ill. The Agency is helping C.A.R.E. by donating their time to create informational booklets for first-time adopters.

At C.A.R.E., several animals are in need of good homes, and while many are adopted by loving residents, occasionally, new owners experience some trouble training their new family members. Ryan Livingston, an employee at C.A.R.E., explained that scratching or chewing on furniture and difficulties with crate training are some complaints that new adopters have.

Livingston stated that some families have even returned adopted pets after finding out that the family is expecting children.

"It's sad and unnecessary to return pets just because you're going to have a baby," said Livingston. The resources are here to prepare your pet for a new addition to the family, before it becomes an issue, he added.

Livingston, along with other workers and volunteers, had compiled many articles and Web sites for training resources. However, the C.A.R.E. staff lacks the time and skills necessary to create an easy-to-read booklet for adopters. All the information was stuffed in folders and unorganized.

Now, with the help of Agency volunteers, the C.A.R.E. Center will receive new informational packets to accompany the take-home kit all adopters receive when taking home a pet from the shelter. Along with food, treats and toys, new owners will soon have valuable training resources at their fingertips.

The Agency members plan on creating two separate booklets, one for dog adopters and one for those adopting cats and kittens. Both packets are scheduled to be finished by the end of the semester and available

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# Fashion industry surreal for Eastern graduate

By Leah Vaughn

A 21-hour work day during New York City's Fashion Week was normal for Eastern Illinois University alumna Katie Benjamin when she was at the center of the fashion industry in the United States.

After college, Benjamin took off to New York to do an internship with Siren Public Relations, making the transition from the relatively easy college life to the hectic fashion industry. During that time she participated in product publicity and launches for a variety of cosmetic companies. The fashion shows she worked at often required her to be at work at 6 a.m. to set up for the show and work all day, until the 3 a.m. after party concluded.

Benjamin's very first fashion show in the highly competitive industry was the Tommy Hilfiger 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary show, where numerous celebrities were in attendance and media coverage was high. Her main task for this event was to stay with actor Jesse Metcalfe, best known for his role in "Desperate Housewives." Benjamin had to make sure Metcalfe arrived on time and got to his seat, met with and posed for the media, and attended the after party.

"It was all very surreal to me," Benjamin said. "To be in a room with hundreds of well-known people in the industry, it

was all very memorable."

After serving her internship, the 2005 EIU PRSSA president took a position with Harrison and Shriftman Public Relations. As an account executive, she worked on beauty and lifestyle accounts including BlackBerry, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and W Hotels. Part of her job entailed event planning and production of events for New York City's Fashion Week.

After that, Benjamin, a Sigma Kappa sorority member, became a freelance event and public relations specialist for the same company, Harrison and Shriftman PR, she worked with high-fashion clients such as Lacoste and Cynthia Rowley. For NYC Fashion Week she coordinated all aspects of the events from invitations and seating to after-party preparation. Benjamin said the best part of working with such big-name clientele was the large amount of funding they had, so the company had the ability to create extravagant campaigns and events.

After spending three years in New York City, Benjamin made the transition to Chicago, where she worked with the Travel Technology Group as a marketing associate. She managed accounts such as the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau and the Fashion Footwear Association of New York, among others. While at



*Katie Benjamin, a former Eastern PRSSA president, has held numerous public relations positions in New York, Chicago and Denver. She graduated in May 2005.*

the Travel Technology Group, Benjamin initiated a company-wide recycling program and spearheaded the corporate events committee.

Recently, Benjamin decided to make yet another transition to Denver. She chose Colorado for the active lifestyle and mountains and she is looking forward to a brand new city full of new experiences and challenges.

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to C.A.R.E. in paper and digital formats so additional copies can be printed as needed.

Other groups at Eastern have helped C.A.R.E. in the past, including individual classes, other

RSOs and Greek organizations. For more information, contact Christina Guadiana, one of The Agency's account executives for C.A.R.E., at [cmguadiana@eiu.edu](mailto:cmguadiana@eiu.edu).

If anyone is interested in working with either CAC, C.A.R.E or both, The Agency meets every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. in Buzzard Hall Rm. 2434.

## General Information

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

Printed in the Journalism Office of the Buzzard Building.

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