

## A Letter from President Eric Wohlleber



I am very excited to be taking on the role of President of the PRSA Capital Region (NY) Chapter for 2009.

In recent years our chapter has grown in many ways and this year we will strive to sustain this growth while at the same time bringing added value to our members. In 2006, the Board motto was “Back to the Basics” – to increase membership and organize quality events. The results were clear. We won a national award for being one of the fastest growing small chapters

in PRSA. We also held a half-day seminar and brought in national speakers. This was accomplished as we continued to provide a variety of educational and professional programs for our members.

Last year our chapter pledged to “Build on the Basics,” and we certainly did that. Last year we launched the popular Wednesday Workshop, a program in which local leaders in our profession share their knowledge and experiences in the public relations field in an informal educational setting. Our chapter also saw an increase in membership and streamlined communication with both members and non-members by establishing monthly e-newsletters as well as print newsletters.

One of the most significant accomplishments that this chapter has seen in recent history was the establishment of the Empire Awards. Many local PRSA chapters around the country have awards that recognize outstanding campaigns and contributions to our profession and it was

about time that our chapter started commending the excellent work being done here in the Capital Region. In our inaugural event, the Empire Awards was sold out and we received more than 50 entries.

This year our goal will be to continue to provide the quality that our members have come to expect from us, while at the same time striving to add value to being a PRSA member. This will be accomplished by providing more and higher quality events and programs to keep our members a step-ahead in a continually competitive field. We will add more members, offer our members more resources and honor those for their outstanding work. The foundation for growth has been laid in the past two years and 2009 will be the year in which this chapter harnesses that momentum to move to the next level.

So if we had to fit this into a motto it would be “Continued Growth.” If you are a current member, we ask that you grow with us, if you were a member once but have not been involved lately, it’s time to take another look and if you are not a member, it’s time to get with the program.

As Tech Valley becomes a reality, so will the need for even more professional public relations practitioners. PRSA is a way for all of us, even those who may compete, to join together for a common good. Together, we can raise the profile of the PR practitioner and educate decision makers to the true value of PR.

Sincerely,

Eric Wohlleber  
President, PRSA Capital Region

## Thank You from Outgoing President

Tom Nardacci, Gramercy Communications



Dear Fellow PRSA Members:

I wanted to take a brief moment to say thank you very much for the opportunity to serve in this important position in our community.

2008 was a banner year for PRSA Capital Region, and we charted new territory. After many years of stalled tries, we finally launched a PR awards program, the Empire Awards. Making this program a reality is a testament to our incoming President Eric Wohlleber. We also hosted a full year’s worth of “Wednesday Workshops.” The workshops are informal enough to create networking opportunities, but also provide continuing education and professional development.

“A rising tide lifts all boats,” is not just a well known saying. The more successful we are as a collective group, the better we will be as individual practitioners.

We need to band together to continually promote our industry, particularly in times of budget cuts. As we know, good PR is the most cost-effective form of communications and organizations are leaning on us more for guidance and counsel in tough times.

My time as PRSA President has been a stellar experience. I have come to know a number of successful and talented professionals that I may not have gotten the chance to meet. Our Chapter has a bright future, but we need even more participation from the Membership to be even stronger.

Sincerely,

Tom Nardacci  
Immediate Past President, PRSA Capital Region



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# Q&A With a Journalist

Steve Ference, Reporter at Capital News 9



## What are the things that you most enjoy about being a journalist?

I most enjoy the challenge of telling the stories that matter most to people in the Capital Region. Especially in today's economy, with so much change impacting so many of us, there are stories and information that has to be told. I enjoy meeting with everyone from state and national

leaders to parents to tackle the issues of the day. Telling their stories in a way that's easy to understand but often covers complex issues is something that I really enjoy. And even though it's hard work, occasionally you hear from folks who say the story had an impact. And of course in this day and age, it's enjoyable to tell positive stories as well - because there's plenty that's right with the world too.

## During the course of your career, has there been one story that stands out the most or that you recall as your favorite piece?

There are so many stories I've covered, it's tough to pick just one. Of course, covering the widely followed Christopher Porco case was a real challenge, and very interesting. After all, it's rare journalists can follow a case that closely each day. But the stories that stick out as my personal favorites are those that tell of injustices: an Iraqi war veteran fighting to become a US citizen, though he should have been fast-tracked. Or the struggle of a hard working mom who just can't get a job though she's doing everything right. Sometimes, my reports lead to solutions. And sometimes - the reports are informative but also fun - like when I trained with the New York State Police. It was the most physically demanding fun I've ever had.

## What is the best way for a PR person to contact you?

### How about any pet peeves about what a PR person should not do?

The best way for a person to contact me is by e-mail. That way I can get information about a potential story in written form with contact information before I even talk with anyone. It allows me to consider all the angles - and how any given story may be of value to our viewers. My only recommendation to PR folks - is to be flexible. The story you want to get out may be more of a starting point than the story. You're looking to get a message out; we're looking to tell a story that informs our viewers. The two goals may overlap and often do - but not always. For example, you may want to tell our viewers about a new business opening up in the area. That may be a story depending on the business - but its larger impact to viewers, and whether it's following some sort of pattern of businesses in the area or nationally is what makes it more important as far as a news story. That's just an example. Journalists are always looking for story ideas - so don't be afraid to send them, but don't expect each one to get coverage either. After all, there's always breaking news to get to.

## What stories are of interest to you and Capital News 9?

Stories that matter to the average person. We cover a variety of stories, and any way I can add perspective to local news, breaking news, national trends and stories, to make it news that makes a difference - I feel I've done my job.

# Agency News

We welcome your news. Please email brief items to [prsa-capitalregion.com](mailto:prsa-capitalregion.com)

**Baker Public Relations** announces the addition of Former FLY 92 talent Shawn Smeltzer as Account Executive. Shawn has more than 15 years experience as a successful on-air radio personality including six years with WFLY-FM/ FLY 92 and four years with WABT-FM/ 105.7.

**Blass Communications** announced today their selection as Agency of Record for Norman Rockwell Museum in historic Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Blass Communications will provide Norman Rockwell Museum with a range of marketing communications services, including media planning and buying and related brand strategy.

**Shorey Public Relations** announced that Kathleen Wren was promoted to vice president of the Saratoga Springs-based public relations firm. She joined Shorey as a senior account executive nearly five years ago. Kathy is Past President of PRSA Capital Region.

**Zone 5** one of the region's fastest growing public relations and marketing firms is proud to announce that Chief Technology Officer, Dennis Hudson, is celebrating his 15th year with the company. Dennis was hired as the third employee of Zone 5 in the fall of 1993 as a Darkroom Technician. In his 15 years with the company, he has risen through the ranks and is credited with keeping the firm on the cutting edge of technology.

Dennis has been responsible for keeping Zone 5 not only current but ahead of industry trends beginning with the transformation from analog (darkroom) to digital press technologies, as well as the installation of state-of-the-art Scitex scanners and imagesetters and large format digital printing equipment in the company's early years. Dennis most recently configured the company's focus group facility's multimedia operations, including digital audio and video hookups, projection equipment and multiple monitor stations.

"Dennis has been a fixture with Zone 5 from the beginning," said Todd Mosher, CEO and President of Zone 5. "He has grown with the organization and has been a major factor in our success."



# Empire Awards

PRSA Capital Region

# 2008 Empire Awards WINNERS

## Empire Awards 2008 Highlights

**Rich Meddaugh**, Sunmark Federal Credit Union

### Pamela Sawchuk

Outstanding Communicator Award



Pamela Sawchuk has been a continuing presence in the region for over 30 years as a PR practitioner, entrepreneur and philanthropist. Along the way, she has established a renowned work ethic and grew her PR agency, Sawchuk, Brown Associates, into one of the leading public relations agencies in Upstate New York. Because of her work in business and her caring attitude she is a pillar of the Capital Region Community.

### Jo Ann LeSage Nelson, APR

Outstanding Practitioner Award



There is one phrase that is consistent with Jo Ann LeSage Nelson: excellent Public Relations practitioner. Jo Ann has practiced public relation in this area for 20 years. In that time, she has developed a following within the PR community as a mentor and friend. At PRSA, we look for particular criteria for our Outstanding Practitioner Award. Jo Ann presents herself with professionalism, hard

work and an approachability that sets her apart from the field and enables others to learn and practice public relations with her.

Jo Ann LeSage Nelson has one of the areas few Accredited in Public Relations (APR) designations in the Capital District and has been a vocal supporter of PRSA on both the national and local levels of the organization. In fact, Jo Ann has recently served as PRSA's Northeast District Chair and is a Past-President for our local PRSA chapter.

She is currently Vice President, Client Services of Piece Communications, LTD and was formerly Vice President of Sawchuk, Brown Associates.

### Annual Reports

The Trudeau Institute  
2007 Trudeau Institute Annual Report  
The Trudeau Institute

### Integrated Campaign

Rueckert Advertising & Public Relations LLC  
29th Annual Freihofer's Run for Women  
Charles Freihofer Baking Company

### Media Relations - Profit

Shorey Public Relations  
Shorey Public Relations – WellWed  
WellWed in New York Magazine

### Media Relations - Non-Profit

Sawchuk Brown Associates  
Habitat for Humanity Blitz Build 2007  
United Group

### Media Relations - Statewide & Beyond

New York State Museum  
Earth's Oldest Tree  
New York State Museum

### Newsletters

New York State Nurses Association  
New York Nurse  
New York State Nurses Association

### Public Affairs

United University Professions  
SUNY is Vital  
United University Professions

### Public Relations Campaign – Non-Profit

Pierce Communications  
Creating a New United Way of Northeastern New York and United Way of Schenectady County

### Public Relations Campaign – Profit

Gramercy Communications  
Positioning 3t as a Green Firm  
3tarchitects

## WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

Held at Professor Java's  
\$10 for members, \$25 for non-members

### January 14

Jo Ann LeSage Nelson & Jonathan Pierce  
Pierce Communications  
PR Lean & Mean

### February 18

John D'Alessandro  
Zone 5  
Public Affairs vs. Public Relations

### March 11 - 12:00 \*note time change

Tom Nardacci  
Gramercy Communications  
Guerilla Tactics: Unconventional PR Weapons

### April 8

Gina Luttrell  
The College of St. Rose  
Blog Etiquette and Handling Bloggers

### May 13

Nicole Messier  
Shorey Public Relations  
Integrating social media into traditional PR

## Social Networking as a PR Tool

**Ben Marvin**, Associate Director of Media Relations  
The College of Saint Rose

2008's last Wednesday Workshop featured Dan Forbush, Skidmore College's executive director of strategic communications, and Jason Gorss, manager of media relations at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, on "Social Networks as a PR Tool." The rapid growth of Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and other social networks is challenging PR professionals as never before. Not only do we require new skills and techniques, but we also must assume the new role of "community manager."

Social networking media matter in several ways, says Dan: they support 'micro-targeting,' they're the new 'word-of-mouth,' and they are free. For the generation after ours, social networking is an integral part of the way they communicate with each other and with the world. Dan walked through how Skidmore is embracing the new tools and provided an overview of some sites that he considers most important for PR practitioners. Some are familiar names: Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube; others are equally as important while lacking the same name recognition: Twitter, Basecamp, Slideshare and Box.net.

Jason then introduced Twitter, a fast-growing micro-blog that allows members to follow each other throughout the day. It's a format for moving news at lightning speed. Reasons why PR pros should be Twitter-ing? Jason identified six: intelligence; information; monitoring and engaging; viewing and responding to reporters' queries; news dissemination; and networking. At the workshop's conclusion, many in the audience vowed to get to know social media better and start Twitter-ing.

## Pitching & Securing Stories, and Managing Your CEO

**Rich Meddaugh**, Public Relations Specialist • Sunmark Federal Credit Union

David Singer, Director of Communications & Marketing for Albany Law School, opened up to local PR practitioners about managing your CEO in the media relations world. Dave utilized his bag of tricks from his experience in both the agency world and in-house environment to bring about numerous examples that he and others have faced in our media market. For instance:

Media can turn sour quickly: The Supreme Court had just made a decision regarding a landmark case, followed by various protesters filed onto the Albany Law School campus to demonstrate. As events escalated, Dave found himself face-to-face with a local cameraman from a broadcast affiliate running tape as he approached them. Calmer heads prevailed and none of the interaction was broadcast locally in our market. But, as Dave said, be prepared and control the energy of the situation.

Manage expectations: Having the confidence from your CEO to act in a manner which will benefit your organization. Be prepared and take notes on the situation at hand. Be there for your CEO as a source to render advice and keep the task at hand under control.

Dave brought a great amount of information to this week's workshop and we truly appreciate his participation in PRSA and our programming. The PRSA Workshops are a unique and interesting opportunity to meet, learn and establish networking opportunities with your fellow public relation colleagues. Come out and continue to support these events or let us know what you're looking for in terms of topics. We're always looking for experiences to draw from for our programming. Submit some ideas and check out our web site at: [www.prsacapitalregion.org](http://www.prsacapitalregion.org)

## Member Spotlight Jo Ann LeSage Nelson

Vice President of Client Services, Pierce Communications



### What has it been like for you to serve on the board of PRSA Capital Region?

I have met so many outstanding practitioners through PRSA and have learned a great deal from them. Some of these learning experiences have been formal ones, taking place at professional development programs or at PRSA's annual international conference; others have just been the result of the personal friendships and associations I have developed with other PRSA members.

My experience going through PRSA's accreditation process was a really rewarding one. When I graduated from college, there were few formal public relations degree programs being offered. My studies for the APR exam affirmed that much of what I had learned through experience was right on target. While the exam was a rigorous process, I am so happy that I went through that process. I am always proud to explain what the APR after my name means.

### How has being a member of PRSA benefited your career?

Serving on PRSA's Northeast District has been a great experience because it has allowed me to talk regularly with public relations professionals from all across New York state and throughout New England. Our colleagues in this industry are all confronted with the same kinds of issues and presented with the same kinds of opportunities as we are here in the Capital Region, and so we can learn from each other the best way to resolve issues and maximize opportunities. The willingness of PRSA members to share their experiences to help fellow members is amazing.

As a member of the district board, it has been gratifying to me to help chapters in New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire understand all the resources they have available to them through our national organization. The district is an important link between local chapters and their members and the national board and staff in New York City. Our mission is to build stronger chapters by offering professional development programs, fostering communication among chapters in the district, and facilitating leadership development.

### What would you tell people that were thinking of joining?

Membership in PRSA provides PR professionals with so many ways to enhance their careers. From the networking opportunities that are such a big part of PRSA activities on the local, district and national level, to the outstanding professional development programs offered at all those levels, to the publications produced by national, the benefits are many. Whether you are just starting out in the field, or have 25 years of experience, PRSA can be a great resource for you.

*"I have met so many outstanding practitioners through PRSA and have learned a great deal from them."*

**PRSA**

» Jo Ann LeSage Nelson APR, vice president of client services, is responsible for strategic public relations and communications counseling for Pierce Communications clients. She is an Accredited Member of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), having demonstrated broad knowledge, experience, competence and professional judgment in the field.