

THE MEDIUM

Vol. 27 | Issue 1

A photograph of a room decorated for a 500th anniversary. Two large, shiny, rose-gold balloons in the shape of the numbers '5' and '0' are the central focus. They are flanked by two smaller, light blue balloons. The balloons are tied to a dark wood cabinet with silver handles. The background is a plain white wall. The floor is a light-colored wood. The overall lighting is soft and warm.

500

years
of PRSSA

THE MEDIUM

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Letter from the President



To me, 50 years of PRSSA means 50 years of friendship and experience. Throughout my time at Virginia Tech I have stopped and reflected many times on what my life would be like not having joined PRSSA. Honestly, I can't even imagine.

I joined PRSSA as a freshman when I had no idea what I wanted to do other than the fact that I wanted it to be in PR. When I showed up to my first meeting, I was terrified. Luckily, it didn't take me long to realize that this was the right place for me. Everyone that I met and talked to were so welcoming and made me feel like I was part of a bigger picture. Quickly, I attached to some of the

upperclassmen as mentors, leading me into my position today. I can honestly say that if it weren't for their constant encouragement that I probably wouldn't have had the courage to run for the executive board. I am so happy to have had their guidance along my journey to become the leader that I am today.

Not only did these times lead me into many new friendships, but also into experiences I would have never imagined. In just the past few months since beginning my position as president in June, I have had the opportunity to travel to Scottsdale, AZ and Boston, MA for conferences. At these conferences I've been overjoyed to make friends from all over the country

that are just as passionate about public relations as I am. Not only have I made friends, but I have been able to listen to and speak with some of the top public relations professionals in the world. None of this would have been possible without my involvement in PRSSA.

I can honestly say that my experiences in this organization have been some of which that have shaped my collegiate experience in

the most positive ways. 50 years ago when PRSSA was founded, I'm sure that they could have never imagined how many young people they would inspire over the years, and I am proud to be one of them.

I look forward to seeing where this journey continues to take our chapter and myself during the remainder of my time at Tech. I would like to end this by thanking everyone for their continued commitment to this organization and

more specifically to our chapter this semester. We would not be able to achieve everything we do without your support.

Best,



Jordan Hogge

ALL “ACCESS” PASS TO AGENCY TOUR

MELANIE DO + SHELBY VANDERGRIF

Account Coordinator and Firm Member

On Friday November 17, nine members of VT PRSSA visited and toured Access, a full-service marketing and public relations agency located in Roanoke, Virginia. Access has experience with clients ranging from Bon Secours to Virginia's Blue Ridge Tourism. During the visit, the group was welcomed by the Director of Public Relations Jeremy Butterfield, who gave a presentation and tour of the firm.

The atmosphere of Access was an inviting and innovative feel. The interior design, employees and projects parallel with the firm's

brand also showed the friendly environment of the workplace. The office was originally a 1930's Buick repair shop, but was transformed to the home of Access through a mix of modern yet vintage decor and an open office setting. As soon as the front door is open, to the left is the front office and to the right is a wall shelf full of almost all of Access's awards and prizes.

The office also included a kitchen, gym, and audio booth for all employees, creating a family-like setting for the company. To outsiders, the location and building of Access would seem like the setting

was created for it.

As PRSSA members walked through the office, the group received valuable advice and information from the Access team, including President and Copywriter Todd Marcum. He told us specifically that he regretted not branching out more and doing what he loved most or even following his dream. Access definitely was a dream come true, but there were so many more dreams to be reached. Some of the Access Account Coordinators gave advice to the PRSSA Account Coordinators, telling them to be on top of deadlines. To do this, it depends on each person, whether it be a schedule, calendar, dry erase board, etc.

Also, when an account coordinator would be overseeing their committee, they understood that each person was different with how they wanted reminders. Some wanted a simple text, others want an email, and some even use a specific program with agenda setting tools. Each member is different and an account coordinator has to adapt to that.



#PRSSANC BOSTON CONFERENCE RECAP

COURTNEY KRSTICH

Firm Co-Director

I am proud to have had represented our chapter of VT PRSSA at the Public Relations Student Society of America National Conference. This year, it was held in Boston from October 4-6. Attending members included President Jordan Hogge, Vice President Anna Pendleton, Events Chair Mackenzie

country, PRSSANC offered many new insights and connections for our chapter. Members of various chapters from across America had the opportunity to network with each other, listen to experts in the communication field, and develop valuable skills. This information helps PRS-

SA members become a top applicant after college graduation.

The PRSSANC program offered over 50 sessions and activities for attendees to select based on their area of interest. One of the most memorable and inspiring presentations was given by Judy

Porter, and myself as Firm Co-Director.

The PRSSANC tagline read “The Revolution Continues,” a nod to Boston’s rich history and continuing legacy within the public relations discipline. Boston did not disappoint: the large city of 600,000 people offered amazing skyscrapers and views. Newbury Street boasted its high-fashion clothing stores, while Boston Commons allowed its normally busy inhabitants to see the organic beauty of great oak trees and a large duck pond.

As the largest gathering of public relations students in the

Smith and focused on crisis communication. She is an American crisis manager, lawyer, author and television producer. Her professional career in Washington, D.C. parallels stories that she produces on a TV show titled Scandal on ABC. She spoke about how she handles crisis situations at her firm Smith and Co.

Companies such as Cone Communications, Panera Bread, Weber Shandwick, Burson-Marsteller, Ogilvy Public Relations and General Motors presented many topics of interest. A common theme repeated throughout the

sessions emphasized that companies are looking for people who have strong written communication skills, possess a strong understanding of individual company culture and who have the motivation, drive and initiative to get things done.

At PRSSANC, I learned more about the public relations industry in four days than I have in three years. I had the privilege of meeting the CEO of Panera Bread Communications and I networked with members from Peru. If any current PRSSA members are interested in attending the National Assembly, Leadership Rally, or National Conference, please contact me and I would be happy to provide you with additional information.



Member of the Semester

MELANIE DO

MAJOR: PUBLIC RELATIONS | MINOR: LEADERSHIP + SOCIAL CHANGE |
COGNATE: SCIENCE + TECHNOLOGY | GRADUATING: MAY 2019

Q: WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN VT PRSSA?

Melanie Do: I got involved in VT PRSSA because of the professionalism of it. I am involved in multiple student organizations; however, this organization is the only pre-professional one I am in. This says a lot about the organization itself and I also love the people in it. I really do see myself growing connections and the experiences here helping me out in the future.

Q: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM BEING A MEMBER OF PRSSA?

MD: PRSSA is so much bigger than it seems. The connections, experiences, trips, and conferences that are all available for each and every member is astonishing. There are multiple resources we have and it is just so cool to see your public relations professors come to general meetings and get to know them a little better. The better you know your professor, the easier the class should be. They also have gone through the PR part of life already, so their knowledge and advice is always taken seriously. I also love the Adobe, LinkedIn, resume and portfolio workshops because I know that one day I will need to make one for myself. Now, I know what I am getting myself into when I make a resume or personal website and some advice for how it should look.

Q: WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

MD: I see myself working in HR for a consulting company/firm, such as Accenture, SAIC, Deloitte, EY, etc. I could also see myself working in HR for Navy Federal Credit Union, Capital One, etc. I also hope to stay in the Northern Virginia area or move to California for a few years before I come back to NOVA to settle down and plan to have a family.



A look inside

NEEKA EGHBALI + ANNA PENDLETON
Editor in Chief and Vice President

PRSSA had the privilege of sitting down with Kevin Jones and Alex Barrette, co-founders of Joba Design, a multidisciplinary design firm in Blacksburg. They specialize in brand identity, digital, industrial and environmental design.

PRSSA: How did the idea of Gokies come about?

Alex Barrette: We were talking about starting a business together. We were in school still in the Industrial Design program. It was his last semester and it was my second to last semester. I hadn't been to a football game and we went to one and I learned about the Key Play. We got to thinking about how everyone jumps to Enter Sandman but not everyone does the Key Play. That's how Gokies was born. Since then, we've come out with a couple new versions and have been expanding the brand. We called it the Go brand. Everything is under the Go brand: we have Gokies and Go Fanface and there's some other things we're working on that'll fall under that. The brand revolves around the collegiate atmosphere, so tailgating, being a part of the fanbase, being in the stadium. Think gameday.

PRSSA: How do you select clients to work with?

Kevin Jones: We say what we do. In the beginning, we were trying to convince everyone, and then we were able to create some products

and create a portfolio. Now we do less convincing because we know what we do works and more telling the story of how we do what we do (the process, how much time it'll take, people who will work on it, how much it'll cost). I look at Joba as one big project. It took a lot of pitching the idea to people and convincing people to come work here.

PRSSA: What is the business structure like at Joba?

KJ: We do business three different ways: in-house, hybrid, and consulting. So the in-house part is where we come together and make our own stuff and at some point we want to transition to only making our own stuff. Hybrid is partnering with a client, so we take on the risk and everything with the client.

PRSSA: What is your favorite social media platform and why?

AB: Instagram, because I don't know how Twitter works and Facebook is kind of boring.

KJ: I would say Instagram as well. People use it differently. Alex uses it for footwear and connections in that industry. I use mine for inspiration and communicate on there sending my team inspiration as well.

I also like to go back to look at the posts that I've liked and used that to create a palette.

PRSSA: What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs and marketers?

AB: Start doing it, whatever it is. Be a part of that community. Casually, I'm into footwear. On my Instagram account, that's what I do. I'm connected in that industry and you talk to so many people that are from all over the place. Surround yourself with people that are willing to help you out and learn things that you didn't know. That's what we've been trying to do here, is provide an outlet for young entrepreneurs and businesses to come here and figure out their needs.

KJ: In the beginning, we were trying to get all these different people to help us. We basically got the runaround in some cases. In other cases, we got promises and no follow through. So we decided that we would do it ourselves and pull our resources. One of the reasons we got together as a team was because of Alex's strengths and my strengths.

Joba

This is a Gokie!



3 words to describe Joba Design according to Kevin:
Innovative. Futuristic. Experience-driven.

Co-founders Alex
Barrette (left) and
Kevin Jones (right)

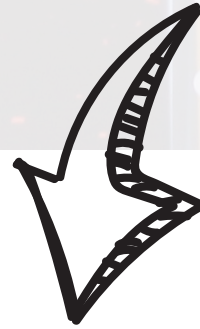


PHOTO BY ANNA PENDLETON



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOBA DESIGN



years

On Friday, Nov. 10 from 3-6 p.m. VT PRSSA hosted its event, Here's to 50 Years of PRSSA in Hahn Horticulture Garden. The event was organized by VT PRSSA event planner Mackenzie Porter and her committee. Attendees had the opportunity to mingle with industry professional and keynote speaker Jennifer Eddy (pictured above), who is the Chief Strategist of Eddy Communications Corporation.



Event planning tips from Mackenzie Porter

1. MAKE A REALISTIC BUDGET

2. UTILIZE YOUR TEAM'S STRENGTHS

3. PICK AN EASILY ACCESSIBLE VENUE

4. USE YOUR NETWORK TO INVITE SPECIAL GUESTS/SPEAKERS

5. HAVE EVERYTHING READY THE DAY BEFORE TO MAKE THE DAY OF AS STRESS-FREE AS POSSIBLE



Advice from PRSSA ALUMS



SHANNON O'DOWD | Account Executive, LEWIS Global Communications

My biggest piece of advice is to embrace every opportunity. When I started my career in cyber PR, I wasn't sure it was what I wanted to do because cybersecurity was so new to me. But I dove right in anyway. After a few months on the job, I found myself understanding my clients' products, messaging and all the technical jargon that comes along with it. I actually love what I do through and through because I found an industry I love.

MELANIE FORD | Account Executive, Merritt Group

The two pieces of advice I'd give is to not get so worked up about networking -- view it as making friends! Schedules are crazy in the workplace, but people love when you express interest in what they do and if you can find ways to give back, that's a bonus in networking. The other piece of advice I'd share is to value yourself in the job hunt. There's a lot of pressure to land your dream job prior to graduation. Sometimes you may have to work another job first before your dream job opens up or you may not know what your dream job is!



KATIE PESEK | Account Executive, Merritt Group

Seek experience for the right reasons. I think often when you're in college, you get involved in projects, classes, internships, etc. because you feel pressured to have a perfect resume. Instead, seek experiences that interest you and provide you with opportunities to succeed and fail. These will help you learn about yourself and the industry, which will result in genuine confidence when it comes time for the postgrad job search.



REBECCA ROBERTSON | Account Services Manager, EAB

I'd definitely encourage PRSSA members to network with their connections when looking at internships, jobs or informational interviews. Also take every opportunity to get involved with the great opportunities that PRSSA gives you -- I had the chance to go to conferences, work on marketing campaigns for Blacksburg clients, and build a great community of friends within PRSSA that have supported me in and out of college.



STRANGER THINGS

KAITLYN SENCHAK

Staff Writer

Millennials are some of the most nostalgic people and, seemingly, for a time we barely remember. The amount of people creating memes or content revolving around the concept, “only 90’s kids will remember this,” is astonishing. Whether it’s bringing back mom jeans or wearing denim on more denim, millennials love the past.

So it makes sense that a program like *Stranger Things*, which incorporates the past with a dose of the heebie-jeebie unknown, would do remarkably well in our demographic. Pair their marketing strategies with their Netflix release and the *Stranger Things* executives have millennials in the palms of their hands (Dacre Montgomery doesn’t hurt either).

The *Stranger Things* marketing team definitely approached things differently, whether it was pairing up with companies that are popular among the younger generation or honing in on social media. This program’s marketing strategy was distinctly effective, which can be seen from the thousands of people begging their friends to binge-watch the new season, as if they haven’t seen it already.

Stranger Things is a Netflix original meaning that Netflix has a lot of say in what the show can do, and they certainly put everything into marketing it. Netflix sent emails to subscribers showing what was popular among users and what has been added recently, including

a gigantic promotion for *Stranger Things*, front and center. Billboards were also posted featuring the easily recognizable logo of four silhouettes on bikes perched on top of the sign. And of course, the countdown clock featured on the Netflix home page, telling users when they could start the marathon.

Largely prevalent on social media, *Stranger Things* delved into Twitter and other networks to promote the show and to hop on the bandwagon of tweets and hashtags. Most notably, the show listened to the demands of users for “#JusticeForBarb” and created a plot in Season 2 that provided just that for dear ol Barb, may she rest in peace.

Users also marketed the show to each other with consumer-to-consumer banter and invitations (or jabs) to non-watchers. Fan-made art also found its way into the social media universe with videos like one that featured the introduction to the show made entirely of Eggo waffles.

Netflix also offered interesting partnerships and product placement in the show. Most watchers know about Eleven’s love of Eggo waffles, which the producers placed in the first season without previous partnership with the company. However, after Season 1 aired, Eggo reached out to the program after an increase in sales and, in anticipation for Season 2, sent out promotional tweets for the show.

The Reebok partnership and adjacent product placement is less known. Reeboks are synonymous with the 80’s so with a show like *Stranger Things* that makes it its

purpose to propose decade accuracy, they made an appearance. Particularly, the 1984 Reebok Ex-O-Fit Hi Clean sneakers, which are worn by Dustin in his *Ghostbusters* Halloween costume, paired with doodles of common *Ghostbuster* sketches.

A few companies that did not see product placement but did partner up with the show are Topshop and Spotify.

Topshop is a street clothing retailer that knows its common customer demographic and their connection to *Stranger Things*. They created a shrine to honor Barb after seeing the hashtag and released a *Stranger Things* product line, which they sold out of almost immediately.

Spotify is also popular among millennials and has done its own partnership with Netflix by providing playlists connected to specific characters in the show, such as “Steve’s Morning Hair Grooves” and “Billy’s Pedal to the Metal”. They also offer special effects when listening to the *Stranger Things* playlist, turning the sliding time bar into a flashlight and an “upside-down-esque” snowfall covers your screen.

All of these marketing strategies, whether or not specifically planned by the *Stranger Things* team, were extremely successful in increasing the excitement and anticipation of fans for the Season 2 release. Through these innovative approaches, the *Stranger Things* and Netflix executives saw a successful response to a seriously wicked program.



And finally...

A special senior send-off to
our very own,

Meagan Gray

“ PRSSA let me
showcase my
leadership
confidence
and helped me
land a full-time
job postgrad!

”

VT PRSSA Executive Board

2017-18



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