

# PR Pulse

Volusia/Flagler Chapter of the  
Florida Public Relations Association

September 2009

## Sorensen to discuss H1N1 Swine Flu Sept. 8



*Dr. Sorensen*

**Dr. Bonnie Sorensen**, director of the Volusia County Health Department, will discuss "Communicating during a pandemic: What you should know about H1N1" Tuesday, Sept. 8, in Conference Room C of the Volusia County Health Department, 1845 Holsonback Drive, Daytona Beach.

Networking and check-in begin at 11:30 a.m., followed by lunch and the speaker at noon.

The cost is \$20 for FPRA members, \$25 for non-members, and \$18 for students. Invite your boss and human resources director to this important and informative meeting!

Please RSVP by Wednesday, Sept. 2, to chapter Secretary **Wendi Jackson** at [wjackson@deltonafl.gov](mailto:wjackson@deltonafl.gov) or (386) 878-8850.

Dr. Sorensen will speak about the challenges of the H1N1 mass immunization campaign and the importance of communications during this declared pandemic. She will also share some of her experiences handling the news media in California as part of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's team, as well as in her role with the Florida Department of Health.

Dr. Sorensen recently returned to Volusia County after spending seven years as the deputy state health officer in Florida and California. Prior to her experience at the state level, Dr. Sorensen was the Volusia County Health Department director for six years.

## UCF's response to H1N1: Proactive, transparent

When the University of Central Florida received confirmation of its first case of H1N1 Swine Flu in June, the school was the first to get the word out.



*Heston*

"Our approach was to be very proactive and transparent," said **Grant Heston**, assistant vice president of UCF's News and Information Department and FPRA Orlando Chapter member. "First

and foremost, our priority is the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff."

Soon after, a second case followed.

And by summer's end, the school's health services center had confirmed nearly 20 student cases.

News coverage about the virus increased once Orange County reported its first confirmed H1N1 death, and UCF continued to receive media inquiries about its response.

The university thought the best way to respond to the media would be through an informal press briefing with its health services director and assistant director. Because Heston's department had good relationships with others on campus, the Health Services staff was open to meeting with the media.

"You need to have relationships established with people in your organization right now," he said.



*UCF's Orlando campus*

"Especially in good times – you have to be prepared for when the bad times occur."

*(continued on page 2)*

UCF, continued from page 1

Not only are internal relationships important, external ones are instrumental as well. Heston said the university already had good working relationships with its local county health departments before the need for counsel arose during its response to H1N1 on campus.

"They've been so valuable and helped guide how we talk about H1N1," he said.

Even before the first confirmed case in June, UCF informed audiences about precautions being taken by the university and provided general health guidelines and prevention messages. News and Information staff used various university Web sites, e-mails and social media to deliver its messages. Posters were put up around campus, and a script was developed for resident assistants to use during conversations with students when they returned to campus this fall.

"We're taking the H1N1 virus seriously and continue to be very proactive," Heston said.

He added that public relations professionals need to maintain a fine balance when talking about the virus. You need to stress the importance of personal hygiene to stay healthy, but you don't want to cause a panic or scare by over-hyping H1N1.

"Keep your key messages short and simple and communicate them again and again," Heston said. "When people are worried about health issues, you need to cut through fear and emotion with facts that are easy to understand and remember."

- Molly Justice

## Symptoms of H1N1

- ✓ Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- ✓ Cough, sore throat
- ✓ Body aches, headache
- ✓ Chills and fatigue

In addition to these symptoms, some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

## Setting the pace in professional development and more



Dorn

Welcome to the chapter's 28th year! It will be a challenge to build on the momentum of the past year, in which we experienced award-winning member and student services, new local awards

and recognition, outstanding communications, near-record numbers on membership recruitment, and nationally known speakers.

We may have the highest percentage of universally accredited and CPRC (Certified Public Relations Counselor) members in the state.

I am honored to be president of such an energetic and enthusiastic board and membership to mark my 11th year with FPRA. The members expressed their wishes in a survey this summer, and I listened. Based on your comments, I'm delighted to unveil the 2009-2010 chapter theme: "Setting the P.A.C.E. – Professional development, Awareness, Communication and Education."

The main project of our board will take professional development in the area to new heights with a full-day conference in late winter. The seminar will cover the latest technology and social media, and also include a range of topics from advanced levels to those of interest to small business managers outside the membership.

At our recent strategic planning retreat, your chapter's experienced officers also pledged to:

- provide support and the chance for dues scholarships to our ambitious student members;
- increase participation in charities;
- create a networking opportunity with another professional association; and
- bring more senior-level topics to monthly professional development meetings.

We accept the challenge of change by offering a few lectures on recent issues, starting with September's H1N1 influenza communications discussion. The board invites our professional and student members to enhance their leadership skills by volunteering on committees.

I believe efforts to raise awareness of the profession, FPRA and the value of accreditation must take place on a local level. Along those lines, I will approach other associations and work with the board to seek ways to promote public relations to the community.

As president, I look forward to your feedback and vow to contact and listen to each member this year to ensure that the Volusia/Flagler Chapter is there for its members' needs and sets the pace for others to follow.

- Mary Dorn, APR

## August 'Chapter Champion'

Since this year's theme, "Setting the P.A.C.E." brings to mind a foot race, chapter President **Mary Dorn, APR**, will award a small gift each month to a "Chapter Champion" who does the most to raise awareness of the profession or assist the president or other board members in their duties.



Boyd

This month's winner, **Tangela Boyd**, the chapter's vice president of public relations and senior media relations manager with the Daytona Beach Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau,

was recognized at the board's planning session for championing FPRA to the area's Advertising Federation. Congratulations, Tangela!

# FPRA celebrates successes, looks forward to new year

Volusia/Flagler Chapter members gathered at the Best Western Aku Tiki Inn Aug. 18 to recognize the year's achievements and ring in a new chapter year.

Under the leadership of President **Melissa Sheets, APR**, the chapter introduced a new program – FPRA Active Rewards – and brought back an old favorite – local Image Awards.

Other highlights of the 2008-2009 chapter year include:

- the highest membership retention rate in years;
- an upswing in involvement by Vision, the student chapter;
- a successful and well-attended Media Day;
- continuation of a long-time and popular tradition – the Great Communicator Award – with this year's honor going to **Shelley Szafraniec, APR, CPRC**;
- the first APR in five years – **Melissa Sheets**; and
- four new CPRCs – **David Byron, Pat Kuehn, Vickie Pleus** and **Shelley Szafraniec**.

"It's been my pleasure and my honor to serve as your president for the past year," Sheets told the group. "We really made an effort to ramp up member activities this year and tried to encourage every one of you to take advantage of what FPRA has to offer."

As her presidential theme, Sheets introduced the Active Rewards



**NEW MEMBERS** – Membership Vice President Pam Hamlin, right, thanks Ronald Thomas, left, and Ken Hornack for joining the chapter.



**2009-2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS** – Front row, from left, Charlann Wrlak, Melissa Sheets, APR, Karen Chrapek, Mary Dorn, APR, and Wendi Jackson. Back row, from left, Meredith Rodriguez, Molly Justice, Pat Kuehn, APR, CPRC, Marisol Moreno, Victoria McGuirk, APR, and Pam Hamlin.

Program to inspire members to get involved.

"I realize that much can be said about the rewards of FPRA, but the fundamental principle remains: You only get out of FPRA what you put in," Sheets said in describing the program. "I wanted my leadership tenure to be an inspiring one for our members, and encourage them to take advantage of what they pay for each year with their annual dues and member event fees."

Many members cashed in their rewards at the meeting with discounted or free lunches.

The top three points earners – **Mary Dorn, APR, Pat Kuehn, APR, CPRC**, and **Marisol Moreno** – received Triple Play Travel Vouchers, which include two round-trip tickets to a selection of 35 destinations, a two-night hotel stay, and a three-night cruise.

"These three members have worked so hard, chairing committees, recruiting sponsors and prizes, serving on readiness review panels and as judges for Image Awards, bringing guests to meetings, and recruiting new members," Sheets noted.

The group also applauded outgoing board members **Debi McNabb, APR**; **Ted Nikolla**; and **Vickie Pleus, APR, CPRC**.

Sheets presented the President's Award to **Charlann Wrlak**, noting that she has "worked diligently behind the scenes to ensure the financial health of our chapter." Wrlak is willing to step up whenever and wherever she is needed and always has a positive attitude, Sheets added.

Afterward, members were given tours of the Aku Tiki. We thank Staed Properties for sponsoring the meeting!



**FINDING HIS PASSION** – Speaker Kevin Snyder relates his experience as a "Price is Right" contestant.

# Volusia/Flagler Chapter honored at state conference

FPRA Volusia/Flagler received two top awards at the 71st annual state conference, and one member took home individual honors in the Golden Image Awards competition.

## Member Services Award

The chapter won the first-ever Member Services Award, introduced this year to recognize creative new programs.

“I felt this was a critical area for chapters to focus on,” said outgoing state President **Lanette Hart, APR**. “Any smart chapter knows the foundation to a chapter’s success is member services. This is where you can easily see the most value for your membership.”

In presenting the award, Hart commended Volusia/Flagler President **Melissa Sheets, APR**, for developing the FPRA Active Rewards Program and President-Elect **Mary Dorn, APR**, for creating a member orientation DVD.

“This chapter planned its entire year around what I feel was the most innovative new idea I saw all year. At the start of the year, the chapter president started a new initiative – the FPRA Active Rewards Program, which, in my opinion, was a brilliant idea. The program provided incentives to members who took advantage of their FPRA member benefits.



**JUDGES' AWARD** – State President Lanette Hart, APR, left, presents a Judges' Award to Volusia/Flagler President Melissa Sheets, APR.



**STATE CONFERENCE** – “Golden Safari” was the theme of the Golden Image Awards Dinner in Boca Raton.

Although it took a lot of personal time and energy for the chapter president to keep track of the members’ points for the program, it added much value to her chapter this year.”

The member orientation DVD includes a royalty-free photo gallery, chapter bylaws, and other important information for new members.

## Student Development Award

The Volusia/Flagler Chapter won the Student Development Award for focusing on its student chapter and upping the ante of its partnership with Bethune-Cookman University.

“Due to their outreach efforts, it was a banner year for monthly attendance by the university’s student chapter, Vision,” Hart said. “Working with the professional chapter, Vision was able to host PR 101 to give students an overview of the profession and explain the skills that are essential to building a successful public relations career. Through these and many other efforts, the Volusia/Flagler chapter helped the students of Vision at Bethune-Cookman University recognize the value of networking and helped validate that FPRA is the premier PR network for PR professionals.”

We commend Student Chapter Liaison **Victoria McGuirk, APR**, Vision Chapter Faculty Adviser **Camesha Manzueta**, and all the outstanding B-CU student members for making this award possible!

## Golden Image Award

**Melissa Sheets, APR**, received a Judges’ Award for Flagler County’s Environmental Lands Acquisition Referendum Campaign during the Golden Image Award competition.

Annual Conference attendees benefited from six general session speakers and 14 breakout session speakers. Eighteen professionals were recognized for receiving their APR and 15 for receiving their CPRC. At the Golden Image Awards Banquet, 117 awards were presented for top PR programs. Add in the opportunities for professional networking and camaraderie, and it’s easy to see why this year’s conference received rave reviews and is being heralded as *the* professional development event for Florida’s public relations professionals.

# Demystifying the CPRC process: Tips from the state VP

Becoming a Certified Public Relations Counselor (CPRC) is a great stepping stone to a raise in salary or better job, **Jeff Nall, APR, CPRC**, told FPRA members during last month's Annual Conference. Nall is vice president of accreditation and certification for the state organization.

CPRC is a lifetime recognition and is offered exclusively by FPRA to accredited members with 10 or more years of experience. There is no maintenance fee or requirement, and there are fewer than 80 CPRCs in Florida.

There are three steps to becoming a CPRC:

## Application

Send your application and \$150 fee to the state FPRA office. You'll receive a sample judges score sheet and a suggested case study book, which is not required. The next two steps can be taken in either order but must be completed within 12 months.

## Oral presentation

The oral exam is designed to evaluate the knowledge, skills and abilities that cannot be evaluated in a written exam. Graders will observe how the professional solicits the approval of decision makers.

Candidates are asked to pitch a communications plan in 30 minutes or less, with or without visual aids. The pitch doesn't have to be of a recent campaign or even a real one, but it helps to use one previously presented to a client or employer.

Areas graded include the introduction, transition, body, conclusion, delivery, effectiveness and overall presentation. The oral presentation is scored by three FPRA professionals with CPRCs. A passing score is 70 percent.

Don't get worked up about the oral presentation, Nall said. Remember, you've been doing it for years!

## Written examination

This six-hour test consists of 16 case-study essays designed to test problem-solving skills. Answers aren't individually timed, but estimated times are provided.

The test can be proctored locally or at one of three statewide testing locations. Tests are graded by two CPRCs, or a third in case of a disagreement. A passing score is 70 percent.

## Success rate

The CPRC pass rate was 85 percent this past year, which is better than the APR pass rate, according to Nall.

Applicants who fail the written portion may retake it after 30 days but within the 12-month period for \$75. The oral portion can be retaken without charge after 30 days. New proctors will be assigned by the state.



*Jeff Nall, APR, CPRC, state vice president of accreditation and certification, gives study tips at the Annual Conference.*

## Ready to take the next step?

There are no required study materials, but it helps to review Golden Image winners and form a study group to share experiences. Also, check the FAQs page and sample questions/answers at [www.fpra.org](http://www.fpra.org) and watch Nall's CPRC video.

For more information about becoming a CPRC, contact:

- **Jeff Nall, APR, CPRC**, at [jnall@coawfla.org](mailto:jnall@coawfla.org) or (850) 432-1575, ext. 130;
- **Victoria McGuirk, APR**, FPRA Volusia/Flagler's vice president of accreditation and certification, at [victoria-mcguirk@cfl.rr.com](mailto:victoria-mcguirk@cfl.rr.com); or
- the state FPRA Office at (941) 365-2135.



*Byron*



*Pleus*



*Szafraniec*



*Kuehn*

## Four local members earn CPRCs

Four members of FPRA Volusia/Flagler completed the CPRC process in July and are now Certified Public Relations Practitioners.

Congratulations to **David Byron, Vickie Pleus, Shelley Szafraniec** and **Pat Kuehn** for a job well-done! All four work for Volusia County Government.

They join chapter members **Helen Riger** and **Anne Dubois**, who previously earned their certification.



*Volusia/Flagler Chapter*

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# Movers and shakers

## Dubois elected to PRSA's College of Fellows



*Dubois*

**Anne Dubois, APR, CPRC, Fellow PRSA,** is now FPRA Volusia/ Flagler's most highly accredited member, having been elected to the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA)

College of Fellows. She is one of only 11 PRSA members nationwide to be so honored this year.

The College of Fellows was founded in 1990 as a way to recognize individuals who have demonstrated superior capabilities as public relations practitioners or educators. Candidates must have at least 20 years of experience in the public relations industry and exhibit exceptional personal and professional qualities while advancing the state of the profession.

"Since my first public awareness campaign to my work today, I have seen the importance of public relations strategies in helping organizations achieve their goals," Dubois said. "I am honored to be elected into the College of Fellows."

Dubois is a 27-year veteran in public relations, beginning as executive director for a nonprofit image-building campaign for the City of Providence, R.I. She was public relations director for three nonprofits in Atlanta before co-founding Dubois Betourné & Associates, a public relations agency in Palm Coast, in 1990.

In 2009, she was appointed co-vice chair of PRSA's Universal Accreditation Board, the governing body overseeing the accreditation of public relations professionals. Her responsibilities include oversight for the Marketing, Professional Development, and Exam and Prep work groups.

Dubois is the author of more than 25 publications and managing editor of an internationally recognized medical journal.

Along with the other 2009 Fellow candidates, Dubois will be inducted Nov. 7 during a ceremony at PRSA's 2009 International Conference in San Diego.

PRSA, headquartered in New York City, is the world's largest organization for public relations professionals with nearly 22,000 professional and 10,000 student members. Less than two percent of PRSA members are Fellows.

"I passionately support accreditation and certification," Dubois said. "Professional accreditation and certification are important steps on two fronts. From a personal perspective, it offers growth potential and confirmation of knowledge, skills and abilities for the individual. From an industry perspective, it advances the profession of public relations, increases credibility, encourages long-term growth of the industry, and bolsters common knowledge of what PR practitioners do."

Accreditation and certification ensure that the public relations profession operates on an agreed-upon set of ethics and knowledge, she added, explaining: "Similar to certification programs for other professions, public relations accreditation and certification simply demonstrate to the world that an individual has basic or advanced public relations knowledge at a level deemed acceptable by communications experts and peers. Why wouldn't a public relations professional become accredited?"

**Visit FPRA Volusia/ Flagler's Web site at [www.fpravf.org](http://www.fpravf.org)**

