



Workshop Notes

Connecting the community with media and advocating news that matters

www.newstips.org

The power of photos

The U.S. government seemed rooted in cement in the days before and after Hurricane Katrina, as photographers captured dramatic visual stories of New Orleans. That's what photojournalists do: they tell stories — many are tales impossible to fully convey without a lens.

Professional photojournalists as well as amateur photographers in and around the Gulf Coast — focusing from helicopters, from rooftops or from anywhere they could get a foothold — recorded images of the winds, the sports arenas, flooded streets, scenes of destruction, local relief efforts and the residents. Media photographers wore protective gear; many others had none. Some photographers worked from perches of safety; others risked life and limb.

Photographic images help document the sweeping tides of history. They leave an indelible mark on people's collective memory of the course of human events. There are thousands of notable ones, like the photos of Rosa Parks whose action sparked the Montgomery bus boycott and brought the nascent civil rights movement into full bloom, or the photos from the frontlines of the war in Vietnam, which altered the public's perception of the war and influenced the growing divide over the war itself. And who, ten years from now, will forget the images of torture from Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison?

Much of Chicago's real history too is told in photos: from the era of Bronzeville to the immigrants who rebuilt their lives here, from civil rights marches to the great snow of 1967. Photos, like those of the mutilated body of Emmett Till on display on the South Side, help us remember when Chicago was two cities, or to learn that it was.

Think of some of our most beloved and vilified local public figures and you think of them visually — from elected leaders like Harold Washington, Jane Byrne and Richard J. Daley



While government officials floundered, Hurricane Katrina evacuees (like those at left) and volunteers from the Center for Neighborhood Technology and other groups pitched in to help. CNT "connected" thousands of victims in rural Louisiana through wireless networks. Photos by Paul Smith, CNT.

to sports idols like Michael Jordan and Walter Payton, and now Ozzie Guillen.

Photos do much more than document our history. They often inspire us to read the written articles that go with them, or to instigate the writing of stories about the subjects in the photos. Every day, photographers document something that matters about us, our city and our culture.

In context, a photo may tell only one story. Out of context, it tells many stories. Among the myriad of Hurricane Katrina photos are those of tanks in the streets of New Orleans. The soldiers carrying high-powered weapons could have been taken in Iraq or New Orleans. The context within which the photos are viewed, and how they are framed, tell a story. By itself, a photo leaves the story to the imagination of the viewers.



Photos help us see people, places and stories that can make us smile and laugh, or can horrify and shock us. They often make us adore or hate someone whom we've never met. They instigate a whole stream of human emotions and influence our actions.

Study the real people and real place images of a few of Chicago's many award-winning photojournalists (see recommendations on page 2). Learn to think more visually, and take the time to learn how to use photographs creatively to enhance your organization's work. You will not be disappointed.

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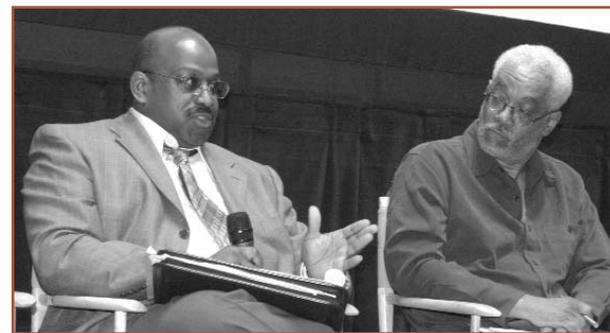
Recommended

• **Columbia College Chicago** and its **Museum of Contemporary Photography** have regular photo exhibits. Current museum exhibits, which run through December 17, are *Stages of Memory: The War in Vietnam* and *Jeffrey A. Wolin: Inconvenient Stories* (an indepth look at those who fought in Vietnam). The museum is also home to the Midwest Photographers Project, where you can view photographers' portfolios.

• **City 2000**, a year-long project headed by Richard Cahan, formerly *Chicago Sun-Times* pictures editor, chronicled what life was like in the year 2000 so people in the future would understand. More than 2,000 photographers documented the city's people, places and personality. The collection is housed at the Comer Archive at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

• The **Art Institute of Chicago** has regular photo exhibits, as do other Chicago museums; the Harold Washington Public Library, where you'll also find the Associated Press photo archives; and the Chicago Historical Society (currently under reconstruction), where the *Chicago Daily News* photo archives are housed. The Newberry Library and our universities also have extensive photo collections, and dozens of local public libraries and community historical societies have photo archives.

Information about photographic collections is fairly easy to find on the Internet. While you're checking out one or more of them, also visit the website of the **Chicago Alliance of African-American Photographers**. And next time you walk by a book store, go in and browse through the photo books, like the recently-published *Real Chicago: Chicago Sun-Times Photo Essay*.



Karen R. Kring

Workshop roundtable discussions...

elicited spirited dialogue on improving the media coverage of African-American and Latino communities and issues. Several hundred people participated in the June 2 roundtables, which were part of the *Making Media Connections* conference (see page 5).

Journalist Laura Washington moderated the roundtable examining African-American media coverage. Panelists included Don Wycliff, *Chicago Tribune* public editor, Alysia Tate, *Chicago Reporter* editor and publisher, and Roland Martin, *Chicago Daily Defender* executive editor. In photo above, Jerry Thomas of Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and Salim Muwakkil of *In These Times* joined the discussion.

In photo below, in the roundtable on Latino media coverage, are panelists Jorge Mederos, *La Raza* managing editor, Linda Lutton, *Daily Southtown* education writer, and Ana Maria Soto, Office of Latino Cultural Affairs at Columbia College. Panelists also included Oscar Avila, *Chicago Tribune*, Alejandro Escalona, *Hoy*, Rey Flores, *Hoy*, Marilia Gutiérrez, *Reflejos*, and Casey Sanchez, *Extra*.



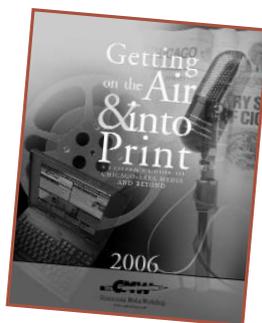
Karen R. Kring

Purchase the 2006 edition of the Community Media Workshop

Media Guide

"a gold mine
an indispensable
resource for
anyone dealing
with the media"

—Rob Feder, *Chicago Sun-Times*



The Guide Features:

- a directory of 4,000 journalists with direct phone numbers and e-mail addresses;
- downtown, ethnic and neighborhood media outlets in the Chicago area, as well as listings of downstate, Midwest cities, and national outlets; and
- tips for nonprofit communicators on how to work with journalists.

The Media Guide comes in **spiral-bound format** and on **CD-ROM**, which is searchable, sortable and exportable, allowing you to make your own lists or labels. To purchase the 2006 edition, go to www.newstips.org.



Many Thanks.

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The Chicago Reader

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McCormick Tribune Foundation

Polk Bros. Foundation

Sara Lee Foundation

With help from CNT, UIC and WVON Radio,

Wireless radio is coming to North Lawndale

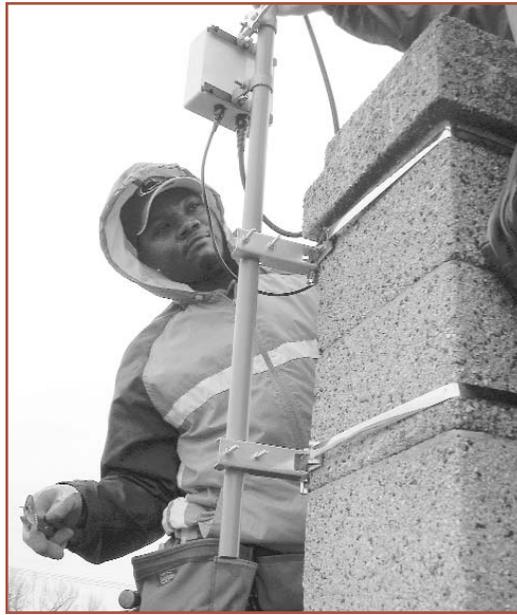
In Chicago's North Lawndale community, Nicole Cabell-Pope and Cedric Pope are working hard to get on air with a new wireless Internet radio station, WNLO. The station will be run by community residents who will host and produce their own shows.

"We want to teach the community about broadcasting and once WNLO is officially launched, we want people to train people to use the equipment to run the station themselves," Cabell-Pope says. "If you're on air, you should sound like you're talking with people — right there with them; that's how you create dialogue between the host and callers. The station will teach everyday people to interview everyday people. We're encouraging people who have the desire, a commitment to hard work and the ability. We'll be training people in a new field and a new career."

One of Cabell-Pope's overall concerns is to convince community residents to have an open mind and be willing to try. Another of her concerns is fair media coverage and "ending racial profiling and the redlining of our communities." She says, "WNLO will allow us to share our own stories. People in the community will speak for themselves, and not be represented by others."

Cabell-Pope is raising the money to launch WNLO. Beginning a station requires operating funds, equipment, engineering, curriculum, broadcasting expertise, marketing, public relations and much more. She expects the station to become a non-profit tax-exempt corporation.

Nicole Cabell-Pope and Cedric Pope are founders of the "Build Today, Lead Tomorrow" program. To launch the station, they are working in partnership with the Wireless Community Network as well as the Vernon Jarrett Program of the University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs.



Community Wireless Network

According to the Community Wireless Network's Nicole Friedman, "Wireless networks are very community-based, meetings are held in the neighborhoods, residents develop the tools, and we are working to find ways to make them sustainable. They allow people to get the type of content they want."

Wireless community networks are a relatively new strategy for overcoming the digital divide. They provide low-cost, high-speed wireless broadband Internet service to underserved neighborhoods and small businesses, as well as related capabilities such as job searching and skill development.

The Wireless Community Network is a project of the **Center for Neighborhood Technology**. Network Manager, Nicole Friedman can be reached at 773.269.4036 or visit www.cnt.org.

Nicole Cabell-Pope can be reached at 773.250.7500 or by e-mail at wnlradio@yahoo.com.

WVON Radio Host Matt McGill and Producer LaKeisha Grey-Sewell helped conduct an WNLO broadcast training. WVON Radio, the only media institution to receive the Workshop's Studs Terkel Award, is Chicago's oldest Black-oriented radio station and its only African-American owned and operated station. WVON's dynamic talk-radio programming has long addressed the critical issues that affect our society. Check it out at www.wvon.com.

Credit: Pharaoh/360BEYOND

Internet access moves to the eye of the storm

"A turf battle is brewing over on how Americans will get to choose their broadband access, as homegrown efforts to provide citizens with affordable and fast Internet are drawing heavy fire from a powerful telecom lobby seeking to eliminate all competition and control prices in the lucrative market for providers." That alert came from Media for Democracy (www.mediachannel.org) early this year.

While this storm's been brewing, Wall Street buyers and sellers have been making their moves. One recently wrote, "Strong Buy. Wireless Internet service is the next big trend in the billions of dollars being made from the Internet. It's more convenient and versatile for people on the go than standard Internet connections. It is the wave of the future!"

In the months ahead, keep your seatbelt on as communities, media reform groups, and telecommunications and broadcast industry giants go to battle over Federal Communications Commission regulations of the Internet. Stay tuned to groups dedicated to ensuring public access to the airwaves. Among them are CNT's Wireless Community Network Project and its national partners: Media Access Project, Free Press, Prometheus Radio Project and New America Foundation.

Katrina Newstips

Communities Respond

Newstips covers local relief efforts

— The Workshop's *Newstips* has highlighted local grassroots angles on response to Hurricane Katrina, including stories about CNT's Wireless Community Network Project using technology to connect isolated evacuees in makeshift shelters in rural Louisiana; ACORN chapters mobilizing to help thousands of low-income New Orleans members; and local public housing residents helping families evacuated from the Gulf Coast. To read these and other updates on local relief efforts, go to www.newstips.org. Also, stay tuned to Chicago's **CAN-TV21**.

Joel Lerner



At the Making Media Connections conference —

community and media representatives took to the microphones ...

and discussed media issues at formal sessions and during lunch. In photo below are *Christian Science Monitor's* Amanda Paulson (left), Green Hills Public Library District's Annette Armstrong and Melanie Coffee of the Associated Press.

Karen R. Kring



Joel Lerner



Among the participants were representatives of hundreds of nonprofit organizations, like Lena Parsons of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois.

Karen R. Kring



Alysia Tate, *Chicago Reporter* editor and publisher, spoke at the roundtable on "The Great Divide: Improving Coverage of African-American Communities and Issues."

Karen R. Kring



Craig Dellimore, WBBM Newsradio AM-780 political editor, shared insights into the nature of radio.

A few tips on photos

With technological advances, nonprofit organizations are finding more uses for photos today than ever before. Yet, the quality of the photos used by many groups has declined rather than gone up in recent years. And too often photos do not "match" the stories we are telling. So we offer a few simple tips.

Taking photos

- **Plan ahead.** Decide in advance who and what you want to capture in the photos, how the photos will be used, and who will use them.
- Try to **capture the emotions** you're trying to communicate — like joy, horror and pride.
- Then **take lots of photos** — not of just anything — but of everything you're trying to capture.
- **Get up close** to the subject(s) — and take only a *few* people at a time.
- Make sure there's **enough light**, especially on faces, and use a flash if indoors or in shadows.
- **Concentrate** on taking photos — don't even try to do other things at the same time.
- Learn to **set your camera correctly**.

Hiring a professional

Learn to take quality photos for your day-to-day work, but we recommend that at least occasionally you hire a professional photographer. It is worth the money you'll spend.

Again, plan ahead. Don't be caught saying: "oops, we forgot to pin down a photographer for tomorrow."

"Too often taking photographs is not thought out, so the professional may not get what you want," says freelance photographer Olga Lopez. "The professional photographer is not going to use the photos; you are."

So think ahead of how you will use the photos, the people you want to cover and the various places you may use the photos, tomorrow and in the future. Go over your plans with the professional in advance. In other words, think it through. Your planning will help a professional take better photos for you.

Assign someone from your organization to help the photographer, and make sure the assigned person is someone who knows how the photos will be used.

If your organization cannot afford a professional photographer, be creative and try to recruit a photography student who needs experience.

Even if you hire a professional to take photos, back up your efforts with some photos of your own.

Getting in the media

In "Think Visually, Keep It Real, Be Patient," Alex Garcia writes: "Studies of photographs in newspapers have always shown that stories accompanied by photographs are far more likely to be read than stories that do not have a photograph. Also, stories that have photographs usually get better placement on the page than stories that don't. It's imperative, therefore, to think visually."

Garcia is an award-winning photojournalist covering real-life stories for the *Chicago Tribune*. His in-depth article, which is part of the Community Media Workshop's 2006 *Media Guide*, offers many valuable tips on getting in the media and what to expect.

You'll also find worthwhile photo tips on our website at www.newstips.org (keyword: The Photo Desk).

Thank you. The Workshop thanks those who shared their ideas with us for this edition, especially: Bob Black, *Chicago Sun-Times* photographer; Richard Cahan, former *Sun-Times* pictures editor; Bill Frederking, acting chair, Columbia College department of photography; Olga Lopez, photographer; Dominic A. Pacyga, Columbia College professor of history; and Kathy Richland, photographer.

Studs Terkel Awards —

May the circle go unbroken



Always elegant and friendly, the Workshop's annual Studs Terkel Awards Benefit celebrates journalism at its best. The 2005 award presentations did not disappoint. In a packed venue, with great food and superb jazz, Studs Terkel, past Terkel winners, journalists, activists and friends of the Workshop celebrated the important work of four extraordinary journalists.

The Terkel honorees were: **Tracy Baim**, journalist and publisher of *Windy City Times*, *Outlines* and other publications serving the gay and lesbian community; **John Conroy**, author and *Chicago Reader* staff writer; **Mary Schmich**, featured columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*; and **James Weinstein**, writer and founding publisher of the independent news and analysis magazine *In These Times*. James passed away this summer following a brave battle with his health.



In top left photo are Studs Terkel and Workshop scholarship winner Angela Caputo (photo: Hal Baim). At top right, Tracy Baim is in center with Thom Clark, Terkel, John Conroy and Hank De Zutter (photo: Hal Baim). At bottom right are Terkel, Mary Schmich and Eric Zorn (photo: Hal Baim). At bottom left are Alex Kotlowitz, Terkel and Conroy (photo: Olga Lopez).

The 2005 Terkel Awards were presented April 6 at The Arts Club of Chicago. The event was underwritten by **The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation**. For more about the honorees and more photos, go to www.newstips.org.

Every year, the Workshop presents awards to outstanding journalists who cover the oft-neglected stories of our neighborhoods. The 2005 event was as good as it gets — that is, of course, until 2006 when the Terkel Awards will be presented on **Wednesday, April 5. Don't miss it!**



Media and community connect

At the 2005 *Making Media Connections* conference, some of the most recognized figures in local and national media shared ideas and expertise on getting in the media with hundreds of nonprofit organizations. The two-day event, held June 1-2, was the Community Media Workshop's eighth annual conference.

In These Times senior editor, Salim Muwakkil, credits the conference organizers with the unique capacity to pull together so many leading media

voices, grassroots organizers and community activists. "There's nothing comparable."

This year's conference was held at Columbia College's great new Film Row Cinema center, located at 1004 South Wabash, Chicago. The lead sponsor was **Sara Lee Foundation**.

Go to www.newstips.org for more on the 2005 conference by writer Mark Anderson, and watch in the coming months for news on the 2006 conference.

Karen R. Kring



Rick Kogan, *Chicago Tribune* and WGN-Radio reporter, contributed to the discussion of what's happening to radio.

Karen R. Kring



Chicago Video Project's Bruce Orenstein and journalist Chris Hayes addressed the "Journalism for Social Change" session.

Karen R. Kring



Dawn Turner Trice, *Chicago Tribune* Metro reporter and columnist, offered perspectives on working with journalists.

Local groups seek election coverage of issues

by **Curtis Black**,
Workshop *Newstips* Editor

When the Grassroots Collaborative held a major rally on July 30 at the Chicago Temple, the difference between coverage in print and broadcast media was striking.

With City Hall scandals framing early media discussion of the 2007 Chicago mayoral and aldermanic races, the rally was to set the stage for an effort over the next year-and-a-half to inject neighborhood issues into the city's election.

"The print coverage was pretty decent in terms of understanding that there's a layer of the story that goes beyond corruption," said Ken Snyder of the Collaborative.

"But aside from the Spanish language stations [an exception community activists regularly note], the broadcast coverage was really only about corruption and personalities."

Many media and campaign reformers have singled out broadcast news coverage of elections. The amount of coverage devoted to elections has fallen precipitously, and coverage of local and down-ticket races has been nearly eliminated. Just as troubling, coverage increasingly overlooks issues and focuses on campaign strategy and polls.

Candidates are forced to buy air time in order to get their messages to voters. Broadcasters take in more money for campaign advertising — and drive up the cost of political campaigns. "The key to campaign finance reform is the cost of television advertising," said Cynthia Canary of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform.

The Campaign analyzed news programs at five Chicago TV stations in October 2002 and found less than 24 hours (out of a total of over 450 which were taped) devoted to the upcoming election — with 58 percent focused

on strategy and "horseshoe" aspects of the campaigns. In the same period, candidates bought 51 hours of advertising on the five stations. "At the same time those stations were raking in more than \$40 million in ad revenue from political commercials, they were devoting little time to candidate interviews, debates, and examination of issues," according to Canary.

A study of October 2004 broadcast news in eleven cities by the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California found local news devoted 12 times as much air time to sports and weather as to the election, and eight times more to stories about accidents. The study found that the amount of ad time for U.S. Senate races was 17 times as much as that devoted to news coverage of those races.

The Campaign backs legislation (sponsored by Senators Durbin, Feingold and McCain) to require radio and TV stations to devote two hours a week to candidate- and issue-centered coverage, as part of the public interest obligation of their free broadcast licenses.

The Grassroots Collaborative, a coalition of labor, community and faith-based groups that has coordinated campaigns around issues like KidCare, immigrant rights and living wages, plans a two-prong approach, said organizer Ken Snyder. It will encourage media coverage of debate over city policies on jobs, housing, education and transportation, and its member groups will work to get aldermen to address issues. "Aldermen should be accountable for things like education and transportation, not just for keeping streets clean," said Snyder.

In planning its issues drive, the Grassroots Collaborative has consulted the Community Media Workshop. "For us the question is whether we can move beyond horseshoe stories about polls, indictments and personalities to have vigorous coverage of the issues that the city and the public need to confront," said Workshop President Thom Clark.

Workshop helps COFI's message get through

At the Workshop's *Making Media Connections* conference on June 1-2, four people from Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) participated, their attendance underwritten by the Chicago Foundation for Women. According to Kellie Magnuson of COFI, "Our attendance had a significant impact on COFI, especially on how we think about media strategy as part of our larger campaign strategies."

COFI began getting results quickly. "We struggled beforehand, because we're a small organization. We have to organize and do our own public relations as well," Magnuson says. "Since the conference, we held a media event around the lack of recess for elementary school students in the Chicago Public Schools. The event was covered on the local public radio affiliate, in a local newspaper and in *Newstips*. That's the most media coverage we've ever received as an organization for this particular campaign."

Founded in 1994, COFI grew out of Women Leaders in Action, a pilot program in eight Chicago-area communities that tested curricula aimed at integrating women leaders' self, family and community leadership growth. In the last ten years, COFI has provided approximately 100 rounds of training, including more than 600 workshops for parents and for other trainers to train parents. An estimated 1,500 parents have taken part in COFI trainings, conducted in the Chicago communities of Logan Square, West Town, Austin, Englewood, Rogers Park, Pilsen, Uptown, Lawndale and Humboldt Park.

COFI was founded on three core beliefs: (1) parents, as leaders of families, are a great untapped source of community leadership; (2) parents, because they are leaders of families, will focus the community's action agenda on making communities better places to raise families; and (3) parent-leaders will find common ground across divisions of geography, ethnicity and class that will make it possible to build constituencies for systems change. COFI can be reached at 312.226.5141.

Newstips....

where you'll find the latest school stories

whether it's how Chicago Public Schools revised the Discipline Code ever so slightly, or what's in store for local school councils at small schools, or that South Shore residents are making sure they have a say in improving troubled schools

These are among the stories you'll find in *Newstips*, a monthly Workshop publication distributed to hundreds of Chicago-area reporters, editors and producers. *Newstips* covers a wide range of stories on everyday people — the kind you read too infrequently in the major media.

Read *Newstips* by going to www.newstips.org, where the stories are up to date, sortable by topic and date, and include contact information.

To share your story with *Newstips*, e-mail editor Curtis Black at curtis@newstips.org.



Dennis Murchison brings a human resources vision to Workshop



Dennis L. Murchison says “his life commitment is to inspire people to reach their full potential.” Three years ago, Murchison, who calls himself a “team player,” joined the Community Media Workshop board “because its mission and vision are similar to mine and that of my company.” Murchison is CEO and president of M & Associates, Inc., a human resources training and development firm.

The Workshop, Murchison says, “offers communities throughout the Chicago area opportunities to voice their concerns, to learn how to do public relations, and to get their stories into the mainstream media. It offers opportunities to connect to alternative media, such as CAN-TV. And, it helps organizations to reach their full potential.”

Murchison defines his company’s mission as “creating opportunities for people and organizations to reach their full potential, however they want to define it.” He describes the training his company provides as follows: “For small businesses and organizations that do not have a human resources department, we work to ensure that morale is high, employees are satisfied, there are no lawsuits, interns are clear on their roles, and performance evaluations are timely so people feel respected. M & Associates provides human resources expertise in discrimination investigations, employment, training and development, mediations and integrity.” With its eight subcontractors, M & Associates makes sure that a client’s human resources policies are up to date, and that the client does not discriminate against its employees or customers.

M & Associates currently works with 27 ninth graders to ensure that the students graduate from high school, college and in many cases post-graduate work, so they can in turn give back to their respective communities. An M & Associates client will pay for the student education, in public or private schools, all the way through.

Murchison has extensive experience in training diverse audiences of Hispanic/Latino, African, Middle Eastern and Asian descent. He currently provides cultural competence training to health care providers for the Asian Health Coalition of Illinois. He also coaches principals and local school councils on leadership development, principal selection and principal evaluation.

On a voluntary basis, Murchison is a mediator for the Center for Restorative Justice, through which communities, victims and juveniles get involved. “We set up mediation sites in different municipalities so that juveniles who commit non-bodily harm crimes and their victims can talk with each other.”

OUR MISTAKE

In an article about Howard B. Brookins Jr. in the last edition, we wrote: “In public service and business, Brookins follows in the footsteps of his father, now deceased, who served admirably in the Illinois legislature....” All is true, EXCEPT that Howard B. Brookins Sr. is not deceased. He’s alive, well and active in the community. Our sincere apology for the error.

— editor, *Workshop Notes*

Through the Chicago Public Schools’ Campaign to Expand Community Schools, Murchison consults with schools that teach character-building workshops for at-risk youth. His clients also educate parents and communities; for example, in Humboldt Park, he says, “we teach parents conflict resolution, leadership skills, English as a second language, and computer skills.” In Englewood, he is consulting with a school on getting an on-site GED program for parents, and to offer physical education activities for kids and parents to participate in together.

Murchison’s contributions to social justice led the Southern Poverty Law Center to add his name to the Rosa Parks Social Justice Wall of Fame. He participated in President Clinton’s dialogue on race relations, and is on the board of directors of Project Equality, Inc.

Born and raised in Lansing, Michigan, Murchison graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a bachelor’s degree in business administration and a concentration in human resources management. Today, he lives in Rogers Park on Chicago’s north side, loves dancing to ‘soulful house music,’ and is an avid sports fan (rooting for Michigan teams).

Welcome and Thanks

The Workshop welcomes President Mike Burke, Treasurer Nicholas Delgado and Secretary Jamica Quillin as incoming board officers, as well as Jill O’Mahony Stewart (photo) as most recent member of the board. She is president of Stewart Communications, a 15-year-old public relations firm that specializes in issue-oriented events management.



Credit: Karen R. Kring

We offer sincere thanks to Marianne McMullen, retiring board member and chairperson, and to Elizabeth Lach, secretary, and Laura Leon, treasurer, who continue their service on the board. We are grateful for their extraordinary leadership.



Workshop President Thom Clark met with Kate Zhenzherukha, director of the Regional Information Resource Fund of Ulyanovsk, Russia, who recently completed a one-year fellowship at North Park University. Zhenzherukha is seeking a more diversified funding base as she expands the Fund’s training of her country’s emerging non-governmental organizations to more effectively engage the media.

Cutting-edge capacity building —

Workshop offers custom training

by **Gordon Mayer**,
Senior Media Trainer

Keeping current with nonprofit trends this summer, we've been picking up new vibes about communications at events such as the Alliance for Nonprofit Management conference and in trade papers such as the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

The conference highlighted marketing and outreach by honoring Robert Egger and his book *Begging for Change* on how nonprofits err in selling their causes and how to do a better job with advocacy. Several articles in the *Chronicle* and elsewhere highlight a growing sense among foundation officials and practitioners of the value of communications.

We're mindful of the cliché that "if you only have a hammer, every problem tends to look like a nail." Since the Workshop is in the communications capacity-building business, we believe that training communicators is the best way to improve public relations, and the news.

To the extent that education *is* the answer to better communications, custom training is one of the most effective methods the Workshop has to offer. Typically, the Workshop conducts custom sessions to provide coaching around a common set of issues or common message, as well as at a time and place that's convenient to the organization.

Custom training is available in English and in Spanish.

Unlike communications courses and technical assistance, custom training involves upfront research and dialogue with the requesting group. The Workshop's expert staff and consultants develop a tailored agenda for half-day, day-long or multi-day sessions, which often entail followup to ensure that the lessons are implemented.

We recently conducted custom trainings for the American Postal Workers Union, Chicago Federation of Labor Workers Assistance Committee, Chicago Girls Coalition, Echoing Green Foundation, Illinois AFL-CIO, Jane Addams Senior Caucus, Metropolitan Planning Council, national AFL-CIO Immigrant Workers Project, and Voices for Illinois Children.

A recent Alliance study on capacity building notes that the most effective work to build a nonprofit's infrastructure and capabilities is "context sensitive" — in other words, it responds to an organization's specific needs. That fits the Workshop's experience: we can accomplish a lot with sessions tailored to an organization's specific needs.

If you want to discuss custom communications training or know an organization that needs it, please contact us at 312.344.7722 or Gordon@newstips.org.

Common communications pitfalls

Reading and hearing about nonprofit public relations made us reflect on what holds organizations back. Here are a few common communications challenges we've run across:

The bad experience — A nonprofit hires a savvy PR firm. After the first meeting, the nonprofit staff feel that all the work is being done by an intern at the firm, or find that the firm expects the nonprofit to do all the work. The firm thinks the nonprofit has unrealistic expectations that hiring someone automatically translates into news coverage. It's important to have a crystal clear understanding of the partnership beforehand.

The overloaded plate — Who has time for communications? There are more important things to do, from direct service to fundraising to ... almost anything we already know how to do that doesn't require us to telephone a stranger. Compounding this, communications is commonly combined with development. Although communications helps power fundraising, communications and development are two distinct, necessary functions.

The come-and-get-me attitude — This takes several forms, such as: our job is to serve, the journalists' job is to report, so we'll do the serving and let them come find us to report about it. Today's quick-cycle journalism and shrinking newsrooms require nonprofit communicators to do much more!

The Power of Photos...see inside!



We can't do it without you

At the Community Media Workshop, we are dedicated to the idea that everyday people are not just news consumers, but newsmakers who need tools and better access to enrich the media news flow.

We depend on gifts from Columbia College, foundations and individual donors to carry out our mission. Please dig deep and make a generous contribution to the Workshop in 2005, or join us at one of our upcoming area house parties. For more information, call Jennifer at 312.344.6402. We thank you.

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Community Media Workshop



Inside

Autumn 2005

The power of photos	page 1
Recommended	page 2
WiFi comes to North Lawndale	page 3
Tips on photos	page 4
New grassroots collaborative	page 6
Workshop board focus	page 7

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