

# SPEAK EASY

## Recapturing the Holiday Spirit: Operation Sergeant Santa

### PRSSA Hosts Holiday Event



Shoppers with their SIU Police and PRSSA Chaperones

this year. It drove away the Grinch, polished Rudolph's bright red nose, and brought Santa to campus just in time to rejuvenate some of us! PRSSA

members, along with Kohl's and

SIU's Department of Public Safety, hosted "Operation Sgt. Santa" on Tuesday evening, December 2nd, in Ballroom D of SIU's Student Center.

"Operation Sgt. Santa" is the fifth annual staging of the event that was called "Shop with a Cop" over the last four years. This year, PRSSA members used their public relations skills to craft a new name that would focus on the heart of this marquee event: the community-oriented operation of our

campus police force. "Operation Sgt. Santa" paired 20 children (ages 5-12) from Evergreen Terrace – SIU's housing area for married students and their families - with officers from the SIU Department of Public Safety who volunteered to participate. Generous donations from Kohl's, as well as a number of other businesses and individuals in Carbondale, meant that every team had \$100 to shop for each child's family at Kohl's. The most special aspect of the experience was the enthusiastic collaboration between the police officers and the children. They got to know each other well, starting with a ride to Kohl's together in an SIU police car. For many of the children, this was the highlight of the evening!

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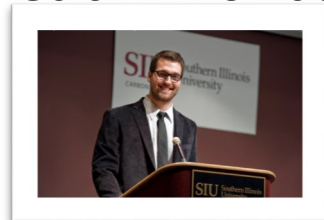
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By Sean Rados, *Speak Easy* Staff Writer

As the winter break approaches, SIU students sometimes feel their holiday spirit wasting away. The end of the semester looms over them. Final exams and projects block their paths to all the fun and festivities.

Fortunately, our department's Raymond D. Wiley Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) came to the rescue again

## Selck Wins Debate Coach of the Year Award



Mike Selck, Assistant Debate Coach at SIU,

was honored with the most prestigious award a coach can receive this past weekend when he was named the Debate Coach of the Year. The award is an annual prize bestowed by the Washburn Debating Union.

Dr. Kevin O'Leary, the Director of Debate at Washburn University, explained that the award was given to Selck for two reasons. "Mike's decisions when judging debates are beyond excel-

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The teams spent more than an hour combing through all of Kohl's departments, talking along the way about their families and their holiday plans. PRSSA

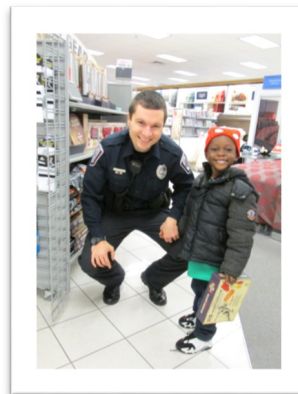
members accompanied the teams to act as "Santa's Helpers." They carried the kids' coats and potential purchases, helped team members stay together, and diplomatically handled difficult questions (such as, "Can I spend my whole \$100 on candy?"). Although the police officers offered lots of helpful advice and friendly guidance to their young partners, each child made the final decisions about what to purchase. The officers then loaded up their police cars with bags and boxes, drove their teams back to the Student Center, and helped the children wrap all of the presents. It was often difficult to tell which member of each team – the police officer or the child – was having more fun!

More than 30 PRSSA members worked cheerfully to decorate the ballroom, make sure everyone got a good

meal of pizza and pasta, and ensure the children and their families had a great time. While the teams were out shopping, the children's parents and siblings were treated to cookies and other refreshments, games and entertainment, and a visit from Santa Claus.

"Operation Sgt. Santa" was a rousing success that revived everyone's holiday spirits. It allowed SIU students to give back to other SIU students and their families. It allowed children – some as young as five years old – to buy gifts that their families could not otherwise have afforded. And, most important of all, it helped spotlight and reinforce the positive relationship between the SIU Department of Public Safety and the campus community they work so hard to serve. As Sydne Rensing, Vice President of PRSSA, summed it up, "Operation Sgt. Santa is an event that we enjoy putting on simply for the kids and their families. Seeing the children's faces light up – when they get to meet Santa Claus, spend happy time with a police officer, and buy special gifts for their families during the holidays - makes

all of our hard work worth it." Zac Klemm, head of PRSSA's event planning committee, added, "We had a great time with everyone who attended. We know 'Operation Sgt. Santa' will be a special memory for the members of our chapter – and we hope the children and police will cherish their memories of it, too."



SIU Officer with a Shopper

If you would like more information about "Operation Sergeant Santa" and how you could help us make shopping dreams come true for another group of SIU students' children next year, then please get in touch with our PRSSA Faculty Advisor, Denise McCleary. You can call Denise at 618-453-1888 or send an email to her at [denisem@siu.edu](mailto:denisem@siu.edu).

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lent," said O'Leary. "I can honestly say that I've learned an extraordinary amount from just listening to Mike explain his decisions and give advice to the debate teams he judges. He maintains the highest level of educational standards and his values as a coach and mentor are beyond reproach."

The other reason Selck was honored was even more obvious, explained O'Leary. "The SIU debate teams have excelled under their current coaches, and Mike has been a huge part of that. He was able to transition from a national champion as a debater into a national champion as a coach. It's a difficult transition that not many people have accomplished,

but Mike made the transition from top-level debater to top-level coach in a seamless manner. The Washburn Debating Union could not be more proud than to announce that Mike Selck is our choice as the Debate Coach of the Year." Selck is also the youngest coach ever to win the award.

"I've recognized how special Mike is for many years now," said Dr. Todd Graham, Director of Debate. "He deserves this award, and I'm happy that I'm not the only one who thinks that Mike Selck is one of the best, if not the best, debate coach in the country." Selck said when asked about the award: "It was a total surprise! I can't believe the team was able to keep it a secret," he said. "I

feel incredibly grateful. It came at a stressful time, and the recognition makes it all worthwhile," he said. Selck and his debate partner, Josh Rivera, won the unanimous National Championship by winning both the National Parliamentary Debate Association championship and National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence championship in 2013. When he completed his undergraduate studies at SIU, Selck had won more championships in debate tournaments than any debater in history. Selck has coached the SIU debate team since graduating from SIU with a degree in Communication Studies and entering our master's program.

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

### Bardhan and Sobre-Denton Receive Best Authored Book Award



Bardhan and Sobre-Denton at NCA

The book *Cultivating Cosmopolitanism for Intercultural Communication: Communicating as Global Citizens* (2013), authored by Miriam

Sobre-Denton and Nilanjana Bardhan, has been honored as the recipient of the 2013-14 Best Authored Book Award granted by the International and Intercultural Communication Division of the National Communication Association.

"I am thrilled and honored to receive this award," says Bardhan. "Dr. Sobre-Denton and I believe that there is a lot of value in the moral vision of critical cosmopolitanism for the field of intercultural communication, and we hope this award will help get that message out. We live in a highly uneven yet interconnected world, and we feel that the cosmopolitan vision can be useful in such a world."

This book engages the notion of cosmopolitanism as it applies to intercultural communication, which itself has been undergoing a turn in its focus from post-positivistic research towards critical/interpretive and postcolonial perspectives, particularly as globalization informs more of the current and future research in the area. It emphasizes the postcolonial perspective in order to raise critical consciousness about the complexities of intercultural communication in a globalizing world, situating cosmopolitanism—the notion of global citizenship—as a multilayered lens for research.

### The Power of Protest Through Puppetry

by Molly Turnbaugh, *Speak Easy Staff Writer*

Dr. Jonathan Gray has a unique approach to environmental communication and protest: *puppetry*. Gray feels that puppetry has an ability to disrupt the connections that we have with nature while expressing our frustrations. He sees puppetry as a way to explore responsibilities and relationships of human beings with animals, to see the human in non-human "Others."

"There are two hands to puppetry," he says. "Puppets are communicable and allow you to say what you may not normally feel comfortable saying otherwise."

Gray says that puppetry is a spectacle that makes impact with a self-expressive message.

His recent and ongoing work with puppetry as a mode of protest has kept him busy.

This past spring, Gray worked

with Cade Bursell from Cinema and Photography on "All Species Parade," a community arts project. Gray attended and assisted with workshops in puppet making. He helped area children create puppets of diverse species that can be found around the world. Also, area specialists visited and talked to the children about many of the local species. The series ended in a community parade held in Carbondale to celebrate Earth Day.

Over the summer, Gray was selected for the Meg Hunt Art Residency in McCarthy, Alaska. While in McCarthy, Gray had the opportunity to work with the Wrangell Mountains Center youth program. Gray led children of all ages in the construction of Big Head puppets inspired by the wild animals found in the Wrangell Mountains. Gray also built two Big Head puppets of his own which participated in the community's 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration.

While Gray was in Alaska, the



Gray in Alaska

community was divided as The Discovery Channel was filming the reality television show, "Edge of Alaska". While some community members thought the show was a way to make some money, others were frustrated and wished they could do something to confront the sensationalism of reality television. Gray had the answer to their concerns. He built a Big Head puppet of a camera. The cameramen for the show saw Gray and began to film him. Some of the community members felt relieved that someone had confronted the television crew

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in a non-threatening way. Unfortunately, the Discovery Channel told Gray that this footage will never make it to television.

Because of his work in Alaska, Gray was asked to speak at the Bastian Foundation Diversity Lecture Series at Westminster College in Utah. His lecture was on "Puppetry and the Personification Paradox: Some Notes on using Puppetry for Environmental Education and Activism".

Gray has developed featured performances such as "Trail Mix" in 2005 and "Cross/Walking" in 2010. He is now preparing a staged group performance as part of next fall's Kleinau Theater season. He is looking towards new media to capture communications, and hopes to participate in another "All Species Parade" for Earth Day.

## Debate Team Has Another Successful Semester

By Ariana Arnone, Saluki Debate Team

The SIU Debate Team has had a very successful semester and has welcomed two new debaters, Zach Schneider and Aditya Sharma, and a new graduate assistant, Ben Reid. Zach, a senior transfer from Cedarville University, is majoring in Computer Science. Zach and his partner, Joshua Rivera, have proven to be an unstoppable duo: they have won three championship tournaments in Fall Semester 2014. Aditya, a junior transfer from the University of California, Irvine, is majoring in Business Economics. She and her partner, Ariana Arnone, have already had a successful start to the season: they placed second at the first tournament of the year, which was held in Liberty, Missouri.

Ben, who is in his first year as a graduate student in Communication Studies, joins graduate assistant Mike Selck and the Director of Debate, Dr. Todd Graham, in

coaching our Saluki debaters. Although the expectation had been for this to essentially be a "rebuilding year," the coaches are very pleased with the way in which the team is not only gaining valuable experience, but also proving to be highly competitive as the season progresses.



Team discusses strategy. L to R: Dr. Todd Graham, Josh Rivera, Aditya Sharma, Ben Reid, Mike Selck, Ariana Arnone, Zach Schneider.

## PRSSA'S Pyramid Public Relations Firm

By Sean Rados, Speak Easy Staff Writer

Educational experiences that directly link the classroom with professional settings can provide college students with significant opportunities to refine their knowledge and skills. Comprehensive internships are very beneficial, but often involve complicated application processes, multiple interviews, and expensive tuition for additional credit hours. However, SIU students interested in careers in public relations, advertising, and marketing have another, more accessible way to test their vision of what their "dream jobs" might actually entail: working as account professionals for Pyramid Public Relations (Pyramid PR).

Pyramid PR is a non-profit, student-run public relations firm that provides services at a low cost to for-profit and not-for-profit clients in southern Illinois. Since its establishment in 1980 as a component of SIU's Raymond D. Wiley Chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), Pyramid PR's mission has been two-fold. First, it seeks to provide high-quality services that meet the public relations and communications needs of its client. Second, it seeks to offer student-level PR practitioners a meaningful chance to test their knowledge, skills, and special interests. Pyramid PR helps its student employees become more adept and responsible PR practitioners; it

helps southern Illinois businesses, agencies and community groups reach their audiences more effectively and inexpensively; and it enhances the visibility and reputation of SIU's PRSSA Chapter and the undergraduate major emphasis in Public Relations offered by the Department of Communication Studies. Pyramid PR currently represents 7 clients: Fat Patties, Life at Southern, Saluki Screen Repair, Shawnee Hills Wine Trail Association, Screaming OWL Recording Studio, The Vape Shop, and Movie Camera Militia. PRSSA students who are selected to join these firms' Pyramid PR account

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teams get to experience what it is really like to work as a PR professional. There are no hypothetical scenarios, imaginary conflicts, scripted interactions or arbitrary deadlines like those found in classroom simulations. Instead, there are specific goals that are established in consultation with paying clients who expect to receive high quality work on or before critical deadlines. The clients get professional advice and products at a cost well below what a regular PR agency would charge; PRSSA gets essential funding to help support its ongoing programs; and Pyramid PR students get to build their portfolios and test themselves against the kinds of challenges

they will face after graduation. Everybody wins!

Zac Klemm, Assistant Director of Pyramid, notes, "Pyramid allows us, as students, all kinds of opportunities we otherwise wouldn't have. By working as part of a PR agency with multiple clients who have complex needs, we are challenged to become more resourceful, more responsible, more ethical, and generally more professional." One of the firm's current clients, Jeremy Packer, CEO and Founder of Life at Southern, adds, "It is great having access to students in the PR field. It is super beneficial to any southern Illinois business."

For information on becoming a Pyramid client or for updates on clients and student employees, check out Pyramid PR Firm at [pyramid-prfirm.wix.com/siupr](http://pyramid-prfirm.wix.com/siupr).



Pyramid Account Teams hard at work.

## Meet Our Outstanding Students

### HA, HA, HA!

Meet Three of Our Graduate Students Who Spend Their Time Away from the Classroom Making People Laugh

#### Cameron Brewer: A Voice that Matters

by Angela Elsherbini, Speak Easy Staff Writer



Brewer performing

Cameron Brewer approaches things differently, which has worked in his favor. He is from Moore, Oklahoma, and cites standup comedian Maria Bamford as a major influence when

he was growing up, "When I was 12 years old, every Friday night I would watch standup, and Maria Bamford was my favorite," he says. "I was floored by some of her work, including her humor, how she presents storytelling and vignettes in such a different and unique way." He adds, "Comedy is like persuasion- getting people to agree with how you view the world."

Cameron is striving to earn a M.S. in Intercultural Communication. The 22-year-old student comedian is one of the most promising comics on today's stand-up circuit. His many late-night appearances and gigs at "open mic" nights prove that he's serious about presenting him-

self both often and well.

His voice is a surprisingly soothing instrument. He is genuine and thoughtful, too, in the way of a childhood friend. His tone, which wavers only when necessary, is as steady as the mellow sound of someone telling a story by a fireside. Cameron's likeable personality is an asset, too. He's tousled and friendly and answers directly with observations that connect with his listeners' experiences. While an undergraduate at Cameron University, Okla., Cameron had his first big break at an open mic gig at Othello's Bar & Restaurant in Norman, Oklahoma, "It served as a real proving ground for an up-and-coming comedian. It's an art getting the room on your side," Cameron says, smiling. He points out that starting

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out in stand-up comedy can be overwhelming and a little scary. It can be easy to alienate your audience, and you always want them on your side. Plus, you never know if an audience member is going to take a joke the wrong way.

"My communications background has really helped me with comedy sets," he says. "In speeches and debate, you are up on a stage being evaluated - but in the comedy arena, you're more vulnerable, having to improvise, learning what or how this particular audience understood your comedy," he adds, "Stand-up is a truly 'learn-by-doing' art form, and you won't know what works and what doesn't, until you've gotten on stage in front of an audience. And the more chances you have to perform, the more you'll be able to learn."

Cameron's method for crafting his comedy is to document thoughts in his phone and develop them into lead-ins. He rehearses his set at least three times, using strong material first, then newer/ weaker possibilities. Cameron shyly says he walks

around his house over and over, as it helps to get the ideas out of his head and into his voice.

He is always ready to take notes and develop ideas. Cameron notes that one never knows when comic creativity is going to strike. "When honing your talent there's always room for improvement; so every once in a while I go back and punch up older jokes with new tags or punchlines," he says. "Plus this is a great way to break out of a rut -- getting your creative juices flowing without requiring you to conjure up new material out of thin air."

"I don't keep saying the same joke if it doesn't work," he says.

Talented and feeling fortunate, with two paying gigs under his belt, Cameron says: "Making people laugh makes me feel happy and I have a voice that matters where I make people feel better. Comedy gives me an outlet to talk about subjects."

As a comedian Cameron regards all topics as "up for grabs," although he favors current affairs,

personal experience and race, and thinks Louis C.K is the best comedian working right now.

Just as the interview wraps up Brewer shares that he met Maria Bamford in Oklahoma in 2010, "What draws me back to her comedy is that she uses her illness (she is bipolar) to make herself feel better. Just the art of making the significant insignificant and the insignificant significant--is never what you expect it to be," he says.

Cameron concludes, "In being a comedian, you have to be a fan of stand-up. You want to perform stand-up because you're funny and you love it, and those are the two most important things you need. Be true to yourself."

Catch Cameron Brewer's stand-up comedy act: Monday nights- 9.30 p.m. Hangar 9, Carbondale. Wednesday nights- 7.30 p.m. at Long branch Café, Carbondale.

HA contd

## Kyler Cook: "There's Nothing Like Making People Laugh"

by Ashley Hughes, Speak Easy Staff Writer

Kyler Cook's comedic journey was inspired by his difficult childhood. While dealing with his parents' divorce, making people laugh was a way of coping with a big change in his life.

"It was a way to escape something. Comedy and Church provided outlets to deal with my depression," he says. "My youth pastor, Noah Oldham, thought it would help me."

A teaching assistant in the Communication Studies Department, Kyler says he loves being in Carbondale because it's a town that supports the arts. The first time Kyler told a joke was during a hospital stay. His mother and the nurses laughed really hard. This was the beginning of his

love for comedy. He says having his own show is better than just 5 minutes of stage time.

"It takes around 20 minutes to get to know the comedian. There's nothing like making people laugh," he says. "I wasn't the 'funny kid,' but I always am amazed how far I've gotten as a comedian."

Content for Kyler's show comes from his own life. Topics range from his wife talking in her sleep to his own name and his brothers. However, his shows primarily promote depression awareness. Through Kyler's shows, he uses humor to inform audiences about how he handled adversity.

"It's weird when students know who I am before they even attend one of my classes. It's also difficult be-



cause they expect to be entertained. So I balance the two," he says.

As he considers the futures, Kyler says a move to Los Angeles is possible. It would involve moving his family and leaving his job at the university, but the idea intrigues him.

"I would probably kick myself if I didn't try," he says.

Kyler's talents have led to other job offers. Admittedly, he is leaning toward the West Coast. But he'll never forget Carbondale.

"Carbondale is still going to be here, I'll always come back."

HA contd

## Proszek Uses College and Life Experiences for Comedy

by Zac Klemm, *Speak Easy Staff Writer*

After James Proszek spoke with Olivia Perez-Langley at the NCA National Conference, he knew SIU was the place he wanted to go for his master's. What he didn't know was that in Carbondale he would check another item off his bucket list – Standup Comedy.

James completed his undergraduate studies at Drury College in Springfield, Missouri, and is currently in the second year of getting his master's degree in Rhetoric and Intercultural Communication. James said he was inspired to try standup comedy after Kyler Cook, a fellow graduate student, told James about Open Mic Nights at the local bars.

"Standup comedy was something that was always on my bucket list," James says. "I received some positive feedback after my first time on stage and stuck with it."

While James is currently on a hiatus from Open Mic Night at Hangar 9 in Carbondale, he says that once his thesis is completed, he'll return to the stage.

"While I do love comedy, it really helps me remember my priorities," James says. "I put my academics first, so hopefully I will be back in December."

James said his comedy covers subjects about himself, his interactions with other people and his experiences in grad school. One of his favorite stories is the first time he went to a middle school dance.

"It was in the school gym, so I wore really nice green gym shorts and a shirt from Disneyland that said: 'I survived Splash mountain,'" he says. "I spent the whole night thinking, 'Why doesn't any-

one want to get with this?"

James says that once he has earned his master's degree, he plans on working toward attaining his Ph.D. and hopes to teach at the collegiate level.



Proszek

## International Saluki Pursues Her Dream

by Sydney Bornstein, *Speak Easy Staff Writer*

In 2009, Jana Simonis came to Southern Illinois University as an international student from Germany. When she arrived at SIU, Jana had plans to only study for a year. However, she ended up staying much longer than she intended and has since earned her master's degree.

"I fell in love with the program here at SIU," she says.

In May 2012, Jana graduated with her master's in Speech Communication focusing on Intercultural and Organizational Communication. Jana possesses a strong interest in in-

tercultural work and international relations which has inspired her career path.

Since earning her master's, Jana has kept busy. She is currently the elected president of SIU's International Student Council (ISC) for the 2014-2015 school year. The year prior, Jana served as their Chief of Staff. As president, she attends administrative meetings and conferences that give her the opportunity to connect with several other leaders, RSO facilitators and staff.

Jana makes a concerted effort to reach out to a multitude of our international population, also referred to as "Global Salukis." And she

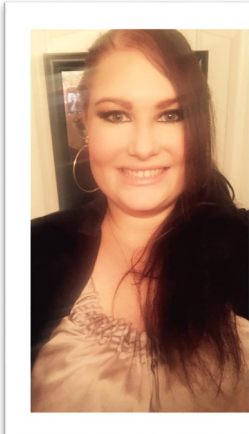
recounts some of her responsibilities as coordinating the "fun stuff" for the international RSO's on campus. She organizes fundraisers, socials, February's festival week and countless other events.

In addition to serving the International Student Council, Jana is working toward her Ph.D. in Communication Studies with a focus in Intercultural Communication and Communication Pedagogy. She credits PRSSA for her ability to effectively pitch to sponsors, and approach and effectively communicate with new people.

"PRSSA taught me various facets of professional communication," she says. Jana's first semester in PRSSA was in

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Simonis

2010 and she is still in contact with friends she has made.

Lastly, Jana has applied for a position in London which entails intercultural training and workforce management. When asked about her outlook on relocating to Europe, Jana said, "I am seriously considering the idea of going back."

We are very proud of Jana's accomplishments, to say the least. We are optimistic she will continue to succeed in a profession that reflects her passion. She can count on support from her Saluki Communication Studies family!

## Meet Our Amazing Alumni

### John Schumacher: Striving to Succeed

by Sean Rados, *Speak Easy Staff Writer*

Our Department of Communication Studies often gives students the opportunity to develop their interests into future successes. John Schumacher is one such outstanding student who quickly turned his passion for public relations and marketing into a rewarding career.

John not only was a great student academically, but he was also involved in many extra-curricular activities. He was the winner of the 2012 Elizabeth Lance Toth Outstanding Public Relations Student Award and he served for two years as President of SIU's PRSSA chapter.

Immediately after graduating, John put his experience and education to work. He flew out to Las Vegas where he interned for a couple of months at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, and then turned his internship into a full-time job with them. He recently left that position and is now a Social Strategist for Digital Royalty. The mission of Digital Royalty is to empower brands to be human and inspire personal connections to positively disrupt the world.

As a Social Strategist, John gets to work on major accounts with clients

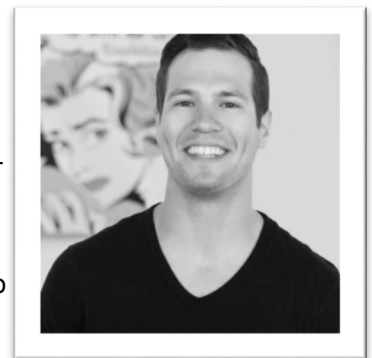
such as Hilton Hotels and Resorts, Tony Hsieh (Zappos CEO), and the Chicago White Sox. When asked what it is like working with individuals and firms that have such a high profile, John says, "One of the most gratifying experiences working with Digital Royalty is seeing my thoughts, ideas, and suggestions being utilized in major campaigns with well-known accounts."

John credits his successes to his experiences at SIU Carbondale, which rewarded his hard work and dedication. He stressed that to make something out of yourself, you really have to get involved.

"It is easy for students to get caught up juggling their class schedule and assignments, worrying about grades, passing finals, and managing a social life," he says. "But one of the best things extra-curricular activities have to offer is a productive *professional* social life. Not only do you get a chance to further develop your skills, but you get to network with individuals who share similar interests and career goals."

John thinks that one of the keys to his success is that SIU and the Department of Communication Studies gave him the opportunity to really become the best at

the basics in his profession. However, he also believes that



Schumacher

"basics" will only take you just so far. He says it is important to further your development by getting involved in opportunities (such as his internship and his leadership role in PRSSA) that are more advanced. Most of all, he emphasizes that you must not hinder your chances for success by being afraid to take chances.

John Schumacher clearly deserves the success he has created for himself. We're proud to count him among our best "success stories" and look forward to following his developing career!



## Being Involved Makes a Difference

By Sabrina Barnes, *Speak Easy Staff Writer*

“My ultimate goal was always to see different ways we could get the SIU community to come together,” says Guillermo Flores, 26, of Villa Park, Illinois, as he reflects on his involvement with several registered student organizations on campus.

Guillermo is a 2011 SIU speech communication graduate, with a specialization in public relations. He is currently a Graduate Assistant in the Office of Student Life at Ball State University and a Live-In Graduate Advisor at Theta Chi Fraternity.

Guillermo has known he wanted to pursue a career in public relations since his sophomore year in college. He subsequently utilized his PR knowledge on behalf of multiple SIU organizations and activities, including student orientations, residence hall activities and Greek life. He was very active in PRSSA, which gave him

his first opportunity to attend a professional conference. He was able to develop skills to network with people within the SIU community, as well as with key people in Chicago and the St. Louis area.

Guillermo also contributed to Greek life at SIU, serving as the Inter-Greek Council President, the Interfraternity Council’s Director of Public Relations, and the Director of Recruitment for the Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity. He served his fraternity as Vice President of Alumni Relations, Membership Orientation Officer, and Public Relations Chair.

In his role at Ball State, Guillermo coordinates activities by 33 fraternities and sororities on campus. He is also closely involved with Dance Marathon — the largest philanthropic organization at Ball State. The goal of Dance Marathon is to raise \$500,000 to donate to Riley Hospital for Chil-

dren.

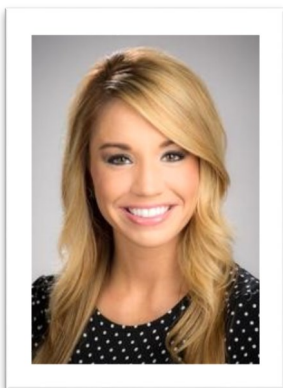
Although he does not plan to remain at Ball State, Guillermo considers his current role to be a great springboard to the future. Guillermo will graduate with a master’s degree in May 2015, and says he is keeping his options open for the next step in his career.



Flores as SIUC's 2010 Homecoming King (photo by Steve Buhman)

## Working in Public Relations is a Rewarding Experience

Sabrina Barnes, *Speak Easy Staff Writer*



Romani

on her career.

Currently, Kendra is a Marketing Consultant and Account Executive at Withers Broadcasting in Marion.

“Everyday I work in a different industry and I love that ... you have to keep creative juices flowing, that is for sure,” says Kendra Romani as she reflects

She works closely with the Production Director to brainstorm creative ways to market Withers’ promotional services. She deals with local restaurants and bars, small and large charity events, a wide range of small businesses and retailers, and a diverse collection of companies – such as Black Diamond Harley-Davidson and Weeks Chevrolet - that have significant regional reach and reputations. “My days are flexible, I am never bored and I have met so many different people. In addition, I voice ads in my free time,” she says.

Kendra, 28, is a native of Sesser, a small town approximately 45 minutes north of Carbondale. Her family owned an Italian restaurant, which allowed Kendra opportunities to engage in business-related conversation with the customers. Family always referred to her as a “public relations person.”

That was ultimately the case, as Kendra graduated from SIU with a degree in speech communication, specializing in public relations. She also had a double minor in journalism and political sci-

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ence. As an undergraduate, Kendra was a very active member of PRSSA. She served as Chair for the Professional Planning Committee and was also heavily involved in Pyramid Public Relations, the student-run PR firm housed in PRSSA.

Kendra took a hiatus during her degree program to work as the coordinator of all the public relations for Gio Restaurant Group in Florida. She wore many hats in that role, including bar manager and event planner, in addition to taking care of all aspects of media relations. Kendra's duties included handling internal communications with staff; developing branding efforts for wine and martini lists; coordinating catering events; budgeting; creating press kits; and hosting media tours.

Kendra encourages all students interested in PR to continuously prospect. She says it is essential to network and keep in touch with people you meet. She also be-

lieves it is important to remain professional at all times, develop a dynamic personality and trustworthy character, and be articulate so that what you say will be taken seriously.

There's no doubt that Kendra "practices" what she "preaches" to students who would like to achieve success as PR professionals. She is a great example of how effectively utilizing all the resources available to you during college, and then capitalizing on what you have learned when you make the transition into your professional career, can guarantee success!

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