

**The 71st Annual Virginia Public Relations Awards
Thursday, May 24, 2018
The Jefferson Hotel
Award Winners**

Commonwealth Awards

Brief Events and Observances

Award of Merit Winners

The Hodges Partnership and First Tee of Greater Richmond for “The First Tee of Greater Richmond – Richmond Location Renovation”

The First Tee of Greater Richmond reopened its Richmond facility in October 2017. The Hodges Partnership and The First Tee worked together to generate awareness of the newly renovated driving range and drive patrons to impact revenue. Hodges completed extensive research including interviews and surveys to develop a persona to shape its overall strategy. Through earned media and persona-driven tactics Hodges helped the organization surpass its revenue goal of \$14,000 by 38 percent. All revenue from the facility supports The First Tee’s mission to build character and promote healthy choices through the game of golf.

The Virginia Department of Transportation for “Incident Management Open House”

The Virginia Department of Transportation’s (VDOT) Northern Virginia District hosted its first-ever Incident Management Open House on November 11. The event featured an outdoor touch-a-truck exhibit with 27 response vehicles and a simulated crash scene that allowed the public to view an incident from the perspective of first responders who work in the roadway every day. An indoor expo featured booths for several VDOT sections as well multiple partner agencies. Through a multi-faceted campaign, VDOT was able to raise awareness of incident management, promote the event and educate drivers about how they can keep responders safe during traffic incidents.

Rhudy & Co. Strategic Communications and Altria for “Altria Engages and Inspires Employees at their Be:2017 Signature Event”

Employee events have the ability to inspire and engage employees around culture and business initiatives. For Altria, its Be:2017 signature event was a key opportunity for the Fortune 200 business to rally employees around the future of the business and showcase their innovation. Rhudy & Co. partnered with the Altria Internal Communications team to bring the event to life and ensure employees left proud and inspired. The plan worked, with 97 percent of employees saying they had a positive experience at Be:2017, and 98 percent finding the content helpful/useful.

The Virginia Department of Health OFHS for “National Public Health Week 2018”

In 2017, VDH used NPHW to raise awareness about the Plan for Well-Being (PfWB), a statewide plan to guide Virginia in becoming the healthiest state in the nation. VDH weaved its agency initiative around PfWB during its NPHW observation to raise awareness and excitement with employees about the PfWB success and work to encourage collaboration among

employees and community partners for improvement. VDH's impact was measured by social media performance, event participation, and employee feedback. The NPHW Twitter promotion reached 43,763 Virginians over 5 days, Facebook reached 168,187 people, and Instagram got 506 likes and video views. The PFWB site had 12,393 visits throughout the week. VDH volunteered a total of 616 hours for Habitat for Humanity. Employees ran a total of 81 miles at the 10K. Then over 200 employees and public citizens attended Celebrate Public Health day. Through clear branding, goals and dedicated strategy of awareness and engagement, VDH has moved one-step closer to reaching its goals.

AA Communications & Sara Hunt PR and Virginia Capitol Foundation for “Jenna Bush Hager Supports the Virginia Women’s Monument”

The Virginia Capitol Foundation wanted to generate awareness and financial support for the Virginia Women's Monument, honoring women's contributions to Virginia history. An event on Sept. 7, featuring celebrity Jenna Bush Hager, created conversation and excitement about the unique monument. Publicity and social media promotion resulted in 100,000+ combined impressions/people reached on social platforms, AP pickup and positive coverage in print, broadcast and online media. Results included ticket sales of 67 percent over goal, an 82.3 percent increase in new visitors to the VCF's website in August/September, and a total of \$60,000 raised to commission a statue in the monument.

Award of Excellence Winner

The Visual Arts Center of Richmond for “The 53rd Annual Craft + Design Show”

The Visual Arts Center of Richmond was established in 1963 and its signature fundraiser, Craft + Design, was launched the very next year. In the 1980s and 90s, it was not uncommon for Craft + Design attendance to top 10,000 people but over the last two decades, with the advent of the Internet and craft retail sites like Etsy, VisArts watched as those numbers steadily declined. A decision to move to a new venue and emphasize strategic ticketing partnerships with organizations such as the VMFA, Quirk Hotel and SportsBackers resulted in double the attendance and double the revenue.

Community Relations

Award of Merit Winners

The Hodges Partnership and Kroger for “Kroger Rewards Richmond Schools”

Kroger needed to raise awareness about its Community Rewards program, increase loyal shoppers in a very competitive grocery market all while remaining true to its mission to help communities grow and prosper. Hodges recommended a strategy that targeted Richmond area schools and developed a plan to reach principals and parents. The team targeted the 40 schools closest to Kroger stores. At each school meeting Kroger donated a \$250 gift card – resulting in \$10,000 going towards Richmond-area schools at the end of the campaign. Forty schools were enrolled and Phase 2 was approved for Hodges to develop a plan to be rolled out statewide.

Commonwealth Partnerships for “Engaging Community Support for Retail Expansion”

A shopping center, located in Richmond, Va., experienced a crisis when one of its anchor tenants was sold to a national company that decided to close that store. Both tenants of the Center and the surrounding community were disappointed by the decision and began reaching out to local media outlets when an inaccurate rumor began spreading that a not-for-profit organization would be leasing the vacated space. The owner of the Center hired Commonwealth Partnerships to develop and implement a community relations and media campaign designed to calm constituent concerns and solicit data that could be used in replacing the vacated space.

Charles Ryan Associates and Virginia State Police for “Virginia State Police – Insurance Fraud Program: Awareness Campaign”

Charles Ryan Associates partnered with the Virginia State Police Insurance Fraud Program to bring more attention to its Stamp Out Fraud program, which asks citizens with information regarding insurance fraud to file a report online. Benchmarks for the campaign were increases in website visitors, as well as social audience growth. CRA ran a brand awareness campaign with a mix of lighthearted informational videos, digital and social advertising, and public relations. Overall, website visitor growth grew more than 400%; the social audience grew nearly 30% and the digital display and video ad campaigns gained over 10 million total impressions.

Roanoke County Public Schools for “Load the Bus 2017”

Each year, thousands of students across the Roanoke Valley approach the start of the school year without the tools needed to be successful in the classroom. Together Roanoke County Public Schools and Roanoke City Public Schools teamed up with Walmart to "Load the Bus for Kids," by collecting school supplies for students in need. The 2017 event was the most successful ever raising more than \$22,000 worth of school supplies in Roanoke County alone!

ndp and Waterside District for “Waterside District Revitalizes Downtown Norfolk”

In the 1980s, Waterside Festival Marketplace in Norfolk, Va., was a popular shopping and dining destination for the Hampton Roads region. However, it was ultimately closed due to declining traffic and a tenant mix that was not family friendly. The Cordish Companies partnered with ndp to create a community relations campaign that would combat negative perceptions of the old Waterside, as well as draw people of all ages to the exciting new Waterside District. Results included almost 950 media stories, 1,200 Google reviews with a 4.3 Star Rating and over 35,000 visitors during the Grand Opening weekend in mid-May 2017.

Award of Excellence Winner

Charles Ryan Associates and Virginia State Police for “Virginia State Police – Help Eliminate Auto Theft: Brand Awareness Campaign”

The Virginia State Police Help Eliminate Auto Theft Program educates about auto theft crimes and prevention. Vehicle theft rates in Virginia have declined more than 60 percent since HEAT's inception, with more than 44,000 related arrests made. Charles Ryan Associates worked with VSP to grow the program's audience. CRA ran a brand awareness campaign with a mix of lighthearted informational videos, digital and social advertising, and public relations. Overall, website visitor growth grew 699%; the social audience grew 56% and the digital display and video ad campaign had over 18 million total impressions.

Crisis Communications

Award of Merit Winner

The Department of Conservation and Recreation – Central Office and Douthat State Park for “Douthat Bear Attack”

The Department of Conservation and Recreation responds to second bear attack within two years resulting in favorable news coverage of Virginia State Parks and Douthat State Park where the incident took place.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Lottery for “Mega Millions Mistake”

When the Virginia Lottery discovered that tickets had been erroneously printed that were potentially unable to win the Mega Millions jackpot, it had a crisis on its hands. By quickly admitting the problem, describing what happened, and most importantly, showing how the Lottery would make it right with customers, a potentially much larger crisis was averted.

Extended Events and Observances

Award of Merit Winners

Family Lifeline for “Celebrating 140 Years of Bringing Health and Hope to the Richmond Community”

You only turn 140 once! That was the spirit for Family Lifeline, a nonprofit that provides care to at-risk children and adults in Richmond, VA. For a nonprofit, a milestone like this can help bring in new supporters, raise additional funds, create new partnerships and increase visibility in the community. To ensure this wasn't a missed opportunity, Family Lifeline made its 140th anniversary a priority in 2017. Their investment paid off, with more than \$41,000 raised in additional funds, coverage in six local and national publications and six new partnerships with local organizations and businesses.

Padilla and The Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Virginia Treatment Center for Children Transforms Children’s Mental Health”

Nationwide, only one in four children receives the mental health care they need. This shortfall also exists in Virginia, with more demand for services than capacity. Virginia Treatment Center for Children (VTCC) helps bridge that gap, offering inpatient acute care, crisis stabilization and outpatient services to children and families. In 2017, Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU (CHoR) constructed a new, expanded VTCC facility to replace its 50-year-old facility. CHoR and Padilla developed a series of launch events to introduce stakeholders to the facility, its increased capacity and its design, focused on family-centered care. All four events exceeded projected attendance.

VANCE and Venture Richmond for “Lucky 13: A Record-Breaking Year for the Richmond Folk Festival”

After Tropical Storm Matthew showed up uninvited to the 12th annual Richmond Folk Festival, organizers braced for our 13th, wondering whether it could possibly be unluckier than the year before. But the floodgates held, and thoughtful planning, strategic storytelling and a passionate commitment to fans made the 2017 Richmond Folk Festival the most successful one yet. More than 200,000 music lovers descended on Richmond's historic downtown riverfront the weekend of Oct. 13-15 and raised more than \$120,000 to keep the city's favorite festival free to the public.

Award of Excellence Winner

Commonwealth Partnerships and the Home Building Association of Richmond for "Richmond Parade of Homes 2017"

The Home Building Association of Richmond's Parade of Homes is a month-long event that showcases the latest in home designs, construction techniques, materials, and more from homebuilders throughout Central Virginia. The event's objective is to increase awareness about local homebuilders and their services, promote the sales of new homes, and showcase HBAR as a resource for builders and buyers. Commonwealth Partnerships was tasked with developing a social media and media relations campaign to highlight the event, which resulted in a 20% increase in Facebook page likes, 19 media placements, 20% increase in website traffic, and 17% increase in home sales.

Integrated Communications

Award of Merit Winners

CarMax for "CarMax – We Buy All The Cars, and Sometimes The 'Stuff' in Them, Too – Capitalizing a Moment in Internet Culture"

The CarMax PR team joined forces with the marketing and social media teams to lead and leverage a real-time campaign opportunity to drive key results for the business, including landing national news media placements and creating a two percent lift in overall awareness for the company. The team capitalized on an external viral video, created strong strategies despite a quick timeline, and somehow agreed to buy a cat in the process! All objectives were met, and key learnings have positioned the teams to tackle similar 'positive crisis' situations in the future, proving once again that PR truly deserves a seat at the table!

VANCE and Venture Richmond for "Lucky 13: A Record-Breaking year for the Richmond Folk Festival"

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Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations and Virginia Commonwealth University Engineering, Marketing and Communications for “VCU Engineering’s Medicines for All Awarded \$25 Million to Increase Access to Lifesaving Medications”

In 2017, Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of Engineering received the largest private grant in university history \$25 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to establish the Medicines for All Institute and to fund the institute’s work on a wide range of global health treatments. With this grant, the institute can help increase access to lifesaving medications for HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases around the world. The grant’s magnitude presented the opportunity to create awareness and buzz about VCU’s preeminence in pharmaceutical engineering, positioning VCU as one of the nation’s premier urban public research universities.

Internal Communications

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Lottery for “Communicating the Strategy Game Plan”

In 2017, the Virginia Lottery communications team was tasked with rolling out the organization’s new Game Plan (strategy), a simplified road map showing how the Lottery would work toward achieving its strategic goal of increasing its consumer base. The Game Plan visually demonstrated the organization’s fresh direction through three “teams”- Top Employer, Trusted Gaming Source and With the Consumer/Retailer Experience. Through internal communications, the Lottery developed and executed on strategies and tactics to clearly communicate the new Game Plan, and help employees understand their role within it.

Capital One for “Capital One’s Finance Organization Vision: Be Greater Than”

(Confidential)

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for “DAR Details Weekly E-Newsletter”

A facelift was in order as we approached the 100th edition of DAR Details, the weekly internal e-newsletter for Virginia Commonwealth University’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations. The newsletter functions as a two-way information pipeline between DAR and all schools and units. After two years, our format was stale and unable to handle increasing news flow from an expanding DAR staff. Readers who persisted to the end of the email occasionally encountered “message clipped.” We had to tame the unwieldy beast. The solution to shortening the newsletter without sacrificing vital content was a redesign with informative teasers that hyperlinked to expanded content in a new blog.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “Great Place: HR Redesign Open Comment Campaign

Virginia Commonwealth University held an Open Comment period in February 2017 to gain employee feedback regarding its draft HR policy. The draft was a massive overhaul of the

current HR policy and was the result of university-wide input, research and analysis. Traditionally, open comment periods have had little engagement, creating a challenge for leadership. High engagement would be critical to the successful adaptation of the policy. VCU developed an internal communications campaign called “Great Place: HR Redesign Open Comment” to encourage feedback. The result was an unprecedented 889 comments and the revised policy was successfully approved in May 2017.

Altria for “Simplifying Our Business to Win the Future”

Employee engagement surveys at Altria indicated that employees across the company felt their ideas to simplify the business were not being heard or making it to the appropriate decision maker. To give employees an opportunity and platform to share their ideas to simplify work and begin to simplify the company, the Altria Communications team created the Simplification Challenge to help identify and bring their ideas to life. The Challenge exceeded all objectives, with 200 simplification ideas for policies, processes and systems submitted across the business, and a renewed spirit from employees and leaders to simplify work.

Award of Excellence Winner

The Hodges Partnership and Hilldrup Moving and Storage for “Bridging the Divide Between Sales and Marketing”

Hilldrup, with the assistance of The Hodges Partnership (THP), implemented an internal social media management campaign to bolster the individual social media efforts of Hilldrup's sales team, while also fostering better relations between sales and marketing. The marketing team used a social media content management/distribution tool - Dynamic Signal - that pushed approved social posts to its sales staff for them to publish on their own social account with a single screen tap. The campaign generated more than 1.5 million social media impressions and a better relationship between the sales and marketing departments.

Investor Relations

Award of Merit Winner

Rhudy & Co. Strategic Communications for “Bringing “Investor Day” to Life in November 2017”

Altria held its annual Investor Day November 2, 2017. This year's event was unique because, for the first time in many years, the event was held in Richmond at Philip Morris USA Manufacturing Center, and because there was a strong focus on innovation in the messaging. As part of the planning committee, Rhudy & Co. developed the powerful visual theme for the event and the accompanying collateral-including the invitation, facility decorations, and presentation templates. We also worked with the client to develop a compelling storyline, and we produced several videos that played as part of the Investor Day content.

Marketing Business to Business

Award of Merit Winner

Charles Ryan Associates and Anthem for “Anthem Small Group Welcome Kit”

Charles Ryan Associates created a welcome campaign for small businesses with new health coverage in Anthem's 14 states. This campaign included a custom welcome kit, welcome website and welcome email all geared to helping employers understand their health coverage to better serve their employees.

Award of Excellence Winner

The Hodges Partnership and Connexions Loyalty for “Building Loyalty Through Content with Connexions Loyalty”

Connexions Loyalty is a loyalty marketing company that provides consumer rewards redemption programs and technology to industries like hotels, airlines and credit cards. The Hodges Partnership built and executed a content program that helped the company's marketing team generate sales leads for Connexions' business division.

Marketing Consumer Products and Services

Award of Merit Winners

Padilla and the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Building Brand Through CHoR's Extra-Special Specialists”

At Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU (CHoR), every specialist is a little extra special, and has a unique ability to care for kids across a wide spectrum of medical challenges. Research revealed these specialists continuously go above expectations and beyond their credentials to make sure their patients still feel like kids. CHoR engaged Padilla to create and launch a campaign that would highlight CHoR's more than 200 experts trained in nearly every recognized pediatric specialty, and elevate the CHoR brand. As a result, CHoR recorded a 17 percent increase in volume of appointments.

Elevation and Virginia Credit Union for “Virginia Credit Union Awkward Conversations Campaign”

Elevation created the “Awkward Conversations” broadcast campaign for Virginia Credit Union to target prospects during four key life stage events: 1) starting a career; 2) getting married; 3) getting a divorce; and 4) thinking about retirement. The creative produced depicted these four scenarios with three alternate endings—one that promoted an auto loan, a second that promoted a home loan, and a third that promoted budgeting and saving, personal loans, or retirement products. The result was a 17.8% lift in total online loan leads over the previous year, representing a whopping 637% return on investment based on the lead value.

VCU Business Services for “Welcome, Rams! Utilizing New Student Orientation to Promote Campus Services”

Each summer, Virginia Commonwealth University hosts over 5,000 incoming students for New Student Orientation (NSO). During the summer of 2017, VCU Campus Services at Virginia Commonwealth University unveiled a new, creative and multi-faceted approach to their presence at NSO. The team used a variety of public relations tactics to enhance the department's exposure to new students and families. The result was a memorable, educational

experience that ultimately contributed to an increase in sales (such as 34% sales growth at the technology store) and engagement (such as 717 newsletter sign-ups vs. the initial goal of 250) leading into the fall.

Award of Excellence Winners

Virginia’s Community Colleges for “Veterans Portal: Credits2Careers”

Virginia’s 800,000 veterans had no way to translate their experience and training into academic credits. Virginia’s Community College System (VCCS) received a federal grant to create a first-of-its-kind online academic and career portal that instantly converts military training and experience into academic credits for 1,700 programs and credentials offered by VCCS colleges. Called Credits2Careers, the portal also provides real-time employment information and helps students explore civilian careers. Even zero marketing funds couldn’t stop the portal’s success, which, thanks to creative tactics and word-of-mouth marketing, saw visitors and user sign-ups more than double in the first six weeks of launch.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “VCU “Some Things Are Just Better in the Summer” Summer Studies Campaign”

In spring 2017, VCU’s Division of Strategic Enrollment Management tasked VCU’s University Relations with creating a campaign to promote Summer Studies and reverse declining summer enrollment trends. The “Some Things Are Just Better in the Summer” campaign ran February through April featuring on-campus events, paid and organic social media, and other assets. The team chose the theme “Some Things are Just Better in the Summer” to give flexibility in promoting the classes, professors and various reasons/benefits of attending summer session. The messaging also highlighted positive aspects of summer in Richmond to lessen the negative stigma associated with summer school.

Multicultural Public Relations

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “DACA Response”

When the federal government announced plans to let Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) expire, more than 70 Virginia Commonwealth University students suddenly faced uncertain futures. In response, the university quickly coordinated efforts between Executive Communications and University Public Affairs to develop a communications plan to express support for VCU’s DACA students and make certain they knew what resources were available. Tactics included statements from university administrators, delivered both in-person and through electronic media; web and social media resources; and coordinating university-media relations. Messages struck a consistent tone and were well-received by the community, and especially by VCU’s DACA students.

Public Service

Award of Merit Winners

Roanoke County Public Schools for "Graduation Live 2018"

In November 2016, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe declared that opioid and heroin addiction and abuse was a state public health crisis. Roanoke County Public Schools teamed up with the Roanoke Valley Opioid and Heroin Task Force and the Prevention Council of Roanoke County to hold a series of community meetings to start a conversation about opioid and heroin abuse. More than 1000 people attended, raising awareness about this ongoing epidemic.

Virginia Department of Emergency Management for "Virginia Department of Emergency Management – Know Your Zone Campaign"

VDEM's Know Your Zone Campaign promoted important lifesaving messages on Virginia's new tiered evacuation program to 1.25 million residents in 23 localities. VDEM adopted a simple, clear and effective "Know Your Zone" campaign as our brand. It included a toolkit of digital and print materials and logos, earned, owned and paid programs, and a scalable communication plan for localities. After the campaign 1/3 of respondents were aware of "Know Your Zone", 23% correctly identified their zone and 25% took direct action. Ads generated 10.8 million Facebook impressions, 4,614 shares, 7,058 reactions, 3,109 new VDEM Facebook likes and 456,187 pageviews.

Madison+Main and the Virginia Office of the Attorney General for "Respect Richmond"

In 2017, Virginia's Office of the Attorney General decided to tackle the growing problem of gang crime and gun violence in Richmond with a goal of decreasing firearm homicides, aggravated assaults, and gang-related violent crimes by 10%. On Sept. 29, 2017, Madison+Main launched "Respect Richmond" — a balanced, highly targeted awareness campaign combining digital, social, traditional, and non-traditional marketing to reach three distinct audiences. Our graphic, impactful messaging was formulated and delivered using geographic data, demographic data, interests, and behaviors. So far, data from Q1 2018 is already showing a reduction of violent crime in the region.

Eastern Virginia Medical School for "EVMS Sepsis Treatment Awareness Campaign"

What do you do when a physician claims he has a homegrown cure for the deadly infection sepsis? His discovery is inexpensive, safe and has potential, he says, to save millions of lives globally. At first glance, it looks like a blockbuster story guaranteed to grab headlines worldwide and revolutionize care. But the evidence (while compelling) is limited. Not only that, vitamin C (one of three treatment ingredients) is widely scorned by the medical community. Despite those challenges, our announcement achieved unprecedented coverage, attracted considerable support to underwrite additional research and ignited a national conversation that has helped save lives.

DRIVE SMART Virginia for "Distracted Driving Simulator Campaign"

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for American teens. In 2016 in Virginia, there were 18,501 crashes involving teen drivers resulting in 76 fatalities. Using a handheld device while driving is a leading cause of distraction-related crashes. State Farm Insurance provided a grant for DRIVE SMART Virginia to create a distracted driving program that includes a hands-on distracted driving simulator. In 2017, the DRIVE SMART Virginia distracted driving simulator

visited 29 teen events and directly reached more than 6,000 young drivers. 81 percent of teens who used the simulator said they would be less likely to drive distracted.

Award of Excellence Winner

Eastern Virginia Medical School for “Boost ‘Em in the Back Seat and Avoid Regret”

Buckle up. This was the perfect storm — a compelling message delivered at the right time via the right vehicle. A Facebook post of our grant-funded video on booster seat safety unexpectedly went viral the week of Thanksgiving 2017. The explosive response included 10.3 million video views, nearly 265,000 likes, nearly 222,000 shares and almost 83,000 comments. The resulting media storm led to intense activity on behalf of the EVMS team via social media, email and phone to respond to media inquiries as well as public comments and questions.

Public Affairs

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Department of Social Services for “Foster My Future”

In previous years, VDSS focused its foster care month outreach efforts on reaching potential foster care parents to encourage Virginians to consider fostering, a prerequisite for adopting youth through social services. However, this past year, VDSS decided not to solely direct efforts in this way. Rather, VDSS intentionally targeted and spoke to foster youth to empower them to equip themselves with life changing information (including available resources and support for education, living and medical expenses) without needing a third party. From this effort, “Foster My Future” was born.

Reputation Brand Management

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Department of Social Services for “You Never Outgrow the Need – Adoption Month Campaign”

VDSS made an earnest effort to educate Virginia’s adoptive families through the “You Never Outgrow” campaign. This campaign speaks to the theory that adoptive families don’t outgrow the need for love, family, and mainly support, simply because the adoption has been finalized. This campaign focused on post-adoption supports available to families in the form of counseling, financial support, medical support and other means of support. The underlying message was to assure adoptive families, formed through VDSS or otherwise, that VDSS was a present-help and support as they navigate the adoptive family journey.

Carilion Clinic for “Carilion Clinic: A Decade of Transformation”

Ten years after restructuring as an integrated care delivery system, Carilion Clinic patients and community members remained largely unaware of the benefits. A multi-faceted campaign capitalized on the milestone to build Carilion’s reputation for clinical sophistication and deepen community support essential for long-term success. Carilion’s reputation grew nationally, with its

CEO ranked among Modern Healthcare’s “100 Most Influential Leaders” and recognition by U.S. News & World Report among the top 1 percent of hospitals nationally.

Award of Excellence Winner

Commonwealth Partnerships for “Bolstering Reputation & Corporate Sponsorships at LDDI”

Virginia Tech’s Land Development and Design Initiative (LDDI), a first-of-its-kind program, relies on financial support from the private sector to fund a majority of its activities. LDDI had seen an erosion of sponsorships in recent years and recognized the need to launch a campaign to promote and enhance its reputation. Commonwealth Partnerships developed and implemented a phased strategy that used earned media placements and op-eds to bolster awareness around LDDI and its reputation. The campaign resulted in the highest-ever number of corporate sponsors and approximately \$50,000 in additional revenue for the program.

Capital Awards

Annual Reports

Award of Merit Winners

The Nature Conservancy for “Our Virginia: 2017 Year in Review”

The Nature Conservancy's innovative science-based solutions are designed to secure clean water in Virginia's rivers and bays, foster healthy forests, protect our oceans and coasts, and ensure access to shared green spaces across the commonwealth. From bringing stakeholders to the table to confront environmental threats to deploying new scientific tools that empower communities to make informed decisions, The Nature Conservancy is engaging with diverse partners to solve the top conservation challenges of our time and create a world where nature and people can thrive.

St. Joseph’s Villa for “St. Joseph’s Villa 2017 Annual Impact Report”

“Together We Rise” is the theme of St. Joseph’s Villa’s 2017 Annual Impact Report. In reporting key highlights, outcomes, and financial performance from the year, the ‘rising’ concept is woven throughout copy and imagery with multiple applications. It is used to describe the forging of new partnerships, program growth and innovations, and the successes of children and families across the Villa’s spectrum of services. While all donors and volunteers received a mailed copy, the Annual Impact Report is distributed throughout the year as a central communications piece for telling the Villa’s story.

Award of Excellence Winner

Carilion Clinic for “Every Moment, Moving Forward”

Ten years after restructuring as an integrated care delivery system, Carilion Clinic patients and community members remained largely unaware of the benefits. A special commemorative 2016

annual report helped change that. Following its publication, research showed more than three-quarters of readers recognized Carilion's increased clinical sophistication and significant investments in education and research. Almost 70 percent agreed that Carilion's work to reorganize as a 'clinic' was a good idea. Most important, overall support for Carilion increased 20 percent.

Blogs

Award of Merit Winners

Wireside Communications and NTT Communications for "NTT Com's IDG Contributor Network Blog Series"

To position client NTT Communications (NTT Com) as a leading provider of Global Enterprise Services in the US and to influence enterprises' ICT purchasing decisions, Wireside took a tactical approach through creation of a B-to-B blog that was showcased on one of the industry's top publications for CIOs and business technology executives. The success of the first blog led to the creation of three additional blogs, and together, the four blogs give NTT Com access to 8 million+ UVP. Wireside has delivered 11 articles across the four blogs, along with supporting social media content, garnering nearly 10,000 views and 37,000 LinkedIn impressions to date.

VANCE and Venture Richmond for "RFF Insider: Getting the Scoop on Richmond's Favorite Festival"

VANCE has had the good fortune of working with Venture Richmond to promote the Richmond Folk Festival since 2013. Until recently, we've focused on building excitement through a robust media relations initiative. The program has successfully placed a steady drumbeat of earned media stories that people have come to expect and seek out as early as May and June. While the value of the third-party endorsement and reach of the press remains high, the Richmond Folk Festival has successfully developed its own media platform designed to celebrate and captivate its die-hard fan base.

Award of Excellence Winner

MCV Foundation for "Stories of Patient Care, Research and Education on the MCV Campus at VCU Health"

The MCV Foundation began populating its multimedia blog in 2017 to grow website engagement and traffic, supply content for Facebook posts and print/digital advertising, and reinforce thoroughly researched key messages. Using text, images and video, the MCV Foundation told stories of lifesaving care, innovative research and world-class education happening on the MCV Campus at VCU Health. In the first half of its fiscal year, the MCV Foundation cultivated 7,000 blog page views, increased its Facebook followers by 166%, achieved a Facebook reach of 250,000 and Facebook engagement of 20,000 on blog-related posts, and achieved its messaging/audience goals.

Brochures

Award of Merit Winner

Virginia Lottery for “Play Responsibly in English & Spanish”

An estimated 2 percent of the population suffers from some form of gambling addiction. For those people, games of chance can be as harmful and addicting as a dangerous drug. In recent years, in part because of its relationship with a revamped Virginia Council on Problem Gambling (VACPG), the Lottery has stepped up its Responsible Gaming program. The only statutory requirement placed on the Lottery by Virginia lawmakers is that each ticket must contain a phone number where people with gambling problems can get help. To better educate the public (not just lottery players) about gambling addiction, the Virginia Lottery in 2017 produced Play Responsibly brochures in English and Spanish.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Department of Health OFHS for “VDHLiveWell Brochure”

How do you lead an orchestra of soloists? “Solo routines” were normal at the Virginia Department of Health’s Office of Family Health Services. There were over 18 unique federally funded programs that focused on strengthening family and community health, plus risk avoidance tips and information on how certain issues affect public health. These programs maintain unique funding varying from \$5,000 to multi-million dollar block grants without internal communications guidance. After a concise communications audit and complete understanding of the business to consumer needs, the team created a unified brand and marketing collateral to position the office’s programs from one sheet of music – the VDHLiveWell brochure.

Creative Tactics

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Business Services for “Using Virtual Reality to Reinvent New Student Orientation”

Each summer, Virginia Commonwealth University hosts over 5,000 incoming students for New Student Orientation. During the summer of 2017, VCU Campus Services unveiled a new, creative and community-focused approach to their presence at NSO: an immersive booth complete with a virtual reality station. The VR station allowed audiences to virtually visit the department’s three main locations on campus: the dining center, technology store and bookstore. The result was a creative, memorable and educational experience for students that ultimately contributed to an increase in sales leading into the fall semester.

ndp and Luk Fu Restaurant – Waterside District for “Luk Fu Lion Dance Parade”

Waterside District, a vibrant waterfront gathering place for dining and entertainment in downtown Norfolk, Va., wanted to build excitement about all of the culinary options for visitors to enjoy after Waterside's Grand Opening in Spring 2017. When Luk Fu, a Pan-Asian restaurant, committed in January to have its second location in Waterside District, ndp organized a Lion Dance Parade for the Chinese New Year to announce the news. Parade-goers got Fortune Cookies with messages about Luk Fu. The Lion Dancers were a hit on mainstream and social media, resulting in conversation and coverage about Luk Fu and Waterside District.

Virginia Department of Transportation for “Series of VDOT Roundabout Demonstrations in the City of Colonial Heights”

The interchange of Interstate 95 and Temple Avenue in Colonial Heights was becoming dangerous and congested. Through extensive study, the Virginia Department of Transportation’s Richmond District engineers determined that a new-to-the-community configuration, a roundabout, would be the best targeted approach to improve safety and traffic flow at this location. Since some locals were unfamiliar with the design, VDOT needed to create a way for people to safely experience the new intersection before it opened. Enter the Roundabout Mat: a large, walkable 24-foot by 30-foot mat complete with guiding signage and pavement markings.

The Hodges Partnership and Kroger for “Kroger Fights Hunger with “Supermarket Sweep” in Richmond

To raise awareness about hunger in Richmond in a creative way, Kroger and Hodges coordinated the area’s first-ever take on 90s game show "Supermarket Sweep" -- known as "Shop to Stop Hunger." For 60 seconds, five Richmond "celebrities" filled their carts with in-demand food bank items. FeedMore walked away with a \$2,500 donation, plus all the food the contestants piled into their carts. Nielsen media impressions reported 143,958 and social media impressions reached nearly 31k, including CBS’s Facebook Live video that reached 13k viewers. Kroger will host the 2018 Shop to Stop Hunger and Jake Burns will defend his title.

Commonwealth Public Relations and Sea Tow Services International for “Dogs of Sea Tow Campaign Leads to Creative Use of Chocolate Lab for Publicity”

When our client Sea Tow, which provides on-the-water assistance to boaters 24-hours a day, asked us to increase awareness and membership of its N.C. franchise, “research” threw us a creative idea we couldn’t pass up. We discovered that the franchise owner and captain had a 100-pound lab co-captain named Charlie Brown, which led to the first-ever “Dogs of Sea Tow” campaign. We leveraged Charlie’s story to place an article in The Wilmington Star-News and used it to generate additional media coverage. The franchise saw an increase in awareness and membership from 1,500 Facebook shares, 2-million impressions and 200,000 online readers.

Bon Secours Richmond Health System for “DispatchHealth Ride Along”

Bon Secours and DispatchHealth launched a new home health care service in Richmond. In addition to a press event, a creative tactic of an exclusive, embargoed ride-along opportunity was secured with the market’s number one TV station in an effort to help consumers understand how to use this new service. The story reached an audience 123,960 people through coverage on WWBT-TV NBC 12 during the 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. newscasts with a bonus airing on WRLH-TV FOX 35 - Fox News at 10 p.m. The sentiment of the coverage was very positive and included desired messaging.

The Nature Conservancy for “Vintage Nature Conservancy Posters”

The Nature Conservancy’s innovative science-based solutions are designed to secure clean water in Virginia’s rivers and bays, foster healthy forests, protect our oceans and coasts, and ensure access to shared green spaces across the commonwealth. From bringing stakeholders to the table to confront environmental threats to deploying new scientific tools that empower

communities to make informed decisions, The Nature Conservancy is engaging with diverse partners to solve the top conservation challenges of our time and create a world where nature and people can thrive.

Award of Excellence Winner

Rhudy & Co. Strategic Communications and Altria for ONE CRT Bridge

As Rhudy & Co. worked with executives at Altria's Center for Research and Technology to launch its ONE CRT campaign, they discovered a perfect bit of real estate for a new creative tactic. The window-lined enclosed bridge that connects the employee parking deck to the state-of-the-art building was previously a blank canvas. By infusing energetic music, colorful clings, hanging signs and lenticular posters on a rotating basis, the bridge now helps employees start their day with energy for the CRT's north star to "shape the future."

Direct Mail / Direct Response

Award of Merit Winners

Sara Hunt PR and Colonial Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad for "CBVRS Fundraising Letters"

Colonial Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad depends on financial contributions from the community to help fund expenses for training and equipment throughout the year. Donations are solicited through a twice-yearly direct mail campaign. In 2017, the two mailers were crafted to engage recipients by sharing news about the squad through the voices of a teenager and a dog. The result was a whopping 168 percent increase in 2017 contributions over the 2016 amount. That's doggone good!

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for "Annual Giving Fall Kickoff Appeal"

VCU is in the middle of the Make It Real Campaign for VCU, the largest fundraising campaign in the university's history. The Office of Annual Giving wanted to create a direct mail appeal that would reach a wide audience of potential annual fund donors to create awareness of the campaign, show the importance of financial support at any level and solicit gifts from these individuals.

Award of Excellence Winner

MCV Foundation for "Establishing Legacies Through Planned Giving on the MCV Campus"

The MCV Foundation, which serves five schools and two healthcare units on the MCV Campus at VCU Health, simplified its planned giving direct mail collateral in late 2017 to be shorter, more visually oriented and easier to read. The mailer returned \$113,000 in new contributions that benefited four of the medical campus's five schools and achieved a 1,683% return on investment. In addition, a potential \$1 million donor received the mailing and inquired with the MCV Foundation about how to make future gifts to support the campus.

Editorial/Op-Ed Columns

Award of Merit Winners

The Hodges Partnership and Enrichmond for “Resurrecting Evergreen Cemetery and the Stories it Holds”

The historic African-American Evergreen Cemetery was in disrepair and overgrown when Enrichmond gained ownership of the property and committed to restoring the sacred grounds. To reach audiences like legislators, community members, families of the interred and skeptics, Hodges recommended Enrichmond pen an op-ed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch to share the rich history of the property, its commitment, and the collaborative process for restoring the grounds. The op-ed ran on Sunday, November 18, a day the editorial editor selected for its high readership. The perfect way to make the biggest impact with an op-ed.

Commonwealth Public Relations and United Methodist Family Services for “UMFS Op-Ed Gets Lawmaker’s Attention of 60,000 Children in Virginia Losing Their Health Insurance”

In Virginia, over 60,000 families rely on the national Children’s Health Insurance Program to provide much needed health insurance coverage. These families fall in a middle ground of not qualifying for Medicaid, but simply cannot afford health insurance premiums. When Congress allowed the funding to lapse, Virginia children were put in a tough situation. The president and CEO of a local nonprofit called UMFS used an op-ed in the state’s largest daily newspaper to bring attention to the topic to lawmakers and ensure families knew what was coming and how to be prepared.

Award of Excellence Winner

The Nature Conservancy for “Mitchell and Wright: Preserving the Land, Protecting the Future”

The Nature Conservancy's innovative science-based solutions are designed to secure clean water in Virginia's rivers and bays, foster healthy forests, protect our oceans and coasts, and ensure access to shared green spaces across the Commonwealth. From bringing stakeholders to the table to confront environmental threats to deploying new scientific tools that empower communities to make informed decisions, The Nature Conservancy is engaging with diverse partners to solve the top conservation challenges of our time and create a world where nature and people can thrive.

External Video Programs

Award of Merit Winner

The Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Public Communications Office – Central Office for “Virginia State Parks Nature Break Commercials”

The Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Public Communications Office produces and creates all regional and national advertising for Virginia State Parks. 2017, marked the last year of the very successful Nature Break commercials that were created to “cut the noise” of typical

“loud, in-your-face” television commercials by offering a “nature break” or moment of the peace and beauty that can only be found outside.

Award for Excellence Winner

The Hodges Partnership and Kroger for “Seeing is Believing: Bringing Kroger’s Giving to Life in RVA”

Kroger is frequently recognized by FORTUNE as one of the most generous companies in the U.S., and locally received a similar honor as the only grocer on Richmond BizSense’s list of most generous companies. In Richmond, Virginia, Kroger is engaged in “grocery wars” – and companywide, all eyes are on Richmond. In July 2017, Kroger Mid-Atlantic’s agency The Hodges Partnership began work on a video that would highlight Kroger’s local giving. The end result? A video that premiered to an audience of 125,000 viewers in the Richmond community, including Kroger shoppers and potential customers.

Feature Stories

Award of Merit Winners

VMDAEC for “Spreading Kindness, One Rock at a Time”

Spreading Kindness by Laura Emery was published in the October 2017 issue of Cooperative Living magazine. Cooperative Living is issued 10 times annually by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives for the member-consumers of 12 electric cooperatives in Virginia. The magazine’s circulation is more than 520,000. Every person who receives the magazine is a cooperative member, meaning every person who receives the magazine is an owner of the cooperative that provides his or her electric service. Cooperative Living serves as the primary communication venue from the business to the member. The cooperative’s members are the magazine’s audience.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “VCU Researcher Develops Lyme Disease Diagnostic and Comes Closer to a Human Vaccine”

The feature story “VCU researcher develops Lyme disease diagnostic and comes closer to creating a human vaccine” is part of Virginia Commonwealth University’s PR strategy to promote long-term, news worthy research endeavors that take new discoveries from the lab to the community. The piece is an update about the continued success of Dr. Richard Marconi’s work on Lyme disease vaccines for humans and dogs, and Lyme disease tests for humans. The feature was our second most widely-read news story in 2017.

Jenny Pedraza Communications, LLC and the University of West Florida for “Sea Change Stories Help to Launch a New Brand”

In the 2016-17 academic year, the University of West Florida in Pensacola, FL. turned 50 years old. This milestone also coincided with the launch of a new brand identity for the university: Sea Change – a Profound Transformation. A series of “Sea Change” features were written for the UWF website to help launch the new brand and position UWF as “the bright, innovative side of Florida.”

ndp and Our Health Richmond for “A Journey of Physical and Spiritual Healing”

As Virginia and the nation debate gun control once again, this article shares the story of how a young man, at the height of his potential and with a life destined for greatness, overcame immense odds to live his dream following a firearms accident. While much attention is on mass shootings or crime-ridden inner cities, victims come from all walks of life – even those who appear to have it all. The story hit home for readers as the magazine received a slew of requests for copies and garnered an increase in social media activity.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations and VCU Police for “Options, Resources, Support: A Look at How VCU is Responding to Sexual Assault

Virginia Commonwealth University’s Public Affairs team wanted a permanent, informative narrative available online to outline the university’s resources for sexual assault survivors. There was a clear need to highlight how students, faculty and staff can report and get support following a sexual assault. The 2017 feature story explains, in detail, how VCU Police, Equity and Access Services, The Wellness Resource Center and a student support group are serving survivors at VCU.

Award of Excellence Winner

VCU School of Engineering, Marketing and Communications and Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering for “VCU Researchers Study Space Radiation Impacts on Bone and Muscle Health”

A VCU School of Engineering researcher is principal investigator on a NASA-funded project to study the effects of space radiation on muscle and bone. The study suggests space radiation may cause astronauts in outer space to lose additional bone, but not more muscle. It also raises questions for humans on Earth dealing with age-related bone and muscle loss. It attracted attention in prestigious scholarly journals, and had widespread appeal for the general public. To direct the public to this intriguing study, the school’s Department of Marketing and Communications published a feature story to raise internal and external audience awareness.

Influencer Program

Award of Merit Winner

Virginia Tourism Corporation for “Birthplace of ‘American Booze FAM Tour”

VTC created a two-track familiarization tour to showcase Virginia's history by way of its culinary and craft beverage offerings. The tour hosted six media (three traditional journalists, three influencers) and showcased Charlottesville, Richmond and Williamsburg, Virginia. The media was split into two groups, with three exploring Charlottesville’s wine and spirits and three exploring Richmond’s craft beer and spirits. Both tracks met in Williamsburg at the end of the week for a tour of historic Colonial Williamsburg followed by a five-course wine dinner at Williamsburg Winery. Results of the FAM tour resulted in numerous social posts, videos and blogs highlighting the trip.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Tourism Corporation for “Eat Travel Rock”

VTC worked with influencer Kelly Rizzo of "Eat Travel Rock" as part of an effort to better promote Richmond's food and music scenes. "Eat Travel Rock" is a video series hosted by Rizzo, dedicated to showing off the local food and music in various destinations. VTC provided an itinerary covering local restaurants, music venues and outdoor festivals in the Richmond area. Two episodes of "Eat Travel Rock" were produced, one focusing on Richmond's music scene and the other on its food scene. Rizzo provided additional coverage on her social channels and Chicago outlets WGNTV and 101-WKQX.

Internal / Intranet Video Programs

Award of Merit Winner

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for “Black & Gold & You videos”

For fundraisers at Virginia Commonwealth University, asking fellow faculty and staff members and retirees for a gift requires a delicate touch – straightforwardness tinged with tact. A critical component of the annual faculty, staff and retiree campaign is a series of videotaped testimonials, incorporated into the Black & Gold & You monthly e-newsletters, from colleagues who expressed why they give back, how satisfying it was to aid students, patients and programs and how gratifying it was to repay the university for their valuable career experiences. The Office of Development and Alumni Communications team hoped that putting a face and voice to solicitation would resonate with peers.

Award of Excellence Winner

Keiter for “This is Your Firm Video Series”

The accounting profession in the United States is facing a talent war with over two-thirds of certified public accountants retiring in the next 15 years and the considerable competition for top talent. This leaves CPA firms with the task of creating unique and innovative ways not only to attract talent but also to retain it. By creating an inspirational video series that features staff describing in their own words why “This is my Firm”, this video series created for employees and recruits has realized 82% staff retention rate, 122% increase in staff, and social media reach of 34,844 impressions.

Magazines

Award of Merit Winners

VMDAEC for “Cooperative Living Magazine”

Cooperative Living magazine is published 10 times annually by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives for the member-consumers of 12 electric cooperatives in Virginia. The magazine's circulation is more than 520,000. Every person who receives the magazine is a cooperative member, meaning every person who receives the magazine is an owner of the cooperative that provides his or her electric service. Cooperative

Living serves as the primary communication venue from the business to the member. The cooperative's members are the magazine's target audience.

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for "VCU Alumni Magazine"

Virginia Commonwealth University's alumni magazine, produced biannually, fosters a continuing link among alumni of the university as well as keeps donors, faculty, community leaders and peer institutions apprised of what's happening on and around campus. VCU Alumni publishes the same content under two flags: Scarab, which mails to alumni of VCU's health sciences schools, and Shafer Court Connections, delivered to alumni of the arts, humanities and social sciences schools. To these audiences, the magazine provides a unified voice of VCU's liberal arts and medical campuses, while highlighting the leaders and innovators moving VCU forward today.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia ABC for "Spirited Virginia Magazine"

Spirited Virginia Magazine is the flagship publication of Virginia ABC. This quarterly, 64-page, color magazine includes interesting stories about distilled spirits, beautiful photography, cocktail recipes, special columns, agency news and Virginia ABC's product price lists. The publication is provided to all 5,100 mixed beverage licensed establishments and made available in Virginia ABC stores to retail customers free of charge.

Media Relations: National

Award of Merit Winners

OFD Consulting, LLC and the International Academy of Wedding and Event Planning for "Agency Hired 3 Weeks Prior to Trend Report Launch and Triples National Press"

In December 2016, OFD Consulting was presented with a request to launch and promote an influential international wedding trends report with only three weeks lead-time and exclusively using our contacts and media relationships. Our team developed a strategy heavily focused on partnering with B2B media to reach industry readership, successfully gaining national press in outlets such as Brides.com, The Huffington Post, Country Living and PopSugar. We ultimately doubled the number of press mentions from the year prior leading to a considerable increase in report downloads, social media engagement and views of the report video online.

Commonwealth Public Relations and Avail Vapor for "AVAIL Vapor Lights Up National Media Coverage of New Partnership"

It was a first in the e-cigarette, vaping industry. A west coast company had partnered with an east coast company (competitor) to leverage its manufacturing capabilities and large retail network to make and sell its product. Research was the game changer for this project and revealed that the partnership between our client AVAIL Vapor and Charlie's Chalk Dust would be news never before announced in the vaping industry. With this in mind, we leveraged a strategic media relations program targeting both industry media, as well as local media on both coasts to generate broad coverage of the partnership.

Award of Excellence Winners

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Sextuplets = Six Times the Fun and Planning”

The Taiwos tried to conceive for 17 years. The couples’ dreams came true on May 11, 2017 when they welcomed not one, but six babies into the world at VCU Medical Center. The sextuplets were in good condition in the neonatal intensive care unit at Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU – and the Taiwos were finally parents. In order to manage the sensitive and high-profile medical story, garner international media attention and direct various audiences to owned media channels, CHoR and VCU Health developed a media relations strategy that produced record-breaking website hits and more than 1.1 billion impressions.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “Opioid Crisis Media Relations”

Soon after Virginia’s governor declared opioid addiction a public health emergency, VCU’s Division of University Relations convened a workgroup to brainstorm how to publicize the lifesaving research, education and treatment efforts underway at the university to curb the opioid epidemic. The plan was focused on landing national media hits, which served to advance the university’s goal of achieving national recognition as a fully integrated research university with a commitment to human health. Through creative media relations strategies and reliance on industry best practices, the plan exceeded its goals in securing positive national media coverage for VCU.

Media Relations: Regional

Award of Merit Winners

Padilla and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Virginia Treatment Center for Children Transforms Children’s Mental Health”

Nationwide, only one in four children receives the mental health care they need. This shortfall also exists in Virginia, with more demand for services than capacity. Virginia Treatment Center for Children helps bridge that gap, offering inpatient acute care, crisis stabilization and outpatient services to children and families. In 2017, Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU constructed a new, expanded VTCC facility to replace its 50-year-old facility. CHoR and Padilla developed a media event to introduce stakeholders to the facility, its increased capacity and its design. The media event exceeded projected attendance and media impressions.

Office of the State Inspector General and State Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline for “State Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline Promotion”

The State Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline is an anonymous tip line that allows state employees and Virginia citizens to report wrongdoing in state government without fear of retaliation or retribution. As part of its responsibility to inform citizens about the hotline, the Office of the State Inspector General implemented a seasonal media relations tactic — a trio of strategically timed news releases — to raise public awareness about this important resource. OSIG exceeded its measurable goals with a 60 percent uptick in hotline calls and total media

impressions of more than 1.5 million, spanning the Tidewater, Richmond and Charlottesville regions.

The Nature Conservancy for “Virginia Coast Reserve: Supporting Human and Natural Communities on Virginia’s Eastern Shore”

The Nature Conservancy's innovative science-based solutions are designed to secure clean water in Virginia's rivers and bays, foster healthy forests, protect our oceans and coasts, and ensure access to shared green spaces across the Commonwealth. From bringing stakeholders to the table to confront environmental threats to deploying new scientific tools that empower communities to make informed decisions, The Nature Conservancy is engaging with diverse partners to solve the top conservation challenges of our time and create a world where nature and people can thrive.

Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services for “No Place Hot Enough in Hell” Financial Exploitation of Elderly Virginians”

The commissioner of Virginia's Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services once said on live TV that “(T)here’s no place hot enough in hell” for those who rob elderly Virginians of their savings. Late in 2016, DARS reported that financial exploitation fleeces elderly Virginians of as much as \$1 billion a year. The challenge for DARS' communications team in 2017 was to increase Virginia media coverage and public awareness of this heinous crime, without any budget. We capitalized on publicity generated by Virginia’s top elected officials, and strong relationships with reporters who cover aging, for a total of 13 pieces.

Commonwealth Public Relations and Sea Tow Wrightsville Beach for “Dogs of Sea Tow” Media Relations Campaign Leads to Increased Awareness and Member Growth for Local Franchise”

When our client Sea Tow, which provides on-the-water assistance to boaters 24-hours a day, asked us to increase awareness and membership of its N.C. franchise, “research” threw us a bone that we couldn’t pass up. We discovered that the franchise owner and captain had a 100-pound lab co-captain named Charlie Brown, which led to the first-ever “Dogs of Sea Tow” campaign. We leveraged Charlie’s story to place an article in The Wilmington Star-News and used it to generate additional media coverage. The franchise saw an increase in awareness and membership from 1,500 Facebook shares, 2-million impressions and 200,000 online readers.

Virginia Department of Transportation for “I-95 Neabsco Bridge Emergency Repair”

Right in the middle of the nation’s “worst single traffic hotspot” exists a 54-year-old bridge on Interstate 95 over Neabsco Creek. The bridge needed emergency repairs and the Virginia Department of Transportation undertook an aggressive timeline to complete repairs before Memorial Day, historically the start of summer traffic, affecting 70,000 cars a day. VDOT needed to alert drivers all along the eastern seaboard to the interstate closures. And since Virginia weather is rarely cooperative, they needed to alert them four times. Let’s talk about bridge repair!

Virginia Department of Transportation for “Work Zone Awareness Week”

Every year, the Federal Highway Administration declares National Work Zone Awareness Week to draw attention to highway work zones and the hundreds of people injured or killed in work zone crashes each year. Statistics are published about crashes, injuries and fatalities. Numbers and percentages are included on websites, posters and news releases. The Virginia Department of Transportation's Northern Virginia District decided to go in a different direction—humanization—to show the people that are affected by work zone crashes and to give the public a window into what it's like to work in a dangerous environment.

Award of Excellence Winners

ndp and Roanoke Regional Partnership for “Ballast Point Brewing Launch”

Managing media expectations and special requests is never easy. But when Ballast Point Brewing Company was about to open its new East Coast tasting room/kitchen and manufacturing facility, the media in Roanoke, Va. were as eager as thirsty cowboys in a saloon. With research and planning, we quenched their thirst for stories to open up a new venue that saw 28,000 customers in just a few weeks with no advertising.

Padilla and Virginia Lottery for “Honoring Virginia’s Teachers, One Thank-You Note at a Time”

In 2016, the Virginia Lottery and Padilla launched a statewide “Thank a Teacher” campaign to boost awareness of the Lottery’s educational mission and recognize deserving teachers around National Teacher Appreciation Week. In the campaign’s second year, the team honed its media relations strategy to increase the campaign’s reach. An expanded mix of long- and short-lead media opportunities, coupled with compelling messaging and new, easy-to-use visuals for media, led to a total of 21.5 million earned media impressions, nearly three times the objective. What’s more, Virginians sent more than 38,500 well-deserved thank-you notes to teachers, nearly one-and-a-half times the objective.

Newsletters

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for “Campaign News”

Campaign News is the e-newsletter for all donors to Virginia Commonwealth University’s Make It Real Campaign for VCU. Delivered quarterly to every donor to the campaign, no matter the amount of their gift, it is a way for us to reach everyone with a stewardship touch while showing the impact of philanthropy, keeping them invested in VCU’s goal and, hopefully, inspiring more gifts.

The Hodges Partnership and Swedish Match for The Umgas Newsletter Builds Community”

The Umgås editorial team launched a newsletter to build community for the Swedish-American site. Throughout 2017, newsletter subscribers grew by 128 percent. Utilizing playful headlines and engaging content, open and click-through rates were above industry standards.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Department of Transportation for “The Inner Loop”

The Virginia Department of Transportation’s Northern Virginia District spans four counties, but at times, it seems like different worlds. It’s made up of horse farms and urban cities, rivers and mountains, gravel roads and busy highways—the definition of diversity. Fortunately, its workforce of 763 strong fits that. From maintenance crews to design engineers, from environmentalists to Safety Service Patrollers, everyone has a compelling story to share. VDOT needed a tool to connect this veritable patchwork quilt of employees, and what better way to do so than with a newsletter, nay a magazine? Thus, The Inner Loop was born.

Online Videos

Award of Merit Winners

Padilla and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Virginia Treatment Center for Children Transforms Children’s Mental Health”

Nationwide, only one in four children receives the mental health care they need. This shortfall also exists in Virginia, with more demand for services than capacity. Virginia Treatment Center for Children helps bridge that gap, offering inpatient acute care, crisis stabilization and outpatient services to children and families. In 2017, Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU constructed a new, expanded VTCC facility to replace its 50-year-old facility. CHoR and Padilla developed a series of videos to introduce stakeholders to the facility, its increased capacity and its design. Videos exceeded projected views by 180 percent.

Padilla and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Building Brand Through CHoR’s Extra-Special Specialists”

At Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU, every specialist is a little extra special, and has a unique ability to care for kids across a wide spectrum of medical challenges. Research revealed these specialists continuously go above expectations and beyond their credentials to make sure their patients still feel like kids. CHoR engaged Padilla to create and launch a campaign that would highlight CHoR’s more than 200 experts trained in nearly every recognized pediatric specialty, and elevate the CHoR brand. As a result, CHoR recorded a 17 percent increase in volume of appointments.

City of Virginia Beach for “New Kempsville Recreation Center Grand Opening”

The City of Virginia Beach Communications Office produced the “New Kempsville Recreation Center Grand Opening” video to provide viewers with a tour of the City of Virginia Beach’s newest recreation facility. The video was posted about one week prior to the center being opened to the public and it served as the perfect sneak peek that successfully built anticipation. On opening day, June 29, 2017, hundreds of people lined up to get inside and, throughout the opening weekend, more than 15,000 guests came through to tour and use the new facility.

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for “Alumni-Owned Business Videos”

This past summer, VCU Alumni celebrated alumni entrepreneurs by offering a free decal to show their Ram pride. These videos served as an intro to the campaign and a way to engage alumni on social media. Through Web, email and social media communications, alumni were asked to let VCU Alumni know if they owned a business. In return, alumni received a “VCU Alumni-Owned Business” decal. Alumni were encouraged to post a picture of the decal on social media that was then shared on VCU Alumni’s Instagram and Twitter to create awareness of alumni-owned businesses.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “2017 VCU Holiday Video”

VCU's Office of the President engaged University Relations to produce an annual holiday video for the university community. Traditionally, the holiday video highlights aspects of VCU’s unique values and core beliefs. This year the beloved VCU pep band, The Peppas, highlight the video. The Peppas were selected because they embody the distinctive spirit of VCU. Their mix of funk, hip-hop, groove and R&B was perfect for a uniquely VCU holiday message. The video successfully captured the vibe and inclusive spirit that is VCU.

Virginia Department of Transportation for “Unearthing Colonial Newtown”

The Virginia Department of Transportation has a robust environmental program, in part to protect archaeological resources from destruction due to road projects. Before construction began at the I-64/I-264 Interchange Improvements Project bordering Norfolk and Virginia Beach, VDOT archaeologists found evidence of artifacts dating back to an 18th century colonial town. VDOT’s Hampton Roads District Communications Department exclusively documented and shared the exciting discovery publicly, while showcasing the environmental program.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Department of Transportation for “’Twas the Night Before a Winter Storm”

’Twas the Night before a Winter Storm is a Virginia Department of Transportation video adaptation of the beloved Clement Clarke Moore poem A Visit from St. Nicholas, commonly referred to as ‘Twas the Night before Christmas. It was released on Christmas Eve and garnered more than 15,000 views on Facebook.

Press Conferences

Award of Merit Winner

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations and Virginia Commonwealth University Engineering, Marketing and Communications for “VCU Announces Largest Private Grant in University History”

In 2017, the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering received the largest private grant in university history - \$25 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation - to establish the Medicines for All Institute and to fund the institute’s work on a wide range of global health treatments. With this grant, the institute can help increase access to lifesaving medications for HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases worldwide. Given the size of

the grant and the importance of the work it is funding, University Relations and VCU Engineering concluded that a press conference was merited.

Award of Excellence Winner

Padilla and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Virginia Treatment Center for Children Transforms Children’s Mental Health”

Nationwide, only one in four children receives the mental health care they need. This shortfall also exists in Virginia, with more demand for services than capacity. Virginia Treatment Center for Children helps bridge that gap, offering inpatient acute care, crisis stabilization and outpatient services to children and families. In 2017, Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU constructed a new, expanded VTCC facility to replace its 50-year-old facility. CHoR and Padilla developed a media event to introduce stakeholders to the facility, its increased capacity and its design. The media event exceeded projected attendance and media impressions.

Press Kits/Media Kits

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Department of Transportation for “Incident Management Open House”

The Virginia Department of Transportation’s Northern Virginia District hosted its first-ever Incident Management Open House on Nov. 11. The event featured an outdoor touch-a-truck exhibit with 27 response vehicles and a simulated crash scene that allowed the public to view an incident from the perspective of first responders who work in the roadway every day. An indoor expo featured booths for several VDOT sections and multiple partner agencies. It was imperative to leverage existing communication channels to promote the event, so an electronic press kit was assembled to share with elected officials, local governments, news media, and other partners.

Publications

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Libraries for “Epicenter”

This annual publication takes a 'Year in Review' approach to the traditional (and I would argue, tired) annual report format. The purpose of the report is to underscore or build awareness of the breadth of library activities and build reputation as an activist, nimble and creative library system seeking and implementing leading-edge solutions to problems within the academic library world. It is also designed to educate potential donors about the depth and breadth of activities within a modern academic library. It is written for a lay audience. Since we began publishing these annually, our fundraising has skyrocketed and we know, anecdotally, that our boards and our donors are better educated and more aware of the tangible work their financial gifts support.

Virginia Department of Transportation for “Incident Management Open House Event Booklet”

The Virginia Department of Transportation’s Northern Virginia District hosted its first-ever Incident Management Open House on November 11. The event featured an outdoor touch-a-

truck exhibit with 27 response vehicles and a simulated crash scene that allowed the public to view an incident from the perspective of first responders who work in the roadway every day. An indoor expo featured booths for several VDOT sections and multiple partner agencies. A picture tells a thousand words, so a 34-page glossy event booklet filled with compelling incident photos, exhibitor bios and explanations of new laws was designed as an event take-home piece.

McGuireWoods Consulting and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce for “Virginia Chamber of Commerce’s Blueprint Virginia 2025”

To help regain Virginia’s ranking as the top place in the country to do business, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce set out to develop Blueprint Virginia 2025 – a comprehensive plan providing business leadership, direction and long-range economic planning for Virginia. After a year-long, consensus-building process of meetings in every part of Virginia, strategic partnerships, polling and events, the Chamber partnered with McGuireWoods Consulting to synthesize and assemble the information into an easily digestible, well organized and attractive document. MWC designed the publication with strong visuals and compelling data, signifying the importance of the thought and initiatives comprising this strategic plan.

Award of Excellence Winner

MCV Foundation for “NEXT Magazine”

Identifying an opportunity to tell the story of cutting-edge, lifesaving research and innovation on the MCV Campus at VCU Health, the MCV Foundation developed and published NEXT magazine, which is the only publication to highlight innovation across all five schools and two healthcare units on campus. NEXT includes highly researched messaging and was distributed to more than 7,500 targeted recipients. Feedback from donors, donor prospects and community leaders exceeded all expectations. Goals to steward donors and grow awareness among prospects and the community were met and will continue to be successful as plans to increase distribution are realized.

Social Media - Organic

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Commonwealth University Business Services for “RamTech Summer Spotlight: How to Gain and Retain New Followers on Instagram”

The Department of Business Services at Virginia Commonwealth University encompasses many auxiliary units, among them, Campus Services, which includes RamTech: an award-winning, on-campus technology retail store. In the spring of 2017, the marketing team for RamTech was charged with finding a new way to increase Instagram followers over the summer, targeting the incoming students during New Student Orientation. The marketing efforts for the Summer Spotlight social media campaign proved successful with an 81% increase in followers during three months and a retention rate of 98% through the end of 2017.

Eastern Virginia Medical School for “Boost ‘Em in the Back Seat and Avoid Regret”

Buckle up. This was the perfect storm — a compelling message delivered at the right time via the right vehicle. A Facebook post of our grant-funded video on booster seat safety

unexpectedly went viral the week of Thanksgiving 2017. The explosive response included 10.3 million video views, nearly 265,000 likes, nearly 222,000 shares and almost 83,000 comments. The resulting media storm led to intense activity on behalf of the EVMS team via social media, email and phone to respond to media inquiries as well as public comments and questions.

Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Libraries for “Vet Your Sources Campaign”

In the aftermath of the presidential inauguration and a chorus of accusations of "fake news," librarians and the PR office at VCU Libraries launched the VetYourSources campaign designed to teach the university community how to fact check news.

Virginia Commonwealth University Office of Development and Alumni Relations for “VCU Alumni Instagram Takeovers”

VCU Alumni launched its Instagram takeover campaign in April 2017 as part of the university’s annual Alumni Month celebration. The engagement program allows alumni to tell their stories and the paths they’ve taken since graduation with VCU Alumni’s followers on Instagram. In 2017, 10 graduates took over the account, sharing a snapshot of their lives and engaging with their fellow alumni, resulting in a 9 percent increase in our Instagram following, generating 181,000 impressions on Instagram and an additional 91,000 impressions across Facebook and Twitter.

Mountain Lake Lodge for “Mountain Lake Lodge and Dirty Dancing 30th Anniversary Reaches Millions”

In 2012, Mountain Lake Lodge began a rebranding effort after a multimillion dollar renovation. To continue to grow brand awareness and revenue five years later, we leveraged the 2017 30th anniversary of the filming of Dirty Dancing at MLL. As a result, 2017 revenue increased by 21.24%, the single largest year-over-year revenue increase since the relaunch.

Virginia Department of Transportation for “Safety Messaging Campaign”

To combat the five most common driver behaviors that lead to crashes, VDOT carried out a four-month social media campaign with the agency’s Traffic Operations Centers across the state, displaying safety messages on Changeable Message Signs. With a wide and varying target audience, the main goal was to attract drivers with catchy visuals and phrases to emphasize the importance of driving safely. We used several tactics as part of a challenging strategy – photographs, graphics, GIFs and animations – to reach the entirety of our target. The metrics show that we successfully reached our audience, who actively responded to our messaging.

Virginia Department of Transportation for “I-95 Neabsco Bridge Emergency Repair”

Right in the middle of the nation’s “worst single traffic hotspot” exists a 54-year-old bridge on Interstate 95 over Neabsco Creek. The bridge needed emergency repairs and the Virginia Department of Transportation undertook an aggressive timeline to complete repairs before Memorial Day, historically the start of summer traffic, affecting 70,000 cars a day. VDOT needed to alert drivers all along the eastern seaboard to the interstate closures. And since Virginia weather is rarely cooperative, they needed to alert them four times. A veritable tweetstorm ensued.

The Hodges Partnership and Beale’s Brewery for “#TreasureYourBeer – Beale’s Brewery Opens in Bedford with a Social Media Splash

Beale’s, the first brewery in the town of Bedford, Va., opened on June 24, 2017. The Hodges Partnership used organic social media to supplement a media relations push leading up to the big day. Through social content, the team was able to generate more than 80,000 organic impressions in the month leading up to and including opening day. Photos of mouthwatering barbecue and thirst quenching beer flooded the feeds of Bedford residents which translated into a successful opening weekend.

Award of Excellence Winner

Padilla and Virginia Lottery for “Raising Winner Awareness with Facebook Live”

For the Virginia Lottery, winner stories play a key role in driving purchase consideration and maintaining game integrity by showing the real people who win. This is why the Lottery promotes its players’ “big-check moments” and continuously thinks of new ways to share these stories with the public. In 2017, it became clear that using Facebook’s new features would be significant in staying ahead of the platform’s ever-changing algorithm and maintaining high reach and engagement rates. The team turned to Facebook Live to share these check presentations, ultimately exceeding all objectives in reach, views and engagements with their target audience.

Social Media – Paid

Award of Merit Winners

Tiramisu for Breakfast and VCU Brandcenter for “VCU Brandcenter Social Recruitment Strategy”

Students graduating from the VCU Brandcenter go on to work at Google, Facebook, Coca Cola and beyond. We needed to formulate a social strategy that was a reflection of the amazing talent coming out of the school in order to attract the right new students. Our goal was to use this to create content that feels custom-made for their target, individuals aged 22-30. We worked hand-in-hand with the recruiting and marketing team of the school to create an effective and sustainable social content strategy. Not only did the Brandcenter see a 15.7% increase in requests for an application to the school following the campaign, they were also now equipped with a detailed content strategy built on insights from their audience and a plan for analyzing and optimizing on an ongoing basis.

The Nature Conservancy for “Connecting the Drops: A Facebook Acquisition Campaign”

The Nature Conservancy's innovative science-based solutions are designed to secure clean water in Virginia's rivers and bays, foster healthy forests, protect our oceans and coasts, and ensure access to shared green spaces across the Commonwealth. From bringing stakeholders to the table to confront environmental threats to deploying new scientific tools that empower communities to make informed decisions, The Nature Conservancy is engaging with diverse partners to solve the top conservation challenges of our time and create a world where nature and people can thrive.

Charles Ryan Associates and the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance for “Virginians for Better Transportation Facebook Campaign”

With a goal of gaining Facebook likes and database subscribers in five diverse regions for Virginians for Better Transportation, CRA ran a highly targeted cascading campaign that narrowed in on the messaging and creative that resonated best with each region. By running campaigns in sequence, each building on the information gathered before it, they were able to gain 285% more likes than the budgeted objective and see actions at costs 97% lower than the CPA benchmark.

Award of Excellence Winner

Padilla and Virginia Lottery for “Social Media Revamp for Virginia Lottery’s Game Guy”

For six years, the Virginia Lottery has brought its “we’re game” brand message to life through its brand ambassador, Game Guy. In July 2017, the Lottery recognized the untapped potential in Game Guy’s social media channels and decided to implement a cohesive strategy to engage new players, build regular content and utilize his event appearances more effectively. This social media revamp met or exceeded all goals to date, resulting in increased engagement and reach while maintaining consistent content calendars and taking advantage of new content types that reach another audience for the Lottery brand.

Speeches

Award of Merit Winner

Virginia’s Community Colleges for “The Chancellor’s Retreat”

Dr. Glenn DuBois, the chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges (VCCS), leads an annual planning retreat for the 23 VCCS presidents and the senior staff of the VCCS System Office. The keynote address he delivers at the planning retreat allows him to highlight recent successes, identify approaching challenges and set the tone for the coming year. Among the many challenges faced in 2017 was a top-to-bottom review of Virginia’s Community Colleges by the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission. The process, which all state agencies undergo periodically, was comprehensive in scope and took more than a year to complete.

Award of Excellence Winner

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “The Fascination of What’s Difficult”

This served as the president’s annual State of the University address, an occasion he used to inspire and energize faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors of Virginia Commonwealth University and to call for members of the university community to invest themselves in doing what’s difficult: solving the greatest social challenges of our time. As one of America’s premier research universities, he argued, VCU should focus on helping people everywhere live longer, better lives; should be a force of good that drives the region forward; and should tackle head-on the most-confounding social problems of our time as only it can.

Web Broadcasts

Award of Merit Winner

OFD Consulting LLC for “Royal Wedding Engagement Inspires Sold Out Webinar”

The October 2017 announcement of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s engagement offered OFD Consulting a unique opportunity not only to engage our audience, but to demonstrate methods for leveraging current events to promote ones event business and increase revenue. Our quick action resulted in securing several high-impact press exposures, and in the production and distribution of a webinar that converted to new business and is now a piece of high-value content we are able to share as we participate in ongoing industry conferences and events.

Award of Excellence Winner

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Websites

Award of Merit Winners

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business for “VCU School of Business Website”

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business needed a strategic website to kick-off our bold new brand, Creativity at Work. Pressure was mounting to attract new students, so the site needed to be designed around them. Our dean, a former Disney executive, had high expectations for design and performance. Faculty and staff doubted our team’s ability to innovate beyond the existing overgrown CRM with 700+ pages “managed” by 30+ subsite owners-editors.

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “VCU Home Page Redesign”

VCU’s home page is essential to attracting prospective students and making sure they and their parents can judge whether the university is a good fit. In November 2017, VCU launched a redesign in order to more deliberately target that audience, track the user journey and improve user experience. The new site incorporated the admissions content, which used to be on four

separate sites, and expanded and improved the academic program and student life information, making it easy for students to answer the question, “Is VCU right for me?”

Virginia Commonwealth University Division of University Relations for “VCU Brandcenter Redesign”

VCU University Relations redesigned VCU Brandcenter’s website. The design, copy and UX nailed their new “secret society” branding and highlighted their reputation as one of the best advertising graduate programs in the world. The overarching goal was to create a fully responsive website to serve as Brandcenter’s “narrator-in-chief” to attract hungry, diverse talent through “lore” about what happens behind the school’s walls. After launch, time spent on the site soared by nearly 50 percent. The Brandcenter communications manager commented, “The redesign fully reflects the school’s mission and new brand identity (and) it enables users to easily find information they are looking for.”

Eastern Virginia Medical School for “EVMS Pulse Online Newsroom”

We had to face it. Media outlets were shrinking and journalists weren’t available to cover our events, programs and successes. In order to keep Eastern Virginia Medical School in the public eye, we needed to tell our own story, but our research found that our online newsroom was anemic, hard to find and devoid of visuals. To help solve that problem, we decided to create a digital channel to serve as the heart of a content development strategy pumping our news out directly to our target audiences of students, patients and journalists in time for FY17.

Virginia’s Community Colleges for “FastForward: A Website Designed to Meet the Growing Demands of Today’s Workforce”

The FastForward website launched in September 2017 as part of a larger outreach campaign targeting young adults considered most likely to take advantage of high-demand training programs offered by Virginia’s Community Colleges. VCCS commissioned several focus groups over a six-month period to ensure the site reached our intended audience. In its first thirty days of operation, the FastForward website generated more than 100 leads as well as 700 new web-users. Ironically, paid advertising for the site ended after the first month when state grant funds ran out due to the program’s popularity.

Award of Excellence Winner

Padilla and the Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU for “Building Brand Through CHoR’s Extra-Special Specialists”

At Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU, every specialist is a little extra special, and has a unique ability to care for kids across a wide spectrum of medical challenges. Research revealed these specialists continuously go above expectations and beyond their credentials to make sure their patients still feel like kids. CHoR engaged Padilla to create and launch a campaign that would highlight CHoR’s more than 200 experts trained in nearly every recognized pediatric specialty, and elevate the CHoR brand. As a result, CHoR recorded a 17 percent increase in volume of appointments.

Word of Mouth

Award of Merit Winner

Tiramisu for Breakfast and Book-Overcoming Bias for “Overcoming Bias Community-Focused Book Launch”

Dr. Tiffany Jana’s *Overcoming Bias* is a guide to understanding bias and its impact on us and others. With a National PR plan in place, we were tasked with focusing on local outreach. Our goal was to stand out amongst the hundreds of books being released from the same publisher through speaking engagements, local social media chatter and feedback from the community. We worked to identify events and existing groups that aligned with the values and messaging of the book to engage with rather than trying to create our own separate group from scratch. Meanwhile, in response to the presidential election, groups focused on inclusivity were forming on Facebook. When one of those inclusivity groups launched a monthly book club, *Overcoming Bias* was the first selection. We reached out to the group’s leader and provided discussion prompts, answered questions from readers in the group and even hosted an in-person book club at Tiffany’s office. As a result of the book’s outpour of local engagement, the book’s San Francisco-based publisher signed two additional book deals with Dr. Jana.

Award of Excellence Winner:

Virginia’s Community Colleges for “Veterans Portal: Credits2Careers”

The Credits2Careers website offers Virginia’s military veterans an easy, online way to translate instantly their experience and training into academic credits at VCCS colleges. The site also provides real-time employment information and enables these students to explore civilian careers related to their area of expertise or interest. VCCS is the only college system in the nation with this comprehensive, patent-pending tool. With no marketing funds to raise awareness of the website, VCCS got creative, which resulted in more than doubling the number of visitors and sign ups in the first six weeks of launch than were expected in the first six months.

Commonwealth Best-in-Show

Commonwealth Partnerships and the Home Building Association of Richmond for “Richmond Parade of Homes 2017”

The Home Building Association of Richmond’s Parade of Homes is a month-long event that showcases the latest in home designs, construction techniques, materials, and more from homebuilders throughout Central Virginia. The event’s objective is to increase awareness about local homebuilders and their services, promote the sales of new homes, and showcase HBAR as a resource for builders and buyers. Commonwealth Partnerships was tasked with developing a social media and media relations campaign to highlight the event, which resulted in a 20% increase in Facebook page likes, 19 media placements, 20% increase in website traffic, and 17% increase in home sales. Congratulations to Commonwealth Partnerships and the Home Building Association of Richmond for receiving the Award of Excellence in the Extended Events and Observances category.

Capital Best-in-Show

Padilla and Virginia Lottery for “Social Media Revamp for Virginia Lottery’s Game Guy”

For six years, the Virginia Lottery has brought its “we’re game” brand message to life through its brand ambassador, Game Guy. In July 2017, the Virginia Lottery and Padilla recognized the untapped potential in Game Guy’s social media channels and decided to implement a cohesive strategy to engage new players, build regular content and utilize his event appearances more effectively. This social media revamp met or exceeded all goals to date, resulting in increased engagement and reach while maintaining consistent content calendars and taking advantage of new content types that reach another audience for the Lottery brand. This successful social media campaign is the reason why Padilla and the Virginia Lottery is this year’s Award of Excellence winner in Paid Social Media.

Rising Star Award

Kelsey Leavey

The Hodges Partnership

Thomas Jefferson Award for Excellence in Public Relations Award

Beth A Hardy, APR

President, Hardy Communications

District 4 School Board Member

Gochland County Public Schools