



P.O. Box 68124  
Grand Rapids, MI 49516-8124  
[www.wmprsa.org](http://www.wmprsa.org)

**For Immediate Release**

**Media Contact:** Lindsey Rodarmer  
(616) 698-3332  
[Lindsey.Rodarmer@zondervan.com](mailto:Lindsey.Rodarmer@zondervan.com)

## **Announcing the 2009 PRoot Award Winners**

*West Michigan PRSA Honors Winners at 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Award Ceremony*

**GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., May 1, 2009**-The West Michigan Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (WMPRSA) is excited to announce the **2009 PRoot Award Winners**. The 24<sup>th</sup> annual PRoot Awards ceremony was held Thursday, Apr. 30 from 6- 9 p.m. at “Eve” at the B.O.B. in downtown Grand Rapids. Gerry Barnaby, host of the 95.7 WLHT-FM morning show “Barnaby and Friends,” was the emcee for the evening ceremony.

WMPRSA would like to congratulate the following 2009 PRoot Award Winners:

### **Individual Award Winners**

#### ***Communicator of the Year: Rob Bliss***

Rob Bliss is the owner of Rob Bliss Urban Experiments and a student at Grand Rapids Community College. Rob’s first Urban Experiment, the “Pillow Fight” in September 2008, brought 1,000 people to Rosa Parks Circle to fight with feathers flying. In October 2008, Rob’s “Zombie Walk” brought out as many as 5,000 people dressed as zombies and garnered national and international attention via social media and mainstream media, including Facebook, blogs, YouTube and CNN. Rob promotes his events through Facebook and other social media and his work has resulted in a partnership with the Downtown Alliance’s *Let’s go. Out.* program.

“In addition to the goal of people having fun, people attending the event will have a greater awareness of downtown. Rob’s events make the downtown a more vibrant and enticing place,” said Sharon Evoy, Executive Director of the Downtown Alliance.

“Rob personifies what it means to engage a citizenry by combining class public relations strategy with today’s newest communications tactics. His ability to mobilize not only young people in downtown events-but people from all ages, backgrounds, interests and geographic areas-all through social media- has made him an instant celebrity, the go-to urban event organizer and respected opinion leader in West Michigan and beyond,” said Clare Wade, APR, of Clare Wade Communications.

#### ***PR PProfessional of the Year: Craig Clark***

Craig Clark is Owner/Senior Counselor of Clark Communications, a former WMPRSA board member, and creator of “GR Media Match” ([www.grmediamatch.com](http://www.grmediamatch.com)). “GR Media Match” connects West Michigan public relations professionals with area journalists. The concept is similar to national query services, with a focus on West Michigan. The goal of GR Media Match is to help reporters find the best local source for their story without spending much time researching and for public relations professionals to be aware of story opportunities.

**-MORE-**

“Craig’s development and launch of GR Media Match exemplifies his understanding of the innovation and flexibility the field of public relations requires. As newsroom resources continue to dwindle, practitioners must think out of the box to craft messages and deliver information to media in more efficient ways,” said Andrea Groom, APR, Senior Consultant at Wondergem Consulting, Inc.

***Media Person of the Year: Mark Sanchez, Business Review Western Michigan***

Mark Sanchez is the business reporter for *Business Review Western Michigan*, a publication of the *Michigan Business Review*, and *Health Michigan* magazine. He has been a reporter for 20 years and for the last four years, has covered health care, life sciences, office furniture, and finance. Mark recently earned the title of associate editor of *Michigan Business Review*. His experience includes roles as editor at the *Holland Sentinel* and staff writer at the *Grand Rapids Business Journal*.

“Mark’s strength is his ability to develop strong relationships with the organizations he works with. He constantly keeps a pulse on each industry he covers-working with some of the top executives in West Michigan. He has a reputation for doing his homework and asking astute questions,” said Amy Miller, Sr. Communications Specialist at Priority Health.

***Student of the Year: Charlotte Sasinowski, GVSU***

Charlotte Sasinowski is a Grand Valley State University student and a PR Intern at Amway Global Public Relations. She has been a member of the GVSU chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) since 2005 and has served as the chapter’s president since 2007. As the organization’s leader, Charlotte oversees all efforts for the chapter, including coordinating events, recruiting volunteers, driving membership, publicizing events, facilitating small group sessions, and speaking publicly on behalf of the group. Charlotte also directed the student chapter’s participation in the 2008 national PRSA conference in Detroit and coordinated student involvement as volunteers for WMPRSA events.

Charlotte founded and served President of Grand Valley’s student-run firm, Grand PR. Grand PR ([www.grandpr.org](http://www.grandpr.org)) was established to provide real-life PR experience for GVSU students and Charlotte was instrumental in recruiting seven clients for the firm, establishing awareness of the firm through local media and campus relations, and for motivating and supporting staff on client accounts.

Additionally, Charlotte led a team participating in the national PRSSA Bateman competition, served as the Laker Leadership and Service intern at Grand Valley, served as PR Chair for the Leadership Summit, was honored on GVSU’s Dean’s List, and was a 2007 recipient of the “I Am Grand Valley” Leadership Award.

“Charlotte is always professional and courteous and has a positive, can-do attitude that is motivating and encouraging to those around her. During her tenure at Amway Global, she has grown immensely in her knowledge of our business as well as her confidence and poise in interacting with the media and other audiences,” said Anna Bryce, APR, Lead-Public Relations for Amway Global.

**PRroof PRemier (Best in Show)**

***Pfizer Inc. and Tanner Friedman – Scientific Equipment Donation Campaign.***

While closing two R&D sites in Michigan in 2008, Pfizer Inc. donated \$6 million worth of scientific equipment and laboratory supplies to research-based universities, biotech startups and secondary schools. The effort by Pfizer and Tanner Friedman helped turn around negative perceptions of the company, and set the standard for communicating the company’s ongoing presence in Michigan.

**-MORE-**

## **Project Category Winners**

***Gold Award, External Communications: Newsletter-Grand Rapids Community Foundation for Current Current*** is the quarterly journal of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. It is mailed to more than 11,500 people in Kent County and features stories and photographs about Foundation donors, grants and community philanthropy.

***Silver Award, External Communications: Newsletter-Grand Valley State University for Grand Valley Magazine***

*Grand Valley Magazine* is a full-color magazine that serves the entire university community, including parents, faculty and staff members, alumni, donors and other friends. It is published quarterly by the News and Information Services office.

***Gold Award, External Communications: Web site-Grand Valley State University for GVSU Election Center Web site***

From soaring gas prices to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the sagging economy, the 2008 Presidential election cycle was filled with important questions and explosive rhetoric. Grand Valley State University's News and Information Services office launched a Web site to connect journalists with the university's faculty expert able to speak on all facets of the process.

***Silver Award, External Communications: Web site-Grand Rapids Community Foundation for [www.grfoundation.org](http://www.grfoundation.org)***

To engage donors, professional advisors, grant seekers and members of the community online, the Grand Rapids Community Foundation has enhanced its website with Web 2.0 tools, including videos, podcasts, blogs and more. This work has paid off increasing page views from 396,000 in 2007 to 539,074 in 2008.

***Gold Award, External Communications: Large Budget Category-Wondergem Consulting, Inc. for "Let's Kick It Grand Rapids" Promotional Video***

In August 2008, the Downtown Alliance partnered with the Radio City Rockettes to premier a downtown entertainment programming initiative. To promote the launch event, Wondergem Consulting managed the creation and social media distribution of a video capturing community leaders and media personalities giving their best "Rockette kick."

***Gold Award, Internal Communications: Small Budget Category-Grand Valley State University for The FORUM newsletter***

*The Forum* newsletter is a long-standing communication tool for the Grand Valley State University community. It is a publication of Grand Valley's new and Information Services Office, reaching more than 2,400 people.

***Gold Award, Internal Communications-Lambert, Edwards & Associates for the Mattress Firm Corporate Video***

Mattress Firm introduced a rebranding initiative which positions the company as "Not Just" another mattress retailer and focused on the company's ability to deliver a transformational experience for employees, customers and the communities it serves. LE&A was retained to develop an internal video to help employees understand the new brand.

***Gold Award, Interactive Media-Grand Rapids Community Foundation for its Planned Giving Design Center iPod Promotion***

To entice professional advisors to become members of its Planned Giving Design Center Web site, the Community Foundation offered the chance to win an iPod shuffle. An online system was developed to instantly notify winners. While growing its member list, Foundation staff greatly valued the relationship building that occurred during iPod delivery.

***Gold Award, Annual Report-Grand Rapids Community Foundation, 12 Below Design, and Brian Kelly Photography for "Growing Home"***

Focused on donors and their love of Grand Rapids, this year's annual report, "Growing Home," presented people telling their stories of how they came to the community, why they've stayed and how they give back through philanthropy. Grantee stories showed the impact of gifts. Panoramic images added an element of surprise to the printed piece.

***Gold Award, Media Kit-Grand Valley State University for its Honors College Media Kit***

The Glenn Niemeyer Learning and Living Center on Grand Valley State University's Allendale Campus is a state-of-the-art facility, housing Grand Valley's Honors College. The media kit covered the details of the facility as well as the legacy of Glenn Niemeyer.

**Campaign Category Winners**

***Gold Award, Community Relations-Grand Valley State University for its Accountability Report***

Faced with an increasingly dire national economy and reports of rising tuition, Grand Valley State University set out to change the debate, proving that it is a good steward of public resources and demonstrating to lawmakers that the university can educate high-achieving students with the fewest state dollars.

***Silver Award, Community Relations-Priority Health for the Helping Kids Embrace Health and Wellness Campaign***

An essay contest encouraged students to identify ways to be more active and eat healthier. The contest was sponsored by the Priority Health Cycling Team. More than 400 students entered. Winning students earned \$1,000 for their school.

***Gold Award-Reputation/Image-Lambert, Edwards & Associates for the Biggby Name Change***

LE&A was retained to develop and manage the corporate communications and public relations strategy for the change from Beaner's to Biggby Coffee—a change that has resonated with owners, employees, vendors and consumers alike; has generated widespread positive media coverage; and allowed the company to continue its impressive growth.

***Gold Award, Reputation/Image-Pfizer Inc. and Tanner Friedman for the Pfizer Scientific Equipment Donation Campaign***

A public relations campaign by Pfizer Worldwide Communications and Tanner Friedman centered around a \$6 million donation of scientific equipment by Pfizer Inc. changed negative perceptions of the company, set the standard for corporate citizenship around site closings, and provided a platform for communicating Pfizer's continuing presence in Michigan.

***Silver Award, Reputation/Image-Priority Health for the campaign 8 Great Reasons***

Priority Health's "8 Great Reasons ..." campaign used e-mail newsletter marketing to increase awareness of key company attributes among two audiences: agents and employers. A series of eight newsletters were sent to agents (East, North, West) and employers (East) from October 2008 to February 2009.

**-MORE-**

***Gold Award, Special Events-Grand Rapids Community Foundation for its New Home Event***

After 86 years of being a tenant, Grand Rapids Community Foundation bought and renovated a historic downtown building for its first home. The purchase, renovation, fundraising and dedication events gave the Community Foundation multiple opportunities to tell its story while building relationships with donors, and increasing its exposure in the community.

***Gold Award, Special Events-Intent PR for the Configura User Conference***

In the summer of 2008, with fewer than 10 people registered for a first-annual user conference, Configura and Intent Public Relations collaborated to create a strategic marketing communications plan, building awareness of the Las Vegas-based event. The result: Attendance of more than 95 people—at capacity—and plans for a second annual conference in Fall 2009.

***Silver Award, Special Events-Cornerstone University for its Presidential Inauguration***

Cornerstone University inaugurated its 11<sup>th</sup> president, Dr. Joseph M. Stowell, on September 12, 2008. The festivities began on September 11 with a community-wide worship service and continued the next day with a “Student and Stowell Breakfast,” inauguration ceremony, and a gala dinner that evening. The weekend ended with special alumni events.

***Gold Award, Public Affairs-Priority Health for its 2009 Helmet Safety Program***

Priority Health partnered with Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital to provide bike safety instruction and free bike helmets to 600 students in the Pontiac school district. The program succeeded in reducing head injury-related emergency room visits at Pontiac Osteopathic Hospital.

***Gold Award, Marketing Communications-Alexander Marketing for the DOWFROST Launch***

In the spring of 2008, The Dow Chemical Company reached an agreement with Wal-Mart and a distribution partner to sell a special blend of its DOWFROST™ Heat Transfer Fluid, a safer and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional antifreeze. The media relations campaign resulted in significant coverage for nearly 7 million unique impressions and a comparable advertising value of \$106,293, and first year sales of 875,461 units, a wholesale value of \$6.6 million.

***Gold Award, Marketing Communications-Alexander Marketing for the Pentair Eco-Select Launch***

To support Pentair Water Pool and Spa, in the launch of a branding initiative designed to highlight the cost-savings potential and environmental benefits of its new pool filter pump, Alexander Marketing conducted a media relations campaign that resulted in more than 7 million unique impressions and a comparable advertising value of \$101,907 targeted to the key pool-owning communities.

***Gold Award, Internal Communications-Priority Health for BOOYA***

BOOYA was the theme of an internal campaign to engage the 70-person Customer Service department at Priority Health. The campaign combined posters and executive pep talks for significant results! Today, phone calls answered within an average of 29 seconds and 96% of issues resolved during the first call.

***Gold Award, Investor Relations-Lambert, Edwards & Associates for the SMID-West Stock Conference***

Lambert, Edwards & Associates’ SMID-West Stock Conference is an annual investor conference created to introduce Midwest-based members of the investment community to the management teams of top-performing small-and mid-cap (SMID) companies. LE&A hosted the fourth annual event in December 2008 at The Palmer House Hilton Hotel in downtown Chicago.

**-MORE-**

***Gold Award, Special Public Relations-Artistry for the Skin Diaries Editor Event***

Artistry's *The Skin Diaries* Editor Event provided beauty editors a personalized opportunity to learn about their own skin. From layers beneath the surface of their skin and on up, Artistry skin care was helping reveal the "secrets" editors' skin had been hiding from them by unlocking their skin's diary.

***Gold Award, Special Public Relations-Zondervan for the Multiple Blessings Book Launch***

Due to national exposure on TLC's "Jon & Kate + Eight," Good Morning America, Fox & Friends, Dr. Phil, CNN's Larry King as well as *Good Housekeeping*, and more, *Multiple Blessings* by Jon & Kate Gosselin and Beth Carson exceeded its sales expectations of 40,000 by selling over half a million copies and hit the *New York Times* Bestsellers list during the first week.

***Silver Award, Special Public Relations-Wondergem Consulting, Inc. for the Radio City Christmas Spectacular: National Arena Tour***

Last year, Madison Square Garden Entertainment launched the largest production and first-ever national arena tour of the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, starring the world-famous Rockettes. MSGE engaged Wondergem Consulting to promote the November 2008 show in Grand Rapids. Wondergem led the market's public relations efforts, including the May tour announcement, September and November advance media tours, opening night and run-of-show publicity.

**About WMPRSA**

The West Michigan Chapter is comprised of nearly 150 PRSA members living within the western half of the lower peninsula of Michigan, from Benton Harbor to Traverse City. Its mission is to help public relations professionals develop and sustain the essential knowledge, skills and standards that will reinforce their integral role in the effective management of organizations. Learn more by contacting WMPRSA at (616) 308-5433 or by visiting [www.wmprsa.org](http://www.wmprsa.org).

###