

Sheila Nero – Media Relations Spotlight

In my work as Director of PR for VFI Marketing, I routinely handled media relations for an average of three events per week in support of a national water conservation tour. It was a particularly enjoyable duty for me because, for 20 years at newspapers, I was the media. I am in tune with the needs of a journalist on deadline, and I speak deadline language.

As head of the “Green PR Team,” I led professionals covering small, medium and large media markets in 46 states for the water conservation tour. Our biggest “reach” came when CNN picked up our Nashville item.

For each event, I set the goal for each of us to contact three TV stations, three print outlets, radio where possible, and online bloggers and websites. Hyperlocal calendar listings were mandatory for each event. We also reached out to local environmental groups, and contacted municipal figures, such as mayors, to encourage attendance and positive “buzz.” I also required each of us to contact City Halls to request a proclamation signed by the mayor declaring “Water Conservation Day” for our event.

My team members, including me, compiled our own media list for each scheduled community relations event. A sample project might be devising media lists for nine separate events in the Boston area, or two events in Seattle, or one in small Altoona, Pa., or one in Albuquerque, N.M. Our water conservation tour crossed regions of the United States, with some states experiencing drought while others were not parched, and we tailored our media relations accordingly.

In addition to leading the media relations strategy, I also served occasionally as the on-air spokesperson on radio talk shows.

Previous to VFI, I handled media relations at a Milwaukee PR agency for a national weight-loss organization. For example, I placed a medical expert to be interviewed by the Fox TV affiliate, and handled all logistics. I also wrote and placed articles in newspapers nationwide, and arranged radio interviews. Again, my “edge” was that I could connect with the media as an insider. I had a previous job in New York state handling media relations, as well.