

The Oak Leaves

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MU Commemorates Kornegay's Retirement Student Public Relations Interns Reflect Fondly on Their Mentor

Jeri Kornegay has enjoyed a storied, multi-decade career as a newspaper reporter, editor, Manchester University's PR director and, perhaps most meaningfully, advisor to some 20 undergraduate PR interns. She certainly means a great deal to them.

Hannah Schutter is completing a semester-long internship with Kornegay. "I would like to thank Jeri for all of her hard work on this campus," Schutter said. "She is such a great example of a professional with an amazing work ethic. Jeri always says that if you work hard for her, she will work hard for you and I can attest that this is true. She helped me receive the MU Study Abroad award and I could not be more appreciative."

"Jeri is also so incredibly sweet," Schutter continued. "I was timid at first starting my internship having only worked with her at the MU Auction last year. She is so put together that I was scared I would disappoint. However, I soon realized that her tough exterior is the shell for the softest, kindest-hearted inside. Jeri brightens my day. Whether she is buying us coffee, saying we look pretty or giving us coupons for food, she is always putting a smile on my face."

"I have been so blessed being one of her last interns and will miss her immensely," Schutter added. "Jeri, thank you for everything and enjoy retirement. You deserve it!"

Kyle Lahman, who interned with Kornegay for a January session and a summer, notes her strong presence on campus. "If you say 'Jeri' anywhere on campus, people know," he said. "Jeri is Manchester's heartbeat: her commitment to excellence and professionalism shines through in all of her publications and her impact on the college and surrounding community is immeasurable. I would write a longer tribute, but I'm too worried that she would catch me making an AP Style violation."

Long-time intern Chaz Bellman '13 also remembers her knack for spotting moving violations. "In the entire dictionary there are not enough words to describe my gratitude to Jeri," he said. "I knew she would be the perfect mentor when she told me I was not correctly shifting my six speed and then proceed to teach me how to let a car just slide into gear for a smoother transition between gears."

"This would define much of our relationship as I tried something and she made it better," Bellman continued. "She has a keen eye for perfection and was always able to uplift those around her to be the best they could be. If her ability to critique and better your writing didn't elevate one enough, simply watching her work ethic (50- or 60-plus hours a week) did the trick. I will feel forever indebted to Jeri for helping prepare me for the real world and employing me throughout college."

"Retirement seems like a closing chapter in a book, but for Jeri I am sure it is the beginning of something special," Bellman said. "May it be canoe trips or flights up north, her child-like enthusiasm will continue to influence those around her and her passion for life will continue to shine. Since I lack better words for the mentor, coach and friend Jeri has become all I can say is, 'Thank you.'"

Current intern Morgan Peas also searches for



words to describe her appreciation for Kornegay. "I wish that I could sum up the last year that I've spent with Jeri in a way that would bring tears to everyone's eyes," she said. "Unfortunately, writing with emotion has been my biggest criticism in the PR office as 'make it sexy' is always a

you more than you know, and I hope some day you will be able to forgive me for the countless AP style violations I've made over the last year and in this message [The Oak Leaves editors and advisor have your back, Morgan].

"Jeri," said Peas as she finished her remarks,

Jacinth Planer (not an MU grad/Beloit College) of D.C., is editor and researches for the Enough Project of The Center for American Progress. She was a research associate with Public International Law & Policy Group, analyzing political power sharing, ceasefire agreements and minority is-

tion for an Indianapolis mortgage company. After a family leave to care for her father, she is learning her new role as farm manager.

Josh Sigler '06 of Kokomo is a sportswriter for the Kokomo Tribune, and former sports editor for the Wabash Plain

Nate Hodges '10 of Tampa, Florida, received a master's in communication studies at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant in spring 2012 and is working on his Ph.D. in communication studies at University of South Florida in Tampa.

Tiffany Berkebile '10 of Bay City, Michigan, received a master's in communication studies at West Virginia University in spring 2012 and is enrolled in the MBA program at Saginaw Valley State University. She is an information management specialist for The Dow Chemical Company. Adam King of Bluffton is a screenwriter for Versa Studios Media Inc. and an assistant English teacher and writing lab instructor for Canterbury High School in southwest Fort Wayne. She did a January internship at the News-Sentinel in Fort Wayne.

William Kallas '12 is working on a master's of divinity degree at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston. In spring 2014, he is half-way through the program and planned to study two months in Turkey and Greece this summer.

Katie Miller '13 Lash married John Lash '12 on the MU Mall in May 2013. She is the Winchester High School resource teacher in her hometown, where John teaches science. She taught elementary school in Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools in N.C. while John was a graduate research assistant in the Ph.D. chemistry program at Duke U.

Chaz Bellman '13 of Elkhart, Ind., is vice president of operations for Motorede, an online/eBay company selling motorcycle parts and gear. He's making mucho money before embarking on a university marketing or alumni career.

INTERNS WHO ARE CURRENT STUDENTS:

Xuny Haley '14
Kyle Lahman '15
Chris Minter '15
Morgan Peas '14
Hannah Schutter '15
Betsy Varner '14



Kornegay with President Jo Young Switzer and Professor Mary Lahman's Advanced Public Relations class in 2014.

comment for edits. Throughout her brief time in my life, Jeri has given me countless Girl Scout cookies, bled all over my releases, and offered me the best life advice that I could ask for. Jeri, you are my hero and the ultimate role model.

"Your life and amazing stories are always enchanting and I could interview you for days without hearing the same tale twice," Peas continued. "You've given me copious amounts of knowledge re: writing to the audience as well as food all over the United States. Thank you for teaching me about listening, writing and the importance of a McDonald's coupon book."

"I'm so, so sad that you're leaving, but you deserve some time in the garden and 'yak,'" she added. "Thank you for loving the interns with more dedication than I've ever seen from an employer. The office will not be the same without your cheerful smile or your ridicule of my friendship with Hannah. We love

"You are forever and always in my heart. Thank you."

Throughout Kornegay's time at Manchester, 20 interns were able to work with her. These individuals encompass the Manchester University spirit and mission. Their majors varied, many were competent in more than one language, some were student athletes, and, most importantly, they were all mentored by the wise, experienced and often hilarious Jeri.

Krista Primrose '03 Zartman of Indianapolis is a course mentor in teacher education for Western Governors University. She was a Purdue University supervisor for student teachers and taught language arts/journalism at Maconaquah High School. She was a reporter in Valparaiso and Peru, Ind. She's also taught English for Ivy Tech and adult ed GED for Warsaw Community Schools.

sues in Sudan and Burma. She also was with a CNN Atlanta documentary unit. She worked for Jeri the summer after her Fulbright.

Megan Hinelene '04 Sutton of Fort Wayne has her master's in communication studies from Purdue (IPFW) and taught communication studies for Manchester. She also was a copywriter for Asher Agency in Fort Wayne and an IPFW adjunct.

Noah Kinsey '05 is an improv performer with ComedySportz in Indianapolis and studied at Second City. He does voice-overs, including the voice of Dicky for a John Sempler film. He acts and produces. His credits include Hour 11 (2014), The Joint (2013) and Creeporia (2014). He's also worked in sales.

Kirby Jasper '06 was a paralegal document preparation specialist for Feiwell & Hannoy PC law firm in Indianapolis. Then she worked in document review and execu-

Dealer. He is a very proud daddy now, with a wee girl. He is the only intern to make a career of Jeri's profession as a newspaper journalist.

Kelli Griewank '08 Grogg of Indianapolis is a school psychologist for Indianapolis Public Schools. She got her master's in school psychology from Indiana University and was a care coordinator for Community Mental Health Center in Indianapolis, in the Intervention and Prevention Program.

Karen Ames '09 of South Carolina earned her master's (and maybe her Ph.D.) in southeast Asian studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison. At Manchester, she was hired to create our hometown news database. She led the Martin Luther King Jr. Project funded by a Plowshares grant through Lilly Endowment, creating an oral history of those who witnessed MLK's visit to Manchester.

Inside: Former PR Interns Reflect on Experience with Kornegay



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Hodges Floats Conspiracy Theory: Is Kornegay 'Really' Retiring?

Nate Hodges '10

I don't know who started this silly conspiracy theory about Jeri Kornegay retiring, but whoever it is needs to cut it out!

Retire (verb): to leave one's job and cease to work; cease to play competitively.

I must very politely ask, HAVE YOU EVER MET THIS WOMAN? Seriously? Cease to work? Cease to play? Get outta' here.

She doesn't have brakes and she jumps over speed bumps. Try walking in on her writing sometime, and then tell me that she's going to slow down. (**WARNING:** For your own safety, knock on her door first.) It's a little like walking onto a murder scene without the blood, dead bodies, caution tape, and, well, maybe it isn't like a murder scene, but you do get the feeling you shouldn't be there.

Her writing wasn't just active; it was hyperactive! My uncle Jeff told me one time after watching me wrestle, "You're like an f'ing badger out there on that mat! Absolutely fearless and relentless, you just keep attacking!" He could have just as easily been describing Jeri's approach to her work and writing. (I'm not calling you a badger Jeri, but you get the point.)

She told me to read that darned APA Bible a million times. I've still never read it, but I learned how to write better by the slash of her bloody red ink. Just when you're sitting up on your high horse feeling like you're Stephen King, she drops off the draft of fluffy crap you just gave her, and lets you know about half of that oh-so-good writing can leave the page. Omit all of the unnecessary words. Pull every single damn weed and leave the pretty flowers. That's what three-plus decades in the newspaper business will do to ya. "What's the point? Well say it and shut up with the other nonsense!"

But we all know how great of a writer she is. What you probably don't know is she is one of the greatest mentors at Manchester. The public relations intern job is one the most coveted student jobs on campus. For good reason: you get to write stories, take photos, chat with alumni, and be in cahoots with all the bigwigs (I say this endearingly) at the school. The internship was definitely "cool beans" as Jeri would say. I became the public



Kornegay pictured with Berkebile, Hodges and President Jo Young Switzer at Commencement in May 2010.

relations intern my junior year of college and didn't stop until the summer after I graduated. How did I impress Jeri so that she'd keep me around that long?

By getting arrested on campus for underage drinking my first week of work. Yep, the public relations guy represents the college by going to jail. As you can imagine, I was just an incy-wincy bit embarrassed. I speak about this now unashamedly because this experience was a life-changer. The kind of experience that makes you reassess who you are and what you want from life. My biggest lesson was yet to come.

I was arrested on Friday night. Monday afternoon I walked into Jeri's office for a nice little meeting with the door shut. Shame and embarrassment are seeping out of every pore on my body. I fully expected to be fired to add to the worthlessness I already felt. Remorse filled up in me like a big, nasty tumor during that half-hour tongue-lashing. "And a damn fine job on the Kevin Sites news release," she said right when I thought she was going to tell me to pack my stuff and get out of there. She didn't fire me.

I made a mistake. A stupid, Stupid, STUPID mis-

take. But she forgave me. That wise act is probably the reason I'm sitting here typing this in Tampa as a third-year Ph.D. student at the University of South Florida. She helped me realize I'm not an idiot (even if that mistake was idiotic) and that I have the potential to do something great in my life. Forgiveness can be one of the hardest things to give, but thank you, Jeri, for giving it, because it changed my life.

Of course that wasn't the only mistake I made throughout the next two years, but it was certainly the most significant. Well, forgetting to turn the coffee pot off overnight could have turned into a more significant mistake, but luckily the only thing burned was the coffee. And my wearing a highly unfashionable hat while speaking at a televised news conference turned out to be a good mistake in Jeri's opinion, because it gave her ammo for humorous insults.

This was one of my favorite parts about working with Jeri—the fun banter between us. Lord knows how many times she wanted to staple my mouth shut (my mouth is too strong for tape), but we were open and forthright with each other, the staple—pardon me—of any good working relationship. She is a walking,

breathing lesson in good communication.

For all you conspiracy theorists talking about retirement, she's not ceasing any damn thing! She's got a book to write (You told me you would and I'm holding you to it), flowers to please,

kayaks to flip, Pure Michigan air to breathe, casinos to put out of business, and lives to change. Yeah, I said it. Lives to change. Cliché or not, she changed mine. I "found my place" at Manchester, and it was in the PR Office.

I'm going to spend

the rest of my life as a writer and I can think of no better compliment than to say, "Jeri, you taught me how to write." But you did even more and unlike you I've always been an unnecessarily long-winded so I'm searching for the best way to describe what you've meant to me, I thought I'd let you actually say it for me because you always have the right words. I found this email from you on May 28 and the feelings are mutual so I'm changing the pronouns and returning it to you. This isn't plagiarism. It's homage to you.

You have had an extraordinary influence on my life, so much so that I am at a loss for words. Well, almost.

I've made no secret of the value of your thoughtful work for the College and to me; it's immeasurable. I will share those viewpoints whenever requested, or when so inspired. The College (and I) will feel the influence of Jeri Kornegay for many, many, many years to come.

Commencement was bittersweet. You are a good woman, and you will bring good measure to your endeavors and relationships. That I've had a wee part in your life... and hopefully, will remain a touchstone... makes me grin widely. You make me grin widely.

I'll be here... or elsewhere... but here in my heart, for you. I expect Jeri-induced grins for years to come.

—Nate



Kornegay Named to Berkebile's Personal Board of Directors

Tiffany Berkebile '10

Jeri Kornegay changed my life. We met when I was 18 years old and she was interviewing me for an internship in the Office of Public Relations. I'd already been to several other internship interviews, where they told me to come

back "when I had more experience." I vividly remember Jeri asking, "Why should I hire you?" in a very no-nonsense tone that I now recognize as distinctly "Jeri." I said that if no one took a chance on me, I would never get the opportunity to prove myself. I said that if she took that chance,

she wouldn't regret it.

I worked with Jeri for the next three years. Three years of seeing red markup on my news releases, writing Manchester magazine stories, and learning interview skills that will serve me for the rest of my life. Three years of seeing an enthusiastic smile and

hearing Jeri say "cool beans!" when I wrote a really good story. Three years of meeting professors and administrators on campus, just to learn that they knew me without an introduction. How? Because Jeri had already told them great things about me.

Self-confidence is so

difficult to grow, particularly when it's someone else's rather than your own. I look at my life now and I can say with no doubts that Jeri's confidence in me helped me to grow my own. I always saw in very real ways that Jeri thought I could do great things. Her belief in me shaped how I continue to view myself and others. This was compounded because I realized quickly how impressive Jeri was as a person. As Maya Angelou said, "The desire to reach for the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise." That speaks volumes for Jeri—she always seemed to achieve both.

Jeri has an impeccable reputation at the college for being incredibly capable and direct. She is a great judge of character and used that to motivate people when they most needed encouragement. In the world outside of Manchester, she seemed to yield even more influence. Everywhere I turned, every opportunity I sought, Jeri would say, "I know someone there. Let me make some calls."

Although I've had other supporters and influencers in my life, Jeri holds a unique place. She has been one of my strongest advocates over the years, and one of the people that I have most

admired. I now see myself as strong, independent and capable. In short, I see myself as having many of the qualities that I modeled after her example.

I currently work at Dow Chemical Company's corporate headquarters while I am working to obtain my second master's degree, this one in business administration. Dow recently hosted a speaker who discussed personal branding. He said a key step was to identify your "personal board of directors." This is the group of people who have helped to shape you the most both personally and professionally. I instantly thought of Jeri, who will always have a place of honor at my board's table.

Jeri, I feel like "thank you" doesn't quite hit the mark, but I'll give it a try. Thank you for everything that you've done for me and everything that you have been to me. You are one of my most influential educators, my role model, my trusted mentor, and my friend. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, your experience and your patience. Most of all—thank you for taking a chance on me. It has made all the difference.

Thank You, Jeri Kornegay!



Kornegay pictured with Professor Mary Lahman's Advanced Public Relations class in 2013.