

# Karen Thurston-Chavez

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## Key Skills/Relevant Experience

- 30+ years of experience in integrated communications.
- Sixth-generation journalist on Thurston side of family.
- Former news and features reporter.
- Superior writer, editor, proofreader.
- Exceptional researcher and fact-checker.
- Associated Press style expert.
- Practiced photographer.
- Capable speech and script writer.
- Experienced public speaker.
- Accomplished at social media campaigns and integrated communications plans.
- Experienced at community outreach.
- Talented supervisor, superb team-builder, exceptional at creating strong, authentic working relationships.
- Skilled using website content management systems, including systems based in Drupal, WordPress and Blogger.
- Skilled with Microsoft Office Suite (including Teams Project Manager/Planner, PowerPoint, Publisher, SharePoint).
- Proficient with Zoom and Teams.
- Knowledgeable using Canva, Trello, PicMonkey, Constant Contact, GovDelivery, familiar with MailChimp.
- Well-versed using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Hootsuite, Skype. Familiar with TikTok, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, Tumblr.

## Professional Experience

### 6Gen Communications, Tallahassee

#### *CEO/Owner (current)*

- Offering integrated communications and marketing, media and public relations, social media planning and management, writing and editing, developing communications and production systems, policies, guidelines, formats and standards. Also offering workshops in media relations and writing and editing.
- Previous freelancing included writing for the *Tallahassee Democrat*, and several magazines such as *Tallahassee Woman*, *Tallahassee Magazine*, *Family Forum* (, *Florida Restaurant & Lodging*, *Florida CPA Today*, *Florida Police Chief*, *Today's FDA* and *Southern Scene*).

### Florida Dental Association, Tallahassee

#### *Hired as Communications Manager, promoted to Director of Communications and Agency Relations (combined 13 years)*

- Oversaw all aspects and managed daily operations of the Communications, Marketing, Membership Recruitment and Retention, and Agency Relations departments, including leading, mentoring and supervising a staff of eight to 10 people.
- Served as primary media contact, wrote press releases, media advisories, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces; developed backgrounders and talking points; taught media relations to leadership and staff.
- Oversaw production of organization's 300+ marketing pieces (brochures, flyers, rack cards, newsletters, booklets, annual reports). Also produced monthly magazine, weekly leadership newsletter, monthly digital membership newsletter, monthly staff newsletter.
- Collaborated and established positive working relationships with all FDA departments, four subsidiaries (profit and nonprofit) and two political action committees to develop and distribute appropriate communications, marketing and public-relations materials.
- Created/launched FDA's first comprehensive, integrated, strategic communications plan.
- Launched FDA's first website in 1997.
- Created organization's first brand and publication style guidelines for FDA and its subsidiaries and ensured consistent use.
- Created FDA's first social media profiles on Facebook, Blogger and MySpace (circa 2006).
- Redesigned monthly publication from newspaper to magazine format, saving \$18,000 annually in printing costs, while computerizing advertising sales and increasing sales by \$23,000 a year for total annual increase in revenue of \$41,000.
- Served as senior-level management/communications support to Executive Director for special projects, and association's governing bodies (Board of Trustees, House of Delegates, Executive Committee and several councils and committees).
- Served as staff liaison, developed and compiled agendas, and wrote minutes for FDA's Executive Cabinet, Board of Trustees, House of Delegates. Also served as staff liaison to Council on Communications, Council on Membership, Committee on Children's Dental Health Month, Committee on New Dentists, and volunteer dental editors.

### Florida Department of Environmental Protection | Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection (ORCP), Tallahassee

#### *Communications and Outreach Coordinator (3 years)*

- Staff liaison for DEP's communications/press offices and ORCP regional communications coordinators and field staff.
- Managed more than 20 projects a month, including writing press releases and assisting with media inquiries; overseeing production of brochures, rack cards, swag, email blasts, interpretive signs and other outreach materials.

- Assisted DEP Press Office — identified subject-matter experts, wrote/edited talking points, developed hot topic comms plans.
- Reviewed all public-facing materials to ensure collateral was well-written/design, and met DEP brand and AP style standards.
- Oversaw all updates and developed new content for the ORCP website ([www.FloridaDEP.gov/RCP](http://www.FloridaDEP.gov/RCP)).
- Served as lead coordinator/contact for ORCP outreach events (Oceans Day, Estuaries Day, and science festivals and fairs).
- ORCP representative on multi-agency Florida's Coral Reef Communications Committee (NOAA, FDEP, FWC, Florida Fish & Wildlife Research Institute); served as Florida representative on Coastal States Organization's Communications Workgroup.

## **Florida Institute of CPAs, Tallahassee**

### ***Marketing Production Manager (combined 5 years)***

- Collaborated with FICPA department managers to develop marketing campaigns for various programs, including membership recruitment and retention, continuing professional education, financial literacy, including consumer protection.
- Oversaw production of marketing materials to promote FICPA's conferences, seminars and shows, membership and staffed outreach events promoting financial literacy.
- Wrote copy, developed taglines and selected photography for brochures, flyers, rack cards and other publications.
- Collaborated with digital marketing manager on social media and email blasts promoting conferences and seminars.
- Wrote press releases and media advisories, and coordinated media inquiries.

## **UF Health | UF Health Congenital Heart Center (CHC), Gainesville**

### ***Marketing Coordinator (teleworked/traveled) (3 years)***

- Recruited and hired as Congenital Heart Center's first full-time marketing coordinator.
- Assisted UF Health news office with media inquiries, identified subject-matter experts and coordinated interviews; provided executive-level counseling during communications crisis.
- Created, developed and implemented CHC's first strategic, integrated marketing plan.
- Prior to employment, created, launched and developed center's first social media accounts, expanding reach and engagement among CHC patients and families, and fostering loyalty and connection beyond the hospital and clinical settings.
- Identified and wrote stories about unique and positive patient stories, along with breakthroughs and firsts at UF Health and CHC.
- Managed special events, including grand opening of Pediatric Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (PCICU), annual picnic for CHC patients and families, health fairs and guest-lecture series.

## **Broken Hearts of Florida Inc. (BHF), Tallahassee**

### ***Executive Director/Founder (10 years)***

- Established Broken Hearts of the Big Bend in 2006 to support, educate and connect families affected by congenital and other pediatric heart diseases. BHBB started with three families. By 2010, it had grown to more than 150 families from Big Bend Region and Gainesville, where the UF Health Congenital Heart Center is located.
- In 2010, researched, completed and submitted all necessary paperwork and requirements to file the organization as a 501(c)(3) and change name to Broken Hearts of Florida to reflect organization's reach and growth.
- Established active Board of Directors and regional coordinators. By 2012, BHF had grown to more than 400 families across Florida, with most families living somewhere between the western panhandle and Miami.
- Successfully pitched numerous stories about BHF and its families to Tallahassee and Gainesville media. Served as BHF's media contact and primary spokesperson.
- Created, developed and launched BHF's strategic plan, continued growing its membership; identified and cultivated funding resources; and developed programs to assist families affected by CHD. Programs included financial-assistance grants, hospital bags packed with toiletries and snacks, stocking a food pantry; providing weekly dinners in the CHC's PCICU; hosting monthly support-group dinners and meetings; and organizing a large (100-200 attendees), annual family picnic at the UF recreation park in Micanopy.
- Cultivated mutually supportive partnership with CHC and its faculty and clinical staff.
- Created and implemented fundraising/development events and campaigns to support and expand BHF's programs and services.
- Developed series of speaking/educational events, including Congenital Heart Forums in Tallahassee, bringing in experts from CHC to discuss clinical advancements in CHD treatment and facility enhancements to benefit pediatric cardiac patients and families.
- Speaking series included seminars on establishing a trust for special-needs children, managing stress during your child's hospitalizations, advocating for your child, panel discussion for new heart parents (panel members were "veteran" heart parents).
- Using news releases, earned media (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines), paid radio advertising and social media, raised awareness of BHF, the prevalence of CHD (1 in 100 babies are born with heart defects), and treatment centers near Florida's Big Bend and Central Florida regions.
- Established active, interactive, successful Facebook and Twitter accounts, website and blog (now idle).

## Tallahassee Democrat

### **Hired as News Clerk, promoted to Features/News Reporter (5 years)**

- Wrote stories from Leon, Gadsden and surrounding counties, covering breaking news, police/crime beat, county courts, city and county government, primary through and secondary education, and features.

## Education & Training

- **Florida A&M University School of Journalism & Graphic Communication**, Bachelor of Science degree in Magazine Production with emphasis in newspaper journalism, Magna Cum Laude (1993). (Attended part time while working full time in my field.)
- **Tallahassee Community College**, A.A., General Studies (1987).
- **American Society of Association Executives** (ASAE), Certified Association Executive (CAE) (2001-2014).
- **Tallahassee Society of Association Executives** (TSAE), Program for Association Leadership (2001).

## Professional Engagement

- **Tallahassee Society of Association Executives** (member, 1989-2013)
  - **President**, 2011; **Treasurer, Vice President, President-Elect** (2008-2010); **Board of Directors** (2002-2008).
- Former member of the American Society of Association Executives, Florida Society of Association Executives, Florida Magazine Association, Florida Public Relations Association-Capital Chapter, American Association of Dental Editors, American Advertising Federation of Tallahassee.

## Professional Achievements

- Created and implemented Florida Dental Association's first comprehensive, integrated marketing and public-awareness campaign (IMPACT) in 1997 to proactively address association/dental-health issues in the media and the Florida Legislature.
- Launched FDA's first website in 1997; managed and oversaw redesign and relaunch in 2000, 2003 and 2006.
- Proofread, designed and managed all aspects of production of family book, *Hopa — Memoirs of a German Immigrant to America*, in 2001 for my father, distinguished journalist George L. Thurston III.
- Managed all aspects of producing the Florida Institute of CPA's history book, *100 Years of Service to the Certified Public Accounting Profession in Florida*, in 2005, commemorating the FICPA's 100th anniversary.
- Founded Broken Hearts of Florida in 2006 to support, educate and connect families affected by congenital heart disease.
- Researched first competitive analysis and subsequently developed and implemented UF Health Congenital Heart Center's first integrated marketing plan in 2014.

## Awards and Accolades

- 2008 Nabisco **Extraordinary Women Contest**.
- 2007 Tallahassee Society of Association Executives **Professional of the Year Award**.
- 2007 Tallahassee Memorial Hospital & Magic 107.1 **Women Making Magic Award**.
- 2004 Florida Dental Association **Employee of the Year** for outstanding work and dedication.
- 2004 American Dental Association (ADA) **Golden Apple Award** for Best Dental Society Website.
- 2003 ADA **Golden Apple Award for** Best Dental Society Membership Recruitment and Retention Program.
- 2002 Tallahassee Society of Association Executives **President's Service Award**.
- 2000 Florida Magazine Association (FMA) **Silver Award** for Best Commentary, *Today's FDA*.
- 1999 ADA **Samuel D. Harris Merit Award**: Honorable Mention for Dental Society Children's Dental Health Month campaign.
- 1992 FMA **Charlie Award** (first place): Best Illustration, "Dispatcher in Distress," *The Florida Police Chief*.
- 1991 FMA **Charlie Award**: Best Feature, "That Looming Reporter/Coping with a Cantankerous Press," *The Florida Police Chief*.

## Volunteer/Community Outreach

- **Florida State University Dance Marathon**, Speaker (sharing son's journey with congenital heart disease (2008-2017).
- **Children's Miracle Network at UF Health Shands Children's Hospital**, Ambassador Family, Speaker (2006-2016).
- **University of Florida Dance Marathon**, Miracle Family, Speaker (2011-2013).
- **American Heart Association-Tallahassee**, Ambassador Family, Speaker (2006-2012).

## Portfolio/Samples Available

- Variety of work samples available for review. Some samples available at [www.linkedin/in/karenethurstchavez](http://www.linkedin/in/karenethurstchavez).