

Skills Highlights

- 20+ years of communications experience, including two years as a news reporter.
- Tech savvy, early adopter.
- Innovator, self-starter, enterprising, creative.
- Collaborative, proactive communicator.
- Superior writer, editor, proofreader.
- Fluent in Associated Press style.
- Digital/social and print media expert.
- Practiced media-relations manager.
- Proven public-relations expert.
- Advocacy/Legislative Education
- Talented content creator.
- Confident public speaker, capable speech/script writer.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite, WordPress, Constant Contact, Hootsuite, some Adobe products (currently learning InDesign and Photoshop).
- Accomplished leader and team-builder.

Experience

6Gen Communications LLC, Tallahassee (6/02/2022-present)

CEO/Owner (www.karenthurstonchavez.com)

- Clients include internationally recognized composer, arranger and conductor; state and local economic development councils; faith-based nonprofit focused on strengthening marriages and families.
- Services include writing, editing and proofreading; digital and print publications, including websites, marketing emails and newsletters; social media assessments and management consulting.

FL Dept of Environmental Protection, Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection, Tallahassee (July 2018-July 2021)

Communications and Outreach Coordinator

- Oversaw all aspects of external communications and marketing efforts for Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection, including website content and expansion, and division outreach events.
- Collaborated with four program administrators, four regional communications coordinators and 30 field staff to develop appropriately branded marketing collateral such as digital newsletters, social media content, email blasts, brochures, outreach slide decks, interpretive signs, trail guides, booklets and outreach swag.
- Ran lead on rebranding and rewriting all collateral for Clean Boating Program, including its sub-programs. Collateral included multiple brochures, rack cards, booklets, one-pagers, stickers, flags and swag.
- Assisted Press Office with media inquiries.

UF Health | UF Health Congenital Heart Center (CHC), Gainesville (April 2012-August 2015)

Marketing Coordinator

- Created and advanced CHC's first strategic, integrated marketing plan and \$40,000 annual budget.
- Managed all aspects of CHC's social media accounts, expanding reach and increasing engagement by 200%, fostering patient/family loyalty and connection beyond hospital and clinical settings.
- Wrote content/updated CHC's two websites: CHC-College of Medicine and CHC-UFHealth.org.
- Collaborated with News Office to respond to media inquiries, pitch story ideas, coordinate interviews with subject-matter experts and accompany reporters on the hospital campus.
- counseled C-suite executives during two media crises that occurred during my tenure.
- Identified and wrote about unique patient stories, as well as breakthroughs and firsts at the center and UF Health Shands Children's Hospital for external and internal communications channels.
- Managed event logistics, including grand opening of UF Health's Pediatric Cardiac Intensive Care Unit.

Florida Institute of CPAs, Tallahassee (April 2008-March 2012)

Marketing Production Manager

- Collaborated across multiple departments and programs to develop multichannel marketing campaigns to promote institute's 250+ seminars, shows and conferences, increase membership recruitment and retention, and support financial literacy awareness campaigns. During my tenure, continuing-education attendance increased by 10%.
- Teamed with digital marketing manager to produce promotional content for social media and email blasts.

Broken Hearts of Florida Inc. (BHF), Tallahassee (June 2006-June 2016)

Executive Director/Founder

- Founded and, with the board of directors, managed all aspects of Broken Hearts of Florida, a nonprofit charity to support, educate and connect families affected by congenital heart disease and other pediatric heart diseases.
- Advanced organization's strategic plan, identified/cultivated funding resources to support programs and services.

- Completed exemption requirements, submitted necessary paperwork to IRS to establish BHF as 501(c)3 organization.
- Managed all media inquiries and story pitches, and served as primary spokesperson.
- In 2012, advocated for pulse-oximetry screening to detect critical congenital heart defects as part of the Florida's Newborn Screening requirements. Provided committee testimony and spoke at press conference in favor of adding pulse-oximetry to Florida's Newborn Screening list. (Florida Department of Health added this rule July 1, 2016.)
- Developed educational tracks for series of Congenital Heart Forums, reaching more than 350 patients/families.
- Built all digital/print collateral, including social media and website, as well as brochures, fact sheets and media kits.

Florida Dental Association, Tallahassee (1993-2008)

Director of Communications, Marketing & Membership, and Agency Relations

- Managed all aspects of daily operations of Communications, Membership & Marketing, and Agency Relations departments; led, mentored and supervised up to 10 staff members and interns; managed \$1.6 million budget.
- Served as association's primary media contact. Wrote press releases/media advisories, letters to editor, op-eds, issue backgrounders and talking points. Also taught media relations to leadership and staff.
- Copy editor for several newsletters, including the FDA's legislative newsletter, *Capital Report*, as well its political action committee newsletter, *PACPower*. Also edited *Headquarters Update*, weekly leadership newsletter and *News Bites*, biweekly membership e-newsletter.
- Proactively developed and implemented FDA's first statewide integrated communications campaign (IMPACT—*Increase Media and Public Awareness Campaign Tactics*), which reached 750,000 Floridians, including 25,000 school children. The campaign resulted in 200 dental-health fairs /screenings across state, a nearly 150% increase in earned media, and almost 50% increase in positive media requests.
- Advanced successful Membership Recruitment and Retention campaign, increasing market share from 70% to 82%.
- Managing Editor for *Today's FDA*, a full-color, monthly publication. Publication redesign reduced production and printing costs by \$25,000, and increased advertising revenue by \$20,000, for a net savings of \$45,000.
- Fostered collaborative relationships with FDA departments and subsidiaries to develop and distribute communications, marketing and public-relations collateral, which included more than 300 pieces annually.
- Launched and managed several FDA firsts, including website, online membership directory, social media accounts.

Book Production

FICPA: 100 Years of Service to the Certified Public Accounting Profession (2005)

- Coordinated content, edited and proofread, and managed production/printing of anniversary book for Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Hopa — Memoirs of a German Immigrant to America (2001)

- Proofread content, designed and managed all aspects of production and printing of family genealogy book for my father, distinguished journalist George L. Thurston III.

Education

- **University of South Florida Muma College of Business, Tampa**
 - Digital Marketing Certificate Course. Currently enrolled; estimated completion, June 2023.
- **Florida A&M University School of Journalism & Graphic Communication, Tallahassee**
 - Bachelor of Science degree: Major: Journalism, minor: Criminal Justice. Magna Cum Laude.
- **Tallahassee Community College, Tallahassee**
 - Associate of Arts, General Studies with emphases in Criminal Justice and Psychology.

Training

- **Adobe InDesign and Photoshop Training.** In progress. Estimated completion, March 2023.
- **Florida Department of Environmental Protection**
 - *10 Tips for Better Webinars*. March 2021.
 - *The Science and Art of Storytelling*. June 2020.
 - *The Collaborative Learning Approach Using Mental and Culture Models*. June 2020.
 - *Water Words that Work: Changing the Subject and Communicating about Climate Change*. October 2019.
 - *Teamwork and Change Management*. September 2019.
 - *Strategic Communications Mentored Course*. Reef Resilience Network. July-September 2018.
- **American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)**
 - Held Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation, demonstrating competence in all areas of association governance and management. 2001-2014.

Professional Engagement

- **University of South Florida Digital Marketing Program Advisory Board.** 2021-2022.
- **Tallahassee Society of Association Executives.** President, 2011. Member, 1989-2014. Board of Directors, 2002-2012.
- **Other memberships:** American and Florida societies of association executives, Florida Magazine Association, Florida Public Relations Association-Capital Chapter, American Advertising Federation-Tallahassee.

Volunteer/Community Engagement

Children's Miracle Network — Florida State University and University of Florida Dance Marathons, 2008-2017

- Miracle Family, speaker/shared son's story about living with CHD.

American Heart Association — Tallahassee, 2006-2012

- Community Board Member, 2006-2008.
- Red Cap Ambassador 2007 HeartWalk.
- Ambassador Family (2006-2012), shared son's story about living with CHD.

Professional Awards

- 2008 Nabisco's **100 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 American Dental Association (ADA) **Golden Apple Award**, Best Dental Society Website, Florida Dental Association (FDA).
- 2003 **ADA Golden Apple Award**, Best Dental Society Member Recruitment & Retention campaign, FDA.
- 2002 Tallahassee Society of Association Executives, **President's Service Award**.
- 1999 **ADA Samuel D. Harris Merit Award**, Children's Dental Health Month campaign, FDA.
- 1991 **Florida Magazine Association Charlie Award** (1st place), Best Feature, "That Looming Reporter/Coping with a Cantankerous Press," *The Florida Police Chief*. (Copy editor: Karen Thurston-Chavez.)
- 1990 Florida Magazine Association Charlie Award, Best Illustration, "Dispatcher in Distress," *The Florida Police Chief*. (Editor: Karen Thurston-Chavez.)