



Perkins School for the Blind spokeswoman Jaimi Lard (left) gives a radio interview with the involvement of her interpreter, Pam Ryan (right).

Perkins School for the Blind

"We had never held a media event at Perkins School for the Blind until the briefing for the Braille and Talking Book Library. This was perfect. We didn't dare dream we would have such a great outcome."

- Jan Spitz

**Director, Development & Public Relations
Perkins School for the Blind**

The Challenge:

Since its inception in 1829, the Perkins School for the Blind has played a vital and historic role in educating and advocating on behalf of people who are blind, deafblind and multihandicapped. In order to further its work, the School engaged Devillier Communications, Inc. (DCI) to develop and then implement a Strategic Communications Plan of Action. The plan identified several communications objectives. These included:

- Building awareness and additional support for Perkins School with key audiences and making people aware of the array of services the School offers to the general community.
- Underscoring the important value of current Perkins supporters.
- Creating awareness about the need for more qualified teachers for children who are blind, deafblind and multihandicapped.
- Creating broader appreciation among colleagues for the School's pioneering work.
- Increasing the awareness of the general public about Perkins School.

Strategy:

DCI believed that the School should communicate its story in new and engaging ways and should especially focus on services available to the community. One of the first opportunities identified by the School was its Braille and Talking Book Library, which was recently expanded. The "unveiling" of the new Library facility was to occur at the School's first "Discovery Series Dinner" that featured keynote speaker Mr. Henry Grunwald, former editor-in-chief, Time, Inc., and victim of macular degeneration. DCI recommended that a press briefing be held before the Dinner. The objectives were to communicate the vital role the Library reaching out to often forgotten members of the community and to make people aware that the Library could assist many more people.

Tactics:

To implement the strategy, DCI:

- Worked with Perkins' staff to invite Mr. Grunwald to address the press briefing.
- Developed a comprehensive event media kit.
- Initiated an aggressive media outreach campaign to print and broadcast media in metropolitan Boston.
- Coordinate a radio tour the day before the briefing for Kevin Lessard, Perkins School executive director.
- Organize a tour of the Library for attending media, led by several of Perkins' blind students and staff.
- Coordinated speakers for the briefing to include blind or visually impaired individuals who either work in the Library or are Library patrons.
- Provided media training sessions for the event spokesperson.

Results:

- 10 radio stations interviewed Mr. Lessard during the tour, most from the New England region.
 - The briefing was covered by newspapers, including *The Boston Globe* and *Metro West*.
 - Associated Press attended and ran a story and photo in several media outlets throughout New England.
 - The coverage generated several follow-up requests for information and interviews about the Library up to two months after the event. These included *The Waltham Daily Tribune*, *The Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, *Springfield Union News*, *The Daily Evening Item*, and *The Patriot Ledger*.
 - More than two million media impressions were generated as a result of the event.
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