





2023 Hall of Fame

**Congratulations
Janice Person**

Hall of Fame



Hall of Fame



Janice received her master's degree from Memphis.... where both her mom and grandmom attended. She was the first woman to get a four-year degree & followed it with her masters from the alma mater her mom & grandmom attended.

The beginning



First "career job" was as an intern and eventually assistant editor at Little Publications, worked with sales department and agencies to create sponsored inserts, etc.



Thanks to Little Publications I got into the ag industry while going to school. This pic is from one of my earliest farm trips with another recent grad whose dad grew cotton.



ARC
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EDUCATION & CAREER OVERVIEW

- Grew up a total city kid in Memphis, TN
- Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications from Phillips University (Enid, OK)
- Master of Arts in Journalism & Public Relations from the University of Memphis (Memphis, TN).
Doing research on the media under various Soviet General secretaries as well as interviewing editors and reporters in Volgograd, Russia
- **Little Publications** (Cotton Farming, Rice Farming & Custom Applicator) — Got into agriculture when a family friend — Adam Ballinger — hired me as a summer intern with Little Publications where he was publisher.
- **Gibbs & Soell** (now G&S Communications) — Joined the White Plains, NY office as an account executive on the ICI Ag / rebranded to Zeneca while I was on the account. I was focused on the Southern Row Crops portfolio but also worked on a range of other parts of their business.



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EDUCATION & CAREER OVERVIEW *continued*

- **Delta and Pine Land Company** — worked at Delta and Pine Land Company as it was introducing seed that was going to revolutionize the cotton industry because it offered in-plant control of a worm that devastated farms just the year before. As the first professional communicator in the company, I got to work on all the things but started with the technical side of things as farmers needed information on how to manage these new varieties.
- **Monsanto Company** — Joined the company through the merger and spent the first half of my tenure with the company doing many of the things I had brought from Deltapine. I was a deep resource for the company on cotton continuing all media and public affairs but also added in chemistry (Roundup as well as the rest of the product line), dairy (including its divestiture to Elanco) and soybeans including the launch of Roundup Ready 2 Yield and all the early work on Dicamba tolerant crops.
- By the time Monsanto realized they needed a full-scale outreach program, I was a natural fit. My personal blog & SM use had put me in touch with lots of social media peeps outside of ag. And my role on the board of AgChat had me in touch with everyone in ag interested in changing the public conversation. This was not only a defining moment for me & my career, but I think it was a defining moment for the ag industry and I was lucky to be well prepared and had leadership willing to take risks.



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Grounded Communications LLC — Founded the company in 2019 to provide speaking and consulting services for clients as well as build content to reach outside of agriculture. What I love so intensely about this part of my career is the depth of knowledge & network and how I can apply that to reach goals both for myself & for clients.

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Two on-going projects that are part of Grounded Communications are **Grounded by the Farm** and **Grounded and Rising** -



Grounded by the Farm® a food and farm podcast geared for non-farm audiences. Because many of our listeners have never been to the types of farms we interview, photos and video footage augment the audio on our website and YouTube channel. This and social media channels help bring some of the people and places we visit to life. The show has ranked among the top 50 in food multiple times and provides a lot of diversity of operations from avocados and dates and corn and dairy. As we enter the fourth season, 26 states and 9 foreign countries have been featured, approximately two-thirds of our guests are women and people of color.

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Grounded and Rising® is a member-based community and training platform that offers individuals and organizations updates on a range of business and communications topics including social media tips, motivation, topics impacting food in current day culture, etc. We host monthly training and information exchange sessions and recently introduced an app that makes it easy to use on the go.



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Awards and Recognition -

- Distinguished Service Award Issued by Ag Relations Council · Mar 2013
- The Vine Award -- Excellence in Engagement (Individual Award, the highest honor in the company given to employees) Issued by Monsanto Company · Jul 2015. The award was described: "'JP is Monsanto.' Janice is the face of Monsanto to thousands of stakeholders, both online and in person. She consistently represents Monsanto in key forums that advance our business and general understanding of Monsanto, has identified credible voices to join the conversation and helped countless employees, farmers and stakeholders learn how to better engage in conversations about agriculture."
- Vine Award -- Smart Risk Taking (Team Award) Issued by Monsanto Company · Sep 2017
- [quora.com](https://www.quora.com/profile/Janice-Patterson) Top Writer 2016-2018 Issued by Quora
- Top Women Agriculture Blogs to Follow Issued by In the Furrow · Apr 2017



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2018 ARC meeting where Janice delivered a keynote about why all of us need to be uncomfortable more often.



ARC pub crawl,
OKC



A famous wine tour in Oregon....
Sally, Deron and the rest of us
have vivid memories of this and
wouldn't be surprised if the tour
guide did too!

ARC memories


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I've known Janice since the mid 1990s, when we worked together at Gibbs & Soell Public Relations in New York, on crop protection accounts. Her commitment to excellence and ethics, enthusiasm for helping consumers grow in understanding about agriculture and dedication to mentoring younger professionals are unmatched. Her induction into the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame is well-deserved.

*Cyndie Shearing, APR
Director, Communications
American Farm Bureau Federation®*

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Janice Person has defined what it means to be a positive influencer for agriculture. Janice is an expert communicator and curator of impactful stories about the people that produce our food and fiber.

Janice has taught hundreds of agricultural producers how to effectively tell their stories and helped them to reach consumer audiences. Janice and I worked together for many years— I could not have found a more effective, dedicated and passionate colleague to help in Monsanto's consumer outreach efforts.

I am absolutely delighted that Janice Person has been selected to be inducted into the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame. Her 30+ years of successfully working as a professional communicator in this industry makes her a very fitting honoree.

Holly Butka



Hall of Fame



"I met Janice through industry meetings but didn't have a chance to get to work with her until I served on the ARC board with her. When I first joined ARC in 1990, and then joined the board and became familiar with the organizational finances, two things became imminently clear. First, how good a deal we had with Agri-Washington (it seems they were almost providing the services pro-bono), and second, if we didn't do something soon, the organization would be bankrupt.

We held a pivotal board meeting in Memphis, as part of an annual meeting. The discussions were carried from the hotel meeting room to several watering holes on Beale Street (Janice knows Memphis like the back of her hand). All of us felt strongly about keeping ARC as a separate entity as opposed to merging it into NAMA or AAEEA. As we debated the organization's future and how we were going to pivot, Janice's insight and expertise were key ingredients in the decision the board made to manage the organization voluntarily for a couple of years until we could get it back on its feet. What followed was an endless series of conference calls (and emails flying around the country as we sorted out who could perform what functions and how we were going to raise the Phoenix from the ashes. I'm ever so grateful to Janice for her courage, her leadership and her ability to clarify confusing topics. I'm so pleased to have been a small part of the renaissance of this wonderful organization and to emphatically join the chorus of voices honoring Janice for her contributions to the organization and cheering her induction into the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame."

Jeri Mattics

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™

Edward Jones



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Throughout my journey in the agricultural industry, I have been fortunate enough to cross paths with several remarkable individuals. Still, none have had as profound an impact on my professional growth and development as Janice.

Janice possesses an innate talent for connecting with people, understanding their unique perspectives, and effectively communicating complex ideas.

Her induction into the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame would not only honor her remarkable career but also serve as an inspiration for future generations of agricultural communicators. Her legacy will undoubtedly endure, and her impact will continue to shape the future of agricultural relations for years to come.

Jodi Oleen

Marketing and Digital Strategist | Brand Builder | Program Pioneer

Jodi Oleen Consulting



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Majory Walker
VP of Communications
National Cotton Council



Hall of Fame



Janice used to scare me. Every time I would see her or meet with her at an ag meeting of some kind the past 25+ years, I was fearful that the shirt I was wearing (or my underwear for that matter) wasn't 100 percent cotton! But seriously folks...Janice's stamp on ag communications goes much beyond cotton. As one of the pioneers (in my estimation) of EFFECTIVE use of digital and social media platforms, she was always (and still is) at the top of the list of contacts to glean some wisdom in this area. There's not enough space to cover all her contributions to ARC over the years. Suffice it to say that Janice was and is someone who appreciates what professional improvement associations do for all of us. Whether working for a Fortune 500 company or now with her own firm, Janice makes us all proud to practice ag communications – and to do it right! Congratulations Janice on a career well “grounded” in communications.

Den Gardner

Gardner and Gardner Communications



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**Congratulations
Janice Person**



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**Congratulations
Deron Johnson**

Hall of Fame



Hall of Fame

Professional highlights:

- Bachelor's degree in Journalism (news editorial) from Kansas State University – 1988.
- **Nine years** as a working journalist post-graduation including 7 years as a senior editor with The Packer, the flagship publication of Vance Publishing Corp (since incorporated into Farm Journal Media).
- **Twenty-three years** in agency leadership roles with firms including:
 - FleishmanHillard, Kansas City – PR Management Supervisor;
 - Gibbs & Soell (now GS Business Communications), Chicago – PR Client Service Manager;
 - Brighton, St. Louis – Director of Public Relations;
 - Rhea + Kaiser, Chicago – VP/director of PR;
 - Curious Plot, Kansas City – SVP of PR and now EVP, Chief Brand & Culture Officer
 - While my role at Curious Plot more closely resembles an overall client/account leader, I very much consider (and will always consider) myself as a “PR native.”
- **Three years** in corporate/brand communications with Pfizer Inc and then Zoetis (as that business was spun off from Pfizer) as Director of Communications for the U.S. Companion Animal business (New Jersey)

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ARC highlights:

- Member since 2005
- Board member – 2006-2018
- President – 2008-2011

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Commentary:

- The most meaningful decision during my time as President was the decision by the board to determine the future of ARC. We were working under volunteer leadership, the active membership list was under 20 people and the overall viability of the organization was in question. I'll never forget the board call where the sole agenda item was to either sunset ARC as an organization or commit to jump-starting it. I don't know that there was any real appetite to end things (certainly not by me and on my watch as President) but the option was on the table.
 - The first annual meeting after this decision to continue forward was in New Orleans, and the success of that meeting was absolutely critical to determining the path forward. I can say with certainty that had that meeting failed, it might have spelled the end of ARC. Fortunately, it was a huge success from an optics/perception standpoint as we leaned into the narrative of both ARC and New Orleans being "comeback kids" (this meeting took place barely 3 years post-Katrina).
- Other big/important developments during my term as President:
 - We made the decision to hire Den Gardner/Gardner & Gardner Comms to professionally manage ARC. This work of course has been transitioned to Kristy Mach and Corner Window Communications, the team that has done an amazing job managing ARC. We owe Den an incalculable debt of gratitude for his leadership, his unwavering commitment and even his willingness to defer payment for services early on as ARC got on its feet financially.
 - We resurrected the Golden ARC awards competition.
 - The discussion was started to create the AG PR Hall of Fame, an effort that came to fruition under the leadership of Mace Thornton, who followed me as ARC President.

Hall of Fame

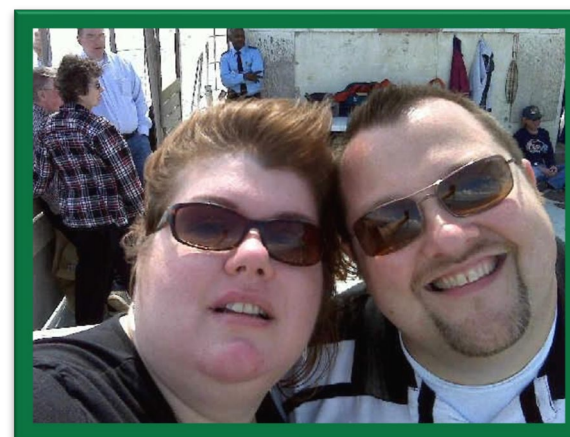


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Daren and Deron

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Since the moment I met Deron, I have been incredibly fortunate to have him as an invaluable friend and trusted confidant. In the challenging days when we could count membership in a struggling Agricultural Relations Council on two hands, and maybe one, his unwavering commitment to the organization has been nothing short of remarkable. Deron's contributions to our vocation and his dedication to ARC deserve the highest praise. Fortified with his EMAW spirit and with more than three decades of leadership in the field of strategic communications, it is a genuine pleasure and honor to welcome him as a member of the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame . Congratulations, my friend.

Mace Thornton
Partner & COO
Stratovation Group



Hall of Fame



Deron Johnson is the real deal.

Immeasurably talented. Vastly knowledgeable. Passionate about agriculture. Able to leap large PR obstacles in a single bound. Rescuing colleagues and clients from major (and minor) catastrophes, faux pas and sometimes just from themselves.

I have never seen Deron and Superman in the same room at the same time... coincidence?

In all seriousness, no one is more deserving of this honor. Mask or not, he is a superhero to many of us in this crazy business of agriculture communications. Agriculture and our world is better with Deron Johnson in it. Congratulations!

Michelle Tollefson

Business/Marketing Manager, EgCel Technology

Arkion Life Sciences

Hall of Fame



Our paths initially crossed when BASF had acquired American Cyanamid in 2000. As the process began to restructure the marketing communications team and to consolidate the various agencies into one full-service agency of record; which became the Brighton Agency.

As head of Public Relations for Brighton, Deron and his team spent countless amount of time planning and developing key strategic PR components on how to effectively communicate with both internal and external audiences. Deron and I had to resolve many tasks within a very abbreviated timeline- such as the integration of two companies with different dynamics, expanded brand portfolios, strengthen customer relations and pending launches of Clearfield rice and Newpath herbicide.

One of Deron's many strengths is his ability to be a true advisor, counselor and confidant with the Client. His skill set and talents continue to make significant contributions to our respective agricultural industries.

Deron's stellar reputation and remarkable accomplishments have been recognized by his ARC peers to be inducted into the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame .

Congratulations to Deron on this well-deserved prestigious honor.

With best regards,
Gary Kreckmann



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I first met Deron when we were both bright, young things. I'd applied for a job with Fleishman Hilliard in Kansas City, and he called to do the initial screening interview. I have never laughed so much during a job interview before or since that Tuesday night call.

Since then, our professional paths have crossed multiple times as colleagues, clients and agency partners. Regardless of his role, Deron was always strategic, passionate and personable.

He is a tireless advocate for agriculture, as well as for the people he works with. If he opened his own agency tomorrow, probably everyone in this room would apply to work with him again. I know I'd like the privilege of collaborating with him once more before we settle into retirement.

Congratulations, Deron. This recognition is well earned and much deserved.

Keena Lykins

*Manager, International Medical Educational and Congresses, Diagnostics
Zoetis*



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When you first meet Deron Johnson, in my opinion, you think about the guy you'd want as your next-door neighbor. The guy to share an evening cocktail with and/or shoot the breeze about sports, politics and your family. A real "Mr. Nice Guy!" The good news – for ag communicators – is that AFTER that drink and discussion you better be ready to talk about how to improve our business, how to best target our clients' customers and how to use professional improvement associations like ARC to promote and create the best in ag communications. When Deron and others approached G&G 15 years ago to manage ARC, it was those qualities of the personal touch and the professional attitude that told us that if ARC was going to come back, people like Deron Johnson were going to have to lead that effort. Congrats Deron on your selection to the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame . Well deserved.

Den Gardner

Gardner & Gardner Communications



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**Congratulations
Deron Johnson**

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Congratulations Janice & Deron



