

A Tip of the Santa Hat to the Givers of Gucci Gulch

By Jeffrey H. Birnbaum
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When Global Action for Children, an advocacy organization for orphans and vulnerable children in developing nations, needed professional help to stage a Washington news conference this past April, it turned to Quinn Gillespie & Associates.

At the time, Global Action did not have enough staff to launch its new drive to increase U.S. funding for primary-school education in poor countries. So the lobbying and PR firm provided ample assistance free of charge.

Lobbyists don't get much respect from the public. But behind the scenes, lobbying and public relations firms such as Quinn Gillespie often do a lot of good deeds -- without pay -- to advance public and charitable interests.

In this holiday season, let's take note of a few of them.

Quinn Gillespie, for example, helped plan and manage the news conference, which featured actress *Angelina Jolie*, Global Action's honorary board chair; *Kay Warren* of California's Saddleback Church; and the group's executive director, *Jennifer Delaney*.

Quinn Gillespie staffers *Rochelle Behrens*, *Catherine Goode*, *Virginia Hume*, *Sue Garman Kranias*, *Richard C. Powell Jr.* and *Ashley Prime* drafted and sent out news releases, edited speeches, and managed the event's arrangements. *Jack Quinn*, an advisory board member, backed the effort.

"This was truly invaluable to GAC," Delaney said. "We could not have done it without them."

But Quinn Gillespie is not the only K Street Santa.

The McLean-based nonprofit Our Military Kids supports the children of deployed and severely injured National Guard and reserve troops. The law firm Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld supports Our Military Kids. Akin Gump helped the charity lobby for federal funds from Congress.

Similarly, Collins & Company, an Arlington-based lobbying firm, has been providing pro bono consulting to the Yellow Ribbon Fund since the fund's inception in 2005. The fund offers assistance to injured soldiers and their families at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

FD Dittus Communications helped Friends of New Orleans raise more than \$60,000 through a series of events this year, including a panel discussion at the Aspen Institute in Colorado and a reception for New Orleans leaders at the home of political consultants *James Carville* and *Mary Matalin*.

Rodney Ferguson, managing partner in Washington for Lipman Hearne, a PR firm, also helped collect money for New Orleans, in his case for the Friends of the Times-Picayune. With the help of Ferguson and his staff, the relief fund raised more than \$30,000 at a Washington fundraiser, which is a lot of money for a small charity.

Ogilvy Public Relations provided pro bono public relations counsel to the fourth annual Congressional Blues Festival. Festival proceeds benefit the Music Maker Relief Foundation, which provides grants for basic needs such as health care and food to low-income musicians over the age of 55.

Fleishman-Hillard public relations staffers volunteered at Miriam's Kitchen, a food shelter in Foggy Bottom. They arrived at 6 a.m. to prepare and serve breakfast for more than 200 people. They also handled promotional efforts for Miriam's Kitchen's annual fundraising gala, 100 Bowls of Compassion.

Paul Miller of Miller/Wenhold Capitol Strategies helped Big Cat Rescue, a nonprofit group, press for legislation that would help end the trafficking in lions, tigers and other big cats as pets. Big Cat Rescue works to provide a permanent home for wild cats who have been abused, abandoned, bred to be pets, retired from performing acts, or saved from being slaughtered for their coats.

Gary Schleuger, president of Pioneer Government Affairs, helped arrange his fifth annual Boehner-Kennedy Dinner, which has raised more than \$5 million over the years for the Center City Consortium to benefit the District's Roman Catholic elementary schools.

The Raben Group worked with the Navajo Nation's Washington office to organize and support a Uranium Roundtable -- convened by Reps. *Tom Udall* (D-N.M.), *Jim Matheson* (D-Utah) and *Rick Renzi* (R-Ariz.) -- to consider the risks associated with future mining on the tribe's land. The lobby firm also plans, pro bono, to launch a national campaign to stop the proposed mining that, it says, threatens Navajo communities.

Patton Boggs's Washington office also worked pro bono for Native Americans, in its case the Cheyenne River Youth Project in Eagle Butte, S.D. The firm obtained funds to help the teen center there, which has dealt with a spate of suicides.

Separately, Patton Boggs's *Gordon Arbuckle*, *Betty Barton* and *Robert Kapla* have been working with NatureServe, a nonprofit conservation organization, to build congressional support for a nationally consistent information network on the status of at-risk species and ecosystems. Patton Boggs helped NatureServe get in contact with lawmakers, which resulted in improved funding for the organization.

Members of DLA Piper's lobbying practice helped *Maher Arar*, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen, prepare for a congressional hearing. Arar was detained by U.S. officials in 2002 while changing planes in New York and was taken to Syria, where he was tortured and imprisoned for nearly a year.

When Arar was asked to testify about his experience, *Joe Davis* and *William Minor* in DLA Piper's Washington office guided him through the process -- pro bono.

Public Strategies, the national communications firm, served as the free-of-charge adviser for the Campaign for Philanthropy, a program designed to boost charitable giving in central Texas. Just three months into the public effort, the campaign has assembled more than 100 volunteers, 12 corporate sponsors and major foundation support.

Happy holidays!

Hire of the Week

Gavin Gibbons, 33, has gone from Fox to fish. The former senior producer for Fox News Channel is the new director of media relations for the National Fisheries Institute, the nation's leading lobby for the seafood industry.

John Connelly, the institute's chief executive, suggested in a blog that Gibbons's background would come in handy, especially if the industry goes into the proverbial fire from the old frying pan. "While Gavin does not have direct food industry experience, he has spent years on the other side of the table, conducting interviews and poking and probing for weaknesses in stories," Connelly said. "We think that kind of experience on our behalf will be invaluable."

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