

Fortify Your Communications ("Comms") No Matter **What** Your Capacity



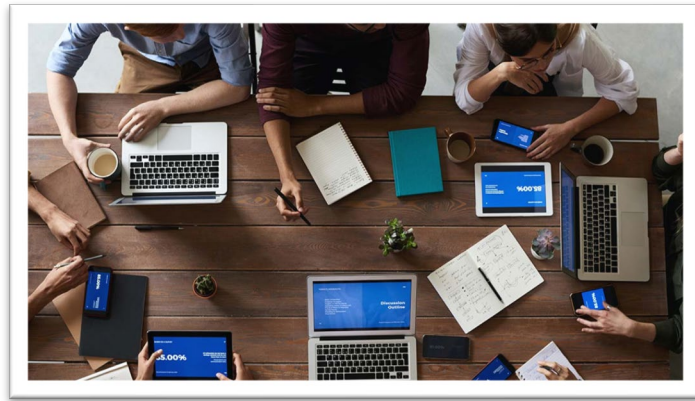
Fortify Your Communications No Matter **What** Your Capacity

Strategies to Get the Job Done!

Outsourced

In-House / 1 Individual

In-House /Department | 2 Team Members



ICMA Practice Areas

- Community Engagement
- Staff Effectiveness
- Strategic Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Policy Facilitation & Implementation
- Communication & Information Sharing

Communication Goals (the Job) No Matter **What** Your Capacity/Size



1. Reach Residents/Businesses/All Stakeholders
2. Connect with Community – Tell the Story of Local Government and its many services
3. Build Trust (for both “good” and “bad” times)
4. Have dedicated communicator/communicators
5. Utilize appropriate mediums and channels
6. Advise and Guide Messaging
7. Encourage Two-Way Communications
8. Build Deeper Connections



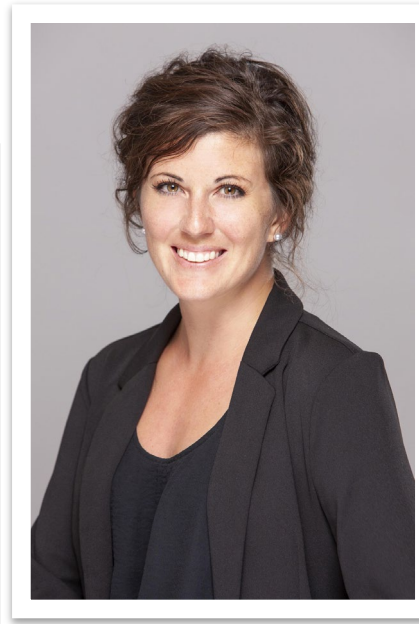
Your Presenters



Jessica Spencer
Assistant Village
Administrator
Village of River Forest



Jack Cascone
Management Analyst II
Village of
Arlington Heights

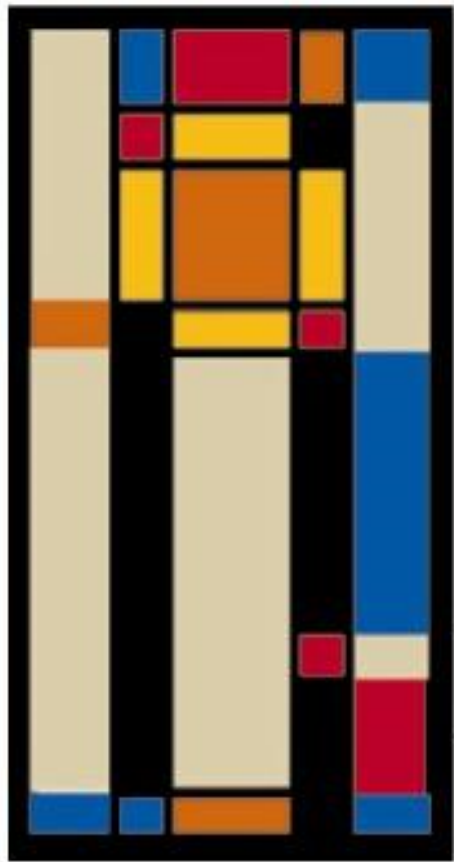


Molly Gillespie
Director of Communications
& Engagement
Village of Buffalo Grove



Moderator:
Melanie Santostefano
President, Vicarious Multimedia &
St. Steven Public Relations





INCORPORATED 1880

**RIVER
FOREST**

Proud Heritage

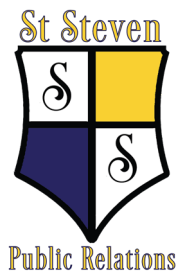
Bright Future

**Village of River
Forest
Communications:
Outsourced Model**



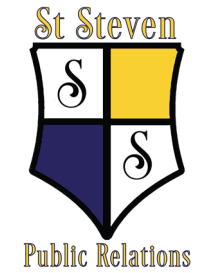
Jessica Spencer
Assistant Village Administrator
Village of River Forest

A Public/Private Partnership to Manage Communications



Melanie Santostefano,
St. Steven Public Relations &
Vicarious Multimedia

Contracted/Outsourced Communications



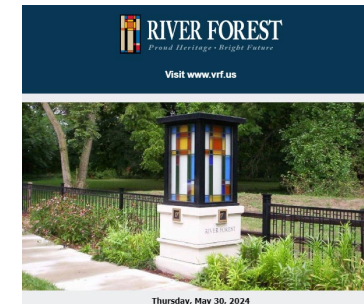
- Vicarious Multimedia (VM) & St. Steven Public Relations (SSPR) Initially engaged with River Forest in spring of 2020 on monthly retainer-ongoing
- “Comms” workgroup consists of VM/SSPR team & Administration (Village Administrator (VA), Asst. VA and Management Analyst
- Four rounds of VA, Asst. VA and Management Analysts
- A defined process for roles/responsibilities has been **KEY!**

Daily-Weekly-Monthly Communications Deliverables



Monthly Newsletter-Digital Send Out

- **Social Media:** 2 posts per day-Facebook, NextDoor & Instagram
- **Newsletters:**
 - Monthly (first Friday of month) traditional (page through)
 - Weekly through Constant Contact
- **PR/Crisis Communications Consulting:** As needed
- **Video & Graphics:** As needed



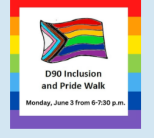
Dear River Forest residents,
 Thank you to everyone who participated in the Village's annual Memorial Day celebration! More than 4,000 people attended this event that honored the men and women in the armed forces, and especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. A list of those who were honored can be found here. For those unable to attend, please stay tuned for our June newsletter (to be sent out on Friday, June 7), where a photo collage of the Memorial Day celebrations will be featured on the back page.
 I would also like to thank our Village Board and staff who worked hard at making the parade a huge success.

Weekly Enews Constant Contact

Vehicle Stickers

All vehicles registered in Illinois with a River Forest address must also be registered with the Village through the purchase of a vehicle sticker. Vehicle stickers for 2024-2025 are now available for purchase. Updated stickers need to be affixed to windshields by Sunday, July 14 to avoid late fees and citations. **PLEASE NOTE:** The Village is now offering an active military or veteran discount on vehicle stickers. For more information or to purchase a vehicle sticker online, click here.

Pride Walk



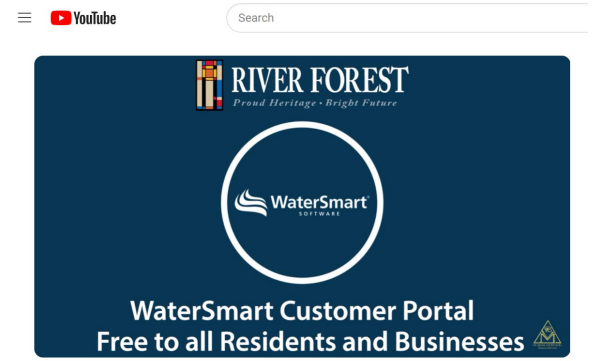
Join Lincoln Elementary School for the third annual District 90 Pride and Inclusion Walk on Monday, June 3 from 6-7:30 p.m., where participants will meet at Village Hall, raise the Pride Flag, then walk around the Lincoln Elementary School block to end at the Franklin Playground. All interested area residents are encouraged to participate. To learn more, click here.

Juneteenth Event



Join the Village and the River Forest Public Library for the Juneteenth Flag Raising Ceremony on Monday, June 17 from 11 a.m. until noon at the River Forest Public Library. This event commemorates the date in 1865 when enslaved people in Texas were proclaimed free. After the ceremony, refreshments will be served until 12:30 p.m. To learn more, click here.

Dominican University Celebrates Juneteenth



WaterSmart VRF

WaterSmart Explainer Video

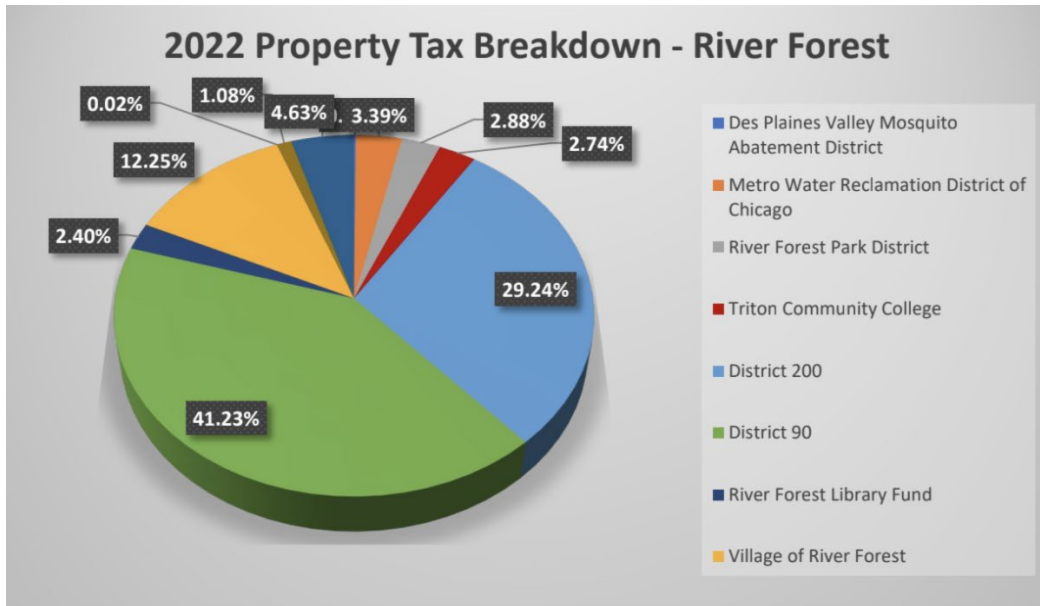
Communications Structure

Roughly 15 hours per week
for Village Team

Roughly 15-20 hours per week for Vicarious/
St. Steven Team(s)



- Ultimate responsibility for Comms is Village Administrator (VA)
- Asst. VA and Management Analyst (MA) help to compile **monthly** newsletter content
- Vicarious & St. Steven teams develop/create content **weekly** for social media & 3 other Enewsletters through Constant Contact – Village advises on any new content
- Village provided draft copy for all content for approval before publishing



Who is Driving Content?

Village President (VP)/Administration/
Vicarious – St. Steven all drive content

Timely topics & issues –
VP can be reactive to “talk around town”

- Village Administrator (VA) directs departments to develop their own content and final reviews all content
- Asst. VA and Management Analyst (MA) work with outside agencies for **monthly** newsletter to submit their content.
- All bulk content (departments/outside agencies) sent to Vicarious/St. Steven to format, edit/write/rewrite - draft is back to Village for final review before send out.



WaterSmart VRF



Rezoning's promised school benefits doubtful

by Kelly Abcarian April 30, 2024

Analyzing the proposed River Forest zoning plan, the lack of data-supported projections raises concerns about its economic viability and infrastructure impact. Converting commercial districts into residential high-rises could strain infrastructure and services. Despite recognizing the need for a "what if" analysis, the ZBA committee failed to provide substantive data at the April 11 meeting. Additionally, [Village Administrator Matt] Walsh's memo ignored key points from the River Forest Public Schools School District 90 Demographic Trends and Enrollment Projections study, commissioned October 2022 (Village board packet on the River Forest website, D90 study, p. 80-108, memo, p. 9-28, <https://www.vrf.us/uploads/cms/documents/events/04-11->

Local news, straight to your inbox!

Sign up for our free newsletter to get latest news and updates on Oak Park and River Forest.



Letter to the Editor – Wednesday Journal

Over the past couple of weeks, the Village has seen opposition to the proposed modernization and updating of our commercial zoning codes. There have been signs staked in the ground, petitions circulating and an overall fear of what this means for our community. I am writing to every one of our community members to tell you that there is nothing to fear here. The Village Board is not asking the Zoning Board of Appeals to rezone any of our land as is stated in communications that are opposed to the zoning modernization.

What we are doing is reviewing codes that have not been changed for three decades. It is our duty to look at what we have developed, what we want to develop, and determine if they fit with the current economic climate and market. The Village Board will always scrutinize any commercial development proposal and will continue to retain the power to approve or deny any development in our community.

Please be assured that the individuals who serve our community on the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Economic Development Commission, and the Village Board are all residents, too, who care deeply about what is best for our community. We are not inviting skyscrapers, or cars to park on our streets overnight – and we are not going to let any development change what is special about River Forest. Ever.

As-Needed Services

Video – Crisis/PR Consulting Graphics Projects



Age-Friendly River Forest



VILLAGE OF

L I N C O L N S H I R E

Village of Lincolnshire: One Employee – Multiple Responsibilities



Jack Cascone
Management Analyst II
Village of Arlington Heights
(Formerly at Village of
Lincolnshire)

COMMUNICATION IN THE VILLAGE OF LINCOLNSHIRE



When Stars Align: Train the Team

COMMUNICATION IN THE VILLAGE OF LINCOLNSHIRE



Background

Joined Lincolnshire in 2019 while beginning MPA Program

Undergrad in Communication and Political Science

- Focus on Public Relations/Social Media

One employee responsible for all communication with collaboration from Village Manager's Office, but communication was just a piece of her responsibilities

Village starting implementation phase of Village-wide rebrand



Rebranding

Full rebranding. All communication top to bottom

First Visual Brand & Style Guide to dictate Brand basics and create foundational documents

Thorough, strict Communication Policy for all staff

Implemented an inter-departmental Communication Committee to oversee rebranding in each department

- DISCLAIMER: Stars Aligned





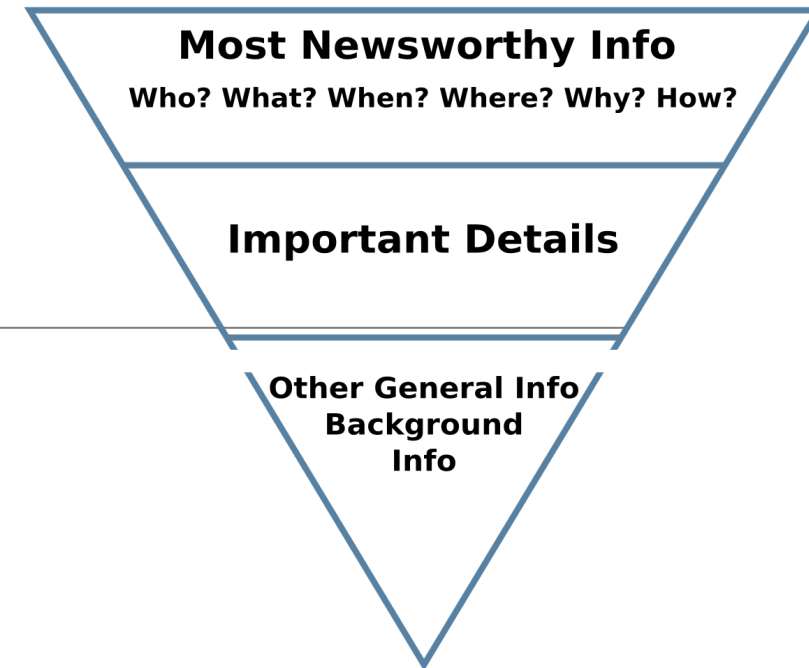
Communication Committee Foundations

One staff member from each department assigned to committee, plus Village Manager's Office

- Met weekly on Monday

New Policy + New Brand Standards = Opportunity to Train Staff

- Ins and outs of the Policy & Brand Standards, and why it's important
- Communication 101; AP Style Writing (Inverted Pyramid); Taking/Choosing Photo Basics
- Writing for Social Media; Writing for the Public (LOSE THE JARGON!)
- Identifying Stories Within Department; Maintaining Brand "Voice"
- Building trust and maintaining credibility among public and partners





Communication Committee Expanded Skills

Committee discussed events, services, cool things, seasonal reminders, etc. in the upcoming week and month

Appropriate department assigned story. Responsible for:

- Writing a Facebook and Twitter post, gathering applicable links, including relevant photo or video, and *trying* to make it interesting
- If applicable, do the same process, but write it for weekly E-News and/or weekly update to the Village Board (three different audiences!)

Lots of time reviewing, rewriting, communicating with staff why edits occurred, reviewing another draft.... Then taking time to schedule the communication



Outcomes

Produced: three social media posts/day to Facebook and Twitter (avg.); daily/weekly website updates; weekly E-News; weekly Board Report; emergency communication; quarterly printed newsletter; press releases; internal communication; internal/external signage; etc.

Staff producing 80% complete work; Village Manager's Office reviewed and finalized everything

Formal & informal staff training programs

Built Village brand with consistent voice



Final Thoughts

Communication 101

- Before the fun
- Before infographics, photography, videography
- Lots of time building the team & training on top of their normal duties

Staff time once Committee is operating

- 25-33% of my time/week
- 3-6 hours/week/Committee member
- Low end total: 21 hours staff time + 10 hours of my time



Final Thoughts

Other things to keep in mind

- Need someone who has a good understanding of communication and public relations or one who can learn quickly
 - Not always the youngest person
 - Things can go wrong very quickly in communication. Everyone has an opinion
- Need leadership who understand the importance of communication and value it
- Hard to get Committee members to talk about their department
- Hard to tell people no without a leadership title
 - Committee needs to have thick skin and willing to learn



BUFFALO **GROVE**

smart. with heart.

**Village of Buffalo
Grove:
Dedicated
Department with 2
Employees**



DEPARTMENT OF **COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT**

Established 2022



BUFFALO GROVE
smart. with heart.

ABOUT THE DCE

Creation

Born out of 2021 Special Village Board retreat.

Purpose

To effectively engage with the community, develop strategies to tell the village's story and modernize identity.

Functions

Facilitating effective communication between the village and community.

Fostering transparency and building trust.

Supporting the entire organization, collaborating with all village departments to complete special projects and showcase the incredible people and work that is performed each and every day.



DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

Molly
Gillespie



DIRECTOR

VISION + STRATEGY
EDITING + DESIGN
PUBLIC + MEDIA
RELATIONS



COORDINATOR

COPYWRITING, CONTENT
CREATION + PLANNING
MULTIMEDIA
PRODUCTION

Tim
Kirsininkas



CONTRACTUAL SERVICES

- VIDEO PRODUCTION SERVICES (IE. RECRUITMENT VIDEOS, ANIMATED EXPLAINER)
- BRAND AND MARKETING SERVICES (IE. COMMUNITY BRANDING INITIATIVE AND BRAND EXTENSION LOGOS)
- PRINT/MAILING/MERCHANDISE

WHAT WE DO



**Write +
create**



**Engage +
collaborate**



**Marketing +
branding**



**Media
relations**



**Public service
announcements**



**Crisis comms +
strategy**



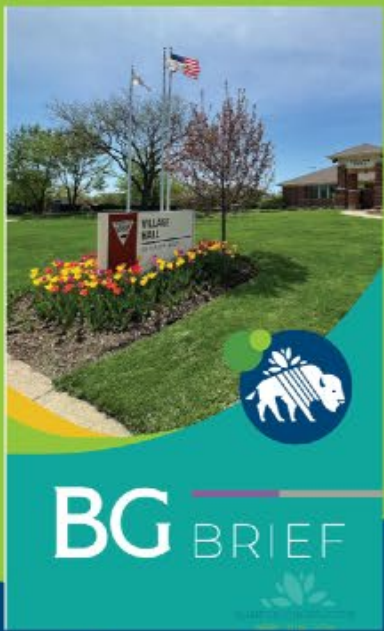
Support



**Quality
control**



**Performance
measurement**



BG BRIEF

Direct mail
quarterly
newsletter

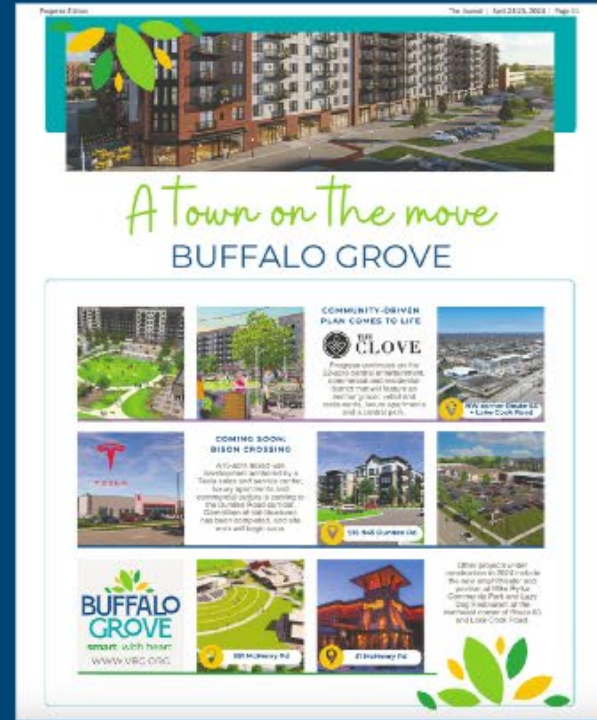
OUTPUTS

Communications

People-focused
social media content



Marketing + advertising



Special projects



Heavy Machine Technician | Grainger Everyday Heroes

youtube.com

Community branding



- Weekly e-newsletter
- Development updates newsletter
- Construction project updates newsletters



- Website content
- Search optimization
- Accessibility
- Quality control



OUTPUTS

Engagement



- Developers
- Employees
- Students
- Seniors
- Businesses
- Residents + community members



DEPARTMENT STRATEGY



Planning

- Research, audit.
- Identify stakeholders + audiences.
- Develop voice, tone.
- Design standards.
- Create content.
- Prioritize growth strategies.



Growth

- Community branding initiative.
 - Brand standards.
 - Implementation.
- Policies + style guide.
- Training.
- Technology enhancements.
- Strategic framework.



Optimization

- Work plans in action.
- Improve workflows.
- Ongoing training.
- Technology implementations/ expansions.
- Ongoing analysis, adaptation.



SUPPORTING COMMUNICATIONS

YES
you
CAN



Leadership
buy-in



Innovation
>
inertia



Professional
networks +
training



Budget



STAY IN TOUCH

Molly Gillespie



847-459-2501



mbgillespie@vbg.org



[linkedin.com /in /mollybgillespie](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mollybgillespie)

The Buffalo Grove logo is contained within a large white circle with a green border. At the top of the circle is a stylized leaf design with green and yellow leaves. Below the leaves, the word "BUFFALO" is written in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. Below "BUFFALO", the word "GROVE" is written in a bold, teal, sans-serif font.

**BUFFALO
GROVE**



**Thoughts
or
Questions
?**

**Share Your
Comms
Strategy/
Execution:**

Discussion!

**In
Summary**

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ILCMA Summer Conference 2024





Thank You!

ILCMA Summer Conference 2024

