

Harwich Native Pushes Boundaries Of Advertising And Marketing

by Debra Lawless

Harwich native Jaelyn Stevenson, 34, recently found herself embroiled in a very serious controversy in western Massachusetts: Does a Bloody Mary garnished with a spiced pickle instead of celery still qualify as a Bloody Mary?

As in almost any dispute, there are two sides, and the battle got hot and heavy for a while as both sides weighed in after a short video of the bartender who invented the Bloody Mary-with-a-difference appeared on YouTube with his creation.

"He's a mad scientist when it comes to infused cocktails," says Stevenson, whose involvement in this cause célèbre we will soon explain.

A newspaper article was written on the spiced pickle/celery debate. All this added up to publicity for the western Massachusetts restaurant where the bar manager works. And the restaurant is a client of the creative agency where Stevenson works, Winstanley Partners in Lenox. This is a "boutique" firm of about 30 people which specializes in sports marketing.

Stevenson is director of public relations and social media at the firm. She cites an impressive list of current and past clients that includes Spalding Sports, Polar Beverages, Smith & Wesson, Bard College at Simon's Rich and regional clients from restaurants to business parks.

"I've straddled the fence between writing and journalism and public relations for the bulk of my career, and my social media work really brings those two things together," Stevenson said during a recent telephone interview. "Writing and content creation – photos, videos, blog posts, status updates – have become such a huge part of today's online world."

Stevenson, who now lives in Lenox, recently received



Harwich native Jaelyn Stevenson. COURTESY PHOTO

an award from Business West Magazine called "40 Under 40." Her boss, Nathan Winstanley, nominated her.

"We received our awards at the end of June at a surprisingly large event complete with stage lights, personalized music, a dessert bar, the works," Stevenson says. Business West Magazine has been giving the award for six years. "This year's winners were part of a special publication with a bio and photo, for which we each posed with a prop. I have saved all of my press passes and event badges over the years and I hung those around my arms and neck."

Now, if you are of a certain age – say you're above 40 – you may wonder how YouTube and public relations mix. Well, if you're not aware of it, the face of public relations has changed lately to embrace social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and Stevenson is a part of it.

"The sky's the limit at this point," Stevenson says of the social media.

Stevenson graduated from Harwich High School in 1995; she's still known around these parts for her senior year role as the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wizard of Oz." Her portrayal was evidently so vivid that "sometimes when I come home for the weekend that's still the only thing people know about me," she says. "We all took it very seriously. We all thought we'd be on Broadway."

Her parents are Colin and Jane Stevenson, former grand marshals of the Cranberry Harvest parade, among other local activities.

"My brother Colin and sister-in-law Jen Stevenson also

live in Harwich. He is a builder and a musician who plays opening night at the Wellfleet Beachcomber each year, and she is the co-founder of Holistic Families of Cape Cod," Stevenson says. Stevenson's sister, Laura, lives in Andover. Stevenson is the youngest, by 11 years, of the three Stevenson children.

After graduating from Harwich High, she studied English at Bridgewater State College and then moved on for a master's degree in organizational development at American International College.

"The two together put me in a position to be a business writer," she says. For several years she wrote on sports, health care and business. In about 2000 she became interested in blogging, then a very new medium, and that was her first taste of the growing online world. Stevenson's recent blog topics include recreation in the Berkshires, a local restaurant that grows hydroponic herbs, and a trip to "BearFest" in Easthampton. Naturally, her blog includes links to Twitter, Flickr, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

Four years ago Stevenson moved to Winstanley Partners where she is creating "anything meaningful that can live online and push the brand forward. It can be an update on Facebook or Twitter," she says. "Writing, the social media, public relations – they lock together for me in a really cool way."

In fact, the spiced pickle/Bloody Mary controversy resulted from a YouTube spot called the Cocktail of the Week, "a way to get out in front of people in the Berkshires." Each segment was a one-to-two minute demonstration of a new cocktail that also included an ingredient list for the home bartender. The spot was shown on YouTube and also to friends of the restaurant on Facebook. As for the spiced pickle Bloody Mary, "if it hits the right chord it runs away with itself and gets people into the restaurant."

And that's all to the good in the new world of public relations through the social media.

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