

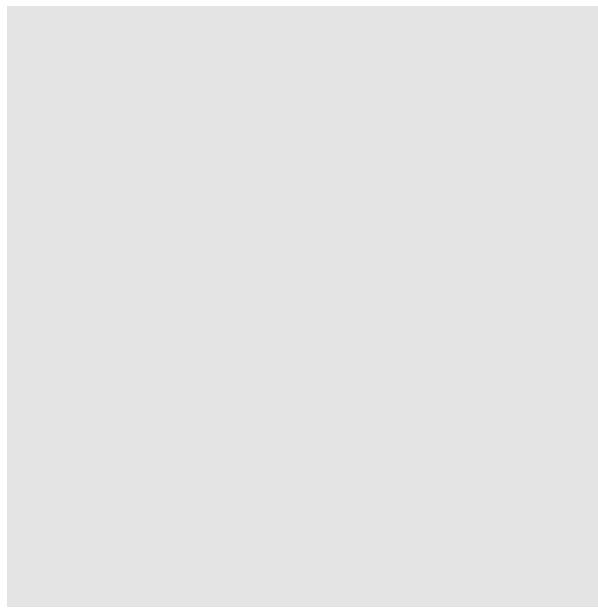


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Internship in memory of BGHS graduate gives students opportunities

AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 18 min ago



McKenzi Loid

McKenzi Loid, a young public relations professional and Bowling Green High School graduate, was still starting her career when she was suddenly killed in a car accident last summer.

Now, through a new internship in her name, a public relations student at Western Kentucky University is working with BGHS journalism students to pass on public relations principles as they plan and run their own publicity campaign.

“When you all do this campaign, the image is what you’re going to get out of it,” Chloe Hohlbein, a WKU senior, told students Monday during her first presentation as the school’s public relations intern. “You’re going to have people participating in your campaign. You’re going to have people reading your campaign, engaging in it.”

After graduating from WKU in 2012 and starting her career, Loid passed away in a car accident in Pittsburgh on June 27, 2017. A private donation made in her memory has funded a paid internship that will place WKU public relations students in the high school's journalism department.

The interns, one each fall and spring semester, will work with students to launch a public relations campaign based on current events or local awareness efforts, according to school district spokeswoman Leslie McCoy.

Loid, the daughter of Tommy Jr. and Robin Loid, worked as an account manager at Guthrie Mayes Public Relations firm in Louisville. She moved to Pittsburgh in 2016 to work as a public relations manager for the Walsh Group on the development of the public-private Rapid Bridge Replacement project.

Through her presentation Monday, Hohlbein sought to pass on some basic public relations tips to students. She cited examples set by brands like Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, which is known for its social activism, and stressed the importance of following narrative structure when executing a campaign.

"A big thing that public relations professionals try to do is create an image," Hohlbein said, encouraging students to think about the kind of image they want to project.

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Lindsey Houchin, an English teacher and newspaper adviser to the Purple Gem, said students will take the reins in running the campaign. She said they've bounced around campaign ideas about promoting diversity and the value immigrants and refugees bring to the community.

"I believe in the real-world value of this class," she said. "This class has a unique opportunity to give students real-world work."

Peter Guthrie, a senior and co-editor of the Purple Gem, said students are still working out ideas for their publicity campaign. He likes the idea of spotlighting work done by the Housing Authority of Bowling Green and “trying to tell a really good story.”

Jack Eason, a senior and the Purple Gem’s second editor, said the project will give students more career options to explore.

“This is something new and it’s something exciting,” he said.

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Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

