



# Coordinating Community

Julie Stansberry finds a way to unite service with her graduate studies in public relations.

STORY BY MOLLY SPINING // PHOTOS BY BRITTANY COGGINS

Straight out of college, Julie Stansberry (PR, 2012) worked full-time as a communications specialist for the University of Tennessee's College of Engineering. During this job, she realized pursuing a master's degree in public relations would solidify the foundation for her career and her future. Instead of heading to New York City to work in journalism, as originally planned, Stansberry let her passion for making a difference guide her career path and enrolled in UT's graduate school.

Now, Stansberry is doing what she loves in a location closer to her home in suburban Knoxville. At United Way of Blount County, she oversees United Way's website, social media, press releases, feature stories, photo shoots, event coordination, marketing materials and more. For someone who didn't initially intend on working in PR, her job description is impressive.

"Life really is what happens when you're busy making plans," she says, referencing the famous quote. "I used to be such a planner with my life, but I've learned that nothing really happens the way you think it will."

It's probably best that Stansberry is no longer a "planner," as she never has a typical day at the office. "The word 'typical' isn't even in my vocabulary anymore," she says. On any given day, Stansberry could be coordinating a golf tournament, working on a video shoot for a partner agency or writing a press release.

Stansberry's work may not be easy, but it's certainly rewarding. As one of seven staff members at United Way of Blount County, she is able to form the meaningful relationships that larger branches are unable to form. Stansberry says she is fortunate to work with a team that encourages and inspires her when life gets hectic. The end results ultimately make her efforts worthwhile.

"It's the best feeling in the world when you see someone speak about how their life changed for the better with the help of United Way," she says. "Waking up every morning for a job that helps one in three people in Blount County receive the services they need is tremendously rewarding."

The services Stansberry speaks of refer to education-, economic- and health-related opportunities and programs funded by United Way. To provide community members with the necessary services, United Way runs campaigns and hosts events to raise money and garner support. This is where Stansberry's PR skills come into play.

Stansberry is lead staff member of the communications and marketing committee and event coordinator. She works closely with volunteers to make sure each event runs smoothly and campaigns are promoted clearly and professionally.

"One of the main reasons I wanted to work for United Way is because I strongly desired to feel like I was making a difference in the work I'd be doing," says Stansberry. "I've formed some great relationships with [volunteers], and the best thing about them is they care so much about United Way and the community."

While Stansberry's day-to-day activities may not be as glamorous as a PR agent's in New York City, Stansberry says confidently that she is happy where she is and with her decision to get her master's. Not many young professionals are lucky enough to work for something they're passionate about.

"In the nonprofit world, every day might not be easy," Stansberry says, "but every day is certainly rewarding, and I'm constantly reminded of the great decision I made to get into this type of work."