Sitting in the Georgia Dome at the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, I listened as delegates talked about the need for more young people to be given greater responsibilities within church leadership and be mentored by the current leaders.

It would be awesome if our church had a mentorship program, I thought to myself. What if every church leader had a college student in their field who they mentored?

One year later, I saw this hope become a reality within the North American Division Office of Communication when one of the professors from the School of Journalism and Communication at Southern Adventist University forwarded me an email from Frenita Buddy, Hope Channel producer, announcing the Society of Adventist Communicators Mentoring Program.

The mentoring program was designed to place junior and senior communication and graphic design students with Adventist professionals working within those fields.

Seeing this as an answer to my “prayer,” I was immediately interested and started the application process.

When I signed up, I was placed with Ansel Oliver, Editor of Adventist News Network.

The SAC does its best to pair students and mentors based on similar interests as well as job goals. While I was a journalism major, I also had an interest in photography. Ansel is both a journalist and photographer and was able to offer me many helpful tips on how to improve my creative eye.

As part of the mentorship program, mentees and mentors are required to connect...
either over the phone, video chat, or email every other week.
I remember hanging up from our first conference call, thinking, I’m going to learn a lot this semester!
And I did. Ansel was a great mentor who helped me improve my journalism skills. If I was struggling with a news story for one of my classes, Ansel was willing to talk through it, help me brainstorm, and even look over it and give his feedback.

On top of all this, Ansel also authors a blog titled Journalism Patterns, where he shares advice, tips, and links that help journalists hone in their skills. Even when we didn’t have a conference call, I knew I could go to the blog and see if one of my questions was already answered there.

Not all mentors and mentees can meet in person, but fortunately I was able to visit the General Conference in Silver Spring, Md., and see the department where he spends his days cranking out news stories for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church.

The following semester I helped with one of the stories Ansel wrote for the Adventist News Network website, giving me a better taste and feel for what it’s like to be a reporter for a large news organization.

Even though I am no longer part of the SAC Mentoring Program, it doesn’t mean that Ansel is no longer my mentor. We still keep in touch, and I know that whenever I have a question or need advice, he is still available to talk things out with me.

My Experience as a Mentor

By Ansel Oliver

I’ve been told that everyone both needs a mentor and should be a mentor. I’ve had some great editors help me along the way and I now teach a lot of workshops. Now, participating in the SAC mentoring program is a great opportunity to work one-on-one with an enthusiastic communication major and see their progress over time.

Suzanne was my first designated mentee through this program, and I appreciated her commitment to the mentorship. She brought a high level of skill and we communicated either by phone or email every few weeks.

On several of her assignments I offered tips that were within my area of expertise. Some tips reinforced what she had learned in class, while others were new insights, including some in related subjects. My goal was to offer her the top lessons I had learned since my own undergrad communication major, master’s degree in journalism, and experience as a journalist for a newspaper and now the Adventist Church.

One of my friends became a foreign correspondent for one of the world’s top newspapers largely because of a mentor he stayed in contact with. The great thing about having a mentor is that they can gauge your work and help you along. Let me be clear, one should seek a mentor only to improve, not to get help in landing a job. But since they have helped develop you, a mentor will want to see you succeed and may put in a good word for you where they feel it’s appropriate. I’m still in contact with Suzanne and a few others in order to keep rooting them on.

Paying it Forward: Why Mentoring is My Personal Passion

By Frenita Buddy

Mr. Harold Cunningham was my first mentor. As my high school Bible teacher, Mr. Cunningham brought the Bible to life for my classmates and me through stories, memory verses, and practical examples of Christianity. More specifically, he encouraged me to develop my skills in communication and public speaking, and offered me opportunities to emcee events in front of the student body.

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Today, I’m still communicating, confident in the skills that I learned years ago. I am grateful for the kindness and encouragement Mr. Cunningham and other leaders have shown me. Yet there’s still so much more to learn! Many students and professionals feel the same way. The Society of Adventist Communicators Mentoring Program (SACMP) was born out of a need that I had for professional advice and coaching, despite my many years of experience in the field. It doesn’t matter whether you worked in a particular field for 30 years or 3 years or 3 weeks; everyone needs a little professional advice and coaching.

SACMP mentors and mentees communicate in a variety of ways—via email, phone, video chat—whatever works for them. The partnership lasts four months with the option to renew. The program benefits not only the mentee, who receives a better understanding of their field of interest and a contact for possible job placement, but also the mentor. Mentors have the opportunity to find and groom new talent. They also experience “reverse mentoring” in which mentees are able to share first-hand insights into social media and marketing. It’s a win-win for everyone involved.

This fall, we’ve revised the program to include new professionals in their first and second years of employment. Join SACMP, and invest in your career and in the careers of other young Adventist communicators. For more program details and to apply, visit www.adventistcommunicator.org.

If you are a Mac user, you may miss the dual screen capabilities available on the PC. The Cinch App by Irradiated Software allows the user to “cinch” (resize) their two windows to fit onto one screen. Requirements: OS X 10.6.5 or later. Cost: $6.99. Click here to visit the app store. (http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/cinch/id412529613?mt=12)

About.me is a one-page site to promote your professional persona. You never have to worry about having potential employers or business connections viewing those embarrassing family beach vacation pictures that someone tagged you in. Your About.me page can boost your professional online image. It is easy to set up and to update. In addition, the company now offers cool business cards based on your about.me brand. Click here to check out about.me. (http://about.me/).

Rajkumar Dixit, D.Min is the Principal of Dixit Media Group. You can follow him @kumardixit.

There are many new Applications (apps) on the market that can assist the busy communications professional. Here are a few that I have found to be helpful:

- **AnyMeeting.com** allows you to hold conference calls via the phone or web for up to 200 participants (you can pay a monthly premium to avoid the banner ads). This is also a great platform to hold online tutorials for larger groups. You show your screen to the group and you can give administrative privileges to other co-leaders during the meeting. I often use this site with clients when I want to show them a project I am working on.

- **SocialBrite** provides comparisons of the various virtual meeting online software programs. Click here to read more. (http://www.socialbrite.org/2011/01/19/comparison-top-web-conferencing-services/)


Tools for the Busy Communicator

By Rajkumar Dixit

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New Features at SAC 2012

The Society of Adventist Communicators Conference 2012 is expected to be the best ever!
Several new features have been added and the fact that the convention will be held in beautiful Albuquerque makes two excellent reasons why you’ll want to register as an early bird to save money on a trip you will inevitably decide to make.

First, as guests in Albuquerque, SAC wants to give back to the community. Therefore, attendees will stuff bears and other animals, sponsored by two NAD departments, for the kids in the Children’s Hospital of Albuquerque and also for children living on nearby reservations. Plan to join in the fun.

The opening reception Thursday evening will be held in a separate building on the hotel property. La Casa Esencia is reserved for socializing and enjoying the tantalizing cuisine of the Southwest. It is a short walk to Old Town, so when the reception is over at 7:00 pm, you’ll have the rest of the evening to explore Albuquerque.

You will love the changes made regarding awards and award presentations. Many winners will receive recognition at mealtimes during the convention. Only the major awards will be presented at the banquet. (Heads up: don’t miss a meal because you might miss receiving your award.) This change will shorten the time needed for the Awards Banquet and make it possible for even the most exhausted to stay for the entire banquet and entertainment. Some have mentioned in the past that they would like to see the projects that were submitted for judging. This year all entries will be displayed in a separate room so you can browse and become inspired for another year.

Another added feature is an opportunity to have your picture taken with friends just prior to the Awards Banquet on Saturday night. Hors d’oeuvres will be served in the lobby outside the ballroom at 6:30 pm - 30 minutes before the doors open for the banquet. During this time an experienced portrait photographer, will take photos and make them available free after the conference. I expect he will be very busy so arrive early.

So, get ready, get set, and go to Albuquerque in October!

SAC Convention registration, hotel and transportation

The Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town will host the convention with rates of $99/night for single or double—ask for the Seventh-day Adventist rate (Group Code: 1210SOCIET). Note: Room block will close on September 24, 2012.