

Helga Luest



PROFILE:

- Successful at developing creative, strategic and results-producing communication efforts at the community, state, federal, and national levels.
- Over 25 years of experience in communications, marketing, and social media, with an emphasis on behavioral health, psychological trauma, victimization, and crime prevention.
- Effectively facilitates collaboration and support for new efforts to improve quality of life and health.

EXPERIENCE:

Director, Marketing Communications & Publications-Behavioral Health/ 2013-Present **Senior Manager-Communications**

Abt Associates, Bethesda, MD

- As managing editor of *SAMHSA News*, a publication of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, successfully redeveloped the publication as a WordPress site that could publish continuously, making it more timely. Other production modifications were implemented to provide significant budget savings and greater efficiencies, including a vibrant social media promotional effort.
- Serve as a communications officer to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, providing messaging, media training, and other communications support related to a broad array of health care topics relevant to primary care physicians.
- Supported numerous domestic and international contracts with strategic creative consult and expert topic support related to psychological trauma, trauma-informed approaches to care, and criminal justice.

Founder, President & CEO

2001-2014

Witness Justice, Rockville, MD

Created a highly successful national organization that provided support and advocacy for survivors of violence and trauma.

- Provided leadership for programs and services to survivors of violence and trauma.
- Analyzed gaps in services for consumers and survivors and creatively developed programs to meet needs, with an emphasis of consumer voice, choice, and leadership.
- Spearheaded national advocacy initiatives, including organizing numerous Congressional briefings that lead to federal bi-partisan policymaker and agency response and action.
- Provided technical assistance in the form of education, curriculum development, outreach, communications, and public relations.

- Provided training and subject matter expertise on trauma, trauma-informed care, cultural competency, human trafficking, veterans and trauma/family safety, and adapted programs or created new ones to meet the needs of distinct populations.
- Managed numerous federal contracts and subcontracts, with knowledge of compliance and other specifications, including:
 - the Office on Women’s Health, DHHS (issue brief on the trauma of interpersonal violence on college campuses and the creation of a risk assessment screening tool for use on college campuses);
 - the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (technical assistance/training and education and the GlassBook Project curriculum development and strategic community engagement);
 - the CMHS, SAMHSA/DHHS’ Campaign for Behavioral Health Reform-National Trauma Campaign (wrote the situational analysis and marketing plan, assisting with creative implementation) and the National Employer Campaign that addressed workplace issues that come up for individuals with mental health concerns and substance use issues;
 - the Office on Violence Against Women (creation of the agency’s first e-learning facility and curriculum on TrainingForums.org); and
 - the Center for the Substance Abuse Treatment, DHHS’s National Recovery Month (case study analysis and communications audit).
- Created state-specific marketing and communications campaigns to facilitate positive change with human service professionals and to spark other responses.
- Wrote white papers and issue briefs, typically commissioned by federal agencies, typically on public health and safety social concerns, with appropriate evidence-based recommendations and findings.
- Initiated numerous projects that receive national and state-level recognition and awards, including the GlassBook Project that was named one of the top five mental health innovations in the country by *Mental Health Weekly*.
- Spearheaded collaborations between federal, state, foundation, nonprofit, community, and individual partners, bringing greater success and cost effectiveness to public education and awareness initiatives.

President

2001-2007

Mission Works Communications, Frederick, MD

Managed the boutique public relations firm, specializing in public interest public relations that primarily focused on nonprofit and government initiatives.

- Served as senior client strategist for nonprofit organizations and other public interest groups.
- Managed client contracts in many areas of communication including media relations, marketing, communications, crisis communications, strategic planning, and corporate branding.
- Supported one pro-bono client per month with public relations consultation to support positive social change.

- Managed numerous national public education campaigns, including serving as lead publicist for USA Weekend's Make A Difference Day (the nation's largest national day of volunteering) and National Sleep Awareness Week.

Vice President

2000-2001

Fenton Communications, Washington, DC

Management of national and international public relations efforts, with the support of a team of ten. Served as a managing member of the leadership team and manager of the healthcare, law, and education practices.

- Developed marketing practices, built relationships with strategic partners, and increased new business by targeting and bringing in new client accounts in record amounts, while serving a full client load.
- Initiated numerous award-winning social change projects.
- Systematically changed internal and inter-office communications for the firm to improve productivity, staff acquisition/retention, and morale.
- Responsible for continuing education and training for staff.

Senior Communications & Media Relations Manager

1998-1999

The Greystone Companies, Arlington, VA

Managed national public relations efforts, with the support of a team of three.

- Managed major national policy and advocacy clients including a group of moderate Congressional policymakers, think tanks, associations, and other interest groups.
- Developed client websites, newsletters, events, social media, and other successful outreach tools.

Media Relations & Communications Manager

1996-1998

Goodwill Industries International, Bethesda, MD

Managed and streamlined all national communication for the Goodwill network (187 nationally and 50+ internationally).

- Organized, coordinated, and marketed national events and cause marketing partnerships, receiving national awards and recognition.
- Developed national crisis communications strategy and media trained all Goodwill executives.

Marketing Manager/Producer

1994-1996

GVI, Washington, DC

Managed client accounts and produced video productions for nonprofit, organization, association, and government clients.

- Retained and grew existing contracts, in addition to acquiring new clients and contracts.
- Created numerous award-winning productions, creating compelling stories that would move people to change behavior or to some other action.

News Producer

1991-1994

ZDF German Television, Washington, DC

Supported the international news agency as a field producer, charged with covering entertainment and cultural stories in the U.S. News segments were broadcast in Germany/Europe.

- Successfully and consistently delivered news segments on deadline.
- Developed collaborative partnerships with U.S. news agencies in order to access unique or supportive video footage.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- University of Maryland (College Park, MD) - M.A. (1995)
Field of Study: International Management (concentration: cultural literacy/cross cultural comm.)
- The American University (Washington, DC) - B.S. (1990)
Field of Study: Marketing
- Completion, Project Director Training (2015)
- Certification in Anger Management for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Clients (2014)
- Certification in Substance Use in Adults and Adolescents: Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) (2014)
- Certification in Prescription Medication: Misuse, Abuse, and Dependence (2014)
- Women's Self Defense Certification, Frederick Community College (2005)
- Private Investigation Certification, U.S. Academy of Private Investigation (2001)

HONORS AND AWARDS RECEIVED

- [**Congressional Eva Murillo Unsung Hero Award**](#) from the U.S. Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus, 2011
- [**Top Ten Most Interesting People in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area**](#), 2011 – selected by *D.C. Spotlight* newspaper
- **Mental Health Liaison Group Steering Committee**, 2011 – Voted into as a strategic leader for one of the most powerful advocacy coalitions on Capitol Hill with regard to mental health legislation
- **Voice Awards Judge**, 2010 – Joined representatives from DHHS, mental health consumer and advocacy organizations, and others to review and vote on portrayals of mental health issues in television and film entertainment industry productions for this esteemed annual Hollywood event
- **Ambassador's Award** from the New Jersey Governor's Association on Mental Health Stigma, 2010 – For mental health leadership and achievement with the GlassBook Project
- **Golden Bell Leadership Award** from the Mental Health Association in New Jersey, 2010 – For leadership and community mental health education with the GlassBook Project
- **Telly Award**, 2010 (two awards: Charitable/Not-for-Profit and Social Issues categories) – One minute promotional video for the GlassBook Project

- **Silver Addy® Award**, 2009 – For conceptual creativity and design of the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care’s (CMHS/SAMHSA/DHHS) Dare to Transform conference materials
- **OVC Recognition**, 2006 – Personally recognized by the U.S Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime for leadership and dedication
- **Community Quarterback Award**, 2006 – Baltimore Ravens
- **Volvo for Life Award**, 2005 and 2007 – Personal Recognition as a national “hometown hero” and one of five Maryland State finalists (2007)
- **Daily Point of Light Award**, 2003 – From the Points of Light Foundation and awarded by President George Bush
- **Golden Web Award**, 2002 – Creative design and content of www.missionworks.com
- **Telly Award**, 2002 – American Speech-Language-Hearing Association video on newborn hearing screening, produced short video
- **Telly Award**, 1998 – Creative concept and production of Goodwill Industries International’s “Breaking Barriers, Building Dreams” short video
- **Editor’s Choice Award**, 1999 – Exceptional creative Web design and content for Family Aids Network from HealingWell.com
- **Silver Inkwell Award of Merit**, 1998 – Best media kit and creative campaign from the International Association of Business Communicators
- **Thoth Award**, 1998 – Best radio public service announcement for Goodwill Industries International from the Public Relations Society of America

PERSONAL STORY: MAJOR TELEVISION AND NEWS MEDIA

- [*Stronger in the Broken Places: the Story of Helga Luest*](#) – a Kara Ferguson Production (2014)
- *Road to Recovery* – DHHS Documentary Series ([Identifying Depression](#), [Understanding Depression](#), and [Embracing Your Recovery](#)) (2012)
- *Scars* – Discovery Health (2006)
- *Final Justice with Erin Brocovich* – Discovery Health (2003)
- [*Forensic Files: Tourist Trap – The Helga Luest Case*](#) – Court TV (2002)
- *Miami Herald: Healing Wounds* (2001)
- *Good Morning America* – ABC (1993)
- *Primetime Live/Day One* – ABC (1993)
- *Larry King Live* – CNN (1993)

PUBLICATIONS/SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

“Mental Health in the Aftermath - Literature Review and Environmental Scan” – A white paper created for the Center for Mental Health Services, DHHS. April 2014

“Personal and Community Resilience - Strategies for Healing” A white paper created for the Center for Mental Health Services, DHHS. September 2014

“Art 4 Social Change: A “Food for Thought” on Building Personal and Community Resilience” – Presented to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. June 2014

“An Overview of Veteran Families Affected by War” – Published in *Child Abuse Sourcebook*, Third Edition. April 2013

“No Armor Strong Enough to Protect Our Children” – Published in *National Safe Child Magazine*. 2013

“Healthy Relationships” Expert Workgroup Meetings (January, June, and August) for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Office on Women’s Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2012

“The Mental Health Impact of Violence and Trauma on Children” – Presentation at the World Conference on Childhood for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2012

“Trauma: Turning Pain into Promise” – Presentation at the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Conference for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2012

“The Mental Health Impact of Violence and Trauma on Children” – Testimony presented to the U.S. Congress, by request of the Congressional Victim’s Rights Caucus and the Coalition Addressing Trauma. 2011

Red carpet live webcast host for the Voice Awards at Paramount Theater in Hollywood, CA. Conducted on-camera interviews with consumer and survivor award winners in addition to celebrities and public officials including Peter Krause, Dr. Westley Clark, and Ron Barber. 2011

Webinar Series: “Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care,” “Trauma and Behavioral Health - Managing Multiple Challenges,” “Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue – With Many Survivors Among the Providers, How to Promote Wellness in the Workplace” – Sole presenter of the training series for Disability Rights of Pennsylvania. 2011

“Employment Strategies Summit” – Invited as one of 30 experts to discuss employment strategies for individuals that experience mental health concerns or addiction issues. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2011

“SAMHSA Recovery Support Strategic Initiative Stakeholders Meeting” – Invited to participate in discussions regarding the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Recovery Support Initiative, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2011

“The Unintended ‘Open Book’ – An Advocates Personal and Very Public Story of Domestic Violence and Healing.” Keynote address given to the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic

Violence's statewide conference. 2011

"Trauma - How is the Federal Government Addressing It?" Presentation at the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Conference for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2011

"Veterans and Domestic Violence: The Traumatic Impact on Women." A national Webinar training presentation sponsored by the Battered Women's Justice Project and the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, with support from the National Network to End Domestic Violence. 2011

"Integrating Creative Arts Therapies into Trauma-Informed Care." Training presentation at the Expressive Therapies Summit. 2010

"Trauma and Intimate Partner Violence on College Campuses – A Trauma-Informed Approach." Training presentation to the NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault College Consortium, Monmouth University. 2010

"Victim Rights, Trauma and Trauma-Informed Change." Training presentation for the Forensic Sciences Academy of New York. 2010

"Women, Violence and Trauma: The Impact and Effective Strategies to Work Toward Social Inclusion." Training presentation for the Mental Health Association in New Jersey. 2010

"An Overview of Veteran Families Affected by War." National Center for Crisis Management Report, in collaboration with the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress. 2010

"What to do in the First 24 Hours After Domestic Violence." Published in the *Domestic Violence Sourcebook*, third edition. 2009

"Social Inclusion and Trauma-Informed Care." National presentation for the Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS Consumer Affairs. 2009

The GlassBook Project Panel Discussion. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2009

Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care Curriculum. Office on Violence Against Women, USDOJ. 2009

Cultural Competency Curriculum. Office on Violence Against Women, USDOJ. 2009

Veterans and Family Safety Congressional Briefing Presentation. Supported by four bi-partisan Congressional Caucuses. 2008

“Veterans and Trauma.” National presentation at the Dare to Transform Conference, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS. 2008

“Trauma and Human Trafficking.” National Symposium on Human Trafficking. 2008

“Situational Analysis: National Trauma Campaign.” Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS Consumer Affairs/National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2008

“Marketing Plan: National Trauma Campaign.” Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS Consumer Affairs/National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2008

Trauma and the Link to Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence.” Presentation for behavioral healthcare workers throughout the county, Ventura County, CA Behavioral Healthcare. 2008

“Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care.” National conference presentation for the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. 2008

“Trauma is the Common Denominator, Healing is the Common Goal.” Witness Justice. 2008

“Family Safety: A Significant Concern for Returning Veterans and Their Families.” Witness Justice. 2008

Psychological Impact of Disasters and Emergencies (with an emphasis on community response) National Presentation. Council on Foundations. 2007

“Addressing the Traumatic Impact of Disasters on Individuals, Families, and Communities.” After the Crisis, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2006

“Victims of Violence in Times of Disaster or Emergency.” After the Crisis, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2006

“Victims of Violence Issue Brief.” After the Crisis, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2006

“Peer Support Issue Brief.” After the Crisis, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2006

“Trauma and Retraumatization Issue Brief.” After the Crisis, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2006

“Criminal Justice System Issue Brief.” After the Crisis, Center for Mental Health Services SAMHSA/DHHS’ National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. 2006

“Life Rage” – Helga Luest guest authored one chapter regarding the violent crime she experienced, paths to healing and founding Witness Justice. Tim Dimoff. 2003

“HR as Producer/Director.” HR Magazine, Society for Human Resource Management. 1996

ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Congressional Crime Victim Rights Caucus Advisory Group 2007-Present

Appointed by members of U.S. Congress to advise congressional leaders, along with other advocates in the field, on crime victim and related policy.

Mental Health Liaison Group 2008-2014

Nominated by Mental Health America Executive Director David Shern and elected to join this prestigious coalition of national organizations that work together to facilitate positive federal legislative movement related to mental health. In 2011, was voted onto the steering committee while also participating in the Health Policy and Social Services Committees.

National Forum for Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services

Selected to participate in this initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime to develop a philosophical and strategic framework for defining the role of the victim's field in the country's response to crime.

Veteran's Health Council 2008-Present

Appointed by the Vietnam Veterans of America to join this national coalition of veteran service organization and others in human services to address the health and mental health needs of veterans.

Returning Heroes Workgroup 2009-2010

Appointed by the Vera Institute to join the leadership group of 50-70 national representatives working together to address some of the needs of veterans and their families.