

**The "Mark of Distinction" Recognition Program
for NSPRA Chapters**

Entry Form

(Please include this information with each individual entry)

Chapter Name: Towson School Public Relations Association (ISPRA)

Chapter President: Laura Sprague, APR

President's contact information

District/Organization: Johnston Community School District

Address: 5608 Merle Hay Rd

City/State/Zip Code Johnston, IA 50131

Telephone: 515 278 0470 e-Mail: laura.sprague@johnston.k12.ia.us

Right to Use Materials Statement

On behalf of the Chapter, I agree that NSPRA has the right to use any materials, project/program examples, etc., submitted in this entry in Association print/online publications, on the website, and as "best practice" resources for NSPRA chapters.

Signature of Chapter President: 

Application Process Checklist

- Each entry includes this cover form and the Entry Specifics form.
- A single PDF that includes links to related supplemental materials and examples is attached. (If entering in more than one category, a single PDF for each category entry is attached or sent individually).
- Chapter president has signed the "right to use materials" statement on the entry form.
- Entry is delivered no later than May 15 and sent to awards@nspra.org, subject line "Mark of Distinction."

Mark of Distinction Entry Specifics

Chapter: Iowa School Public Relations Association (ISPRRA)

Please complete and include the information below for each individual entry

Section I: Membership Building

- Current number of chapter members _____
 - NSPRA-provided membership baseline number as of June 1 _____
 - Number of chapter members who belong to NSPRA as of April 30 _____
-

Section II: Special Focus Areas

Category A – chapter has less than 50% NSPRA membership

Category B – chapter has 50% or more NSPRA membership

1. Professional Development/PR Skill Building

2. Special PR/Communication Program, Project or Campaign

One-time project/program (completed within a single year)

Continuing annual project/program (repeats each year; demonstrate new/improved/revised components)

Multi-year project/program (one-time only with defined start and end dates)

Multi-year phased project/program (components implemented in clearly defined phases each year)

3. Coalition-Building/Collaborative Communication Effort



NSPRA Chapter of Distinction

APPLICATION

Submitted by

Laura Sprague, APR

ISPRA President 2017-2019

laura.sprague@johnston.k12.ia.us | 515-278-0470

May 4, 2018

The Iowa School of Public Relations Association (ISPRA) would like to request consideration for NSPRA recognition as a Chapter of Distinction for work we have done to build and maintain our membership and expand our programs during 2017-18.

The 2017-18 school year brought about a change in board leadership. We welcomed two new ISPRA board members to the group for membership and the secretary position; all other board members had served on the board for at least two years. We looked forward to working together to provide a great ISPRA experience for all of our members. We wanted to continue the momentum started by the previous ISPRA board and continue to build our membership and recognition within the state. Over the past year, we have had one annual planning session and online meetings. Below are our key focus areas.

- Learn board roles and responsibilities, and find a balance between jobs and ISPRA responsibilities
- Continue to grow membership and improve member benefits and experiences
- Encourage membership and participation at the national level (NSPRA)
- Increase member participation in professional development offerings

Membership

Over the past seven years we have managed to steadily grow our membership.

Membership Through the Years

- 2011-12 - 29 members
- 2012-13 - 30 members
- 2013-14 - 40 members
- 2014-15 - 49 members
- 2015-16 - 53 members
- 2016-17 - 57 members
- 2017-18 - 68 members

Because Iowa is a small state, the steady growth we have seen is a positive. Our intention is to see ISPRA's membership continue to grow as more Iowa school districts find themselves needing public relations and communications assistance. This includes reaching out to people who handle public relations functions in addition to another role, such as board secretary, community education, or administrative assistant.

Over the past three years, we have been working on laying the groundwork to help establish partnerships with other local professional organizations (i.e. SAI, IASB, and PRSA). This idea was presented at the NSPRA National Annual Meeting in 2016, and we felt it was a concept that was worth pursuing. We would like to provide even more learning opportunities for our membership, and our hope would be that these other organizations would find value in what ISPRA is offering.

In the Fall of 2017, our members presented at the Iowa Association of School Boards annual convention and Iowa Association of School Business Officials statewide conferences. This marked a shift for our membership - going from more "behind the scenes" work to now presenting at these large conferences for ourselves.

We also have seen an increase in ISPRA's involvement at the national level. We were purposeful in our communication over the past three years. We shared more of the following:

- The wealth of NSPRA's resources
- talked to members about joining NSPRA and the value of the membership
- sharing and convincing members to attend the National Seminar

Currently, 25 ISPRA members are NSPRA members, which is about a quarter of our membership. Our intention is to work towards obtaining 50 percent.

ISPRA board members have also attended NSPRA's Annual Meetings, events, and regional conference calls.

The number of ISPRA members attending the NSPRA National Conference has also increased. We reached an all-time high in Chicago in 2016; 13 members attended. At the 2017 National Seminar, six ISPRA members traveled to San Antonio to expand their professional learning. We look to have about the same number (six) going to Anaheim this summer.

Member Benefits and Programming

The ISPRA board continued to build upon the foundation that was laid by the previous board. Below are explanations of the opportunities and benefits offered.

Monthly Learning Opportunities

We offer monthly learning opportunities at no charge to members. These opportunities included:

- PR Power Hours offered by NSPRA
- Virtual Round Table Discussions - an opportunity for members to share their thoughts and discuss hot topics virtually

More Access to Monthly Learning Opportunities

Providing the ISPRA opportunities to all our members was an important objective for the ISPRA board. Because we have members from all around the state it isn't practical to think that our members will drive hours for a one-hour session. To help provide ISPRA learning opportunities to all members, we purchased a subscription to ZOOM, a video conferencing service. This allowed us to offer more professional growth opportunities to our full membership.

We have received positive feedback by offering this as an option.

Accreditation in Public Relations

We continue to advocate for our members to obtain their Accreditation in Public Relations (APR). The state PRSA chapter welcomes school practitioners to join their classes and we have had good interest from our membership in taking the course and

completing the requirements. Currently, two ISPRA members are taking the PRSA APR short course for eventual completion of the APR.

We have two existing members who have already obtained their APR and another handful of members who have completed the short course but did not pursue the readiness panel and/or computer exam.

Online Payment System

ISPRA moved to using PayPal as a payment system for memberships, conference registrations, and the communications contest. As more school districts are using P-Cards we wanted to offer a way for our members to be able to use their cards. Also, we were trying to find a more convenient way to collect on invoices and manage monies. Our members and treasurer have been thrilled with the results. It took about half as much time to collect membership dues this year as it has in the past.

ISPRA Members Shared Folder - Resources and More

A resource Google Drive folder has been created as a place for ISPRA members to share and find resources. Everyone can benefit from sharing and looking at what other district's have done in regards to crisis planning, communication plans, diversity, social media, bond issues, and much more. We are encouraging ISPRA members to share information in this folder to create a library of strong resources.

Membership Survey

A membership survey will be deployed in late May 2018 to garner information about our members. It is based off the NSPRA 2018 membership survey as a way for us to benchmark results. The results will be used to inform a strategic plan for the chapter.

Google Group

The ISPRA Google Group continues to be our strongest communication tool. We have had a range of questions from communicable disease outbreaks to annual reports, to requests for style guides and a discussion on how districts are responding to improper usage of marks on social media. Members have been vocal about how thankful they are to have this community of PR professionals. It is comforting to know you have a group of peers that you trust and have a place to ask the hard questions and brainstorm.

Communications Contest and Awards Night

We continued to grow our annual Communications Contest and Award Night. Communication Contest entries are on the rise along with Awards Night attendees.

Communications Contest

- 2014 Awards Night - 51 entries from 12 different school districts
- 2015 Awards Night - 74 entries from 14 different school districts
- 2016 Awards Night - 84 entries from 20 different school districts
- 2017 Awards Night - 100 entries from 21 different school districts
- 2018 Awards Night - 113 entries from 20 different school districts

We continued the Communicator of the Year Award in our annual communications contest to recognize an ISPra member for excellence in communication. The winners receive a paid registration to the annual NSPra seminar.

The Department of the Year Award was added in 2017 and awarded again in 2018 based upon positive feedback from members. This award recognized participants of the ISPra Communication Contest. The winner is determined by adding a district's top score from each category entered. The district with the highest overall score earns the award.

Conferences

Our conferences have also seen an increase in attendance.

- 2015 Fall Conference - 24 Attendees
- 2016 Spring Conference - 35 Attendees
- 2016 Fall Conference - 26 Attendees
- 2017 Spring Conference - 42 Attendees
- 2017 Fall Conference - 36 Attendees
- 2018 Spring Conference - 38 Attendees

The conferences provided professional development that was relevant to our membership. In fall 2017, we had a trainer from Wixted & Co. provide an audience participation media training for most of the morning, followed by Afternoon sessions that included a focus on what makes a strong superintendent/communications director team as well as round table discussions and sharing of best practices.

Our Spring 2018 conference offered the following sessions: Bonds & Levies: Beyond Campaign Time; Legal Primer for School Communicators; News Media Relations: The New Rules of Engagement; and Lessons Learned: Promise of Iowa Campaign.

We continually hear how much ISPra members enjoy their time with each other learning and networking.

We continue to work on possible new initiatives that include a new website, rebranding, strategic communications plan, starting a speaker's bureau, and a crisis calling tree.

Connect with ISPRA!

- Website - www.ispra.org
- Facebook - www.facebook.com/lowaSPRA
- Twitter - <https://twitter.com/lowaSPRA>



ISPRA Conference Agenda Schedule

Thursday, October 5, 2017

- 9 am Welcome & Introductions of ISPRA board - Laura Sprague, ISPRA President
Review Agenda & introduce speaker - Beth Strike, ISPRA Vice President
- 9:25 am **Stakeholder Awareness & Messaging - Katie Ward, Wixted & Co., Des Moines, IA**
Katie knows today's ever-changing media landscape from the inside out. She's done just about every job in a newsroom including photojournalist, editor, reporter, online news writer and anchor. She began her career as a reporter and weekend anchor at KOMU-TV in Columbia, Missouri; was recognized in 2004 as a top journalist at the Hearst National Broadcast Championship in San Francisco, California; and received an Emmy nomination for her work as a breaking news reporter at KCCI. Her expertise and commitment to excellence help our clients prepare for high stake interviews, meetings and presentations.
- 12 pm Break for lunch
- 12:45 pm **Panel: How To Get A Seat At The Big Table**
Tara Thomas & Stephanie Mohorne, Waterloo CSD
Renee Nelson & Joe Crozier, Grant Wood AEA
Mike Cyze & [Stan Rheingans](#), Dubuque CSD
- 1:45 pm Break
- 2 pm **Round Table Discussions**
Jessica Hartgers, Bondurant-Farrar CSD: Bond/Finance Campaign
Jamie Evans, West Des Moines CSD: Brand Development
Nicole Wallace, Waukee CSD: Communication Planning
Justin DeVore, Charles City CSD: Community/Public Engagement
Janelle Darst, Cedar Falls CSD: Social Media Campaign
Laura Sprague, Johnston, CSD: Website
Katrina Hermann, Waterloo CSD: Video
- 3 pm Closure - (Evaluation)
<http://bit.ly/2yJRZol>



Iowa School Public Relations Association Spring Conference 2018
Friday, April 20, 2018
Heartland AEA
6500 Corporate Drive, Johnston, Iowa
9 am - 3 pm

8:30-9 am

Breakfast sponsored by [Gabbart Communications](#)

9 - 11 am

Successful Strategies to Pass a School Funding Measure

Lesley Rogers, Strategies 360, Seattle, WA & ISPRRA members

11 am-12 pm

Legal Primer for School Communicators

Matt Carver, J.D., School Administrators of Iowa

12-12:30 pm

Lunch Sponsored by [Midwest Alarm Services](#)

12:45-1:45 pm

Rules of Engagement: How Working With the News Media Has Changed

Jerry Gallagher, former anchor, KWWL-TV

Associate, Donovan Group

1:45-2 pm

BREAK

2-3 pm

Update --The Promise of Iowa Campaign: Lessons Learned

Lisa Bartusek, Executive Director, IASB

Tammy Votova, Communications Director, IASB

3 pm

Chapter business meeting (optional)

Presenter Bios:

Lesley Rogers

Lesley Rogers brings more than 20 years of communications experience to her role as senior vice president at Strategies 360. Lesley worked at Strategies 360 from 2007-2011, then re-joined the firm in 2014, after serving as the Chief Communications Officer for Seattle Public Schools. With hands-on K-12 district experience, Lesley understands the need for school districts to authentically engage with both internal and external audiences. At S360 she oversees the firm's education practice, working closely with school districts and education clients. She leads the bonds and levies work, helping school districts and campaign committees to pass critical funding measures. She also works with districts to identify key stakeholders and pinpoint strategies for effective two-way communications. Lesley conducts communications audits, develops strategic communications plans, helps districts with digital media strategies and advises on crisis communications and media relations. At Seattle Public Schools, the largest school district in the Pacific Northwest, Lesley oversaw strategic communications for the district, including the direction for both external and internal communications, as well as crisis communications and media relations. Lesley managed a six-person team in charge of ensuring families, principals, teachers, staff, community members and the media received timely and accurate district news and information. During her tenure, she developed a long-term strategic communications plan, launched a social media campaign, played a role in developing the district's new five-year plan and oversaw district communications for the \$1 billion capital bond, which was approved with more than 72 percent of the vote in February 2013.

Lesley is originally from Wisconsin and started her career as a newspaper journalist, covering local government for the Indianapolis Star, Wisconsin State Journal and The State Journal-Register (Springfield, Ill.). She has Bachelor's degree in journalism and political science from Northern Illinois University and a Master's in Public Affairs Reporting from the University of Illinois at Springfield. She and her husband Ben live in Seattle and stay busy chasing around their two young children, Elijah and Naomi.

Matt Carver

Mr. Carver is the legal services director for School Administrators of Iowa. He previously practiced law at a private firm in Des Moines. Mr. Carver holds a bachelor's degree in government and history from the University of Notre Dame, and a juris doctor from the University of Iowa College of Law. He is a lieutenant colonel in the Iowa Army National Guard, and a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Jerry Gallagher

Before joining Donovan Group, Jerry spent 19 years as a broadcast journalist in Iowa and Wisconsin. He was a news anchor in Waterloo, Sioux City and Eau Claire. Jerry earned a Midwest Regional EMMY in 2015 for his story, 'Brothers in Arms,' about his father's trip on an Honor Flight. He also received several other EMMY nominations over the years for his reporting on topics like education, including a special report on Common Core.

Jerry grew up in Strawberry Point and Storm Lake before earning his degree at the University of Northern Iowa. His wife, Kelly, is also a UNI graduate who spent 15 years as an elementary teacher and is now a school improvement consultant with Central Rivers AEA in Cedar Falls. They have four children: Reece, Maddie, Kinnick and Greenley.