



# NSPRA Mark of Distinction Entry

## Washington School Public Relations Association

### Special Focus Area, Professional Development/PR Skill Building – Category B

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#### **Background:**

The Washington State School Public Relations Association is a professional organization that works to promote communication in public school districts across Washington State and provide its members with professional development opportunities, networking opportunities and resources.

In June 2013, the incoming WSPRA board members held their annual retreat and established a set of goals for the year to enable us to better serve our membership in offering the best possible professional development and opportunities to connect with colleagues. These goals were stated as such:

#### **2013-14 Goals:**

Work to enhance the value of WSPRA membership.

- Workshop attendee satisfaction – 90% rated conference as satisfied or very satisfied.
- Increase membership by 10%.
- To meet or exceed number of participants in workshops.
- Identify a new tool for managing event registration and payment.
- Implement a new website.
- Define and promote a sponsorship program.

The WSPRA board is proud to report that we have met each of these goals. Each was essential in order for our organization to provide the best possible professional development and networking opportunities through our annual workshops and conferences.

#### **WSPRA Workshops:**

Each year, our the WSPRA board works to put on three professional development and networking opportunities for members that include: a one-day workshop on the east side of the state, another one-day workshop on the west side, and a two-day conference in a central location. Building on a series of very successful 2012-2013 workshops, the board discussed the issues facing public education in our state and outlined topics and professional development topics that would benefit

our members. The board also agreed to develop a sponsorship program to allow WSPRA to bring in top-notch speakers and draw from a regional or national pool of presenters. This proved to be a real boon as the sponsorships quickly sold out.

Keynote speakers who appeal to a broad audience and create a “draw” has contributed to an increase in attendance at our workshops. Since 2011-2012, our fall east side workshop numbers have increased by 10 bringing the total to 52 the winter west side workshop by seven bringing the total to 52 and our annual state conference by 27 participant totaling 57 This year we made a concerted effort to market to district leadership and had more school district administrators attending workshops – as well as representatives from other state education organizations, such as the Washington Association of School Administrators. In fact, we have outgrown the space at our state conference venue, where we’ve held the event for years. Satisfaction with the workshops and conference were evidenced by responses on our evaluation forms. Overall, 90% of our members told us they were satisfied or very satisfied with the conferences.

The implementation of our new website and event registration system increased our level of professionalism, elevating our image among members and prospective members. This, coupled with the quality workshops we presented, helped increased our membership by more than 10% from 94 to 113 members.

We have a powerful pool of knowledge and expertise within our membership. Adding new members brought additional brainpower to the organization. To leverage our own expertise, we invited members to present at workshops and also built in time during our workshops to for our members to connect with colleagues. This helps everyone improve the work they do in their districts as ideas are shared and relationships are built lasting beyond the workshops.

#### **Awards Program:**

A final professional development opportunity offered by WSPRA is our annual communications awards program. Nearly 300 entries in 13 categories were submitted for this year’s awards. Each entry was judged by experienced members of WSPRA as well as marketing and communications industry professionals. The judges offered constructive feedback on the scoring rubrics that were sent back to the entrants so they could see their strengths and also areas to improve.

WSPRA offers two special awards, the Learning and Liberty Award and the Crystal Apple. The Learning and Liberty award is given to an individual who is currently serving in a formal role of school public relations, for example a school PR professional or consultant specializing in school PR. A Learning and Liberty award winner is someone who has contributed greatly to the profession of school PR through an extensive body of work, unique achievements, collaboration with colleagues or mentoring other school PR professionals.

The Crystal Apple award is given to an individual who does not serve in a formal role of school public relations; it may be a parent, superintendent, school board member, or business leader. A Crystal Apple award winner is someone who has given tirelessly of themselves to enhance positive stakeholder perceptions of K-12 public schools or have empowered school public relations

professionals to be their best. We believe this award helps us connect and engage with school district leaders and build relationships beyond our communications colleagues.

**Meeting NSPRA Goals and Objectives:**

WSPRA is carrying out the mission of the National School Public Relations Association in promoting effective communication and promoting its importance in schools and districts, elevating our reputations as school public relations professionals, and empowering our members with professional development opportunities that help us all be more effective communicators as we advocate for our schools and public education in our nation.

**Attachments:**

Agendas from Eastern Washington, Westside, and State Conferences

Conferences Attendance lists (Tickets from Eventbrite)

Available Handouts and Presentations from Workshops

Conference Evaluation forms

Awards Call for Entries

Awards PDF of Power Point Presentations

Sponsorship Recap and Packages

Please visit our website at [www.wspra.com](http://www.wspra.com)