



NSPRA Mark of Distinction Entry

Washington School Public Relations Association

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

Background:

The Washington State School Public Relations Association (WSPRA) is a professional organization that works to promote effective communication in school districts across Washington State. In an effort to better support our WSPRA members and their respective organizations, the WSPRA Board of Directors established a set of goals focus our work around offering the best possible professional development for our members. These goals included:

Goals:

- Workshop attendee satisfaction – 90% rated conference as satisfied or very satisfied
- To meet or exceed number of participants in workshops over last year
- Secure high-quality speakers who have presented at NSPRA conferences
- Increase the number of scholarships available for members to attend the NSPRA Seminar in Chicago
- Develop an online process for submitting and judging publication/media award entries

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

WSPRA Workshops and Annual Conference:

Each year, the WSPRA Board puts tireless effort into providing three professional development and networking opportunities for members. They include: a one-day workshop on the Eastside of the state, another one-day workshop on the Westside, and a two-day annual conference in a central location.

Our Board has been inspired by the quality of speakers and sessions offered at the NSPRA Seminar each year and we have been intentional in providing that type of experience for our members, albeit on a scaled down level. This year, our conferences featured past NSPRA Seminar keynote speakers Dr. John Draper and Brian Woodland, as well as NSPRA President Susan Hardy-Brooks.

Offering nationally recognized keynote speakers has also helped us continue to increase workshop and conference participation. Our fall workshop attendance grew to 28 registrations, four more than the previous year, and the winter workshop registrations increased by 20 to 61 participants.

Our annual conference was attended by 74 members, an increase over last year's turnout of 67.

We held our [fall workshop](#) on November 13, 2015 in Pasco, WA. It featured a presentation from Sheridan College's Christine Szustaczek on [using communication to develop internal institutional support for initiatives and programs](#). The workshop also offered a member-requested session on [public records requests and laws and regulations](#) related to them.

Our [winter workshop](#) was held on February 26, 2016 in Vancouver, WA. Our keynote speaker for this conference was Brian Woodland from Peel District School Board in Ontario, Canada. He delivered an incredibly inspiring and entertaining presentation on [school communication tactics and strategies through the lens of country music](#). Representatives from the Seattle Times' education reporting project, Education Lab, also presented on their work and how our members can [partner with them and develop stories on what's innovative in education](#).

The [WSPRA Annual Conference](#) was held on April 28-29, 2016 in Leavenworth, WA. This two-day conference featured an opening day keynote from Dr. John Draper. His presentation focused on the [important conversations we need to have with our communities](#) about the great work that really happening in our schools and classrooms and how it is changing lives. Our closing day keynote was delivered by NSPRA President Susan Hardy-Brooks and focused on emerging school communication trends that are on the horizon. The conference also featured: an [interactive crisis communication session](#) by two of our region's most-respected school crisis response experts, a presentation from one of our members who shared her experienced managing communications in the wake of [school shooting that created a hero](#), and a session exploring the benefits and challenges learned through a [school communications audit](#).

We are pleased that each of these conferences was met with over 90 percent rating their session experiences as either very satisfied or satisfied on [conference feedback forms](#).

Awards Programs:

A final professional development opportunity offered by WSPRA is our [annual communications awards program](#). There were 253 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. This was the second year we have used an online submission and judging system, allowing us to cut down on the amount of time and resources spent on managing paper submissions. Based on member feedback, we tweaked this year's process to include more detailed judges rubrics and dividing each category into sections of districts with over 10,000 students and another for districts with less than 10,000 students.

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.

Scholarship Program:

In addition to striving to provide our members with an “NSPRA-esque” experience at our workshops and conferences, we also helps some of our members experience the real thing through a scholarship program. This year, the WSPRA Board increased the number of \$1,500 scholarships to attend the NSPRA Seminar from three recipients to five. This has been made possible through a successful conference sponsorship program with selected vendors.