

Northeast Region Chapter Reports – November 2017

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New Jersey School Public Relations Association (NJSPRA)

Lori Perlow, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: The NJSPRA chapter is thriving this year. As of October 8, 2017, we have 42 members. For a little perspective, we reached 41 members in March of last year. Of the 42 members, 12 are new to the organization. Since so few districts have a dedicated school communications pro in NJ, we're making an active push toward recruiting superintendents. When there's no school communications pro, superintendents are often the ones handling social media and communications in addition to their administrative duties. We currently have six superintendents and one assistant superintendent on our membership roster. We've been extremely lucky for one champion superintendent, Nicholas Diaz, who has volunteered to handle NJSPRA social media and he's actively recruiting superintendents to join NJSPRA. He "gets" school PR and social media and we're grateful for his commitment. He's been instrumental in helping us connect with other communications-savvy superintendents in NJ.

Outreach was done to current NSPRA members from NJ who are NOT members of our local chapter. Some weren't aware we existed or thought they were members of both when joining NSPRA. We've also done outreach to former members who hadn't renewed to get them on board.

We added two new member benefits last year which prompted a modest dues increase to cover new costs. It had been several years since there was an increase, so the timing seemed right. Thankfully, there's been no negative response to the increase. Compared to other professional organizations, NJSPRA dues are considered to be affordable. We currently charge \$325 for individual membership and \$525 for a group membership (two from the same district). Both memberships include 4 workshops (with breakfast and lunch), annual meeting/awards event (dinner and snacks) and access to monthly PR Power Hours at local host sites. The networking is invaluable.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: We've been asked to provide school communications PD for NJASA again this year. We will co-host a workshop on website accessibility in January 2018. We've also been invited back to present at the NJASA Superintendent Academy in February 2018. Lastly, they've asked us to provide a communications strand of workshops at their spring 2018 conference in Atlantic City. We're thrilled to participate which gives us access to an important group of admins from around the state. In addition, our members love the opportunity to engage with this group while sharing their expertise.

At our October workshop on website accessibility, we had two presenters from the NJDOE. Historically, the NJDOE has not been particularly collaborative with our organization. We've reached out to the commissioner but to no avail. We were thrilled to have the NJDOE trainer deliver most of the workshop. A few weeks before the workshop, I got a call from the Valerie Francois, NJDOE Director, Strategic Partner & Constituent Communications, who asked to co-present. I've invited Valerie to provide an NJDOE update at the start of our future meetings which she has agreed to do. Valerie was present when Lana Mueller announced the winner of the Superintendents to Watch list and the Front-Runner Awards. Valerie indicated that she would publicize both which is OUTSTANDING and helpful as we continually try to advocate for our profession!

Professional Development Programs/Activities: We have a dynamic workshop line-up this year. We just hosted our first workshop last week which was a tremendous success. The line-up is below.

- **Wednesday, October 4, 2017 – Hot Topic: School Websites and ADA Compliance – Is your school website accessible to all populations?** Learn about the new compliance guidelines so you can avoid legal troubles.

Is your school website accessible to all populations? Learn about the new compliance guidelines for websites from two experts. Elizabeth Thomas and Valerie Francois, from the NJ Department of Education, will review the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and provide tips to get your school district website in compliance. Patrick F. Carigg, Esq. of the Lenox Law Firm in Lawrenceville, NJ will address the legal side in regards to liability and how to respond if a complaint is filed against your school district. Join us for this very informative and timely topic!

- **Thursday, December 7, 2017 – Social Media: Don't Delete that Comment! First Amendment Rights and Public Records**

Wednesday, March 7, 2018 – Strengthen Your Community Engagement Plan to Keep Everyone In-the-Know. Learn outreach and engagement techniques that work. Includes Tech Take Away: Creating Professional Graphics and Infographics

- **Thursday, May 3, 2018 – Department of One? How to engage others to help increase communication and marketing efforts in your district.** Includes Tech Take Away: Tips for perfect video editing

Issues or Areas That Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support: I would like to see more chapter leadership training opportunities from NSPRA. This could be in the form of a webinar. As a volunteer-based organization, I always welcome strategies from other chapter officers and NSPRA to be sure we're on target and collaborating in the most productive way for our members.

New York School Public Relations Association (NYSPRA)

Bill Cameron, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: Our chapter is active and has 145 members. This is down from a year ago but will increase in the period between now and our spring conference. We are fiscally stable. We just held a regular meeting this month for a vote on bylaws changes and other business.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: We just completed our annual contest and held an awards luncheon. We also held a master plan development all-day session for officers to work on a three to five year plan, and also work on updated mission and vision statements. This is on-going.

Professional Development Programs/Activities: As we do on an annual basis, we will offer professional development activities at our spring conference.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: We are working to finalize our master plan development and set goals and objectives to get it underway.

Issues or Areas That Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support: We have no concerns. We appreciate the guidance from national on our bylaws changes.

Additional Items of Note: Our officers are excited about the effort to develop our master plan and provide even more value to our membership. We look forward to chapter growth and extending our staff development to other sections of NYS and at different times of the year.

Pennsylvania School Public Relations Association (PenSPRA)

Angela Lynch, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: PenSPRA is an active chapter with a growing membership. We have regular workshops and bi-annual board meetings as well as an annual symposium. This year, we are focusing on growing the “value-added” aspects of PenSPRA membership – helping our members and “would-be” members see the value that PenSPRA brings to the position with professional development, collegial support, and more.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: Recently, three members of our executive Board presented a crisis communications presentation at the Pennsylvania School Board Association’s annual conference. In January, we have been invited to contribute a presentation to The PA Association of School Administrators’ New Superintendent’s Academy Part 3: Professional and Community Leadership. PenSPRA is honored to have been called upon to instruct the newest class of school district leaders as experts in our field in presenting “Communication Strategies During and After a Tragedy or Crisis.”

We also look forward to a growing partnership with the Association of Pennsylvania Education Foundations (APEF) to leverage membership and symposium growth.

Professional Development Programs/Activities: We continue to host regional workshop meetings as well as an annual symposium.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: Some of the concerns we have at the board level is growing and marketing the organization with only a part-time ED. We have revised the job description, allocated additional resources to the position, and are looking forward to hiring a new individual in the coming months. This individual will be called upon to lend more support to visionary thinking for the organization.

Issues or Areas That Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support: Recently, PenSPRA sent its president to attend the International Public Relations Society of America conference in Boston. Within that organization is a non-profit group – we would encourage NSPRA to collaborate more with business and industry leaders such as PRSA – many of our “for-profit” partners are facing similar challenges and finding interesting solutions to new problems – often without a need for considerable funding.

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On: More and more, the parents of our students have grown up in the digital age. As a result, we need to reconsider our strategies for reaching individuals who are accustomed to receiving a crafted message designed to meet their individual tastes and desires. With shrinking budgets, this requires more creativity than ever before.

Connecticut School Public Relations Association (ConnSPRA)

Kimberley Eves, chapter president

No report submitted.