

Northwest Region Chapter Reports – November 2017

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Idaho School Public Relations Association (IDSPRA)

Allison Westfall, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: Dormant hoping to start up again after a successful June meeting.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: Collaborated with the State Department of Education on an ESSA Update.

Professional Development Programs/Activities: Tom DeLapp, APR, provided a workshop on social media firestorms.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: We struggle to stay connected in a large state with few IDSPRA members. There was a desire expressed to keep meeting and charge dues, but it has been a challenge with busy schedule. It is easier for members to attend other states and national professional development opportunities instead of getting involved in the planning, organizing, and offering of similar activities – not a criticism. It is just easier to pay and go vs. plan and lead and do the work.

State or local issues that NSPRA should keep an eye on: Concerned about efforts to limit district communications around bonds and levies. Eager to see what is developed by the Idaho School Boards Association as an option.

Oregon School Public Relations Association (OSPRA)

Alandra Johnson, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: Our chapter is growing. We are excited to see many new members and some new school public relations folks from districts that have not had one in the past. Every new member received a personal letter from the president, inviting them to our fall conference as well as to our group Facebook page.

The Facebook page is a huge draw, with members posting new items every day. Our officers respond and check on posts regularly. We also highlighted new members as they joined the group to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: We started a new project to connect mentors with new members. At our fall conference, we paired up six different mentor/mentee pairs and they took a few minutes to connect. We hope to see these official connections grow. We always had said something generic like “call on any of us when you need something,” but wanted to make

those connections more concrete and official. Our new members seemed to appreciate this and the mentors liked being called on as a source of knowledge.

We are in our second year of offering an awards program – celebrating a Communicator of the Year and sponsoring a scholarship to NSPRA (in honor of Joe Krumm).

Professional Development Programs/Activities: Our fall conference was a huge success. We had 51 attendees, which is a very high number for us. At the same venue last year, we attracted 41 members. Having President Tom DeLapp, APR, was a great draw, so we appreciate his presence in bringing folks in – as well as his great message about the value of school PR. We are also well on our way to planning for our spring conference and already have established a date and location and have a few beginning ideas for topics.

We partnered with NSPRA to try to attract more members to NSPRA from the Northwest and hope that promoting this opportunity will bring more members to NSPRA and, in turn, a stronger presence from school PR professionals from the Northwest Region at the national level.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: We are working hard to get new systems in place for our finances (new bank) and for our membership list. These broader, systematic changes, we hope, will help us stay more up to date with requests for information and will help us pass on information better as the board rolls over each year.

Issues or Areas That Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support: We are always on the lookout for dynamic speakers. It would be great to have a vetted list of topics and experts that we could look at to help us select speakers for our conferences.

We would love to see NSPRA come to the Northwest for the annual Seminar ☺ It would be a great show of support for school public relations in the Northwest.

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On: Funding, as always, is generally the top concern for Oregon districts.

Other issues include:

- Graduation rates
- Equity
- Communicating with diverse audiences
- Safety
- Threats to schools and students
- Mental health of students
- Natural disasters, from snow to smoke

Additional Items of Note: We are excited about the progress our chapter has made this year. We are growing, active and thriving.

Washington School Public Relations Association (WSPRA)

David Beil, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: WSPRA is thriving in 2017! We've held our first two conferences of the year and we are planning for the winter and annual conferences. Membership is up 16% (137, up from 118). Our financial picture is strong, with \$61,000 on hand, which allows us to plan for and host upcoming conferences.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts:

- We have conducted our first chapter financial audit, and have begun implementation of recommendations.
- Expanded sponsorship program to \$6,000 for a Keynote Sponsor to help WSPRA bring in high quality presenters to our conferences.
- We are researching improvements to our annual awards process and the judging criteria.
- Working with state organizations to educate superintendents and administrators about the importance of ongoing communication work and the resources available through WSPRA and NSPRA.
- WSPRA is working with the Washington Association of School Administrators to provide assistance to districts without communications staff. This work is coordinated through the School Communication Assistance Network (SCAN).

Professional Development Programs/Activities:

- Election Conference held in Shoreline, Wash., on Sept. 21 with 127 attendees. The focus was on voter trends and attitudes in Washington.
- Fall Workshop held in Spokane, Wash., on Oct. 20 with 40 attendees and focused on internal communications.
- Winter Workshop is scheduled for Feb. 23 in Renton.
- Annual Conference is scheduled for April 25-27 in Leavenworth.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: We are discussing the possibility of extending officer terms to two years instead of one, in order to maintain continuity.

Issues or Areas that Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support:

- We would like to ensure that judging criteria for WSPRA awards aligns with those used at NSPRA.
- Members are excited about and committed to growing regional NSPRA membership, and we are enthusiastic about planning a national conference in our state. We appreciate the NSPRA incentive program in helping us grow membership and expand school communications efforts in our region and nation.

State or local issues that NSPRA should keep an eye on: New restrictions on school levies recently passed in the state legislature will affect how much money districts can collect and how they will use it. There is uncertainty as to what these new restrictions mean; we anticipate more clarity on this issue from the next legislative session.