

South Central Region Chapter Reports – November 2017

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Arkansas School Public Relations Association (ArkaSPRA)

Devin Sherrill, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: The ArkaNSPRA chapter is growing. Our last meeting had record number of current and potential members present. More school districts are realizing the need for communication professionals and creating these positions in their Administration Office staff. Chapter members reach out to neighboring school districts and inviting new hires to be part of the local group.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: The chapter's new leadership team met in August to discuss responsibilities and projects. Our chapter is focusing on membership efforts and ways to promote the benefits of membership in in the state and national organization.

Professional Development Programs/Activities: The ArkaNSPRA chapter will be adding workshops to each of the meetings held this year. In October, we focused on e-newsletters and how to communicate the death of a student on campus.

The chapter has a very high level of engagement and sharing of ideas during meetings and in the course of our work in individual districts.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: The chapter funding has decreased. While our membership is growing we are collecting fewer membership fees. The leadership team is working to address this issue.

The majority of our members serve as the only communications professional in his/her district. Finding the time to dedicate additional resources to ArkaNSPRA is difficult. We have phased out our website and are committed to doing a better job of updating our Facebook page.

Issues or Areas That Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support: Since we are small, I would like to see ArkaNSPRA partner with our neighboring chapters to host conferences and professional development opportunities.

We would also like to explore ways to support members in obtaining their APR status.

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On:

- Decreasing state funding for facilities
- Ability to pass millage elections
- Lack of funding for early childhood education

Kansas School Public Relations Association (KanSPRA)

Dane Baxa, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: The KanSPRA Chapter has picked up the amount of activity in the past 5 months. Typically, our board has only met quarterly, but this year, we have added monthly meetings that are online and our normal quarterly meetings are in person.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts: We have 3 significant projects in the pipeline for KanSPRA. The first is creating a ‘Members Benefit Package,’ that markets KanSPRA and NSPRA benefits to not only communication professionals, but superintendents without PR professionals on their team. The second is a KanSPRA video project that will be tailored for two audiences, the first being used as a recruitment tool for membership, and the second, is to have school districts be able to share it to their communities as a means to promote positive communication, engagement, and leadership among staff, parents, and the community to support public education in Kansas. The third major effort is to coordinate with our United School Administrators of Kansas, USA-KS, and share some of the expertise of KanSPRA members in exchange for additional administrative support to help us further our mission.

Professional Development Programs/Activities: One of our biggest projects is our Fall Conference on Nov. 1-3. This 3 day initiative is packed full of professional development sessions and will be used also to facilitate strategic questions about the future of KanSPRA. We are proud to be hosting NSPRA Past-President Julie Thannum, APR, as our key note speaker. The questions we’ll be facilitating are below.

1. Why are you a member of KanSPRA?
2. What is the most valuable resource KanSPRA provides its members?
3. What is KanSPRA missing?
4. Where do you see KanSPRA in 3 years, and how do you see yourself helping us get there?

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: Even with the recent Kansas Supreme Court Ruling that told our State Legislature that our public education funding formula was inadequate, this next legislative session could be the most important session in our generation. Either the formula is funded adequately and equitably, and if not, schools are shut down; or an additional proposal could change the Kansas Constitution and limit future litigation that holds the state of Kansas accountable in providing funding to public education. Our chapter’s coordinated efforts of the stories we share, and how we communicate the value of public education that engages our community and elected officials, is going to be critical to the long term success of public education in Kansas.

Issues or Areas That Could Use NSPRA Regional or National Support: Keep helping us learn the best way to advocate for public education, and I love the theme next year about creating value in public education! It will be critical to all of us in our responsibilities to advocate for ALL public education students.

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On: See above.

Missouri School Public Relations Association (MOSPRA)

Submitted by: Paul Tandy, APR, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being: MOSPRA is a thriving chapter with healthy financials and strong membership base. The current membership count sits at a little more than 170 members statewide. This is down from our last count in June 2017, but we are just concluding our membership drive and expect to be above the 181 members we concluded last year with. The state chapter is divided into four regions (Eastern, Mid-State, Ozark and Western) with monthly meetings scheduled in each area providing professional development opportunities for members.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts:

Sponsorship Program

MOSPRA currently has annual sponsors with Blackboard, SchoolMessenger, PeachJar, MarketVolt and as of this week, Thoughtexchange. The partnerships are rewarding not only for MOSPRA but for the sponsors, as they are able to build relationships and create top of mind awareness with our members.

Colleague Connections

MOSPRA established Colleague Connections to provide support, learning and professional growth opportunities for new members by establishing a collaborative, professional relationship with a MOSPRA colleague. New MOSPRA members are provided with a professional, confidential resource of school communication expertise during the first year as a member.

Document Vault

MOSPRA has completely rebuilt the document vault on our website. We ask that MOSPRA members who have participated in the MOSPRA Communications Contest submit their work from the past 2-3 years. We also ask members to submit communication plans (both comprehensive and issue specific), informational campaign work samples, crisis communication samples (including letters home), procedures for social media, and any presentations. The submissions are added to the vault for all members to have accessibility to the information whenever needed.

Social Media

Several months ago, MOSPRA Executive Director David Luther launched a closed Facebook page for school communications professionals. Most members of the page are from Missouri, but there are others from across the country. This site is very active with members posting questions and providing helpful insights on a daily basis. The association also has a closed Facebook page for those who participated in last year's PR Boot Camp. Finally, there is the open MOSPRA Facebook page for general information and to spotlight outstanding work by members.

Professional Development Programs/Activities:

APR Study Group

MOSPRA member, Stephanie Smith, APR, along with others, has developed an outstanding and ongoing program to help members work towards their APR. MOSPRA is on track to have up to seven (7) members attain the APR by summer 2018.

Fall Conference

The 2017 annual MOSPRA Fall Conference is set for November 2-3 in St. Louis (St. Charles, Missouri). We will focus on “Marketing and the Customer Mindset.” The conference is designed for school PR professionals with topics selected for in-depth discussion. Past NSPRA President, Jim Cummings, APR, will be the featured speaker (and Jim will use his time with us to workshop ideas). This conference is always well attended. We currently have 109 registered.

Spring Conference

The 2018 annual MOSPRA Spring Conference will be held at Lake of the Ozarks, April 4-6 in joint partnership with the Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA). MOSPRA is allotted nine sessions to present to our members and also Missouri superintendents. This year we are pleased to have NSPRA President, Tom DeLapp, APR, join us.

Regional Outreach/Sub-Regions (AKA “Rogue” Group)

MOSPRA has expanded its “Rogue” (sub-regional) groups to five. Three are thriving (West Central, Southeast and Jefferson County) and two are getting started (Northwest and North Central). These groups allow those who cannot easily make meetings in the metro areas to still share time and ideas with their colleagues. The groups meet each quarter.

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On: As the 2018 legislative session begins, we will be carefully tracking issues such as Charter School Expansion and the state budget’s effect on schools.

Oklahoma School Public Relations Association (OKSPRA)

Courtney Morton, chapter president

Chapter Well-Being:

- Declining membership remains an ongoing issue for the Oklahoma chapter. Budget issues continue to be a problem throughout the state and professional development is frequently one of the first cuts for K12 schools.
- A majority of members (or at least those who attend meetings) are representatives of CareerTech technology centers. We are trying to recruit more K12 members and/or meeting attendees.
- Online membership has been somewhat cumbersome this year. We are working with our website provider to figure out a solution.
- After not having any outside sponsorships last year we created a sponsorship tier program. Our December meeting will be sponsored by Blackboard. In addition to contributing financially to our organization, a Blackboard representative will be at the December meeting and will talk to the group about services related to the meeting topic (ADA requirements for websites).
- Meeting content for this year is really strong! We kicked off our first meeting of the school year with a session by Julie Thannum, APR, where she spoke to members about effective fund raising strategies for school districts. OKSPRA members Joshua Sauer and Ida Fryhover shared the session they led at the NSPRA Seminar on creating advocacy for

your school district. Joshua also “started” his session on social media campaigns. He will pick back up with this session at the December meeting.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts:

- OKSPRA members were introduced to the Organization of Rural Oklahoma Schools, an organization that focuses on the needs of rural school districts. We made a connection with the organization’s director and spoke at their August board meeting. We shared about our organization and announced that OKSPRA officers would host a free crisis communications training for their membership. Feedback from their director and board members was that this was a training that their members would need/benefit. Our intent was to provide a service and hopefully gain new members. We held the training and two members of their organization were in attendance. Needless to say, we hoped for greater turnout!
- The December meeting is co-sponsored with Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration. As a partner for this meeting they will include the meeting in their professional development communications and we will waive the non-member registration fee for CCOSA members. We hope that members will find value in the meeting content and either join OKSPRA or pay the non-member registration fee for upcoming meetings.

Professional Development Programs/Activities:

- December 7 Meeting will focus on legal changes in education. Meeting will feature two prominent education attorneys. That meeting will also feature two short training sessions led by OKSPRA members. We are making an effort to tap into our membership for meeting sessions. The December meeting will feature Joshua Sauer talking about creating successful social media campaigns and Tara Thompson talking about successful internal communications.
- February 14 quarterly meeting.
- April 4-6 Annual Conference and Awards Banquet.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns: Declining membership. This is the main issue for our organization. Three years ago our membership was nearly double last year’s membership numbers. Our officer group needs to take a look at what “internal” processes have changed (could online registration be an issue or is it something else?) and look at what we might need to do to reach more people.

Issues or areas that could use NSPRA regional or national support:

- Would like to know more about how other states gain access to a potential member list. Are they partnering with other state education organizations? Are they working with state Department of Education offices?
- What do other states do in terms of being an “advocate” for public education? Do other chapters take an advocacy role with legislators on behalf of their school districts?

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On:

- Ongoing budget issues in Oklahoma likely have an impact on our membership numbers.

- For CareerTech members, there is discussion about the overlap of services between CareerTech and the community college system.
- Charter schools are gaining ground in many of our metro areas.
- Oklahoma has an active #oklaed following on Twitter. It will be important for school communications people to stay in tune with this group from the standpoint of they are creating their own narrative and as school communications professionals, we aren't a part of it.
- Teacher funding continues to be a HUGE issue in the state. Many of our members serve dual roles and frequently operate as their district's HR manager.

Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA)

Submitted by Linsae Snider, executive director

Chapter Well-Being:

- The first external audit of our organization was conducted during the month of August resulting in a report of sound accounting practices and diligent and responsible management of funds along with recommendations to the *Member Review of Financial Records and Procedures (Audit) Committee* for enhancing small office operations.
- The *Member Review of Financial Records and Procedures (Audit) Committee* conducted its audit of the 2016-2017 fiscal year on September 12, 2016, reporting sound accounting practices, efficient office operations and making seven recommendations to the Executive Committee based on findings from the external auditors.
- The TSPRA 990 for the 2016-2017 fiscal year was filed with IRS on September 26, 2017.
- We continue to accept dues 2017-2018 renewals until October 31, 2017. After that date, a late fee of \$45 will be added. We expect membership to remain at approximately 880 members.
- Dues for associate level membership were increased to the same amount as professional level dues in an effort to stand true to the definition of associate membership as stated in the TSPRA bylaws. A recommendation for a bylaws/standing rules vote to eliminate the associate level membership can be expected in 2018-2019.
- All but one of the nine TSPRA regions has hosted (or has scheduled) to host least one meeting during the fall of 2017 with SPRINT, CASPRA, SASPRA and HASPRA hosting monthly meetings.
- *TSPRA Executive Committee* met in Frisco on October 5, 2017, resulting in a summary of the meeting actions, discussions and information being shared with membership via the weekly newsletter.
- The *TSPRA Nominating Committee* also met in Frisco on October 5, 2017, to slate Executive Committee candidates for 2018-2019. Electronic voting takes place November 6 – December 6, 2017.

- During the October EC meeting, the board engaged in two work sessions: (1) review of progress towards the 2016-2018 TSPRA Organizational Goals and (2) prioritize and establish timelines for implementation of recommendations made by the *Member Review of Financial Records and Procedures* (Audit) Committee.
- TSPRA signed the NSPRA incentive agreement for recruitment of new members to NSPRA and will send the mandatory letter to TSPRA members on October 20, 2017.
- TSPRA invested an additional \$25,000 into a long-term portfolio with the intent of earning increased dividends and a goal of reaching a minimum of \$100,000 to generate interest that will be designated.
- As insignificant as it sounds, TSPRA began accepting electronic payments of up to \$1000 from vendors and members paying dues out of pocket.
- Forty-one vendors have committed to exhibit space for the 2018 TSPRA Conference.

Chapter Projects/Collaboration Efforts:

- Two TSPRA members have earned APR credentials with two additional members working towards a February pinning.
- A total of 14 TSPRA members have earned CPC (certified public communicator) credentials from the TCU program with another six enrolled and having completed the first year of the two-year program.
- An ad hoc logo committee is working with a contracted design team to redesign the TSPRA logo that is now 35 years old. The new logo will be unveiled during the 2018 TSPRA annual conference.
- TSPRA Executive Committee and four regional groups engaged in a *Brand Deck* activity to define six words that define “what TSPRA aspires to be.” The six words will guide our branding efforts. TSPRA aspires to be: welcoming, trusted, professional, accomplished, multifaceted, and dynamic.
- The state office continues to publish twice-weekly EduLeges, weekly eNewsletters, eBlasts about important announcements and postings of communications related positions on our website. In addition, numerous Facebook postings and twitter messages are posted on an ongoing basis. The TSPRA Facebook page houses photographs from regional meetings.
- Texas House of Representatives Education Chair, Dan Huberty, was named *2017 Key Communicator* and received recognition on October 6, 2017, during the first general session of the 2017 TASA TASB Convention held in Dallas.
- Professional headshots were taken of the TSPRA Executive Committee and will appear on the TSPRA website and annual conference program.
- The annual *Celebrate Texas Public Schools* (CTPS) campaign will launch on November 8, 2017, to include a theme, logo, social media calendar and sponsored water bottles to be distributed during the annual conference.

- We continue to be pleased with the *Member 365* member management system we invested in a year ago and continue to learn new features.
- *Star Awards* entries are being accepted until November 6, 2017, through *Open Water*, a system we also invested in a year ago, with an expectation of receiving approximately 1100 entries.
- *Open Water* will be utilized this year for professional awards nominations and judging.
- TSPRA continues to be asked to present to the *TASA First Year Superintendent Academy* each year, provided seven concurrent sessions for the TASA/TASB Convention and will schedule 12 sessions for the Superintendent's Midwinter Convention.
- Three TSPRA past presidents have been secured to deliver communications related sessions for the 15 TASB spring workshops scheduled throughout the state and attended by local board of trustee members and their superintendents.
- TSPRA continues to utilize "GoToMeetings" making ad hoc and standing committee meeting time and resources more efficient without the hassle or expense of travel.
- Applications for three TSPRA conference scholarships, valued at \$1940 each, will be accepted until November 21st with the recipients being named on December 13th.
- The TSPRA president served on the selection committee that named the *2018 Texas Teacher of the Year*.
- TSPRA will be honoring its first *Partner in Public Education Award* during the February annual conference, along with the other six professional awards recipients that will be announced.
- TSPRA continues to author articles for the TASA publication, the *INSIGHT*, that is delivered to all TASA members quarterly.
- TSPRA has contacted for conference locations in 2019 (Lost Pines Resort in the Austin area), 2020 (Omni Barton Creek Resort in the Austin Hill Country) and are in negotiations currently for 2021 location.
- The *Scholarship Committee* honored Monica Faulkenbery, APR, with the complimentary NSPRA Seminar registration awarded to the TSPRA host committee in San Antonio this past summer.

Professional Development Programs/Activities:

- Proposals to present at the 2018 TSPRA Conference are being accepted until October 27, 2017.
- Conference 2018 registration is open. Already, the hotel block at the conference hotel is at capacity and an overflow hotel, near capacity. The conference planning committee meets on November 9, 2017, to slot concurrent sessions, determine the "timely topics" and appoint facilitators for the job alike sessions. Julie Thannum, NSPRA Immediate Past-President, has been asked to bring greetings from NSPRA. Five preconference sessions are scheduled along with one keynoter, three distinguished lecturers, 40 concurrent sessions, roundtables, job-alike sessions and "timely topics" discussions. Forty-one vendors will be on-site. Keynoter is Jones Loflin, author of several books

including *Juggling Elephants*. Distinguished lecturers include Jay Rosser, VP of Public Affairs for T. Boone Pickens, Carol Simpson, attorney specializing in copyright and trademark law, and Fred Campos, social media marketing guru. In addition, there will be a 5K run, sponsored evening receptions and events and the annual Star Awards Banquet emceed by Tim Carroll, APR. We expect attendance to exceed 620 attendees again this year.

- Ten retired TSPRA members have been enlisted to assist with conference labor, photography and other duties, providing a significant cost savings.
- *Spoken Word Group* serves as the contractor for Media and Crisis Communications, Presentation Skills, and Dealing with Angry Public trainings as we continue to schedule them across the state.
- A series of legal webinars addressing copyright, trademark law along with “ask the lawyer” content will be scheduled during the spring 2018.

Major Chapter Issues or Concerns:

- Foremost on the minds of Texans is the continued relief efforts necessary for the 136 school districts affected by Hurricane Harvey. A domino effect results when such a travesty occurs resulting in loss of property taxes (and as much as 50-75% of Texas public schools are funded through local property taxes), loss of ADA funding due to displaced students and the trauma of our TSPRA members dealing with issues related to their districts along with losses at home.
- TSPRA serves a very diverse membership – PIO/communications professionals at all levels from head of department to specialists in addition to education foundation directors, webmasters, electronic media production specialists, translators, community partnership coordinators and graphic artists. We continue to challenge ourselves to provide services that address and meet the very different needs of each.
- Texas continues the battle legislatively with vouchers, a bathroom issue and an unfit school finance formula.

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

- Charter schools are considered public schools in our state. As a result, charter school employees are allowed to join TSPRA. We would be interested in how other affiliates are addressing this issue.
- Charter schools across the state are marketing like crazy and pulling students from our public schools affecting ADA and funding. In many cases, they are extremely organized, strategic and effective in recruitment practices.
- Texas has among the lowest voter turnout of all states and even lower among teachers. A *Texas Educators Vote* campaign is being supported by 17 education related associations to encourage educators to register to vote, and to vote in the primaries.
- Texas has 2000 certified teachers who are DACA and employed in our state, most of them as bilingual teachers where we also have a shortage of qualified teachers.
- Border issues continue to affect our schools, especially those near the Mexico border.

State or Local Issues That NSPRA Should Keep an Eye On:

- A grassroots campaign is underway to “retire” the current Texas Lt. Governor who is anti-public education.
- We are observing an increase in the number of newly created communications positions being created in 4A and 3A schools around the state. We attribute this to two factors:
 - 1) First time superintendents typically served as assistant superintendents in larger schools and experienced the value of these positions as they accept their first superintendent positions that are typically in smaller school districts.
 - 2) Exposure provided to superintendents as a result of the close association our organization has with TASA by sharing office space with them and the opportunity to provide professional development several times a year to this membership along with increased request for assistance in providing professional development through our ESC system (intermediate education agencies).
- Texas schools continue to be slammed with OCR complaints and lawsuits related to website accessibility.
- The issue of educators involved in inappropriate relationships with students makes the headlines in the newspaper and runs the top of the news – almost weekly somewhere in the state!
- School safety is an issue of concern.
- Large athletic stadiums and collaborations with professional sports teams is trending in our state – and not always resulting in positive media!

Celebrate Texas Public Schools
2017-2018 Theme/Logo

