

INSPRATIONS

Winter 2006-2007

Illinois Chapter
National School Public Relations Association

A Message from INSPRA President Melea Smith

Dear Fellow PR Professionals -

Thank you to all who were involved in helping with the November IASB/IASA/IASBO (Triple I) Joint Conference in Chicago! INSPRA was well represented, with six of our members giving extremely informative presentations.

While there, Past President Brett Clark, President Elect Terry Ryan and I had a very productive meeting with Marcy Dutton, who is the Associate Director of the Illinois Association of School Administrators, regarding establishing a partnership between INSPRA and IASA. Thanks to Superintendent and INSPRA Board member Dr. Charles McCormick for paving the way for that conversation.

We hope to be able to provide professional development opportunities for school administrators, especially in the areas of communications and community relations, while raising the awareness of what school PR professionals do for education in the process.

And speaking of raising the professional bar, I am VERY excited to announce that eight of our members have committed to participate in an online study course (and have created their own study group) in pursuit of the APR - an Accreditation in Public Relations. APR is the mark of distinction for public relations professionals who demonstrate their commitment to the profession and to its ethical practice, and who are selected based on broad knowledge, strategic perspective, and sound professional judgment.

The process involves submitting and defending a portfolio

project, as part of the Readiness Review, and then, upon recommendation of a Review Panel comprised of three APRs, advancing to the written test. The examination process tests 10 groupings of competencies, or knowledge, skills and abilities (known as KSAs), that were identified through the Universal Accreditation Board's landmark 2000 Practice Analysis. This analysis identified more than 60 subsets of KSAs that are critical to successful public relations practice.

In order to be eligible to pursue this designation, a candidate must have five years of full-time experience in public relations prior to making application with the UAB. For more information about this universal accreditation, please visit <http://www.praccreditation.org> or contact me. I serve on NSPRA's Accreditation Committee and would be happy to answer your questions or put you in touch with the national chairman, Lowell Wolff.

To say that this requires tremendous effort and dedication, especially given the demands of our jobs, is an understatement. I am proud that our chapter is so highly committed to continued growth and excellence!

With the new year just around the corner, make a resolution to raise your own professional bar by attending INSPRA's Tips & Tactics workshops (see dates and topics on page 2) and our annual Foundations Conference, set for Feb. 9. It's one of the smartest career investments you can make.

Melea Smith, APR
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Safety and Security: the number one concern of parents and schools

It's Maslow's hierarchy: children who don't feel safe cannot effectively learn. And here's another immutable law: parents who don't feel their children are safe will not trust the school when it comes to other important matters. Following every tragedy, such as the one that took place in Lancaster County, PA, this fall, we must again ask ourselves if we're doing enough to safeguard our students.

An "INSPRA Member Needs Help" request for ideas on how to bolster security generated a flurry of responses on the topic, the consensus of which is as follows: locked doors except for one main entry during the school day (with employees being responsible for monitoring exits); door buzzers, with intercoms and video cameras (with one district planning to reconfigure some buildings so that the office is closer to the main entrance); front door greeters; visitor sign-in requiring photo ID (upon which a badge or pass is given); photo IDs for students in middle and high school; name badges/photo IDs for all employees; and paid hall monitors. One district headed off employee complaints by making the IDs key cards that open the building's locked doors.

General concerns with the buzzer systems were that this represents increased demand on office staff (due to interruptions and the time it takes to monitor the door); concern about liability for those employees; contract issues generated by these concerns; and the worry that high-tech solutions might lead to a false sense of security, resulting in less vigilance among staff. While no system is perfect, the best defense is a good offense. And, the approaches suggested by our members certainly fit that bill.

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Foundation guru Mark Havens leads conference

If your school district already has or is even contemplating an education foundation, make plans to attend INSPRA's 13th annual Midwest Education Foundation Conference Feb. 9 at Aramark in Downers Grove.

Featured speaker Mark Havens literally wrote the book on building foundations, NSPRA's "Dream Big, Creating and Growing Your School Foundation." Mr. Haven's presentation will be pertinent to all types of foundations, from elementary through college, as he focuses on "Building a Great Board of Directors: Recruitment, Training, Accountability and Recognition."

Mr. Havens experience includes 23 years in fundraising and development. He has worked on both sides of the table: as an executive director, and a board member. He is a frequent speaker at NSPRA seminars and has addresses audiences on the subject of school foundations in 17 states and three Canadian provinces.

Following the keynote 90-minute presentation and a box lunch, participants will have the opportunity to exchange ideas at afternoon roundtables. There will be nine topics to choose from. New this year are roundtables geared toward the age of foundations: zero to two years, three to nine years and 10 or more years.

Attendees come from many walks of life...foundation administrators, board members, school district administrators, and parent volunteers are all welcome. Please pass the word to the person(s) in your school district responsible for your foundation.

Log on to www.inspra.org to download a conference brochure which includes directions to Aramark and a registration form, or call 815-464-3275 for more information.

Tips & Tactics workshop lineup for 2007

Each school year, INSPRA hosts six sessions focusing on the latest "must know" public relations strategies for successful school communications. Sessions are individually priced at \$30 for members and \$50 for non-members. The remaining 2007 lineup is:

Jan. 19, 2007 Laying The Groundwork – Public Engagement Strategies

Feb. 23, 2007 Legal Issues Communications Professionals Face

March 16, 2007 Introduction To e-Communications

April 20, 2007 How to Write an Effective Communications Plan

Call Karen Hyland at (815) 464-3275 to register or for more information. If you have not renewed your INSPRA membership, be sure to ask about our special half-year rate.

INSPRA recognizes the support of business partners

Members recently received a flyer (along with the December Tips & Tactics mailing) from one of INSPRA's business partners, Liberty Mutual Insurance Group, offering group savings to our membership. Liberty Mutual was a financial supporter of the chapter when we were raising monies to host the national seminar in Chicago last July. Please take a moment to see if you can save money by calling 1-800-835-0894 for a free quote. A percentage goes to INSPRA for each policy that is written.

We also want to recognize the following business partners for their important contributions to INSPRA: Aramark, Honeywell, WIn Marketing, AltertNow, Laidlaw, Purple Monkey Studios, Inc., Back in 10 Productions, Turner Construction and UNICOM•ARC.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of these companies and their services, you may access their direct links by going to the INSPRA website: <http://www.inspra.org>. Please click on the "News and Articles" tab.