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special techniques are required. We learned about it at the conference. You can check it out on their Web site, www.nspr.com in their products and services section.

The lively and informative third general session was a presentation by Pam Gardener about *FISH*. A fish company in Seattle (can you believe it?) learned the keys to increased enjoyment and productivity at work. If you would like good reading materials connected with this idea, get *FISH*, by Stephen C. Lundin; *The Art of Possibility*, by Zander and Zander; or *The Four Agreements*, by Don Miguel Ruiz.

If you haven't discovered the WSPRA conference as a highlight in your year, put it on

(Superintendent Connects, continued from page 2)

Dan was able to connect with retired and current staff, community members and parents of former and current students. Feedback ranged from families new in town telling us how much they loved our schools, to concerned parents dealing with student/teacher issues.

When utilizing this engagement approach, you do open the door to hear from the unhappy and disgruntled. We welcomed hearing the bad news, since these are issues that will now be resolved, turning that one unhappy customer (who can spread bad news quickly), to a satisfied customer.

If you would like more information regarding this program, contact Amanda Brooker, manager of school and community relations at (920) 448-2025, or email, abrooker@greenbay.k12.wi.us. ❖

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

WSPRA is looking for a few of its past presidents and honorary lifetime members.

We just don't like those letters returned. If you know the whereabouts of any of the following individuals — Jean Dyer, Sherman Weinrich and Richard Wenzel — please contact Patti Welch at the WSPRA office, pwelch@wasb.org or Mabel Schumacher, 848 Messmer Street, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538, schu848@charter.net.



WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

Dr. Brian Hanes Awarded Holtshopple Scholarship

■ Dr. Gerald Freitag, Franklin Public Schools



Brian Hanes is presented with the Holtshopple Scholarship by WSPRA President Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D.

Oostburg Superintendent Brian Hanes is the recipient of the second annual Allan Holtshopple Scholarship. The scholarship is named for longtime WSPRA member and former President Allan Holtshopple. Each year it is awarded to a new WSPRA member who has demonstrated strong community involvement.

Dr. Hanes has served in several administrative positions in the Sheboygan County area. His resume includes assistant principal at Sheboygan's Urban Middle School; principal at Sheboygan Falls Middle School; and principal at Oostburg High School. Dr. Hanes is currently superintendent at the Oostburg School District.

An accomplished musician, Brian was a music teacher in Manitowoc before becoming a school administrator. He has continued to use his musical talents as a member of the Sheboygan Symphony Orchestra for the past 15 years.

Superintendent Hanes coordinated the completion of a district brochure created by a student who worked with a local marketing business. The brochure has been distributed to five realtors and is used for school presentations, school choice applicant mailings, and for families new to the Oostburg School District. The contents also appear on the

WSPRA welcomes articles from its members for the WSPRAgram. If you would like to write an article, please send contributions to WSPRA, 122 W. Washington Ave., Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703. ❖

district's Web site. This is an example of the marketing effort necessary for public schools in today's competitive climate.

As the Holtshopple Scholarship recipient, Dr. Hanes received a complimentary registration to WSPRA's Annual Fall Conference and a complimentary one-year NSPRA membership. Congratulations, Brian Hanes! ❖

2001 President's Award

■ David Petroff, Menomonee Falls School District



WSPRA Immediate Past President David Petroff presents Dr. Gerald Freitag with the President's

Each year, WSPRA's past president selects an individual to be recognized at the Annual Fall Conference for outstanding contributions to the organization. This year Immediate Past President David Petroff named Dr. Gerald Freitag, Franklin Public Schools, as the recipient of the 2001 WSPRA President's Award.

Dr. Freitag has been a long-time member of the WSPRA Board of Directors and a standard bearer for educational public relations and public engagement, speaking at numerous local, state and national conferences and workshops about the vital role of communication in sustaining the institution of public education.

Dr. Freitag has consistently demonstrated his belief that "public relations is everyone's job" by supporting active memberships in WSPRA for 17 staff, parents and school board members. Dr. Freitag is recognized as one of Wisconsin's strongest advocates for school community relations among state superintendents and school districts. Gerald Freitag is to be congratulated for his ongoing efforts on behalf of WSPRA and as this year's winner of the President's Award. ❖

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WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION



From the President . . .



Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D.

We have just returned from a successful WSPRA Fall Conference 2001. Again, this conference met my expectations in several ways: (1) professionals gathered together to network and share ideas, (2) pertinent issues, critical to a wide variety of school personnel, were discussed, and (3) professionals left the conference revitalized and ready to face the challenges of education today.

The conference line-up this year exceeded my expectations. All of the general session speakers and breakout session speakers targeted a unique need in our profession. I won't dwell on them, since you can read more detailed summaries in our *WSPRAgram* insert. I do, however, want to highlight a few things.

Our pre-conference with Robin Schell was particularly enlightening. She presented the concept of information mapping, a technique that makes us all more effective in our communication. Our classrooms today have been teaching students how to do story maps to make their reading more effective. Research shows that if we use the same concept in our communication, that we can make that more effective as well! Ask your reading specialist about story and information mapping. Turn it into a key communication strategy in your district!

High energy and inspirational, Patty Hendrickson provided the perfect beginning to the conference. Conference-goers left the session with renewed energy and a smile.

Our second general session with Bob Noyed left us on information overload, wanting even more details. Have you heard about NSPRA's *Selling the Invisible*? Well, that's the business we are in. We don't have a product — we have a *service* we are selling, and

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Grinde Receives Lifetime Membership



WSPRA President Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D. presents Lifetime Membership certificate to Jane Grinde.

■ Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D., Fort Atkinson

At the President's Luncheon on November 8, WSPRA founding member and leader, Jane Grinde, was honored as WSPRA's 2001 Honorary Lifetime Member. Grinde was described as a person who cannot say "no" whatever the size of the project or the length of commitment; a person lead, mentor, research, and write — as well as parent, befriend, and care; and a person who has kept and its members at the cutting edge of educational change.

Grinde has provided leadership for the Year of the Family in Education initiative, Families in Education materials, and most recently the Bright Beginnings project. State Superintendent Burmaster stated in a letter read at the luncheon that she is "proud to lead a state department staffed by thoughtful, committed professionals of Grinde's caliber."

Honorary Lifetime Membership status is created by the WSPRA bylaws, restricted to WSPRA members who have been active members for 10 years or more, and granted as a result of outstanding performance. ♦

Superintendent Connects in Check Out Lane

■ Amanda Brooker, Green Bay/Ashwaubenon School Districts and CESA 7

How do you introduce a new superintendent to the community? And how do you make this superintendent approachable?

The Green Bay Area Public School District decided to go directly to the people. Dan Nerad, the new superintendent, willingly agreed to meet the public in such unorthodox places as grocery stores, the Farmer's Market, a parent exposition, and the Hispanic Information Fair. At each informal engagement opportunity, the following elements were used:

- ♦ A two-hour time slot during peak hours in which Dan would appear. This was published in the local newspapers and our e-mail newsletter.
- ♦ A table with district information and a display unit featuring pictures of our schools and students.
- ♦ A neon sign with "Meet Your New Superintendent Dan Nerad" was posted on the doors of the grocery stores or on the display unit.
- ♦ We set up by the checkout lines, where the flow of traffic was greatest.

Dan then utilized three strategies to encourage people to approach him:

- ♦ He was "dressed down" and appeared without a jacket and tie.
- ♦ He wore a nametag, for easy identification
- ♦ He greeted people with a simple "Hello" or "How Are You?" which opened the door for further conversation if people were interested.

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Customer Service: Adapting Concepts from Business

■ Mark McLaughlin, McLaughlin & Associates

Despite being a "people business," education has not been a customer-driven industry. Much of the curriculum, programs, services, policies and procedures are developed internally. Yes, education is provided for the customer but that's not the same as being customer-driven. As the demand to meet public expectations continues to increase, becoming customer-driven is becoming more important. Rather than taking the time and effort to develop something that is unique to education, why not adapt the existing model as long as it is effective for your district.

The following six steps, taken from a business management approach, can be adapted, with a little reworking, to any school district.

- ♦ **Make sure the commitment to being customer-driven starts at the top — by edict and by example.** No adapting is even needed for this first item. To expect the administrative staff, teachers and all other district staff to support and practice a customer-driven approach, the district administrator needs to be the leader. The leadership includes both the support of policies and procedures as well as demonstrating customer-driven behaviors.
- ♦ **Get customer participation at the design stage to limit the need for adjustments later on.** Depending on the issue, the customer may be different. In most cases, the primary customer is either the student or the parent. Involving these two groups, and others when appropriate, will help with designing the customer-driven approach and will build credibility for future cooperative activities.
- ♦ **Give employees at the front lines and on the factory floor authority to solve problems on the spot.** The receptionists and other support staff who first interact with customers and the employees, your "front lines" and the teachers "on the factory floor," need to have the authority to make decisions to help solve basic problems for customers. While teachers may already have much of that authority, does your office staff have the authority to make decisions?
- ♦ **Collect customer satisfaction ratings and give them substantial weight in employee performance reviews and incentive plans.** While contracts may not allow for financial incentives, certainly employee performance reviews can reflect customer satisfaction ratings. The issue is how to determine customer satisfaction. One of the most typical and objective ways to identify customer satisfaction is through an ongoing satisfaction research program.
- ♦ **Talk to your competitor's customers as well as your own**

— and find out why they do business elsewhere. Open enrollment makes available to school districts a list of competitor's customers; parents who have elected to send their children to another district's school. Talk to them, formally or informally, to ask "why" so you know what parents use to evaluate schools and how you can meet parents' expectations.

- ♦ **Make it easy for customers to reach you with complaints and questions.** You are already doing this, but how effectively? People can visit or call the district or individual school offices, but can they reach the person they need to talk to? How long does it take the school employee to respond? Are you making the most appropriate use of communication technology? Be sure the system is as convenient and effective as it can be . . . *for the customer.*
- ♦ **Hire your customers — what better way to boost service than to employ someone from the other side.** To adapt this step, use the word "involve" instead of "hire." Just as it is suggested to involve customers when designing the customer-driven process, involve customers on an on-going basis in the district. Add more students, parents and business representatives to committees addressing issues related to those "customers." The key is to involve them from the beginning of a project, not at the end when all you are really looking for is a stamp of approval for what you've already developed internally.

Everything that is important in education involves people. It's only logical, then, that education needs to be customer-driven. The district that can exemplify that philosophy through

NSPRA 2002

■ Mabel Schumacher, Ph.D. Fort Atkinson

The theme for this year's NSPRA conference is *Rebuilding Trust and the Tradition of Support for Education*. The conference will be held July 14-17, 2002 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in San Diego, California. In typical fashion, NSPRA will present a multitude of informative, inspirational, and challenging general and skill-building sessions designed to meet the needs of all conference goers. You WILL find something designed just for you.

Take advantage of the special offer to save \$80 by registering and paying before December 31, 2001. Cash or credit card payments (purchase orders are not considered as payment to lock in the prices) must be received by that date to receive the discount.

This past year in Minneapolis proved to be a fun-filled learning experience that benefited attendees. To check out further details about the conference, to get a registration form, or to find out what to do in sunny California, check out Web sites, www.nspr.org and www.calspra.org. ♦