

WSPRAgram is published five times annually. It is the official newsletter of the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association. Please address any questions or comments to WSPRA, 122 West Washington Ave., Ste. 400, Madison, WI 53703.

**Printing:** Rogers Publishing  
Winneconne, 920-582-4541  
**Distribution:** WSPRA Office  
Madison, 608-257-3220

#### 2004 - 2005 Officers

**President:** Mark McLaughlin  
Manitowoc, 920-684-5665  
**President-Elect:** Lori Holly  
Menomonee Falls, 262-255-8440  
**Vice President:** Dr. Lloyd McCabe,  
Waupun, 920-324-9341  
**Secretary:** Mabel Schumacher  
Fort Atkinson, 920-563-8454  
**Treasurer:** Chris Preisler  
Oconomowoc, 262-560-2113  
**Director:** Dorreen Dembski  
West Bend, 262-335-5459  
**Director:** Dan Dobner  
Hartford, 262-673-8950  
**Director:** Anne Egan-Waukau  
Brookfield, 262-789-6000  
**Director:** Wendy Wong  
Pewaukee, 262-691-2100, Ext. 6526  
**Trainer/Coordinator:** Barb Fleming  
Brown Deer, 414-371-6758  
**Administrative Liaison:** Lloyd McCabe,  
Waupun, 920-324-9341  
**School Board Liaison:** Pat Lund  
Stoughton, 608-873-9446  
**Legislative Liaison:** Joseph Quick  
Madison Metro. School District, 608-663-1902  
**Spectrum Chair:** Darlene Hovoroka  
Adams-Friendship, 608-339-3213, Ext. 210  
**Operations Secretary:** Patti Welch  
WSPRA Office, 608-257-3220

## What is it that makes a School District Shine?

■ Lori Holly, conference chair, Menomonee Falls School District

Join us for the 2004 WSPRA Fall Conference in Green Lake and learn from those whose programs and practices have put the sparkle in school PR!

Barb Nicol, president of Barbara Nicol Public Relations will share tips on effectively marketing education and your district in particular. She'll answer nagging questions such as, "Can we market something that we can't really see or feel?" and "What does 'marketing' really mean, and should schools be doing it?" in a bright and interactive opening session.

Judy Whalen, who has helped leaders of many organizations shine by polishing their vision, will help us discover what we need to do to personally shine both in our work and in our lives. Her vibrant and motivating message, which will close out the two-day conference will send us home refreshed and energized.

In addition participants will learn how to influence legislators, engage their communities using a variety of different models, plan special events, create an image campaign, use your web site more effectively, and so much more. You'll take home ideas and a bag of magic tricks to help your district shine brighter.

Put the dates on your calendar—Nov. 11-12—you won't want to miss this fun and informative conference. Watch for details in the mail soon and on the WSPRA website!



August 2004

Vol. 30, No. 1

www.wspira.org

WISCONSIN SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

## NSPRA Conference Provides Practical PR

■ Mark McLaughlin, McLaughlin & Associates

One of the benefits of attending NSPRA's annual conference is the practical PR tips you learn that can be applied to your job as soon as you return. These are tips that can help make you more productive and more effective in your job. Thanks to input from several board members who were able to attend this year's conference, here are some tips they intend to incorporate into their workplace and ones that could help you.

- ◆ To generate positive publicity, develop a weekly tip sheet that you can send to the media on a regular day each week or month. Include anything going on in the district such as a storyteller visiting the third grade, a recognition assembly and the upcoming AP tests. For each item, list who, what, where, when and, very importantly, why this is great for students.
- ◆ To help improve the public's perception of your district by business leaders, work with the Chamber of Commerce to coordinate bus tours to district schools for area CEOs. The tour can be a simple "drive around" with a school representative providing a narrative to a more elaborate schedule with stops at schools to meet staff members and take tours, participate in activities and have refreshments.
- ◆ To help do a self-analysis of your own copy when you are writing an article trying to persuade someone, use the following steps:
  - Picture your audience
  - Establish what you can make happen
  - Recognize possible objections
  - Stress the rewards of your plan or idea
  - Use familiar words and language
  - Always be clear and precise
  - Decide what you want and ask for it
  - Instill the right tone
  - Never leave them hanging
  - Give readers something to remember you by
- ◆ Need to communicate with diverse audiences? Take the time to talk to them. Find the most effective way to communicate. For example, the Hmong communities may prefer videotapes or cable access. On the other hand, the

Hispanic community may be reached through churches that hold Mass in Spanish.

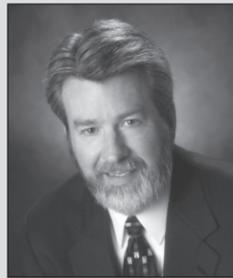
- ◆ When having materials translated into other languages, make sure the language is simplified. This will help avoid confusing translations. The "keep it simple" rule is best for all communications!
- ◆ Place a priority on internal staff communications. Make sure those employees on the front lines know and embrace the key message points of the district. The daily contact these people have with people throughout the district will reinforce the messages being communicated through formal channels like the newsletter, articles in the newspaper and other public formats.
- ◆ Prior to being interviewed by the media, create three bullet points that will convey your message. Memorize these bullet points and work them into your answers. This will keep your message consistent with the different media. Share the bullet points with other employees before they talk with the media so the message in the district is consistent.
- ◆ Talk with disengaged parents. Find out why they are not involved in school. Try to find ways suitable for them that they can become engaged at some small level. A parent working three part-time jobs to make ends meet may not have the time to read 20 minutes to their children every night. Help them find a way they can support their children's education.
- ◆ Make sure the media is on your mailing list for everything going out to any publics. Don't use your media mailing list just for the big announcements. You never know when some minor activity will catch the interest of a media person who will want to do a story. By keeping the media informed about all activities on a regular basis, positive publicity will follow.

By adopting these tips, you will be developing a routine that should pay off with a stronger, more positive public image for your district. ❖

Mark Your Calendar!  
WSPRA Annual Fall Conference • November 11-12, 2004  
Heidel House Resort & Conference Center • Green Lake  
Watch your mail for details! Coming in September.



## From the President . . .



Mark  
McLaughlin

Summer has finally arrived and, hopefully, we are all finding time to enjoy it. With the growing school-community relations responsibilities, the value of time is increasing. To help us use time effectively and efficiently, your WSPRA board of directors spent a day in June focusing on the association's strategic direction for 2004-05.

Of the many topics addressed, two are particularly important; who are we going to serve and how will we do that. The board's intent was to define these two issues so that our actions can be directed in a very specific way to make the greatest impact.

While it seems obvious that we should focus on our membership, our organization has a very diverse membership. Therefore, the board agreed that a two-fold approach would be most effective.

◆ Services will continue to be designed to benefit *all* members who are responsible for public relations within their district regardless of job title.

◆ To build on our relationship with all district administrators; members and non-members alike.

Specifically, the board decided that WSPRA's communications would provide a consistent message on the importance of systematic, professional public relations in every district. By adhering to this theme, our goal is to increase the understanding, use and value of school-community public relations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome three new board members; Anne Egan-Waukau, Pat Lund and Wendy Wong. Please see the related article in this edition of the *WSPRAgram*.

Please contact me or any member of the board of directors with questions and

## 10 Commandments of a Good Newsletter

■ Carolyn Warner, 2000, Corwin Press "Promoting Your School — Going Beyond PR" Reprinted with permission.

1. Make it interesting. Remember: a newsletter is intended to accomplish something for a specific set of readers: it isn't a diary.
2. Follow the 30-3-30 principle. Your newsletter is written to provide pertinent information whether the reader has 30 seconds, 3 minutes or 30 minutes to spend.
3. Have an easily identifiable masthead that is used consistently. Include the following: name of the publication, school name, logo, publication date, statement of purpose (for staff, community), address and contact number. It is also wise to add the following: "this is an official publication of the (name) School District."
4. Leave lots of white space. Short paragraphs and a column format increase readability.
5. Use color for emphasis. If you use colored paper for your newsletter, use soft, neutral colors such as ivory, beige or pastels. Save bright colors for flyers.
6. Avoid the use of endless columns of text. Use bullet copy, borders, graphs and graphic art to add interest.
7. Use consistent type elements. Stick to one style of type for the body and another for headlines.
8. Use photos judiciously. Be certain of good reproductive quality. Photos are effective only if they add to the story.
9. Use the best printer you can find. A laser printer is excellent. If you don't have one, take your newsletter to a local print shop to have an original printed.
10. Make sure copies are clean and neat. Run several proof copies and check them carefully for problems. ❖

## New Board of Directors Elected, Appointed

Effective July 1, WSPRA welcomes Mark McLaughlin as president and Anne Egan-Waukau, Wendy Wong and Pat Lund as new board members.

McLaughlin, president, McLaughlin & Associates, was elected by the board to serve as WSPRA president for 2004-05. McLaughlin has served on the board since 1998. He will assume the position in place of Jackie Olson Kold, APR. Olson Kold recently accepted a position in Illinois. According to the WSPRA by-laws, she is not eligible to hold a board position.

Egan-Waukau and Lund will be serving two-year terms as elected directors-at-large. Wong will also serve as a director-at-large, a one-year appointment by the president.

Egan-Waukau is employed as the media relations specialist by the Wisconsin Association Education Council. She has served in that role for 12 years.

Wendy Wong is relatively new to education PR having been the public information coordinator for the Pewaukee School District for the past year.

Lund, who is a librarian, has worked with children in public schools for over 30 years. She has served on the Stoughton School Board for a total of 10 years and is also on the board of



Anne Egan-Waukau



Wendy Wong



Pat Lund

## WSPRA Invites You to Participate:

### 21<sup>ST</sup> Annual Communications Contest

■ Darlene Hovorka, CEOE, Spectrum Awards Chair, Adams-Friendship Area School District

The WSPRA Spectrum Awards program seeks to honor professionals just like you . . . those who are striving for excellence in school public relations. The WSPRA awards program gives you and your district or agency an opportunity to assess one part of your communication efforts and gain the recognition you deserve.

Awards of Excellence will be presented to the top one-third of each category, with either the Award of Excellence or the Award of Merit. The Lighthouse Award, given for "lighting the way toward better school public relations" will be given to the entry deemed best of all categories by a team of judges, not associated with WSPRA.

Entries may be submitted in the following categories under Print Projects: Calendar, Special Purpose Brochure/Handbook, Annual Report/School Performance Report, Newsletters

## Member Spotlight

### Janesville Improves Look, Readability of School Newsletters

■ Mary Pat Pfeil, Wauwatosa School District

Research indicates that parents consider the school newsletter the second-most important source of information about their schools—the first being what their children tell them.

So, when is the last time you reviewed your school newsletter(s)? In Janesville, the answer was during the 2003-04 school year. In a pilot project aimed at improving the appearance and content of school newsletters, the district organized a "Creating Effective Newsletters" workshop, presented by WSPRA. Based on the principles discussed in the workshop, school secretaries worked with **Jackie Olson Kold, APR**, manager of public information, to: (1) Develop an "appealing, concise, easy-to-read format;" (2) Provide guidelines and timelines for information submitted for inclusion in school newsletters; and (3) Provide for access to school newsletters on the district's web site. All the objectives were aimed at promoting a more positive image of the school and district.

**Connie Stratton**, an administrative assistant at Janesville's Parker High School, recalled that the workshop showed her "what people generally look for in a newsletter and how to organize it."

A Parent Newsletter Committee established guidelines and

and Classroom Publications (teacher-generated). Entries in Special Projects include: Electronic Media, Special One-Time Project, Year-Round Project or Campaign, Web Site, or a new category—Cultural Diversity Communication Program. Please see the insert "Equity Corner" for an explanation of the new category.

You will receive your entry forms in August in the mail or you may download a form at [www.wspra.org](http://www.wspra.org). Materials must be submitted/sponsored by a WSPRA member and must have been produced since September 1, 2003.

All entry materials must be received at the WSPRA office by September 17, 2004. ***No late entries will be accepted.***

An entry fee of \$20 per entry must be submitted with your entry to the Spectrum Award program.

Entries should be sent to: WSPRA Spectrum Awards Contest, ATTN: Patti Welch, 122 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Madison, WI 53703, Phone: 608/257-3220.

If you have any questions regarding the WSPRA Spectrum Awards, please contact: Darlene Hovorka, CEOE, Spectrum Awards Chair, 608/339-3213, Ext. 210 between the hours of 6:30 am and 3:00 pm or e-mail: [hovorka\\_d@af.k12.wi.us](mailto:hovorka_d@af.k12.wi.us). ❖

deadlines for information submissions and a process for review of newsletters by administrators, which helped ensure that only necessary information was included. A new design template featured a cover photo with accompanying story, a sidebar of bulleted information entitled "What's Inside," and a special format for the principal's column. Pre-prints allowed schools to keep costs down, and bar code mailing reduced mailing costs.

**Tonya Williams**, secretary at Janesville's Franklin Middle School, said the template approach had been "extremely helpful, especially because we were working in a new program (Microsoft Publisher)." She said the revised format was "user friendly" and gave her "a lot of flexibility" in designing the four- to eight-page newsletter, which is published at Franklin five times a year.

Stratton said Parker's newsletter has improved dramatically. "It's much easier to do—and easier for people to read," she said. "It's a much cleaner look, with so much information." The Parker newsletter now typically is two 11x17 sheets folded with one to three insert pages.

Piloted at one elementary school, one middle school and one high school in 2003-04, the newsletter reformatting received positive reviews from both parents and staff in surveys done at the end of the school year. The project also won a 2004 Golden Achievement Award from the National School Public Relations Association. This year nine elementary schools in Janesville and all three middle schools will be using the newsletter template. ❖