

Cover the bases at the 1997 TSPRA Annual Conference

You don't want to miss the all-star lineup at the 1997 TSPRA Annual Conference in Austin, Feb. 17 - 19.

"Covering the Communications Bases" is the theme and national hitters like NSPRA President Burnadine Anderson, public relations guru Dr. William Banach, and motivational speaker Dr. Pat Love, are sure to hit home runs. Anderson will kick off the conference on Feb. 17 with her talk about building a future for our students.

Banach's topic, "Schools and Communities....It's a New Game," will center on educational marketing during the second general session on Feb. 17. Love's keynote on Feb. 19 is "The MVP — You!"

The early bird in all of us can select one of the following outstanding "pre-game" sessions to attend on the afternoon of Feb. 16. Cost is \$50 for a session.

► "Crowd Pleasing Presentations" by Lindsae Snider, coordinator of staff development,

Region 17 Education Service Center

► "Bottom of the Ninth and You're Up!" crisis communication on camera by Dixie Parris,

administrator for communications, Mesquite ISD

► "Learning the Fine Points of the Game" ASPR accreditation by Jerry Smith, ASPR, executive director of Board/Community Services, Spring ISD; Julie Thannum, ASPR, director of communica-

tions, Eagle Mountain Saginaw ISD; and, Marjorie Sklar, ASPR,

director of public relations and personnel, Wharton ISD

► "Understanding the Rules Before the Umpire Calls you Out!" a legal workshop on open records and open meetings by attorneys from Henslee, Fowler and Hepworth

Other conference highlights include the annual awards banquet, a luncheon for TSPRA rookies, exhibits, and an instructional TV track on Tuesday, Feb. 18. A one-day registration for the ITV track is \$90.

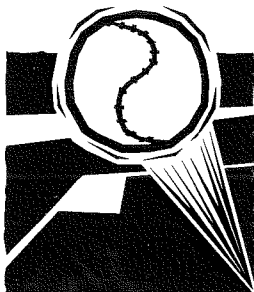
Registration before Feb. 4 is \$130 and after that date it will be \$150. The awards banquet is an additional \$30. Home plate is the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Town Lake.

Be sure you cover all your bases and get registration and hotel information in as soon as possible. Registration forms were sent out in December.

For more information call (512) 474-9107.

See you in the dugout in Austin! ▼

1997 TSPRA Annual Conference



Covering The Communications Bases

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TSPRA: Strengthening the image of school PR

by Linda East, ASPR

TSPRA President &
Director of Communications, Socorro ISD

Ann Barkelew, one of the top PR professionals in the nation, once said "In public relations, we can't be just something that's nice to have. We need to be necessary."

Most everyone who has worked in school PR knows the frustration that comes from being considered nice, not necessary. My primary goal this year as president of TSPRA was to continue to strengthen the image of TSPRA, the school PR profession, and the school PR professional,

so that our role is recognized as essential in education.

Building on the work of past leaders of TSPRA, your 1996-97 Executive Board has made major contributions that have enhanced the image of school public relations in Texas. We've seen growth in our membership, an increase in our visibility across Texas, more professional development opportunities, more member involvement, and more requests for PR assistance from other educational groups. Here are some of the highlights from this year.

► For the first time, TSPRA offered its members a seminar that addressed legal issues in school public relations. The legal seminar was so popular that TSPRA will offer a pre-conference on Open Records Act and Open Meetings Act at its Annual Conference Feb. 16 at the Hyatt in Austin.

► More and more organizations are asking TSPRA to provide PR-related workshops, training

and assistance in crisis communication. New groups that TSPRA served this year include the Texas School Transportation Association and the Texas Municipal League, which is made of mayors and council members. As in past years, TSPRA members assisted with the TASA/TASB Conference where they presented workshops, served as reporters for the associations' publications, and provided PR counseling and publications in the Exhibit Hall. Members have also presented at TEPSA and TASSP conferences. A record number of public relations workshops for paraprofessionals have been presented across the state. In addition, many members and non-members who needed PR counseling received one-on-one assistance from TSPRA staff and members.

TSPRA members worked with the staff of Governor George W. Bush to develop a promotional packet to promote the Governor's reading initiative. The promotional packet is expected to be released this month. This project not only provides our association with statewide visibility, but it also gives credibility to our role in public education.

An activity on the World Wide Web is a new feature in this year's Texas Public Schools Week packet. This year's packet is creative and educational. Its theme "No Limits on Learning" is sure to be a hit for school celebrations across Texas during the first week of March.

The Membership Campaign has focused on three major areas of recruitment: (1) promoting the new Associate Membership for those not directly re-

sponsible for school PR responsibilities; (2) recruiting employees who work in Instructional TV; and (3) encouraging membership of small school district superintendents, or staff members from

their school systems, so that they can benefit from TSPRA's resources. As we reach more audiences with information about school public relations, we can improve communications and relationships in our schools and organizations.

It was a notable event in TSPRA's history when the Executive Board voted to make Executive Director Annell Todd a full-time employee. As TSPRA has grown, the demands on the TSPRA office have increased. Todd's visibility in Austin and across the state has been advantageous to TSPRA. Her connections with key people in education have opened many doors for our members and our association.

A marketing campaign is promoting the association's new publications, the *Media Handbook* and the *Media Ideabook*. Work has begun on revisions to the *Principal's Campus Level Assessment Booklet*. These publications help us in our efforts to educate others about good practices in school PR as well as generate revenue to support the association.

This Board has contributed to strengthening the image of school PR in Texas. These accomplishments are a result of the talent, time and dedication of the members. My thanks to all who had a hand in our success! ▼

Take your vitamin for 1997, attend the Annual Conference

by **Annell Todd, APR**
TSPRA Executive Director

Happy New Year, TSPRAnS! I've always thought one of the best perks of being in the school business is that you get two fresh starts every year—one at the beginning of school and one at the calendar new year. I encourage you to start 1997 off right by registering for the Annual TSPRA Conference in February.

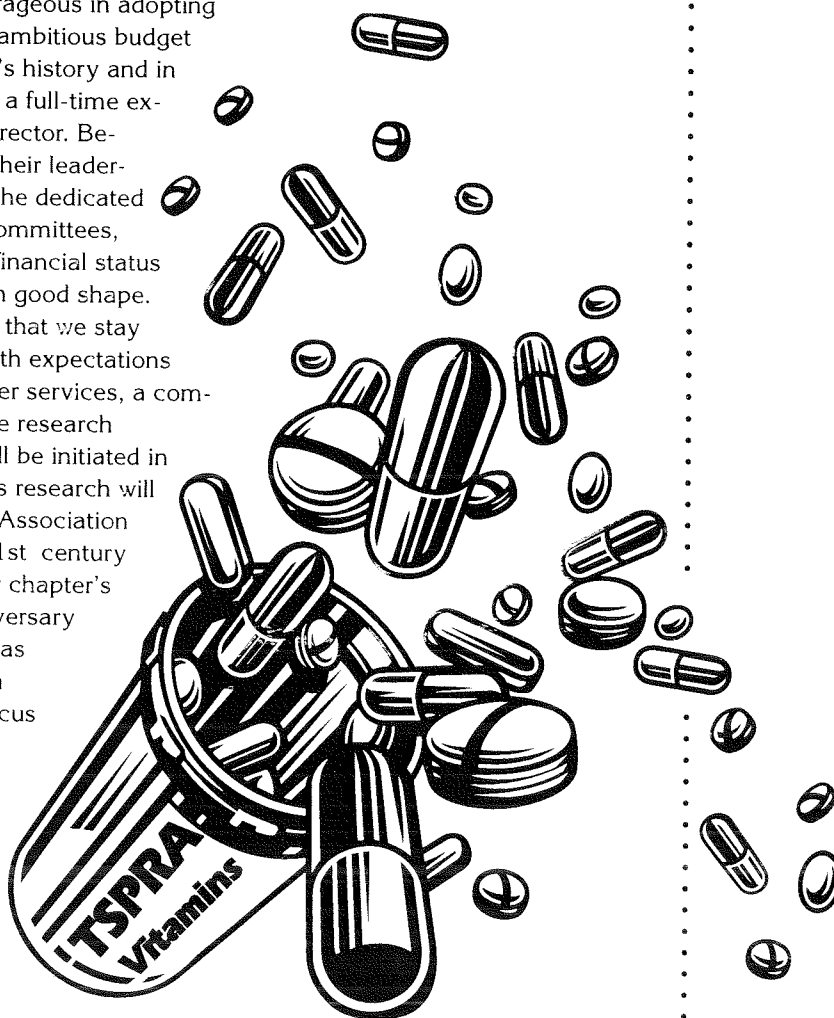
To all of you who have never attended a TSPRA Conference, I urge you to make every effort to come this year. Your board has developed an outstanding program, and the personal benefits you can receive are hard to describe until you have experienced this gathering of some of the brightest minds in public relations—school or corporate. To quote Vera Porter, Harris County Department of Education communications coordinator and the 1993 recipient of TSPRA's Most Valuable Member award, "the TSPRA Conference is like my vitamin pill for the year; it energizes me professionally and personally and keeps me going for an entire year. I can't imagine missing it."

And I remind all you seasoned professionals to impress upon your superintendents how capable they are and assure them that they can manage without you for three days. You know your district will benefit in the long run. Also, our newer members can benefit from your experience and encouragement.

As I reflect on the experiences of the last year, I believe that 1996 will go down as a benchmark year for your association. TSPRA added new

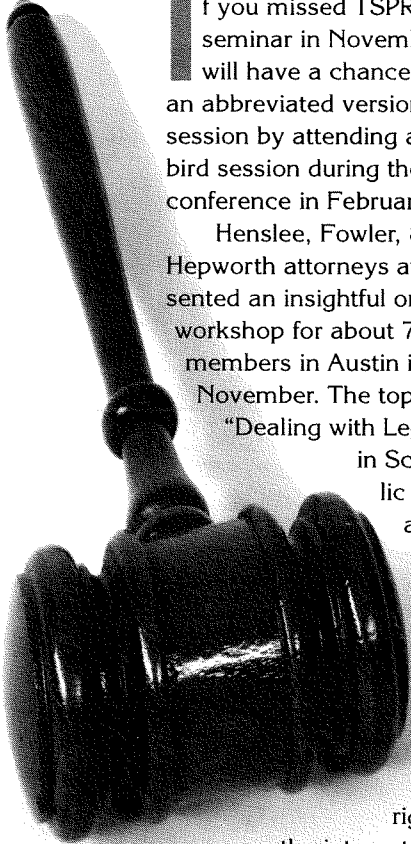
members, as well as services, and its influence and visibility are at an all-time high. For example, TSPRA was tapped to help develop a promotional kit for the Governor's reading initiative and a growing number of superintendents and school districts are calling to request information and assistance. Your current board displayed leadership in meeting some challenges and solving problems this last year. They were courageous in adopting the most ambitious budget in TSPRA's history and in voting for a full-time executive director. Because of their leadership and the dedicated work of committees, TSPRA's financial status remains in good shape. To ensure that we stay current with expectations for member services, a comprehensive research project will be initiated in 1997. This research will guide the Association into the 21st century and to our chapter's 40th anniversary (TSPRA was founded in 1962). Focus groups at the Annual Conference and a survey following the confer-

ence will provide you with the opportunity to help shape TSPRA for the future. With your continued dedication and participation, 1997 can be the biggest and best year in TSPRA's history. See you in February! ▼



Dealing with legal issues in school public relations

by **Kari Hutchison**
Executive Director, Communications and Business Partnerships, El Paso ISD



If you missed TSPRA's legal seminar in November you will have a chance to catch an abbreviated version of the session by attending an early-bird session during the annual conference in February.

Henslee, Fowler, & Hepworth attorneys at law presented an insightful one-day workshop for about 75 TSPRA members in Austin in mid-November. The topic was "Dealing with Legal Issues in School Public Relations" and the topics ranged from open records and open meetings to copyright laws, the internet, and the do's and don'ts of bond issues and advertising.

TSPRA benefited from the seminar when the Austin law

firm donated \$1,000 to TSPRA for scholarships.

Highlights of the day-long session included the reminder that, as spokespersons in our districts, we cannot make any comment about employee performance in regards to employees who are under consideration for termination or other action by the district. The employee could call a news conference and say anything he/she wants to about the district, whether factual or not, and the district cannot comment about the employee or the matter because it's a personnel matter. Whether you have something negative or positive to say about the employee, the attorneys advise that nothing is said unless the employee gives the district permission to release the information.

The Open Meetings Act states that every regular, special, or called meeting of a governmental body shall be open to the public, unless an exception applies. There are at least nine exceptions under the Texas Government Code Chapter 551, Subchapter D. On the conservative side, attorneys feel that it's

best to post any meeting a board member may attend if there's a possibility they may talk business.

Open Records Act information can be found in Texas Government Code Chapter 552. Almost everything a school district does is open to review by the public with the exception of working documents or documents still in draft form. Another exception to the general rule is that personnel evaluations and transcripts in a personnel file are not open record.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was discussed at length and attendees were reminded that all student "directory information" (i.e., name, address, date of birth, phone number, awards received, photograph) is subject to disclosure unless parents of the minor have indicated otherwise. If a student dies, FERPA does not apply, and student records are open. ▼

Welcome new TSPRA members

Region	Name	District
1	Steven Valdez	Weslaco ISD
5	Jim Baxter	Region 5 ESC
6	Linda Dornburg	Montgomery ISD
6	Janet Williams	Montgomery ISD
10	Kathy Covington	Kaufman ISD
11	Mary Ann Wood	Alvarado ISD
11	Janny Schertz	Birdville ISD
11	Beth Leschper	Stephenville ISD

Region	Name	District
11	Patti Woods	Weatherford ISD
13	Della May Moore	Austin ISD
13	James Ullrich	Austin ISD
13	Hjardeir Overton	Manor ISD
14	Merry Sue Stephens	Abilene ISD
17	Carroll Melnyk	Lubbock ISD
19	Lucy Araujo	Ysleta ISD
20	Patricia Mancha	Eagle Pass ISD

New officers to assume duties during conference

The TSPRA Teller Committee, chaired by Joey Lozano from the Texas Education Agency, reviewed all of the ballots cast in the fall election.

The general membership elected Lynda Queen of the

Region 16 Education Service Center as president-elect. Also elected to two-year terms were Bill Britcher of Leander ISD as Central Region vice president, Pam Keeton of Copperas Cove ISD as West Central Region vice president, Becky Nugent of Bryan ISD as East Texas Region vice president, and Brian Morris of Lubbock ISD as Northwest Region vice president.

The official installation of officers, and Julie Zwahr, director of communications for Keller ISD, as president, will take place on Feb. 18 at the Installation Luncheon sponsored by Total Program Management Inc.

Members of the committee included Lozano, Marilyn Kuehlem of Austin ISD and Linda Jackson, Texas PTA. ▼

Dues increase?

The TSPRA Executive Board voted in September to propose a dues increase of \$10. Currently, members pay \$50 in dues.

A proposal to consider an increase in the dues from \$50 to \$60 will be included on the agenda of the General Membership meeting at the TSPRA Conference, scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 19 at the Hyatt Regency. Please plan on attending.

Order your Texas Public Schools Week PR kit

What is your school district doing during Texas Public Schools Week, March 3-7? sample press releases, proclamations, tips and ideas on involving students, parents and the community, and much more.

If you need some quick help in this area, and you haven't ordered *the kit* yet, you still have time! TSPRA has assembled another first-rate promotional kit for the special week.

The theme is "No Limits on Learning," and the kit includes camera-ready official logos,

For information call 1-800-880-9107 or (512) 474-9107. To place an order use the order form found in this newsletter. ▼

A testimonial to TSPRA

The following is an excerpt of a letter TSPRA received from member Beth Shepperd, director of public information for the Pine Tree ISD in Longview.

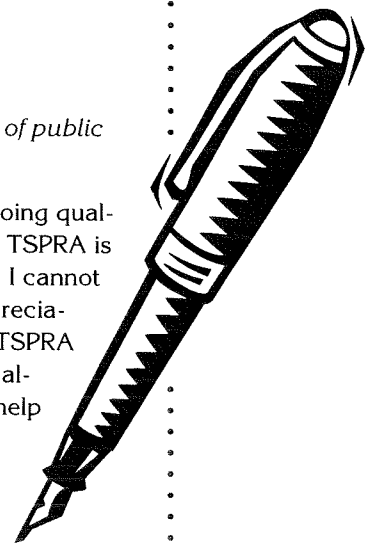
"I am sorry to report that I will be missing my first TSPRA Winter Conference...Every year I have learned valuable lessons in seminars...The bad news this year is that the former Pine Tree ISD Director of Business Services made a series of errors in the information he supplied for the budget process totaling approximately \$5 million. Our annual budget is \$23 million...."

The good news is that the Office of Public Information has been working overtime to en-

sure focus on the solution to this problem and the staff's commitment to maintaining Pine Tree ISD instructional standards. Media coverage, staff response and community reaction have been remarkably positive. Campus level staff members have been compiling lists of possible budget cuts, including personnel recommendations. Cuts to the Public Information Office have not surfaced on any list. I see this as confirmation that our peers are recognizing

the necessity of ongoing quality communication. TSPRA is responsible for this. I cannot express enough appreciation for the veteran TSPRA members who have always been there to help me, teach me, and give me moral support. Our organization deserves the lion's share of credit for the work I've been able to do here...."

Beth Shepperd ▼



Let TSPRA Unlock your PR potential

TSPRA Media Guide to Texas Public Schools

This guide is a must for school PR practitioners and a great resource for education reporters. Available in hard copy or on disk. Includes updated Senate Bill 1 information.

Ideas to Improve Your Communication with the Media: A Handbook for School Leaders

This handbook for school leaders is packed with practical ideas, approaches, and checklists to use in creating and strengthening a solid media relations program.

Texas Public Schools Week Promotional Kit

A first-rate promotional kit for the special week. The theme is "No Limits on Learning" and the kit includes camera-ready logos, press releases, proclamations and many tips.

Make checks payable to TSPRA

- check enclosed
 bill me: purchase order # _____

name _____
 title _____
 district _____
 street _____
 city/state/zip _____
 phone _____

quantity

- \$25 for non-member, handbook or disk
 \$20 for member handbook or disk
 \$40 combination handbook and disk
 (circle one MAC or PC/IBM)

- \$14.95
 \$9.95 each for 10 or more copies

- \$25 each for non-TSPRA member
 \$20 each for TSPRA member
 \$15 logo on disk w/ purchase of kit
 \$25 logo on disk without purchase of kit
 (circle MAC or PC)
 \$3.50 shipping

Total _____

Mail to:
 Texas School Public Relations Association
 1615 Guadalupe St., Ste. 203
 Austin, Texas 78701-1246
 (512) 474-9107 • fax: (512) 477-0906

News Flash

► Orlando, Fla., is the place to be July 12-16. NSPRA's 44th Annual Seminar will include some terrific keynote speakers, workshops, and family-oriented activities.

Dorian Martin, president-elect of NSPRA and past president of TSPRA, will



be installed president. Early-bird sessions include "Marketing your Public Schools" by Bill Banach, "Maximize Your Performance with the Media" by David Voss, and "Marketing Positive Images about Your Schools" by the Disney Educator Program. Early-bird registration is good through May 16. NSPRA members pay \$399 before then and non-NSPRA members will pay \$459. For more information call (703) 528-5840.

► The Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) is offering professional development workshops for principals and their representatives on marketing their school. The workshops are being taught by TSPRA members. Charles Rogers, public information officer, Katy ISD, and Dorian Martin, TEPSA's director of communications, led the Jan. 18 workshop in Austin. On Feb. 22, in Dallas, Bob Sharp, executive director of communications for the Spring Branch ISD, and Rogers, will conduct the same workshop. The infamous duo will be at it again on March 8 in Houston. For more information call (512) 478-5268.

► In the last five months of 1996, five Texans joined the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). Texas tied with Florida and both states trailed California which added 10 new members. For less than \$15 per month you can join NSPRA too. The resources you receive by phone, in the mail, or during meetings, are tremendous. Contact NSPRA at (703) 528-5840 for membership information. Members who join before May 30 will receive a complimentary copy of "The Wit and Wisdom of PR Success."

► The Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG) will present a free teleconference on Thursday, Feb. 6 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Central time) titled "FAFSA: Step-by-Step for Parents and Students." The conference will help high school

seniors and their parents complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you're interested in airing this conference call Jim Brennan, at (512) 219-2803 or 1-800-252-9743, ext. 2803.

► If you haven't registered for the 1997 Annual TSPRA Conference, do so today! Don't miss renowned PR professional Bill Banach, NSPRA President Burnadine Anderson and motivational speaker Dr. Pat Love. The conference promises to "Cover All the Communications Bases." Mark your calendars now for Feb. 17-19 at the Hyatt in Austin. Don't miss it!

If you can't find your conference registration form, call the TSPRA office at (512) 474-9107 to request one. ▼

NSPRA Conference

Rich Bagin, executive director for NSPRA, has notified TSPRA that it will be "TEXAS in 2000" when Texas is the host state for the national conference. The "TEXAS in 2000" NSPRA Conference will be held July 8-13, 2000, at the Hilton Palacio del Rio in San Antonio.



TSPRA Mission Statement

TSPRA is a professional organization whose members are dedicated to continuous improvement in education in Texas by:

- promoting effective public relations practices,
- providing professional development for its members, and
- improving communication between Texans and their schools. ▼

TSPRA members help decorate halls of TEA

TSPRA members recently were asked by Debbie Graves Ratcliffe, senior director of communications at TEA, to send photos from around the state of children and employees in the public school system. The response was great! Ratcliffe says the photos have really become a conversation piece for agency staff and visitors. Next time you visit the Travis Building in Austin, spend some time in the halls and see what Texas schools are all about.

First Floor

Dallas, Mesquite, Mansfield, and Socorro

Second Floor

Harlingen, Friona, South Texas, La Marque, Mansfield, Mesquite, Dallas, Bryan, Chisum, Grand Prairie, Goose Creek, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City, Grand Prairie, Bay City, and SBOE.

Third Floor

Henderson, South San Antonio, Mabank, South Texas, Grand Prairie, Lake Worth, DeSoto, Pine Tree, Humble, Texas City, Terrell, Kerrville, Socorro, and Belton.

Fourth Floor

El Paso, South San Antonio, Henderson, Harlingen, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City, Grand

Prairie, Del Valle, Henderson, Laredo, Alvin, Mesquite, Galveston, Humble, Angleton and Bay City.

Fifth Floor

Lubbock, Bryan, Mission, Denton, Laredo, Livingston, Goose Creek, South Texas, Cypress-Fairbanks, Lubbock, and Laredo. ▼

1996 TSPRA Chairpersons

ASPR Academy – Jerry Smith, ASPR
 Assessment Book/Principal Workshops – Beth Sheppard
 Audit – Bob Sharp, ASPR
 Campus Level Assessment – Mary Ann Simpson
 Exec Director Evaluation – Julie Zwahr
 Government Relations – Katherine Cernosek
 Government Reading Initiative – Linda East, ASPR
 Long Range Planning – Julie Zwahr
 Marketing – Robin McClure
 Member Survey – Kris Taylor, APR
 Membership Recruitment – Brad Press
 Mentoring – Bob Massey
 Nominating – Julie Zwahr
 NSPRA Awards – Vera Porter
 Paraprofessional Workshops – Chris Garcia
 Paraprofessional Workshops (asst chair) – Julie Thannum

Past President's Council – Ann Spears
 Professional Awards – Betty Colley
 Publicity and Promotions – Lynda Queen
 Research – Bill Reaves
 Scholarship – Leslie Kriewaldt
 Strategic Planning – Julie Zwahr
 TSPRA Star Awards – Shana McKay
 TASA/TASB Convention (Booth) – Kathy Clausen
 TASA/TASB Convention (Reporters) – Carolyn Pope
 Technology/Cutting Edge – Brenda Nettles Riojas, ASPR
 Technology/Cutting Edge (asst chair) – Scott Milder
 Texas Public Schools Week – Brenda Nettles Riojas, ASPR
 University Liaison – Jeanne Guerra
 Update Newsletter – Kari Hutchison
 VP/Chair Job Descriptions – Charles Rogers

1996 TSPRA Board



Annell Todd, APR, Executive Director

Linda East, ASPR, President

Shana McKay, East Texas VP

Julie Zwahr, President-Elect

Luis Villalobos, Far West VP

Charles Rogers, Past President

Jenny Robinson ASPR, Gulf Coast VP

Sharon Woldhagen, Central VP

Chuck Smith, Houston/Beaumont VP

Susan McGuire, North Central VP

Susan Hoyl, Northwest VP

Pam Keeton, APR, West Central VP

Phyllis Kinnison, Parliamentarian

TSPRA Update is published quarterly during 1996-97 by the El Paso ISD for members of the Texas School Public Relations Association.

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