



Winter
2002

TSPRA update

a newsletter from the **texas school public relations association**

More than 300 expected for Annual Conference in Austin

TSPRAnS will meet in Austin Feb. 18-20 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their association during the annual conference. They'll also hear outstanding general session speakers, gather necessary information to sharpen their communication skills, take time to recognize their chapter award and communication contest winners, and finally savor the opportunity to network and have fun with their peers from across the state.

NSPRA President **Barry Gaskins** will kick off the conference with an uplifting talk at the first general session that addresses the school public relations profession in terms of family, focus, fellowship, fun and future. The second general session will feature representatives from the Houston advertising agency, **Sachnowitz & Co.**, known for their successful "Will You Be My Teacher?" campaign created for Houston ISD. **Richard Harwood**, founder and president of the **Harwood Institute for Public Innovation**, will discuss how we engage Americans, what it takes to grow community strength, and how to connect communities and schools at the third general session. And finally, we'll close the conference with nationally acclaimed author and speaker **Liz Carpenter**,

who will share her perspective on public relations.

The anniversary celebration will continue into the conference evenings. TSPRA past presidents and award winners will be honored at a reception on Monday, while on Tuesday the traditional **Star Awards Banquet**, hosted by **Riney Jordan**, with music by **Jon Dahlander**, will honor the work of our own talented and creative members.

Come celebrate and be a part of this year's annual conference. It's one you won't want to miss!



TSPRA

Celebrating 40 Years

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President's Perspective

The success of TSPRA and the respect it enjoys today among all those who serve in the public education arena belong to you - each and every one of you. You can feel good that TSPRA is in good hands with the strong leadership of our TSPRA Board, the steady guidance of our executive director, and the enthusiasm

and commitment of our membership to improving the profession of school public relations.

We have had a very successful year! The TSPRA strategic plan was reviewed at a two-day planning retreat where members worked hard and took a close look at where TSPRA is today, where we need

to be in the future-and what it will take to get us there. All TSPRA members will receive a copy of TSPRA's first annual report at our upcoming conference that will contain a copy of the strategic plan.

As the result of our TSPRA committee chairs' efforts, TSPRA programs and projects have been very well supported this year. Many of our members have hosted Ammerman training workshops, have presented at state and national conferences, and served on statewide committees supporting major education initiatives. You will hear more

about these efforts in the annual report.

And we are really looking forward to seeing everyone at the 2002 Conference, "TSPRA 2002...Your Homepage for Effective Communications!" The conference committee has done an outstanding job in organizing this conference for you. We believe the lineup of general session and skill session topics provide a broad menu of professional development that addresses every member's needs. The conference will also offer many opportunities to make new friends and to socialize and enjoy each other.

And it goes without saying that for each and every one of us, this has been a remarkable and unbelievable year. As Texans, and as Americans, we

have faced and will continue to face many personal and professional challenges as our country continues to deal with the aftermath of Sept. 11. It makes me especially proud and glad to be a part of the education profession during these times - as the education of our children is with certainty the hope of our future.

Let me take this time to thank you for the unique and extremely rewarding opportunity you have given me this past year to serve as your TSPRA president. It has been an honor and experience I will treasure forever. See you in Austin!



Mary Ann Simpson, APR,
Fort Bend ISD,
TSPRA President

Communicate — even (and especially) when the news is bad

Note these quotes about Enron that appeared in an article which ran in the Jan. 28 *Houston Chronicle*:

Enron staffers contemplate future amid gloom

She (an employee) said Enron management was always secretive and is even more so now..."

The communication we get is from news reports . . . Enron only admits things when it comes out in the media. We never hear about what's going to happen until after its happened."

A business psychologist quoted in the article said, "The effect of secrecy is devastating . . . it increases anxiety and anger and the likelihood of sabotage . . . Sharing information is the right thing to do ethically and from a business standpoint."

New officers, executive committee will be installed Feb. 19

As a result of by-laws and standing rules changes approved by the membership last year, the TSPRA Executive Committee will increase by three positions - a vice president representing the San Antonio area and two at-large vice presidents. President **Mary Ann Simpson**, APR, will install the following leaders at the annual conference during the Tuesday luncheon. Board members returning for a second year of their two-year terms are **Barbara Williams**, TASB (Austin); **Beth Shepperd**, Longview ISD; and **Cecilia Masters**, Plainview ISD.

Katherine Cernosek will begin her third year on the board as President after having served one year as the North Central Area Vice-president and President-elect this year. She joined TSPRA in 1985 and has been active on committees including chairing the STAR Awards and TSPRA reception for the 2000 NSPRA Seminar in San Antonio. She is the administrative officer for communications in Mesquite ISD and previously served as Director of Communications in Galena Park and Grand Prairie. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in journalism/radio/TV from Trinity University and a master's degree from East Texas State University. She has either chaired or served on almost every TSPRA committee, has won over 40 Star Awards and is an accomplished presenter.

As TSPRA President-elect,

Kirk Lewis will chair several committees including nominations and strategic planning, and work closely with President **Katherine Cernosek** to prepare for his year as president in 2003-2004. Kirk is the Deputy Superintendent of Administration, Public Relations and Governmental Affairs for Pasadena ISD. A member of TSPRA for 15 years, he has served on the board, chaired Texas Public Schools Week this year, frequently been a TSPRA presenter and has collected numerous STAR Awards including two Platinums. Kirk has a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations from Texas Tech University and a master's degree in Education Futures from the University of Houston-Clear Lake.



Kirk Lewis
President-elect
Pasadena ISD

Candace Ahlfinger will represent the North Central Area where she is well-known as a team player and a mentor to new members. Active in committee work since she joined TSPRA eight years ago, she chaired the scholarship committee last year and served as a conference day chair last year. A presenter and TSPRA reporter at the TASA/TASB Convention, she is also gaining recognition for the FISH workshops she co-presents with Louise Henry. She has won numerous STAR



Candace Ahlfinger

Awards including a Crystal Commendation and Best of Category. She serves as Director of Public Relations for Waxahachie ISD.

Monica Faulkenberg, APR, will represent the San Antonio Area in the first year that it has been a separate region from the Austin Area.



Monica Faulkenberg has had a busy year as STAR Awards Chair and earning her accreditation in public relations. Although she has been a member of TSPRA for only three years, she has been an active member of NSPRA for ten years and was President of the Missouri Chapter. Since returning to Texas, she has served as the Director of Communications in Eanes and is currently Assistant Director for Northside ISD in San Antonio.

Craig Eichhorn, APR, is Executive Director of Communications in Galena Park ISD and will represent the Houston-Beaumont area. He joined TSPRA in 1991 and was named Rookie of the Year in 1993. He has chaired the TASA/TASB Booth Committee for three years



Craig Eichhorn

and was the Conference photographer for four years. He has also been assistant chairperson for the Houston Area PR Association (HASPRA). Craig has presented at TSPRA, TASA/TASB and other TSPRA-sponsored workshops and is also the recipient of numerous STAR Awards.

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'Dive In' theme a success!

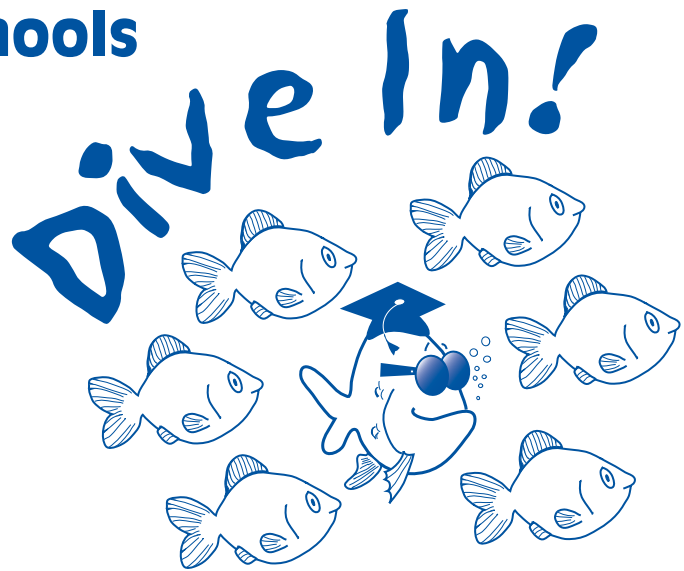
Texas Public Schools Week kit orders pouring in

With almost 700 kits sold, Texas Public Schools Week sales are off to a great start. The theme, *"Dive in to a different school of thought"*, developed by Pasadena ISD's communications department, has been well received by the education community. And there's still time to order your kit so that your district can be part of the celebration **March 4-8, 2002**.

This year's kit contains many of the same features as previous TPSW kits - ideas for your district celebration, camera-ready artwork, the history of public education in Texas, and sample press releases and board resolutions. But for the first time, several key items were included in Spanish.

Promotional items (pencils, erasers, ribbons, stickers and backpack I.D. tags) are available from **Brady Hull & Associates**, who each year contributes part the proceeds from their sales back to TSPRA.

So order your kit! Buy the promotional items! Support TSPRA! Print off an order form from the TSPRA website - www.tspra.org and fax it back with a valid purchase order number and we'll get a kit to you as soon as possible.



... to a different school of thought
TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
MARCH 4-8, 2002

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A tape of Texas Public Schools Week public service announcements will soon be sent to all TSPRA Vice Presidents for distribution to the media in their regions. School district ITV staff can request a copy of the tape from the TSPRA state office for their own use. TSPRA wishes to thank the Texas Association of School Boards for production of the psa tapes.

Pick A Week for Texas Public Schools Week 2003

In 2003, the TAKS testing has been scheduled during the first full week in March, the traditional week for Texas Public Schools Week (TPSW) celebrations across the state. This test conflict last occurred in 1998 and at that time TSPRA developed a non-dated theme and logo that allowed districts to "pick-a-week" in March for their celebration. TSPRA's 2003 Public Schools Week Committee

Chairs Tamerah Ringo, Coppell ISD, and Verone Travis, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD, will again use the "pick-a-week" idea.

TPSW is scheduled in March because it originated as part of Texas Independence Day celebrations on March 2 some 50 years ago. It is the oldest and certainly one of the most successful community and parental involvement campaigns in the nation.

TSPRA's sixth Legal Seminar a success

For six years TSPRA has given its members the opportunity to stay informed about legal issues in school public relations at our annual **Legal Seminar** and for the first time the seminar was moved from Austin to Dallas to give our north Texas members a chance to attend.

Sixty persons heard Attorney **Karen Johnson** of the law firm of **Bracewell & Patterson** review current legal decisions regarding open meetings, open records, FERPA vs Texas law, religion and prayer in schools, electronic communication, and student concerns including sexual harassment, discipline and residency.

"Attorney Karen Johnson did a great job," said **Beth Rickert La Porte ISD**. "I try to make the TSPRA legal seminar every year. I always come away better prepared and more capable in my job because I took the time to listen and learn one more time, not only from the presenter, but also from my peers."

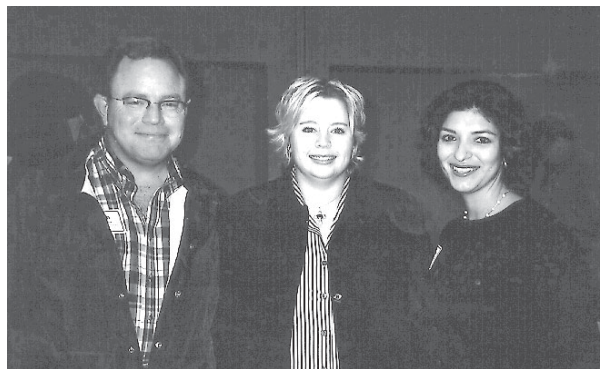
Attendee **Sharon Cox**, of **Denton ISD**, said, "Although I try to keep updated with all the latest legislation and laws, this seminar was invaluable to all school public relations practitioners. I have already utilized the materials on several school situations. This workshop should be offered two or three times a year throughout the state so every school administrator could attend."

This was the second TSPRA Legal Issues Seminar that **Julie Crimmins**, of **Hays CISD**, attended. She said that both semi-

nars proved invaluable in her work for several reasons. "I walk away with a notebook full of resource information that I refer to throughout the year as the issues arise. The information is timely and pertinent. The attorneys go over the latest concerning these issues, most of which affect our daily operations as communications officers. The questions from TSPRA members are enlightening. I learn not only what challenges my peers face, but many answers and strategies in dealing with those challenges."



TSPRA President Mary Ann Simpson, standing, thanks Attorney Karen Johnson of Bracewell & Patterson L.L.P., for her presentation at this year's Legal Issues Seminar.



Veteran TSPRAn Brian Morris, Lubbock ISD, greets two new TSPRAns, Melanie Maxcey Nicholas, (center), Midland ISD, and Christine Hopkins, Galveston ISD, during a break at the Legal Seminar.

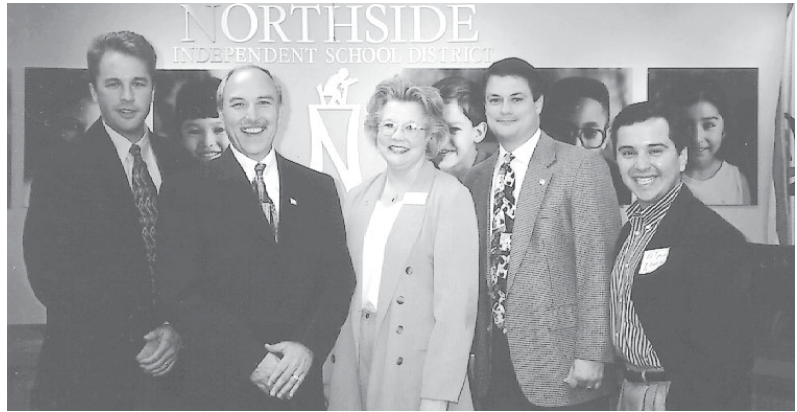


Attending this year's legal seminar, held for the first time in Dallas, are (l-r) Deanne Hullender, Tamerah Ringo, _____ and _____

TSPRAnS hold regional meetings

San Antonio Region's town hall meeting with the education writers

San Antonio is a one newspaper town that happens to have a four person education reporting team covering the 16 school districts in Bexar County. So getting all the school district public information officers and the *Express News* education team together is a real scheduling challenge. But it happens. At least once a year, the education reporters meet with their assigned school district PIOs to discuss issues, strengthen their networks, and enjoy lunch. At the recent meeting, TSPRA staffers were special guests.



San Antonio TSPRAnS and media representatives attended a luncheon hosted by Northside ISD's Pascual Gonzalez and Monica Faulkenberg, (2nd and 3rd from left.)

"As busy as we all are, the personal and face-to-face meetings with each other and the newspaper's education team help

us all do a better job of communicating," says **Pascual Gonzalez**, Northside ISD communications director.



From left, Brenda Ritter, Katy ISD; Hollis Hood, Beaumont ISD; and Cathy Giardina, Alief ISD, at the HASPRA meeting.

HASPRA/SPRINT/Gulf Coast/Far West meetings

The Houston Area School Public Relations Association (HASPRA) holds regular meetings throughout the year.

To kick off the new school year, HASPRA invited *Houston Chronicle* Editorial Writer **James Howard Gibbons** to speak. TSPRA President-elect **Katherine Cernosek** and Executive Director **Annell Todd** were guests at the meeting held at the **Harris County Department of Education**. President **Mary Ann Simpson** and Houston-Beaumont Vice President **Susan Castro** both gave reports on TSPRA activities statewide. **Jerry Smith** is serving as HASPRA Coordinator for 2001-02.

SPRINT (School Public Relations in North Texas) regularly schedules area meetings in different school districts, and North Texas Vice President **Cindy Randle** also has published newsletters throughout the year for SPRINT members.

In the **Gulf Coast Area**, Vice President **Annette Garcia** kicked off the school year with a meeting at the **University of Texas - Brownsville** where lunch for the group was courtesy of UTB Communications Office following a tour of their facilities.

In **El Paso**, Ysleta ISD's **Bonnie Schulenburg**, recently facilitated a meeting for TSPRA members in that area. Bonnie is the Zone Chair for the vast Far West TSPRA area for which **Adela Vasquez**, Ector Co. ISD, serves as vice president.



TSPRA Executive Director **Annell Todd**, 2nd from left, and President Elect **Katherine Cernosek**, 2nd from right, were guest's at the HASPRA meeting. Also in the photo, from left, are **Jerry Smith**, Spring ISD; **James Howard Gibbons**, guest speaker; President **Mary Ann Simpson**, Fort Bend ISD; and Vice President **Susan Castro**, Alief ISD.

new officers
continued from p.3

As a 17-year veteran TSPRA member, **Christina Garcia** has served on many committees including Texas Public Schools Week, awards, and scholarship. She has



Christina Garcia

chaired the conference hospitality and the paraprofessional workshops committees and hosts a paraprofessional workshop almost every year. Having served several years ago, she is returning to the board as the Gulf Coast Vice President. Chris has presented numerous times at TSPRA and served as a reporter at the TASA/TASB Convention. She is the Coordinator for Public Information for the Corpus Christi ISD and collected many Gold Star Awards over the years.

Adela Vasquez was appointed by Julie Thannum to serve an unexpired term on TSPRA's Executive Committee last year. She will begin her two-year elected term this month



Adela Vasquez

after being in TSPRA for only two years. Adela is Director of Communications for Ector County CISD in Odessa.

Veteran TSPRA members **Kathy Clausen** and **Steve Knagg** will fill the positions of the two new At-Large Vice Presidents and will draw to determine who will serve the one and two year terms.

Kathy Clausen is Director of Public Information at Goose Creek CISD in the Houston area and has been an active TSPRAn for 11

years. TSPRAn selected her as Most Valuable Member in 2000. Having chaired the Texas Public



Kathy Clausen

Schools Week, TASA/TASB booth, and conference registration committees, she has met and mentored members from across the state. In addition to chairing, she has also served on numerous other committees. She is a Star Awards winner with several Best of Contest medallions and a frequent presenter. She has received recognition for her outstanding leadership in her Baytown community and also Lee College where she worked before joining Goose Creek.

Steve Knagg first served as a TSPRA Vice President 20 years ago and brings with him a wealth of experience in both the areas of school public relations and association governance. In 1985-86, he served as TSPRA President and went on to



Steve Knagg

serve on the NSPRA board continuously from 1987 to 1993, serving as President in 1991-92. He is a

well-known keynote/workshop presenter with over 700 presentations in 25 states and Canada. He is the recipient of TSPRA's Most Valuable Member (1985) and Professional Achievement (1996) awards, as well as numerous STAR Awards. His service on committees and special task forces for TSPRA is legendary. Steve is the Director of Communications for the Garland ISD, where he began his career in school PR in 1978.

Shana McKay Wortham has agreed to serve as TSPRA Parliamentarian, an appointed position, for the coming year. Shana will bring previous board experience to the position and an understanding of the associa-



Shana McKay Wortham

tion from chairing numerous committees including Texas Public Schools Week and the STAR Awards. Shana is a former newspaper reporter with a degree in journalism from Texas A&M. She is Director of Communications for the Frisco ISD and previously served in that same position for the Conroe ISD. She was named TSPRA's Most Valuable Member in 1999 and is a frequent presenter and STAR Award winner.

New 2002 TSPRA Membership Directories will be handed out at the annual conference. If you are not attending this year's conference, your directory will be mailed to you in the next few weeks. Since most of the directory information has been gathered from dues forms filled out this past summer and fall, there may be some changes and additions. Please notify the State Office with any new information.

Welcome New Members (since May 2001)

Reg	Name	District	Reg	Name	District
1	Crystal Belmares	Univ. of Texas-Pan American	10	Claude Trotter	Grand Prairie ISD
1	Laura Guerrero	Mission CISD	10	Shannon Wells	Richardson ISD
1	Hermalinda Infante	Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD	10	Eric Williams	Mesquite ISD ITV
1	Celina Lopez	San Benito CISD Police Dept.	10	Lee Zethraw	Highland Park ISD
1	Sylvia Migoni	Univ. of Texas-Pan American	11	Kyle Berger	Keller ISD
1	Mark Montemayor	Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD	11	Teresa Horton	Springtown ISD
1	Naida Robles	La Joya ISD	11	Eileen Houston-Stewart	Fort Worth ISD
1	Jorge Teniente	Univ. of Texas-Pan American	11	Michelle Howard-Schwind	Northwest ISD
1	Gregg Wendorf	Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD	11	Sharon Hughes	Springtown ISD
2	Mary Kelley	Corpus Christi ISD	11	Tom Kearly	White Settlement ISD
3	Debbie Crick	Victoria ISD	11	Darlene Pennington	Springtown ISD
3	Claudia Iselt	Victoria ISD	11	Judy Ramos	Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD
3	Martha Pedersen	Victoria ISD	11	Nance Renaud	Aubrey ISD
4	Ted Bowen	Lamar CISD	11	Jennifer Stokes	Northwest Education Foundation
4	Charles Dillon	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	12	Jennifer Marshall-Higgins	Region 12 ESC
4	Kelli Durham	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	12	Mary Ann Moody	Region 12 ESC
4	Karen Fitzgerald	Data Projections, Inc.	12	Elizabeth Weakley	Region 12 ESC
4	Christine Hopkins	Galveston ISD	13	Celina Bley	San Marcos CISD
4	Janice Knight	Lamar CISD	13	Milli Christner	Round Rock ISD
4	Sherry McDonnell	Houston ISD	13	Susan Fambrough	Pflugerville ISD
4	Kathleen Neck	Lamar CISD	13	Emily Starr	TASA
4	Andy Nguyen	Spring ISD	13	Adrienne Sobolak	Texas Education Agency
4	Donna Range	PBK Architects, Inc	13	Toni Turner	Austin Chamber of Commerce
4	Tami Sophia	Brazosport ISD	14	Jim Biggerstaff	Abilene ISD
4	Lee Weeditz	Tomball ISD	16	Becky McLraith	Amarillo ISD
4	Angi Williams	Galena Park ISD	17	Ricky Mitchell	Lamesa ISD
4	Hugo Zelaya	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	18	Mabel Benavides	Ector County ISD
5	Sophia Lea	Vidor ISD	18	Lynn Dudney	Ector County ISD
5	Kasandra Sherrod	Vidor ISD	18	Melanie Nicholas	Midland ISD
5	Judy Van Pelt	Silsbee ISD	19	Toni Bowermaster	El Paso ISD
6	Emily Cason	Huntsville ISD	19	Phillip Cortez	San Elizario ISD
6	Michael Daniel	Magnolia ISD	19	Irma Jean Torrez	Ysleta ISD
6	Gregg Faith	Livingston ISD	20	Pete Anthony	Southwest ISD
6	Shannon Weaver	Conroe ISD	20	Cynthia Bouvier-Flores	Harlandale ISD
9	Brian Bohannon	Wichita Falls ISD	20	Melvin Brown	Northside ISD
10	Jennifer Collins	Sunnyvale ISD	20	Shanna Falgoust	Northside ISD
10	Ron Costa	Mesquite ISD ITV	20	Alejandra Gonzales	Northside ISD
10	Philip Endicott	Van Alstine ISD	20	Andrea Guajardo	Harlandale ISD
10	Richie Escovedo	Nolan Catholic High School	20	Sean Hoffmann	Judson ISD
10	Jeffrey Franks	Mesquite ISD ITV	20	Regina Howell	Bandera ISD
10	Joy Greenwalt	Rockwall ISD	20	Chrissie Kolb	North East ISD
10	Allison Pritchard	Dallas County Schools	20	Laurie Miller	Alamo Heights ISD
10	Kim Pruitt	Denison ISD	20	Rebecca Minjarez	North East ISD
10	John Roderick	Community ISD	20	Ed Suarez	South San Antonio ISD
10	Donna Sweaney	Forney ISD	20	Victor Valdez	Northside ISD

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2001-2002 TSPRA Board

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 Julie Thannum, APR, Past President
 Annette Garcia, Gulf Coast VP
 Susan Castro, Houston/Beaumont VP
 Beth Shepperd, East Texas VP

TSPRA
update
a newsletter from the texas school public relations association

Cindy Randle, North Central VP
 Rob Ludwig, West Central VP
 Barbara Williams, Central VP
 Cecilia Masters, Northwest VP
 Adela Vasquez, Far West VP
 Louise Henry, Parliamentarian

Annell Todd, APR, Executive Director

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