

SPRF PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Each year, SPRF member organizations (ECPRO, PRAL, PRAM, and PRCA) are invited to nominate one outstanding public relations professional for the SPRF Professional Achievement Award, formerly known as the Practitioner of the Year. The recipient of this award is announced at the SPRF annual conference. SPRF established this award to recognize an individual who has continually demonstrated the highest ideals of the profession and a commitment to advance the profession of public relations.

- **BE A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING**
- **HAS TAUGHT OR PRACTICED IN THE FIELD OF PR FOR A MINIMUM OF 15 YEARS**
- **HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CHAPTER, STATE, AND/OR SPRF FOR MULTIPLE YEARS**
- **HAS PARTICIPATED IN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN OTHER PROFESSIONAL OR PREPROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**
- **HAS PARTICIPATED IN PR COMMUNITY SERVICE**
- **HAS REALIZED RECOGNIZED SUCCESS IN THE PRACTICE OF PR DURING THE INDIVIDUAL'S CAREER**
- **HAS RECEIVED ACCREDITATION BY A UAB MEMBER ORGANIZATION**

SPRF PAA RECIPIENTS

2025: Kim Foster Collins, APR - PRAM

2024: Caron Blanton, APR - PRAM

2023: Mara Hartman, APR - PRAM

2022: Matt Martin, APR - PRAM

2021: Tracy Heggins Yanez, APR - PRAM

2020: Lesley Bruinton, APR - PRCA

2019: Checky Herrington, APR, FELLOW
PRSA PRAM

2018: Col. Christian Patterson, APR+M,
FELLOW PRSA - PRAM

2017: Tracie G. Bertaut, APR - PRAL

2016: Kristina Hendrix, APR - PRCA

2015: Holly Houk Cullen, APR - PRAL

2014: Robin Street, APR - PRAM

2013: Mary Cracchiolo Spain, APR -
PRAM

2012: Lea Ivey Stone, APR - PRAM

2011: Jennifer Jenkins, APR - PRCA

2010: Susan Broussard, APR - PRAL

2009: Kristie Aylett, APR, FELLOW PRSA
- PRAM

2008: Glen Duncan, APR - PRAL

2007: Denise D'Oliveira, APR - PRCA

2006: Suzanne Fornaro, APR - PRCA

2005: Michael Tullier, APR - PRCA

2004: Carol Mann, APR - PRCA

2003: Missy LaBorde, APR - PRAL

2002: Delia Adams Taylor, APR - PRAL

2001: Deirdre McGowan, PH.D., APR,
CAE - PRAM

2000: Sherry Harlow, APR - ECPRO

1999: John Forde, Ph.D., APR, FELLOW
PRSA PRAM

1998: Bill Todd, APR - PRCA

1997: Dave Rickey, APR - PRCA

1996: Karla Shackleford Conway, APR -
PRCA

1995: Jamie Palmer, APR - PRCA

1994: Rosemary W. Blackmon, APR -
PRCA

1993: Bill Michelet, APR, FELLOW PRSA
- PRAL

1992: Philip Shirley, APR - PRAM

1991: Peri Wiedener, APR - PRCA

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOMINEE

Tricia Webb Grayson, APR, is a strategic communications leader with more than 30 years of experience helping organizations build trust, strengthen relationships and navigate change through effective communication. Her career has spanned journalism, healthcare, education, nonprofit leadership and professional services, with a consistent focus on using strategic communication to help organizations connect with the people they serve.



Accredited in Public Relations (APR), Tricia is an active leader within the profession, serving as Vice President of Continuing Education and APR Chair for PRAL Northwest and Communications Committee Chair for the Bayou Chapter of the Ozark Society. She is also an Executive Committee member of the Shreveport Journalism Foundation, where she supports journalism education and scholarship programs.

Throughout her career, Tricia has earned recognition at the regional, state and national levels, including the 2026 Public Relations Association of Louisiana Professional Achievement Award, two PRAL Northwest Beacon Awards of Excellence, the 2025 ATHENA Leadership Award Honoree recognition, Southern Public Relations Federation Senior Practitioner Designation, National School Public Relations Association awards, and the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) credential.

Outside of work, Tricia is passionate about conservation, the outdoors and lifelong learning. A Louisiana Master Naturalist, she volunteers to promote environmental stewardship through community cleanups, educational outreach and outdoor programs. She is active with Sisters on the Fly and Sister Corps, helping introduce women to outdoor recreation while supporting conservation and community service projects.

Tricia and her husband have been married for 26 years and are the proud parents of two adult children. When she's not working or volunteering, you'll likely find her hiking, camping or curled up with a good historical fiction novel. She believes the most meaningful work leaves organizations, communities and natural places better than they were found.

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOMINEE

Abby Guasti, APR, discovered early in her career that she loved both the strategy and the pace of public relations. What began as a passion for strategic problem solving and communications quickly evolved into a career built on helping organizations navigate change, strengthen relationships, and communicate with purpose.

As Founder and Principal of Simple Complexity, Abby provides strategic communications counsel to organizations across healthcare, manufacturing, education, nonprofit, and government-related sectors.

She partners with executive leaders to align communications with organizational goals, build trust with key stakeholders, and navigate opportunities and challenges with clarity and confidence. Among her most significant engagements is serving as communications counsel to the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering (ASCTE), where she has helped elevate the school's reputation as a national leader in cyber and technology education.

An Accredited (APR) practitioner, Abby is committed to research-based strategy, ethical counsel, and lifelong learning. She has served in leadership roles at the chapter, state, and regional levels; mentored emerging professionals; supported Accreditation through Readiness Reviews and candidate coaching; judged professional awards; and spoken to students and practitioners on strategic communications and professional development. In 2026, she was honored with the Public Relations Council of Alabama's Philip R. Forrest Jr. Professional Achievement Award in recognition of her career contributions to the profession.

Outside of her professional work, Abby enjoys investing in future leaders, serving her community, and spending time with her husband, Courtney, and their two children, Harper and Hadley. They remain her most honest focus group, keeping her grounded, reminding her what matters, and ensuring she never takes herself too seriously.



PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOMINEE

Sophie McNeil Wolf, APR, loves the intersection of community, quality of life and storytelling, which has informed much of her work. In fact, as a child, she was pegged as the “first to know it and the first to tell it.”

As a communications professional and storyteller, Wolf has worked for nearly 20 years to help organizations quantify and share their impact through traditional and digital media. An accomplished writer, editor, and content creator, her skills include photography, video, social media management, graphic design, SEO, digital ADA accessibility, and strategic communications planning. The secret sauce of integrated marketing communications - creating compelling touchpoint strategies while upholding brand standards - is paramount to her work.

Her communication interests intersect her my love for community and synergy. For more than fifteen years, she has worked to promote cities, institutions, and neighborhoods, particularly as creative, innovative destinations to improve quality of life. Wolf currently serves as the Director of Communications and Insights for the Community Foundation for Mississippi. She has previously worked for organizations such as Visit Jackson, Millsaps College, the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and Mississippi Public Broadcasting. Her work has appeared in Sports Illustrated, Wall Street Journal, Mississippi Magazine and Jackson Free Press.

Wolf holds a bachelor's degree in journalism with an emphasis in news-editorial from the University of Southern Mississippi, a master's degree in integrated marketing communications from the University of Mississippi and a graduate certificate in economic development from the University of Southern Mississippi. She is a 2014 graduate of the Millsaps College Business Advantage Program and 2018-2019 graduate of Leadership Greater Jackson. In 2024, she earned her Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) from the Universal Accreditation Board. She is also a certified Master Gardener through the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Wolf was the 2024 president of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi, Central Chapter and currently serves at the Senior Member at Large for the chapter. She also serves her industry in other capacities as the co-VP of Programming for the Public Relations of Mississippi and the VP of Professional Development for the Southern Public Relations Federation. She is a former board member of Leadership Greater Jackson and past president of the College Public Relations Association of Mississippi. Wolf is also part of the duo behind popular media brand Find It In Fondren, highlighting Jackson's hip arts district, with her husband, Paul Wolf.

