

CTPAA Celebrates Twenty Years

Editor's note:

*As we review the past
20 years, it's impos-
sible to overlook how
much the industry has
changed over the years.*

*It's equally true to note
that the individuals
who founded CTPAA
had the vision to make
the practice of cable
public affairs the true
professional vocation
it is today.*

CABLE TELEVISION
**PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
ASSOCIATION**
C T P A A

20 YEARS
1985-2005

From Phone Booths to Roundtables

"When we held the first planning meetings in 1983 and 1984, we joked, somewhat truthfully, that you could fit all of the industry's full-time public affairs professionals in a phone booth," recalls Richard Holcomb, CTPAA's first president and a driving force in establishing the organization.

Holcomb, who moved to cable following his role in the start-up of public television stations, used the community programming resources of ATC, Time Inc.'s cable unit to enhance the company's image and support government affairs and marketing objectives in the communities it served.

Bob Russo, another leader in the push to create an industry organization, left his job at Coors to work for Bill Daniels, the industry's greatest cheerleader since the 1950s.

Lynn Yaeger, who in those days worked for Viacom Cable, exemplified the public affairs veterans who had shifted their role from winning what were often termed in those days as "lucrative cable franchises" to implementing community-based programs for keeping them. And she was already building a network of corporate and field-based public affairs professionals, including Peggy Keegan. Keegan would later serve, as a president of CTPAA and, working with Mike Schwartz at CableLabs, would launch CableNet, the most successful program for promoting cable technology.

Also on hand was Dave Andersen who was recruited from General Motors to create the public affairs program for Cox cable. "When I came over to cable, there wasn't a group to support my efforts and help me to learn the nuances of cable PR," he says.

"Providing a vehicle for folks who were new to the industry, or public affairs, was one of the services that we believed a cable public affairs organization could provide," Holcomb confirms. We also knew that we couldn't achieve our objective to increase the role of PR within our companies if we didn't have something happening industry-wide to support it."

This nucleus of advocates began contacting their counterparts at the other cable MSOs and programming networks about creating an organization for public affairs professionals. They convened a larger group at the 1984 NCTA Show in Las Vegas, and in the summer of 1984, approximately 20 of the industry's PR professionals held the first organizational meeting in conjunction with the CTAM Summit at New York's Waldorf Astoria. The group, which represented virtually the entire population of the industry's dedicated PR staff at the time, fit around a conference table. In comparison, CTAM drew more than 1,200 industry marketers that year, which also marked its tenth anniversary.

Attendees included Mark Harrad, then director of affiliate public relations for HBO, Sandi Wildman Padnos, affiliate PR manager for Showtime, Rosa Gatti with ESPN, Susan Swain from C-SPAN, Cheryl Daly with Group W, Judy Hartley from A&E and Art Sando from Turner.

“At that time, most of the relationships were between the networks’ affiliate relations staff and their marketing contacts at the cable MSOs and systems,” Harrad recalls. “With my focus on public relations, I needed to smoke out the real PR people. And from my parochial viewpoint, getting CTPAA off the ground was a great way of rounding up the PR folks at the cable MSOs.”

Among those PR contacts identified by Harrad were representatives from company names that are seldom recalled today but numbered among the top ten MSOs in 1984, including Mal White from Colony, Gail Wallace from United Cable, Elaine Tarant with Centel, Andy Holdgate from Storer and a representative from Tribune’s Dittrick Communications unit. Ed Dooley, public affairs chief for NCTA, was also an active member of the planning process.

“Dick Holcomb’s right, we used to joke that you could fit all of the industry’s public affairs practitioners in a phone booth,” Dooley laughs. “But we believed that creating an independent organization was the only way that we could shine the light on the importance of our role in the industry and to increase our ranks.”

Going it Alone and Gaining Respect

“The easy course would have been to take an offer on the table to launch as an arm of CTAM,” Peggy Keegan remembers. “But the discussion demonstrated that everyone was very dedicated to the viewpoint that the public affairs function is a distinct and essential discipline within the industry.”

“We wouldn’t have achieved one of our main objectives,” Holcomb explains. “We needed to create a distinct organization in order to elevate recognition for the importance of the public affairs function and thereby increase the human and capital resources for implementing public affairs programs within the industry.”

CTAM supported the groups’ decision and has demonstrated its support for the organization in numerous ways in the years since. CTAM president & CEO Char Beales, who is being recognized as a 2005 CTPAA President’s Award recipient for her support of CTPAA, recognized how the organization and its members could bring their expertise to CTAM’s industry affairs activities, including most recently the On-Demand Consortium.

The founders also received a great deal of support from Steve Effros the former head of CATA, and its greatest industry association advocates, Tryg Myhren at ATC, Bill Daniels,

John Goddard at Viacom, Colony’s Jack Clifford, C-SPAN Founder Brian Lamb and A&E’s Nick Davatzes. Motivated by this backing and the broadening interest demonstrated at the 1984 meeting, the core members reconvened to develop bylaws and formally established the organization in 1985. CTPAA filed papers as a Colorado non-profit and was certified as a 501 C6 by the IRS in 1987. In 1992, Cable attorney Frank Lloyd, a longtime friend of the Association, reviewed the bylaws and registered CTPAA as a Delaware corporation.

Ironically, one of the factors that began bringing the industry’s first generation of public affairs professionals together, lobbying for passage of the 1984 Cable Act, ultimately became a factor in the lackluster response to public affairs by field management. With the focus on what it would take to win support for the legislation, discussions at trade shows centered on creating customer service standards and national advertising. While it would be another five years before it adopted customer service standards, the industry did launch the Council for Cable Information (CCI), which produced three national TV spots promoting cable’s value and contributions to the community later that year.

With the passage of the 1984 Cable Act, which went into effect in 1985, cable operators were now free to set the rates for their services and they could have a reasonable likelihood for renewing their franchises. That meant that cable system operators no longer needed to compel city councils to vote in favor of having their constituents pay more for cable service. And the cable GM’s mantra of “How do I get the votes?” was replaced in too many markets by “Thank God I don’t have to deal with those people again.”

Fortunately, there were other issues facing cable operators where effective public relations helped them to realize bottom line results. With construction completed and truck chasers already on board as subscribers, the industry placed greater focus on customer retention. Additional challenges included residents who would buy their own C-band satellite dishes to receive satellite-delivered TV and others who obtained cable service through illegal hook-ups and decoders.

In what was then a pioneering move for a network to dedicate PR resources to an industry issue, Showtime’s Sandi Wildman Padnos co-authored the popular “Theft of Service Combat Kit,” which introduced the concept of amnesty into the lexicon of the cable industry. She personally organized dozens of news conferences in cities across the country and taught operators how to launch local amnesty campaigns – oftentimes dressed in combat fatigues. This represented one of the first turnkey affiliate PR programs.

Training the Industry About Public Affairs

In fact, media relations training was the first priority for the Association, as evidenced by the agendas at CTPAA's first two annual FORUMS, which were developed by Sandi Padnos, CTPAA's first professional development chair.

"We wanted to have a professional conference where we could learn from each other about the issues and develop our professional skills as PR practitioners," she notes. "I put my experience as a former schoolteacher to work in designing the agenda for the first two years and Bob Russo came up with the name FORUM and how to market it."

As part of the agenda for the 1986 FORUM in Denver, Russo hired a local camera crew to ambush attendees and set the stage for media training. Attendees that year included the nascent population of full-time MSO public affairs practitioners; the relatively few network PR representatives from the cable programming networks, system general managers and state cable association executives, like Bill Cologie.

"I always found at CTPAA some of the most committed, creative, and hardest working people in the industry, who despite the insufficient resources available to them, found ways to advance cable's image," says Cologie a former public affairs director and head of the now renamed Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania. "CTPAA has always been the place for sharing best practices and it has improved the climate for the industry as the ranks of public affairs professionals and the resources available to them have grown."

At the 1987 FORUM, event co-chair and CTPAA vice president Sandi Padnos paired media relations with industry affairs and drew more than 100 attendees, including CEO supporters like Brian Lamb and NCTA Chair Ed Allen and NCTA President Jim Mooney, who spoke about "Cable's Image: The Challenges facing CTPAA."

Other sessions that year included "how to" panels on promoting National Cable Month, an industry campaign to raise awareness about the quality, uniqueness and growing viewership of cable programming. It's hard to picture today, but in those days the industry had to have its own preview month and Ace Awards show for recognizing programming excellence. Back then, the only time cable programming was mentioned on broadcast television was during an "Saturday Night Live" skit.

"CTPAA was an integral part of my career development," says Padnos, president of a PR consulting firm. Padnos who

currently teaches "Working with the Media" at UCLA Extension and is actively developing a PR seminar business. "The several years that I went around the country for the 'PR 101' training really helped me to hone my comfort and abilities as the person in front of the audience as well as being the person working from behind the scenes."

Bob Russo, whose PR skills had matured during the nationally prominent Coors labor strike, knew the answer to the question "what are you going to do when 60 minutes calls?" And when CTPAA was given the opportunity to create a public affairs training program, using the remaining funds from the CCI initiative, he developed "Public Affairs 101," the industry's first public affairs training program.

"The board supported the plan for me to draw from my experience at Coors, including training from the country's top crisis communications experts, to create the program," Russo remembers. "We had a very successful pilot with McCaw Cablevision and from there we had a 'train the trainer' workshop and developed 10 briefcases containing the presentation materials for them to take into the field."

Modules in the workshop included basics on consumer products PR, a speaker's kit for delivering presentations at local chamber and rotary events, media relations training and primers on community relations and political affairs. With the help of local CTAM chapters, state cable associations and cable MSOs, hundreds of local system general managers across the country received the training. And Russo received an NCTA Vanguard Award in recognition for the industry contribution represented by his efforts.

"Our goal was to instill within the founding members of CTPAA a sense of urgency to get out and train the industry's GM's, who at that time were the spokespeople for their companies and the industry in the communities they served," says Russo. "And it had an effect. We introduced the topic and we began to get people moving in the right direction."

"It was a great program for CTPAA and for the industry," Dooley agrees. Beginning with the pilot, which we facilitated by Cathy Hollingsworth in Tucson, we were training system GMs on what they needed to know in order to represent their businesses, their MSOs and the industry in their communities. And with very few full-time public affairs professionals in the field the operations, local origination and marketing managers that participated in our programs also represented a significant proportion of our membership in those days."

Becoming the Beacon for Community Relations

Having community-minded affiliates was also the right direction from the viewpoint of cable programming networks. C-SPAN pioneered community outreach with its “States of the Nation” program during the 1984 Presidential election campaign, with Brian Lamb and Susan Swain doing live shows from key cable markets across the country. By 1988 those early initiatives were joined by stand-outs like Lifetime Television’s “women and AIDS” awareness campaign, the steady stream of community outreach programs from HBO, like “Dear America, Letters Home from Vietnam,” A&E’s Library program, and many others.

Increasing the development and utilization of affiliate public relations campaigns has been a career-long mission for Bonnie Hathaway, who served as a president of CTPAA in the 1980s, when she was HBO’s affiliate PR head and again 12 years later, after she had moved to her current post as vice president of public affairs for Time Warner Cable.

During Bonnie Hathaway’s first term as president, she tapped Sandi Padnos to develop the Programmer Roundtables that became an integral component of the annual Forums. The roundtables helped to foster further adoption of these programs in the field.

“Quantifying and proving that what public affairs does is worthwhile is what keeps us up at night,” says Hathaway. “And demonstrating the bottom line benefits of these early campaigns has fueled the higher volume of network and MSO activities that we see today.”

Building upon a suggestion made by Bob Gold at the first Forum, CTPAA teamed up in the late 1980s with the California Cable Association to recognize exemplary public affairs programs at the annual Western Show. Among those recognized at the 1989 show were C-SPAN’s Brian Lamb, who received the first President’s Award, and Lifetime’s Meredith Wagner, who to this day continues to create and implement cause-related campaigns that link the local chapters of national causes and cable system affiliates with Lifetime’s original programming.

“We wanted to make the awards ceremony very special and C. J. Hirschfield (vice president of industry affairs for CCTA) really helped to make that happen in the early years,” recalls Peggy Keegan.

When Nancy Larkin from Continental Cablevision became involved in CTPAA, the association had the catalyst it needed for expanding the awards initiative in a way that would

drive greater adoption and development of community relations events and campaigns.

Larkin, who developed the local cable ACE awards to recognize excellence in community programming, convened a planning group that mapped out the criteria and selected the awards. “Ann Brown from the cable system in Nashville found a great looking crystal award and we said ‘that’s it – let’s call them the crystal awards.’ We later changed the name to Crystal Beacons and then Beacons, and that’s a great name for them, because we spotlight the winners whose course leads to having an effective campaign.

“We accomplished a lot with the awards,” Larkin believes. “The criteria really required you to demonstrate that you had a clear understanding of what you expected to achieve from the campaign and how you were going to measure its effectiveness. People weren’t as sophisticated about community relations as compared to the professionals who are executing those programs today. And as the popularity of the awards grew, you could see the quality of the campaigns improve too.”

The first year of the awards, there were 180 entries. A small number compared to today, but more than enough to handle back then. “I’ll never forget it,” says Larkin. There were boxes of all sizes and shapes, stacked all over and around Ed Dooley’s offices, which were donated by the Learning Channel. We crammed them into his compact, rental cars, cabs, any transportation we could find, to get them over to NCTA for the judging,” she remembers.

Another objective of the awards was to use them to increase awareness among industry CEOs, by having them serve as finalist judges. “The organization had a CEO advisory council, and those members would come and speak at the FORUM,” Larkin says. “But we believed that exposing MSO and network leadership to the purpose and results from the top campaigns would help to engender support for keeping these types of activities in the budgets.”

The President’s Award was also incorporated into the program and additional awards have been added over the years, including a “Good Sports” Award from ESPN and the Maxwell Media Awards. Named and sponsored by longtime trade media publisher and supporter Paul Maxwell, the awards recognize reporters whose work demonstrates exemplary coverage of the industry. In addition to a scholarship, Maxwell would pay the winners’ way to the FORUM, where they would also participate in a media relations session. “FORUM sponsorships by people like Libby O’Connell at the History Channel allowed us to turn the

award ceremony into a nice event, and we have been very grateful for that support,” says Maxwell.

“Great People, Great Times, Great Memories”

While Beacon Awards MCs in recent years have included network celebrities, the combination of Reed Publishing’s Bill McGorry and NCTA’s Dan Brenner - cable’s answer to Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin - was great insider entertainment for the early Beacon Awards ceremonies. Attendees remember Brenner stopping the presentation while reading about one award winner, a state association that defeated a .2 percent telecom tax increase, to ask: “Wait a minute. You waged a campaign to defeat a two-tenths percent tax? How much did that cost? And now you’re getting an award?!”

“My reference to Alex Swan and Meredith Wagner as cable’s answer to the ‘Twisted Pair’ haunts me to this day,” McGorry says. “It seems like we all had a lot more fun in those days. But in all sincerity I always viewed our (*Multi-channel News* and *Cablevision* magazine) role as partners with the industry associations, which was a view shared by Joel (Berger) and later Larry Oliver.”

Joel Berger replaced Dan Brenner as a co-presenter with McGorry in 1992. For several years, he also created and published the list of winners in a special supplement of *Cablevision* magazine. The tradition continued after Joel died from AIDS and he is fondly remembered each year when the Joel Berger Award is presented.

“Having trade publications like *Cablevision* publish the awards was an essential ingredient for increasing industry awareness and recognition for these community outreach programs,” believes Meredith Wagner, who managed the awards programs in the mid-1990s. Today Larry Dunn and Chuck Bolkcom continue to have a strong relationship with the association and publish two inserts covering the Beacons and other CTPAA awards in *Multichannel News*.

While Meredith and Alex aren’t twisted, McGorry’s image of the hard-partying duo illustrates another aspect of CTPAA’s role in the lives of its members. Alex, a past CTPAA President and current media relations director for Arris, sums up what many past and present CTPAA members believe about the association: “Great people, great times, great memories.”

Typical of CTPAA’s membership, coming together for fun wasn’t quite right unless there was a cause-related compo-

ment, which led to making Sunday night’s welcoming reception at FORUM a silent and live auction. You could always tell who had served as that year’s auctioneer by how hoarse his voice became from shouting out the live auction bids over a boisterous crowd of friends and colleagues who were doing some catching up in the process.

But, thanks to persistent auctioneers, especially professionals like Randy Wink, very generous donations of auction items and the annual reception sponsor, CTPAA has presented more than \$100,000 since the auction’s inception to deserving organizations like the Emma Bowen Foundation, Cable Positive & other charities. “CTPAA’s support has enabled us to make a difference in the lives of so many at-risk teens who need programs like the annual student congress in Washington, which the auction proceeds help to sponsor,” says Foundation president & CEO Phyllis Eagle Oldson.

“CTPAA has always been a haven for similar-minded people, where you could swap stories and share your information openly within a close-knit community,” adds Nancy Larkin, who went on to serve as CTPAA president.

“It was an instant affinity group,” says Rob Stoddard, senior vice president for communications and public affairs at NCTA and a past president of the organization. “When you walked into a room and spotted another member, you knew that you were among friends and colleagues.”

CTPAA’s first president, Richard Holcomb, who today lives in Austin and is a public affairs and new business development consultant to business and nonprofit clients, still hears regularly from a number of his CTPAA colleagues. “The professional and personal relationships that we established at CTPAA transcend over time into friendships that continue even after you leave the industry.”

“When CTPAA started, the country was still questioning the need to pay for television and the value of additional channels,” Sandi Padnos adds. “The industry was like the Wild West, focused on winning franchises, upgrading head ends for channel delivery and establishing 24-hour network concepts that are now well-established brands.

“Amidst this backdrop, we were this small group trying to underscore the emerging value of consumer choice and convenience, as well as promote the social consciousness of the industry. We were on the front lines defending the industry’s positive elements. Like wartime buddies, there’s nothing like those early CTPAA friendships, she concludes.”

Rob Stoddard, a former trade reporter and editorial services marketer whose new role had him as the host rather than the guest of the industry's "flak frat" events.

Effros wasted no time in pulling together a kitchen cabinet comprised of the industry's - and CTPAA's - top public affairs executives, including Bob Russo, Lynn Yaeger, Dave Andersen, NCTA's public affairs head Elise Adde (later replaced by longtime CTPAA supporter and NCTA PR chief Louise Rauscher) and marketing veteran McAdory "Mac" Lipscomb, the new head of PR at Showtime. Anne Cowan, a DC-based media training expert and corporate trainers Lyn Grosz and Tom Leonard, joined CATA, (and CTPAA) and were responsible for creating and conducting the training program under the PR advisory team's guidance.

"The industry training program was a phenomenal accomplishment," says Lipscomb. "Never in the history of corporate America has an entire industry been trained as effectively, as comprehensively and in such a short period of time. It is a case study on how to redirect the collective behavior of an industry and successfully change the tide of public opinion."

The training program was rolling out when many members of congress were already sold on re-regulation. But as Lynn Yaeger, a veteran from the earlier cable regulation regime pointed out at the time: "There will be an even greater need for public affairs training. Cable managers will need to have even more communications skills to talk to city councils and the media about rate increases and in educating them about the business."

Many people had joined the industry after the 1984 Cable Act, when the industry had greater financial latitude in upgrading its plant and financing new networks like Discovery and TNT. And when Congress overrode a Presidential veto to pass the 1992 Act, it demonstrated the consequences that result from the lack of industry-wide public affairs.

"From the standpoint of preventing the push on the Hill to re-regulate cable we were doing too little too late," says Rob Stoddard. "But introducing initiatives like the on-time guarantee when you had people in the field that had been trained on how to promote it, set the stage for reversing a lot of the 1992 Act in 1996. And the 1996 legislation enabled the industry to make a \$95 billion investment in the infrastructure that allowed us to roll out innovative broadband services like high speed Internet, VOD, HDTV and VoIP."

Realizing the Vision: Dedicated PR Professionals in the Field

One of the biggest contrasts from the days of CTPAA's PR 101 and the CATA training is the growing base of professionals assigned to community relations.

"In the 1980's you could point to less than a handful of MSOs that had created field positions in public affairs and community relations," Lynn Yaeger notes. "They included the ATC and Warner Cable divisions, which were consolidated under Time Warner. The process was always the same with each MSO. You needed to begin by getting someone in the MSO's corporate office and start to make some things happen as a result of that presence. From there, you can rationalize the value for having full-time community relations resources in the larger field operations."

Cable in the Classroom (CIC), initially motivated by an effort to keep Chris Whittle's ad supported Channel One service out of schools, also helped to increase the number of education and community affairs staff in cable markets across the country. Cable MSOs showed their support by connecting schools in their services areas; cable networks developed curriculum-based programming for use by classroom teachers, such as Assignment Discover and CNN Newsroom. And both groups hired staff to drive training and implementation initiatives like the TCI Education Project, Continental in the Classroom and the national town meetings on education hosted by Jones Intercable and ME/U.

The market consolidation that followed MSO consolidation also fueled an increase in the number of division-sized operations that could sustain public affairs staff positions. "One of the aspects of our training program included advocating for more full-time public affairs staff in the field," Anne Cowan recalls. "I think that once the operations heads came to appreciate just how much public relations could improve their consumer marketing, we began to see an increase in PR and marketing communications within their business units."

"People who were looking to get out from under the 1992 Act and deal effectively against competition were beginning to recognize the type of commitment to public affairs it was going to require," Rob Stoddard recalls. "I remember the 1993 Forum in Boston, when MediaOne's Steve Lang looked around the room at the 400 attendees and said 'that's about how many PR employees we have at US West'. You

could literally see everyone comprehending the magnitude of that statement and thinking: 'US West is the smallest of the RBOCs and even its PR resources outnumber our entire industry'."

"There were not many public relations practitioners with Texas cable systems when I first joined CTPAA," confirms Nancy McMurrey, "And the task of being the only go-to resource for cable-related information for a state the size of Texas was a daunting one at best. But that has changed dramatically since then, and for the better!"

"We've come a long way since that meeting in 1993, particularly with the commitment of companies such as Comcast, Charter, Insight, Adelphia and Brighthouse, who have joined frontrunners like Time Warner and Cox in establishing a greater PR presence within their field operations," Stoddard continues. "Today, we have the infrastructure envisioned by CTPAA's founders and, as a result, CTPAA is NCTA's strongest ally for grassroots support. Whether it's an issue affecting a particular market, or something that needs to be implemented in every market, there's a solid network of seasoned professionals who have the skills and relationships necessary for getting the job done."

CTPAA's leadership is also influencing the decisions concerning the industry initiatives developed by NCTA, as members of the Public Affairs Advisory Committee that Stoddard established several years ago when he became senior executive for NCTA.

A Place at the Table

"There's a genuine respect for the role of public affairs today. Whether it's at the industry level, the corporate level or in the local markets, the industry's public affairs professionals are at the table and participating as equal members of their management team," he notes.

Anne Cowan, who today serves as senior vice president of communications for CTAM, agrees. "When leaders come together to talk about the business, the PR executive is at the table and an active participant in the decision-making process. This is particularly true for marketing decisions. Marketers recognize the fundamental role that PR plays in optimizing the rollout of new products. They don't go to launch without the consumer PR component, which wasn't always the case."

Cowan points to the 2004 On Demand consortium as an example where public relations played a major role in developing the consumer communications plan for advanced

services. "PR's contribution to last year's On Demand Consortium led to this year's expanded initiative, the Consumer Communications for Advanced Products. Ellen East (vice president of communications and public affairs for Cox) and Mark Harrad (senior vice president of corporate communications for Time Warner Cable) serve on the committee and through their relationship with CTPAA we have a mechanism in place to ensure the consumer campaign is widely implemented in the field."

Creating Our Own Infrastructure

There's another aspect to the infrastructure that enables organizations such as NCTA, CTAM – and CTPAA itself – to marshal its grassroots capabilities: the Association's own full time staff.

The organization has evolved significantly from the all-volunteer days. It was an all-volunteer organization until 1988, when Ed Dooley became a part time executive director. In the early 1990s, Jim Ewalt led the move to outsourcing management to Mary Pitelli at Pitelli and Partners and the account later transferred to the Widemeyer Group. Shortly thereafter, Sally Folmer Flynn, a former NCTA public affairs director who managed the account at Widemeyer, became CTPAA's first full-time executive director.

Sally and Ann Dorman, who joined CTPAA as a full time membership services manager, moved the CTPAA office to NCTA, where it has been ever since. When Sally and her husband Rob, who was also an active member of CTPAA, moved to Orlando, Sara Breaux, a former employee in Continental Cablevision's DC office took the reins. And in 2000, CTPAA hired Steve Jones, who brought many years of experience running membership-based non-profits to the organization. Jones with the help and guidance of the CTPAA Board has established new educational products and professional resources while building and maintaining a solid financial footing for the organization. Michelle Butler, formerly employed by the public affairs department within Time Warner Cable's Austin Division, serves as the association's director, membership programs & development. Rounding out the staff is Kelly McGrew, who is the membership services coordinator.

During this time, CTPAA has settled on making Washington, DC the permanent location for the annual FORUMS. "Being in DC has helped to elevate the status of CTPAA by making it an easier location for both speakers and attendees," believes Lifetime's Meredith Wagner, who served as CTPAA president in the mid-1990s.

CTPAA's Current Course

"A couple of years ago, we determined that with solid industry relationships in place, we could focus on the two L's – Learning and lauding," past CTPAA president Ellen East notes. "That's the common denominator for everything we do. On the learning side, it's the FORUM, the new CPTAA Public Affairs Institute, our workshops and panels at other industry events (Western shows, NCTA, CTAM, regional seminars) and CTPAA publications like our white papers and bi-weekly e-mails. And the lauding includes the recognition that we provide to our peers, through the Beacon Awards, and our President's Awards, which recognize the industry leaders who themselves serve as beacons for the role of public affairs in their companies and the industry."

Peter Kiley, CTPAA's current president and vice president, affiliate relations for C-SPAN, says the organization is poised to keep the five years remaining before its 25th anniversary on par with the best years from its first 20. "The strength of this organization is evident in the role its members play in advancing cable's business and public policy objectives. Public Affairs is now an accepted and appreciated profession by the marketing and business executives in the industry. We've come a long way thanks to the hugely successful efforts of the people who founded CTPAA twenty years ago. Now we are working hard to ensure that CTPAA is providing its members with the resources and educational opportunities necessary to continue their vital role in helping the industry achieve success."

Please note...

My apologies to the many readers of this review whose contributions to CTPAA's success have been overlooked. I know the feeling when you read an in-depth article and can't believe your company wasn't included. But we don't need to let it end here. Let's consider this the first attempt at gathering some of the key developments to incorporate into recognizing CTPAA's 25th anniversary. With five years to work on the project, we can make it much more comprehensive and a much better tribute to all of the noteworthy efforts of CTPAA's membership.

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CTPAA Milestones

- 1984..... Founders hold organizational planning meeting
- 1985..... CTPAA established
- 1986..... First CTPAA FORUM held in Denver, Colorado
- 1987..... "Public Affairs 101" training program launched
- 1988..... CTPAA retains Ed Dooley as its first Executive Director
- 1989..... C-SPAN's Brian Lamb Receives first President's Award
- 1990..... First Beacon (Crystal) Awards Competition and Awards Ceremony
- 1991..... CTPAA, CTA and NCTA develop industry training program
- 1992..... Association's management assigned to Pitelli and Partners
- 1993..... TCI's media training program distributed to CTPAA members
- 1994..... NCTA and CTPAA launch "Cable Communicates" Campaign
- 1996..... Sally Flynn and Ann Dorman become CTPAA's first FT managers
- 1997..... CTPAA launches www.ctpaa.org
- 1998..... "Live Auction" added to Silent Auction during FORUM
- 1999..... Record 576 entries received for Beacon Awards
- 2000..... CTPAA hires first non-cable executive director, Steven Jones
- 2001..... DC becomes permanent location for annual CTPAA FORUMs
- 2002..... CTPAA conducts extensive review of operations and launches a revised Strategic Plan
- 2003..... Web site re-launched with new navigation and sophisticated search functions
- 2004..... Graduate-level program started in conjunction with the George Washington University – CTPAA Public Affairs Institute
- 2005..... CTPAA celebrates its 20th anniversary at its 19th annual FORUM