PR in the Rural South

PR FROM A SMALL CHAPTER PERSPECTIVE: AN OVERVIEW
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MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER OF ASLA, PR/COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR & TREASURER
Overview...

- Context
- Issues facing Chapter
- What Chapter is Doing
- PR Happenings
- Lessons Learned
- Upcoming Events
- Questions
State’s Economy: +/- $156 B annually
  ~ $66 B – Manufacturer’s shipments (2012)
Education:
  82.3% hold High School Diplomas*
  20% hold Bachelor’s degrees or higher* or 1 in 5 people
    Nationally: 28.3% or 1 in 4 people *
* Person’s 25+ years of age, 2011-2015

Five Largest Cities:
- Jackson: 173,513
- Gulfport: 67,793
- Southaven: 48,982
- Hattiesburg: 45,989
- Biloxi: 44,054

Populous Areas:
- Jackson Metro: ~318,401 (blue)
- Gulf Coast: 198,718 (red)
- Desoto County: 122,622 (green)
Membership:
- On the Roles: 70 to 80 members
- Actively Involved: ~35 to 40 members

Emerging Professionals (EP):
- Mississippi State University graduates (BLA or MLA) leave state to practice as they do not see MS full of opportunity for LAs
Issues Facing Chapter

- **Membership:**
  - Aging membership
  - Limited EPs in chapter
  - Limited Member participation

- **BLA & MLA Graduates who remain in Mississippi**
  - BLA & MLA graduates - enter Design/Build and **DO NOT** join ASLA or seek licensure

- **Rural State:**
  - Members concentrated in 1 of the 3 populous area; others sparsely located
  - Difficult to host events w/ participation

- **Education:**
  - Lack of higher education within state and state’s elected officials affects ability to effectively market profession and services to policy makers or potential clients
What MS ASLA is Doing...

- Member Engagement
  - Email Campaigns
  - Annual Conference
  - Social Media

- Student / EP Engagement
  - Sharing Social Media Posts
  - Sponsorship of Student Chapter

- Public Engagement
  - Social Media
  - Events
  - Press Releases
WLAM - 2015

**PROS**

- Leveraged local newspaper contact for WLAM coverage
- Interview & photo shoot at a built landscape architecture project
- Reporter was very conscientious about understanding profession and did research

**CONS**

- Unable to pull off WLAM event with contact in Jordan
- Little chapter participation
Twin States Conference - 2016

- Largest chapter event annually
  - Greatest opportunity for MS & AL ASLA chapters for publicity
- Press Release generated local TV news coverage:
  - Audience: 56,987
  - Ad Value: $ 485
  - Calc. Publicity Value: $ 2,836.00
Greater membership participation with the “This is Landscape Architecture” campaign than 2015

Partnered with Miss. State Univ. Student ASLA to host a ‘10 Parks’ event at Oktibbeha County Heritage Museum

- The project has won Mississippi ASLA awards
- **ASLA National Award of Excellence** in 2013 for Student Collaboration in Service Learning
PARK(ing) Day 2016

- MS ASLA encouraged MSU Student ASLA to participate
  - Students planned & executed event in under a month’s time
- MS ASLA supported event
- MSU Student ASLA Objectives:
  - Reduce Impact on Environment
    - Sought donations of materials otherwise deemed unusable
    - Used leftover materials from NALP Student Competition a month prior
  - Encourage active lifestyle
  - Encourage collaboration between students as well as students and local businesses
PARK(ing) Day 2016
PR Lessons Learned...

- **Documentation:**
  - Record events with photos
  - Save electronic copies of press coverage for future use
  - **TIP:** Develop a file store structure & standard document layout/design

- **Voice of Chapter:**
  - Handle ALL Outbound AND inbound public communications
  - Consistent voice/position, formats, and sender
  - **TIP:** Prepare communications on behalf of other Ex Com officers for their review before release

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 1, 2016

The Mississippi Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) will be hosting the 2016 Twin States ASLA Conference, named “Rebooted to Design,” at The Mill at Mississippi State University in Starkville, Mississippi April 7-9, 2016.

The mission of the American Society of Landscape Architecture is to lead, educate, and participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning, and artful design of our cultural and natural environments. The Twin States Conference is a partnership of the Mississippi and Alabama Chapters of ASLA, established to promote these goals, to showcase the beauty, culture and history of each state, and to the Chapter’s primary fundraising activity each year. This year’s conference is expected to host over 70 attendees, including both professional practitioners and students from Mississippi State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture, as well as over 30 exhibitors in an industry exposition. For more information about the conference, including a schedule, list of speakers, and exhibitors, please visit: http://www.twinstatesconference.com/

This year’s conference coincides with ASLA’s World Landscape Architecture Month (WLAM) – a celebration and introduction of the landscape architecture profession to the general public that takes place each April. For more information about WLAM, please visit: https://www.asla.org/Content/Detail.aspx?id=65763

Additionally, the Mississippi Chapter of ASLA will be presenting our bi-annual Design Awards recognizing outstanding works of landscape architecture in the state of Mississippi on Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 6 PM. For more information about the MS ASLA Design awards, please visit: https://asla.org/awards/

Members of the media are invited to visit the conference. AL & MS ASLA Chapter officers as well as landscape architects will be available for interviews about the conference and the landscape architecture profession.

Please direct all questions and interview requests to:

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END OF PRESS RELEASE
PR Lessons Learned...

- **Email Campaigns:**
  - Less IS More
  - **TIP:** Create new mailing lists for specific events to prevent attrition from “chapter news” email lists, for example

- **Working with Press:**
  - What you want reported often is NOT what gets reported
  - **TIP:** Build relationships with press to increase coverage for chapter and profession

- **Engagement:**
  - You never know who is looking and sharing
  - **TIP:** If relevant to chapter or profession, SHARE, SHARE, SHARE!
Upcoming in 2017…

- **Mississippi Legislative Luncheon**
  - January 17, 2017 - hosting Legislators & Staff at State Capital
  - Members will engage guests in dialogue about how LAs protect HSW through profession’s work

- **Travelling Exhibit**
  - Using exhibit boards from Legislative Luncheon, will start a travelling exhibit to showcase profession at schools, public libraries, etc.

- **“The Mississippi Landscape Architect”**
  - Developing a semi-annual publication about profession in MS
  - Will be mailed to members as well as elected officials, municipalities, schools, etc.

- **Website Updates**
Questions?
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