

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

of building philanthropy in the western suburbs and

10th Annual Awards

of honoring philanthropic leaders

WSPN Celebrating 25th Anniversary and 10th Anniversary of the Annual Philanthropic Awards Luncheon

By Jill McWilliams, WSPN's VIEWPOINT editor

In the spring of 1986, a small group of six to 10 fundraisers, some new to the field and others experienced, began meeting informally in the western suburbs at each other's work sites. They discussed many topics of interest to the philanthropic community and were willing to share information and resources.

By fall of 1986, those who were providing leadership began organizing into a more credible educational, networking entity, and they explored ways in which the group could meet the needs of fundraisers working in the western suburbs. The group's intent was to provide guidance, support, networking, training and education for its members along with high-quality programming; moreover, offer affordable membership dues.

In 1993, the Chicago Chapter of National Society of Fund Raising Executives (known today as Association of Fundraising Professionals) invited the West Suburban Network (WSN) to participate in a Special Interest Group as a pilot program, though a legally binding agreement was never signed. One of the first organizational meetings as a SIG was held in September 1993 at Elmhurst College where leadership discussed ways of enhancing the WSN, improving programming and increasing participation. The pilot program ended in 2002 and the WSN went back to its original independent structure.

By fall of 2002, the WSN leadership began discussions regarding formalizing bylaws and securing nonprofit status. In August 2003, the organization was incorporated as an independent organization, given 501(c)(3) status (a nonprofit entity with tax-exempt status) and guidelines for operation. In addition, the legal name of the West Suburban Network was changed to the West Suburban Philanthropic Network. After WSPN's incorporation, the chair title was changed to president.

Through the next several years, the organization consulted with the county government to help start Giving DuPage, interacted with the Donor's Forum and College of DuPage (COD) to establish a satellite Philanthropy Center at COD's library, worked with several groups to create The Academy for Non-Profit Excellence (now defunct) at COD, launched the annual awards luncheon in 2002, encouraged members to participate in peer mentoring, began publishing a quarterly newsletter, and provided scholarships to its members.

Meet the founders and members who helped



At the time discussions began about starting the West Suburban Network, **Joe Skvara**, currently president of JS Consulting, had finished a six-year stint as a senior fundraising consultant with Campbell & Company in Chicago and was just beginning his 19-year career with Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital.

Skvara says his primary goal was to help development and executive directors from small- and medium-sized nonprofits understand and become more involved with the west suburban philanthropic process. During his time of involvement, he served as chair, membership chair and programs co-chair. For Skvara, one of the most significant accomplishments was seeing Rob Taylor's idea of the annual awards luncheon come to fruition. In 2003, Skvara received the WSPN Distinguished Service Award.

Skvara says, "I am very pleased that WSPN has remained a true, vibrant organization to teach people about the value of philanthropy."



In early 1986, **Val Ensalcó** was director of corporate and foundation development at Illinois Benedictine College (now Benedictine University) and also executive director of the President's Advisory Council. Through her professional networks, she was directed to the group and was actively involved in the founding of WSPN and shared responsibilities with the rest of the leadership team.

Ensalcó prepared the mission statement and bylaws, which an attorney used to prepare the articles of incorporation that led to the organization's current name and 501(c)(3) status. She served as secretary and chair, developed programming, hosted meetings, participated as a presenter and served as a mentor. In fall of 1997, she started WSPN's award-winning, quarterly newsletter, *VIEWPOINT*, and served on the board as editor for 14 years. In 2004, she received the WSPN Distinguished Service Award.

Ensalcó says, "Many individuals and groups have influenced the growth and sophistication of WSPN. Advancing the mission and growth of WSPN would not have been possible without the entire leadership committee—and later the officers and directors—sharing responsibilities. It takes a cohesive team to make things happen, and I've been privileged to serve among them."

Ensalcó, an award-winning writer and the 2005 and 2010 Illinois Communicator of Achievement, has recently retired from fundraising and completed her terms as an officer of the National Federation of Press Women and the Illinois Woman's Press Association. She is an independent writer, taking on small, temporary projects.



Ken Bartels, currently senior vice president/director of Community Bank of Elmhurst, and principal of Ken Bartels Consulting; was in his fifth year of a 28-plus-year career at Elmhurst College during a comprehensive campaign when conversations began among the suburban fundraising professionals. Each person felt that attending a group in Chicago became a full-day commitment at times, and many participants of these groups felt they did not receive the full value of their hefty membership dues.

Bartels felt strongly that advancement professionals in the western suburbs should have their own organization and networking opportunities. As the group matured, Bartels served on several committees, developed programming and presented many times. In 2005, Bartels received the WSPN Distinguished Service Award. Since that time, he has emceed the awards luncheon several times and continues to provide support, advice and encouragement to the current board.

Bartels says, "Like all start-up organizations, over time, there are periods when you wonder about its future. WSPN's growth and staying power sustains its founding premise. There was a need and WSPN filled it. I am very proud of what WSPN has become and am pleased to still be involved."



Tom Zuba, currently an author, grief guide and inspirational speaker, was working for his late wife, Patricia Brennan Zuba, who owned Bish Communications, which specialized in public relations, marketing and fundraising, when he became involved with the group in 1993.

At the first meeting as a SIG at Elmhurst College, Zuba volunteered to create a mailing list, which led to sending out meeting notices, which led to securing program speakers, which led to serving as the organization's first formal chair. Prior to Zuba taking the helm, the leadership took turns and shared responsibilities. Zuba reflects that the strength of WSPN was offering quality programs with a variety of speakers and providing networking and idea-sharing opportunities.

Zuba says, "I am in awe of the fact that the group is still alive and well and continues to meet a need in its current form. I have wonderful memories of the incredibly talented people I worked with and became friends with as we labored to birth the organization. My life has taken me in a different direction, and I am no longer in the field, so it is wonderful to reconnect in celebration of 25 years." To learn more about Zuba, please visit TomZuba.com.



Rob Taylor, currently founder of the Marlin Group of New York, was heading a fundraising program for Evangelical Health Systems (now Advocate Health Care), when Joe Skvara asked him to join the leadership team as program chair in the late '90s.

After several years on the committee and after a heart transplant, Taylor served as chair/president and, in 2002, was instrumental in starting the Annual Philanthropic Awards Luncheon, which recognizes individuals, businesses, foundations, and organizations that enhance philanthropy in the western suburbs. Funds from the luncheon helped support programming, scholarships and the newsletter. In 2007, Taylor received the WSPN Distinguished Service Award.

Taylor says, "Many people helped WSPN flourish, working very hard and demonstrating tremendous passion as they sought to promote philanthropy, professional development, volunteerism and a giving spirit in our communities. I am very proud to have been a part of these efforts."

WSPN today

In 1986, many development offices did not even have computers. Today, with technological advances, WSPN continues to evolve as a premier organization, yet it has kept its longstanding tradition of providing guidance, networking opportunities and education to fundraising professionals serving nonprofit organizations throughout the surrounding areas of Chicago. Board meetings and monthly programs are still hosted by various member organizations which allow members to become more closely acquainted with other nonprofits.

The volunteer-led board has made enhancements to WSPN's mission statement, bylaws and logo; conducted strategic planning retreats; revamped programmatic elements of the annual awards luncheon; created a new, user-friendly website incorporating eBlasts, online membership, scholarship applications and registration opportunities; incorporated member surveys; and created a LinkedIn group. WSPN currently serves about 220 members.

Thanks and appreciation are due to those visionaries who moved the organization from its modest beginnings—when a desk-drawer treasury was used for postage and meeting expenses—to opening a bank account, electing officers (including a treasurer) and, in the tradition of excellence established in those early years, WSPN continues to be a vital resource to the greater philanthropic community. The founding members express their gratitude to the membership who, over 25 years, have contributed to the longevity and success of WSPN and have brought honor to the fundraising profession.

Steering Committee Chairs, West Suburban Network (WSN)

1993-94	Tom Zuba
1994-95	Tom Zuba
1995-96	Tom Zuba
1996-97	Tom Zuba
1997-98	Joe Skvara
1998-99	Joe Skvara
1999-00	Kathy Wohlhuter
2000-01	Val Ensalaco
2001-02	Val Ensalaco
2002-03	Rob Taylor

Presidents, West Suburban Philanthropic Network (WSPN)

2003-04	Rob Taylor
2004-05	Martha Schiedler
2005-06	Michele Ambroz
2006-07	Stephanie Walsh
2007-08	Stephanie Walsh
2008-09	Brad Warren
2009-10	Brad Warren
2010-11	Lora Vitek
2011-12	Lora Vitek



EDUCATION • NETWORKING • ADVOCACY

WSPN mission: To offer support to development professionals and advance philanthropy.

WSPN, P.O. Box 268, Wheaton, IL 60189-0268

www.wspnonline.org