



Public Relations Association of Mississippi
CENTRAL CHAPTER

PRAM Central Chapter announces 2024 Outstanding Professionals



PRAM Central Chapter 2024 Outstanding Professionals of the Year are (from left) Kalli Hedgepeth, Emerging Practitioner; Paul Katool, Practitioner of the Year and President's Award winner; and Jean Cook, APR, Advanced Practitioner Award winner. They are pictured with PRAM Central 2024 President Sophie McNeil Wolf, APR.

JACKSON, Miss. – January 22, 2025 - The Public Relations Association of Mississippi Central Chapter awarded its highest accolades during its January chapter meeting to three outstanding members as part of the 2024 Outstanding Professionals of the Year Awards program.

Kalli Hedgepeth, a Madison resident, accepted the 2024 Emerging Practitioner Award. Paul Katool, a Jackson resident, accepted the 2024 Practitioner of the Year Award and the President's Award, and Jean Cook, APR, a Clinton resident, accepted the 2024 Advanced Practitioner Award.

"These awards celebrate the exceptional work and professionalism of our chapter members," said Sophie McNeil Wolf, APR, 2024 PRAM Central President. "This year's recipients exemplify the highest degree of excellence, innovation, and dedication in public relations, setting a standard for all of us in the field."

Nominees were evaluated on excellence in four key areas:

1. Outstanding Achievements – Including certifications, awards, promotions, and other professional recognitions
2. Creativity and Resourcefulness – Highlighting accomplishments through innovative use of resources, overcoming challenges, and professional impact
3. Professional Development – Emphasizing service to the PR profession and related associations
4. Community Service – Recognizing meaningful contributions beyond the workplace

Emerging Practitioner Award – Kalli Hedgepeth

Judges highlighted Kalli Hedgepeth's remarkable achievements in just two years of professional experience. Her work as a digital marketing strategist helped a Starkville business increase social media engagement by over 240%, social media reach by 1,800%, and business sales by more than 500%. Judges also commended her inclusivity efforts, such as translating a company newsletter into Spanish to broaden internal communication.



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Kalli earned her MBA and bachelor's degrees from Mississippi State University, graduating summa cum laude with concentrations in International Business and Integrated Digital Marketing. She currently serves as Director of Marketing for Green Oak.

Practitioner of the Year Award – Paul Katool

Judges praised Paul Katool's creativity and resourcefulness, particularly his role in launching his agency's presence on Nextdoor, enabling geo-targeted communication with Mississippians during emergencies at no cost to taxpayers — a nationally recognized effort. He also spearheaded an award-winning podcast fostering transportation and policy discussions, which contributed to record funding of nearly \$1.5 billion.

Paul serves as Deputy Director of Public Affairs at the Mississippi Department of Transportation, leading a 12-person team and overseeing strategies for social media, multimedia content, and digital messaging.

Advanced Practitioner Award – Jean Cook, APR

Judges noted Jean Cook's consistent recognition for professional excellence and her remarkable achievements, including a legacy project that raised \$100 million, with half directly tied to her PR expertise. Her 19 professional awards, three personal awards, and APR accreditation reflect her dedication to excellence.

Jean serves as Chief of Communication for the Mississippi Department of Education, where her leadership, creativity, and resourcefulness have left a profound impact on her organization and the profession.

President's Award – Paul Katool

The President's Award honors a volunteer board member who demonstrates a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, and a willingness to serve beyond their role to support the success of the organization.

This year's recipient, Paul Katool, is a resident of Jackson who serves as Treasurer on the PRAM Central Board. Paul stepped into this critical role during a transitional period, ensuring the organization's financial records were updated and in excellent order. His proactive approach, attention to detail, and steady guidance have been instrumental in strengthening PRAM Central's financial processes.

"Paul has been an incredible asset to our chapter," said Sophie McNeil Wolf, APR, current chapter president who selected the recipient. "His dedication and willingness to step up when we needed it most reflect his deep commitment to PRAM Central. Through his leadership as Treasurer, Paul has brought a renewed sense of clarity and organization to our financial management, ensuring we're set up for continued success."

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About PRAM Central:

Founded in 1956, PRAM Central is the largest of nine local chapters geographically located throughout Mississippi. It serves as the premier source for networking, continuing education, and professional development for public relations professionals in central Mississippi. With over 130 members, its membership includes professionals from agencies, corporations, nonprofits, government, education, and industrial sectors, as well as students aspiring to join the profession. The chapter is an autonomous affiliate of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi (PRAM State).