



Public Relations Association of Mississippi
CENTRAL CHAPTER

News Release

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Pictured are (from left) Paul Katool, Jan Schaefer, APR; Martha Grace Gray, Jeremy Cole, Chrystelle Thames, APR; Vanessa Lowe-Garcia, Emily-Kate Ford, Sophie McNeil Wolf, APR; Micheal King, Matt Westerfield, APR; and Kalli Hedgepeth.

PRAM Central 2026 Board of Directors installed

JACKSON, Miss. — The Public Relations Association of Mississippi Central Chapter installed its 2026 Board of Directors at the organization’s chapter meeting Jan. 28 at The Rickhouse by Manship event venue in Jackson.

The volunteer board consists of 11 accomplished public relations practitioners from the central Mississippi area. Board members manage the nonprofit’s operations and create opportunities for the 130-plus chapter members to advance the practice of public relations. Four board members have earned their Accreditation in Public Relations (APR). The chapter is an affiliate of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi.

The PRAM Central 2026 board was elected by a majority vote of the chapter’s membership to lead the chapter’s efforts to provide networking, continuing education and professional development to public relations professionals near the Jackson metro area. Officers in attendance were sworn in by Bill Moak, APR, the 2022 past president of PRAM Central, and all board members formally began their terms for the year.

“I am very excited to serve as the 2026 PRAM Central President with this amazing board,” said Chrystelle Thames, APR. “This team already has big ideas to foster professional growth and provide opportunities for our members to achieve excellence personally and professionally. This is a group of talented, award-winning professionals, and I am honored to work alongside them to enhance the PRAM Central Chapter experience and advance the public relations profession in our area and throughout Mississippi.”

The board consists of the following professionals:

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Chrystelle Thames, APR resides in Clinton and serves as president. She is the Director of Communications at The Baptist Children's Village.

Vanessa Lowe-Garcia resides in Brandon and serves as the president-elect. She is the Media Relations Director at the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

Paul Katool resides in Madison and serves as vice president of programs. He is the Deputy Director of Public Affairs at the Mississippi Department of Transportation.

Emily-Kate Ford resides in Clinton and serves as the vice president of membership. She is the Associate Director of Communications for The Baptist Children's Village.

Kalli Hedgepeth resides in Madison and serves as the vice president of communications. She is the Marketing Director at Green Oak.

Jeremy Cole resides in Clinton and serves as the secretary. He is the Marketing Director at the Mississippi Department of Education.

Matt Westerfield, APR resides in Pearl and serves as career development coordinator. He is the Communications Director at the Mississippi Division of Medicaid.

Micheal King resides in Brandon and is the treasurer. He is the communications specialist at the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

Martha Grace Gray resides in Madison and serves as member-at-large. She is the Art Director at the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Sophie McNeil Wolf, APR resides in Jackson and is a member-at-large. She is the Director of Communications and Data at the Community Foundation for Mississippi.

Jan Schaefer, APR, resides in Madison and is the past president. She is the Director of Communications at the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

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About PRAM Central

Founded in 1956, PRAM Central is the largest of nine local chapters geographically located throughout the state. It serves as the premier source for networking, continuing education and professional development for public relations professionals throughout 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).