

Gaila Barnett
APA Welcome Presentation

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Thank you, Kim. Before you leave the stage, I'd like to thank you for that kind introduction – and a whole lot more. **Your term as**

President has left big shoes for me to fill. ~~From the updating of our Strategic Plan to the new APA-branded TAS Field Reference Manual,~~

your leadership over the last year **has been as inspirational** as your

efforts have been exhausting. As an organization, we **can never**

thank you enough for all you have done.

But what we can do is this: On behalf of the members of the APA, it is my privilege to **present to you** this _____ as a token of our appreciation for your **time**, your **talents** and **your leadership**. Thank you.

Kim accepts award and exits

I first joined this organization in 2002, when it was the Texas Registered Accessibility Specialists Association or TRASA. I was **one of the 87 Charter members**. As we grew from 87 to 240 members,

I watched many of my colleagues and friends expend tremendous amounts of time and energy to make our organization what it is today.

In appreciation for the difference TASA had made in my life, I decided at one point that, when my personal commitments were reduced, I wanted to give back to the organization and make a difference myself. **That's why I'm here.** I'm excited, motivated and completely focused on building our association into the premier accessibility organization in the United States.

Back then, we had our own Texas Accessibility Codes, our own Certification through TDLR as Registered Accessibility Specialists, our own training and our own continuing education. Texas had a very unique program that did not exist in other parts of the country and other states sought to develop similar programs. So, back then, there really wasn't much reason to think about expanding beyond Texas.

But, since then, our goals and needs as an organization have expanded. Our membership has expanded beyond RAS members. Members in other states and other industries have realized the benefits of our resources; including design, architecture, engineering, code consulting, and construction. We began to not only provide training on various accessibility codes and components of the codes but to collaborate with ~~government agencies~~ and other organizations to provide certification programs in different market sectors. In recognition of this new direction for our organization, we changed our name to Accessibility Professionals Association in 2011.

Then, in March 2012, the State of Texas adopted new Federal Standards with minor revisions and other States are considering the adoption of those standards as well. The standards cover the scoping and technical requirements for accessibility to sites, facilities, buildings, and elements by all individuals with disabilities. As a result, a large percentage of our membership now offers accessibility consulting services outside of Texas and would benefit from a National Organization.

Today, over half of our membership has indicated their desire to expand our organization beyond the State of Texas. In support of this membership interest, the APA Board of Directors has adopted the goal of expanding our membership beyond the State of Texas in the next two years.

One of the lynchpins of that initiative will be training. Training is one of the most important components of the resources we provide. Up to this point, our training has been exclusively tailored to the

requirements of the State of Texas. But now, with the new codes in effect, the training we provide can be applied to accessibility codes outside the State of Texas. Our training can now expand globally and provide accessibility codes education for National, Federal and other State Accessibility Codes that can be used in many industries.

In order to reach our expansion goal the APA Board of Directors needs your support. In addition to being a resource for training and technical information, we also plan to provide certification for accessibility knowledge in a variety of market sectors. We need all of you to get involved and provide the input we need to make our expansion a success.

Pause

As I was writing my notes for explaining my vision for APA in 2013 and why I wanted to be APA president, two of my past experiences kept crossing my mind. One was my background in Architecture and the second was a book that I was assigned to read sixteen years ago called *Built to Last*.

Using an architectural process model, I am looking at 2013 as an idealized design process and asking the question: “How do we come up with the best solution to expand our organization?” And the answer I keep coming up with is “designing from inside-out” In the “inside-out” approach, the needs of end user are the prime design criteria. The result is a design that more effectively serves both short and long term purposes and provides greater value than traditional design processes. The inner core of each inside-out project consists of values, strategic goals, immediate purposes and long-term needs. Applying these principles to APA, our users are our members and their needs are our goals.

The optimal design for our organization will be developed by end-user opinions, observations, analysis, interviews, surveys, and dialogues . Through their participation in Association activities our members make their needs known, gain a fuller understanding of where we’re

headed and help shape our plans. With the variety of expertise among us, we intend to be the master architects of “The Premier Accessibility Consulting Organization.”

But Change is difficult; growth is painful. Like any other project, our expansion plans need a schedule and a list of milestones. We are considering the next couple of years as mock up years during which we can tweak everything and establish a good growth model. Our objective is to become a visionary organization that is the apex institution in our industry, one that is widely admired by knowledgeable professionals and makes a real difference in the world.

Continuous improvement is a way of life, not a management fad. In a visionary organization, core ideology provides continuity, stability, and cohesion, while the drive for progress promotes change, improvement, innovation, and renewal. The challenge is to build for the long term and the critical question is not “How can we do well?” or “How can we meet the competition?” but “How can we do better tomorrow than we did today?”

To be a visionary organization, we must strive for self-improvement day in and day out, invest in new technologies and new management methods, and take calculated risks to achieve our goals. And we must always keep one eye on the long term, even when it’s hard to do. With your full support and participation, this is something we can do, we must do and we will do. As you go about your activities here at our annual meeting, I would like you to do so with this thought in mind: We’re going to EXPAND OUR BOUNDARIES and become the premier National Accessibility Organization in the USA!

Applause

Before I close, I would like ~~have been asked~~ to say just a few words about our committees – and that’s very challenging – because I can’t say *enough* about the work of the committees of the APA. Ours is a volunteer organization. We have an Executive Director, but the

values, ideas and visions that guide us come from volunteers, especially from committee members. It's the work of our committees that creates the effectiveness of our training, our reputation for expertise and the credibility of our certification program. They are our life-blood.

Now let me acknowledge up front that participating on an APA committee is a lot of work – but it's work that I have personally found to be as rewarding as it is "vigorous." You learn leadership working on a committee; as competing ideas are advanced, discussed, modified and prioritized. You learn far more about both our organization and our profession than you otherwise would, making you more knowledgeable, more valuable and more successful. And committee work gives you an unparalleled opportunity to network with your peers and learn from their experiences and viewpoints. If you have yet to serve on an APA committee, you have a very rewarding experience waiting for you. I urge each of you to take a look at our committees, decide where you might make a contribution and volunteer.

Our Committees include:

~~The Legislative & Legal Committee, responsible for interfacing with TDLR.~~

~~The Technical Standards Committee, providing technical assistance to APA members, improving the web site/Forum and coordinating technical FAQ's,~~

~~The Communications, Marketing & Membership Committee, which promotes APA members to potential clients within the design & construction industry, and maintains APA internal communications and improves external marketing tools,~~

~~The Education & Events Committee, which maintains and improves education services for Texas RAS's , AIA Members and other Design Professionals,~~

~~The Jim Boyce Memorial Scholarship Committee, which awards The Jim Boyce Memorial Scholarship to deserving Design students.~~

~~For 2013, I have made some adjustments in the structure and goals of our committees which have been distributed to the Chairs and current members of each committee. I have also established new task forces...~~

We have also proposed task forces under several of the committees that you can get involved in.

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I will then point out the different locations where each committee chairs and Task force group is located for the members to select what to attend to learn more about (brief kick off meeting).