

Kentucky School ADVOCATE

JUNE 30, 2017

A special Brad Hughes edition for the Kentucky School Boards Association



THE DEAN OF KENTUCKY SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS RETIRES

Tributes from:

- Kentucky education advocates • Kentucky superintendents
- National School Boards Association • K-SBA presidents
- School p.r. professionals in Kentucky and elsewhere



A bit about Brad

Brad Hughes has been helping people get their message out for more than 40 years. His career evolved from being a newspaper, radio and television reporter to being a public relations professional for nonprofit entities.

Brad, 64, spent a decade as executive director of the Office of Communications for the Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources, at the time state government's largest agency. During his tenure there, the unit was named the nation's outstanding state government public affairs program by the National Association of Government Communicators.

He has headed KSBA's Member Support and Communications Services since 1993. During that time he also has been a consultant and trainer on community and news media relations, presenting both in Kentucky and out of state, as well as for national groups such as the National School Boards Association. As a trainer, he has been part of KSBA's Training Cadre, developing courses in media relations and school board ethics.

In building KSBA's communications unit from the ground up, Brad:

- Established the newspaper clipping service that is now the electronic eNews Headline Service, serving 4,000 people.
- Transformed a scholarly journal into what is now a magazine, the *Kentucky School Advocate*, to which he contributes a widely read – and quoted – monthly column, Get Your Message Out.
- Created the Public Education Achieves in Kentucky (PEAK) Award, which twice a year honors a school or district for a program that is improving student achievement.
- Became the go-to resource for school board members, district and school administrators and school p.r. people who need advice on communications issues.
- Established himself as a resource on P-12 education for reporters around the state (and on many occasions, the nation), as well as a reliable source for a pithy quote. In doing so, he raised the statewide visibility of KSBA itself.
- Developed what amounts to a communications curriculum for school board members, educating them on news media and community relations.

Other service

Brad has been a longtime member of the Kentucky

School Public Relations Association Board of Directors. In that capacity, he designed the Outstanding Achievement in School Information Services (OASIS) professional development program for those who work in school p.r., and coordinated entries and judging each year.

He is a member and past president of the national Council of School Boards Association Communicators and the Kentucky Association of Government Communicators.

Brad, a 1975 graduate of Western Kentucky University, has served on its Alumni Association Board of Directors and is a WKU Alumni Ambassador.

Honors

A highlight of Brad's KSBA career came in 2004 when he was chosen by the National School Boards Association to receive the Thomas J. Shannon Leadership Award for contributions to public education by a state school boards association staff member. He also received the 2002 Liebman National Media Award from the National Association for Year-Round Education for a series of articles on year-round schooling in Kentucky.

In 1999, Brad was selected by the Bluegrass Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, in cooperation with the Kentucky Association of Government Communicators, as the first recipient of the Jennifer Schaaf Award, recognizing "a career dedicated to the public interest in government communications." The Kentucky School Public Relations Association has twice recognized his service: in 1997 with the O. V. Jones Award, the organization's highest honor, and in 1999 with the creation of an annual school communications training scholarship in his name.

The personal

Brad's muse, right-hand woman and basket-weaver extraordinaire, his "bride" Judy, joins him on his retirement journey as she has joined him in every other facet of his life for the past 33 years of their marriage. The couple met on the way to a fire as reporters for competing news outlets in Bowling Green, a story Brad loves to tell.

Retirement, or semiretirement, will give Brad more time to dote on his eight nieces and nephews, some as close by as Franklin, Kentucky and others as far away as Texas, Colorado and Virginia. ■

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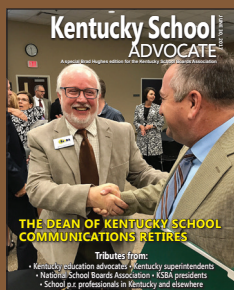
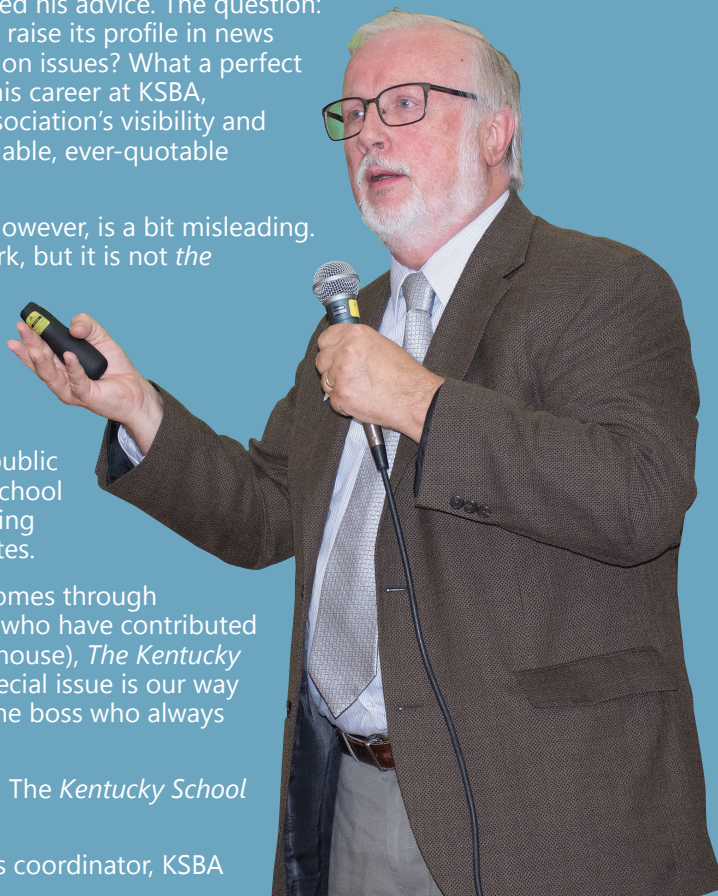
Just a couple weeks before his retirement date, Brad got a call from an executive of a school boards association in another state who needed his advice. The question: How could the association raise its profile in news media coverage of education issues? What a perfect query as Brad closed out his career at KSBA, since he has raised this association's visibility and credibility as its always-reliable, ever-quotable spokesman.

Brad's devotion to KSBA, however, is a bit misleading. It is a motivator for his work, but it is not *the* motivator. He wants to do his best for the students of Kentucky, and KSBA is merely the vehicle, whether it is commenting on a piece of legislation, advising a school district public relations official, training school board members or bolstering his colleagues in other states.

This is the message that comes through loud and clear from those who have contributed to what we are calling (in-house), *The Kentucky School Bradvocate*. This special issue is our way of saluting and thanking the boss who always had our backs.

Madelynn Coldiron, editor, *The Kentucky School Advocate*

Matt McCarty, publications coordinator, KSBA



On the cover

Barren County Schools Superintendent Bo Matthews, right, congratulates Brad Hughes at the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative board meeting in June. The co-op recognized Hughes and superintendents who are retiring this year following the board's regular meeting. Brad regularly attended the GRREC board meetings on behalf of KSBA. (Photo courtesy of GRREC)



My friend (and mentor) Bradley



Allen Kennedy
KSBA Immediate
Past President

Brad Hughes is the epitome of a true professional in the area of media coverage and training and development. His career has covered all aspects of that work and more. Many in the field, including the National School Boards Association, state school boards associations, school boards, teachers associations, etc., in the U.S. seek him.

Announcer Voice: throughout my career I have been acquainted with several off-camera/stage announcers but Brad is hands-down the best of the best. He is focused, in his element and, above all, in control of the situation at that time.

I remember as a new KSBA board member attending one of my first sessions with Brad facilitating, called "The Perfect Interview." After he shared some cool headlines to prove his point, I quickly received three distinct points to remember:

- ✓ Lead point = Main message
- ✓ Second point = Supportive example
- ✓ Third point = Why main message matters

I have aspired to follow these directions but have found my tendency to ad lib would get me in trouble at times. I will never forget the importance of his training on many diverse subjects from interviewing to school board ethics.

Another wonderful session from Brad was his rendition of "When Pigs Fly." We were given a series of practical, proven ways to increase community awareness of district success stories and ways to become involved in supporting schools' efforts. By the end of the class, we were able to create a sample engagement/marketing/branding plan workable for school systems regardless of size or staff support.

During my tenure at KSBA Brad has gone "above and beyond" the call of duty to help me survive many potential catastrophic events by being my mentor, even though he had his work cut out for him. I did not get too excited about some things that maybe I should have been more focused on. My goal was to get-er-done and go to the next item on the agenda.

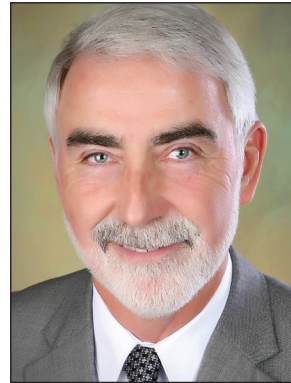
In the midst of Brad's perfect world there are multiple things that I did to ring his bell:

- Time management CEO: It is difficult for me to say hello in five minutes, especially during my inauguration address as president-elect. Brad kept raising his timing signs, but I paid zero attention to them, and he finally gave up and let me finish.
- Hair combed/tie straight: Brad is a stickler for perfection. In the absence of my wife, he had to constantly remind me of the condition of my attire.

Brad is a cornerstone of the KSBA organization and will be sorely missed. He has been a mentor and personal friend of mine and Lois'. We wish him and Judy God's protection, the best in his retirement, and continued success in whatever he chooses to do going forward. ■

Allen Kennedy is past president of KSBA and chairman of the Hancock County Board of Education

"Master of many trades"



David Webster
KSBA President

Where do I start? Brad is one of a kind. Someone you never forget after you meet. He has a way about him that you can draw strength from. He will brighten your day. He is a wealth of knowledge about many different things. The old saying, "Jack of all trades and master of none," doesn't apply to Brad. He is a master of many trades.

He has inspired me to be more than I am – to step out beyond what I thought I could do. I enjoy his antics, his T-shirts and direction in times of uncertainty.

There will never be another Brad Hughes, and there shouldn't be.

Oh, by the way – he is from Simpson County. Maybe those roots is where he gets his wisdom! ■

David Webster is the current president of the KSBA Board of Directors and chairman of the Simpson County school board

Showing up when it counts



Bill Lovell
Former
KSBA President

Brad Hughes! What can I say? My first memory of Brad was his great T-shirts that always got our attention at annual conference. What a great personality he has. When I became involved with KSBA on the board and later as president, his friendship and professional help to me were priceless. I am not sure all presidents used Brad's talent as I did, but I expect that was the case. All presidents were to submit to the *Kentucky*

School Advocate a bimonthly column, and he made me look like I knew what I was writing about. Ha. What a great asset Brad has been to KSBA.

On a personal note, Brad seemed to be in attendance at places where I never expected him to be. I recall that Brad showed up at my Dad's funeral, which meant a lot to me. One of our longtime board members on the McLean County board passed away recently and guess who showed up at the funeral home? Of course, it was Brad. What a great person. KSBA will miss him. I wish Brad a happy retirement and a long and healthy life.

Love you Brad. And thanks. ■

Bill Lovell is chairman of the McLean County school board, a member of the KSBA Training Cadre and former KSBA president

"Always on the move for kids"



Joe Brothers
Former
KSBA President

Brad Hughes! Brad Hughes is retiring? The communicator extraordinaire is retiring? The smooth voice from the ceiling at our conferences is fading into the sunset? Breaking news, Brad Hughes is retiring!

Sorry, I just couldn't resist being a little melodramatic at this moment! Brad Hughes deserves a little drama! He has done a great job for education, and more particularly, for the children of Kentucky.

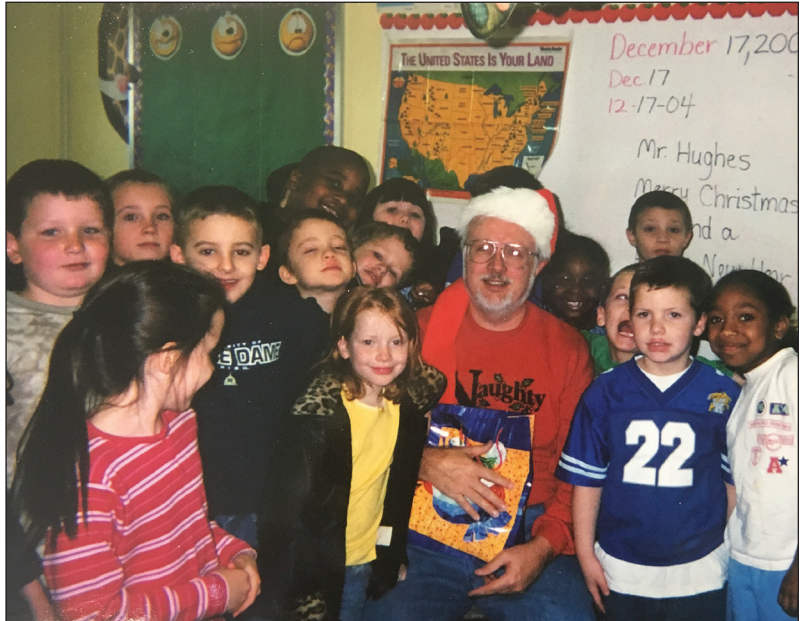
During my years of service with KSBA, Brad was always a reliable source of sound common-sense advice and guidance in dealing not only with communication on issues, but for effectively addressing education and political leaders as well. His insight into issues and how to "get your message out" was always on target and helpful. I cannot recall how many times David Keller or one of the other KSBA folks told me that Brad could get more done than you can imagine. In fact, if you wanted to talk to Brad, you might have to move fast while he worked on some task that he was in process of completing. He was always on the move for kids!

His guidance to me and many others as we served as school board members, KSBA directors, or with the State Board of Education was always timely and helpful! He was in the forefront of introducing color into the *Kentucky School Advocate* and other printed materials for KSBA. His use of electronic media was leading edge. His training through classroom instruction, various publications and seminars was classroom ready and workplace applicable for school board members.

It was always a pleasure to work with Brad on any assignment. He will be missed at KSBA and around the state as he moves on to retirement. Thank you, Brad for your untiring efforts to help all of us, but especially for your labor of love for the children of Kentucky!

We are proud of you and your accomplishments. They will bear fruit for Kentucky kids for decades to come! ■

Joe Brothers is a former Kentucky Board of Education chairman, KSBA president and member of the Elizabethtown Independent school board.



As a volunteer at Second Street Elementary in Frankfort for many years, Brad celebrated the holidays with a class that he regularly read to.

Hughes "made me a better school board member"



Margie Bradford
Former
KSBA President

I was a member of the board of directors when KSBA had the opportunity to hire Brad. I can remember how excited we were to have snagged such a prominent and well-respected journalist. We felt we had hit the jackpot.

Brad set to work at whipping us into shape, teaching us how to serve the public interest by keeping the community informed, but making sure that we spoke through one designated individual and with one voice.

He taught us to be proactive in telling the community what our programs are all about, and tooting our horn in explaining those things to the community.

He said the three most important rules were 1)

Communication 2) Communication and, lastly, 3) Communication.

It was a lesson I took to heart and I've tried to adhere to during the 34-plus years that I was a school board member.

I would like to say that it has been a pleasure and privilege to have worked with Brad Hughes for many of those years. I feel that the things I learned from him made me a better school board member.

And that is a message worth getting out. ■

Margie Bradford was KSBA president in 1993-1994 and was a longtime member of the Bardstown Independent school board.

Quotes on Brad Hughes from across Kentucky and elsewhere

“C

ongrats. More time to watch the Yankees!!!!” Dr. Terry Holliday, former Kentucky education commissioner



Photo courtesy of Scott County Schools



“Thank you for many years of sharing the great stories of Kentucky public schools. Thank you also for keeping us educated and informed. ... You are top-notch – always professional – always eloquent.” Kathy Burkhardt, superintendent, Erlanger-Elsmere Independent Schools

“You are truly one of the finest colleagues with which I have worked. You are professional, fair and amazingly helpful. Also, you are a true friend! Have fun in many, many, many years of retirement.” John Wright, director of public relations, Hardin County Schools

“It’s been a pleasure knowing and learning from you all these years. Wishing you and your better half a wonderful next chapter!” Glenn Cook, contributing editor, *American School Board Journal*

“We wouldn’t be the group (Council of School Boards Association Communicators) we are today without your guidance, suggestions, and humor. We will all miss you terribly and I personally can’t wait to read the “Only Brad” retirement stories on Facebook. Best of luck to you and to Judy in the future; thank you for being a shining example of the best in Association communications.” Jennifer Nelson, director, Information Services, Illinois Association of School Boards

“Thanks for all the help you were for me at WBKO-TV, over the years in your Frankfort roles and for your continued kindness and friendship. I so admire your devotion to the band contest at

Franklin-Simpson High School. It says a lot about you as a person of commitment and character.” Ben Sheroan, editor, *News-Enterprise*, Elizabethtown



“I have respected you and your work from when I was a principal and my respect has greatly increased as I moved into this role four years ago....Board members and superintendents will long benefit from your endeavors; however, the true benefactors will continue to be the students we all collectively serve. Best in retirement.”

Elmer Thomas, superintendent, Madison County Schools

“This is a huge gap to fill. You have been the perfect example of sharing experiences (good and bad), motivating others and also, most importantly, lifting others up. It won’t be the same without you.” Justin Pauly, director of communications, Georgia School Boards Association

“Everyone will be seeking you out now that you’re retiring. Just pick and choose how best to contribute your considerable talents!” Stephanie Bateman, former communications director, Jefferson County Schools

“A lot of knowledge is walking out the door!” Shannon Pratt Stiglitz, former KSBA governmental relations director

“The end of an era for sure! You will be missed both professionally and personally by a lot of people!” Kevin Grebe, former CFO, KSBA



"Thanks so much for helping us tell our stories. You have been such a great messenger for Kentucky schools and supporter of the advancement of education in the Commonwealth." Rachel Yarbrough, superintendent, Webster County Schools

"Count me among the many that feel so lucky to have worked with you. Honesty, class, great manners and directness come to mind,

but even more, a king-sized sense of humor. Thanks for all the help." Michael Wilson, communications director, Washington State School Directors Association

"So sorry to learn about Brad Hughes's impending retirement. He has been a wonderful resource to me (and occasional contributor to our magazine). I deal with a lot of school p.r. folks, and I rank Brad at the very top in terms of responsiveness. He will be missed on this end." – Jay P. Goldman, editor, *School Administrator* magazine, AASA, the School Superintendents Association

"It was a pleasure working with you from the beginning, at WFKN, and again at the *Daily News*/WKCT. Our paths have crossed many times since, and I greatly appreciate your willingness to help the long line of reporters a certain Lexington newspaper has thrown at you through the years." Tom Caudill, managing editor, *Lexington Herald-Leader*



"Your daily updates on the news around the state is more welcome than you might know. It isn't uncommon for a specific article to catch the eye of a superintendent who then forwards his/her thoughts to other superintendents that generates a discussion group about a particular situation. It is an opportunity for us to grow professionally

You have always been a crowd favorite in your presentations at KSBA and you always provided a warm and welcoming presence at all meetings. Your wisdom and experience will not be easily replicated." Leon Smith, superintendent, Russellville Independent Schools.

"Congratulations on your decision to retire and your commitment to your profession. You can be proud of your contributions to public service and Kentucky's educational opportunities, Proud to call you friend. (Now maybe Judy can teach you to weave beautiful baskets too!)" Alan Palmer, retired director of marketing, Greenview Hospital, Bowling Green and former news director, WKCT-AM and WBKO-TV

"Brad, I've held you up for years as an example to young journalists and p.r. people alike as to how it should be done. What a remarkable career you've had and impact you've made on the world around you." Dan Burgess, senior vice president, Doe-Anderson and former WHAS-AM reporter

"Noooooooooooooooooooo!!! And by that I mean NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!! But seriously, Brad... your knowledge, wisdom, friendship and good, good soul have blessed me and this group for many years. You will be missed, but never forgotten, my friend! And there's always Facebook." Tracey Benson, associate executive director, Arizona School Boards Association

"If there's anyone on this planet that deserves this, it's you, Brad. Congratulations. I look forward to following your burgeoning post-retirement basket-making exploits." Chip Polston, senior vice president communications, Kentucky Lottery Corporation

"I remember trying to "beat" Brad to a story – any story! – back when I was interning at the *Daily News* and he was across the street at KCT/DNS. Don't know that I ever managed to do it, though." D.T. Whitaker, general counsel, Union Underwear Co., and former reporter, Bowling Green *Daily News* ■

"It's About Kids" is born

By Stu Silberman

When I first met Brad Hughes it was 1995, I was 43 years old, and was the newly appointed superintendent of Daviess County Schools. I came to this great state from Tennessee and had a lot to learn about Kentucky education. I was blessed to be able to serve in a district with outstanding teachers and staff and an excellent board of education. Well, during that first year as superintendent, I attended the KSBA conference and selected a session being conducted by this guy named Brad Hughes. I did not know him but as it turned out, that session had a huge impact on my leadership for the rest of my career.

I remember Brad talking about the 1992 presidential election between George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Clinton's campaign strategist, James Carville, came up with the slogan, "It's The Economy Stupid!" I remember Brad telling the group that it was the same thing in education, except for us, "It's The Kids Stupid!"

Brad's words rang loud and clear to me as I reflected about why we do what we do every day. I thought to myself that this would be a tremendous mantra for a school district. This would be a mantra where everything we did and every decision we made was about kids! I did not mention this to anyone but I asked a local bank to fund the purchase of some T-shirts for our faculty and staff.

We held an administrative retreat shortly after that and each administrator received a T-shirt with a bunch of kids on them and large bold letters, I.A.K. They did not know what the letters meant yet and seemed somewhat suspicious, so we held a contest to see if anyone could guess what it stood for. There were some hilarious guesses but one I haven't forgotten was, "I'm Against KERA!" The guessing game was fun, broke the ice, and "It's About



Daviess County Schools unfurls a flag emblazoned with its new motto, It's About Kids, inspired by Brad Hughes during his communications training. At left in this mid-1990s photo is then-Superintendent Stu Silberman.

Kids" became the mantra for the Daviess County Schools. It was an amazing sight to see every staff member in the district wearing one of these shirts on opening day as we talked about why we existed as a school district. I have to say that the people lived by this mantra and our kids were the beneficiaries.

Well, we sent Brad one of our shirts and he began using it in his presentations. He would wear it under a regular shirt and when he got to the part about it being about kids he would tear open his shirt and our T-shirt would be right there for everyone to see it's about kids!

Brad's presentations not only helped the kids in Daviess County, they helped kids from all across the state. Many districts adopted mantras with a major focus on kids. When I left Daviess County after nine years and went to serve in Fayette County, we renamed our Central Office in Lexington, "It's About Kids Support Services" and had our brick masonry students erect a beautiful

sign/planter in front of the building on Main Street and our horticulture students planted beautiful flowers so all in the community would be reminded of why we existed every day as they passed the building. Fayette County adopted the "It's About Kids" mantra and it had a powerful impact on our culture.

All of this because a great guy named Brad Hughes had the ability to break down our missions into a simple slogan with laser focus that was a benefit to thousands of kids across Kentucky! Thank you, Brad, for your dedicated service to Kentucky education and for your impact on me personally. Now, try to remember, "It's About Retirement!!!!"

Wishing you the best. ■

Stu Silberman is a former superintendent of Daviess and Fayette county school districts and the retired executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.



"All of this because a great guy named Brad Hughes had the ability to break down our missions into a simple slogan with laser focus that was a benefit to thousands of kids across Kentucky! Thank you, Brad, for your dedicated service to Kentucky education and for your impact on me personally."

– Stu Silberman

Shared knowledge, wisdom and humor

By Nicholas D. Caruso Jr.

My history with Brad has to have gone back to 1997, (like Brad, my mind doesn't always remember everything as clearly as I used to) when I attended my first Council of School Boards Association Communicators conference in Orlando, Florida. Brad and I hit it off and I quickly got into the COSBAC scene. In part due to Brad's counsel, I was "Rookie of the Year" that year! COSBAC became a highlight of my annual calendar and getting together with my COSBAC "homies" was the biggest reason why.

I am always amazed at how Brad manages to impart knowledge, wisdom and humor into all that he does for KSBA, COSBAC and NSBA. Fortunately, as my work with COSBAC drew to a close and I got more involved with the Trainers' group, I still have had numerous opportunities to work with Brad, and I've enjoyed every one!

I really thought Brad missed his annual April Fools' Day joke and his announcement was just a way of catching up, but I guess not... I've learned a lot from Brad and enjoyed his company. Luckily, I can keep up with him through Facebook. Brad – I wish you and Judy the best as you retire! My advice – get a second TV so when *Dancing With the Stars* comes on you can watch whatever you please! ■

Nicholas D. Caruso Jr. is the senior staff associate, Field Service, and coordinator of technology for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education



Brad in his early days at KSBA.

"How may I help you?"

By Dr. James Evans

Many roles come to mind when I think of Brad Hughes: leader, supporter, confidant, visionary, friend, and the list goes on. As a new superintendent in 2008, I was continually searching for available resources to assist our district in both promoting the positive and offsetting the negative. Brad Hughes became that resource for me. His remarkable communication skills have helped our



Dr. James Evans

district share news both good and bad in an understandable, transparent and positive light. He has always been one phone call away, and I've always had the utmost confidence in his opinions and advice.

For years, as the voice of KSBA, Brad has been admired by his colleagues throughout both Kentucky and the nation. His sessions on media response, public relations, and telling a school district's story have taught me how to better communicate with our board, parents,

students and community. In times of crisis, Brad is the first person I want to talk with. He has helped me respond on issues ranging from bomb threats to bed bugs, guns, lockdowns and inclement weather, just to name a few. Any time Lee County School District has been in crisis, Brad Hughes has been there to help me get out in front of the story.

His unsurpassed knowledge of public relations has rendered him invaluable to not only me, but to other superintendents, school board members and educators across the Commonwealth.

He always answers his phone with "This is Brad Hughes, how may I help you?" and help us he does. He has a remarkable way of transforming information given to him into the kind of story that you would want to tell. He's come to my aid many times, and I've always been fully confident in any advice he has given me. My hat is off to Brad for all his help over the years and I wish him the very best. His efforts will never be forgotten. ■

James Evans Jr., Ed.D., is superintendent of Lee County Schools and recipient of the 2017 F.L. Dupree Award for Outstanding Superintendent



The mock video interview has been a staple of Brad's communications training from day one, with him playing the role of reporter and participants responding – as trained – with their “three talking points.” Above photo is from a KSBA annual conference early in Brad's tenure; below is from training he conducted for the Michigan Association of School Boards.

A REPORTER'S STRAIGHTFORWARD AND ACCESSIBLE RESOURCE

By Tom Loftus

FRANKFORT, Ky. – *Courier-Journal* statehouse reporter Tom Loftus reacted with shock and dismay upon learning that Brad Hughes will retire as the spokesman for the Kentucky School Boards Association.



Tom Loftus

“How the heck does Brad expect me to write any education stories now?” Loftus asked.

The veteran reporter is famous for dodging stories about the most important public policy issue in the state – public education. Yet frequently his efforts at avoidance have failed and he has reluctantly been forced to try to understand the complexities of myriad education issues.

“In such situations, my first call was to Brad. Hey, everybody tries to spin a reporter. But I always believed Brad spelled out all sides of an issue in a manner that was about as straightforward as possible,” Loftus said. “More important, he was always accessible – and generous with his time – when I needed simply to check a fact, a name or a number.”

Loftus boasted that – thanks to his occasional phone calls to Hughes – he not once incorrectly reported the name of Hughes' employer as the Kentucky School Board (singular) Association. However, Loftus declined to comment when asked if he ever reported the name of the group with an apostrophe.



Dismayed and frustrated as he was by the retirement announcement, Loftus stopped short of directly criticizing Hughes. “As coldhearted as this decision is to me personally, I guess Brad richly deserves his retirement. I can't believe he's been part of Kentucky's public affairs/journalism world for 44 years. Seems like only yesterday he was the friendly, accessible and informative spokesman out at Human Resources. And that was decades ago.”

Loftus said he hoped to carry on. “I'll just have to find another Brad Hughes, but I'm not sure that's going to be so simple.” ■

Tom Loftus is the longtime Frankfort bureau chief for the Louisville Courier-Journal

The advocate for school public relations positions

By Julie Ellis

Brad Hughes is the gold standard for school communications and so much more. When Brad entered the Kentucky education scene, he was a seasoned communicator. For those of us who were involved with school communications, Brad's addition to the Kentucky School Public Relations Association was a blessing we would quickly learn to appreciate.

One of the first things he brought to the KYSPRA group was a "connection" to KSBA and to other state resources. He had experience with media that most of us did not. Brad quickly became a teacher, mentor and friend to KYSPRA members.

His media training sessions, such as "When Pigs Fly," provided us with a high level of professional development that was directed to our unique situations. Generally, there is only one of us (or a half a person, so to speak) per district. So, Brad became our go-to source for advice in p.r. situations, both large and small.

School board members throughout the state have come to know Brad and to take as gospel what he advises. And, Brad has never missed an opportunity to praise his colleagues' efforts to their local school boards. No doubt, he has saved communications positions from the budget hatchet through the years as he has pointed out the value of good communications to school boards and superintendents.

Brad has unselfishly given of his time. He is always the one who comes early to be sure everything is prepared for his colleagues and stays late to be sure the last person has been helped. He is the one who runs ahead to make the table reservations for an evening meal after a long day in conference sessions or stays behind to be sure a straggler has a ride to the restaurant. For KYSPRA, he has always been the one to lug in heavy boxes of plaques before OASIS dinners. In fact, Brad has done the "heavy lifting" on OASIS from collecting entries to getting the judging done. And, there was always a surprise "guest" (Brad in costume) to make OASIS presentations.



Top: Brad, far right, with district p.r. professionals at a KYSPRA spring conference in May 2010 at a Kentucky state park.



Left: Brad cooks burgers while the gang relaxes. "It's so typical of how Brad always takes care of everyone," said Julie Ellis, who wrote this piece.

Brad's kindness, integrity, and friendship have enriched many lives. He has spent many days and nights on the road traveling throughout the state on behalf of KSBA. Many of us have enjoyed hearing his jokes and stories (many of them Irish) over a meal or in the hospitality room after one of those conference sessions at a state park or conference center.

There was never any question that Brad always preferred to head home to Louisville each night, if he was within reasonable driving distance, to be with his "bride" Judy. She has sacrificed many an evening meal with Brad when he has been traveling to an evening school board meeting or has been away for a conference. But she has always been with him in his thoughts. He is so proud of her many talents, such as basket making. Several years ago, Brad was so pleased that

he could show his love and appreciation to Judy by arranging to surprise her by making a gift to WKU to name the advisor's office in the new student publications building in her honor.

Brad, congratulations on an outstanding career! No matter how busy you have been, you have always taken the time to be there for others. When you came to our school board meeting the day I retired and spoke to the board on my behalf, I was so humbled that you would make the trip to Owensboro for the occasion. Hopefully, the trip included a visit to your favorite Owensboro restaurant – Moonlite Bar-B-Q. May you enjoy a blessed retirement, my Friend. ■

Julie Ellis is the retired longtime public information officer for Owensboro Independent Schools

An encourager and adviser

By Dr. Fred Carter

From 1970 until 1972, while I was an undergraduate at WKU, I also served as the youth director for the Franklin First United Methodist Church. A high school kid named Brad Hughes was one of “my kids” in the youth group and I marveled at his intelligence, organizational skills, sense of purpose, love of God, and general no-nonsense approach way to doing things even in those formative years. Brad has always been mature beyond his years and interacted with adults very well even as a teenager.

Following my graduation from WKU and Brad’s graduation from high school, I have watched him grow and mature and hold a variety of jobs, from radio personality to TV reporter to his present role with KSBA. Brad and I always stayed in touch and he turned into the “encourager” I frequently needed in my own career as he playfully inquired about when I was going to move from teaching and coaching into a principal’s role. Then, when I was a principal, he inquired about when I was going to move into a Central Office role. Then, he told me he was looking forward to printing in the KSBA clippings a story about me becoming a superintendent. Somehow, with his career moves and my career moves, we always remained in contact and frequently saw each other at



Brad with Chris, a Frankfort Independent student he mentored.

some educational conference or other.

While I first met Brad and served as his “spiritual adviser,” over the years Brad has evolved into my “unofficial” career advisor and encourager and became a very good friend. I suspect that Brad does not even know today what a positive impact he has had on my professional life. I also suspect he has had that same influence on lots of other educational professionals throughout Kentucky.

Therefore, Brad, as you fade quietly into retirement, please know that you have been the voice of reason in Frankfort when interpreting those

hastily passed educational bills. Even more importantly, your quiet honesty, your strength of character, and your love for what you do has not gone unnoticed. KSBA will find you a hard person to replace, my friend, as will educators across Kentucky.

Best wishes for a wonderful, lengthy, enjoyable, and healthy retirement. By the way, Brad, you now look far older than me!!! ■

Fred Carter, Ed.D., is director of coaching and mentoring for the Kentucky Association of School Administrators

A helping hand and calming words

By Linda Salyer

Approximately 30 years ago, an organization was created to bring together school public relations personnel from across the state of Kentucky for professional development and camaraderie now known as the Kentucky School Public Relations Association or KYSPRA. Brad Hughes has been at the center of this wheel bringing greater awareness of the need for p.r. professionals and educating KYSPRA members on topics of interest that would heighten their skill level for the many tasks at hand. Brad is the “go to” person in any crisis. He is there to lend a helping hand, give advice or just

offer calming words, “You can do this.”

Brad is synonymous with OASIS (Outstanding Achievement in School Information Services). Every year Brad spends countless hours preparing for this event, overseeing the entries, judging and, of course, the ultimate presentation of the awards. This is no small event. Brad puts his heart and soul into making sure this event quantifies and reflects the level of expertise represented at the ceremonial banquet. Because of Brad, KYSPRA has one of the strongest professional development programs in the field of education.

As much as he has given through the years to help us develop professionally, he has also given to us his friendship.

On a personal note, Brad has been there like a big brother to lean upon in difficult situations. He has cried with me at times of loss, listened during times of frustration and been there during times of need. I love how he ends every conversation with “Thank you, friend” or “See you later, friend.”

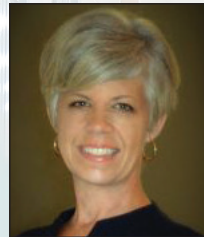
I truly appreciate everything Brad has done for the organization and the friendship we have shared. Brad is a top-shelf public relations professional. He is one in a million! We will miss him tremendously. ■

Linda Salyer is the public relations/ Cable 74 coordinator for Daviess County Schools and KYSPRA association manager

Part of a collective rally for public education

By Brigitte Blom Ramsey

I first met Brad Hughes in the late 1990s when I was a local school board member in Pendleton County. I was young and about as green as they come, but eager, nonetheless, to contribute to making my local school district the best it could be. I religiously attended the annual KSBA conference with my elementary school daughter in tow. I always made sure to attend the media training sessions Brad was hosting. At the time, there was little media to reckon with in Pendleton County, but Brad's sessions were always enjoyable and, as I'd find later, were preparing me more for future endeavors than the of-the-time relatively sleepy rural education conversations.



Brigitte Blom Ramsey

Later, I would come to know Brad in his reporting of state Board of Education meetings. I missed going to Brad's sessions at the annual conference but enjoyed seeing him in the audience at KBE meetings and his presence was always a good reminder of all that I'd learned from him. Every once in a while, I'd find myself quoted in Brad's commentary or report of the recent state board meeting and I'd feel a bit of pride that I'd said something Brad deemed worthy of repeating – and it wasn't because I'd stuck my foot in my mouth, a

Media 101 no-no!

In the past couple years, I've again had the pleasure to know Brad from a slightly different vantage point, in my role here at the Prichard Committee. And, again, Brad has been the kind of friend-to-education and expert adviser that I'd grown to expect him to be – calling it like he sees it and expecting nothing less than excellence from those communicating with and to the public about something as critical to Kentucky as education.

In a way only Brad can, he's challenged me to be my best in each role I've played the last 20 years, and the memory of his encouragement, and at times challenge, to be better will stay with me in the years to come. As I reflect on his influence, it's not been about me or any one individual – it seems it's all been about a collective rally on behalf of education and the next generation. I'm proud to have been part of that collective rally with Brad. In the words of the late Ed Prichard, "Education is a path to a larger life," and Brad has been waving that flag in his own way, encouraging all of us to follow on that path, for the span of his career. I hope he continues to rally and to call us to task when need be from his new vantage point on the world. With admiration and best wishes, Brigitte Blom Ramsey. ■

Brigitte Blom Ramsey is executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and former member of the Kentucky and Pendleton County boards of education.

Eager to please but tough as needed

By Dr. Randy J. Poe

Brad Hughes' retirement is a great loss for the Kentucky School Boards Association. Brad is the consummate professional who KNEW the job inside and out. I know that comes from his media background in anticipating what the media wants and how to disseminate all information with a positive theme attached.

Brad is always the go-to person for just about anything you



Dr. Randy J. Poe

need in education and he's always happy to do it for you. That is not something you learn on the job. That takes a special personality that is eager to please but can be tough when the times call for it. We here in the Boone County School District send Mr. Hughes our warmest wishes for a grand retirement. The next person stepping into Brad Hughes' role will have some big shoes to fill "and that is a message worth getting out." ■

Randy J. Poe, Ed.D., is superintendent of Boone County Schools and recipient of the 2015 F.L. Dupree Award for Outstanding Superintendent

“Brad is just plain special”

By Linda Embrey

Brad Hughes may have spent the last 24-plus years at the Kentucky School Boards Association, but his influence goes far beyond the state borders.

Over the years, school board members attending the National School Boards Association annual conference could tap into Brad’s expertise at preconference training and regular sessions covering, among other topics, communications, boardmanship and social media.

When he wasn’t presenting or taking photos for KSBA, Brad was writing for NSBA’s Conference Daily, first for the print edition and then after it went online. “I could assign Brad three sessions a day to cover,” says Kathleen Vail, NSBA’s director of publications.



Kathleen Vail

“He’d turn in flawless copy and never miss a deadline. His background was in newspaper reporting, and he had a reporter’s work ethic and respect for deadlines.”

Brad also was a valued coach at NBSA’s Alexandria offices, where he frequently visited to do media and press training for staff members.



Deborah Rigsby

“Brad’s expertise has been invaluable to us at NSBA. His unique style of training and attention to detail have helped us tremendously. Brad has helped bolster media engagement and messaging for policy priorities,” says Deborah Rigsby, director of lobbying and federal legislation. “Brad, we wish you much continued success in this next chapter!”

Brad was an invaluable member of the Magna Awards judges panel, where he used his insight and experience to find the exemplary school district programs.

“Brad is a rare combination of skill, professionalism, and a warm and engaging personality. He knows school boards and the issues they face exceptionally well. He understands how



Brad was the 2004 recipient of the National School Boards Association’s Thomas J. Shannon Award for contributions to public education by a state school boards association staff member. His father, the late Harry Glen Hughes, made the trip to Washington, D.C., for the presentation.

to communicate effectively – and, importantly, how to help others do the same,” says Thomas J. Gentzel, NSBA’s executive director and CEO. “And, he is a genuinely nice person. I have never heard anyone say a bad word about him – and, if they did, I wouldn’t believe them!”



Thomas J. Gentzel

COSBAC stalwart

Brad was an active member of the national Council of School Boards Association Communicators. Brad served as the chairman of COSBAC in 1999-2000. It’s safe to say that all his COSBAC colleagues have a Brad story to tell:

“As president of COSBAC, I am responsible for putting together the agenda. Naturally, my first call was to Brad to see what he would like to do. (What he would like to do; not if he would like to do anything.) Of course, he agreed. I found it amusing that this highly experienced communications professional, not to mention veteran trainer, cleared his ideas and direction

with me. I assured him that he could read the phone book and it would be well received by his COSBAC disciples.

“A short time later, Brad got in touch to say that his retirement was now scheduled to occur prior to the July conference. Any other person would tell me that he’s sorry it didn’t work out and wish me well in finding a replacement. But dear Brad was quick to assure me that he and Judy would be in Portland on the designated day, and on their dime if COSBAC could not handle the expense.

“And that’s Brad – dependable, full of integrity, and true always to his word, even when he has a great excuse to bow out. I’m so grateful he’ll be there as he is truly the backbone of COSBAC, the head cheerleader, the one that motivates, inspires, and most of all, keeps us all laughing and engaged. It is a massive understatement to say he will be missed.”
– Sandi Barry, 2016-17 COSBAC Chair, Maryland Association of Boards of Education

“Brad is part of the fabric of COSBAC. He demonstrates the good nature, collaborative attitude, keen intellect, desire to learn, integrity and sharp wit that all communications professionals in

our field should strive to attain. He can share with you the most profound insight that will help you to be a better communicator and person with complete humility, then show an almost unending appreciation for the smallest tip.

“Case in point: I was relatively new to COSBAC when I showed Brad how to fix his autocorrect so that he would never accidentally write “pubic education” again, and he has spent the last several years thanking me for it.

“Meanwhile, he has continually shown me through his actions and advice what it is to be a good person, mentor and friend – so much more meaningful than a technical fix. He does so not boastfully; nor do I think he does it intentionally. Brad is just plain special.” – *Dax Gonzalez, Texas Association of School Boards*

“One of Brad’s biggest contributions has been his humor in looking at what we do every day. In addition to sharing any project he’s ever worked on, he also shows us how to laugh at some of the obstacles we come up against. That humor, both at the situation and himself, is something that we all should remember. Our jobs are important, but the ability to find humor in a bad situation and in ourselves is a wonderful lesson to learn, and Brad has been the best teacher.

“Also, after every COSBAC conference, Brad has sent an email to our executive directors, thanking them for allowing us to attend the conference and telling them how much he learned from us. It has meant a lot that he has taken the time to do that, and it shows the value of COSBAC among the state associations. My executive director has appreciated those emails and shares them with us. Brad’s thoughtfulness and leadership has been greatly appreciated by COSBAC, and we hope we can continue to carry on those traits because they are what makes COSBAC a wonderful group to work with.” – *Angela Penquite, Ohio School Boards Association*

“I would describe Brad Hughes as the dean of school board communications. I wasn’t on the job a month before I heard from him. We all get copies of each other’s publications, and he sent



Hughes leads a session during a conference of his work-alike group, the Council of School Boards Association Communicators.

a nice note about my first one saying something like, ‘Looks like NYSSBA has hired a real journalist! Look forward to seeing you at COSBAC!’

“He is one of those people that make COSBAC not just a group, but a community.” – *Eric Randall, New York State School Boards Association*

“It has been a true honor to know and work with the esteemed Brad Hughes. His dedication, insight and humor have added greatly to the COSBAC experience. I speak as a fellow elder with the group, which will never be the same without him. We all wish Brad only the best in his future adventures and hope he will keep in touch. I personally will miss his smile and twinkling eyes, a mirror into the soul of a professional who sincerely cares about our kids. A man of his integrity won’t soon pass this way again.” – *Barbara Williams, Texas Association of School Boards*

“Brad: Always positive, always helpful, always professional; genuinely cares about kids and education. Plus, he’s a Yankees fan! Enjoy retirement!” – *Frank Belluscio, New Jersey School Boards Association*

“Brad is a vast wealth of information, and more than happy to share that wealth with others. He is quick to share ideas, insights and wisdom. During my first COSBAC conference, Brad was welcoming and interested in helping me make the most of the conference.

He made me feel like part of the group, and kept me laughing the entire time! I can’t think of a better person to show a new person the ropes! He is passionate about school boards and it truly shows. His quick wit, humor and wisdom will be missed.” – *Tammy Votava, Iowa Association of School Boards*

“Brad was the chair of the first COSBAC conference I attended (San Antonio, 2000), who quickly made this newbie feel welcome and part of the group. I always look forward to reconnecting with him and his “bride, Judy” at COSBAC. (He’s also one of my two favorite Brads, the other one being my son!)

“If I could, I would ‘steal without guilt’ Brad’s seemingly effortless way to connect with

people, his sense of humor, his personal encyclopedia of communications knowledge and possibly some of those special T-shirts he unveils during his presentations. He will be hard to replace.” – *Barbara Bradley, New York State School Boards Association*

“Dear Brad,

“I would like to congratulate you on your retirement from the Kentucky School Boards Association.

“I know you’ve mentioned retirement for a couple of years, but I was hoping it was still a few years off. While you will be missed by all of us at COSBAC, you certainly deserve time to enjoy your retirement. I’ve enjoyed seeing and learning from you during the COSBAC conference each year. You’ve always brought such a wealth of knowledge to us all. Plus, there is no one with a better radio and TV voice!

“So, while I am saddened to see you go, I wish you much success and happiness in retirement and in your future endeavors. Retirement will surely offer you many new opportunities, which I know you will embrace wholeheartedly. Please keep in touch, and I’m sure no one will mind if you decided to continue to join us at COSBAC!” – *Bridgett Johnson, Georgia School Boards Association* ■

Linda Embrey is senior associate, Media & Public Relations for the National School Boards Association

Validator of school p.r. work

By Linda Jones

When I first decided to delegate the job of covering all the terrific education stories in our small town weekly newspaper



Linda Jones

to the schools, I never dreamed it would lead to 25 years' worth of employment at two school systems as a school public relations practitioner. At the time, I did not realize this would be my life's work, having been the news editor, photographer and reporter for 12 years at the local newspaper, which seemed noteworthy at the time.

So, in a very small way and not nearly as awesome as Brad's body of work, I felt like I had mirrored his career history. God had led us both to doing something so important and worthwhile – who would have ever imagined it after covering government, accidents, meetings, and all those hard news stories? How fortunate we are to have told all of the hundreds and hundreds of stories about children and the staffs that make a difference in our world, as well as managed a few crises along the way.

So, when I became acquainted with Brad, the leader of school p.r., it brought such a breath of fresh air and wisdom to my fairly new school p.r. career. He was someone I could strive to be like. He taught me the ropes, answered all my questions, and picked me up when I felt like I was down and out. He told me what to say when I panicked when we almost burned a school down from a teacher having a candle lit in her classroom. He was there when a pesky school board member wanted to eliminate a bunch of the central office jobs, including mine, because our district dipped into the red that year. He was there at one of our board member/ leadership meetings in our district, making me look good. He was there at conferences, always mentioning me to my colleagues who attended.

He was there at sooooo many KYSPRA events that I have always looked so forward to attending, continuing to offer us guidance and caring so much



Above: Hughes presents the OASIS Sweepstakes Award to Nelson County Schools, flanked by Superintendent Anthony Orr and board member Diane Berry.



Left: Hughes accepts the O.V. Jones Award in 1997, the highest honor presented by the Kentucky School Public Relations Association.

about our individual school district p.r. programs. It was pure joy to go out with our group to dine and fellowship with one another, when he could have easily headed home for a more reasonable work-week schedule. It has always been a pleasure to get a “Brad fix” for a day or so at those annual events, with him going the extra mile for us with OASIS Awards and conducting workshops. Then to top it off, once we got home we could read his wonderful “Get Your Message Out” column monthly. I always enjoy the news service that has helped me with story ideas and how other districts handle similar issues I might be facing. He always answered my phone calls and emails lickety-split, so I knew I could count on him for advice always.

I guess the bottom line is he validated our work through a profession we all love. He called us “friend” and made us all feel like our work was the most important career on the face of the planet. Therefore, I will be glad to be at the head of the line of the Brad Hughes Fan Club! I am sure the membership list is lengthy!

Brad, please know that you have been the best mentor I could have ever dreamed up. I hope I can pass along at least a smidgen of what you have so willingly shared professionally.

Here is to “Well done, thy good and faithful servant!” ■

Linda Jones is the public relations coordinator for Wayne County Schools



Brad is the announcer for the annual Franklin-Simpson High School Marching Band Invitational, a highlight of every year for him.

The pride of Franklin-Simpson High

By Dr. James Flynn

Congratulations, Brad, on your impending retirement – well-earned and much deserved! We will certainly miss your service, guidance and support that you have so graciously provided over your career! As a long-serving Kentucky superintendent, I can say your expertise has been useful in both good and challenging times! Thank you so much!

Many folks may not know that you're a graduate of Franklin-Simpson High

School – a fact that we share with pride! They also probably don't know that for many years you have returned each fall to provide the public address duties at our annual Franklin-Simpson Marching Band Invitational. As I've attended these for the last 14 years, I have always been impressed with your enthusiasm and talent that adds so much to the atmosphere and experience of everyone involved! In fact, this year will mark our 49th annual FSHS Marching Band Invitational and I look forward to hearing your amazing voice, your upbeat

and motivating words, and seeing you back in the stadium press box – aptly named The Hughes Press Box in honor of your father, uncle and you for many years of dedicated service.

As you move to retirement, remember that you have left a legacy of excellence and service that is admired and lives on through those of us who've had the pleasure of working with you and learning from you! ■

James Flynn, Ed.D., is superintendent of Simpson County Schools



"This year will mark our 49th annual FSHS Marching Band Invitational and I look forward to hearing your amazing voice, your upbeat and motivating words, and seeing you back in the stadium press box – aptly named The Hughes Press Box in honor of your father, uncle and you for many years of dedicated service."

– Dr. James Flynn

School leaders gain leadership insights from Hughes' legacy

By Lisa Bartusek

As a source of practical, prudent advice on media relations and communications, Brad Hughes has advised school leaders all across the country about how to get their message heard.



Lisa Bartusek

As Hughes retires from his service to the Kentucky School Boards Association, this correspondent feels it's important to reflect on the leadership lessons learned from

Hughes' legacy of service.

As he is known as a master of the sound bite and the quotable quote, we'll use some memorable quotes from a variety of sources to capture Hughes' lasting impact.

"In the first place, God made idiots. That was for practice. Then he made school boards."

– *Mark Twain*

Brad Hughes stood up to critics and spoke out in support of the value of locally elected citizens who sit in trust of the public schools of our country. As a model for others, he showed that you can best defend the value of school boards by showcasing their impact and good work in countless stories, articles and features.

"To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible, we must be truthful."

– *Edward R. Murrow*

Honest and transparency are hallmarks of Hughes' philosophy of communication. Hughes advised boards to build lasting, ongoing relationships with the media based on openness and truthfulness.

"The worse the news, the more effort should go into communicating it."

– *Andrew S. Grove*

When the news is bad, Hughes emphasized an important corollary to truthfulness: timeliness. He helped countless



Most recently, Brad has developed training to help board members and other school leaders avoid social media pitfalls. As in most of his trainings, he unveils a thematically appropriate T-shirt.

individuals and organizations through crisis communication with this guidance and his adept step-by-step counsel.

"There is a big difference between what we have a right to do and what is right to do."

– *Justice Potter Stuart*

There is no better public relations strategy than integrity. Hughes found countless ways to help boards make difficult decisions in ethical ways, encouraging boards to take the time to explain the rationale for their decisions to build understanding.

"Authentic marketing is not the art of selling what you make but knowing what to make. It is the art of identifying and understanding customer needs and creating solutions that deliver satisfaction to the customers, profits to the producers and benefits for the stakeholders."

– *Philip Kotler*

Hughes modeled laser-like focus on understanding the real needs of KSBA members, and creating services that helped school board/superintendent teams meet their challenges.

"A sense of humor is part of the art

of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done."

– *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Even a past president and general recognized the value of a little humor in leadership. The master of self-deprecating "Only Brad" wit, Hughes' legacy is a reminder that laughter lightens the load of leadership.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

– *Martin Luther King Jr.*

The message of public education and of local citizen engagement and support for our nation's public schools can't—and won't—end as Brad retires. Like many people in Kentucky and across the country, this reporter has been inspired by Brad to continue to advocate, communicate and collaborate, and continue to be a champion for public education.

Thank you for the lessons in leadership, Mr. Hughes. You have created a wonderful and memorable legacy by sharing them. ■

Lisa Bartusek is executive director of the Iowa Association of School Boards

Working with Brad: A two-way challenge – and some good times

By David Baird

Did you ever have someone who comes up to you and asks you a question, but you know that they already know the answer to the question and just want to see how much you know? Or immediately after you have responded to that person's first question, there is an immediate WHY challenge, because he is still not convinced that you know what you are talking about. And as hard as you try to convince this person that you've "got this one," the interrogation continues until you can convince him that you know your stuff and now you are ready for prime time.

At first it was intimidating and annoying that I would be questioned in such a way because after all, I was a big shot and he was the "communications guy" telling me what to do and say. But this is how it all started with Brad and me in a working relationship that was very foreign to me. I came to KSBA as associate executive director after a long career in P-12 education where I did not have one of those communications staffers and people just wanted to know "what does David say," and that was the end of the discussion. What I did not know (and there was a lot) was that the stage had changed and my audience – which was previously a small school district – was now an entire state. And dealing with 173 school districts, the General Assembly and the Governor's Office required a new level of expertise.

And that is what Brad was trying to tell me in a respectful yet direct manner: David, you do not know it all so shut up and listen for a minute. Occasionally, Brad would get agitated and huff and puff and might blow your house down if we were not careful. Now, I know that it is hard for you to believe that Brad would EVER get agitated (especially with me), but it did happen from time to time. But gradually our working relationship began to grow and I soon learned that Brad was helping to prepare me for the cold, cruel world that I was about to encounter and I better have my facts straight or I probably would step into something not so pleasant.

Gradually, I learned to appreciate what Brad meant to me as well as KSBA. Respect is a word that he does not use in general terms often, but I certainly can use it generously when I talk about Brad. I often felt that Brad was like my password. I knew my user name and what I wanted to write, say or deliver but I needed his guidance and his second set of eyes to make it comprehensible. As a writer, Brad is gifted (I often felt sorry for his teachers with having this precocious, smart-alecky kid in class – just saying) in having the ability to understand a subject, issue or concern and putting an explanation document on paper that most anyone will understand after he has created it. Once given an assignment he proceeds with lightning speed to his desk with the creative juices flowing, as



“Respect is a word that he does not use in general terms often, but I certainly can use it generously when I talk about Brad.”

– David Baird

if under a deadline to go to press (old habit). Often I felt sorry for his keyboard, since he pounded the keys as if they were a Whack-a-Mole game and he had to keep them in the holes for fear that they may emerge and devour the content already produced.

When you work with someone as closely as Brad and I you learn a lot of things about the person and some you wish you never knew. Everybody knows that Brad “married up” and we can’t understand how he has convinced Judy to stay for so long. I always enjoyed going to the Kentucky State Fair and Joyce and I would always go to the basket-weaving exhibit area and look for the marvelous and amazingly intricate works of art that Judy produces (talk about being gifted). I think Brad sells them on the black market to supplement his income, but don’t tell Judy. I have heard the many stories of the pilgrimage treks to Pigeon Forge for fun and relaxation. Can’t fool me – I still think there is a mafia connection there somewhere.

Among other things I have learned about Brad is that we both have a martyr complex that you can develop by doing crazy things like leaving work and driving to Fulton Independent for an evening meeting and then driving back that same night without sleep and then back in the office the next morning. Or driving to 120 regional meetings over the last 10 years and hearing Brad say, “Where are

the keys? Do we have the handouts? I have the PA system, do you have the sign-in sheets? Where is Mike – we’ve got to go. I thought our president was riding with us. Do we have gas? Kerri, surely we are not having chicken again ...”

Over the years, Brad has taught me to appreciate a good Long Island tea (they get graded), a good April Fools’ eNews column, NSBA conferences (the good the bad and the ugly), KSBA conferences that were all good (yes, they were), Abraham Lincoln books, Broadway show CDs, and Red Lobster. I still don’t like the Yankees (who grows up in Simpson County and likes the Yankees – REALLY).

So, just as Brad taught me to have three talking points when I am facing a major presentation, discussion or career decision, here are the three things Brad needs to know before retiring:

1. Do not call customer service without having the “nitrogen” pills by the phone.
2. Start looking for another job because you will flunk retirement just like me. (Remember the martyr complex.)
3. Make friends with the paper boy, mail carrier and street vendors coming to your door. Within five minutes you can convince them of how important you used to be.

Looking back makes it all worthwhile.

And that’s a message worth getting out! ■

David Baird is the former associate executive director at KSBA and retired superintendent of Eminence Independent Schools

Hughes had it covered, from school consolidation to staff reductions to head lice

By Jeff Phillips

The call came early one April morning back in 2001, said Jeff Phillips, Harlan County Schools' director of public relations.

Brad Hughes, the superhero of Kentucky school public relations, was on the other end of the line to prepare Phillips for calls he would soon be getting from the state's largest newspapers.

"I admit being a bit shocked at first, thinking it possibly could be a prank," recalled Phillips, who only minutes later knew this was real.

A school in Phillips' district had opened a chapel on the third floor of the building, "complete with padded pews, a hand-made pulpit and altars and a display of the Lord's Prayer," reported the *Lexington Herald-Leader* in a banner headline on Page 1.

"I had no idea and the superintendent had no idea," said Phillips, who soon began fielding calls from the *Herald-Leader*, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and other media outlets. "Brad Hughes saved me that morning, something he has done more than once over the past 23 years in which I have worked in school public relations. His contact information and immediate availability have been my lifeline many times."

Phillips had Hughes' phone numbers posted everywhere back then, he said. "They were on my refrigerator at home, the Rolodex, the console in the car, my wallet – you name it, I had his number within arm's reach."

A chance meeting of Hughes and Phillips at a communications conference sponsored by the Kentucky School Boards Association and the Kentucky Department of Education a few years earlier than this incident had led to a very important relationship, said Phillips, who previously had worked in the newspaper industry. "I was now on the other side of the fence and Hughes



"The voice from on high" – Brad announces off stage at his last KSBA Annual Conference, in a costume befitting the event's theme of Be a Superhero for Public Education!

was instrumental in teaching me the tools of the trade."

In the years to come, calls for advice to Hughes were many and varied. A school board member, who also was a state social worker, was forced to resign from both positions after a school district employee found child pornography on the board member's computer.

"A teacher taped a child's mouth shut in an elementary school and the parents weren't happy and they were talking to reporters. My first step was to call Brad Hughes and exclaim 'HELP!'" said Phillips.

Phillips noted that Hughes is well-versed in many areas of public education.

"On viral meningitis, flu epidemic, head lice, staph infections and other health matters, Hughes was my No. 1 resource for advice. He helped put many fires out here, literally," said Phillips. "About two hours before students were to arrive in our brand-new, multimillion-dollar high school, a fire believed to be the work of an arsonist broke out, setting off sprinklers and

flooding the building with thousands of gallons of water. Another was a couch catching fire due to a faulty extension cord in another school."

There have been bus wrecks where the drivers talked to the media, the arrest of a teacher for plowing her car into a local department store, guns at school, drugs at school, a financial crisis that led to massive reductions of staff, and state-imposed management of the district, just to name a few. Hughes shared unselfishly his expertise time and time again, Phillips said.

"School consolidation was an ugly process. He found people across the state for me to contact and garner insight on best practices for selling the need to close schools. There were some ugly incidents, but he always helped me do the right thing and put the positive spin on them."

After learning of Hughes' soon-to-be departure from KSBA, Phillips, striving to hold back tears, stated, "What am I to do?" ■

Jeff Phillips is the public relations director for Harlan County Schools

"A teacher taped a child's mouth shut in an elementary school and the parents weren't happy and they were talking to reporters. My first step was to call Brad Hughes and exclaim 'HELP!'"

– Jeff Phillips

Foul play at the fair: Feds want Hughes for cornering the market on blue ribbons

By Freddy Farm Bureau

FRANKFORT, Ky. – A high-ranking Kentucky School Boards Association official has left education officials and would-be journalists reeling after going on the lam this week in an effort to avoid federal prosecution for his part in a far-reaching rigging scandal that threatens to bring down state fairs in Kentucky and throughout the South.

Known to most as a mild-mannered director of Member Support/ Communications Services for almost 25 years, Brad “Kiss Me, I’m Irish” Hughes is described by law enforcement officials as the mastermind behind a shadowy, ruthless organized crime syndicate committed to amassing basket-making Blue Ribbons and Best in Shows at any and all costs.

Details of the conspiracy are sketchy, but an inside source says Hughes and his unnamed female accomplice were able to thwart at least one fair’s crack security system each year, gaining access to winning entries well before they were made public. Hughes would then gleefully share the information through an encoded Dark Web site known as the KSBA eNews Service, often while whistling an Irish tune and dancing a small jig.

“Bold. Shameless. Oddly catchy” was how one Federal Bureau of Investigation RICO investigator described Hughes’ style. “For reasons that are not immediately clear, his main target seems to be the highly competitive, some might say cutthroat, basket-weaving competitions,” the investigator said.

Despite being known far and wide in Kentucky and throughout the world of school boards, to date Hughes has managed to elude law enforcement at every turn.

“This guy is a master of disguise. He has been perfecting it for years,” an unnamed law enforcement source said. “Abraham Lincoln, Tim ‘the Toolman’ Taylor, a cadre of caped crusaders and



even The King himself. He is a modern-day Keyser Söze, I tell you.”

Further thwarting law enforcement’s efforts is Hughes’ ability to live off the grid thanks to an endless supply

of gift cards amassed during his time directing the Kentucky School Public Relations Association’s annual OASIS Awards competition. The cards were used to thank judges for reviewing entries. Kroger, Panera, Amazon – if there is a gift card for it, Hughes has access to it, investigators said.

“Whitey Bulger has nothing on this guy,” said FBI Acting Director Andrew McCabe, during a press conference to announce Hughes’ inclusion on the agency’s 10 Most Wanted List.

When asked to comment on the suspect, Kentucky Department of Education spokesperson Nancy Rodriguez commented, “That doesn’t fall under the department’s purview, but you know who you should talk to? Brad Hughes at KSBA. Wait! What?!? What do you mean he’s gone? Who am I going to Heisman all my media calls to now?”

Meanwhile, *20/20 Investigates* with Chris Cuomo plans to run a two-hour special on Hughes next week entitled, “Basket Case.”

Law enforcement officials said they were planning a surprise sting operation to catch Hughes, who is expected to attend the KYSPRA meeting this fall. Attendees who spot an errant magician, dead president or superhero are asked to call 1-800-TATTLE-TALE. ■

“Freddy Farm Bureau” is the pen name for Nancy Rodriguez, spokesperson for the Kentucky Department of Education, and her “co-conspirator” colleagues at KDE.

A loss for Kentucky journalism

By Jack Brammer

What can you say about a 64-year-old man who is retiring? That he was beautiful and brilliant? That he loved school boards and human resources, Judy, and media?

With apologies to those old enough – that includes Brad and me – to recognize that I am paraphrasing the opening line in Erich Segal’s best-selling 1970 novel, *Love Story*, I commence my homage to Brad Hughes.

If there were a Mount Rushmore for Kentucky government communicators, the likeness of Brad Hughes would be chiseled into it.

Brad should not only be recognized for his longevity as a government communicator, but for his honest, diligent service to the people he worked for and the media over the years.

I first met Brad when he was working for the Human Resources Cabinet.

He was most knowledgeable about the cabinet’s people and operations, many times more so than the cabinet secretary.

As a reporter, you could always count on Brad to find answers for your follow-up questions at news conferences and legislative hearings.

Brad had the much-appreciated knack of taking complicated subjects and explaining them so even a reporter could understand them.

As far as I know, Brad never lied to me.

That’s a high compliment a reporter can pay to a communicator.

I wish Brad and Judy only good things.

I am glad for Brad that he is going on to other ventures but sorry for Kentucky journalism.

Of course, as Mr. Segal said so many years ago, love means never having to say you’re sorry.

A lot of us love Brad Hughes. ■

Jack Brammer is the Frankfort Bureau chief for the Lexington Herald-Leader

“His career has been a lifetime of service to the people of Kentucky and his contributions are immeasurable. I count myself fortunate to have known, worked with and been a friend of Brad Hughes. He is the best.”

– Kay Sharon

The “go-to” person

By Kay Sharon

It has been my privilege to know and appreciate Brad Hughes for the entire time he has been associated with the Kentucky School Boards Association, first as a school public relations professional with the Hardin County Schools and for the last 12-plus years as a member of the Hardin County Board of Education. For that entire time, Brad has been the “go to” person when folks at the local district level had a situation they did not know how to handle. His advice was always thoughtful and right on target. He helped me many times.

I was also associated with him through the Kentucky School Public Relations Association. There wasn’t anything he didn’t do for KYSPRA, including the institution and management of the OASIS awards. His career has been a lifetime of service to the people of Kentucky and his contributions are immeasurable. I count myself fortunate to have known, worked with and been a friend of Brad Hughes. He is the best. Best wishes for a long and most enjoyable retirement, my dear friend. ■

Kay Sharon is a former president of the Kentucky School Public Relations Association and has been a member of the Hardin County school board since 2005.



Kay Sharon



Vintage Hughes: Brad at an early “Get Your Message Out” training session.

The most appreciated gift

By David Keller

November 2, 1993 was a very significant day in the history of KSBA. On the recommendation of a friend, I met Brad Hughes that day at an Appleby’s restaurant in the Highlands to see if he would be interested in coming to work for KSBA as director of communications. After a lot of questions, he decided to take a chance on me and the job, and as the saying goes, the rest is history.

It quickly became obvious that he had the necessary background, skills and vision to develop an outstanding communication program. And he did! He created services that served the information needs of board members and superintendents, and became a trusted resource for local school districts in publicizing the positive work in their schools.

Brad also became a respected and trusted spokesman for the association. Whether it was preparing for a legislative-related news conference (including coaching me) or responding to requests for information from statewide media, he always represented KSBA with professionalism and integrity.

It was always a pleasure to me to have Brad as a trusted and very valued colleague! He never needed supervising, just equipping with the resources to let him make his ideas a reality. I appreciated him for having a can-do attitude and being a team player. Most of all, I appreciated him for always telling me what I needed to hear, even when it wasn’t what I hoped to hear. That, my friend, was a gift!

I missed working with Brad after I retired, and I know everyone will miss him when he has retired.

Brad, you have my best wishes for a happy and fulfilling next chapter in your life! ■

David Keller was the executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association from 1981–2005



As always, Hughes announces honorees at the presentation of the annual OASIS Awards. Helping with the presentation are (center) Warren County Schools’ Communications Coordinator Wayne Walden and Nelson County School’s Communications Director Tom Dekle.

“The spiritual leader” of Kentucky school public relations

By Paul Schaumburg

“Chances are really good that if you’ve covered education – local primary or secondary schools, or school board meetings – over the last 24 years, you’ve dealt with Brad Hughes,” writes David T. Thompson, executive director of the Kentucky Press Association, on his blog dated May 12, 2017. He adds, “Now after 24 years as director of Member Support/Communication Services for the Kentucky School Boards Association, Brad Hughes has announced his retirement effective June 30.”

While this news has been a long time coming, I hate to hear it and I am quite confident my fellow members of the Kentucky School Public Relations Association agree. Not only is Brad Hughes the leading expert on Kentucky school p.r., but also, and with all due respect to official officeholders, Brad is the spiritual leader of Kentucky school p.r. In fact, I’d go so far as to say that to many people – including many of us KYSPRA members, Brad Hughes IS Kentucky school p.r. (Yes, the last line is a twist on dialogue from *It’s a Wonderful Life* ... how appropriate!)

I’m quite confident that if and when my comments reach Brad’s eyes, he will roll them in exasperation and mumble something to the effect of ... “That Schaumburg, there he goes again!” But, he’ll get over it and, highly intelligent and perceptive communication professional that he is, he will have to admit in his heart of hearts that

my praise is far from empty flattery and is both well-grounded in fact and universally accepted among people who know. As evidence, I refer you to David Thompson’s comments and interview with Brad on the aforementioned blog, “On Second Thought,” on the KPA website: members.kypress.com. It’s very insightful:

“Brad has been the consummate media relations person to deal with, probably all tied to his background as a reporter himself,” Thompson writes. “He knew what reporters sometimes faced in doing their jobs and he was more than willing to help them as much as possible...”

When I started as community relations director of the Graves County Schools in 2002, it was not long before I encountered Brad in his role with KSBA. We had worked in Bowling Green radio at the same time in the early 1980s: he at WKCT and me at WLBJ. Some of our mutual friends from radio and Brad all transitioned to WBKO-TV 13 around that time, while I moved back home to Paducah after finishing my bachelor’s degree at Western Kentucky University. So, I always felt a special kinship to Brad because of that connection. In other words, I was actually there when Brad wore his legendary customized glasses on TV! (If you haven’t heard that story, you should, and nobody tells it better than Brad himself.)

Brad is indeed a thorough journalist as well as an excellent observer, leader, teacher and caring confidant. And, from what I see, he’s that caring confidant to

anybody and everybody who seeks his advice. He knows journalism, media, writing, interviewing, schools, boards and any other aspect of his work as well as or better than virtually anyone else.

His retirement is well-deserved and he very likely will be replaced in his official job, as most of us are eventually. However, as for the roles he fills as the unofficial leader of Kentucky school p.r., we, his colleagues, will get along, but I’m not so sure one person really can replace him in that regard on a one-for-one basis, nor should they be expected to do so! I’m referring to his gifts ranging from the vast knowledge he gained from experience and shares so freely and constructively with colleagues to the respect he engenders and the influence he has on others. The massive void he’ll leave is testament to the tremendous contribution he has made.

Having said all that, I simply want to take a moment here and now to say what I know so many of my colleagues are thinking along with me: Brad, you have contributed greatly in shaping Kentucky school p.r. and you have helped us as a group and me as an individual more than you ever will know. I am blessed to have known and collaborated with you and it is with confidence and pride that I can refer to you in all sincerity with the same accolade with which you always greet me and so many others ... Friend ... thank you! ■

Paul Schaumburg is the community relations director for Graves County Schools

“Repurpose,” please

By Jon R. Akers



Jon R. Akers

Brad Hughes has been my “go-to p.r. person” for the past 17 years and has helped me along the way in my role as executive director of the Kentucky Center for School Safety. Brad is the consummate professional, extremely efficient, intelligent, personable and should have been a commentator on NPR with his resonating “radio voice!”

Brad has been instrumental in keeping school safety on the front burner among his readers,

educators and school board members.

Also, if you ever need any information about President Abraham Lincoln, Brad’s the man who has studied the president extensively. Hopefully, some bright person will see that Brad is too young to retire and will “repurpose” him back into service. I can’t wait to hear about “Brad 2.0!” Well done, Brad! ■

Jon R. Akers is the executive director of the Kentucky Center for School Safety and a former high school principal

IN CONVERSATION WITH ... Brad Hughes

on his retirement from KSBA after nearly a quarter of a century

(Interviewer's Note: For all reporters out there who cover, may cover or have need to reference it, please note it is the Kentucky School Boards Association. KSBA represents more than one school board, therefore boards is the plural in using the name of the organization. You'll see one of Brad's biggest frustrations is the media not getting the name correct.)

Chances are really good that if you've covered education — local primary or secondary schools, or school board meetings — over the last 24 years, you've dealt with Brad Hughes. Now, after 24 years as director of Member Support/Communications Services for the Kentucky School Boards Association, Brad has announced his retirement effective June 30.

Whenever a newspaper reporter called me asking a question related to schools, school boards or about the policy on taking pictures of school children while on school property, Brad was the person I always turned to. I knew I was going to get an answer, an explanation of the policy and an invitation to have the reporter contact him if there were further questions. And it was going to be in a true professional manner.

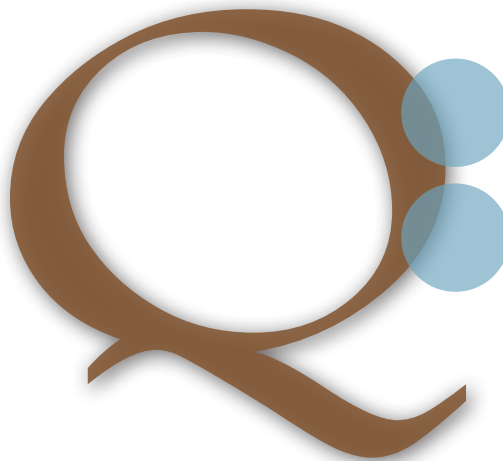
Brad has been the consummate media relations person to deal with, probably all tied to his background as a reporter himself. He knew what reporters sometimes faced in doing their jobs and he was more than willing to help them as much as possible.

His 24 years with KSBA followed 10 years in a similar capacity with the Cabinet for Human Resources (today, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services) where he averaged 250 media interviews a week.

He got his experience on the media side of the fence from 1973 to 1983 when he was an announcer/reporter at WFKN Radio in Franklin (trained by Tom Caudill, Henry Stone and Stan Portman); announcer/reporter, WHOP Radio in Hopkinsville; news director/reporter, WKCT Radio in Bowling Green; and reporter, WBKO-TV in Bowling Green.

You can see he got started back in the "Dark(room) Ages" because in talking about some of the changes he has seen over his career, he mentions having to develop film and using a manual typewriter. (For those younger journalists out there, manual typewriters had no electricity.)

I've appreciated the working relationship with Brad, going back to the days he was communications director for the state cabinet. Whatever we were discussing, whatever question I needed to ask him to help a newspaper reporter, Brad was always the same. Mild-mannered, professional and understanding.



I asked Brad about changes he has noticed in the media, and the way the news about school boards and education in general has been handled.

A: There are so few education beat reporters today in Kentucky. Combine that with the turnover of reporters who cover schools in many communities, and you have young journalists who are trying to explain extremely complicated education issues, sometimes with – but sadly too often without – the collaboration of local educators. Clearly there are many more media outlets that are no longer bound by a publication or broadcast deadline to post their stories online. A small number of media outlets are doing instant reporting from school board meetings, which I think is great in the cases when the reporters understand what they are hearing and tweeting/posting without the time to ask "What does that mean?" Unfortunately, it's very easy when listening to a complex presentation on an education matter, not fully understanding what was said, what was meant, and then putting the information out. I'm a big promoter of social media use by schools and



In Conversation With ... normally consists of an interview between a leader or figure involved in public education and a representative of the *Kentucky School Advocate*. This special edition features a reprint of a Kentucky Press Association blog, "On Second Thought," in which Brad Hughes was interviewed by KPA Executive Director David Thompson.

government agencies. I wish every school board member used social media to communicate with constituents – as long as they don't see that as an alternative to working with mainstream reporters and their readers, viewers and listeners.

Q: Since he deals with school board members, local education officials and at the same time professional journalists, I asked Brad if there's a common theme or complaint from those education officials about the news media.

A: Well, there are multiple themes. There is a huge lack of understanding how media outlets really work, why this makes "news" and that doesn't. Everyone loves positive coverage, but many people – school leaders included – tend to remember the negative stories. Turnover – both in terms of school leaders and reporters – works against building trusting relationships. School officials in communities with multiple public school systems and a single newspaper are constantly doing a comparison of coverage – perceived positive versus negative, features, news release pickups, sports stories, stand-alone photos. And not enough public school systems have dedicated communications.

I'm blessed to be able to teach a lot of classes on media relations to public officials and agency staff around Kentucky and several times a year in other states. I often wear a T-shirt from the Newseum in Washington, D.C., imprinted with the message, "Trust me. I'm a reporter." And I try to use those 44 years as a journalist – 10 as a mainstream journalist and 34 in what I call "public affairs journalism" – to increase understanding about how news is gathered, about professionalism and credibility needing to be earned by both sides of an official/journalist relationship, and how to deal with mistakes on both sides. Errors happen but can be reduced when a superintendent or board member or district spokesperson makes it known that they are willing to take a call anytime to clarify. I hope I can continue to do this kind of training for many years to come with KSBA and other groups. On a really good day, a superintendent, board member or principal mentions remembering my training about creating a message or avoiding "No comment,"

"There is a huge lack of understanding how media outlets really work, why this makes "news" and that doesn't. Everyone loves positive coverage, but many people – school leaders included – tend to remember the negative stories. Turnover – both in terms of school leaders and reporters – works against building trusting relationships. School officials in communities with multiple public school systems and a single newspaper are constantly doing a comparison of coverage – perceived positive versus negative, features, news release pickups, sports stories, stand-alone photos. And not enough public school systems have dedicated communications."



and I'm on top of the world.

All that said, I see about 200 education stories a week, and sometimes I just stare at the computer screen, wondering "What?" The vast majority of stories in Kentucky newspapers are well-written. But I find too many that leave me wondering who failed to ask a question or to offer an explanation. I've come to learn that a story that's either flat out wrong, partially in error or just confusing can be just as much to blame on the side of the information provider as on that of the story writer.

I do wish I could have educated Kentucky newspaper reporters and editors that it's the Kentucky School Boards Association, not the Kentucky School Board (no 's') Association. If I had a dollar for every time I've had to correct that (and I do know sometimes the information comes wrong from school folks), well, I could have retired many years ago. And that's no joke.

Q: When Brad took the position with KSBA, he was the perfect choice. Can you imagine putting an educator in a position of dealing with the media on a daily basis? That's why one of Brad's observations (2) is so on point:

A: 1) Relationships – not friendships – are crucial between local officials and

local journalists. There always will be another story.

2) The best public affairs people have been reporters. Having met a deadline, got a clarification, wrote a correction, told a story in limited seconds or copy inches makes all the difference.

3) Some of the nicest comments I've heard since my retirement became public came from reporters and editors I've worked with for years – even a few for decades. It proves point No. 1.

4) Being married to one of the best newspaper reporters I ever competed against and hands down the finest copy editor I've ever worked with makes me a debtor to journalism for the rest of my life.

Q: And 4) led to the obvious question: Has Judy (his wife) given you a list of "Honey Do" jobs now that you're getting close to retirement?

A: When Judy isn't helping University of Louisville researchers and reporters who need an expert on this topic or that issue, she's an incredible basket weaver. Two-time Grand Champion of the Kentucky State Fair. She hasn't created a Honey Do list, but mine includes being her "Reed Roadie" for weaving classes around the country. ■

Social Media: Learning by Example



Leslie McCoy, APR
Director
of Communications
for Bowling Green
Independent Schools

It was Boston, summer of 2012, when Brad Hughes stood before an audience of school board members and superintendents and asked how many used social media for personal reasons. Nearly four of five raised their hands. However, when he asked if the audience used social media as professionals, the majority of hands stayed down.

Returning to Kentucky, Brad Hughes of the Kentucky School Boards Association knew districts were missing an opportunity to tell their own stories using social media.

In his monthly column, he warned school leaders to, “ignore at their peril,” and debunked the myth that the Department of Education was blocking or discouraging the use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., in schools.

“That’s baloney, bunk and bull,” he wrote.

Clear enough?

One year later, in June 2013, Hughes again reminded school board members and district administrators about the importance of social media. He shared the sites as the fastest-growing media source, and its use by citizens who both use and pay for schools. As an admirer of the prose of President Abraham Lincoln, one can only wonder what the 2012 and 2013 Brad Hughes would think of current tweets from the highest political office of the land.

Moving on.

Brad Hughes’ own Facebook page is filled with a few common themes from which school leaders and communicators can learn. Like most personal social media accounts, Hughes shares anecdotes, stories and photos to illustrate the ups and downs of his favorite teams, as well as day-to-day life.

Dig a little deeper.

A win is a win

Reading the Brad Hughes Facebook newsfeed, one would believe the three seasons of the year are WKU basketball season, Yankees baseball season, and WKU football, with some overlap here and there. His loyalty to these teams has led him to many drives down I-65, enduring subpar online coverage of “mid-major” games, and at times watching until the single-digit morning hours, cheering one more inning.

Hughes has celebrated unprecedented seasons, history-making championships, suffered devastating losses, scandal, and at times simply said, “a win is a win,” but he has always been true to his team.

School leaders and communicators should also stay true to the team: students and community. There should never be fair-weather or bandwagon school leaders. School districts should celebrate successes, have open and honest information for the

community when bad things happen, and offer access and support in times of need. Learn from Brad.

Make the boss look good

In a recent interview with the Kentucky Press Association, Hughes was quoted as saying he is married to one of the best newspaper reporters he ever competed against and hands down, the finest copy editor. Brad Hughes considers himself the “laundry king” of his home. He endures injuries and knee pain through never-ending lawn care challenges. Plus, he makes a point to watch most every episode of *Dancing with the Stars* with his wife, Judy, while also sharing a running commentary about the show for, “the happy few crazy Facebook fans without a real life.”

What can school leaders and communicators learn?

- Always, always make the boss look good. And. Admire, compliment and publicly share the great work done by leaders of schools. Great schools have great leaders. Period.

- Work to meet and exceed expectations, even when it’s tough. Schools have a lot of stakeholders, and thus, a lot of expectations, but public schools are service organizations. They are intended to serve the needs of the community. Never stop working to push harder and make an effort to improve for the students.

- Enjoy the lighter moments. School business leads to almost daily experiences that many would question as believable. Smile, laugh and enjoy time with colleagues, and appreciate the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students.

Learn from Brad.

Editions of Only Brad

When the luck of the Irish isn’t in Hughes’ favor, Facebook followers discover new editions of Only Brad. Throughout the years, he’s shared day-to-day mishaps from farming to dining. One day, he paid \$18 for bagels (including the parking ticket), and another, he limped to an outdoor Ben and Jerry’s only to find the sign was a font-mirage for a beef jerky shop. Reading each Only Brad, followers imagine Hughes shaking his head, offering a shrug and moving on.

Everyday work in education is not easy. People make mistakes, sometimes people do incredibly stupid things, and other days simply do not go as planned. In these times, school leaders, like Brad, must learn to shrug, have a head shake, and simply move on to another day and another story. Learn from Brad.

Brad Hughes was right, when he stood in front of the Boston audience in 2012. Social media is a powerful professional tool that school districts can use to share and connect with communities. However, as long as Hughes is on social media personally or professionally, he will teach by example.

And that’s a message worth getting out. ■

Madelynn

Janet

Jean

Jamie

Mike

Amanda

Debi

Ashley

Carolann

Beth Knott

Ji

Whitney J.

Katrina

Kim

Don

Jeff

Ron

Maisha Kathy J.

Jay

A.

Shannon

Math M.

Rachel

Bambam

Linda

Leah

MaryAnn

Eric

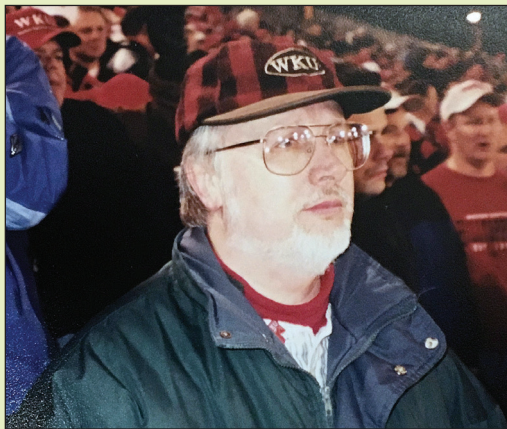
Steve

Sneak preview

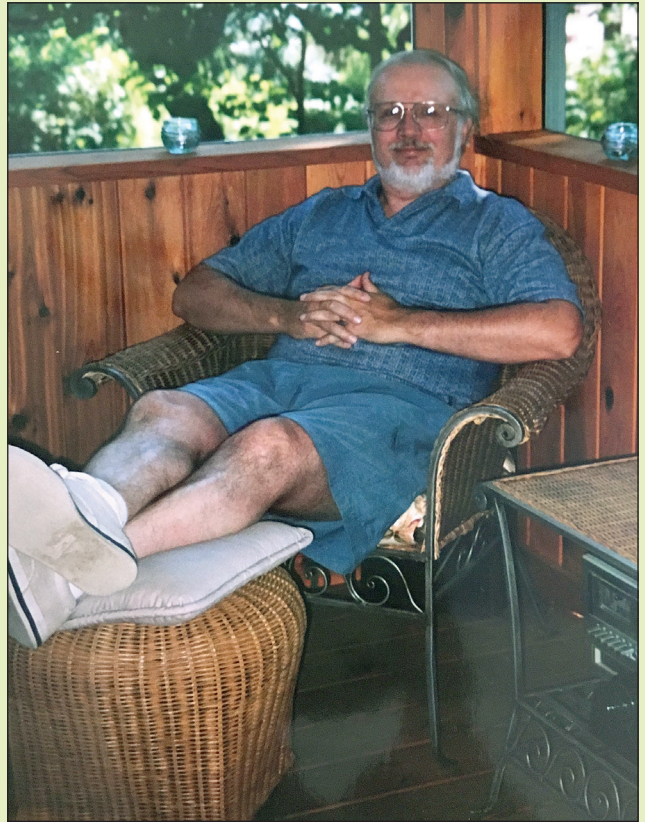
These photos offer a glimpse of life in retirement for Brad and his wife, Judy. Imagine more of this:



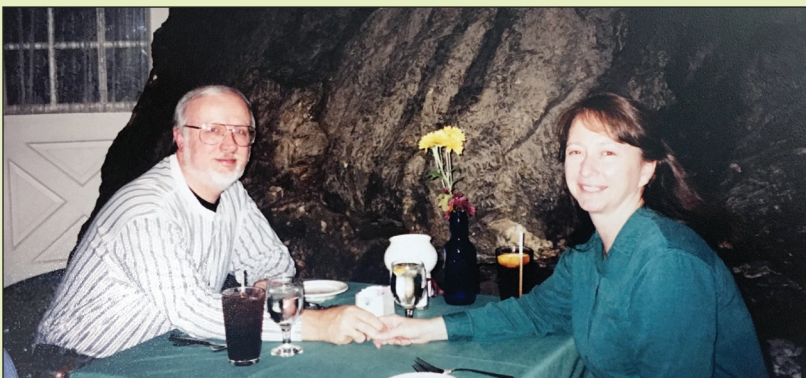
Above: Basking on the rocks on vacation.



Left: Taking in a WKU football game.

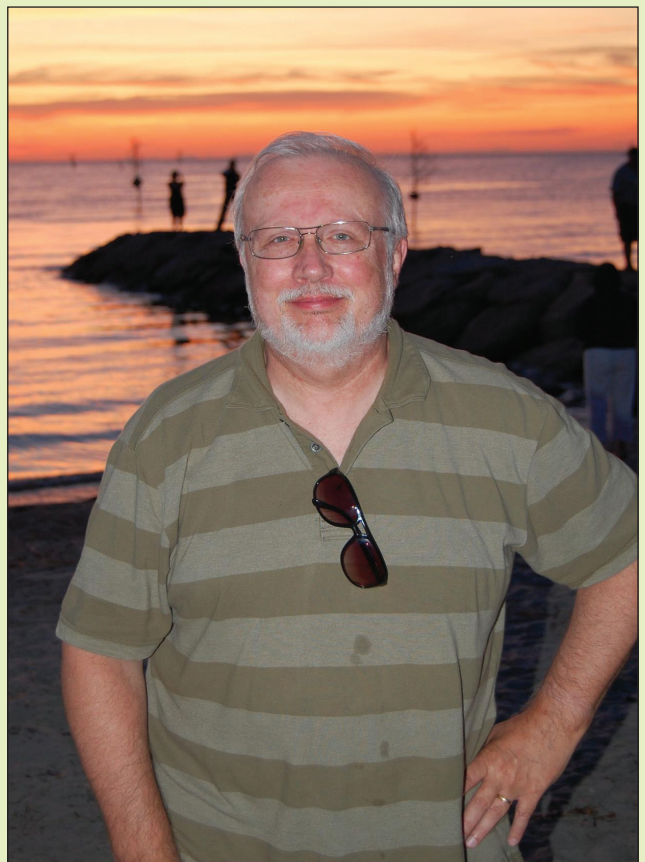


Chilling on his porch at home in Louisville.



Above: Spending time with his "bride."

Right: Accompanying Judy to basket-weaving sessions as a Reed Roadie.



Enjoying sunsets on vacation.