

**Opening Remarks**  
**2009 AAPA Public Relations Seminar**  
**June 23, 2009**  
**Aaron Ellis**

- Thank you for joining us here for the **biennial AAPA Public Relations Seminar**. My name is Aaron Ellis and I'm AAPA's communications director. I'd like to acknowledge and thank **the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority**, which is generously hosting the seminar's reception on Wednesday, and the **Detroit Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America**, which is our promotional and programming partner for this seminar.
- The theme for this seminar is Public Relations **STRATEGIC** Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. After we held our 2007 Public Relations Seminar in Canaveral, Florida, we heard from many attendees that they wanted a program focusing on strategic public relations, as opposed to one focusing on PR tactics. So, our goal for the this seminar is to first give you the tools you need for developing a first-rate strategic communications plan, and then to put those tools into practice on the last day by having you break out into small teams and have each team draft a communications plan that you share with the rest of the group. We have some great examples of successful communications programs to share with you this week, including AAPA's seaport industry awareness initiative, titled **"Seaports Deliver Prosperity,"** which we will showcase in a special session later today.
- Besides me, another AAPA staff member here with us is **Mary Beth Long**, AAPA's senior advisor. (*Ask Mary Beth to stand.*) If you have registration questions, logistical needs like getting your PowerPoint presentation loaded onto AAPA's laptop, or just about anything else, either Mary Beth or I can help. You may also have an opportunity to meet one or more of the dedicated Detroit Visitors and Convention Bureau volunteers who are helping us with handing out registration and other materials. They have graciously offered to assist Mary Beth

and me at the registration table so that the two of us can focus more on your needs as seminar participants, panelists and speakers.

- Also participating with us on making this seminar a success is Port of Corpus Christi Cargo Development Manager **John Valls**. (*Ask John to stand.*) John, who was just promoted from his long-standing position as the port's Marketing Manager, is this year's AAPA Public Relations Committee chairman. The Public Relations Committee comprises more than 100 communications, marketing and community relations professionals, like John, from seaports throughout the Western Hemisphere. A good number of those communications professionals are here with us today.
- I'd now like to pay a special acknowledgement to **Cheryl Solomon**, the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority's marketing director, who has been instrumental in helping develop the seminar's theme, content and various activities, such as the dinner and fireworks reception I hope you are all able to attend on Wednesday evening aboard the *Detroit Princess*, not far from here. So, Cheryl, please come up here to accept a plaque for your tireless work on behalf of the Port of Detroit and the AAPA Public Relations Committee for hosting this year's PR Seminar. (*wait for Cheryl to accept her plaque*).
- Next, I'd like to acknowledge the facilitator for the Thursday workshop portion of this seminar, **Kim Skeltis**, who is the managing director and senior VP for Strat@comm strategic communications counselors here in the Detroit area. (*Ask Kim to stand.*) Kim, who is volunteering her phenomenal services for Thursday's strategic planning workshop, is also this year's president of the Detroit Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, which as I mentioned earlier is AAPA's promotional and programming partner for the seminar. Thank you Kim!
- Now, since this seminar one of the prerequisite courses, I'd like to get a show of hands of who among us is a candidate for AAPA's Port Professional Manager

certification? The designation AAPA/PPM<sup>®</sup> is intended to further the Association's goals to enhance port management professionalism. The program's primary objective is to assist public port authorities, marine related organizations and agencies in hiring or promoting qualified seaport managers and professionals. A secondary objective is to publish selective written materials and make them available as educational and informational sources to AAPA members.

- Finally, I'd like to remind you to please silence or turn off your cell phones during the seminar sessions, and that the presentations you will see and hear in this conference will be posted to AAPA's website by the end of next week.
- So, without further interruption, I'd like to turn the microphone over to **Cheryl Solomon** to introduce her port's executive director, who would like to personally welcome you to Detroit.

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