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## Group lauds HR manager for her efforts

**Phil Castle**  
Business Times

Barbara Burr keeps a bottle of Tabasco hot sauce on her desk at work — not as a potent condiment, but a powerful reminder.

It's a metaphor, Burr explained: Just as certain ingredients should be left out in cooking an apple pie, some approaches work better than others in human resource management

What Burr *does* strive to put into her job as human resource manager of the Mesa County Libraries is professionalism, creativity and a passion for serving the managers and employees who work for the Mesa County Public Library District. Her ultimate goal: to cultivate a safe space in which staff can feel heard, appreciated, valued and respected.

It's an approach that has earned Burr praise from supervisors and peers alike — along with the Western Colorado Human Resource Association award as the 2006 HR Professional of the Year.

"Barbara is a wonderful example of the best of the human resource field," said Lisa Martin, president of the Grand Junction-based group.



Barbara Burr

Burr was among five finalists nominated for the award, a group that also included: Margie Arney of Western Building Solutions, Linda Davidson of Horizon Consulting, Terri Gird of Hilltop Community Resources and Shelley Williams of the City of Grand Junction.

A panel of five community leaders reviewed the finalists' performance in the human resource field, their efforts in promoting the HR profession to others and their contributions to the community and charitable organizations.

As director of marketing and public relations for the WCHRA, Burr wrote the media advisory about the award presentation, but never expected to win herself. "I was surprised and very honored to be in such great company."

Burr has worked as human resource manager for the Mesa County Libraries for more than two years, but has more than 20 years of experience in the field, including previous work at libraries and universities in Idaho and Washington. She holds a bachelor's degree in home economics education and a master's degree in organizational psychology.

Her responsibilities with the Mesa County Libraries include recruitment, employee relations, training and development and compliance with laws and regulations.

Burr said she considers her clients the managers and employees of the library district, which has a total staff of about 70.

Over the past year, Burr has implemented new strategies for the interview and hiring processes, revised the employee handbook, established regular staff training sessions and launched a wellness program for employees.

In addition, Burr has been an active board member of the WCHRA, a chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management with about 110 members. She recently was recertified as a senior professional in human resources. Burr also served as chairwoman for the Taste of Italy, a benefit event that raised \$6,000 for the Mesa County Habitat for Humanity.

Burr said the role of human resource managers is changing from what once was considered personnel "police" to integral members of the administrative team that determines the direction of a company or organization.

It's more important than ever to recruit and retain good employees as well as create a workplace in which they're productive, she said. At the same time, HR managers face increasingly complex challenges in complying with regulations and keeping down health care costs.

Still, good communications remains at the core of human resource management, Burr said. She strives to actively listen to everyone who comes to her office. And if one approach doesn't work, she'll try another.

