

MP MISSOURI PRESS NEWS

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Day at the Capitol in Jefferson City | P8**



Get your Better Newspaper Contest entries in before its too late | P3

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Time may change us, turn and face the strange

Why in the world is change so hard? I may be the exception, but I embrace change. I don't mean change for change's sake, but to accomplish a goal or to shake things up so it is new and fresh.

There is not a lot of business going on in the newspaper offices in Missouri that is done the same way it was 20 or even 10 years ago.

We are all facing change. Albeit too much change at once, can be overwhelming, and there are days I know I feel that way, and most likely anyone who is reading this does too.

But change is also good and can be accomplished with solid planning and smart execution.

Finding a new promotion that excites advertisers, the newsroom, and our readers, that's good. Changing attitudes or perception of our newspaper and what it brings to the community, that's also good. Keeping up with all the new technology, not only good, but we must!

The most current change at the newspaper office located on the corner of Commercial and Jefferson, in downtown Lebanon is charging for obituaries.

My goal wasn't to make a 35% profit, it was to pay for the paper, ink, and our staff's time.

I began this "process" five weeks in advance of our target date of Wednesday, Feb. 15.

Almost all the Funeral Homes who

*Change:
Make different;
alter or modify.*

use our paper regularly accepted the fact that we would be charging. In fact, I believe we were the only paper they regularly dealt with who wasn't already doing so. We still offer a free death notice, but I did have to define what we classified as a death notice verses an obituary.

I also designed a template for our staff members to use that worked as an ad order, proof, price sheet and finished design for printing in the paper. One and done!

When introducing these changes to the clients and the employees I simply shared the truth. We just can't keep giving away all these inches in the paper.

Our industry is facing so many changes, and we are constantly addressing this with our readers, our staff, our customers, our suppliers, everyone we are doing business with in one form or another.

It seems all our change is received with negative. We must go from twice a week to once a week, we must raise our subscription rate, we must furlough or layoff staff. These are real

issues that many of us have faced, are currently facing, or may be facing soon.

Our customers and employees can find it very difficult to see any benefit to the changes.

There can be real kickback or consequences' in making these changes too.

Staff so lean you have no back-up. This expedites the need for cross training, that's for sure.

Losing subscribers or advertisers. But the positive can be an incentive program designed to retain or gain them back. Contracts, special promotion tie-ins, rewards for purchase levels.

For the *Laclede County Record*, we had to make the obituary change. Our Feb. 15 newspaper had seven paid obituaries and two death notices. Everyone adapted rather quickly, and it was one of the easiest changes I have experienced.

If you have implemented any changes that might help a fellow newspaper publisher, manager, advertising director, send them my way as I'd love to share them.



Beth Durreman,
The Laclede County Record
MPA President



PRESIDENT: Beth Durreman,
Laclede County Record, Lebanon

1st VICE PRES.: Amos Bridges, *Springfield News-Leader*

2nd VICE PRES.: Peggy Scott, *Leader Publications, Festus*

SECRETARY: Kimberly Combs,
Wayne County Journal Banner, Piedmont

TREASURER: Mike Scott, *NEMO News Media Group, Kahoka*
NNA Representative: Hannah Spaar, *The Odessan, Odessa*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Mark Maassen

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Ted Lawrence

EDITOR: Matthew Barba

PAST PRESIDENT: Roger Dillon,
Shannon County Current Wave, Eminence

DIRECTORS:

Donna Bischoff, *St. Louis*

Gary Castor, *Jefferson City News Tribune*

Sandy Nelson, *The Courier-Tribune, Liberty*

Bryan Jones, *The Morgan County Statesman, Versailles*

Kevin Jones, *St. Louis American*

Tim Schmidt, *Montgomery Standard, Montgomery City*

Lucas Presson, *Southeast Missourian, Cape Girardeau*

Bryan Chester, *Columbia Missourian*

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2023 Better Newspaper Contest template is open and ready for you

Prepare your entries now

The 2023 Missouri Press Foundation Better Newspaper Contest template is open for members to begin submitting entries. If you haven't yet, start gathering your entries for this year's contest now.

All the information about the contest — rules, categories, entry instructions — is online at mopress.com/better-newspaper/.

Entries to the contest are submitted using the BetterBNC Online Journalism Awards Platform: betternewspapercontest.com/login.

While entries will be accepted through Friday, April 7, a tiered-fee structure has been put in place with reduced costs for newspapers submitting entries earlier in the contest cycle.

The 2023 BNC entry fee structure is:

Entries uploaded before April 1: \$7 per entry; and
Entries uploaded April 1-7: \$10 per entry.

The template will close automatically at 11 p.m. Friday, April 7, and no entries will be accepted after it closes.

All categories for Missouri's 2023 Better Newspaper Contest require digital entries. Please familiarize yourself with the template and ask questions as soon as possible.

You are also encouraged to consider file-sharing websites, i.e., Dropbox, Google Drive, as a method for sharing your larger entries, such as General Excellence and page design entries. There are many free options available.

If you need help entering, contact Matthew Barba (mbarba@mopress.com) or Kristie Fortier (kfortier@mopress.com) for assistance.

We ask members not to wait until the deadline to enter. If a significant number of people attempt to use the template at the same time, it can slow everyone down and could cause you to miss the deadline window.

IMPORTANT: While BetterBNC can work with other internet browsers, it is optimized for Google Chrome.

Download it at <http://www.google.com/chrome>.

DEADLINE: There is no need to wait until the deadline to upload your entries! The contest template will close at 11 p.m. Friday, April 7, and will not accept entries after that — no exceptions. You may begin uploading your entries now.

ALERT: Please try to keep file sizes under 5mb to aid judges in accessing entry content. For larger files such as Special Sections, options include Dropbox, Google Drive, or any service that lets you “share” files via URL. Please make sure the file is public or a password is provided and that it can be printed. If a file cannot be easily accessed, it could be skipped over for judging.

THREE TIPS TO MAKE UPLOADING EASY:

1. Entries that consist of more than one piece of content should be combined into one file. This will make uploading and judging much easier. Categories include Best Columnist, Best Front Page, etc., where an entry is more than one piece. Do the same for stories that jump to another page.

2. Entries should have 1-3-word titles that tell the judge precisely what material on the page is to be judged. You can also use Adobe Acrobat's “highlighter” function to indicate content to be judged.

3. Put all your entries into one folder on your desktop.

Please read the instructions and category listings carefully!

Mark your calendars for Missouri Press Association's 157th Annual Convention, Sept. 21-23, 2023, at Sheraton Westport Chalet at St. Louis.



Meet Missouri Press

Mike Scott is one of two new Board directors helping lead MPA.

By Matthew Barba
Missouri Press News

Since its beginnings 157 years ago, Missouri Press members have provided their knowledge and volunteered their time to help guide the state's newspaper industry. Mike Scott, publisher of NEMO News Media Group, along with Kimberly Combs, Missouri regional manager for Better Newspapers, are the Association's new directors in 2023.

Directors are elected each year during the business meeting held as part of the Association's annual convention and trade show. Nominations to serve on the board are accepted until July 1 and are then reviewed by a nominating committee for consideration by the entire MPA membership.

Since March 2003, Mike and Sue Scott have been a consistent presence in northeast Missouri when they purchased the *Kahoka Media*, *Edina Sentinel* and *LaBelle Star* from Hazel Smith. In the 20 years since, they added the *Shelby County Herald*, *Clarence Courier*, *Palmyra Spectator*, *Milan Standard*, *Memphis Democrat* and *Schuyler County Times*. They also shuttered the newspapers in Clarence and LaBelle.

"The almost 20 years has gone fast," Mike Scott said. "I used to tell people that I love my job 99 percent of the time. Now, as I'm getting older, it's more like 97-98 percent."

"There are never two days that are the same," Scott said of his love for the business. "I might be taking papers to a post office in the morning, and talking to a U.S. Senator in the afternoon, and livestreaming a football game that evening. Breaking news can happen, or I might be stuck doing a sales tax report. But it's never the same."

Scott's first job in the industry was as a staff writer for the *Greek Line*, a monthly publication that served the fraternities and sororities at his alma mater, Iowa State University. Various jobs followed graduation, including working as an assistant manager at Payless Shoes.

Eventually he ended up at the *Omaha World-Herald* as circulation district manager overseeing sales and delivery in northeast Nebraska and southeast South Dakota. "I used to joke it was better than selling shoes."

Getting burnt out in circulation, Scott left to sell copiers and office equipment for a few months but left for ethical reasons. He took a job at a Nebraska commercial egg factory where he would cook more than 300,000 hard-boiled eggs during his 8-hour shift. He was also able to go back to grad school at night.



Mike and Sue Scott attend Missouri Press Association's 2023 Day at the Capitol last month in Jefferson City. Mike is one of the Association's new-for-2023 MPA Board directors, along with Kimberly Combs, who was profiled in the February issue of *Missouri Press News*. Together, the Scotts own and operate NEMO News Media Group, which has seven publications in northeast Missouri, including the *Edina Sentinel* and *Kahoka Media*, two of the publications they originally purchased in 2003 when they made the move to newspaper ownership. (Staff photo/Missouri Press News)

Taking a job as circulation manager for a Sioux City, Iowa shopper, Scott said, "It was there that I found out that I was really good at circulation."

Using that as a jumping off point, Scott joined the Kokomo, Ind. *Tribune* as alternative delivery manager, responsible for shoppers, national-title magazines fulfilled by the newspaper and product samples ranging from perfume packets to canned soft drinks.

"Hell hath no fury like a customer who didn't get their *Cosmopolitan* magazine on time," he added.

After a year, he took over as distribution director for the *Kokomo Tribune*, massively improving the quality of its circulation operations, reducing expenses and dramatically lowering the number of complaints received.

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

Scott, Combs are MPA Board's new directors.

In the aftermath of a sampling campaign that proved a catastrophic sales failure for the newspaper, the Tribune was restructured and Scott found new opportunities elsewhere. He continued gathering experience with other newspapers and ownership groups, including the *Daily Nonpareil* in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

"One of the reasons I went to Council Bluffs was the promise of moving out of circulation and into management. By then, I knew I could be a publisher," Scott said. "After not even getting a courtesy interview for an opening at a small, nearby paper owned by the company, I reached out to a recruiter. He then called my boss, and a few days before Christmas 2002, I had to announce that I was leaving the company during the Christmas party."

That proved to be the push Scott and his wife needed to buy their first newspapers in 2003 and over time become one of the largest independent ownership groups in the state and the largest in northeast Missouri, which prompted him to apply for the MPA Board.

"Last year, I noticed that almost all of the MPA directors were from central or southern Missouri. It made sense that I should try to serve," Scott said. "I'd like to see Missouri Press help smaller papers more."

"I think some good things are in progress, like the Digiversity.tv and the Earn Your Press Pass programs, but I think we must do more," Scott said. "We should find ways to help smaller papers develop better access

to digital revenue streams and help them find out new ways to increase revenue or decrease costs. The big guys have corporate staffs focused on those things. The mom-and-pops just get by day after day and try to squeeze those ideas in when they can."

He added that everything newspapers do is to better connect with readers and overcome the myriad challenges that newspapers face.

"First of all, let me say local newspapers are not dead, but we have to change," Scott said. "The key is to remain local and tell the stories nobody else is telling. Every person you meet is a potential feature story. Maybe they carve wooden duck decoys, raise alpacas, work as a rodeo clown or collect geodes — everyone has a story, and readers love those kinds of stories."

"But beyond that, it's our job to report on what the local school board, city council and county commissions are doing," he continued. "Usually, I'm just about the only member of the public at any of their meetings, and it's that way in most of our communities. If we're not there reporting what we see and know, then people have no way of knowing what's going on."

Quality is also important for staying relevant in the community, helping to build trust in the newspaper and in turn get people to pay for a product

that pays the bills. Right now, that is print for most newspapers, but digital's share is increasing.

"The folks in our communities know us. They see us around town, at the ball game or grocery store, and we build trust with them every day," Scott said. "People want news, and they are willing to pay for it, but they want news they can trust. And they can trust their local newspapers."

Although his writing most often ends up in the seven newspapers that make up his NEMO News group, Scott's efforts behind the quill have also ended up on the stage. "Most people don't know that I have been involved in community theater as an actor, writer, director and board member for many years."

And while the euphoria that comes with a stage production's curtain call is its own kind of high, there's something else Scott said lifts him up.

"I earned my private pilot's license when I was 46," he said. "My son and I own a 1952 Piper Tri-Pacer. There's nothing like flying."

See the February 2023 issue of *Missouri Press News* to learn more about Combs, her career in newspapers and how she wants to help the industry evolve. You can find a digital archive of past editions online at www.mopress.com.



Kimberly Combs is regional manager for **Better Newspapers' Missouri publications**, including the **Wayne County Journal Banner** in Piedmont. She was profiled in the **February 2023 issue of Missouri Press News**. (Submitted)

Digiversity.tv can help ease your work day

From Missouri Press Staff

Digiversity.tv is a training website focused on the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of products with the goal of providing designers and graphic artists complete answers and solutions to everyday challenges and more. The website is operated by Russell Viers, who has been a presenter for many years to Missouri Press and associated groups.

Staff of Missouri Press newspapers have free access to



Digiversity.tv through the end of 2023. Register one staff, two staff, three staff or more!

Signing up is simple, go online to bit.ly/DigiversityMPA OR email Matthew Barba at mbarba@mopress.com.

In addition to training and explaining, users can submit questions directly to Viers at russell@digiversity.tv. He'll be happy to help and your question might be inspiration for a future training video.

MPAME

Missouri Press Advertising
& Marketing Executives Meeting

April 20-21, 2023
Hotel Vandivort
Springfield MO



Laura Koch
Metro Creative
Graphics



\$149 sleeping
room rate,
reservation
deadline
March 17, 2023.
For Special MPA
room rate go to
<https://bit.ly/3XNf9WY>
Group Code:
4684

Thursday, April 20

11:00 AM | MPAME Board meeting
Hotel Vandivort – *Pillar Room*

PROGRAM | Events in Cornerstone Room

1-2:15 PM | Legal Hotline Attorney Jean Maneke

2:15 PM | Break

2:30-3:30 PM | Best Ideas Session
Bring Your Best Ideas to Share to win CASH!

3:30-4:30 PM | Laura Koch of Metro Creative
Graphics | SPEC ADS training / info session

5:30PM | Awards Banquet and Best Ad Idea
Session Winner Announced | Cornerstone Room

8:00-9:30 PM | THURSDAY NIGHT FUN!
Ernie Biggs Dueling Piano Bar

MPAME

Friday, April 21

Events in Cornerstone Room

8:30 AM | Breakfast

9-10:15AM | Laura Koch of Metro Creative Graphics
SPECIAL SECTIONS review

10:15 AM | Break

10:30-Noon | Hot Topic Round Table Discussions

Laura Koch Metro Creative Graphics



Laura Koch is the senior graphic designer at Metro Creative Graphics. She holds a BA in Communication, but followed her artistic passion to start her career as a graphic designer for two newspapers in her hometown of Buffalo, NY. In 2008 she relocated to NYC and landed a graphic design position at Metro, a company she utilized in her previous design work at the Buffalo News. Laura has been with Metro for 12 years now, continually helping the company anticipate and meet the evolving needs of the newspaper industry. She has a great appreciation for what designers on a small staff with tight deadlines can create. Laura puts her passion for layout and design to work in producing ads, section covers, art headings, infographics and editorial layouts, which she hopes will inspire her fellow artists and give them a jumping-off point in their own designs.

Online registration form: <https://bit.ly/3KI7wv8>

Local newspapers can still work

By Walter B. “Walt” Potter Jr

For the Reynolds Journalism Institute

Emerging trends in local news business models may be cause for optimism about local news coverage.

One advance finds newspaper owners creating small regional groups that hit the sweet spot where economies of scale and advantages of local ownership can be achieved. The other evolution is the proliferating ways news organizations are leveraging donations to support local news coverage.

I examined these developments while visiting small newspapers this past fall as part of my continuing work with the University of Missouri School of Journalism’s Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute (RJI).

I also found papers that continue to prosper in particular markets with more traditional approaches. The *St. Louis American* is doing better than ever as it fine tunes coverage of its metro area’s African American community.

This project updates visits made in 2015 and 2016 — dubbed the Potter Listening Tours. I reported on the companies’ initial efforts to meet challenges the internet poses to revenues and news coverage. Six years later, small newspapers have developed new techniques for a digital age.

Trips to Westplex Media Group and Leader Publications showed a “right sizing” strategy yielding positive results. These two groups have four newspapers each, which provide opportunities for cost sharing. Meanwhile, the ownership and management of these newspapers know the communities their papers cover intimately.

Both Westplex Media Owner Tim Schmidt and Leader Publisher Peggy Scott grew up in the same areas where their papers are published. “Our advantage is we live here,” Schmidt says. “My name is on it.”

Schmidt acquired two of his papers from Gannett Co. that the giant corporation felt didn’t fit the model for its nearly 1,000 papers nationwide but Schmidt felt were well-suited for his operation in the western suburbs of St. Louis. Meanwhile, Leader Publications has been matching its growth to the expansion of communities in the southern St. Louis suburbs.

This version of “right sizing,” it should be noted, differs from the usual usage of the term as a euphemism for layoffs. Both companies have added employees recently and are actively searching for more.

Trips to *The Kansas City Beacon* and *The Northeast News* of Kansas City showed two different approaches to relying on grants and donations for revenue. The *Beacon* is a brand new news organization that publishes entirely online and brings new ideas to government reporting and community engagement. The *Northeast News* is a 90-year-old small community paper that distributes in both print and digital while trying to blend grants and donations with its traditional advertising income.

The *Beacon* pursues a heavy emphasis on community engagement using advisory boards, events to meet the public and attention to web site analytics.



Submitted graphic/Reynolds Journalism Institute

Funding the *Beacon*’s activities relies nearly entirely on donations. “It’s very much a public broadcasting model,” says Chelan David, vice president of development, who adds the company’s aim is to achieve sustainability.

In contrast, *The Northeast News*, nestled in its namesake Kansas City neighborhood, still puts out a print version as it has since 1932. The free distribution paper continues to take in revenue through advertising, but last May it began operating as a non-profit corporation. This allows the organization to seek grant and foundation funding set aside for non-profit journalism outlets as well as discounts on supplies and even sales tax, says Publisher Michael Bushnell. “We want to make us sustainable.”

Non-profit status, though, is not for the faint-hearted, says Bushnell, who gave a presentation on the paperwork-intensive process at last fall’s Missouri Press Association convention. Schmidt and Scott joined a number of other publishers curious about Bushnell’s venture.

Like its suburban St. Louis brethren, the *St. Louis American* found that right sizing was the right move. “During the pandemic we had to cut back on distribution, saving money” says Chief Operating Officer Kevin Jones, “but people still found the (free distribution) paper.” Meanwhile, revenues picked up as corporations wanted more than ever to reach the *American*’s loyal African American readers. The result? 2021 was the 94-year-old publication’s best year and 2022 was the second best.

The *American* cut costs, but not people, maintaining its staff. That was reflected in the paper’s performance. Its web site reports that over the past three years, the *St. Louis American* has “received nearly 100 local, regional, and national awards for excellence in journalism and design, advertising and community service.”

I’ll go into more detail on these fall visits in future posts on the RJI website, rjionline.org.

Walt Potter Jr. is a third-generation newspaper journalist whose family operated community newspapers in Virginia. In 2014, he committed \$1 million to MU’s Walter B. Potter Fund for Innovation in Local Journalism. The fund supports teaching and research centered on journalism that serves small communities, such as towns in rural areas or individual neighborhoods in larger urban areas. This article was edited for length and the original, published Feb. 6, can be found online at rjionline.org.

Thank you for showing up to support Missouri's newspapers



Gov. Mike Parson speaks to members of Missouri Press Association during the 33rd Annual Day at the Capitol, held Feb. 23. In addition to lunch at the Governor's Mansion, MPA members met with legislators in the Capitol

building and heard from statewide leaders about various issues being considered this session, including proposed changes to the Missouri Sunshine Law and public notices in newspapers. (Staff photo/Missouri Press News)

Sunshine law, public notices and St. Louis circuit attorney were subjects of multiple questions.



By Matthew Barba
Missouri Press News

Despite cold temperatures and wind erasing any comfort warmer weather earlier in the week might have provided, Missouri Press Association members still filled the Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City during Missouri Press Association's 33rd Annual Day at the Capitol.

MPA members headed to Jefferson City on Feb. 23, the re-scheduled date for this year's Day at the Capitol after

the original event in January was canceled due to winter weather.

Attendees met at the Missouri State Capitol building for coffee and pastries before being sent to roam the halls and meet with their local legislators. Key among their goals was to draw attention to proposed legislation detrimental to newspapers' ability to keep members of their community informed, including bills that would limit accessibility of records through the state's Sunshine Law and take public notices out of newspapers.

After meeting with their legislators, attendees heard from State Treasurer Vivek Malek, who took office in January and spoke about his path to becoming an American citizen that would eventually lead to his role as a public servant.

Malek also discussed his goals for the Treasurer's office, including the "three Ps" of protecting Missourians' tax dollars, providing more opportunities through the Treasurer's office through programs like MO ABLE and maintaining the promise that Missourians can achieve the "American dream."

"I am the living example the American dream is still alive," Malek said.

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

Legislative leaders state commitment to Sunshine

Senate president Pro Tem Caleb Rowden was the morning's second speaker. He addressed gaming bills being considered to legalize sports betting, as well as legislation that coincides with the Attorney General's efforts to remove St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner from office and another bill that would put St. Louis police under state control.

On the topic of the Sunshine Law, Rowden told MPA members he does not think it needs to be limited but there is interest in removing personally identifiable information from records subject to Sunshine Law requests.

"If its arbitrarily or unnecessarily limited, it's not something I would support," Rowden said of legislation to limit the Sunshine Law. "I don't want to do anything to make this place any darker. I think everything should be accessible, that's generally a good rule of thumb."

House Speaker Dean Plocher followed Rowden and talked about the Sunshine Law, as well, adding "I want there to be transparency, I don't want it to be obtrusive."

During his prepared remarks and the questions that followed, Gov. Mike Parson talked about the importance of securing pay raises for state employees and the need to ensure Missouri's teachers are receiving proper compensation. Doing so, he added, ensures the state and school districts can be more competitive with private industry.



Top, Missouri Press Association President Beth Durreman greets Gov. Mike Parson before his remarks to MPA members at the Governor's Mansion. Lunch at the Governor's Mansion and a question-and-answer session capped off the 33rd Annual MPA Day at the Capitol. Above, MPA Legislative Director Doug Crews gives members some advice on legislation to talk about with lawmakers before sending them out to meet with their local legislators. Proposed changes to the Sunshine Law and public notices in newspapers continue to be a topic of priority for the Association this legislative session. (Staff photos/Missouri Press News)



Top, members of Missouri Press Association listen to Gov. Mike Parson following lunch at the Governor's Mansion during last month's Day at the Capitol. Above, Missouri State Treasurer Vivek Malek, center, greets MPA Executive Director Mark Maassen and MPA President Beth Durreman before addressing members attending Day at the Capitol.

MPA members are encouraged to meet with their legislators in person as often as possible to relay the importance of laws that ensure open access to government records and meetings. In-person meetings are the most effective way to get your legislators to listen.

If you have questions about meeting with legislators, either during the legislative session or during the summer, feel free to contact MPA Executive Director Mark Maassen, who can provide MPA members with talking points about critical legislation that is being considered. Contact Maassen at (573) 449-4167, ext. 308, or at mmaassen@mopress.com.

More photos from Missouri Press' Day at the Capitol are available on the Association's Facebook page.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

DEADLINES APPROACHING



Nominations are being taken now for the top awards of the Missouri Press Association and Foundation:

Missouri Newspaper Hall of Fame Outstanding Young Journalist

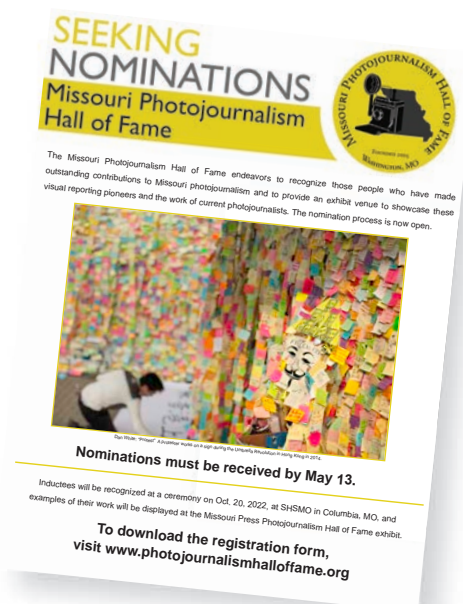
Nominations must be in by March 31

Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame

Nominations must be in by May 13

DOWNLOAD NOMINATION FORMS AT
bit.ly/MoPressForms (case sensitive)

Each of the nomination forms includes the criteria for selection. Contact Matthew Barba by phone at 573-449-4167, ext. 302, or by email at mbarba@mopress.com with questions.



Applications for the Internship Grants Program must be received on or before April 20.

If your newspaper is interested in applying for an internship grant, please go to mopress.com/missouri-press-foundation-internships

If you have questions please call
573-449-4167



Open Records Reporting: Duquesne agrees purchases 'questionable'

By LaDonna Allen

From the Jasper County Citizen

After reviewing documents provided by the City of Duquesne, a source inside the Office of State Auditor said people would "be amazed" to learn what was purchased by Melody Cundiff, former city clerk.

The auditor has now closed the investigation without taking action.

In a letter dated Jan. 4, the office notified Duquesne Mayor Bill Sherman an investigation was concluding with no further action.

Chief Mary Johnson of the office of the State Auditor said the review confirmed Cundiff had placed multiple orders which were delivered to her home in Carl Junction. The auditor will take no further action, as "the argument could be made that these were office supplies."

"She could always say that she took the items into the office and that she was allowed, at times, to work from home," said Johnson.

The state auditor launched a preliminary investigation after receiving a whistleblower report of strange purchasing activity. A report was filed with the office after 116 Amazon purchases were made on city credit cards during a six-month period.

In November, Johnson sent a request to Sherman requesting multiple documents, including invoices and receipts for city purchases. Johnson said the city complied with the request and staff thoroughly reviewed records.

The *Jasper County Citizen* filed a request for the open records provided to the auditor with the city of Duquesne and after more than a month received the information.

A preliminary review of the documents explained the auditor's statement of puzzlement.

During the six-month period from March through September, the city order at least 961 ink pens, refills and markers to be delivered to her Carl Junction home. Item information on at least two more statements, totaling more than \$620, was not included.

Carl Junction's
Jasper
County **Citizen**

Those writing instruments carried a total price tag of \$1,267.11. The purchases represented 35 of the Amazon orders placed during the six-month period.

In the month of August 2022 alone, the city ordered more than \$536 worth of pens and markers to her home.

During the same time-period, the city also spent \$227.18 of taxpayer funds, for 225 ink pens to be delivered to City Hall.

Records also show Cundiff ordered multiple cordless headsets, one priced at \$168.51. Handwritten notes show this was "office supplies" and compatible with a new phone system, despite the fact it was delivered to her residence. Additional headsets were purchased and delivered to City Hall.

Other purchases delivered to Cundiff's home ranged from a Honeywell whole room cooling tower, desk fan, handheld fans, multiple planners and calendars, a charging station for Apple products, a magnetic charging pad and a "cute cell phone stand (dog)," to multiple pen and pencil holders.

Home deliveries also included a decorative basket, over-the-door towel holder and over-the-door clothes hanger, among other items.

During that same time period, records reflect items purchased on the city cards and returned for refund. Those included skin care products, novels, mugs and plush animals. One statement shows a Van Gogh print coffee mug was returned and a Van Gogh T-shirt was ordered.

As to whether Cundiff ordered these items to "work from home," an inspection of the former clerk's time cards from this period showed she had worked during regular business or meeting hours on all but three occasions. Even on those occasions, Cundiff's time was recorded on the city's time card system, which the current city

clerk confirmed was accessed by either a fingerprint or entering a code into the control panel located inside City Hall.

A review of Board of Aldermen meeting packets over the six-month period showed full lists of expenditures were not presented at each meeting, although they were obtained, separately, through an open records request.

In a written statement issued Jan. 24, after consulting with the city attorney, Sherman acknowledged questionable spending had occurred.

"The City of Duquesne has recently been under scrutiny by the State Auditor's Office because some questionable spending for office supplies had allegedly taken place. While this process was under way, the city had its annual audit and a close review by the mayor and Board of Aldermen who agree that some questionable spending of city funds did occur and has been addressed in the following manner: corrective action to prevent reoccurrence has been taken; merchandise has been returned to the seller, where possible; and the city has received reimbursement for items which could not be returned. All pertinent purchases of office supplies are in the city's possession.

"The State Auditor's Office has determined that no further action is required at this time. These events continue to be evaluated to determine if further action is warranted," wrote Sherman.

A request for information as to when reimbursement was made, by whom, and the amount of that reimbursement has not yet been answered by the city of Duquesne.

This article was originally published Jan. 25, 2023, and reprinted here with permission. It has been edited for length. In honor of the Sunshine Law's 50th anniversary this year, Missouri Press News is sharing the efforts of Association members who raise awareness about the law, including through reporting that highlights an effective application of open records statutes to further inform readers.



St. Louis

Albert Schweitzer

Albert L. Schweitzer Jr., 101, a well-known St. Louis cartoonist, died Jan. 30, 2023, at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Louis.



Schweitzer attended the University of Missouri before joining the Marines in World War II aboard the USS

South Dakota.

After the war, he took night classes and did advertising agency work before joining the advertising art staff at the former *St. Louis Star-Times* in the late 1940s. He joined the *Post-Dispatch* advertising staff in 1950 and was promoted to the news-art department in 1955.

Many St. Louis newspaper readers were familiar with Schweitzer's work, including being only the fifth cartoonist to work on the *Post-Dispatch's* Weatherbird from 1981-1986, when he retired as the newspaper's chief artist.

A member of the St. Louis Media History Foundation's Print Hall of Fame, Schweitzer donated much of his original artwork to the St. Louis Mercantile Library.

In addition to scores of friends and colleagues, Schweitzer is survived by two sons, Albert and Peter; and a granddaughter.

Santa Fe, N.M.

Rosemary Smithson

Rosemary Leitz Smithson, 91, of Santa Fe, N.M. died Nov. 29, 2022. A political organizer and community volunteer, she worked as a feature writer for *The Kansas City Star* from 1979 until her retirement 1998.

During her time at *The Star*, Smithson founded the Women in Politics Funds and the Missouri Women's Leadership Coalition, serving to promote the election of women to statewide political office.

She leaves behind many friends and family, including two daughters, Carol and Lee; and two grandchildren, Lowell and Hedy.



Kansas City

James Murray

James B. Murray, 84, of Kansas City died Dec. 28, 2022, at KU Medical Center surrounded by family.

Murray was a journalism and art major at the University of Missouri in Columbia. Just after college, he was hired as an editorial artist by the *Kansas City Star/Times*, where he worked for 18 years as art director.

He was also an award-winning sports illustrator and co-authored the book, "Don't Spit in the Wastebasket", as well as joined former *Star/Times* colleagues and friends to write "From Worst to First" about Kansas City baseball. Another of his work covering the Kansas City Chiefs, entitled "Just For Kicks", will be released posthumously.



In addition to his wife, Joyce, he survived by two grandsons, two great-grandsons, three siblings and many more family and friends.

To make a donation to Missouri Press Foundation, contact Michael Harper at (573) 449-4167, ext. 303, or at mharper@mopress.com.

Teach new staff the fundamentals of journalism

From Missouri Press Staff

Missouri Press Association member newspapers now have access to a new training tool in the form of Earn Your Press Pass, a web-based course that teaches the fundamentals of journalism. The course is being provided to all Missouri Press members at no cost.

The course provides new hires the information and structure they need to sit down and complete lessons that teach the basics of good journalism. Everything from common newspaper terminology to story writing to media

laws are covered in the materials.

Not intended as a college-level course, the goal of Earn Your Press Pass is to impart practical, usable knowledge. Lessons are designed to take the layperson to a functioning newspaper reporter upon completion.

Learn more at earnyourpresspass.com and find out what the course can offer your publication and staff.

To sign up for the course and get added to the Missouri Press group, send an email to mbarba@mopress.com or kfortier@mopress.com.

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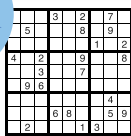
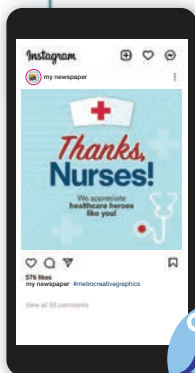
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The importance of sharing

By Matthew Barba
Missouri Press News

Newspapers thrive on the concept of things being better together. From the very foundations of the venerated trinity: circulation, advertising and editorial, they all have to work in concert to get a product in readers' hands that people actually want.

The same concept applies to the newspaper itself. Sure, news and features fill the front page, but obituaries are a critical component of any community newspaper. Of course, families love to clip sports and school news for the fridge.

So what if we go a little more high-minded with this idea and consider that newspapers are better because of the other publications that make up the industry? Of course, I'd say that being a representative of the Association, but hear me out.

Over the last few years at various Missouri Press and MPA-adjacent events, such as the regional press meetings, there has been a greater focus placed on idea sharing. Similar to roundtable discussions, these sessions get people talking to each other about ideas they've tried and to consider trying something new in their own newspaper.

I have loved some of the ideas I have seen shared at these meetings, not all of which you'd find in traded copies. Such as "The Real Ozarks" magazine produced by Norene Prososki and crew at the *Ozark County Times*.

Billed as "Ozark County's most important marketing opportunity," copies of the beautifully designed magazine are distributed throughout the state in travel welcome centers.

As a vacation guide, its purpose of boosting tourism to the county is simple. But the execution is something only an established media company like you, the local newspaper, can make happen for all the various local clients advertising in its pages.

Speaking of media companies, lots of national groups like to make generic visitor's guides for communities



where the sales rep has never even visited. In Maryville, however, the *Forum* staff puts together "Experience Maryville," a guide they distribute

through local hotels to let newcomers to town, whether just passing through or planning an extended stay, know exactly what Nodaway County has to offer.

It's the kind of product that seems necessary, so if you're not already doing it, why not? If you get the chance to chat with Ken Garner, pick his brain for ideas on how to make such a supplement work for your newspaper and community.

Printed visitor/community guides also seem like the right candidate to include a QR code for accessing a digital version. You might be able to sell premium digital spots that click through to the advertisers' own website.

The news side of me shudders at the thought of recommending more special sections for already overworked editorial staffs, but supplements that celebrate the community in ways only a local newspaper can are clear winners. And when the dust settles, they're also the likely way to ensure bills and staff continue getting paid.

So, the *Perry County Republic-Monitor's* "Volunteers" section that focuses on the people who give back to the community seems like a lot of work on the surface but the payoff must be worth celebrating. Again, it's the kind of section your newspaper is uniquely positioned to produce.

If you're planning to attend any of this year's regional press association meetings or the Missouri Press Advertising Managers and Executives meeting in April (and you should!), bring samples of your wins but also be ready to talk about the losses.

I think you'll be bowled over by the camaraderie people in this business show and the support they offer.

That's critical, because we're better together ... our industry, the presence newspapers have in elected officials' minds and your Association, all benefit from the strength we collectively give each other and the ideas we share.

ON THE MOVE



St. Louis — Dan Martin, a 42-year veteran of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, announced his retirement last month. He will continue freelance drawing the newspaper's Weatherbird, the nation's longest continually drawn daily cartoon feature at 122 years.



Martin told readers he remembered growing up with the *Post-Dispatch*, racing his dad to grab the afternoon edition and always looking over the Weatherbird cartoon, even if he didn't always understand it at the time.

Going to work at the newspaper, he recalled crowded offices filled with cigarette smoke and seeing the pressmen wearing their famous square newsprint hats. "And if you took the stairs in the morning, there was a good chance you would exchange pleasantries with Joseph Pulitzer Jr., the founder's grandson," Martin wrote. "But the very best part was the people. I've worked alongside, met or covered some of the most interesting folks you could imagine. I made countless friends."

Troy — Greg Orear has been



named publisher of the *Lincoln County Journal*, *Troy Free Press*, *Elsberry Democrat* and *News Time*, all of which are operated by Lakeway Publishing. He brings more than 30 years of newspaper experience to the role, as well as returning to the St. Louis region where he was born and raised.

A journalism graduate of Truman State University, Orear joined the Chillicothe Constitution-Tribune as a reporter after college. He was soon named editor of the *Brookfield Daily News Bulletin*, and after 10 years, became editor of the *Kirksville Daily Express*.

His first publisher role was for two weeklies in Iowa, followed by heading up two dailies in Minnesota, where one of his papers won General Excellence awards twice. He has also personally won several awards, including Iowa Newspaper Association's Master Columnist award.

Orear has also authored two books, "The Millennium: The Definitive History of Linn County" and "The Sesquicentennial: 150 Years of History in Marshall and Lyon County".

CALENDAR

2023 March

- 31** — Last Day for \$7 entries to the Better Newspaper Contest
- 31** — Hall of Fame Nominations Due
- 31** — Outstanding Young Journalist Nominations Due

April

- 7** — Better Newspaper Contest Template Closes
- 20** — Last Day to Apply for a Missouri Press Foundation Summer Internship
- 20-21** — MPAME Advertising Meeting, Springfield

June

- 15** — Missouri Press Foundation First Amendment Golf Classic, Hermann
- 16** — Missouri Press Board Meetings, Hermann
- 16** — Show-Me Press Meeting, Hermann

September

- 21-23** — MPA's 157th Annual Convention, Sheraton Westport Chalet, St. Louis
- 24-30** — Missouri Photo Workshop, Sedalia

October

- 19** — Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Columbia

Did you know?

You can find all of the latest registration forms for Missouri Press' events online at www.mopress.com.

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More On Advertising

Ted Lawrence,
Advertising Director
Missouri Press Service



5 Step Call-Planning For Your Best Sales Week



According to sales authority and author Dave Kahle, the average salesperson spends only 25 to 30% of the work week talking with prospects and customers.

Most salespeople love to be active—talking with people, solving problems, putting deals together. This activity is one of the necessary characteristics of a sales personality.

But Kahle says the face-to-face interaction with the customer is the core value a salesperson brings to the company. This, says Kahle, proves that it makes sense to spend time planning and preparing, to make that 25 to 30% of the week the highest quality you can possibly make it.

5 Steps For Effective Sales Call Planning

To be successful, the salesperson must follow five specific steps.

Step One: List Useful Information

Determine what kinds of information you'd like to have to help you deal with your customers.

For example:

- Your customers and prospects
- Your competitors
- The products, programs, and services you sell

You may have a number of other categories, but this is a basic list to begin with.

Step Two: Categorize the information

What, ideally, would you like to know about your customers and prospects?

Some typical info would be: What forms of advertising are they using? How much do they spend on advertising? When would any current contracts with media competitors expire?

If you collect this type of information, you'll be better equipped to make strategic decisions and create effective plans.

For example, you'll know exactly who to talk to when your newspaper comes up with a new advertising product or idea. You may currently be doing a so-so job of collecting information. It's true that anyone can gather information. But few people do it well.

Step Three: Develop A System And Some Tools.

The single most effective tool is an account profile form. According to the author, it's an incredibly effective tool that generates and organizes some of the most powerful processes.

Step Four: Store the Information Efficiently.

You may have done a great job of collecting information, but if you've stored it on old matchbook covers, coffee-stained post-its, and the backs of old business cards somewhere in the backseat of your car, it's probably not going to do you much good.

If you are into digital filing, then your computer or phone can be a great tool. If not, you're going to need to create an organized set of physical files to store your information.

Step Five: Use It Regularly.

Before every sales call, review the information you have stored. That review will help you make good decisions during the call. Likewise, review the information as you set your annual goals and sales plans, when you brainstorm strategies, and when you organize and plan your territory.

(Dave Kahle has written twelve books, presented in 47 states and eleven countries, and has helped tens of thousands of salespeople and sales organizations.)



Missouri Newspaper Organizations

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OZARK PRESS ASSOCIATION: President, Ron Schott, Wright County Journal; Vice President, Amanda Mendez, Howell County News; Secretary-Treasurer, Norene Proski, Ozark County Times, Gainesville. Directors: Steve Pokin, Springfield Daily Citizen; Shelby Atkison, Laclede County Record, Lebanon; Kimball Long, Eldorado Springs Sun; and Dan Wehmer, Webster County Citizen, Seymour.

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI PRESS ASSOCIATION: President, Lucas Presson, Cape Girardeau; Second Vice President, Tamara Buck, Cape Girardeau; Secretary-Treasurer, Gina Raffety, Jackson; Historian, Peggy Scott, Festus. Directors: Kim Combs, Piedmont; and Jay Forness, Jackson.

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MISSOURI COLLEGE MEDIA ASSOCIATION: President, Nathan Gladden, Southeast Missouri State University; Vice President, Genevieve Tlustos, Truman State University; Secretary, Caitlin Smith, Evangel University; Adviser, Tamara Zellars Buck, Southeast Missouri State University; and MPA Liaison, Jack Dimond, Missouri State University.

Marijuana advertising brings new risks, rewards

The first of 2023 has brought an onslaught of advertising for recreational marijuana. We may laugh when we say it, but this is a “green” crop for advertising vehicles of all kinds. Still, it raises some issues newspapers are pondering.

Back in January, the Press Association suggested it get a memo out to members about the issue of running advertising for recreational marijuana. It is legal in Missouri to sell the product and, of course, to advertise the product for sale. It is viewed as a money crop in many cities in the state, as the cities (and counties in some area) move to institute a sales tax on the product in hopes of catching a small stream of this revenue.

The issue is not advertising in the state. The issue is mailing a product that contains advertising for what is a federally-controlled drug. Running advertising for recreational marijuana is potentially a federal felony, to be blunt. But it is also speech, which is protected by the First Amendment, and it is commercial speech about a lawful activity in Missouri.

If your newspaper wants to participate in this revenue stream, I urge you to send an email to either Ted Lawrence (tlawrence@mopress.com) or Mark Maassen (mmaassen@mopress.com) and they’ll be happy to forward a copy to you.

Or, right now there’s a link to the memo on the mopress.com website front page!

The reason I urge you to review this is to fully understand the potential legal issues I’ve noted above and to make a decision that you are comfortable with in terms of running such ads.

Meanwhile, I will point out that this is somewhat different than the situations where a significant number of hotline calls fall. This is an issue where the paper faces potential significant legal concerns. That differs

“The issue is not advertising in the state. The issue is mailing a product that contains advertising for what is a federally-controlled drug.”

from so many situations involving alcohol and tobacco advertising.

So often, your advertising staff wants to know what they should tell local bars and liquor stores about running ads for buying alcohol and tobacco. My advice seems to be something simple – tell them you will publish whatever they bring you (so long as it meets your community standards).

There is a simple reason for that – your newspaper faces limited (if any) risk in regard to publishing such advertising. Yes, there are federal regulations that relate to the sale of alcohol, including restrictions on pricing and related issues. Tobacco is similarly regulated.

But penalties for violating those standards fall on the advertiser only. There is no liability that attaches to the newspaper – but the advertiser faces a risk of losing their liquor license if they violate those regulations, for example. So that is why I always recommend that your paper suggest to its advertiser that it consult its own lawyer.

When it relies on its own lawyer, it is able to be certain its legal advice is accurate. And if it’s not, well, that’s between the lawyer and his or her client. I don’t want your advertisers coming back to you and complaining that because what you told them about running such ads was wrong, they have now lost their key to their business. You cannot afford the risk of playing “lawyer” for these clients.

Tobacco advertising is similarly federally regulated and again, the penalties do not attach to the newspaper, so leave the legal advising up to your customers’ attorneys and you just promise them you’ll get their ads in.

And, as you all know, the other advertising land mine out there is real estate advertising. The federal Housing and Urban Development folks do continue to watch for discriminatory language in ads. There are lists online that are touted as “magic” words to avoid.

While such lists are educational, they are not fail-safe and the best advice HUD gives to newspapers is to “describe the property, not the renter or buyer being sought.” In other words, the property is probably “perfect” for whoever wants it and it’s their decision that it’s perfect for them, and not the advertiser’s suggestion.

Rehash for some of you readers, I know, but a reminder never hurts! Hope to see you at the Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives meeting in Springfield in April! It’s always good to hear what questions your paper is having!



Jean Maneke,
is MPA's Legal Hotline attorney.
Contact her at (816) 753-9000;
jmaneke@manekelaw.com.

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