

April 2013

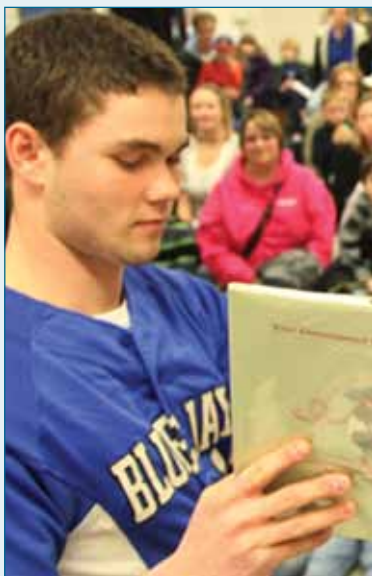
Missouri Press NEWS



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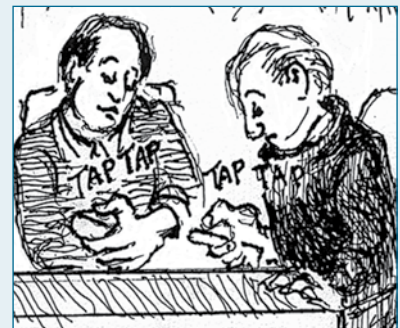
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Brad Buchanan of NewzGroup, Columbia, helps judge the Missouri Ad Managers' Contest on March 1 at the Reynolds Journalism Institute. In the background are Pat Hanna of Hanna Advertising, Boonville; J. Michael Roach of Calendon Virtual, Columbia; and Scott Reeter of Mizzou Magazine, Columbia. Awards will be presented April 18 at Lake Ozark.



Foundation calls on members to help set course for future.

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Jefferson County Leader objects to council members texting during public meeting.

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Big XII tourney just not the same

Help Press Foundation by attending April 25 summit meeting

Today (March 15) is one of those “Chamber-of-Commerce Days.” You know, a warm sunny day in mid-March with the temperature in the 70s.

As I write this, the Big XII basketball tournament is being held in Kansas City. The Sprint Center is just two blocks away, and I am tempted to sneak out of work and take in the festivities. I can start my weekend early, as I have in years past on a Friday, when this tournament was held here.

But, I have an empty feeling. Missouri is not playing in Kansas City this year. Instead, the Tigers are playing in Nashville in the SEC tournament. Blair Kerkhoff of *The Star* wrote about how many in the area feel about the loss, how it seems “weird” that the Tigers aren’t playing here. Especially the way the tournament ended last year. Missouri won the last Big XII tournament title it ever played for last year in Kansas City.

To a Missouri fan, that feeling was electric. Tiger fans took over the Power & Light District, much to the chagrin of our neighbors to the west. In fact, after the championship game, Kim English, forward for the Tigers, reminded everyone that Kansas City was “OUR CITY.”

Not this year. Tonight I will head home early to watch the Tigers play on TV. I realize that the move to the SEC is a good move for the Tigers, especially long-term financially. But on this Chamber-of-Commerce Day, I can’t help but yearn for the days of Big XII tournaments past.

Imagine most of you in other parts of the state don’t feel this same loss as I do. But many of you on this side of the state might share my sentiments. Sometimes, I can’t help but think, “Are we sure it was a good move to go to the SEC.”

The Missouri Press Foundation needs our help. What is the Missouri Press Foundation? It is a 29-year-old non-profit entity of the Missouri Press Association, founded to deal with

the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Past, present and future leaders of the Missouri newspaper industry are asked to participate in a one-day summit on April 25. The foundation’s board of directors voted to call the summit when it met on Feb. 1.



Mark Maassen
The Kansas City Star.
MPA President

A survey of newspapers was conducted earlier, and a priority list was established from its results. The survey showed newspapers want to build readership and train staff members. Other responses include supporting independent ownership, re-establishing market dominance, im-

ploding the myth that newspapers are dying and establishing reader habits of the young.

Bill Monroe, retired executive director of the Iowa Newspaper Association, will moderate the idea summit. I have had the pleasure of attending meetings with Bill, and I guarantee you that you will find this meeting informative and useful.

The summit will be held in Columbia. Contact Kristie Williams at the MPA office and tell her you’ll be there. More information is in this magazine.

Objective is to come up with ways to help newspapers boost readership, reclaim market share and train staffers.



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Missouri Press Foundation

Help us build a better Foundation

Past, present and future leaders

of the Missouri newspaper industry are asked to participate in a one-day meeting in Columbia about the future of the Missouri Press Foundation.

The meeting will focus on how to fulfill the mission of the 29-year-old non-profit entity of the Missouri Press Association and help Missouri's newspapers deal with the challenges and opportunities ahead.

What: Missouri Press Foundation Summit

When: Thursday, April 26, 2013

Where: Hy-Vee Club Room, 406 E. Nifong Blvd.,
(2nd floor) Columbia

Time: 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

RSVP: Please let us know by **April 15** if you will attend. Lunch will be served. RSVP to: kwilliams@socket.net or 573-449-4167.

Do not wait until contest deadline

Template will automatically close off entries at midnight April 30

Every year, many newspapers wait until the deadline to submit their Better Newspaper Contest entries to Missouri Press.

Don't do that!

The online contest template will automatically stop accepting entries at midnight on Tuesday, April 30. The deadline cannot be extended. No late entries will be accepted.

MPA's contest will be administered online for the first time this year, and the contest template is ready for you to begin uploading your entries. If you wait until the deadline, and you have difficulty, you may not be able to submit your entries in time.

Complete information about the contest and instructions for uploading entries are at mopress.com/current_forms.php.

Here are suggestions for making uploading of entries easy.

1. One person from your newspaper — your contest administrator — should handle the contest.

2. Create a folder on one computer desktop and put all of your contest entries in that folder. One of the steps in uploading your entries is to "browse" to your entry files. If all of your entries

*Learn procedure
before you
run into trouble
at deadline.*

are in one place, that step will be fast and easy.

3. Include Category numbers in the titles of your entries. For example, name a photo of a house fire something like 10NHouse Fire (the category number for news photos is 10N). By doing this, the entries in your folder will be in numerical order and identified according to the categories in the template.

When you begin uploading entries, you will be taken through a validation process after uploading two entries. The program will log you out and send a validation email to you with a link that will take you back to your contest account. After completing contact information,

you can upload more entries.

Remember, all entries must be in by midnight April 30. The contest template will shut down automatically.

Uploading your entries before the deadline also will help the MPA staff, because each entry — and there probably will be more than 3,500 — has to be validated.

Choose your contest administrator now. Have that person set up the entry folder and place in it several contest entries. Get the uploading instructions and test the system now.

In categories with bulky entries, like Special Sections, you can create remote digital files and upload the web addresses to the contest template. One website where you can create these files is issuu.com. Instructions for creating issuu files (a simple procedure) are with all of the other contest information at mopress.com/current_forms.php.

For this year's contest you'll still need to send hard copies in three categories to the MPA office in Columbia: General Excellence, Overall Design and Newspaper In Education Program.

As always, if you have questions, contact the MPA office: (573) 449-4167, kford@socket.net.

Press Foundation asks for help setting goals

The Missouri Press Association has invited leaders of the newspaper industry in Missouri to attend a summit meeting in Columbia on April 25 for discussion about the future of the Missouri Press Foundation.

Leaders of regional press associations and other Missouri Press affiliate organizations, and others who are interested, will meet from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Club Room of the Hy-Vee supermarket at South Providence and Nifong Boulevard in south Columbia.

At a Feb. 1 meeting of the Foundation's board of directors, Bill Monroe, retired executive director of the Iowa Newspaper Association, told how the

*MPA members invited
to April 25 Summit Meeting
in Columbia.*

Iowa Newspaper Foundation has succeeded. In the past few years it has grown from a nearly broke corporation to one that has provided training to thousands of journalists and generated 2012 income of nearly \$571,000.

At the Feb. 1 meeting, the Missouri Press Foundation board reviewed the results of a recent survey that asked members of Missouri Press to identify the most pressing issues facing their

newspapers. Based on the results of that survey and their own experience, board members determined that three areas need to be addressed: Staffing, programming and fundraising.

The board decided to hold the summit meeting to continue the conversation with the members of all MPA-related boards to find out in which direction to take the foundation and to develop recommendations.

Those who received invitations to the April 25 meeting are urged to let Missouri Press know whether they will attend. Others who are interested also should contact Missouri Press at (573) 449-4167 or kwilliams@socket.net.

All things circulation April 20-22 in St. Louis

Regional and national organizations, including the Midwest Circulation Management Association, have partnered to sponsor a Mega Summit focusing on circulation to be held Saturday-Monday, April 20-22 at the Saint Louis Renaissance Hotel Airport.

The 2013 Mega Summit will focus on using all of the circulation tools available — including non-traditional tools — to boost circulation and other vital segments of your business.

See the entire agenda and register at 360mediaalliance.com/events/.

For hotel information and reservations: 360mediaalliance.com/event-register/.

Vickie Miller of *USA Today*, from Olivette, is chairman of the board of the Midwest Circulation Management Association, one of the sponsoring organizations. The association has more than 100 newspapers in eight states.

Tom Livingston of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* is the third vice president of MCMA.

The Missouri state director for the association is Jim Kennedy of Neighbor News, Bolivar. He can be reached at jimk@mo.neighbornews.com for information about the Mega Summit.

Ryan Squibb buys Greene County papers

Ryan Squibb, who bought the *Lawrence County Record* in Mt. Vernon on Dec. 31, has purchased the *Ash Grove Commonwealth* and *Willard Cross Country Times*. Former publisher/editor Laura Scott sold the papers to Squibb on Feb. 16.

Squibb, a graduate of Ash Grove High School, is a former editor of the *Republic Monitor*. He also works a cattle farm near Bois D'Arc.

All three of the communities are in Greene County northwest of Springfield.

Scott remains on the newspapers' staff as a page designer, reporter and writer. She published the papers for 11 years. Other staff members also have been retained.

Chamber of Commerce lauds Grandview weekly for service

Dear Editor,
On behalf of the Grandview Chamber members, board and staff, we want to express our CONGRATULATIONS to the *Jackson County Advocate* for serving as our community newspaper for 60 years! What an incredible accomplishment for you and the previous publishers of this important news vehicle for our community.

At the Chamber office, we know every Thursday as "Advocate Day." We watch for the paper to arrive in our mailbox and sit down with it over lunch to read and educate ourselves on City, school district and community news. Many an article has led to an in-depth discussion!

Grandview is so very fortunate — especially in the technology age — to be able to say that we have a thriving hometown newspaper. Grandview is more than proud to boast about our

Letter

award-winning paper and the Chamber has enjoyed working with the Turnbaugh family, the Wood family, and now the Davis/Wilson family. Kudos to all of the publishers, editors and reporters who have built this newspaper to the success it continues to be today!

Besides saying "Congratulations" we would also like to say "Thank You" for the coverage you have given our organization and the business community over these past 60 years. We look forward to the success of the *Jackson County Advocate* for the next 60 and beyond.

Kind regards,
Kim Curtis, President
Grandview Chamber of Commerce
Mike Simmons, Chairman
of the Board

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Odessa foundation will induct publishers into Hall of Fame

Several Missouri community newspaper publishers will be honored April 20 with induction into the Odessa R-7 Public School Foundation Hall of Fame.

Betty S. Spaar, John Spaar, Joe and Renee Spaar, *The Odessan*; Darryl Wilkinson, *Gallatin North Missourian*; and the late Robert "Bob" Cobb, King City *Tri-County News*, have been selected for the Odessa Hall of Fame honors.

The Spaars were selected as friends of education and

alumni (John and Joe are Odessa High School graduates). Wilkinson, too, is a graduate of OHS. Mr. Cobb was a journalism teacher at OHS in the 1960s and 70s.

The 10th annual Foundation Banquet and Hall of Fame Induction will be held at the Odessa Middle School gymnasium, 607 South Fifth St., in Odessa. Tickets for the 5 p.m. social hour and 6 p.m. dinner are \$40 per person. RSVP by April 12 to 816-633-5316.

Lake Ozark passes ordinance to restrict cussing in public

Watch what you say in Lake Ozark.

The Camdenton Reporter reported that the board of aldermen in February unanimously passed a disorderly conduct ordinance that prohibits "abusive, offensive, indecent, profane or vulgar language in a public place, and the language by its very utterance tends to disturb the peace of another person, invoke or incite violence by another person, or cause alarm or annoyance to another person ..."

The ordinance also prohibits displaying a firearm or other dangerous weapon in public.

The Lake Ozark police chief asked the board to pass the ordinance, the city attorney told *The Camdenton Reporter*.

One alderman questioned whether the ordinance involved prior restraint of free speech, which courts frown upon. The city counselor said it didn't, and the aldermen voted.



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Vote for Government in the Sunshine

Tell your legislators to keep 'the people's business' open to the people

(Editor's note: Several Missouri newspapers published this op-ed during Sunshine Week in March.)

By **DOUG CREWS** / Executive Director
Missouri Press Association

Take a look out your front door. Is the sun shining at your city hall? Is it shining at your county courthouse and at your public fire district headquarters?

How bright is the sun shining at the school board's headquarters, at your public water district office and in your public hospital board's meeting room?

March 10-16 is set aside for National Sunshine Week in Missouri and across the U.S.

This week-long observance is a time for citizens and taxpayers to focus on state and local government operations and how those operations are visible to the citizens and taxpayers they serve.

Since 1973, the State of Missouri has had a Sunshine Law in its statutes. Forty years ago, the Missouri legislature passed Senate Bill 1, and then-Governor Christopher S. Bond signed it into law.

The Sunshine Law, located in Chapter 610 of Missouri's revised statutes, sets out the rules for public governmental bodies — such as city councils, county commissions and boards of education — to follow in providing access to their public meetings and public records.

A key passage in Missouri's law says, "It is the public policy of this state that meetings, records, votes, actions, and deliberations of public governmental bodies be open to the public unless otherwise provided by law." And, sections of the Sunshine Law "shall be liberally construed and their exceptions strictly construed to promote this public policy."

This year in Jefferson City, bills are moving through the General Assembly to amend the Sunshine Law with changes that will strengthen the law for

citizens. The Missouri Press Association is supporting these bills and has testified in favor of current versions. Testimony supporting the bills has been given by the Missouri School Boards Association, also.

Dissenting testimony has come primarily from the Missouri Municipal League, the St. Louis County Municipal League and the Missouri Association of Counties.

The bills would make more than a dozen changes to the current Sunshine Law, among them:

— Two exemptions to the Sunshine Law expired on Dec. 31, 2012. These exemptions, enacted soon after the 9/11 attacks of 2001, protect operational guidelines, security plans

and systems of public facilities, such as schools, and the bills would reinstate the two exemptions.

— The fine for a violation of the law would be \$100. (The current fine for a "knowing" violation of the law ranges up to \$1,000.) And, if found guilty by a judge, the public governmental body would be required to pay court costs and fees of the plaintiff who filed the lawsuit.

— City councils, county commissions, school boards and other local public bodies would be required to provide 48-hours' notice of their meetings. Currently, 24-hours' notice is required.

— Interested members of the public who desire to receive notices of meetings could request such notices from public governmental bodies.

— Minutes of a closed meeting would contain a list of subjects discussed during the closed meeting to help avoid discussions straying from the original purpose of the closed meeting.

— Missouri is the only state in the nation whose National Guard has a complete, blanket exemption to its state Sunshine Law. It's odd that the federal Freedom of Information Act applies to the Missouri National Guard, but the Missouri Sunshine Law doesn't

apply to the taxpayer-funded National Guard. One of the proposals in Jefferson City would eliminate the Guard's exemption.

Senate Bill 139; House Bill 256, 33 & 305; and House Bill 600 contain more bright sunlight shining on government, and less darkness.

Two of the Sunshine bills have passed by wide margins in the Missouri Senate and the Missouri House of Representatives, respectively, but they have not reached the finish line and the Governor's desk. House Bill 600 awaits consideration in committee.

Key supporters of Sunshine legislation include Sen. Kurt Schaefer (R-Columbia), Sen. Mike Kehoe (R-Jefferson City), Speaker of the House Tim Jones (R-Eureka), Rep. Caleb Jones (R-California), Rep. Todd Richardson (R-Poplar Bluff), Rep. Nate Walker (R-Kirkville), Rep. Casey Guernsey (R-Bethany), Rep. Chris Kelly (D-Columbia), and a host of bill co-sponsors.

If you are interested in a more transparent, open government, the Missouri Press Association urges you to contact State Senators and State Representatives to seek their support in strengthening the Missouri Sunshine Law . . . this year! Ask them to vote for government in the sunshine!

Two years after Missouri legislators passed Senate Bill 1, the late Judge Fred L. Henley of the Missouri Supreme Court in a 1975 decision, *Cohen v. Poelker*, speaking for the majority in that case, said, "The several sections of Chapter 610, considered together, speak loudly and clearly for the General Assembly that its intent in enacting the Sunshine Law, so called, was that all meetings of members of public governmental bodies . . . at which the people's business is considered must be open to the people and not conducted in secrecy, and also that the records of the body and the votes of its members must be open."

It's "the people's business!" Thank you, Judge Henley!

Happy Sunshine Week!



Doug Crews

Send ad sales people to lake for MAMA

Newspapers that won awards in the Missouri Advertising Managers' Association Better Ad Contest are requested to not publish their awards until after the April 18-19 ad meeting at The Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark.

Shannon Kinney of Dream Local Digital in Maine will be the presenter for the annual meeting.

An agenda and registration form have been mailed to MPA members, published in the MPA Bulletin and magazine, and are available at www.mopress.com/current_forms.php.

The annual MAMA meeting is for everyone in the ad department — and publishers — who want to learn and network.

The MAMA board will hold a lunch meeting on Thursday, April 18, before sessions begin. Registration for the general meeting will begin at noon.

A panel discussion about digital sales will open the program. Mike Jenner of the Reynolds Journalism Institute will moderate the panel.

Panelists will be Tim Weddle of the *St. Joseph News-Press*, Donna Denson of Rust Communications/*Southeast Missourian*, Darryl Wilkinson of Gallatin Publishing Co., and Ed Farrar of Lake-way Publishers of Mo.



Mike Sell, interim ad director for Missouri Press Service, looks over the shoulder of Ad Contest judge Jack Miller of True Media, Columbia, during judging on March 1 at the Reynolds Journalism Institute on the MU campus. In the center background is Jim Sterling, a professor at the School of Journalism and former publisher; and at right are Kaitlin Warner of Word Marketing, Columbia, and Ashley Troutman of Bucket Media in Columbia.

Kinney will give her first presentation after the panel discussion. She'll address industry trends, the rise of social media and its impact on media companies and their advertisers.

Winners of MAMA's Ad Contest will receive their awards at dinner that evening.

After breakfast Friday, Kinney will talk about how newspapers can use social media and digital services to make money.

The meeting will adjourn at noon.

Kinney has more than 15 years of experience in the development of Internet

products, sales and marketing strategies. She has worked on the teams developing successful Internet brands such as cars.com, careerbuilder.com and over 60 online media properties for newspapers all over the U.S.

Prior to that, Kinney spent more than 10 years in media sales and sales management in Maine.

Registration for the meeting costs \$119. If you can't attend the entire meeting, the registration form has prices for individual activities.

For a room at The Lodge, call (888) 265-5500.

Post-Dispatch staffers with Guard in Afghanistan

On Feb. 3 the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* began a continuing series about the 1138th Engineer Company of the Missouri National Guard, which is deployed in a risky assignment to clear deadly roadside bombs along the military supply and infantry routes in southern Afghanistan.

Editor Gilbert Bailon wrote in a column that the *Post-Dispatch* believes the Guard's sacrifice and commitment continue to be a significant story.

The *Post-Dispatch* assigned two veteran journalists to embed with the Missouri National Guard and tell of their military and personal lives. It is important to remind readers about their risks and contributions that make

a distant war closer to home and more human, Bailon wrote.

Jesse Bogan, a Missouri native, is a general assignment reporter on the metro desk who embedded with the Texas Army National Guard in 2005 in Iraq. Bogan also was based in Mexico for the *San Antonio Express-News*. He joined the *Post-Dispatch* in 2010.

Photographer J.B. Forbes has worked at the *Post-Dispatch* since 1975 and serves as chief photographer. He has covered stories — including the war in Iraq and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti — from 30 countries.

Forbes, a native of Prairie Village, Kan., has won many awards and was inducted into the Missouri Photojour-

nalism Hall of Fame in 2011.

Bogan and Forbes are documenting the 1138th through a series of stories, photographs and videos that illustrate how area people serve in a dangerous place abroad.

Editors coordinating the coverage in the newspaper and online on STLtoday.com are assistant metro editor Matt Franck, photo editor Lynden Steele, deputy managing editors Adam Goodman and Bob Rose and presentation director Santiago Carlos Ayulo.

We believe a vigorous news organization is vital to our community fabric, whether the stories originate in Kirkwood or Kandahar, Bailon wrote.

Maneke recommends Media and Law Seminar April 19 in Kansas City

The 26th Annual Media and the Law seminar, sponsored by the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association Media Law Committee and the University of Kansas School of Law, will be held Friday, April 19, at the InterContinental Kansas City at the Plaza.

Journalists are invited to attend this day-long seminar for \$60.

MPA legal counselor Jean Maneke highly recommends this annual program, which addresses current issues and conflicts involving secrecy, privacy, ethics, marketing, copyright and more.

Industry experts will discuss these issues and more at the seminar.

Luncheon speaker John Perry Barlow is an American poet and essayist, retired Wyoming cattle rancher, and a cyber-libertarian political activist. He is also a former lyricist for the Grateful Dead. He is a Fellow at Harvard University's Berkman Center for Internet and Society.

The Media and the Law agenda/registration form is at mopress.com/current_forms.php.

APME NewsTrain offers two full days of sessions in Illinois

The Associated Press Media Editors' NewsTrain will pull into Springfield, Ill., April 29-30. It will provide low-cost training about watchdog journalism, government coverage, social media skills, working with data, covering diverse communities and more.

After the first day's sessions, guests may attend a reception and performance by Freedom Sings of Nashville at the Old State Capitol State Historic Site of Illinois.

Examine the program and register at www.apme.com. Call the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel for a room, 1-866-788-1860.

If you have questions, contact Michael Roberts, NewsTrain project director, mroberts.newstrain@gmail.com; or Bob Heisse, *State-Journal Register*, bob.heisse@sj-r.com, 217-788-1505.

NW Mo. Press will have ad, news sessions

Separate sessions for news and advertising staffers will highlight the 123rd Annual Meeting of the Northwest Missouri Press Association.

The Northwest Press meeting will begin with a business meeting at 1 p.m. Friday, June 21, at the McRae Community Building in Mound City. Early arrivers are invited to lunch at noon at the Klub restaurant, which is in the McRae building.

Adam Johnson, publisher of *The Mound City News*, is the president of Northwest Press and will be the host for the meeting.

A general session featuring a presentation by faculty from the Missouri School of Journalism will begin at 1:30.

Separate sessions for news and ad people will begin at 2:30.

Mark Maassen of *The Kansas City Star* will lead the advertising program. Maassen is president of the Missouri Press Association.

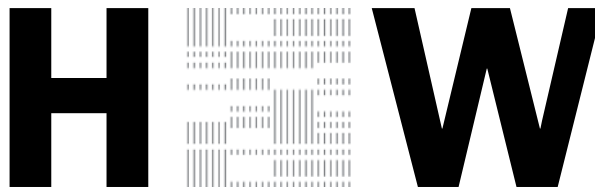
The concurrent session for news people will be led by faculty from the School of Journalism.

Those sessions will be followed at 3:30 by separate roundtable discussions for the news and ad people.

A social hour will begin at 5 p.m.

Northwest Press will present its Craig Watkins Friend of Northwest Missouri Press Award, Merrill Chilcote Award and James C. Kirkpatrick Award during dinner. New Northwest Press officers will be introduced and the gavel will be passed to the new president.

A registration form is at mopress.com/current_forms.php.



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How to hold a closed open meeting

Texting allows officials to violate the Sunshine Law with impunity

By PATRICK MARTIN

Jefferson County Leader

Onto the ever-expanding menu of ways that the public's business is hidden from the public, we can add a new entrée.

Maybe.

At the minimum, it's some combination of sneakiness and just plain bad manners. However it gets labeled, it's the latest, if not the greatest example of misbehavior: Board members or administrators texting during public meetings.

What *are* those people talking about?

It's been questioned three times that we've heard of in the last few months, in venues far apart, so it's a safe guess these are not the only incidents.

The first was during the Arnold City Council, when city attorney Bob Sweeney noticed busy thumbs just a-texting around the council table. Sweeney suggested the council members knock it off.

It's not clear whether the council members were texting each other, checking basketball scores or getting a grocery list from home, but Sweeney called it a murky area of the law that the council might want to avoid. At the minimum, he told the council members, it just didn't look good.

He's right.

Defenders of texting between board members – if there are any – might suggest that it's no different from whispering to your neighbor at the council table. That's a good defense, except that it *is* different. Visitors at the meeting can see that happening, unless the whisperer is a ventriloquist.

The second incident was reported by a Fox School District resident who called Leader World Headquarters to complain that board members and administrators were communicating with themselves and audience members by texting during board meetings.

If they have something to say, they

should say it instead of texting it, the complainer said.

That's a valid point. Here's another. People who are elected to city councils and school boards are there to represent the people who elected them. They are supposed to debate issues openly, then collectively decide how to fulfill the duties entrusted to them.

They are not there to send each other snarky messages, make silent pacts or generally act like a bunch of clannish

Missouri's Open Meetings and Records Law, better known as the Sunshine Law, is silent on the specific issue of texting, though it does have a section relating to electronic communications.

The Missouri Press Association's attorney, Jean Maneke, is pretty well-versed on the Sunshine Law, given that she wrote large sections of it.

Maneke said if the phone is paid for by the district, the text messages would certainly be a public record and could be requested.

Text messages on a private phone may or may not be public records.

They could be if they are sent to enough board members to constitute a quorum.

Then there's the bad manners argument. Anyone who has heard people yakking loudly on cell phones in a restaurant, in a theater or even in church knows that horse has left the barn. A newer rudeness is going to dinner with someone, or to a ballgame, and watching that person spend the evening staring at his phone or texting.

We do expect more – even if we are not optimistic about the outcome – of our public officials. Good manners and

compliance with the spirit of the law, as well as the letter of it, shouldn't be too much to ask.

All boards, councils and commission members should have the good sense and common courtesy not to text during their meetings. If they have a rogue member or two, then make it official policy.

When I started reporting, every council chamber was a smoke-filled room, but that changed over time. If they can ban smoking, they can ban texting.

When board members send messages around a room that the public cannot hear or see, it shows nothing but disrespect to the voters who put them there.



middle-schoolers with new phones.

If they want to be snarky, they should do it out loud. It's the American way.

Finally, the issue has surfaced at the Jefferson County Council, where new chairman Kelly Waymon intends to assign it to the Legislation and Government Relations Committee.

The committee will study the issue, then make a policy recommendation to the full council.

"I don't feel safe with 100 percent confidence saying that it's illegal," Waymon said, "but I wouldn't sit up there and do it."

"How would anyone know if it's council business or personal?" he asked.

Louisiana council to tidy up agendas

The *Louisiana Press-Journal* reported that on recommendation from the Missouri Attorney General's Office, the Louisiana City Council considered an ordinance in March to end the practice of placing generic, blanket closed meeting notices on its agendas.

Those notices had appeared on almost every regular meeting agenda of the council, the paper reported. They said the meeting would be closed for discussion of personnel, legal action or real estate transactions.

Missouri Sunshine Law allows meetings to be closed for certain reasons, but

it also requires that the specific reason for closing a meeting be stated.

This was the second time the AG's Office advised the city to drop the blanket closed meeting agenda entry. It previously told the council in June 2011 that the blanket notice was "not creating an agenda that is reasonably calculated to advise the public of the matters to be considered."

The city changed its agendas soon after the June 2011 notice from the AG's Office, but late last year the blanket notice reappeared on agendas, the *Press-Journal* reported.

Missouri Southern will induct Fairchilds into Hall of Fame

Steve and Kathy Fairchild, former owners of the *Lawrence County Record* in Mt. Vernon, will be inducted into the Regional Media Hall of Fame at an April 4 dinner in Joplin.

The Missouri Southern State University Department of Communication sponsors the Hall of Fame.

The Fairchilds owned the weekly from 1984 until they sold it to Ryan Squibb on Dec. 31.

Sources and Resources for Missouri Newspapers



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Scrapbook

• **Houston** — *The Herald* raised its single copy price on March 7 from 75¢ to \$1. It was the first bump in 12 years.

A year's in-county subscription to *The Herald* costs \$34.

• **Lebanon** — Because of the severe weather in late February, with snow making some country roads impassable, the *Daily Record* gave free access to its online editions for two days.

Circulation manager Gene Autery said most papers were delivered, although many were late.

One driver slid into a ditch, damaging his car's fender and shredding a tire. "He came in and got it fixed, then went back out," Autery said. "I'm proud of them. I've got a really good group of people here."

Some carriers could not get into town to get their papers, so other staffers — including associate publisher Matt Wright — covered for them.

Many other Missouri newspapers delivered papers late. Some carried two daily editions after cancelling deliveries

for a day.

Parts of Missouri got two 10-inch snows four days apart in the latter part of February.

• **Kansas City** — *The Star's* coverage of SoftBank's offer to buy a controlling interest in Sprint Nextel won a 2012 Best in Business award from the Society of American Business Editors and Writers.

Mark Davis and Scott Canon earned the award in the category of newspapers with daily circulation between 100,000 and 200,000.

Another *Star* article, written by intern Allison Prang, a student at the University of Missouri, received honorable mention in the student category. Prang wrote about policies governing the privacy of college student data.

• **Neosho** — Two *Daily News* reporters and the sports editor won awards in the AP Managing Editors writing and photojournalism competition.

Whitney Saporito and Todd G. Higdon placed second in spot news for a

year-later follow-up story about the May 2011 Joplin tornado. They took third in spot news for stories about President Barack Obama's Commencement speech at Joplin High School.

Daily News managing editor John Ford said, "Ironically, these two stories happened a day apart. I remember pulling up the 'America's graduates' piece and thinking 'that's a winner. Enter that.'"

"Then I opened the next day's pages and thought, 'well, that's a winner, too.' I debated which one to enter, then thought, 'Why not both?'"

Sports editor Levin Payton placed second in sports features for a story about a baseball pitcher.

Former *Daily News* sports editor Cody Thorn placed third in spot sports. He now works for the *St. Joseph News-Press*.

• **Warrensburg** — *The Daily Star-Journal* also won some awards from APME.

It won third-place awards for a spot news photo of local firefighters, a sports photo of a rodeo rider, a graphic about misuse of alcohol and a photo story about Halloween.

Second-place awards were received for a feature photo of a girl holding an alligator and for a group of photos from the county fair.

Editor Jack "Miles" Ventimiglia won first-place awards for best spot news story and best spot photo for coverage of the murder of a young, local business owner.

The paper also won first place for graphics for an illustration titled "Cyber-Bullying."

• **Carthage** — *The Press* in February sponsored the first of the annual series called "Eggs and Issues" gatherings of area residents and their state legislators. Monthly meetings will be held through May in Webb City, Joplin and Neosho.

• **Jefferson City** — *News Tribune* staffers won several headline writing awards in the AP Managing Editors News Writing and Photojournalism Contest.

Anne Kettenbrink won first and second for the headlines "Fifty Shades that aren't gray" and "Oktoberfest, you gotta go." Doug Waggoner took third for the headline "Fueling our ire."

Other APME awards went to Jeff

Fort Leonard Wood newspaper advances in Army competition

The Fort Leonard Wood *GUIDON* was named the top newspaper at the Installation Management Command level of the Army's Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Public Affairs Competition.



Melissa Buckley

The *GUIDON* won first place in the metro-format newspaper category. Second place went to the *Bayonet* of Fort Benning, Ga., and third to *1st Infantry Division Post* of Fort Riley, Kan.

Significant contributions to the *GUIDON* listed for the award were Dawn Arden, Melissa Buckley, Matt Decker,



Derek Gean and Robert Johnson.

In the individual categories, Buckley received first-place awards in Story Series, News Feature and Personality Feature; a second in Photojournalism and honorable mention in Human Interest Feature Article.

Johnson took third in Commentary.

More than 500 entries from installations around the world were judged. The top three entries in each category advanced to compete at the Department of Army level in March.

Haldiman, second in spot news; and Kettenbrink, third in feature writing.

- **St. Joseph** — Staffers at the *News-Press* shared the APME glory as well.

These awards were to be presented as part of the MPA/AP Day at the Capitol program on Feb. 21. Winners were announced later after a coming snowstorm forced cancellation of that event.

News-Press awards: Phil Ervin, first in sports feature writing; Kelsey Saythany, first in headline writing; Emily Morrison, second, headline writing; Clinton Thomas, third, spot news and general feature writing; Cody Thorn, third, spot sports;

Sam Robinson, third, sports feature writing; Ross Martin, third, headline writing.

- **Sedalia** — Democrat staffers won lots of awards in the APME competition for work done in 2012.

Sports reporter Eric Ingles, first in sports features; former sports reporter Seth Stringer, first in spot sports; sports editor Kyle Smith, third in spot sports; photographer Sydney Brink, first and second in sports photography and third in feature photos.

The team of reporter Emily Jarett, managing editor Dennis Rich, editor Bob Satnan and former reporter Elizabeth Schleicher won first in Community Affairs/Public Service.

Also, Satnan, first in feature writing; Rich, second in feature writing.

- **Springfield** — APME also honored work done by The *News-Leader* in 2012, including the paper's Every Child Project, which won the top honor in the competition.

Every Child examined child welfare in the Springfield area. The project was judged the best from among all of the first-place winners.

The *News-Leader* competed in Division II, daily circulation between 20,000 and 49,999.

Its other awards: Juliana Goodwin, first in feature writing; Matt Schoch, first in spot sports; Every Child team in community affairs/public interest; Nathan Papes, first in spot news photos; Dean Curtis, first in feature photos, second in spot news photos and feature photos;

Valerie Mosley, first and second in photo story; Staff, second in spot news; Lyndal Scranton, second in spot sports and sports feature writing.

In another competition, the *News-Leader* is a finalist in the category Marketing Solutions for Advertising Clients (Under 75,000 circulation) in the International News Media Association. The INMA Awards reward excellence in marketing.

First-place winners will be announced April 30 at a dinner in New York City that will conclude the INMA World Congress.

The other finalists in the *News-Leader's* category are the *Pensacola News Journal* and *Diario do Para* of Belem, Brazil.

- **St. Louis** — *Post-Dispatch* photographer Chris Lee won the Photojournalism Sweepstakes award in the APME competition. His photo "The playoff pitch" combined four sequential images of a throw by Cardinals pitcher Jaime Garcia.

Here are the *Post-Dispatch's* other APME awards: Stephen Deere and Kim Bell, first, spot news; Christine Byers, Jesse Bogan and Elizabethe Holland,

third, spot news;

Todd C. Frankel, third, feature writing; Bernie Miklasz and Tom Timmermann, second, spot sports; Derrick Goold, third, sports feature; Roger Hensley first, Santiago Carlos Ayulo second and Lacey Burnette third for headline writing;

Jeremy Kohler and David Hunn, first, community affairs/public interest; J.B. Forbes, first and third in spot news photos; Lee first and Huy Mach third in sports photos; Robert Cohen second and Christian Gooden third in feature photos; David Carson first, Cohen second and Laurie Skrivan third in photo story.

- **St. Joseph** — The *News-Press* will sponsor a trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., for a Maryville Middle School student.

Sakif Islam, 12, placed first ahead of another Maryville sixth-grader, Hayden Mildward, in the Northwest Missouri Regional Spelling Bee.

Sakif spelled "Swahili" in the 39th round while Hayden missed "percolate." They both had missed their words in the 23rd round.

The *News-Press* is one of several Missouri newspapers that sponsor local bees.

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On the Move

• **Bolivar** — The new editor of the *Herald-Free Press* is Matthew Barba. On Feb. 25 he succeeded Charlotte Marsch, who left the paper after 16 years to become director of marketing and communications for Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, her alma mater.



Matthew Barba

Barba previously worked at the *Morning Sentinel* in Centralia, Ill., the same paper where Marsch worked before joining the *Herald-Free Press*. Last year he was promoted to managing editor of the *Morning Sentinel's* Mt. Vernon bureau.

Barba, 29, is an English graduate of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. He was born in Mansfield, Mo., and his parents now live in Marshfield.

• **Joplin** — Brent Powers has joined *The Joplin Globe* as advertising director.



Brent Powers

Previously he was ad director at the *Gaston Gazette* and the *Shelby Star* in North Carolina. Those papers are part of Halifax Media Group, formerly Freedom Communications.

Powers began his newspaper career with the *Oxford Eagle* in Oxford, Miss., and later joined Gannett Co., in Hattiesburg, Miss. Later he became ad director for Freedom Communications at the *Journal Courier* in Jacksonville, Ill., before moving to the *Gaston Gazette* and *Shelby Star*.

• **St. Louis** — Roland Klose has been named business editor of the *Post-Dispatch*.

Klose, 54, previously was business editor at *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis for the last three years.

From 1999 to 2003 Klose was the managing editor of the *Riverfront Times*



Roland Klose

in St. Louis. He is a 1981 graduate of Washington University.

He's been assistant business editor at the *Tampa Tribune* and a staff writer at the Memphis and Nashville business journals. He's also led *Illinois Times*, an alternative paper in Springfield, Ill.

Klose replaces Brian Thevenot, who left last fall to become an assistant business editor at *The Los Angeles Times*.

• **Nevada** — Sharon Kay Knight is the new editor of the *Nevada Daily Mail*. She joined the paper's staff on Feb. 25.



Sharon Kay Knight

Knight lived in the Missouri bootheel years ago and graduated from high school in Cardwell.

Knight began her career as a reporter/photographer at *The News* in Salem, Ark., and later at the Paragould (Ark.) *Daily Press* before becoming editor.

She also has been a staff writer and assistant managing editor for the Batesville (Ark.) *Daily Guard* and editor of the *Stewart Houston Times* in Erin, Tenn. Her other work experience includes time as an adjunct instructor of journalism at Arkansas State University, a staff writer for Journatic News Services in Chicago, director of community relations for the Arkansas Sheriffs' Youth Ranches and various other positions.

Knight also has been active in many civic and service organizations.

• **Thayer** — Reporter Tammy Curtis has been promoted by Areawide Media to managing editor of the *South Missourian News* in Thayer and Areawide's nearby Arkansas publications: *The News*, *The Villager Journal* and *Avenues*, a monthly magazine.

Former managing editor Kyle Mooty has taken a job with a newspaper in Alabama.

Curtis joined Areawide Media in 2008 as a graphic designer. She became a reporter for *The Villager Journal* in 2009, primarily covering Sharp County, Ark.



Tammy Curtis

Curtis has a web design degree from University of Arkansas Community College in Batesville and a graphic communication degree from Arkansas State University. She and her husband, Paul, live in Cave City and are natives of the Sharp County region. They are expecting their first grandchild in April.

• **Columbia** — MU journalism professor Charles Davis has been named dean of the University of Georgia's Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications. He will begin there on July 1.

Davis, 49, is returning to his roots. He grew up near the Georgia campus in Athens and earned his master's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia.



Charles Davis

In a story about the move, Davis told the *Columbia Missourian*, "I'm a Georgia boy through and through and through and through." Davis and his wife, Julie, moved their family to Columbia 14 years ago, and Columbia will always be home too, he told the *Missourian*. Their son, Charlie, is a freshman at MU and will remain in Columbia. Their daughter, Mamie, is 14.

Davis is a former executive director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition, which is based in the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the School of Journalism. He is an expert in open government issues and helped the Missouri Press Association and others launch the Missouri Sunshine Coalition a few years ago.

'Hazelwood' still rules after 25 years

By MELISSA MEINZER

Missouri Lawyers Media

Decades after a high school principal yanked two pages of a St. Louis County student paper because of content he found inappropriate, the U.S. Supreme Court's January 1988 ruling remains the definitive precedent on student press rights.

The decision supporting the principal's right to censor the paper, *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier*, remains a rallying cry for a present-day national student press organization. It has been cited in recent headline-grabbing cases from a rape-alleging cheerleader in Texas to a student suing a school for infringing on his right to hold up a banner about marijuana and Jesus.

The Student Press Law Center has an opinion. It sells bracelets reading "Cure Hazelwood" on its website.

"Ever since Hazelwood, we have reliably had in the neighborhood of 800 calls a year from around the country reporting censorship," said attorney Frank LoMonte, executive director of the center, a legal referral nonprofit for student journalists, based in Arlington.

"More troubling than any specific incident of censorship is the overall mindset that students' opinions are worthless, and if you speak out of turn you're at risk of being punished."

In the early 1980s at Hazelwood East High School, *The Spectrum* student newspaper routinely submitted pages to the principal for review. In 1983, the principal nixed two articles in one issue — one about the effects of divorce on students and one about teen pregnancy.

The principal said he was concerned about the pregnant students' privacy, although they were quoted anonymously, and that a student's divorced parents were not given an opportunity to respond in that article.

The editor and two reporters sued. Their suit, saying their First and Fourteenth Amendment rights had been trampled, was first introduced to U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, which found that schools could censor students. The students appealed, and the U.S. Court of Appeals

for the 8th Circuit reversed the decision in 1986, finding the paper to be a public forum.

Then the U.S. Supreme Court took the case. It decided 5-3 that the principal was entitled to censor student speech.

"A school need not tolerate student speech that is inconsistent with its basic educational mission, even though the government could not censor similar speech outside the school," Justice Byron White wrote in the majority opinion.

The decision overturned a 24-year-old precedent, and Justice William J. Brennan Jr. was unsparing in his dissent: "The young men and women of Hazelwood East expected a civics lesson, but not the one the Court teaches them today. ... (S)uch unthinking contempt for individual rights is intolerable from any state official."

Hazelwood was cited in 2011 in *Doe v. Silsbee Independent School District*. A cheerleader refused to cheer for a basketball player whom she accused of raping her (he ultimately pleaded guilty to the charge).

The school tossed her off the squad, and the court found that as a cheerleader she was a "mouthpiece" for the school and as such the school could control her speech. Citing Hazelwood, the court said it was "well settled that students' First Amendment rights are curtailed while in school."

In the U.S. Supreme Court's 2007 decision in *Morse v. Frederick*, which cites Hazelwood, a school principal suspended a student for holding up a banner that read "BONG HiTS 4 JESUS." The student sued, and the court found in the school's favor.

Sandra Davidson, a communications law instructor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and an adjunct professor of the School of Law, said Hazelwood was written with "a very broad brush." The case comes up again and again in caselaw, and Davidson said she would like to see its role clarified.

She said it would certainly have protected school officials had anyone sued in an incident in 2006 at Fulton High School, where the drama teacher found the play "Grease" too risqué for student

consumption and edited it into a much gentler version of itself. (Local residents still complained it was too racy.)

"The Supreme Court has given the school boards and principals power to avoid potentially sensitive issues," Davidson said. "It's not just for newspapers and yearbooks, but any school-sponsored activity."

Davidson said the court's decision explicitly avoids spelling out issues of censorship for colleges and universities, and that consistency would be most useful to her and her students.

LoMonte said he sees "a definite sense of empathy for put-upon principals, that people want to give them the benefit of the doubt and want to defer to their authority."

But, he said, Hazelwood went too far and maintains a culture of fear among students and teachers. The Silsbee case, he said, relies completely on Hazelwood.

"That case exemplifies the deference gone wild since Hazelwood," he said. "To tell a 16-year-old rape victim that you're a mouthpiece and that your case is frivolous — it's bloodcurdling."

He said it's crucial for students to be allowed to speak their minds, especially when reporters "can't get past the front door (of a school) without a public relations person following you around and making sure you get no unfettered access."

Seven states, Missouri not among them, have anti-Hazelwood statutes, LoMonte said. Those statutes take censorship back to the level established in 1969 in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, which gave students a right to free speech up to the point where education was being disrupted. The seven states are Arkansas, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts and Oregon.

In the states with laws that pre-empt Hazelwood, LoMonte said, the Student Press Law Center's research has not found any case of a school losing a lawsuit because of anything published by students. "What those statutes do is not a wild, wild West situation. It's a middle ground," he said. "Students can handle legalized press freedom."

Many features available to promote Earth Day

Eldon has great Democracy Day program

April 22 is Earth Day. In February, I wrote a column about the great strides the printing industry has made to become an environmentally responsible resource and pointing out that digital isn't necessarily the green alternative. (You can find that Newspaper In Education column at mopress.com/_lib/files/2_2013.pdf.)

Vicki Russell of the *Columbia Daily Tribune* shared a link to an Editor & Publisher column with similar information: [editorandpublisher.com/Newsletter/Features/Production: Will-An-Industry-Leader-Please-Stand-Up-for-Print—Now](http://editorandpublisher.com/Newsletter/Features/Production:Will-An-Industry-Leader-Please-Stand-Up-for-Print-Now).

In early April we'll release a new feature on the Missouri River that will be great for Earth Day. The Big Muddy feature will teach about the river and the importance of keeping it clean — not just at its banks, but also throughout the Missouri River watershed, which drains 1/6 of all the water in the United States. Missouri River Relief, a non-profit organization dedicated to cleaning up the Missouri River, is underwriting this special feature. The feature will be posted at www.mo-nie.com under download code bigmuddy.

Another great feature for Earth Day, and for spring, is Amazing Soil. This seven-part series is a guide to growing and includes features on soil, raised-bed gardening, germinating seeds, composting, insects, organic gardening, and conservation. Each feature provides information for readers of all ages and activities for smaller green thumbs. Use download code garden.

Missouri schools will be giving grade-

level MAP (Missouri Assessment Program) tests between April 1 and May 17. Students in grades 3-8 will test in communication arts and math, and grades 5-8 will test in science.

The newspaper is a great resource for educators to have on hand. It's also a good time to remind your education leaders that students who use newspapers in school at least once a week score on average 10 percent better on standardized tests!

The Iowa Newspaper Foundation has a great institute that promotes community leadership. It's a program I would like to see our Foundation replicate in Missouri. Last month I was fortunate to be a part of two programs that are models for community leadership.

Each year the *Eldon Advertiser* hosts a Democracy Day in its local school, inviting elected officials and community leaders to be a part of the conversation of what makes a democracy. This year more than 50 people spent the day at Eldon Upper Elementary, and all of the classes rotated through the discussions.

Trevor Vernon, publisher of the *Eldon Advertiser*, says the project grew from a conversation about the lack of civic education in our schools. He and Tammy Witherspoon came up with the idea of Democracy Day, hoping to show the students what makes a democracy and a community work while showing community leaders how important it is for students to be civically literate.

The project is so successful after seven years, the *Advertiser's* Witherspoon, who

organizes the event, can't accommodate all the community individuals who want to participate. It's a tremendous effort by the local newspaper to connect young readers to their community and to remind the community how important it is to keep those young people connected through their community newspaper.

The *Washington Missourian* also partners with its schools to organize a community-wide

reading event called Family Reading Night. Now in its 13th year, the event is held the first Friday evening in March.

Family Reading Night has more than 150 volunteers, community leaders and high school students reading stories in classrooms, policemen and firemen acting out books on the main stage and parent/teacher organizations hosting crafts tied to good books.

More than 700 children, parents and grandparents attended this year's event (photo on page 17). The goal of Family Reading Night is to remind families about the importance of reading together and to connect children to the faces in the newspaper.

It's an event that could happen at any school, but with the leadership of the newspaper it brings together the entire community.

Joplin Globe names retired carrier 'Doctor of Delivery'

Gretchen Caldwell has been named a Doctor of Delivery by *The Joplin Globe*. Only those who have delivered *The Globe* for more than 30 years earn this "doctorate."

Caldwell retired on Feb. 28 after delivering *The Globe* for 31 years.

As far as people at the newspaper know, she is only the fifth person to achieve the status of Doctor of Delivery, a distinction bestowed by circulation director Jack Kaminsky.

*More than
150
volunteers
help make
Family
Reading
Night
a success.*



Dawn Kitchell is MPA's NIE director. Contact her at (636) 932-4301; dawn.kitchell@gmail.com.

Postal Service may close processing plant at Columbia airport

The Postal Service is conducting an Area Mail Processing study to determine how much to reduce staffing and service at the processing plant at the Columbia Regional Airport.

The Postal Service said the study will take several months, after which, a public meeting will be held to present findings and receive input. Mail now processed at the Columbia plant could be sent to St. Louis or Kansas City for sorting.

Those wishing to comment on the proposal can send them to: Manager, Consumer & Industry Contact, John Boeger, 1720 Market St., Room 1015A, St. Louis, MO 63155-9511.

University Extension offers gardening articles

The University of Missouri Extension's Cooperative Media Group is offering Missouri newspapers a free gardening series.

All articles are approximately 600 words. Some offer short videos and podcasts for placement on newspaper websites. Technical assistance where needed also is free.

Instructions and login information are available at extension.missouri.edu/media/newsroom.aspx

This series and the Missouri Press Foundation's features on soil would complement each other nicely.

Weekly in Canton moves downriver to LaGrange

The *Press-News Journal* has moved its office from Canton to a former church building at 409 Jefferson St. in LaGrange.

The historic building has been completely restored, and the weekly newspaper began operating out of the lower level on April 1.

Both towns are along the Mississippi River in Lewis County, LaGrange about six miles south of Canton.



Family Reading Night in Washington

Members of the Washington High School baseball team read in one of 27 sessions offered during the 13th annual Family Reading Night at Washington Middle School. More than 700 children, parents, grandparents and volunteers turned out despite winter weather and cancelled classes.

This year's event featured guest author/illustrator Kenneth Kraegel, who traveled from Michigan to share his book, "King Arthur's Very Great Grandson." Other highlights included readers theater presentations by the Washington Police Department and the Washington Fire Department. Participants heard stories read by community and education leaders and high school leaders from Washington High School and St. Francis Borgia Regional High School.

Eight parent organizations from local schools hosted crafts. Donated baskets of books and prizes for family reading were given away at the end of the program. Sponsors were *The Washington Missourian*, Washington School District and Washington Optimist Club, with support from the Washington High School Football Team, Pepsi Cola Bottling Co. of New Haven, the Washington Library and Washington NEA. (*Washington Missourian* photo)



Missouri Press Foundation

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Ask legislators for support of Sunshine Law changes

Don't let opportunity slip away

By the time this column lands on your desk, the spring break recess will be over for the Missouri legislature and they'll be in the long home stretch.

Time is running short to get a sunshine law bill passed this year. 2013 is an important year in Missouri's sunshine law history, as you well know, having just come through Sunshine Week.

A number of you ran Doug Crews' column outlining the history of this law in the state. Some journalists in the state did their own "sunshine surveys" and wrote about how local bodies responded to requests for records.

We appreciate all your efforts, but you are not yet done. We lost some momentum this year when the snowstorm hit and all of you could not make your annual pilgrimage to the Capitol. But yet, legislative efforts involving the sunshine law have been moving along smartly this session.

Senate Bill 139, which incorporates language Missouri Press Association supports, was passed out of the Senate on Feb. 12. Considering that it was referred to committee in late January, that's an amazing amount of progress.

Much credit for that effort belongs to Sen. Kurt Schaefer. On the other end of the Capitol, similar language is contained in House Bill 600, introduced by a number of sponsors, including Rep. Chris Kelly, Speaker of the House Tim Jones, and Reps. Stephen Webber, John Wright and Caleb Rowden. However, that bill has not moved since its hearing before the General Laws Committee in the House.

Over the coming weeks, if you see leg-

islators back home, take a few minutes to corner them and tell them that you need their support if a sunshine law bill gets to the floor.

I truly believe there is no doubt that some sunshine law bill will be voted on in coming weeks. Gov. Jay Nixon has called for the legislature to pass an extension on the two public safety exceptions contained in Section 610.021.

We worked late last fall with the Department of Public Safety on language to clarify those exceptions. But when either of the houses takes up a bill with that language in it, your local legislators need to understand that there are more changes than those provisions that

need to be made. Your legislators need to be aware that they should support the additional changes to the law.

These additional changes include several matters that you might mention to your legislators when you see them, or that you might include in an email to your legislators, specifically:

1. The litigation exception needs to be narrowed so that it's not just a "potential cause of action" that triggers closing a meeting under the litigation exception, because anyone can file suit any time for

any reason, and that's not the spirit in which this exception was written.

It's clearly meant to allow a public body to consider whether to resolve a conflict that exists before it reaches the point of a lawsuit being filed. It's not meant to cover any scenario where a public body thinks its discussion will anger a citizen. New language in this section helps make that clear.

2. The biggest change in the law is that the penalty for a violation has been reduced from \$1,000 to \$100, and there no longer needs to be proof of a "knowing" violation. (There is still a fine of up to \$5,000 for purposely violating the law.) In addition, however, the public body would have to pay attorney fees if it lost a sunshine lawsuit.

The idea is that this creates an incentive for public bodies to settle disputes. It makes violation of the law akin to getting a speeding ticket. The judge will still be the decision-maker as to what is a reasonable attorney fee for the plaintiff's lawyer, if the case is taken to court. If the case is settled, the attorney fees could be extremely minimal, or nonexistent.

That seems, however, to be lost upon municipal organizations in the state, who are continuing to cry loudly to legislators that this will cost them significant amounts of money and that this is unreasonable.

It's time your voices were heard, too. Your state legislators need to know that this change is very important to you, and to the public at large. Our time is short to get changes this session, and it's time for you to speak. Each of you can help make this happen this session.

I'm always glad to answer any questions you might have. And I appreciate all that each of you does to help us change the law to improve access to public information for your readers.



Jean Maneke, MPA's Legal Hotline attorney, can be reached at (816) 753-9000, jmaneke@manekelaw.com.

Missouri Press Association / Missouri Press Service

802 Locust St., Columbia, MO 65201-4888

(573) 449-4167 / Fax: (573) 874-5894 / www.mopress.com

STAFF

Doug Crews: Executive Director, dcrews@socket.net

Kent M. Ford: Editor, kford@socket.net

Connie Whitney: cwhitney@socket.net

and Jennifer Plourde: jplourde@socket.net: Advertising Sales & Placement

Karen Philp: Receptionist, Bookkeeping, kphilp@socket.net

Kristie Williams: Member Services, Meeting Planning, kwilliams@socket.net

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CALENDAR

April

12 — Free Business Journalism Seminar, Fayetteville, Ark.

18-19 — Missouri Advertising Managers' Association meeting, The Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark

20 — Missouri College Media Association Convention, Joplin

21-23 — Missouri Circulation Management Association meeting & Circulation / Audience Mega Summit, Renaissance Hotel, Lambert Airport, St. Louis

25 — Missouri Press Leadership Summit on the future of the Missouri Press Foundation

25 — MPA Past Presidents and Spouses Dinner, Columbia

30 — Deadline for entering Better Newspaper Contest

30 — Deadline for nominations for Newspaper Hall of Fame, Photo-journalism Hall of Fame, Outstanding Young Journalist

June

21 — Northwest Missouri Press Association meeting, Mound City

September

5-7 — MPA Convention, Marriott Downtown, Kansas City

12-15 — National Newspaper Association Convention & Trade Show, Arizona Grand Resort, Phoenix

Oak Grove staffer near site of K.C. restaurant blast

An advertising staff member of *Focus on Oak Grove*, Nancy Mathis, witnessed the fire that destroyed a restaurant in the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City in February.

Mathis lives in an apartment building near JJ's Restaurant. She was watching TV when natural gas vapors in the restaurant exploded, blowing open a door on her terrace, she told *Focus*.

Mathis said she saw flames leaping higher than her seventh-floor apartment. She grabbed her purse, coat and shoes and fled the building, not knowing where the flames originated.

Mathis watched emergency responders, utility workers and news people in the next few hours, until she was allowed to go back into her building.

The blast and fire killed an employee of the restaurant and injured 16 other people. (*Focus on Oak Grove*)



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