

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2020

Important Dates

*America's Newspapers
Webinars*

[Pandemic Prompts Evaluation
of Print Delivery Days](#)

*Presenter: Mather Economics
(Free to APA members)*

[Overcoming Objections and
Selling Ads Amidst COVID
Business Issues](#)

Sept. 17, 9 a.m.-10:30 a.m.
FREE to APA members

[NNA.org/convention](#)
October 1-3, 2020
#NNAathome

APA presents ad sales workshop with
Ryan Dohrn

Do you know a struggling journalist?

Nelson finds summer home at the
Star-News

Allen named Publisher at The Sand
Mountain Reporter

The Over The Mountain Journal
turns 30!

Archibald named Nieman Fellow at
Harvard University

NNA online convention coming in
October

NNA applauds suspension of USPS
service changes



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APA presents ad sales workshop with Ryan Dohrn: Sept. 17

Objection handling is a skill that all salespeople need to master, especially now that COVID has harmed so many small business owners! Ryan will highlight the six most common COVID and other business objections media salespeople face on a daily basis and show you how to flip those objections into closed deals with ease and style.

Because Ryan sells media every day, these objections and scenarios are timely, relevant, and practical. Ryan will dig deep into objections like, "I'm on Facebook, I'm good." And, "I am not seeing ROI from print."

And, "I cannot pay my rent, much less advertise!"

This interactive workshop is designed to give sales reps at all levels the skills they need to walk into any conversation with an advertiser with confidence. With 30 years' experience in the media sales business, Ryan has heard it all. And because he still sells media today, his responses will be

relevant, timely, and right on the mark!

Dohrn is the founder of media sales strategy firm Brain Swell Media and the creator of the 360 Ad Sales System taught to over 20,000 media sales professionals in seven countries. His presentation at the 2018 APA Summer Convention received very high marks.



He works with over 200 newspapers per year and has a deep passion for the community newspaper business. Ryan's 30-year media sales and marketing career includes leadership roles at PennWell Publishing, Morris Publishing, Disney/ABC TV, and The NY Times Company. He is an Emmy Award winner, business book author, and has been featured in USA Today and on Forbes.com.

Mark your calendars. Registration ([HERE](#)) will begin next week. Can't make it? We will record it for you. Just sign up and we will send you a link.

The workshop is free to APA members.

Do you know a struggling journalist?

Many Alabama journalists have been affected by Covid-19 resulting in reduced hours and wages, furloughs, or layoffs.

In an effort to support our local journalists, the Alabama Power Foundation has issued a grant to the APA Journalism Foundation to help Alabama journalists who are struggling during these challenging times. The program is designed to provide financial help while growing relationships with publishers by offering content to community newspapers around Alabama.

A \$500 grant will be awarded to each journalist (up to 20) who produces a story with photos that is suitable for publication in Alabama newspapers and on news websites. The APA Journalism Foundation will fund the program through a grant from the Alabama Power Foundation.

We're asking you to reach out to your reporters and even freelancers who have done work for you to let them know

about this opportunity.

Reporters should choose stories that will draw readers from beyond their community, providing content that newspapers and news websites across Alabama can use. Once stories ideas are approved and edited by a retired APA member, we will provide the articles to all members for publication.

Stories should be news or news features – not opinion – and focus on the people, businesses, nonprofits and institutions that make Alabama a

distinctive, welcoming place to live and work. Examples include stories of businesses bringing jobs or nonprofits creating programs that help people and communities; profiles of people whose talents bring positive attention to their community and the state; or features about historic landmarks, iconic institutions and tourist attractions.

grant continued on page 3



grant continued from page 2

We urge you to share this grant program with your reporters who have been adversely affected so they can apply for one of these grants and provide

a story that you and other papers can publish. Reporters are encouraged to work on a story on their own time rather than company time, although their newspaper is welcome to publish the story.

If you have staff members who have had reduced hours or have been laid off, encourage them to visit: [https://www.](https://www.alabamapress.org/2020-journalist-grant-program/)

[alabamapress.org/2020-journalist-grant-program/](https://www.alabamapress.org/2020-journalist-grant-program/) to apply and submit story ideas. We will let them know where to submit final articles once their idea is approved. Contact Felicia (felicia@alabamapress.org) or Leigh Leigh (leigh2@alabamapress.org) with any questions about this program.

Nelson finds summer home at the Star-News

By Ora J. Nelson

Editor's Note: The APA Journalism Foundation awarded eight \$1,500 internships over the summer. Here is a report from Ora Nelson, summer intern for the Andalusia Star-News. This is just one example of the benefits of your support of the Foundation. If you have not made a pledge this year, please consider joining other APA member newspapers in supporting the Foundation.

When I came home from a study abroad year cut short by a budding global

pandemic, my first choice in furthering my career path was at the Star-News. The Star-News, both the company and the people, was there as the whole world went through a crisis and as everyone had to learn what normal would be.

I learned how to make global news into local news and found out that how news is delivered affects how it is received.

When I faltered—or didn't know the correct AP format for writing "fourth of July" or "PowerSouth," the staff at the Star-News was always there to lend a hand as they watched me grow as a journalist and

writer.

Once the project for my internship came about, I realized I could handle the task without floundering for help at every turn—something I wouldn't have even imagined at the beginning of 2020.

I credit this to the help I've received while working at the Star-News. After I finish out this chapter in my life, and although I will be saddened to leave it, I know I will be leaving equipped and ready to handle numerous kinds of people and situations than I did before starting this internship.

Allen named publisher at The Sand Mountain Reporter



Shannon Allen has been named publisher of The Sand Mountain Reporter in Albertville. He has worked at the paper since his graduation from the University of Alabama in May of

1988.

Allen worked at The Crimson White while in college as a staff writer and also as a student assistant in the sports information department.

He has received numerous awards from APA through the years for writing, photography and sports coverage. He received the Distinguished Alabama

Community Sports Journalist from Auburn University's journalism department in 2009, and he was inducted into the Marshall County Sports Hall of Fame in 2018.

Allen is a 1984 Crossville graduate and attended Snead State in 1984-85. A 1988 graduate from the University of Alabama, he received a Buford Boone Journalism Scholarship at UA.

The Over The Mountain Journal is 30 years old

The Over The Mountain Journal, a free circulation newspaper in the Birmingham area and long-time associate member of APA, recently celebrated their 30th anniversary. The bi-weekly publication covers Mountain Brook, Homewood, Vestavia Hills, Hoover and North Shelby

County.

Publisher Maury Wald said the newspaper's mission has always been to "highlight the interesting people and exciting events that make Over the Mountain life so enjoyable."



Archibald named Nieman Fellow at Harvard University

Alabama Media Group columnist John Archibald has been awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University for the academic year beginning this fall.

Archibald won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 2018. He has been a reporter for The Birmingham News since 1986 and columnist since 2004. His columns appear on AL.com and in The Birmingham News, the Mobile Press-Register and The Huntsville Times.

He is also the author of "Shaking the Gates of Hell: A Search for Family and Truth in the Wake of the Civil Rights

Revolution," published by Alfred A. Knopf and set for release on March 9, 2021. It's a book about his family, civil rights in the South and the church's role in a conspiracy of silence about discrimination based on race and later sexuality.

Each year, the Nieman Foundation awards fellowships to as many as 24 journalists working in print, broadcast, digital and audiovisual media. During their nine months at Harvard, Nieman Fellows attend seminars, journalism "shop" talks, master classes and journalism conferences. They audit at least one class

per semester.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," Archibald said. "It's something I never thought I'd get a chance to do."

The academic setting will offer a chance to focus on a single topic over a long period of time.

Archibald is currently finishing a narrative podcast about the 1979 police killing of Bonita Carter, which changed Birmingham and presaged the Black Lives Matter movement. He has been married to Alecia Archibald for 33 years, and the two have three grown children.

NNA convention coming in October



#NNAatHome

Meet us online for this year's NNA Convention and Trade Show, October 1-3, 2020!

LEARN what it takes for a community newspaper to succeed in today's environment
HEAR from and network with owners and publishers at publications across the U.S.
VISIT our online exhibitors and learn about the valuable solutions they provide

\$50
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NNA 134th Annual Convention & Trade Show
#NNAatHome
 Oct. 1-3, 2020

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Informative video conferencing sessions and workshops
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TODAY'S READERS
LEADERS
 NNA 134th Annual Convention & Trade Show
 October 1-3, 2020

Established in 1835, the National Newspaper Association (NNA) is a not-for-profit trade association representing the owners, publishers and editors of America's community newspapers.

Join us for NNAatHome!

NNA.org/convention

The National Newspaper Association's upcoming Annual Convention & Trade Show, which will be held online using Pathable, will take place on Oct. 1-3, 2020.

Registration is \$50 and includes three days of live sessions held in both small and large video conferencing groups — a fantastic value and no travel costs! Sessions are still being added, but we already have a great lineup.

Registration is open at <https://nna.formstack.com/forms/nnaconvention>

National Newspaper Association applauds suspension of USPS service changes

National Newspaper Association recently recognized a decision by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy to suspend some service changes until after November elections.

DeJoy announced that the Postal Service was fully able to handle election mail. In addition, he committed that until after the election:

- Retail hours at Post Offices will not change.
- Mail processing equipment and blue collection boxes will remain where they are.
- No mail processing facilities will be closed.

And we reassert that overtime has, and will continue to be, approved as needed

NNA President Matt Adelman, publisher of the Douglas (Wyoming) Budget, said he appreciated the Postmaster General's responsiveness. He said NNA believes maintaining service levels is critical to support Americans' confidence in the mail.

"We want to note that the election is not the only focal point this year. To us, the challenges created by the pandemic are at least as critical, if not more so, than the concerns about election mail. We have always had confidence that USPS is completely competent to handle even a great upsurge in election volume. But the

public health emergency is far from over. The Postal Service will continue to need support from the public and Congress to carry on its mission, even amidst coronavirus disruptions, until the nation has fully recovered.

"That said, we know this Postmaster General is eager to get on with cost-cutting, which NNA supports in general terms. His attention to the concerns of customers and members of Congress is right on target."

The Postal Service's announcement is here: <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2020/0818-postmaster-general-louis-dejoy-statement.htm>.

Obituaries

Phil Sanguinetti

Phil Sanguinetti, from The Anniston Star, passed away on July 9 at his home in Anniston. He was 100.

A native of Norfolk, Va., Sanguinetti received a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from Virginia Tech in 1942 and began working for Monsanto Chemical Co. He was transferred

to Anniston and later married Elise Ayers, the daughter of The Star's publisher, Col. Harry M. Ayers.

He joined The Anniston Star in 1962 as the national advertising manager, and was promoted to business manager in 1967. Four years later he was named president of

Consolidated Publishing Company, the title he would hold for the next 47 years.

Sanguinetti was president of APA in 1977 and very active with the APA Journalism Foundation. He received APA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003.

Barrett Shelton, Jr.

Barrett Shelton, Jr., former publisher of The Decatur Daily, passed away July 12, at his home in Decatur. He was 89.

Shelton grew up in the newspaper business. The newspaper has been in the family since 1912. In 1924, Barrett Shelton, Sr. left college and returned home when his father became ill. Barrett, Jr. started in the mailroom and then worked as a carrier. After learning to type, he worked as a reporter and during his senior year of high school was the newspaper's sports editor.

After graduating high school, Shelton spent a year at Washington and Lee University, but he earned his college degree from the University of Alabama.

Before returning to The Daily in 1957 as county editor, he worked at several newspapers in different capacities, including advertising sales at The Dothan Eagle, and circulation and classified advertising sales at the Chattanooga Times. He became managing editor of The Decatur Daily in 1958, and after his father's death in 1984, he became editor and publisher.

He also married his first wife, Tolly in 1958.

Shelton has served as president of both APA and of the APA Journalism Foundation. He is a founder and past director of First American Bank of Decatur and was an elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Decatur. He is a past chairman of the Decatur Chamber of Commerce and a past president of the city's Industrial Development Board.

He is survived by his second wife, Carolyn, three children, six grandchildren, a sister, two stepchildren and four step-grandchildren.

William Matthews "Matt" Stewart, II

William Mathews "Matt" Stewart II, 40, died Aug. 3, 2020, in Decatur, Alabama. Matt was an artist talented in painting, drawing, television, film and theater. He was the son of Steve and Patrice Stewart.

He lived in East Point, Georgia, and was working temporarily in the Decatur area in the production of "Super Science Showcase," a film series teaching young people science facts through history and literature. He was born Sept. 23, 1979, in Mobile, Alabama, and grew up in Monroeville, Alabama.

He attended Monroe County public schools and the Alabama School of Fine Arts before moving to Decatur. He graduated in 1998 from Decatur High School. He earned his bachelor's degree cum laude from the University of Alabama in 2002, with a major in

painting and sculpture and minors in film and theater.

He performed in theater productions in Monroeville, Decatur and Tuscaloosa. As a member of the Decatur High forensic (speech) team, Matt won top state honors and many other awards in dramatic and humorous interpretation, plus a four-year scholarship to UA.

As a member of the university's forensic team, he competed at colleges around the country and was a national champion in poetry interpretation, also winning awards in prose interpretation and informative speech. He was a member of UA's Mallet Assembly, which describes itself as "a diverse group of eccentric individuals forming relationships around advocacy, service and academics."

He also received an art scholarship to UA, where during his senior year he co-wrote the winning film script in a class taught by a "Seinfeld" producer. That led to his move to Los Angeles and work as an actor and in art department jobs.

For 16 years he was involved with films, TV, commercials, sitcoms, game shows, music videos and video games. He also graduated from El School of Professional Makeup.

In 2019 he moved to the Atlanta area to work in the growing TV and film industry there. His talents included set dressing, props, art, graphics, writing, editing, producing, directing, comedy, parody, satire, acting, makeup, improv, telling stories and creating comic books.

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Obituaries

William Matthews “Matt” Stewart, II *(continued)*

His family and friends remember him as creative, funny, considerate, helpful, loyal, generous and kind. He loved family, friends, children and pets. The family held a private memorial service in Monroeville.

Memorial donations may be made to the Ryan Licht Sang Bipolar Foundation at ryanlichtsangbipolarfoundation.org; or to the

new Bill and Matt Stewart Annual Scholarship Fund at the University of Alabama, which will benefit students active in creative media or journalism.

The scholarship address is University of Alabama, Box 870101, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487, or tinyurl.com/stewartUAScholarship.

Survivors include his parents, Stephen

E. “Steve” and Patrice Walters Stewart of Decatur; his sister, Emily Ward Stewart Baker, and husband Dallas of Greensboro, North Carolina; and aunts, uncles and cousins. Matt’s late grandparents were William Mathews “Bill” Stewart and Carolyn Hall Stewart of Monroeville and M.S. “Buck” and Charlotte Ward Walters of Cartersville, Georgia.

Rick Watson

Rick Watson, reporter and photographer for the Daily Mountain Eagle, died July 16, after a short illness. He was 69.

He started writing columns for the Daily Mountain Eagle’s lifestyle section in 2007. His column, Life 101, entertained readers from veteran stories to how much he loved to cut grass.

Watson wrote a book in 2008, “Remembering

Big: Ponderings and Reflections of a Sloss Hollar Scholar,” which was a compilation of some of his early columns for the Eagle. He came out with a second book, “Life Happens,” published through Homefolk Media in 2012.

His columns also ran in 280 Living, the Tannehill Trader in Birmingham and 79 Magazine. He was also a freelance writer for Village Living in Mountain Brook, and the

Hoover Sun, and the Homewood Star.

His newspaper career came after a 33-year career as a data center manager for AT&T. He studied business at Birmingham-Southern College and later earned a master’s degree in public and private management from BSC.

Watson is survived by his wife, Jilda.

TN TownNews

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Columns

Knight's Words Of Wisdom Still Relevant To Today's Publishers



by Tom
Silvestri, The
Relevance
Project

Will your blood, toil, tears and sweat in newspapering today be relevant 10 years from now? How about in 40 or 60 years?

I wondered about that as I finished reading "Knight: A Publisher in the Tumultuous Century." It's the biography of John S. Knight, the newspaperman who built an empire. Yes, the Knight Newspapers that became Knight-Ridder and then McClatchy, whose uncertain future is the news of today.

John Knight died in 1981. I found the 1988 biography by former Miami Herald columnist Charles Whited among a pallet of boxes in the basement of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, where I was publisher until Dec. 31. The boxes contained lots of books that had once lined the walls of a former publisher's office. They had to go because the RTD sold its downtown building in Virginia's capital city.

Funny how you stumble across wisdom. Even old-school lessons.

Or are they?

Knight's life is a study in contrasts. No problem. That probably sums up most people in this crazy business. But one of the profound contrasts to today's newspaper scene is how Knight was among the media CEOs known more for his column writing, than his achievement of quarterly earning goals. Knight's journalism earned him a Pulitzer Prize.

He also knew British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who is responsible for the wartime phase in the first paragraph. The book "Knight" quotes his "The Editor's Notebook" columns and speeches to advance a detailed chronology and to capture Knight's newspaper philosophies.

Time for you to weigh in. Judge these 10 quotes from the book on whether they're still relevant today:

"True journalism -- and I emphasize the word 'true' -- is the lamplight of our modern society. Without it, the lamps are turned down and we revert back to the Dark Ages. The modern newspaper is the means by which the whole human race, if but allowed

the opportunity, may acquire knowledge and gain wisdom. It is the beacon of light of this new experiment we call democracy." (Sound familiar? This was Knight in 1945.)

"Your first duty is to the citizen who buys your newspaper in the belief that it has character and stability...There is no known substitute for integrity and character, no synthetic for guts." (This advice appeared in The New York Times after Knight bought the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Daily News in 1970.)

"Unless the newspaper is profitable, how the hell do you have any liberty? Without profits you're always at the mercy of the banks. You've either got to conduct a profitable newspaper or be subsidized, and no matter who does the subsidizing you're never again free. I'm free. Nobody puts pressure on me." (Answer in 1973 to an interviewer's question: "It's always the profit motive first?")

"The truly distinguished newspapers in this country are those which have dared to face public wrath and displeasure. Criticism rises in portion to the amount of news read or heard that does not fit the public's preconceived ideas. ...We must report the world as it is and not as we would like it to be." (Speech in 1971.)

"A successful newspaper is a reflection of its owner or editor. This is something more than dedication to printing unbiased news, giving voice to all points of view or the skillful assembling of interesting features and comics. The newspaper editor must be the conscience of the community....An editor should lead." (1965 speech.)

Why are newspapers decreasing? "In a great many cities it's pure economics. They don't want to go out of business, nobody wants to sell to a competitor, and they don't like to give up the operation of the paper. But with increasing costs, there just aren't enough dollars for some of them to exist." (The quote is from an interview in 1966.)

"It's simple. When we buy a newspaper, we spend money to improve the editorial product. That brings us more readers who read the paper more thoroughly, producing better results for advertisers. More revenue from circulation and advertising produces better profit. And this we plow back into improving the editorial product still more." (Interview in 1972.)

"The business or professional man cannot extend his imagination very far before it runs into the chain of command. He cannot hire and fire at will even if he is the big boss, because even the big boss becomes a creature of the company he creates. So the modern man is regimented, with mounds of paperwork, conferences, anxieties about personnel, government, labor unions and other often-mundane matters that give us premature heart attacks and galloping ulcers." (On organizational pressures, from a 1957 commencement address.)

"I get disgusted with men who go to editorial conventions and orate about freedom of the press when they don't use what freedom they've already got. They are generally frightened, timid rabbits when real questions of press freedom arise." (interview 1944.)

"The threats to freedom of expression concern us all. To borrow a phrase, ideas can be dangerous but the suppression of ideas is fatal. Freedom is a dangerous way of life. But it is ours." (1955 speech.)

What's your verdict?

For me, it's 2020 and I'm instinctively underlining Publisher Knight's points in an old book. I'd say they're all relevant.

Use the relevance as inspiration to write and talk about newspapers knowing 30 years from now someone reading those statements will nod in approval.

Better yet: Win over a non-reader or non-advertiser of today.

Please allow one more Knight quote because it offers a chuckle:

"I hope 'somewhat larger' will not mean miniscule."

The publisher was arguing in 1980 with the editor over the need for larger type in the newspaper.

Some arguments never change.

Tom Silvestri is executive director of the Newspaper Association Managers' Relevance Project, which advocates for community newspapers. He retired Dec. 31 after 15 years as the president and publisher of the Richmond (VA) Times-Dispatch and 42 years in newspapering.

Columns

Read any good catalogues lately?



Ad-libs
by John Foust

Over the years, I've heard ad professionals talk about the outstanding copywriting that can be found in catalogues. Of course, there are other approaches to advertising creativity, but catalogues excel when it comes to descriptions of product features and benefits.

Some of the best examples can be found in L.L. Bean catalogues. Let's take a look at a two-page spread featuring their famous snow boots. Even if you live in an area which doesn't have snowy winters, it's easy to appreciate this well-crafted concept.

A color photograph occupies the entire left page and half of the right page. The close-up photo shows the boots being worn in the snow. The tops of the boots are just below the cuffed jeans, demonstrating the ankle height of one of the styles. Although there is snow on the boots, it is clearly not soaking through. The headline reads, "Bean Boots for the Snow."

The sub-headline reads, "Present-

ing our limited-edition waterproof Bean Boots, with 400 grams of toasty PrimaLoft insulation and a breathable Gore-Tex lining to keep your feet dry and comfortable in extreme wet weather." The PrimaLoft and Gore-Tex logos appear at the bottom, along with their slogans.

The main copy to the right of the photo states, "For men and women... handcrafted in Maine since 1912, one pair at a time. Premium full-grain leather sheds snow and rain. Supportive steel shank enhances stability and comfort. Waterproof rubber boot bottom with chain-tread sole provides traction and durability."

Under that is a section which provides details on sizing for lined and unlined styles. There are six more photos, three of men's boots and three of women's boots. Each photo is accompanied by a few words of additional information on boot heights, available colors, linings and prices. At the bottom right corner of the page, there is a box which encourages readers to "See more styles and colors at LLBean.com."

What else do you need to know? It's all right there on those two pages: A succinct five-word headline, a photo that shows the product in use, features

and benefits in the copy, product details to help you choose the right size and style, and where to go for more information.

This is just one product in the catalogue. Descriptions like this appear on every page. In addition, L.L. Bean enhances their marketing efforts with generous discounts, guarantees and delivery policies – all of which are designed to provide consumers with reasons to trust (and buy) their products. Because they don't resort to shallow claims and exaggerations, you won't find words like "unbelievable," "fantastic" or "awesome" in their descriptions. By keeping the focus on relevant features and benefits, they essentially let the products do the selling. And it's no secret that they sell a lot.

Obviously, not all advertisers are planning to publish a catalogue. But many of them can increase sales by using these catalogue techniques.

In other words, if the shoe fits, wear it.

John Foust conducts training programs for newspaper advertising professionals. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

New normal offers opportunities

by Don Heinzman

Newspaper publishers and editors, you must be wondering what your post-pandemic new normal business model will look like.

Having managed and edited community weekly newspapers in small towns for 30 years, here is my take:

First and foremost, your community leaders value having your local newspaper, and I suspect if you decided to quit the business, your community leaders immediately would look for another newspaper publisher to serve the community.

I also believe your community leaders view the importance of your positions equal to the mayor, school superintendent and bank presidents. They rarely will tell you that.

I believe your residents who are living this stay-at-home existence, will take a second hard look at the values

of socializing and living in and around their local communities. I also believe your subscribers/readers will scrutinize your newspaper for hard, real news coverage about this new normal, I suspect they will shop the local small businesses to help them revive, fearing going to the big-box stores and getting the virus. This should cause local merchants to advertise in print and on-line.

Editors should solicit guest opinions for the opinion page to begin the dialogue of the importance of strengthening local community living. Since change begins at the local level where the power of the public resides, this is the time to examine what reforms are needed, particularly in the local police department's use of force policy, starting with training involving choke holds.

There will be changes in local publishing and journalism.

Publishers and editors will want to schedule regular "brain storming" sessions for ALL staff on how to make print and digital changes, especially on ad-

vertising rates to confront the new normal caused by the Covid- 19 epidemic.

This will be a window of opportunity for newspaper publishers to organize a "Shop Locally" campaign, along with the Chamber of Commerce that also has revival of its business members at stake.

Some publishers already are designing new campaigns bannered with "We are here to help you", while offering special discounts. I just read a special four-page graduation section sponsored mainly by one local credit union.

At the same time, editors should plan special business stories on changes local businesses are making for this new normal.

In the fall, editors will want to have special back-to-school stories on changes principals and staff are making with reorganized classes, as well as a continuation of distance learning.

normal continued on page 9

normal continued from page 8

This is a time to feature special teachers, because parents have a greater respect for teachers, having had to teach their own children at home.

Since city and school officials will be cutting budgets and raising property taxes, there will be much interest in decisions made by school boards, city councils and county boards of commissioners. They

will be looking to local news media with renewed interest for information on policy decisions that are sure to affect their pocketbooks.

I suspect there will be a renewed interest in organized religion as church leaders will be making some changes. This is another opportunity to strengthen the church page featuring, thoughts by church leaders.

Finally, this will be a time to write some positive heart-warming stories of ordinary citizens who are performing extraordinary service to their communities during this

pandemic.

The bottom line for local community newspapers is to take advantage of a new normal local community spirit that treasures its American Citizenship and desires a free press as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Don Heinzman is a weekly community newspaper consultant and is the author of a manual on how to manage a weekly newspaper. His e-mail address is dhein0219@aol.com.

Guide to aggressive reporting? Begin with the basics.



by Jim Pumarlo

Everyday news reports are filled with statistics as COVID-19 continues to dominate headlines.

The number of individuals who have tested positive and those who have died of the coronavirus. Patients hospitalized and those in ICU. Confirmed cases broken down by gender, ethnicity and county of residence. The tally of businesses that have closed. The rising unemployment totals. Terms of financial assistance programs available at federal, state and local levels. Bankruptcy and foreclosure totals.

The pandemic is being analyzed at all angles with all sorts of statistics, but numbers are the tip of the story. Statistics ring hollow without providing interpretation and context. How does one community stack up against others? Is a community in better or worse shape than three months ago?

The final step is to tell the stories behind the statistics, to put a face behind the numbers. The pandemic offers numerous opportunities.

What is it like to be on the front lines? Interview a health care worker or first-responder.

How have individuals coped with being in quarantine or with not being able to see loved ones in long-term care facilities?

What is the next step for a business that faces no other choice than to permanently close its doors?

A brainstorming session is likely to generate more than enough stories for

newsrooms to consider and pursue.

Beyond the pandemic, exploring stories behind statistics should be a regular exercise in newsrooms. Numerous examples can be found in everyday reporting.

The school board is pitching a referendum for a new school. Calculate the tax increase for a factory in the industrial park, a Main Street retail store, a cabin on the outskirts of town, a home in an established neighborhood and a residence in an upscale subdivision. Talk to representative owners and get their reactions to the proposal.

The daily police blotter reports numerous calls to break-ins and thefts in a neighborhood. The police announce a crackdown with extra patrols, and that's reported. But have you walked through the neighborhood yourself to take a pulse of the families?

The fall harvest will soon be here. How do local yields compare to statewide and national trends? What's the ripple effect on the local economy? Are local farm operations merging? Is a farmer forced to sell, ending three generations of family ownership? An auction signals the last chapter of a foreclosed property. Annual reports are routinely presented at meetings of local government bodies – from a wrap-up of parent advisory council activities to building permits to public safety. Identify the most compelling statistics. Highlight those in a story, accompanied by a sidebar with the overall facts and figures. The package may generate follow-up coverage.

You don't have to wait for official reports. Brainstorm other ways to bring statistics to life.

Do a feature package on neighborhood activities for National

Night Out. Incorporate a sidebar and graphic highlighting appropriate public safety statistics pointing out where the community is doing well and not doing so good.

Does your community have a Habitat for Humanity program? The volunteers and host family are a natural story. In addition, flesh out statistics to beef up the package. What is the available housing stock locally and what is the average price? Is there a homeless problem, and can it be described in numbers? What is the menu of financing programs for first-time homebuyers?

Many communities honor a volunteer of the year. Is there an umbrella organization that compiles the total number of volunteer hours contributed by businesses and civic organizations in a year?

Round out your high school graduation story with accompanying statistics on a class's cumulative academic achievements – specifically, what's the grand total of post-secondary scholarships awarded to the graduates? Profile a handful of the more noteworthy recipients.

All of these scenarios present opportunity to report statistics, but a recitation of numbers without interpretation offers little substance for readers. Stories are more vivid and meaningful when names are attached to everyday news. It's a winning formula for your newspaper and your community.

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