

AlaPpressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2020

Important Dates

*America's Newspapers
Webinars*

(Free to APA members)

[Writing, Editing and
Designing for Mobile
Consumption](#)

April 30, 1-2 p.m.

Presenter: Mario Garcia

[Key for Connecting and
Selling in a Digital \(and
Remote\) World](#)

May 7, 1-2 p.m.

*2020 Summer Conference
Perdido Beach Resort
CANCELLED*

APA cancels 2020 Summer
Convention

APA Legal Hotline posts a new web
video

APA Items of Interest emails

“Positioning ourselves, and our
customers, to come back strong”

“It’s all about the benefits”

“Coronavirus underscores the breadth
of business reporting”

How are you coping?



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APA cancels 2020 Summer Convention

Like so many associations and businesses, the APA Board of Directors have made the tough decision to cancel the upcoming 2020 Summer Convention set to take place in late June at the Perdido Beach Resort.



“With so much uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not possible to effectively plan an in-person meeting that would ensure everyone’s health and safety,” APA Executive Director Felicia Mason said. “Our conventions have always been a time for learning and fellowship for our members, and we are sad and disappointed that we will miss that this year.”

Mason said the staff is working on plans for a virtual presentation of the APA Media Awards. Judging is in progress and should be completed in late May. Stay tuned for

more details.

“There are so many APA traditions we are missing this year with the Alabama Newspaper Hall of Honor being postponed earlier, and now the summer convention,” Mason said. “I believe it will make next year’s events even more special.”

The Hall of Honor is a special event for APA and the families of the inductees, and we look forward to the time we can remember and honor Ed Fowler and Marcia Sears, our inductees for this year.



APA, thought to be among the oldest associations in Alabama, will celebrate the association’s 150th anniversary next year. We will return to the sandy beaches of Alabama **June 24-26, 2021**, and will make it a special celebration of our association and our industry. Mark your calendar.

APA Legal Hotline posts new web video

APA General Counsel Dennis Bailey has produced a short video discussing how public bodies are meeting via teleconference in this time of stay-at-home and social distancing. It is the second in a series of videos discussing questions members have posed to the APA Legal Hotline.


The first video discussed letters to the editor and what issues publishers should be aware of when publishing letters submitted by the public. These videos will be archived so that newspapers can refer to as needed. To access the video link, visit the APA website on the [Legal Hotline page](#) and log in using your member password.

Remember the APA Legal Hotline is there for you at no charge to APA members. Attorneys skilled in First Amendment and privacy and access laws are on standby to assist member newspapers with common legal issues often faced by reporters, editors and publishers.


By contacting the APA Hotline via phone (334-206-3100) or email (apahotline@rsjg.com), you could possibly save thousands of dollars in unnecessary legal fees. Both pre- and post-publication advice is offered on libel, privacy and FOI matters.

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Evans Bailey



Dennis Bailey

Dennis R. Bailey
 General Counsel
 Alabama Press Association
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A rule of the Supreme Court of Alabama requires the following:
 No representation is made that the quality of legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.

APA Items of Interest emails

Since Friday, March 13, APA has sent emails we called "Items of Interest" to our members. At first, the emails were daily, and later started a Monday, Wednesday and Friday schedule.

Below are a few items we think are worth repeating. Also, you can find the summary of our calls with publishers on ideas for circulation, advertising, content and more on page 7.

These are challenging times to be sure, but there are also opportunities that can put us in touch with advertisers and help create revenue for us.

Think about this: If an advertiser has invested in billboard advertising, who is seeing it? Sure, there are a few people on the roads, but not many. Why not reach out to some of those advertisers and make them an offer to run in your newspaper. Use the spec ads APA had created and made available to our members and offer a package for the next four weeks.

AND, what about radio. Most people don't listen to the radio at home, and we are all mostly at home now. Radio sells drive time, and not many of us are driving. Those advertisers need an alternative, and it is your NEWSPAPER.

· APA is excited to send you a series of house ads that were produced from the market research conducted in

Alabama at the end of last year by Pulse Research. The research was funded by the Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service. We know newspapers are the #1 source of news and information in your community, and now you have the facts to prove it.

Please use this message as often as you can to remind readers AND advertisers where people in your communities look for dependable, reliable information. This is never truer than in the crisis we are living through today.

The ads are available on BamaNet under "Newspaper promo ads #1 and #2."

America's Newspapers has created ads to encourage readers to subscribe to your newspapers. The ads can be cobranded with your logo.

[Click Here](#) to access the print and digital ads. "Newspapers have your back," is the tagline. "We are grateful for those who have our back in this important time."

Your readers are counting on you to bring them the news they need...when they need it. And, the importance of the work that you do has never been more critical. With this campaign, we remind readers that we are grateful for their support — through print or digital subscriptions.

From Friday Night Bleachers to Monday Morning Council Meetings

Newspapers are the #1 trusted source for local news and information in Alabama.

Your newspaper flag here

We're here for you.

THIS IS MY NEWSPAPER.

Newspapers are the #1 trusted source for local news and information in Alabama. And trusted, by their readers, 4 to 1 over social media. Subscribe to your local newspaper today, you can't afford to miss out.

Your newspaper flag here

We're here for you.

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Pep Talk for Newspapers

From Steve Key, Hoosier State Press Association

In the worst of times, newspapers rise to the occasion.

While everyone struggles to understand "flattening the curve" and social distancing, who will provide them with the information about what is happening in their community?

Who will explain what steps the county health department has instituted to deal with COVID-19?

Who will explain what steps the hospital's emergency room and doctor's office have taken to deal with requests for a coronavirus test?

Who will tell residents whether there are

any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in your community?

Who will assure Hoosiers that the shelves of stores remain stocked, maybe not with hand sanitizers, but the essentials needed while people try to stay at home as much as possible?

Who will tell them that the pharmacies remain open to fill prescriptions for those who need medicine?

Who will share stories on how first responders are protecting themselves while serving calls from possible coronavirus victims?

Who will explain to parents what students should be doing to stay current in the classroom?

Who will help circulate the latest information released by county commissioners, school superintendents, mayors and town councils on the local response to an ever-changing situation?

Who will inform families where they can go to replace the school lunches their children were receiving?

Who will ask hard questions of government officials when flaws in the system become evident?

The answer to all of the above questions is the local newspaper.

Be proud of the role you fill in a democracy and make your community proud of the way you fulfilled your role when this crisis passes.

People

Graham Brooks has joined the staff at Tallapoosa Publishers as a staff writer. He has worked for five year at the Shelby County Reporter prior to joining TPI.

Brooks is a Birmingham native and a 2014 graduate of Auburn University with a degree in journalism. In 2015, he helped launch the Helena Reporter, a sister publication of The Shelby County Reporter.

Breanna Hill has also joined the staff at Tallapoosa Publishers as a staff writer. She

is a native of Alexander City, although she grew up in Sylacauga.

Hill is currently working on a bachelor's degree in digital journalism from Jacksonville State University. She has served two years as editor of The Chanticleer, JSU's student newspaper.

Sydney McGriff has joined the staff at Greenville Newspapers. She is a lifelong resident of Greenville, and will be working as retail/classified marketing consultant.

McGriff replaces Chloe Langston, who was promoted to marketing coordinator. Langston, who has worked at the paper since 2019, will graduate from Auburn University in Montgomery with a degree in English.

Mandy Whitehead is the new advertising director at the Jackson County Sentinel. She returns to the Sentinel where she served as an advertising executive from 2013 until 2015.

Help Wanted

Independent Sales Positions - Birmingham, AL

Work from home as an independent contractor for the leading family & parenting publication in the Birmingham metro area.

Print, digital or telemarketing experience will help the right candidate move to the top, with open territories, lots of local business categories to prospect from, and unlimited growth potential. A full time position requires a minimum of 30 hours per week to be successful, but part timers and telemarketing professionals will also be considered.

Hours are flexible and home-based though applicants must be able to meet clients in person when required and to attend special Expo events. COMMISSION ONLY - grow your own base with no caps on growth.

The position requires a detail-oriented person that can manage multiple clients and is willing to listen, learn and execute management directives in securing new advertising revenue. Knowledge of web and Word-based programs for data entry and customer relationship management is required. Email your resume and cover letter to Carol Evans at carol@birminghamparent.com or fax to 205-624-2415.

Journalist - Alexander City, AL

The Alexander City (AL) Outlook is a five-day a week daily located at Lake Martin, one of the biggest recreational lakes in the South. We're looking for a creative, experienced, versatile general assignment reporter to continue our impressive growth and statewide recognition as one of the best newspapers in Alabama.

This job requires strong interviewing skills, attention to detail, critical thinking skills, a level of independence with a team-oriented mind and the ability to juggle numerous assignments, meet daily deadlines, cultivate sources and generate daily story ideas. The ideal candidate will have a proven record of quality reporting and unique writing skills, knowledge of AP style, social media, photography and video skills. Pagination skills are not required but are a plus. We offer competitive pay and great benefits.

If you're passionate about storytelling, we want to talk to you.

Interested candidates should send a resume, writing samples and a brief cover letter to Managing Editor santana.wood@alexcityoutlook.com.

Digital/Web Specialist - Cookeville, TN

The 117-year-old Herald-Citizen is accepting resumes for its newly created Digital Specialist position. The Herald-Citizen is a daily news-

paper publishing Tuesday through Friday and Sunday. It is located in beautiful Cookeville, TN, one of the fastest growing micropolitans in the country and home to Tennessee Tech University. A regional hub for the Upper Cumberland with big-town conveniences and small-town charm.

Candidates must have a proven track record in growing online audiences, creating new digital offerings and maintaining an active social media presence. Experience with blogging and video is a plus.

Responsible for all newspaper web and digital offerings while working as a liaison with newsroom, advertising and publisher on product content and revenue enhancements. Mission is to bolster newspaper's web, digital and social media presence.

Education requirements include a related communications, multi-media and/or digital media degree from an accredited college or university, or at least five years of related field experience. Compensation commensurate with experience. Benefits include medical insurance and 401(k).

Apply by sending resume, link to digital portfolio, cover letter and wage expectation to Publisher Jack McNeely by mail to P.O. Box 2729, Cookeville, TN 38502, or via email at jack.mcneely@herald-citizen.com. No walk-ins, please. EEO.

Columns

Positioning ourselves, and our customers, to come back strong



*Ad-vice
by Brad English*

We make, on average, 100 decisions every day. Some small, some much larger. Deciding on whether to order take-out or eat in pales in comparison to where to send your kid to college. I have just moved my youngest out of her dorm at South over the weekend. It was a family thing, for the most part. Couldn't talk the rest of them into joining me at the Holiday Inn Express just off campus Friday night. I was one of five people in the hotel.

These are, indeed, challenging times for all of us. How can it be so beautiful outside and no traffic on the streets? How can a grocery store be packed every day, and other businesses be shuttered? And how much toilet paper does a family of four need?

I mean, come on.

I've struggled with how we can help our local businesses. Our local advertisers. I hear promos the radio stations are running with clients thanking the stations for offering free air time with advertising delivery services, store hours, etc.

We're different. Ink costs money. So does newsprint. The airways are just that. So, they have a little more room to accommodate than we do. So, what can we do?

What about sponsors? Your local chamber of commerce would be a logical first call. Maybe offer them a non-profit rate for a full-page ad listing all of the local businesses who are offering some type of limited service. Think about where you or your family and friends shop or take out. Maybe combine the sponsorship money with some small space ads at a discounted rate. (Remember, we have some great spec ads available for you on BamaNet.)

We are going to get through this. The question is how do we position ourselves to be the best partner we can be to our local businesses?

The decision, of course, lies with each of you. Hard times mean tough choices. Please know we are here with you and working to get all of our advertisers up and running when this thing is over. And I am confident it will be soon. (Color me an optimist.)

Those of you who know me well, know I'm not a big fan of the "Mike" era of Bama football. So, I hesitate to recite the words of one Mike Dubose who said, "With every great challenge comes great opportunity." But I agree with him on this one. We can position ourselves, and our customers, to come back strong from this.

Brad is the Marketing/Governmental Affairs Director for APA/ANAS. E-mail: brad@alabamapress.org.

It's all about the benefits



*Ad-libs
by John Foust*

Rob is the marketing director for an outdoor apparel company. I remember a conversation with him about his philosophy of promoting their products. "It's all about benefits," he said. "Every time a new product is developed – or an existing product is improved – my task starts with learning the features and translating those features into marketable benefits.

"I meet with the research and development team and ask questions like, 'Where did this idea come from?' and 'Why did you decide on these specific changes?' I want them to walk me through their thought process, so I can understand how the product enhances our customers' outdoor activities.

"There's a chain of communication," he explained. "I share the relevant details with our sales team, so they can present the new product to stores that sell our products. That includes providing them with information the stores can communicate to their customers. Of course, all of that is coordinated

with our international brand marketing.

"At every step along the way, the focus is on features and benefits. For example, we use wicking fabrics in many of our products. A shirt which is made of wicking material draws perspiration away from the body and to the exterior of the shirt, where it can easily evaporate. A shirt with wicking fabric is cool and comfortable – and that's important to active people. The word 'wick' doesn't mean anything to a lot of folks, so it needs a good benefits-oriented explanation."

There's a reason why advertising veterans have always preached the value of product benefits. People don't buy features, they buy benefits. If that strategy is good enough for a successful international company, it's good enough for the businesses we encounter every day.

Here are a couple of takeaways from Rob's approach:

1. Stick to the facts. "There's no need to embellish the truth," he said. "If a product is worth buying – if it is worth advertising – it should offer honest advantages to consumers. That's why we encourage all of our marketing folks to avoid superlatives in their descriptions.

People are suspicious of words like 'best,' 'tremendous' and 'fantastic.'

"Think about it. If you're in the market for a shirt to wear for hiking or boating, would you be more likely to buy one that is comfortable because it 'evaporates perspiration quickly' or one that is described as 'unbelievable?' Solid facts win that contest every time." 2. Keep it simple. Rob has access to a lot of technical product details, but he knows it's important to narrow it down to simple, easy-to-communicate information. "The most effective marketers make their messages easy to understand," he said. "If they make it complicated, they'll lose people." The most memorable benefits are communicated with just a few words."

When you're working with an advertiser who needs ideas for a new campaign, keep features and benefits in mind. That will answer the question, "Why should people buy what we're selling?" And it will take a lot of sweat out of the creative process.

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

Columns

Check in regularly with readers



Ad-libs
by Jim Pumarlo

The coronavirus pandemic is dominating headlines, generating stories on issues touching nearly every aspect of our lives.

Reports addressing the health and safety of citizens are obviously center stage. At the same time, the pandemic has spawned a range of stories focusing on our worksites – the places we earn a paycheck as employees and purchase products and services as consumers. Business lockdowns and restrictions have redefined commerce and reshaped daily routines.

Business news from all aspects deserves extra attention during these extraordinary times. This is also an opportunity to think about expanded business coverage during ordinary times. Stories about employers and employees have a big impact on communities. What happens at the workplace might even overshadow a decision of a local governing body. Yet, many newspapers struggle for consistent coverage of employers and employees.

It's impractical in many newsrooms to devote one person to report on business. Editors and reporters still can incorporate business coverage into their everyday regimen of assignments. The first step is to brainstorm stories on a regular basis similar to examining coverage of local government or sports.

Here is one list:

- When is the last time you compared and contrasted local employment with statewide statistics? Take it a step further, and identify a feature story representing specific trends. Present the trends and data in graphically pleasing, easy-to-understand formats. If online, make the data interactive, searchable and alive.

- How are businesses grappling with health care costs, and what is the impact on employees?

- Is your community facing a workforce shortage? What steps are companies taking to attract and retain qualified workers?

- Do companies provide on-site child care? Share the best practices.

- What is the local landscape of in-home businesses?

- How important are exports to the bottom line of businesses? Provide a local perspective into the global economy.

- Who are the winners and losers in the international trade wars?

- What sustainability measures are companies implementing to respond to consumer demand for a green economy?

- Has the role of long-term care facilities changed as people live longer and programs are in place to help them stay in their own homes?

- How important is e-commerce to local merchants? Are companies hindered by lack of broadband access? How are businesses best getting their messages to customers? Facebook? Web? Phone? Videoconferencing?

The stories are limited only by staff resources. As with any beat, newspapers will soon discover that the more attention devoted to the broad definition of business news, the more ideas that readers will forward.

Credible and ongoing coverage of employers and employees can lead to increased advertising revenue as well. Be clear, this does not mean saying "yes" to every advertiser's request for news coverage. Newspapers are in the strongest position by maintaining a clear separation between news and advertising. That's in the best interests of both your advertising and news departments.

At the same time, news and advertising departments should explore shared opportunities. Newsrooms

are regularly approached to publicize such events as Manufacturers Week or Small Business Week or Nursing Home Week. As you discuss news coverage, think about ways to generate revenue, too. Identify possibilities for a special section. Maybe even sponsor an event in conjunction with, say, the local chamber of commerce or manufacturers association. Investigate all platforms for news and advertising from print to digital.

Here's a worthwhile exercise for all newspapers. Take a quiz in your newsrooms. You all can likely name the members of the city council or school board, local lawmakers, the county administrator. But how many can name the city's five largest employers, or the names of their CEOs, or the top corporate contributors to the local United Way? Have you ever toured these facilities or met the owners or management team? It's fairly common for the downtown retailers to convene at a local restaurant for morning coffee. Have you ever attended?

Improving business coverage is a shared responsibility. Businesses must be comfortable that reporters can get the story right, and reporters deserve to have all the facts including those that may not be so flattering. Editorial and advertising staffs must have a common understanding of what is worthy of a story and what warrants an ad.

As a first step, begin a conversation within your newspaper and with your business community. Identify the opportunities and challenges, and then make a plan. Building business news into your everyday coverage will spell dividends for news and advertising departments.

Jim Pumarlo writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He can be reached at www.pumarlo.com and welcomes comments and questions at jim@pumarlo.com.

How are you coping?

That's the question we asked Alabama publishers recently, and we heard some very creative answers. Here goes.

• Circulation

This might seem like an odd time to have a circulation drive, but newspapers across the state are offering discounted subscription rates, both in print and online.

Here's a catchy headline: SMASH THE VIRUS – subscribe to your local newspaper for the latest information in the community. No virus is going to keep us down.

Many papers have put a hold on rolling off expiring subscriptions. Many of them are in-person payments, and you will want to see them when they are able to visit your office again.

One paper is offering their e-editions free if you provide an email and mailing address. This is a good way to build a database for the future.

• May Graduation tabs

This has always been a profitable special section for newspapers. This year, this section will be more valuable than ever. Promote this as the only public recognition seniors will have of their graduation.

If you are missing photos, contact the principles. You can also offer private photo sessions for those who don't have senior pictures.

One newspaper is selecting a few seniors in the larger schools and conducting interviews on how their senior experience had been impacted by the pandemic.

There are advertising opportunities with local businesses and with parents and grandparents wanting to congratulate their senior.

• Finding “different” news content

Since there are no spring sports, papers are revamping the sports section with hunting and fishing tips. If you have a bait and tackle shop in the area, you might be able to get a sponsor for the page.

Find the “mask makers” in your community. People all over the state are using their sewing talents to make masks. These are positive, upbeat stories that spotlight something good happening in the community.

Picture Pages – since most people are staying home, drive around your community and take pictures of “scenes of the area.” Examples are ribbons on mail boxes, teddy bears in windows, kids with “wave” stands (instead of lemonade stands).

Yester Year Pages or A Look Back in History – reach into your archives and see what was happening 20, 30, 40 + years ago. One newspaper restarted this feature in their paper and got the local bank as a sponsor.

If you are not doing a graduation tab, find senior baseball, tennis or softball players to feature each week. You may want to feature teams. Interview the players about what missing the last season means to them.

And, as Mr. Rogers says, “find the helpers.” Much like the mask makers, talk to the firemen and police men and women, grocery and convenience store clerks, city and county workers who are all frontline. A nice feature story is a great way to recognize their efforts.

• Advertising

With so many off the road and out of their cars, think about what advertisers have billboards up or who are drive-time radio advertisers. They need another place to advertise! No one is seeing their billboards and no one is hearing the radio spots.

Sponsor pages – this can be done for COVID-19 information or now for information about how we will be re-opening businesses when that is allowed to happen.

Signature pages – a listings of local businesses that are open. This can be a sponsored page or sold like the old sig pages to individual businesses with business card size ads. This can be a great sales tool as businesses begin to reopen.

PLAN FOR THE END OF THIS! Start talking to your local advertisers NOW about how you can help them when they are allowed to reopen. Use the house ads provided by APA (attached) and update them with a “We're Back” message.

Are any gyms in your area offering online workouts? If so, that is a good opportunity for a digital ad with a link to the gym site.

• Using Social Media

Newspapers are being very creative when it comes to the use of social media. It isn't making money now, but it will pay off in the long run by developing online readers and building loyalty among print and digital subscribers.

Easter has come a gone, but this can be applied to different topics. One newspaper read the Easter story on Facebook live and had a tremendous response. Since kids are not in school, you could have a weekly reading for kids on various classic stories like The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, etc.

Another Facebook idea is to have a template on your page with a flag at the top and subscription information button on the bottom. The space in between can be used for two or three paragraphs announcements from local officials, community events, or to promote upcoming content in the newspaper.

• Applying for PPP and other CARES loan opportunities (more money expected soon)

Many of the papers we talked with have already applied for the Payroll Protection Plan and some have already received payment. There was a lot of confusion early on about what banks were participating. One thing to remember is that if one bank cannot process your application, look for another one. Banks are required to have a certain loan to deposit ratio, so this may prevent some banks from participating.

Also, if PPP doesn't work for you, there is the EIDL Loan Advance. This loan advance will provide up to \$10,000 of economic relief to businesses that are currently experiencing temporary difficulties. Find out more about this program [HERE](#).

Gov. Ivey launched altogetheralabama.org, an online resource for information about Alabama's response to the COVID-19 crisis. This site has up-to-date information on the response effort and opportunities for assistance for Alabama business owners and workers.

There are relief funds available in specific areas as well. For example, the West Alabama Small Business Fund offers loans to businesses in Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Marengo, Pickens, Sumter, or Tuscaloosa Counties.