

Alabama Publisher



Winter 2022

Volume 75, Number 1

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and graduate students and their
professors for attending this year's
Media Summit.



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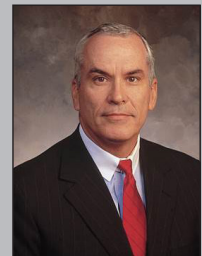
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No representation is made that the quality of legal services to be performed
is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.

Welcome!

Welcome to the 151st APA Media Summit. We are excited to have APA active and associate members as well as journalism students from around the state join us.

APA is also proud to recognize the 2022 Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist recipients, Ray Stansell and Katie Bohannon. These two individuals represent the best of our industry from the veteran to the novice. These are APA's most special awards, and we look forward to recognizing these individuals.

We are thankful that Covid cases are on the decline in Alabama, and we are hopefully seeing the light at the end of this very long tunnel. While Covid still exists in our state, we respectfully ask that you wear a mask and socially distance when possible.

We appreciate your support of the APA Media Summit. Please mark your calendars for the 2022 APA Summer Convention in Orange Beach June 23-25 at the Perdido Beach Resort.



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Passing The Gavel:

Many thanks to our APA presidents for their passion and dedication in moving our association and industry forward.

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Cover Photo: Atmore, Alabama
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A lifetime of achievement

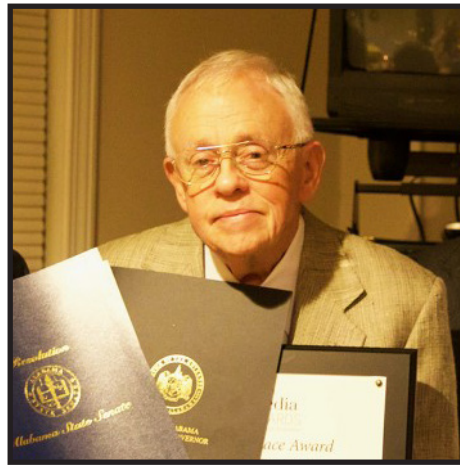
There is nothing like young blood to bring fresh ideas and lots of energy to a newsroom. On the other hand, for a small weekly newsroom, there is no greater asset than having a veteran that can and will do anything needed to get the paper out each week.

Ray Stansell started his newspaper career in 1974 at The Clay Times-Journal, then the Lineville Tribune & Ashland Progress. Like journalists who have spent their career at a community newspaper, Stansell covers meetings, builds ads, works racks, handles the mailing and helps with the layout of the paper, even if his official title is sports editor.

Stansell was born and raised in Clay County. He graduated as valedictorian of his class from Lineville High School, and is also a graduate of Jacksonville State University.

His co-worker, Tammy Andrews, wrote that he works hard to ensure that every little

detail is ironed out before we put the paper to bed. He has a work ethic that is most admirable and hard to find these days. "I'm proud to not



Ray Stansell
APA 2022 Lifetime Achievement



The Clay Times-Journal Staff

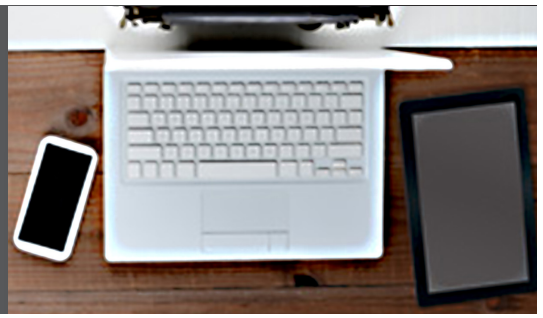
only call him my colleague, but also my friend."

Stansell lives the phrase, "the paper always comes first," and has had a career of providing the people of Clay County with the most reliable community news.

In 2020, Madelyn Wolfe was a student working at The Clay Times-Journal. She said she has a long list of things Stansell taught her. "Ray has taught me how to improve my writing, come up with creative headings, layout pages, and new editing techniques. While those are all handy to know for my future endeavors, I think the most important thing that Ray taught me is how to be a good employee."

But, there is more to Ray than the newspaper. Clay Times-Journal Publisher David Proctor wrote this about Ray in his nominations letter, "Ray has always had a great love for music and even played in a band before marrying the love of his life, Jeannie. Even though his love for the band was great, his love for her was greater, and their wedding was the last time he played. Ray is also an avid train fan. He has traveled to several different states 'train chasing.' He has numerous

carves a path for the future



collections of photographs gathered over the years of unique and rare trains. Jeannie always said she ran a close second to a good train."

From one end of the career spectrum to the other, Katie Bohannon is just beginning her career, although she has made quite an impression in a few short years. She is the news editor for *The Messenger* in Gadsden. She joined the newspaper in 2019.

She is a native of Gadsden and obtained her Associates Degree in English from Gadsden State Community College in 2017, before furthering her education at The University of Alabama, where she graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Creative Media.

While at Gadsden State, Bohannon served as a founding editor of the college's first Cardinal Arts Journal and secretary

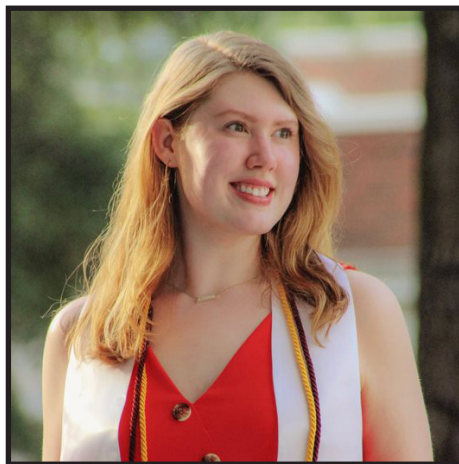
of Phi Theta Kappa. She represented Gadsden State at numerous lecture sessions, writing speeches and raising awareness for PTK's Honors in Action project, which focused on the local, national and global issue of human trafficking.

Bohannon continued her leadership at The University of Alabama, where she served as vice president of the International English honors

Society Sigma Tau Delta, representing the university at the society's annual convention with an original poetry collection. She also assisted with the revitalization of UA's literary magazine *Dewpoint*, overseeing the edition's outline as chief editor. During her time at UA, Katie participated in an internship with the Gadsden Museum of Art, where she curated the exhibit "The Art of the Sari: A 60 Year Collection."

At the *Messenger*, Bohannon has taken the lead with their bi-annual magazine, the first of which was 140 pages and recognized the graduating seniors at 11 areas schools.

In his nomination letter, Publisher Chris McCarthy wrote, "I'm a believer in throwing a new employee into the water and seeing if he or she will sink or swim. Katie not only swam but did so with an energy and enthusiasm I have rarely seen in this business."



Katie Bohannon
2022 APA Emerging Journalist



The Messenger Staff

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2021 APA Recruitment Package can help you find and train employees

Led by APA President K. A. Turner, the APA staff, along with retired publisher and journalism professor Steve Stewart, put together a recruitment package to help members find and educate new team members.

Finding good employees or freelancers has become one of the greatest challenges for our newspapers, and this effort offers fresh, new ideas to help with recruitment.

The package includes:

1. Training Tip sheets

There are seven tip sheets to provide ready-made training for new hires. The tip sheets are available on the APA website at www.alabamapress.org/apatrain-tips.

- Getting the story
- Writing a headline
- Interviewing
- Laws and liability
- Covering a meeting
- Ethical guidelines for journalists
- Writing a news story

These Tip Sheets are not only good for new team members, they can be used as a refresher for current staff members to help remind them of the basics of creating content for newspapers and magazines.

2. House ads for recruiting available on BamaNet

The package also includes recruitment ads that can be used as house ads to attract candidates. These ads target the people in the community who are most likely interested in making a positive impact

on the area in which they live. They might be retired teachers, retired military or anyone with a passion to see their community grow and prosper.

Print and digital recruiting house ads are posted on BamaNet inside the Newspaper Recruitment Package folder in the Ad Department that can be download at any time. There are multiple versions, sizes, color and b&w options, and they are not password protected. Call the APA office if you have questions or need help retrieving the ads or tip sheets.

These ads need be customized with your newspaper flag, contact information, or linked to a landing page where interested applicants can apply or get in touch with the publication.



Getting the story

A brief of a small news story would benefit from knowing all the facts before anyone else, and starting with the story's subject.

Interviewing

When you interview on the phone, in person or over the Internet, there are some things to keep in mind. When you go down for a phone interview, make sure you have a quiet place to talk. When you go down for a phone interview, make sure you have a quiet place to talk.

Laws and liability

Access to government records and meetings is crucial for the press to fulfill its role. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a federal law that gives the public the right to see all documents created or received by the federal government, except those that are exempt from disclosure.

Before 1

Before you go to a meeting, you should know what you are going to do. You should know what you are going to do. You should know what you are going to do.

When

When you go to a meeting, you should know what you are going to do. You should know what you are going to do. You should know what you are going to do.

During

During a meeting, you should know what you are going to do. You should know what you are going to do. You should know what you are going to do.

Potential civil liability

Potential civil liability is a risk that can be avoided by following the rules. Potential civil liability is a risk that can be avoided by following the rules.



Do you have a passion for photography?

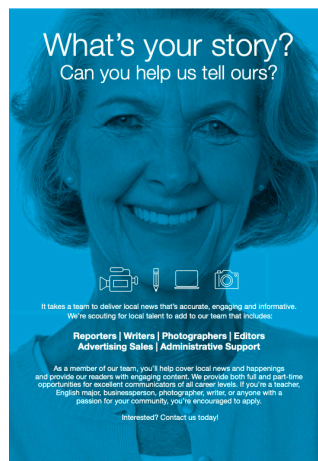
Can you help us tell ours?

It takes a team to deliver local news that's accurate, engaging and informative. We're looking for local talent to add to our team that includes:

Reporters | Writers | Photographers | Editors
Advertising Sales | Administrative Support

As a member of our team, you'll help cover local news and happenings and provide our readers with engaging content. We provide both full and part-time opportunities for excellent communicators of all career levels. If you're a teacher, English major, businessperson, photographer, writer, or anyone with a passion for your community, you're encouraged to apply.

Interested? Contact us today!



What's your story?

Can you help us tell ours?

It takes a team to deliver local news that's accurate, engaging and informative. We're looking for local talent to add to our team that includes:

Reporters | Writers | Photographers | Editors
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As a member of our team, you'll help cover local news and happenings and provide our readers with engaging content. We provide both full and part-time opportunities for excellent communicators of all career levels. If you're a teacher, English major, businessperson, photographer, writer, or anyone with a passion for your community, you're encouraged to apply.

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I FOUND MY SOMETHING AT UWA.

- MARK JOSEPH
UWA CLASS OF 2020



STUDENTS LIKE MARK JOSEPH JOHNSON

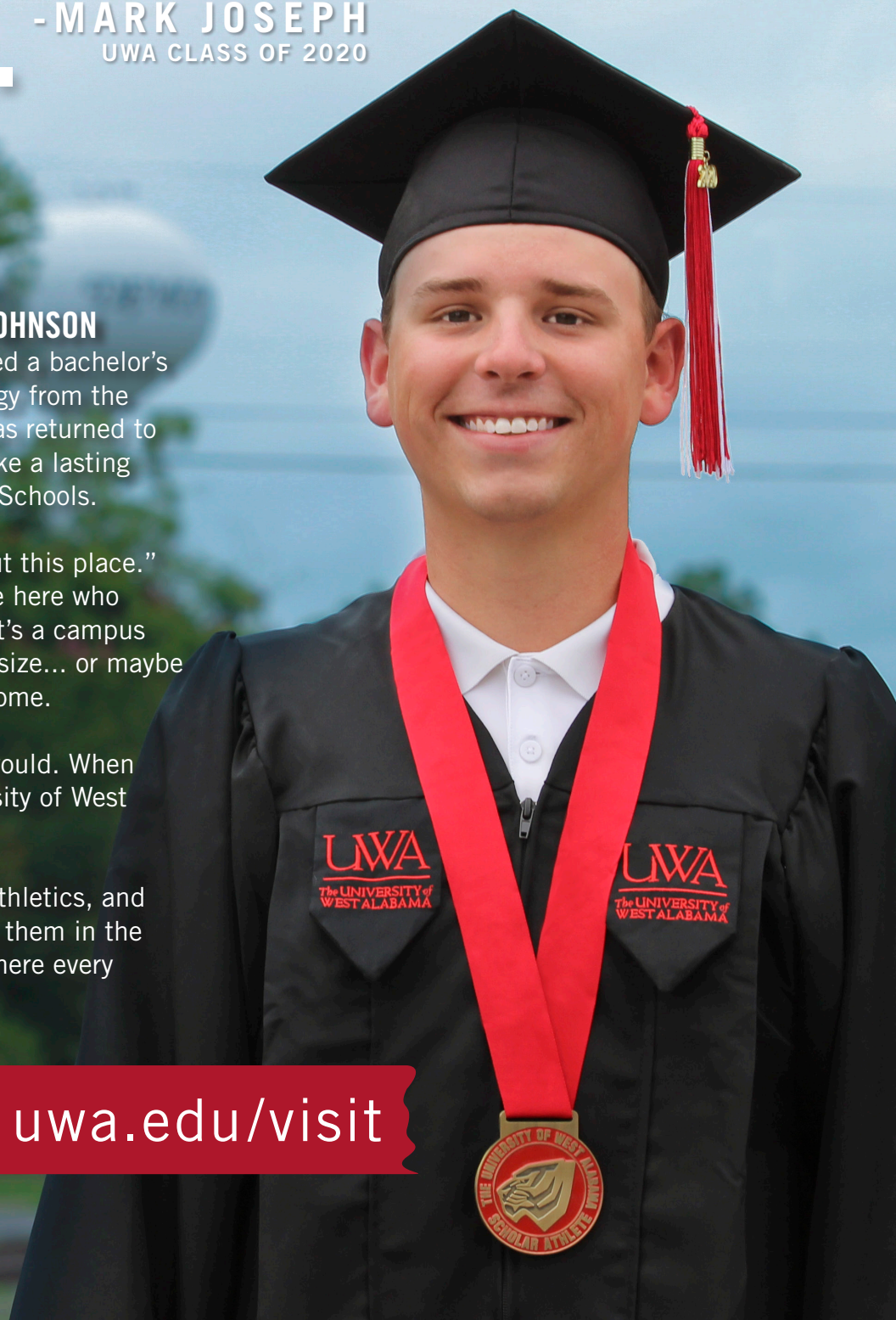
could succeed anywhere. He earned a bachelor's degree in cell and molecular biology from the University of West Alabama and has returned to his hometown of Demopolis to make a lasting positive impact at Demopolis City Schools.

They say, "There's something about this place." Maybe it's the charm of the people here who become lifelong friends... maybe it's a campus and classes that are *just* the right size... or maybe it's because this place feels like home.

If we could put it into words, we would. When students take a tour of the University of West Alabama, they feel it.

From greek life to championship athletics, and a world-class education that lands them in the careers of their dreams, UWA is where every student can find their *something*.

FIND YOURS uwa.edu/visit



Different year, same old fight, but a new champion for open government

Editor's Note: This article was written by Kyle Whitmire, the state political columnist for the Alabama Media Group, and first published on al.com on March 15, 2021, and still very relevant. As Whitmire mentions, Sen. Orr has taken the mantle of strengthening our Open Records Law. The effort continues in this current Legislative session with the Alabama Public Records Study Task Force.

In addition, Sen. Orr is handling bills on our behalf to address the ruling made by the Alabama Supreme Court last year related to investigative records held by law enforcement and the secrecy the ruling now allows. He is also working on a bill related to access to 911 transcripts that was restricted based on a court ruling in Morgan County that impacts the entire state.



Alabama doesn't work like other states on a lot of things, but especially when it comes to public records.

Last year, my colleague Amy Yurkanin had a question: How much was the University of Alabama at Birmingham paying a private company to recruit students from foreign countries?

Her question led to a public information request to the university. She would like to see the contract, she said. Only UAB didn't want to show it to her. At least not all of it.

After Yurkanin pushed some more, she got back a redacted version with those big black boxes over the type, like something you'd get from the CIA. The most important information — how much a public institution was paying a private company — was still secret.

A lot of times, this would be the dead end. Alabama law says all the state's citizens are entitled to inspect public records and take copies upon request, but the law is weak. It doesn't set deadlines for when state and local governments must respond. It allows government

agencies to charge ridiculously high and often prohibitively expensive fees for copies and "research" costs. And it doesn't penalize public officials who flatly refuse to obey the law.

Often, the only recourse is to sue, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars, as it did one company in 2019. When Central Alabama Radiation Oncology fought a public board all the way to the Alabama Supreme Court to get, among other documents, minutes of its meetings, it won the fight and got the docs — after spending \$70,000 in legal fees. Last year, a national ranking of states by open records compliance put Alabama where it often finds itself — dead last.

Not only are some public officials too lazy to look for records, but they'll use that as an excuse.

When environmental activist Daniel Tait asked the City of Troy for records regarding a local gas utility, the city told him Alabama law didn't require them to look for the records he requested. That's right. A city attorney argued that state law doesn't actually require public officials to look for records.

It's easy for government officials here to say no. The law be damned.

But with Yurkanin's request to UAB, she lucked into something different. She didn't have Alabama law on her side, but she did have Florida law on her side.

As it turned out, the University of South Florida had contracted with the same company to do the same kind of work, so Yurkanin filed a public information request in the sunshine state. With it, she drew an interesting side-by-side comparison of Florida's law and Alabama's.

The Florida request gave her the documents she asked for in six days.

Six days.

This is how an open records law works in a state where the open records law works. No fussing by bureaucrats. No broad redactions that make the whole task pointless. Just a request and a prompt reply.

This is how the law should work in Alabama.

continued on next page

(After I wrote about Amy's accidental compare-and-contrast, UAB relented and gave her the unredacted records. Sometimes public embarrassment works, too.)

For the last two years, state Sen. Cam Ward has proposed a top-to-bottom rewrite of Alabama's open records law, and both years his bill died in committee. Lobbyists from county commissions, municipalities and school boards have fought the bill, arguing that a law largely copied and pasted from other states would be too burdensome for Alabama.

Last year, Ward left the Senate to become director of pardons of paroles, because in Alabama it's easier to give prisoners their freedom than it is to free public records. When he left, I worried he'd taken any hope of a real open records law with him.

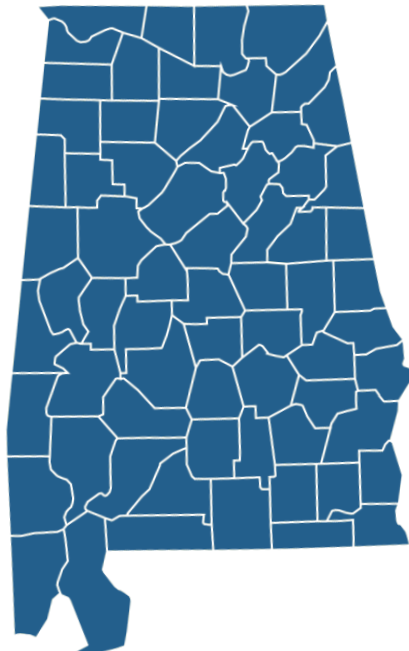
But as it turns out, the bill isn't dead.

State Sen. Arthur Orr has now taken up the cause where Ward left off.

Orr, a Republican from Decatur, is no slouch in the Alabama Senate hierarchy. As chairman of the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee, he wields substantial influence in the Legislature. Before taking on this crusade, Orr sponsored legislation to put the state checkbooks online for all to see.

Orr says he hears a lot of the same bellyaching then as now, but not since that law passed.

***Public records are not
a media privilege any
more than they are
the private property
of public officials.
Public records belong
to you. And you, your
neighbor, your nosy
uncle — anybody —
should be able to see
them. Because public
records are the best
— sometimes, the only
— tool the public has
to hold government
accountable.***



"No one has complained that it's too expensive or too hard," he said. He says he took on this cause because it's the right thing to do.

The bill would do the simple things that work in other states. It sets deadlines and caps fees. But most importantly it would create an affordable appeals process through a state public records ombudsman.

"I fear that some organizations don't want the bill to pass at all," Orr said when I spoke with him this week. "They like the way things work today. They don't want to meet in the middle."

Orr said that won't deter him, and he intends to bring the bill back up in committee on Wednesday.

Public records are not a media privilege any more than they are the private property of public officials. Public records belong to you. And you, your neighbor, your nosy uncle — anybody — should be able to see them. Because public records are the best — sometimes, the only — tool the public has to hold government accountable.

And a public officials' attitude on this subject is telling.

So good for Orr.

But it's time for the rest of the Alabama Legislature to get with the program and return to the public what's rightfully ours.

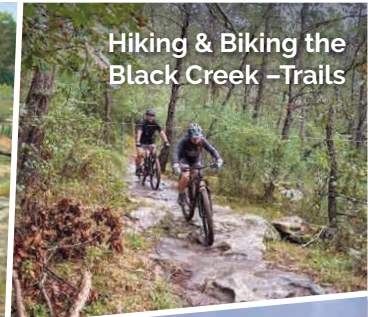
First Fridays
Downtown Gadsden



Fly fishing in
Black Creek



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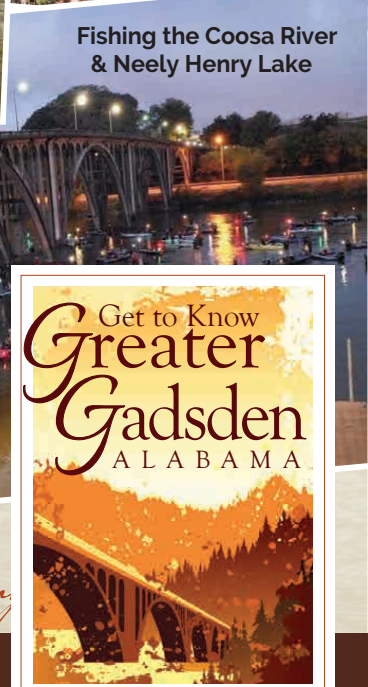
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2022 APA Media Summit

Friday, February 25 | Montgomery, AL

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration Desk Open

9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Program 1: Covering State Government Panel

Capital Ballroom

Mike Cason, al.com

Todd Stacy, AL Daily News

Kim Chandler, Associated Press

Bryan Lyman, Montgomery Advertiser

10 to 11:30 Past Presidents Brunch (Nominating Committee)

Salon C

**10:45 to 11:45 Impress the Interviewer and Meet the Publisher
Student Event**

Atrium/Lobby

**noon to 1:15 p.m. Lifetime Achievement/Emerging Journalist
Awards Luncheon and Membership Meeting/Installation
of Officers**

Salon AB

1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Program 2: The Pros and Cons of Gaming in Alabama
*The discussion continues on whether or not to expand
gaming and institute a lottery in Alabama. You will hear
from both sides of this issue.*

Capital Ballroom

2:30 to 3:30 p.m. 'Your Best Ideas' Share
*Share your best ideas for cash prizes!
(revenue producing, editorial ideas, special sections,
use of social media, etc.)*

Capital Ballroom

