

# Happy Holidays & Merry Christmas



from the Alabama Press Association, representing 123 Alabama newspapers, 22 magazines and their digital products!

*Felicia, Brad, Leigh Leigh, Parrish, Jaclyn & Cassidy*





# *AlaPressa*

*THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION*

*DECEMBER 2023*

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Montgomery, AL  
**Friday, Feb. 16, 2024**

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Contest portal is open!

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HHS directed to look locally for ad buys

Historic Tuskegee News seeks new



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## Contest portal is open

The 2024 contest portal is **OPEN NOW!**  
Every newspaper wants more time to  
get their contest entries prepared. Now  
you have it! Don't wait until the last minute!  
Start uploading your entries for the 2024  
contest NOW.

Click [HERE](#) to find the rules, portal link  
and more information.

As a reminder, it is a requirement to  
volunteer as a judge for our 2024 partner's  
(the Hoosier State Press Association)  
contest, in order to qualify as a contestant

in the APA Media Awards.

**Also, your APA dues must be paid  
prior to start of the judging process.**



## JSU student newspaper brings home national awards

*From The Chanticleer*

Jacksonville State University's aspiring  
communications professionals are usually  
just outside the spotlight – on the other  
side of the camera lens, scribbling notes  
in a reporter's book, capturing the news  
and accomplishments of others. But  
now, they have experienced a series of  
personal wins of their own.

been supporting college media programs  
since 1954, and its Pinnacle Awards are  
intended to honor the best individual work  
and organizations in student media across  
the nation.

"This week's accomplishments from our  
aspiring professionals in the Department  
of Communication reflect the hard work of  
our students who drive our student media

platforms and PRSSA chapter, and  
the commitment and support of  
their faculty advisers, Dr. Breann  
Murphy and Mr. Ben Cunningham,"  
said Dr. Chris McCollough,  
department head and Ayers Family  
Endowed Chair of Journalism and  
Mass Communication.

The student wins come on  
the heels of a remarkable  
showing for the Department  
of Communication as a whole,  
which received reaffirmation of its  
accreditation from the Accrediting

Council for Education in Journalism  
and Mass Communication in April. Site  
visitors described the performance as,  
"a difference of night and day" following  
the addition of industry-current facilities,  
ample production equipment for students,  
and more than 60 curricular changes  
intended to support job readiness and to  
facilitate easier progression through the  
program.

"This week's news is a direct result  
of the accomplishments of the past  
year," McCollough said. "The innovative  
curriculum, the commitment of the  
faculty to our students, the engagement  
of our students, and the rapid growth  
in degree-relevant job placement of  
our graduates should signal that the  
Department of Communication is a  
leader at Jacksonville State University  
in supporting student success and in  
aligning our academic programs with  
industry."



*The Chanticleer staff L to R: Madeline Ricard,  
Anna Barrett, Maddie Reid and Justin Travis*

The student staff of The Chanticleer  
were recognized with their first two national  
awards as a student media platform by the  
College Media Association. For the quality  
of their coverage, they were presented  
two Pinnacle Awards in direct competition  
with institutions like Marquette University,  
Quinnipiac University and Vanderbilt  
University.

The student staff was recognized in  
the following categories:

- First Place: Best Breaking News Coverage – Presented to Anna Barrett for "JSU Student Struck in Crosswalk by Car on Campus"
- Second Place: Best Editorial – Presented to the editorial staff, led by now alumnus Thomas Ashworth, for "ALDOT Should Act Now to Save Lives"

The College Media Association has

## Elba Public Library honors The Elba Clipper during National Newspaper Week

*From The Elba Clipper*

"A city without a newspaper is a city without a soul." So said Luis A. Ferre, who was quoted when the Elba Public Library hosted a reception to recognize The Elba Clipper during National Newspaper Week.

Library board member Mary Grider talked about growing up in Damascus at a time when every surrounding community submitted "social" news to The Clipper.

"We would have parties, and everyone knew that even if we didn't call them, they were invited," she said. "But we couldn't

wait for the paper to come so we could see what was written about us."

She and Library Director Jennifer Farris Amlong shared facts about the newspaper, which is more than 125 years old, and noted some highlights. They pointed out that many communities no longer have print newspapers and concluded with this: "The Elba Clipper is the Story of Us."



For many years, that story has been told by Ferrin Cox, publisher/owner of The Elba Clipper, and for the past 24 years he has had the help of Linda Hodge, editor. "Thank you, Mr. Ferrin and Linda, for all you do for our community," Amlong said. "You are the story of us."

*L to R: Ferrin Cox and Jennifer Farris Amlong*

## A message from the Alabama Scholastic Press Association leader

My name is Becky Robinson and I'm the new director of the Alabama Scholastic Press Association (ASPA), which is a non-profit organization housed in the Department of Journalism & Creative Media at The University of Alabama. I have a diverse background in graphic design, writing, editing, teaching and university advancement, so I'm very



*Becky Robinson*

excited to bring these skills to this role. I also love to travel, read and bake, so if you have any travel recs, book recs or recipes that need testing, send them my way!

Although I never had plans to be a professor, I've had the best time

with my college students on campus and can't wait to bring media opportunities to high schools around the state of Alabama. Growing up in Huntsville, I was fortunate to have several media outlets both in town and a great newspaper at my high school (Pope John Paul II Catholic High School) to foster my interest in journalism.

Email: [rdrobinson1@ua.edu](mailto:rdrobinson1@ua.edu), ASPA email: [aspa@ua.edu](mailto:aspa@ua.edu), Phone: 205-348-2772.

## Athens finds fun way to connect with readers AND make money

*By Tom Mayer, Editor: The News Courier/The Cullman Times/St. Clair News-Aegis; CNHI Alabama group editor*

We've been told that one secret to building a local newspaper's success is getting the names and photos of your readers within its pages as often as possible between birth and death.

From this maxim, "Class of ..." was born — an annual yearbook for the kindergarten set.

Most of us already publish high school graduation sections, pages or magazines. The idea behind "Class of ..." capitalizes on that idea, producing not only one heck of a cute product, but a family keepsake that will generate current revenue and actually promote graduation section sales a dozen years later.

Not incidentally, it's a product that advertisers look forward to — and also has a marketable shelf price of its own (currently \$5).

In Athens, the The News Courier has produced "Class of ..." for several years. Our most recent issue, which published as it always does, in early fall, spotlights the Class of 2036. In that, every public and private school in Limestone County

has its own set of dedicated pages, with a yearbook-like layout of each kindergarten class consisting of mugshots, names and answers to the question, "Who is your hero?"

Editorial also includes a photo of the school, school principal and the classroom teacher and assistants. In other words, getting as many names and faces in the pages as we can.

On the revenue side, advertisers embrace the product and after so many tried-and-true years, it's a standard annual buy for many of our local businesses, moms, dads and other relatives. Because of this, advertising supports the typically 100-page full color, glossy magazine, which we insert free in mailed papers to subscribers. The overrun for counter sales is a secondary and important revenue stream.

All of this is not to say that the magazine doesn't come with its own challenges and

headaches, mainly on the side of editorial. Getting the schools to buy in is crucial — it's the kindergarten teachers who will be supplying the photos that they take within the first few days of school (solving a couple



of critical concerns — getting the photos of each child and having permission to run them). Once they see the product, though, it's not difficult to earn that partnership.

Still, as we know from our grad sections, these projects are a lot like herding cats, multiplied with challenging deadlines (our football magazines, for example, deadline about the same time as we're still producing daily newspapers).

**Athens continued on page 4**



**Athens***continued from page 3*

To that end, a couple of tips. To mitigate those challenges, in Athens we've found it's important to have one project person in charge of getting the editorial content (we have an excellent page designer who spends the summer months priming the waters with letters

and emails to the schools, and then following up and assembling the content for the magazine designer). It's also helpful if your designer is consistent throughout the years, and even more helpful if she, as does ours, likes to mix it up year to year, producing themed magazines (the Class of 2036 has a western theme). Again, early work on all of that (pictures for the cover themes are

the responsibility of the newspaper, for example) is critical.

But, once you jump the hurdles, if the success of the magazine in Athens is any measure, you'll have a solid advertising-partner product that will become loved and cherished by the community year after year. Feel free to reach out with any questions for the team or myself at [tom@athensnews-courier.com](mailto:tom@athensnews-courier.com).

**Obituaries****Josephine Peoples Ehringhaus Ayers***Josephine Ayers*

Josephine Peoples Ehringhaus Ayers, of Anniston, longtime arts leader, philanthropist, and a leader of many charitable organizations, died peacefully on November 1, 2023, in the presence of

family and dear friends.

She was chair of Consolidated Publishing Corporation and publisher of The Anniston Star, and former publisher of Longleaf, a regional magazine about the arts, style, and living of the surrounding region.

Born on October 2, 1940 in Raleigh, North Carolina to the late J. C. B. Ehringhaus, Jr. and the late Margaret Peoples Ehringhaus, she is survived by her loving daughter, Margaret Irwin Peoples Ayers of Anniston, AL; sister Susan Houghton Ehringhaus of Chapel Hill, NC; brother J. C. Blucher Ehringhaus, III (Nancy Roberts) of Charlotte, NC; nieces Katherine Ehringhaus Edelshain (Benjamin) and their children Eleanor and Clara of Charlotte, NC and Julia Ehringhaus Noel (Thomas) and their children Maggie and Jack of Charlotte, NC. In addition, Josie, as her oldest friends and family knew her, leaves several beloved godchildren, and scores of dear friends who were like family throughout Alabama, North Carolina, and the world.

Josie was educated in the North Carolina public schools and attended Saint Mary's College in Raleigh, where she was a leader and enthusiastic organizer and participant in the Arts Program, foreshadowing a lifelong involvement

in support of the arts. A world traveler, Josie always held North Carolina close to her heart. Her grandparents, the late Governor (NC) J. C. B. Ehringhaus and Mrs. J. C. B. Ehringhaus and their children, grandchildren, and generations that would follow were Tar Heels for life.

After meeting and marrying her beloved husband, the late Harry Brandt (Brandy) Ayers, who was a Washington Correspondent of the Raleigh Times and The News and Observer, the couple moved to Washington, DC, before moving back to Brandy's hometown of Anniston, when he joined The Anniston Star, a family newspaper.

Soon thereafter, Josie became a devoted University of Alabama sports enthusiast, as her friends can attest. Josie involved herself in many charitable organizations and served on boards and raised money to help people, especially those who suffered from AIDS during the 1990s. She also worked for the betterment of the Anniston Museums and Gardens, a special place she visited almost weekly until recently. She was a longtime member of Grace Episcopal Church, and served in many capacities over the years, including as a Lay Eucharistic Minister. Josie and dear friends at Grace Episcopal created legendary floral arrangements for special services over the years.

If there was a higher degree of floral arrangements, Josie would have been designated Summa Cum Laude. Josie dedicated her energy and heart to the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, which she founded in 1972 in Anniston. She worked tirelessly to build a sustainable organization, raising millions to fund performances of the works of Shakespeare. As producer, fund-raiser,

director, actor, and everything in between, she shepherded a fledgling organization with her energy, drive, and determination. The Shakespeare Festival became well-known throughout the region and the state, sought after by a global audience. Eventually, Josie took the Shakespeare Festival overseas where art was abundant, which helped to grow an adoring community of friends around the world. Josie's herculean efforts, personality, and sheer dynamism imbued the Alabama Shakespeare Festival with life and ultimately the recognition and sustainability it so richly deserved. Josie's constant involvement in the arts of Calhoun County and the broader region also led to her involvement with the Alliance Theatre Company of Atlanta and the Anniston Community Theater.

To say that Josie was a multi-talented and dedicated leader would be a vast understatement. Her community of friends, colleagues, neighbors, and loved ones would say that she was indeed a force of nature, a hostess extraordinaire, and a chief magic-maker, especially to the young children in her life. Josie deeply loved her family, especially her late husband Brandy, and dedicated and loving daughter, Margaret, along with her immediate and extended family, and of course her friends and colleagues. Josie's family and legions of friends will miss her, never forget her, and cherish and be inspired by her memory. Funeral services were held at Grace Episcopal Church on Saturday, November 11. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Juliette Doster Memorial Garden, Grace Episcopal Church or the Anniston Museums and Gardens.

# The Vanguard, University of South Alabama's student newspaper, returns to print

*From The Vanguard*

While the rest of the publishing world moves online, The Vanguard student newspaper is going old school with its first print editions since 2019.

The University of South Alabama publication remains online, but now there will be regular print issues to draw more attention to student journalism and news on campus.

On a recent morning at the Student Center, Vanguard staffers handed out free cookies and copies of the paper. "Can we just take one?" students asked. Yes, they could.

Brandon Clark, managing editor, wrote a Page One story: "Barracoon: The Story of the Last 'Black Cargo' moves campus and community." It's the first byline he's ever had in ink on paper.

"Even in high school, it was all digital," Clark said. "This looks amazing. You look down and see the headline and the picture and your name above the fold."

Stephanie Huynh, editor-in-chief of The Vanguard, welcomed the idea of adding print editions of the student newspaper. She remembers when her older sister, Sandra, wrote for the paper back in 2013.

"She would show me some of her old articles, and I thought that was so cool," Huynh said. "And then I came here, and it was all online, and I thought that was so sad."

Dr. George Bovenizer, assistant professor of communication and adviser for the student newspaper, wanted to start small. He ordered 500 copies of a four-page issue from a company in Mississippi. The Vanguard was printed on stock paper, rather than traditional newsprint,

so reproduction and readability are higher quality.

There will be another print issue of The Vanguard before the end of the fall semester. Next year, there should be more issues, more pages and more news. "The excitement level has been pretty high," Bovenizer said. "It's a nice addition to our online version."

Dr. Robert Coleman, interim chair for the Department of Communication, wanted to bring back the print edition. So did the University administration. Since 1965, South students and faculty have followed campus news in The Vanguard.

"It's shared knowledge," Coleman said. "It's tangible, something you can hold in your hand and talk about with people. 'Hey, did you see this in The Vanguard?'"

The market for modern media can be difficult to predict. In the same way that vinyl records made a comeback for music fans, print newspapers resonate with readers who prefer pages that fold.

Clark, a junior from Madison, Alabama, is majoring in multimedia journalism. He took the photograph that accompanied his "Barracoon" article. He also wrote a short story on a 5K race to raise money for cancer research at the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute.

Huynh, a junior from Gautier, Mississippi, is a business management major who enjoys student journalism. She worked on her high school yearbook and started out as a reporter for The Vanguard. Her work includes stories

on "The Clothesline Project," raising awareness of domestic violence, and the HEART Project, promoting recovery from sexual violence.

She edited The Vanguard print issue on the Canva graphic design platform, using digital stories posted online with a WordPress interface.



*With the first print editions of The Vanguard in several years are, from left, Brandon Clark, managing editor; Stephanie Huynh, editor-in-chief; and Iman Thibodeaux, contributing writer.*

"People said it looked good," Huynh said. "People said it looked professional."

Jaguar sports news for the print issue included photos of women's volleyball and football tailgating. There were features on an outdoor retreat for the men's basketball team and a new sportsmanship rating for intramural squads.

In a back-page column, the editor-in-chief thanked readers for supporting the student newspaper and its "new way" of publishing stories. At the Student Center, she looked relieved to have the issue printed and in student hands.

"Now we can get excited – now it's real," Huynh said. "Before, it was like, 'Oh, we have this deadline to meet.' Now it's real. Now it's on to the next one."

## Joint separation of Boone Newsmedia and Carpenter Newsmedia announcement

Boone Newsmedia, Inc [BNI], and Carpenter Newsmedia, LLC [CNL], which have jointly owned and managed newspapers for the past two decades, announced to employees in late October that a long-planned, orderly transition to separate companies has begun.

A number of leadership changes also were announced.

Veteran publisher and community media executive Steve Stewart succeeds Todd Carpenter as president and chief executive officer of BNI, and Catherine Boone Hadaway has been named senior

vice president of the company founded by her father, the late James B. "Jim" Boone Jr.

BNI Senior Vice President Tim Prince has been named president and CEO of Carpenter Newsmedia. Carpenter, who had been president of BNI since 2004, will serve as chairman of the board of CNL and take an active role in management and leadership alongside Prince. He will work with BNI as a consultant for a period of time to assist in the transition.

"On behalf of Boone Newsmedia, Inc. and the Boone family, I thank Todd for his 20 years of service leading our company,"

Hadaway said. "BNI was founded on the philosophy our father inherited by his work for and association to Carmage Walls and that of his father, Buford Boone. Mr. Walls helped dad acquire his first newspaper and ultimately start his own company that we all know today as BNI. We join in both Todd's and our father's pride in watching Carpenter Newsmedia continue that legacy."

"It has been an honor and a blessing to lead BNI over the years and to work in a culture of challenging and developing

**joint continued on page 6**

**joint**  
*continued from page 5*

people, serving readers, communities and driving commerce for our customers,” Carpenter said. “Jim Boone was a benchmark, best friend, mentor and second father figure in my life. His legacy will continue to be well-served by Steve and the excellent group of people who make up the BNI family. As the CNL team and I step forward in our work, accept new challenges and pursue new opportunities, we will work hard to meet the high standards set by Jim and others who put down the foundations of our excellent reputation.”

Stewart, a McComb, Mississippi, native and graduate of the University of Mississippi, has worked as an editor, publisher and community media executive for 33 years. He is a past president of the Virginia Press Association and has won many reporting and commentary writing awards from state and national press groups. In 2021, he won the D. Lathan Mims Award for Editorial Leadership from the Virginia Press Association. Stewart will continue to live in Smithfield, Virginia, where he owns and publishes The Smithfield Times. He also owns The Coastland Times, which serves North Carolina’s Outer Banks. Both newspapers have management contracts with BNI.

“It is a high honor to lead a community media company founded by my mentor Jim Boone,” said Stewart, 56, who had been a senior vice president of BNI for the past decade. “Jim’s cherished values of serving communities with excellent journalism and first-rate marketing solutions for small businesses inspired all of us who worked for him and will continue to guide BNI for many years to come. It has been a privilege to work the past 17 years with and for Todd Carpenter, who has laid a foundation for continued success. The course charted by Todd and Jim will serve BNI well moving forward.”

Prince, 50, a native of Alabama, began his community media career in Texas after graduating from the University of Alabama. Prince has been active in civic, church and industry leadership throughout his 35-year career, having previously served on the Alabama Press Association Board of Directors, the APA Journalism Foundation Board of Directors, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Board of Directors, and currently serving as a founding member of the America’s Newspapers Board of

Directors and the America’s Newspapers Foundation Board of Directors.

The Shelby County (Alabama) Reporter, a newspaper Prince has published for more than two decades, has been named Alabama’s best community newspaper for 17 consecutive years by the Alabama Press Association. “Throughout my life, the Boone family has been personally and professionally intertwined with my own,” Prince said. “Jim Boone wasn’t just a mentor, but a beacon of inspiration and wisdom. As I embark on this next chapter, I’m not just continuing my career but expanding on a shared legacy. The bond between our families is a testament to the time-honored traditions and values we hold dear, and I look forward with anticipation and gratitude to the future ahead.”

Hadaway is a Tuscaloosa native and graduate of Rhodes College, where she earned bachelor’s degrees in business and religious studies. She has worked for BNI for the last decade serving in various roles related to advertising and sales, circulation and audience development, bookkeeping, editorial, general management and publishing. She lives in Vicksburg, Mississippi, where BNI owns and publishes The Vicksburg Post.

BNI publishes newspapers, magazines and related websites in Alabama, Mississippi, Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota.

Jim Boone founded BNI and remained the controlling stockholder and chairman of the board until his death in February 2023. His wife of 36 years, Carolyn Farrior Boone, now serves as chairman of the board and controlling stockholder. Carolyn, along with Jim’s five children, own all other stock in BNI.

BNI has its corporate origins in Tuscaloosa Newspapers, Inc. [TNI], a company that leased The Tuscaloosa News from Public Welfare Foundation, Inc. [PWF] from 1951 until 1981. TNI went through several intra-company mergers and name changes in 1981-83, following its decision not to renew its lease on The Tuscaloosa News.

PWF was principally funded in the 1950s by the late Charles Marsh, who gave The Tuscaloosa News, The Gadsden Times and The Spartanburg [S.C.] Herald-Journal to PWF. The structure of leasing newspapers to their publishers and significant PWF funding was provided by Carmage Walls, who then headed Marsh’s newspaper

company and about that time began his own company.

Buford Boone, father of Jim Boone, was publisher of The Tuscaloosa News under Marsh ownership and formed TNI to lease the newspaper under Walls’ guidance. He had come to Tuscaloosa in 1947 when Marsh’s company bought that newspaper. Prior to then, he was editor of The Macon [Ga.] Telegraph, a Marsh-owned newspaper published by Walls. In 1957 Buford Boone was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in Journalism for distinguished editorial writing in The Tuscaloosa News.

Jim Boone worked for Walls-owned companies from 1958 until late 1968, in Georgia, Texas and a number of years as publisher of Suffolk [Va.] News-Herald, then owned by Walls and Gene Worrell. He returned to Tuscaloosa in late 1968, when his father sold him a controlling interest in TNI as part of a plan to acquire other newspapers.

Walls suggested selling the leasing company to Jim Boone, provided the basic plan for acquiring newspapers and gave periodic strategic advice for more than 25 years. While there are no financial ties to the Walls Family, the association of the Boone and Walls families continues strong through succeeding generations.

In October 2022, the name of the company was changed from Boone Newspapers, Inc. to Boone Newsmedia, Inc., to better reflect the nature of its business and mission going forward. CNL was founded in the owner-publisher tradition of Marsh, Walls and Boone with Boone and Carpenter working together over several years in acquisitions and cooperative management of CNL and BNI. CNL publishes newspapers, websites, magazines and offers digital and other marketing services in Georgia, Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Carpenter is a Tuscaloosa native and graduate of the University of Alabama. He is a member of The University of Alabama President’s Cabinet, College of Commerce Board of Visitors, College of Communications Board of Visitors and has been active in civic and industry leadership in numerous roles and organizations throughout his career. He and his wife, Emily, live in Natchez, Mississippi, where he last published a daily newspaper, where they raised a family and he continues to base his work. Carpenter plans to continue to work from Natchez and Tuscaloosa.

## Ellison joins Franklin County Times

Fred Ellison is the new advertising manager of the Franklin County Times. He attended Troy University, where he studied accounting and business.

He brings more than 30 years of newspaper sales and management experience to the FCT, working at various sized papers across the United States.

Ellison said in his experience, customers all want results from their marketing investment, and he takes pride in achieving that goal with a "win-win" philosophy: businesses receive cost effective marketing solutions provided by the newspaper. He said he is committed to building life-long friendships and

enjoys contributing to the success of businesses.

Originally from Montgomery, Ellison and his wife Janet enjoy college football, golfing, fishing and music. He also loves spending time with his family, which includes two daughters and grandchildren.

## HHS directed to look locally for ad buys

The House Appropriations Committee is poised to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to direct more of the agency's advertising dollars toward local media, including nondaily newspapers, TV and radio when public-health campaigns are set up.

In a report accompanying the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation for HHS, the Committee says, "The Committee recognizes the critical role local media plays in delivering lifesaving public health messages to small or rural communities." It asks the HHS Secretary to provide a report on its efforts within 180 days of the appropriations passage.

The report closely mirrors similar direction from the Senate Appropriations Committee, which would allow only 90 days

for the report.

Reports accompany major legislative enactments, explaining the intentions of Congress and interpreting the meaning of language in the statutes. While report language is not binding on the agencies, it is generally considered a strong signal that Congress is paying attention to certain activities and might push harder for action in the future if the agency does not respond.

Congress has not yet completed action on appropriations for HHS. A continuing resolution is keeping the government open while Congress completes work on appropriations bills. The advertising report language will not be final until the appropriation is completed.

National Newspaper Association Chair John Galer said the strong direction from

the House was a major step for NNA's federal advertising campaign.

"We are making steady progress toward our goal of redirecting federal advertising dollars to local newspapers where they will do the most good," Galer said. "NNA began this work several years ago but intensified it when we noticed that HHS' vaccine and coronavirus messaging was not reaching rural audiences through local newspapers. These are costly campaigns for NNA, as we have to drive our own message through multiple layers of the federal government. But this fall, we see solid progress. We intend, with the support of our members, to continue this work."

Galer urged interested newspaper executives to join NNA's Congressional Action Team to assist in the effort.

## Columns

### Treasure Hunt for ad ideas



*Ad-libs  
by John Foust*

Some years ago, I attended an exhibit of treasure from the Atocha shipwreck which treasure hunter Mel Fisher had located off the coast of Florida. The Atocha was the most famous ship in the Spanish fleet that sank in 1622 in a hurricane near the Florida Keys. The exhibit was at a jewelry store that had made special accommodations for the display. All of the regular merchandise had been stored away to make room for silver bars, gold coins and jewelry. It was an impressive show, and there was a waiting line outside.

When it was my turn to enter, a representative handed a silver bar to me and asked, "Heavy, isn't it?" As I carefully moved the bar from hand to hand to test its weight, he mentioned that it was worth thousands of dollars. Although I've forgotten the exact amount, it was enough to buy a fancy new car. I told him I was just

looking and spent about 30 minutes gazing at display cases and pondering buried treasure. "Just think," I said to myself, "many years ago, these artifacts were lost at the bottom of the ocean. And here they are today, looking as good as new."

Lost treasures have fascinated people for centuries. But not all treasures consist of gold and silver. For those of us in the advertising business, some are hidden away in file cabinets and company archives.

Take Jessica, for example. She told me about one of her advertising accounts, a local lumber company which has been in business for many years. "For as long as I can remember," she said, "the company had run generic 'look at us, we're in the lumber business' ads. All of the ads featured nondescript illustrations of stacks of lumber, with the headline, 'Three generations of service' and their logo at the bottom. Since a lot of their customers are commercial building contractors, they saw advertising as just a way to keep their name in front of the public."

"I knew there was a better way, so I did a little research on their advertising

history. I looked through a file of their old ads, and it didn't take long to find a series on woodworking projects. I suggested that they: (1) update their image ads to offer specific discounts to contractors and (2) revive the woodworking idea to differentiate their friendly-neighbor philosophy from the big box store across town.

"It was an easy sale, because it was an update of an idea they had previously run. We expanded their advertising to include both approaches – both with the underlying 'Three generations of service' theme. The first woodworking ad featured a birdhouse (with building instructions). The second one featured a kids' playhouse (also with instructions). The next ad spotlighted picnic tables, and it went on from there. The campaign was a real boost to their business, and it added an element of personality."

Jessica came up with a real winner. And it all started with a treasure hunt for ideas.

*John Foust conducts training programs for newspaper advertising professionals. E-mail for information: [john@johnfoust.com](mailto:john@johnfoust.com)*



## Columns

## Sustaining Rural Journalism



by Al Cross

Nonprofit newspaper journalism, until now largely a feature of urban areas, is going rural – especially if the National Trust for Local News keeps up what it's doing and plans to do.

"By December, we will be the fifth largest independent newspaper operator in the country," among those that are not publicly traded or owned by hedge funds, the trust's chief portfolio officer, Ross McDuffie, told the New England Newspaper and Press Association conference Oct. 19.

The trust recently bought 22 newspapers in Maine, most of them rural weeklies, and two years ago bought 24 papers along Colorado's Front Range. McDuffie said in an interview that the trust plans to announce acquisitions in Georgia next month. The Knight Foundation recently gave the trust \$5 million to create a newsroom in Macon, where McDuffie was publisher of the Macon Telegraph.

The trust says it is exploring opportunities in Kentucky, Montana and New Mexico, and wants to create 10 independent, state-level conservancies serving 475 counties and 20 million people in the next five years, with a goal of having one in every state. It says its fundamental purpose is to "keep local news in local hands."

At the National Summit on Journalism in Rural America in July, McDuffie said state-level nonprofits are "the most sustainable path forward for rural newsrooms."

He told NENPA's online meeting, "Our vision is to build and operate a federation of nonprofit subsidiaries that can sustain high-quality community journalism in small communities across the nation," and to see that "established trusted news organizations thrive and remain grounded in the communities they serve."

The trust gets its money to buy newspapers from donors, ranging from local individuals to major foundations. Those listed on its website include George Soros' Open Society Foundations; in August the publication Semafor reported that OSF and Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss, who is not listed on the trust's website, "played a central role" in the

Maine purchase. The trust denied that OSF committed money for the purchase, and OSF said its grants to the trust "have not included money for specific projects."

The trust wouldn't comment on Wyss (who earlier tried to buy Tribune Co.) and said it would tell more about the funders when its Maine advisory board was constituted in September. Asked Oct. 24 when that was going to happen, McDuffie said the board will make that decision and its membership still hasn't been finalized, but "There is a real desire to have that constituted by the end of the year."

The trust is still raising startup money in Maine. McDuffie told NENPA that the trust has raised \$18.1 million for a two-year, \$22 million "transformation" plan that includes unifying three operating businesses and expanding commercial printing, because "We believe in print and its longevity and its ability to serve an audience."

He said the trust wants to "rejuvenate" its community newspapers, most of which are weeklies; "significantly boost" household penetration; and raise funds from "a very large and curious audience" in Maine. But one of his PowerPoint slides said the goal is to operate "as a sustainable news enterprise that does not require ongoing general support from philanthropy."

As with for-profit enterprises, bigger is better, McDuffie said: "As we scale rapidly, we are uncovering more opportunities to leverage efficiencies of scale . . . that were only previously available to large media conglomerates or corporations," such as buying power for paper, employee benefits, digital transformation and attracting talent.

He said the trust has raised \$30 million across geographical, ideological, generational and programmatic lines that usually separate philanthropies, and "Funders are having a consistent and palpable reaction to our narrative within the first few minutes of hearing our story."

Much of the philanthropy for local journalism has gone to startups, mostly online, but they are almost entirely based in urban areas, and McDuffie and others believe philanthropists need to look at funding the purchase of legacy newspapers to prevent the creation of news

deserts in rural areas.

"With sufficient capital and expertise, conserving and transforming existing news sources IS an efficient way to strengthen democracy and support that civic and social fabric of small towns and rural communities," he told NENPA, emphasizing the verb.

"These communities need reinvestment in the newsgathering teams that have spent decades of building trust and credibility," he continued. "The creation of these state-level conservancies amalgamate legacy ownership into one operating model and unlock efficiencies of scale while keeping quality local news as the North Star of decision-making, as opposed to what's happening at other larger, conglomerate, corporate media, where profits or shareholder value are typically the nexus of decision-making. It's a difference of motivation."

He said the need is greatest in the Southeast, where the trust estimates that 23 million people are at risk of losing their only local news provider. That's more than half its estimate of 45 million in 1,424 counties – 45 percent of the nation's counties. The estimates are based on counties with median household income below the national average.

The trust figures that in every state in the Southeast (including both Virginias), more than half of counties are at risk of becoming permanent news deserts. It estimates that is also the case in Idaho, Montana, New Mexico and Nevada.

To the NENPA attendees, McDuffie rattled off the impact of news deserts, as established by research: higher taxes and borrowing costs, more government employees, decreased visibility of government decision-making, and more corruption and misuse of public funds.

And there's a more fundamental threat. "There's no democracy that can function without a shared understanding of what's true and what's not," McDuffie said, in one of the pithier versions of that warning I have heard.

In an era of misinformation, including disinformation by political interests who want to control narratives to serve their own interests, news consumers will be skeptical of out-of-state outfits that use billionaires' money to buy their local newspapers. So, the trust will need a

**Cross continued on page 9**



Ross McDuffie

### Cross continued from page 8

broad range of in-state funders, and boards that will help insulate the funders from the newsrooms.

McDuffie says its news outlets follow the transparency guidelines of the Institute for Nonprofit News, requiring website

publication of donors of \$5,000 or more, and the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. He said funders know the trust's editorial-independence and non-interference policies, and "Our local newsroom staff are the only people who will decide what stories to pursue, the timing of those stories, and their content."

In a distrustful information environ-

ment, the trust's newsrooms may have to prove that every day. But if they do, the nonprofit option is a promising long-term path for sustaining rural journalism.

*Al Cross edited and managed rural newspapers before covering politics for the Louisville Courier Journal and serving as president of the SPJ. He is director emeritus of the University of Kentucky's Institute for Rural Journalism.*

## Historic Tuskegee News seeks new owner

The Tuskegee News has been in existence since 1865, and the current owner has owned the business for over 20 years. As a weekly rural newspaper with local roots and ownership, it operates on the belief that the newspaper's role is to serve the community. The Tuskegee News has a history of providing professional journalism and effective advertising that readers and customers have come to rely on. The newspaper and its principals are well known and respected in the area and are supported by a readership of over 3000 through mailed subscriptions and newsstand sales. The Tuskegee News is the only newspaper in the county and is the only authorized publication for legal advertising and public notice. In the past three years, gross annual revenue

average exceeded \$250k per year.

The Tuskegee News has been a consistent award-winning publication in the Alabama Press Association Better Newspaper Contest (BNC). Several first-place honors have been bestowed for Best Local News Coverage, Best



Editorial Page or Section and Best Editorial Column or Commentary. Other awards have included for Best Local Economic Coverage, Best Education Coverage, Best Photo Essay and Best Sports Coverage. Two who have served

as editor/publisher have been recipients of the Distinguished Alabama Community Journalist Award from the Auburn University Journalism Foundation.

The Tuskegee News is based in Tuskegee Alabama, home of Tuskegee University, Tuskegee Airman National Historic Site, and the Kellogg Institute. The community and its attractions draw thousands of visitors a year. The newspaper operates out of a restored 2,500 square foot downtown building. The property is owned by the seller of the business and is available should a buyer be interested in purchasing the real estate. The seller is also willing to lease the building to a new owner.

All inquiries should be emailed to Alan Davis at [alandavis@alandavisemail.com](mailto:alandavis@alandavisemail.com).

## Help Wanted

### Instructor/Assistant Professor Digital News Production- University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

The University of Alabama's Department of Journalism and Creative Media seeks a nine-month, non-tenure-track, renewable contract instructor/assistant professor whose class load will include teaching up to four courses per semester. This teaching-focused position is based on a 3-year renewable contract cycle with opportunities for promotion. This position is essential to maintaining capacity in news production courses within the news media major which is a high-demand undergraduate program central to the identity and reputation of JCM and the college.

Opportunities to work with students and contribute to the department include: Teach news reporting, digital media content creation, and fundamentals of audio and video broadcasting.

Strengthen the integration of the JCM department and the Digital Media Center by working closely with the WVUA 23 and Alabama Public Radio (APR) news teams to provide experiential learning opportunities.

A master's degree in journalism, mass communication or a closely-related field is required for the instructor position, terminal degree required for assistant professor position. Experience in professional journalism and teaching is preferred. Commitment to working collaboratively with colleagues from different backgrounds and disciplines, engaging students with varied needs and interests, and preparing the next generation of media professionals to effectively serve all members of their communities is expected.

Direct questions to search committee chair Dr. Chandra Clark (205-348-2697 [Chandra.Clark@ua.edu](mailto:Chandra.Clark@ua.edu)). Apply at: (<https://careers.ua.edu/faculty>). Screening begins November 6, 2023. The position begins Aug. 16, 2024. Applications should include

a cover letter, CV, contact information for three references. A demo reel is strongly encouraged.

**For more information on these positions and the most current listings, visit the APA Help Wanted page [HERE](#).**

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