



Alabama Publisher





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It's the season to slow down and reset. And with our easy, at-home tips, we can help you save energy for what matters most. Whether it's swapping your stovetop for oven-based recipes or throwing an extra rug down in a drafty room, there are little things you can do around the house to save energy for what matters most this season – like gathering 'round the table with family.



Find our home energy-saving tips
at alabamapower.com/savings.

Welcome!

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 153rd APA Media Summit, this year in Montgomery. We are proud to have so many journalism students and faculty from Alabama colleges and universities with us. We welcome our active and associate members as well.

We are excited to honor the recipients of the 2024 Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist awards. Tommy Campbell and Hadley Hitson represent the seasoned and the young professionals in our industry. These awards are the most prestigious personal awards given by APA each year, and we look forward to sharing their stories with you at the luncheon.

The presence of so many journalism students is a bright spot for this association. We learn so much from hearing about the work they are doing and the ideas that will lead our industry into a new era.

We appreciate the support of all our members, and their steadfast dedication to this industry and to our association.

Everyone, PLEASE mark your calendars for the APA Summer Convention at the Perdido Beach Resort, June 27-29, 2024. See you there!



Darrell R. Sandlin
President, Alabama Press Association

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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Special thanks to the undergraduate and graduate students and their professors for attending this year's Media Summit.



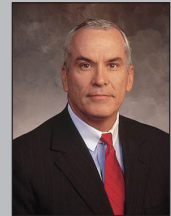
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Alex Mahadevan



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Alex Mahadevan

Alex Mahadevan is the director of MediaWise at the Poynter Institute. Since 2019, he's taught digital media literacy to tens of thousands of teens and older adults, created curricula for first-time voters, and trained thousands of journalists across the world in verification, AI and digital tools for investigations. He also co-leads the Empowering Diverse Digital Citizens Lab at Stanford University, which studies media literacy interventions on TikTok and YouTube. Before getting into fact-checking and media literacy, he launched content management systems, newsletters and video series as a data reporter and audience editor based in Florida.



Dr. Dianne Bragg



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Dr. Dianne Bragg

Dianne Bragg is an associate professor and associate chair in the Journalism and Creative Media Department at The University of Alabama. She has a PhD in mass communication, with a concentration in history, and an MA in journalism. She has held leadership positions with several academic organizations, including serving as the 2017-2018 president of the American Journalism Historians Association and associate editor of the Journalism History academic journal. Her research interests lie in antebellum newspapers, the politics of slavery, and late nineteenth and early twentieth century women journalists.



Dr. Chris Roberts



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Dr. Chris Roberts

Chris Roberts is an associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Creative Media at The University of Alabama. He earned his undergraduate and master's degrees at Alabama in the late 1980s, and he worked at newspapers in Alabama and South Carolina before earning his doctoral degree at the University of South Carolina in 2007.

Nationally, Dr. Roberts is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists' ethics committee, and was part of the team that revised its code of ethics in 2014. He also served four years on the board of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, as head and vice head of the Council of Divisions. Software he wrote has saved taxpayers and AEJMC members thousands of dollars in travel.

Lifetime Achievement Award



Tommy Campbell



Before Tommy Campbell became a newspaper reporter, ad salesman, editor, and publisher, he was a well-known DJ for WPRN Radio in Butler. He also worked as a promoter for country music stars, primarily the legendary Johnny Cash.

A few years after he began working in radio, the local newspaper, The Choctaw Advocate, offered him a job in advertising, and he took them up on it, beginning what has become a 43-year career in the newspaper business.

At The Advocate, he worked his way from advertising representative, to reporter and photographer, to editor, handling nearly every aspect of the newspaper. He earned state and national recognition for his advertising campaigns from APA and from the National Newspaper Association.

Tommy worked as editor of The Advocate until 2003 when he and his wife Dee Ann left to take jobs with Jones Media Group in North Carolina and Tennessee. Tommy took on the role as editor of the Avery Journal-Times in Newland, NC, while Dee Ann worked as a reporter for the publication.

Later that year, they returned to Choctaw County and started The Choctaw Sun. In 2006, the Campbells purchased The Choctaw Advocate and merged the two publications into what is now The Choctaw Sun-Advocate.

“Tommy exemplifies the weekly newspaper editor and publisher... He has put not only his physical and mental being into his work but his heart and soul, too.”

Tommy returned to Jones Media Group in 2012 as publisher of the Rogersville Review in Rogersville, TN, while Dee Ann remained in Choctaw County to publish The Sun-Advocate. Under Tommy's leadership, the group started a new publication in neighboring Hancock County.

In 2020, when Jones Media Group was sold, Tommy returned to Alabama for good. At that time, he and Dee Ann took ownership of The Democrat-Reporter in neighboring Marengo County. They changed the name to The Leader, and Tommy currently serves as the publisher there.

In nominating Tommy for the APA Lifetime Achievement Award, retired Clarke County Democrat Publisher and APA Past President Jim Cox said, "Tommy exemplifies the weekly newspaper editor and publisher; he reports the news of his community from the mundane to the sensational and controversial but always with a feeling for his readers and his communities. He is a native of Choctaw County and has put not only his physical and mental being into his work but his heart and soul, too."

Cox added, "Aside from their newspaper work, Tommy and Dee Ann do so much more to boost and promote their county and communities, going far beyond what many who simply work in this business do or should do. From his years in radio to his long career in newspaper publication, his name has been synonymous with community news in Choctaw County and surrounding areas for more than four decades."

In addition to his work at the newspapers, Tommy serves as the bi-vocational pastor at Nanafalia Baptist Church in Marengo County. He also serves on the Choctaw County Board of Education.

Tommy and Dee Ann reside in Gilberttown in the historic 110-year-old building where their main office is located. They have four adult children and ten grandchildren.



2024 Emerging Journalist Hadley Hitson

Hadley Hitson joined the Montgomery Advertiser in 2021, as a Report for America corps member covering rural Alabama. Her work quickly gave voice to readers at the state capital newspaper, The Gadsden Times and The Tuscaloosa News, all published by Gannett, as she built trusted relationships with rural residents.

Hadley, a Birmingham native, is a 2021 journalism graduate from the honors college at the University of Mississippi, where she served as managing editor of her student newspaper. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism and a minor in Spanish and digital media studies.

Report for America is a national program that places journalists with local news outlets to cover the underserved topics or communities. The Advertiser's partnership with Report for America allowed Hadley to examine access to health care, education and other services while covering the news for rural Alabama communities.

After her two-year Report for America assignment, Hitson joined the Advertiser team as a regular staffer covering children's health, education and welfare. Her focus has been to cover the joys and challenges of growing up in Alabama.

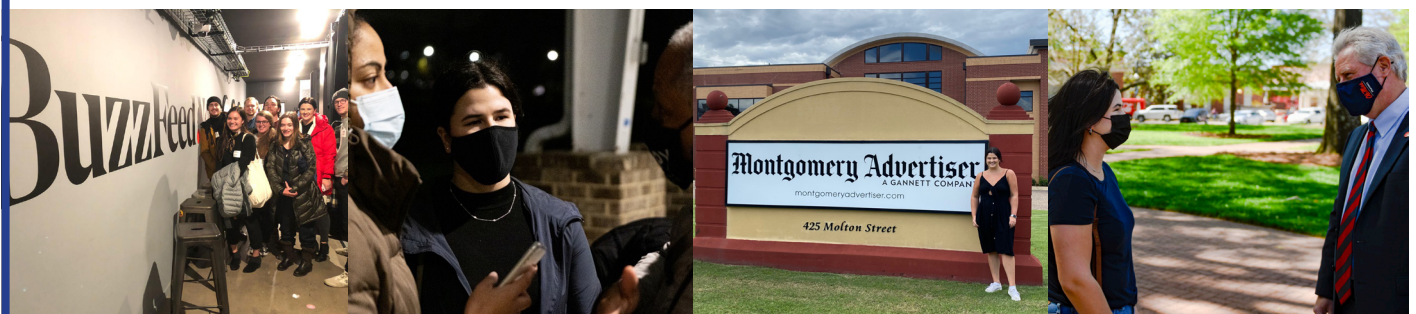


In nominating Hadley, Paige Windsor, senior director of the Local News Division for Gannett, and Brad Harper, executive editor for the Montgomery Advertiser said, "showing up for the communities she serves, writing for them, not about them, is what Hadley does best. She volunteered as a mentor for Auburn University's student newspaper, after which three students landed slots with Report for America."

They added, "In her first two years, she also doggedly covered the lack of adequate sewage in Lowndes County, as well as the plight of a Uniontown neighborhood that says coal ash, moved from Tennessee after the Kingston (TN) Fossil Plant coal fly ash slurry spill of 2008, is so toxic that its presence at an adjacent landfill is making them sick."

Hadley's work was a cornerstone of the UNC Tablestakes Newsroom Initiative, a yearlong program to help media organizations identify challenges and opportunities, as well as create sustainable solutions to survive and thrive in the digital age.

"Hadley created and ran a Digital Advisory Board that provided direct connections to readers, we gifted them subscriptions, who were willing to discuss the most important issues in their communities, give us feedback on our work and, most importantly, take us behind the scenes to how they had been building their own network of support and change without broad media support,"



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Windsor said. "Hadley was at the heart of this worthy collaboration that resulted in extraordinary stories, solutions journalism and accountability journalism."

In an Advertiser story announcing her new role, Hitson said, "I grew up in Birmingham, but over the last two years that I've spent living in Montgomery and traveling into the rural communities that

surround us, my understanding of Alabama has deepened in ways I never expected. Essentially, I'm going to be covering every issue through the lens of how it is impacting Alabama's kids, and I'm eager to jump in feet first."

This month, Hadley was named to Editor & Publisher's 25 Under 35, a salute to the next generation of news media professionals.



Prime time to take inventory of your newsmakers

By Jim Pumarlo



Here's a periodic action item for every newspaper: The exercise can be quite revealing in evaluating how you are connecting with various audiences. It is even more important in today's fractured media landscape and as everyday interaction can still be challenging in the aftermath of the pandemic.

For starters, ask reporters to identify the community newsmakers in a brainstorming session. Better yet, divvy up newspapers from the last several weeks and circle the names and faces in the stories and photos.

Then identify those folks who appear with some regularity. Several individuals are likely to be on the list, no matter the community: for example, the mayor and city council president; the superintendent and school board chair; the county's chief administrator and the county board chair; local legislators.

You get the drift. Newsrooms by and large do a commendable job of writing for the source, especially when it comes to public affairs reporting. Public officials speak, and their statements are recorded. They issue press releases, which often are published verbatim. They are fixtures in many photo ops.

Make no mistake: What public officials say and do warrant notice.

At the same time, newspapers are shortchanging their readers – their customers – if they do not expand their definition of newsmakers in community

conversations. That means exploring and talking with all the players – those affected by the news as well as those making the news.

For example, consider a city council debate over whether to provide tax incentives for a big-box retailer to anchor a new strip mall on the edge of town. Broaden your reporting beyond the required public hearings. Will the discount store strengthen the city as a regional retail center? What's the anticipated impact on downtown merchants? Investigate the experiences of similar developments in other towns. Do a man-on-the-street interview. Why should this commercial development receive special treatment when others have not?

Seeking and reporting these additional perspectives will enrich the community conversation on this important decision. The extra research will provide new names and faces.

Equally important in this exercise is examining daily routines. It's only natural that content often is framed by your regular connections. How often do you get out of the office to connect with folks firsthand? Do you take the same route to and from work? Do you eat lunch at the same restaurant with the same friends? Do you attend the morning coffee roundtable

at a local cafe? Do you belong to any service clubs? Do you ever talk with the individual or company who is the focus of a government proceeding?

Try this for starters. Connect with a new face – someone beyond your usual network – once a week, every other week, each month. These new contacts will appreciate the outreach, and you'll be surprised how conversations may enrich news content.

Editors and reporters must constantly ask: Are we relevant to our community? Are print and digital

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platforms dominated by the same set of newsmakers, or are we looking beneath the surface to identify the full cast of characters?

Scrutinizing coverage goes beyond examining the meetings and decisions of local governments. Routinely brainstorm all aspects of everyday coverage. It can be as easy as tracking down and inserting other voices beyond those provided in a press release or presented at an event.

Invite other members of the newspaper family to assist

in the conversation; employees across your operations often represent a cross-section of the community. As you tackle a bigger news project, convene a roundtable of selected residents and solicit their ideas.

Expanding your bucket of newsmakers is all about going beyond the story served on a platter. Indeed, digging beneath the surface takes legwork – and it produces long-term benefits. The enhanced coverage is more interesting and relevant, and you'll likely pick up some new readers.



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.

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ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

Winter Media Summit 2024

February 16 | Montgomery, AL

8:30 a.m.	Registration Desk Open	
9:30 to 10:30 a.m.	Program 1: Student Panel	Capital Ballroom
	Moderators: Jeff Martin, <i>The Montgomery Independent</i> Barnett Wright, <i>The Birmingham Times</i>	
	Students: Anna Barrett, <i>Jacksonville State University</i> Emily Lee Mosier, <i>Troy University</i> Caleb Thomas, <i>Troy University</i>	
10 to 11:30 a.m.	Past President's Brunch (<i>Nominating Committee</i>)	Salon D
10:45 to 11:45 a.m.	Impress The Interviewer/Meet the Publisher Event	Atrium
12 to 1:15 p.m.	Lifetime Achievement/Emerging Journalist Awards Luncheon	Embassy Ballroom
	Membership Meeting/Installation of Officers	
1:30 to 2:30 p.m.	Program 2: AI Applications	Capital Ballroom
	Alex Mahadevan, <i>Director of MediaWise, The Poynter Institute</i>	
2:30 to 3:30 p.m.	Program 3: Media Law and Ethics	Capital Ballroom
	Dr. Dianne Bragg, <i>The University of Alabama</i> Dr. Chris Roberts, <i>The University of Alabama</i>	
3:30 to 4 p.m.	'Your Best Ideas' Share	

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