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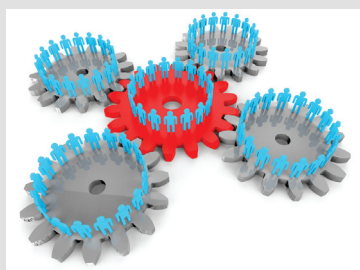
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“The mission of AFCP is to help its members enhance their profitability and lead in strengthening the free publication industry.”



Dave Neuharth

DAVE NEUHARTH
EDITOR

A Look Back at 2015

Great conferences once again topped the highlights of the free paper industry in 2015.

During the conferences, a host of honors were passed out to deserving individuals who volunteered their time to the industry we serve.

The Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP) visited Savannah, Ga., for its annual conference and those who attended took advantage of numerous training sessions, great entertainment and receptions.

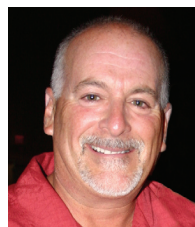
The sessions – count them! The Leadership Institute (TLI) provided 35 classes. There were 13 management and content tracks, various panel discussions and open mike sessions on the agenda. Add in the keynote speakers, the TLI graduation, the “Best of the Best” awards, the entertainment and the banquets and you had enough memories to last a lifetime.



Bill Welsh

The Bill Welsh Memorial / Rising Stars Scholarship Fund was announced at this conference. The Rising Stars initiated a silent auction which raised over \$5,000 during the conference.

Vincent Grassia was named the AFCP Publisher of the Year. At the time Grassia was serving as the CEO of Iwana Division of Fayetteville Publishing Company located in North Carolina.



Vincent Grassia



Elaine Buckley

The AFCP Craig S. McMullin Distinguished Service Award was presented to Elaine Buckley. At the time Buckley was serving as the national account representative for Pen-

nySaverUSA in Southern California.



Gayle Alexander

Gayle Alexander was named the first recipient of the annual Gladys Van Drie Volunteer Award. Alexander has volunteered her time for numerous years taking care of all the intricate details needed

to plan the food and beverage menus for the AFCP conferences.

Prior to the Alexander presentation, AFCP Executive Director Loren Colburn made the announcement establishing the Van Drie award. Van Drie was presented with a commemorative plaque of this newest AFCP Award named in her honor.



Gladys Van Drie



Rena Reiser

Moving on to San Antonio, the Independent Free Papers of America (IFPA) held its annual conference where Rena Reiser and Katie Thomas took home the top honors.

Reiser, the vice president and director of sales of the New Mexico Market Place in Albuquerque, was the recipient of the IFPA Distinguished Service Award. Thomas, the sales manager of The Exchange in Fayetteville, Tenn., received the annual Ben Hammack Service Award.



Katie Thomas

The Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP) celebrated its 60th anniversary at its Spring Conference in March. Past presidents were invited to join in the celebration. The MFCP President’s Memorial Award



Monda Garwood

for Distinguished Service was presented to Mona Garwood of the Vinton Livewire for her many years of service to the organization and to the free paper industry.

The Community Publishers of Florida (CPF) passed out several awards at its annual conference in September in Orlando. Tom Germond of Tampa Bay Newspapers and Doug Heizer of the Boca Raton Tribune were recipients of the Milton & Bernice Beckerman awards for community service. Charlie Delatorre of Tower Publications in Gainesville was presented the CPF President's Award for service to the association.



Tom Germond



Doug Heizer



Charlie Delatorre

Plenty of news in the industry took place in California when the PennySaverUSA was closed without notice. The world's largest direct mailed publication, with over nine million circulation, was informed by parent company Open Gate Capitol that it was out of business and over 700 employees were out of jobs. Final paychecks issued to the employees bounced.



Martha de la Torre

Following the closure, Martha de la Torre announced she would expand her business in the market and produce an English publication that hit the streets with an original 95,000 rack-distributed circulation. The founder of El Clasificado publishes the largest free Spanish publications in the nation.

Several months later a group of former PennySaverUSA employees, led by Elaine Buckley, led a start up of a direct mail publication in the market. Goals for The Shopper Saver were to distribute over one million.

In memoriam: A long-time member of the Free Community Papers of New York (FCPNY), Jerry Watson Rolison, died on August 17 at the age of 87. He started the Mount Morris Shopper in 1959 and remained at the helm until his death. **INK**



Jerry Rolison



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ASSOCIATION OF FREE COMMUNITY PAPERS

Member to Member Peer Groups

by AFCP Membership Committee

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICES THAT THE Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP) can provide to its members is the opportunity to network with other members engaged in the same day-to-day activities.

Prior to last fall's AFCP board of directors' biannual strategic planning session, the general membership was surveyed regarding member benefits and the value our members derive from being a part of this national association. The survey revealed that member interaction was one of the top benefits.

Given that fact, the AFCP Membership Committee was tasked to investigate new ways to provide members additional access to best practices and successful peers who have excelled with their companies and help members interact for the benefit of interested participants and the industry as a whole. Our annual conferences provide great opportunity for training, sharing and networking but not everyone can attend the conference every year and conferences only last a few days.

The Membership Committee's solution was the creation of peer-to-peer networks of like-type publishers who will be willing to work together and share operational details with each other. The Membership Committee polled for members interested in joining a group of non-competing publishers in similar type market profiles with similar or like characteristics.

Assigning interested participants to a peer group was the easy part. Finding a perfect time to convene the groups on a regular basis has been tricky and the most difficult portion of the assignment. Some accommodations were required to adjust for time zone differences and call schedules. Below are the current peer group setups:

Peer Group #1 meets via conference call on the first Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m. EST. The call lasts approximately 30 minutes. The group is made up of weekly publications with one or two papers/zones, in rural and suburban markets with an independent carrier

delivery system. This group has six members.


Peer Group #3 meets via conference call on the first Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. EST for approximately 30 minutes. The group is a mixed group made up of weekly, biweekly, monthly and daily newspapers, with some members having only one paper to others having more than 12 papers/zones in rural and suburban markets. They are delivered by private carrier and demand drop. Currently this group is full but it could be split up to narrow down the focus.

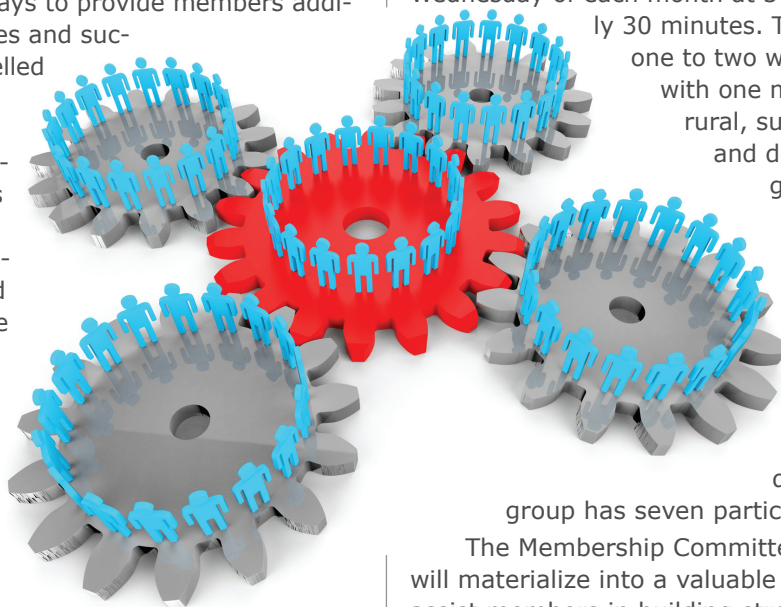
Peer Group #4 meets via conference call on the third Wednesday of each month at 3 p.m. CST for approximately 30 minutes. This group is made up of one to two weekly publications or zones with one monthly publication, serving rural, suburban and metro markets and delivered by U.S. Mail. This group has five participants.

Peer Group #5 meets on the second Thursday of each month at 8 a.m. EST. This group is made up of larger regional papers with six to 12+ zones in rural, suburban and metro markets delivered by U.S. Mail. This group has seven participants.

The Membership Committee believes this program will materialize into a valuable member benefit that will assist members in building stronger franchises and further strengthen our industry during the changing times ahead. If you have not signed up yet but are interested, the committee hopes you will consider letting us place you into a peer group both for what you'll contribute and for what you will take away.

Interested members should contact the AFCP office and request participation. The goal is to keep the groups to a comfortable size of no more than 12 participants. They would like to add a pure monthly peer group, so don't let the fact that many of the publisher are weekly scare you away. We know many of our members are beginning to offer new monthly and quarterly publications and a group focused on those issues could prove to be very beneficial.

We will continue to adjust and add participants as well as groups as interest in the program dictates. 



No Postal Rate Increase for Publishers in 2016

by Donna Hanbery, Executive Director, Saturation Mailers Coalition

COMPETITIVE PRICES RISE

In October 2015, the United States Postal Service filed a notice with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) of a proposed price increase for its shipping services and other competitive products to take place after the holiday season. If approved as scheduled, the competitive price increase will take effect on January 17, 2016.

A little holiday present for First Class mailers, Periodicals, and Standard mailers, is the news that there will be no increase in other mailing products for January 2016. If there is no change in the current legislation governing the Postal Service, it is likely that mailers of market dominant products, First Class, Standard, and Periodicals, may only see a price decrease in 2016 when the 4.3% exigency surcharge is on track to be removed in late March or early April, 2016.

What is behind this Postal Service good news? The postal rates for market dominant products are permitted, under current law, to be adjusted on an annual basis within the rate cap set by the Consumer Price Index. As of the fall time when the Postal Service has generally filed its annual price adjustments, most recently around October of each year for a January implementation date, the cumulative CPI rate cap has been less than .5%. Under the law, the cumulative CPI increase is calculated each month. The amount of authority the Postal Service would have to increase rates is determined, on a monthly basis, with each announcement of the cumulative CPI. The unused CPI authority for 2015 will be carried forward into next year.

For competitive products like the Postal Service's shipping services, including Priority Mail, Parcel

Select, Standard Post, International, and First Class Package services, the rules governing price changes are not tied to the CPI. The price changes proposed for competitive products "averaged" 9.5%, but some mail products saw significant increases in rate cells exceeding 15%.

The changes in competitive pricing also contained some changes in terms and rules. For example, Standard Post will be named "Retail Ground."

Retail prices for Priority Mail are increasing an average of 8.6%, slightly less than the average with the retail flat rate small box starting at \$6.80. For the Priority Mail Express service the increase is higher, averaging 14.4% with the retail flat rate envelope increasing to \$22.95.

With economic predictions suggesting that CPI increases may remain modest throughout 2016, based on the current consumer CPI calculation and decreased energy costs, it seems likely that mailers of First Class Mail, Standard, and Periodicals will make it through 2016 without a postal rate increase and should see a decrease of 4.3% when the exigency surcharge is rolled back.

Could anything go wrong with that prediction? As with all things postal, it seems there is always

some uncertainty. As of the writing of this column, there is still some discussion about the possibility of a postal reform law that could give the USPS the right to keep all or some of the 4.3% exigency surcharge and to "bake it in" to future postal price adjustments. But if those legislative efforts do not move forward, free papers that mail will have the pleasant experience of a predictable year for postal distribution costs with no price increases and the promising prospect of a 4.3% rate reduction around April 2016.

Continued on page 10



It seems likely that mailers of First Class Mail, Standard, and Periodicals will make it through 2016 without a postal rate increase.

How to #Hashtag: A Guide for Newspapers

Reprinted with permission from Social News Desk, web.socialnewsdesk.com

WHILE ALL SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS AT THIS POINT know what a hashtag is, sometimes it's not so clear when to use them or which ones to choose. We get a lot of questions at Social News Desk about them from our media partners, and spending a few minutes thinking about the hashtag you plan to use can make a big difference in the way your posts perform and ultimately how successful your strategy is. Here are some guiding principles for using hashtags effectively in your newspaper's social media.

Why use a hashtag at all?

Our take on hashtags is that they don't hurt (unless you have a tweet full of them; that's just annoying). It kind of depends on what you want to get out of it. Do you want to make it easier for people to follow the thread of a story (like #FIFA), or collect user-generated content (#TBT), or promote a sense of community (#DragonCon)? Is it something people are already talking about, or are you starting the conversation from scratch? These things all matter when you're deciding on a hashtag. Every use case is unique, and every event doesn't call for a branded hashtag. Some don't need a hashtag at all, some have a well-established hashtag, and sometimes using two hashtags can get you into the conversation and brand your tweets at the same time.

Creating your own hashtag

Striking out on your own with a hashtag tends to make more sense for newspaper branded initiatives (KSAT 12 in San Antonio used #KSATFiesta for their Fiesta coverage, for example) as long as you are also acknowledging that there are other hashtags about the same topic (for instance, everyone in San Antonio is probably using #Fiesta more than anything else). Create your own when it makes sense, and also include hashtags for the conversation that's already going on. You don't want to wind up with hashtag soup, but two or even three hashtags can be fine, especially if you work them into the body of your tweet. Twitter has some great best practice recommendations.

Hopping on other hashtags

While creating a hashtag can help differentiate your coverage on social media from the other outlets in town, you also don't want to miss out on bigger conversations that are happening. Including popular hashtags on big stories can help more people see your posts, and make you part of the

overall thread of the story. Stories like #Ferguson stand out, but looking at what other hashtags are bubbling up about a story can inform which hashtags you choose to include.

While covering the San Antonio Spurs in the 2014 NBA Finals, KSAT used four hashtags – which seems like a lot, but they were able to write them into the body of most of their posts. The branded hashtag was #DriveforFive (as the Spurs were on the chase for their fifth championship), plus they included #NBAFinals (ABC's network hashtag), #GoSpursGo (the Spurs' own hashtag) as well as #Spurs (of course). They also added #NBACHamps into the mix after the Spurs sealed the deal. KSAT earned over 2 million Twitter impressions over the course of the Finals.


Facebook hashtags

Hashtags are really starting to take off on Facebook, with the News Feed algorithm grouping posts about similar topics together. This feature can help your posts show up in a block if you're using a newspaper hashtag on ALL of your posts. It would show up something like "Tampa Bay Times posted about #TBTimes" with 3 of your posts grouped together. It can make brands stand out a little more if they're consistent about using Facebook hashtags all the time.

If you're concerned about people seeing posts way later in the day, don't worry – that will happen regardless of whether or not you're including a hashtag. It's just the way Facebook works now.

A few things to watch out for

Be sure you check out your hashtags in advance if you are creating one – a simple Twitter search can uncover any tweets that you might not want to be associated with. Also, consider how easy it is for people to spell, and look for hidden words in your hashtag that alternative capitalization might reveal (see this @nerdist #letsnow tweet from a few years back for an example of what I mean).

Have some great examples of how your newspaper is using #hashtags or have social media questions we can answer? That's our speciality, along with great software tools to move your team forward and help you master these and other social media best practices! Contact us today. 

Set Sail for Success

by John Draper, Conference Committee Chair

IN KEEPING WITH THE 2016 AFCP ANNUAL Conference and Trade Show theme, we again prepare to Set Sail for Success.

Living in Minnesota in December, sailing is far removed from my mind. The closest I may come is a snowmobile trip across a frozen lake or two. Not exactly the picturesque waterscapes afforded my Southern friends. So what's a man to do? Head to San Diego maybe?

The 2016 AFCP event will be held at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina. This venue is located on San Diego Bay offering panoramic views and easy access to the historic Gaslamp District, Seaport Village, the San Diego Zoo and many other great attractions. This scene is much more representative of sailing and will put everyone in the mood to soak up the learning opportunities while also getting a bit of relaxation time.

We're working hard this year to create learning opportunities that have plenty of great ideas for you to take back to your organization. Here's a sampler of what you can expect from AFCP.

Sam Richter will kick start this year's conference. Sam's program will deliver the keys to Online Information Search Secrets, enabling you to KNOW MORE than you ever thought you could (or should) to win more business and provide more value. When you Know More and show that you can solve real problems, you win and keep more business.

Shannon Kinney from Dream Local Digital will offer insights and direction for publications to utilize marketing, SEO and social media as a means of growing revenue by serving advertisers across several platforms.

With help from San Diego State University, we will be providing sessions on editorial to enable attendees to address both digital and print issues and understand the current trends with readers and the industry.

The Leadership Institute (TLI) will conduct 30 sessions throughout the weekend. Rob Zarrilli and his team of talented professors will again offer sessions specifically designed for sales reps and managers of all levels. TLI sessions offer industry-specific strategies, information, and tactics that you can take home to start making more money.

The industry's biggest trade show will take place in San Diego as well. This year's show will host an



Photo Credit: USS Midway Museum

assortment of sponsors with products and services specific to our industry and aimed at solving problems and creating opportunities for publishing members.

What would a sailing excursion be without some relaxation? AFCP has developed a great line up of events to help you relax while also making industry connections. We kick off Thursday night with dinner and a social aboard the USS Midway. Enjoy beautiful views of the San Diego skyline and waterfront from this off-site, yet nearby, venue. Friday evening we will dine and socialize outdoors on the Sheraton's grounds then move on to Club AFCP.

Look for registration and more line-up details coming soon to your inbox and mailbox. And remember, conference registration costs nothing for qualifying NANI participants. Additionally, NANI will pay \$50 toward each room night booked during the conference for up to four nights.

The price is right, the opportunities are there, and some fun is to be had as well. What's to lose? Come along with us to San Diego on April 28-30, 2016 as we Set Sail for Success. **INK**



It's the holiday season. Celebrate with Travel!

by Greg Birkett

RECENTLY THE Association of Free Community Papers and NANI embarked on a new plan to bring in alternative revenue – travel. You might ask how we came

up with travel as an alternative revenue source.

For years the NANI board has discussed fulfillment as a possibility. Surely there must be something we could utilize the strength of our NANI program to help promote and actually sell. We tried to think of what widget that might be. When travel was discussed, it seemed like a great idea and Loren Colburn did extensive research to find just the right platform. What came out was our new venture, National Cruise Planners travel (ncptravel.com).

Travel is something most of us do from time to time and Loren and Cassey can help you with your travel needs. From cruises to all-inclusives, they have access to all the major cruise lines and resorts. Check out the website and while there, sign up for the e-newsletter. Since this is the holiday season, perhaps a family vacation is in the works as a Christmas gift. Or surprise your significant other by booking a cruise!

Speaking of Christmas, I am sure you are all busy with your special holiday issues, Christmas parties, shopping and all the stuff that goes along with the season. I hope you get a chance to enjoy the season with your family and


friends; after all, that is what makes this season so special.

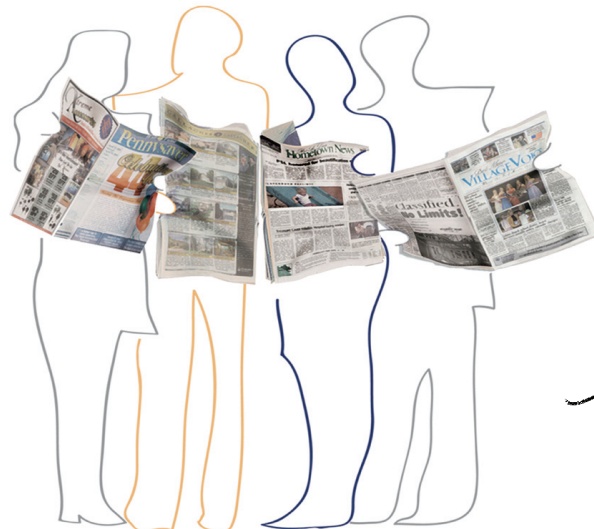
My wife's family takes family togetherness to a whole new level. Several years ago when an ice storm arrived during the family get together, it forced everyone to spend the night at "Grandma and Grandpa's". Since everyone had so much fun (especially the cousins), it has become a family tradition and almost everyone still spends the night. Good thing Sherri's Mom and Dad have a big house with lots of room for air mattresses, sleeping bags and cots.

Some great memories are made during the holiday season, like the very, very early morning when the kids woke us up after Santa had been there. My daughter was so excited as Santa brought her an American Girl Doll. She hugged it so tight and was so happy. She looked at me and said, "I can't believe Santa brought me an American Girl Doll!!! They cost more than a hundred dollars!" I looked at my wife and said "I can't believe it either!"

Looking back on it, I am sure glad Santa spent the cash. Samantha still has the doll although

at age 12, she probably doesn't play with it much anymore. But I am sure it will be one of her most treasured keepsakes from her childhood.

Wishing you and yours all the best this holiday season and the whole year through! 




GREG BIRKETT
AFCP PRESIDENT
DUBUQUE ADVERTISER

MFCP's Annual Conference

1. President Steve Fisher Welcomes Everyone and Kicks off the MFCP Fall Conference.



2. MFCP members pay rapt attention at the Keynote Address by Dennis Wade.



3. The Publisher's Roundtable participants included Jackie Caulkins, Joel Klaassen, Lisa Miller, Mona Garwood, Leigh Borkowski, and Peggy Loveless.



4. More Publisher's Roundtable participants, including Rich Paulsen, Mary Ungs-Sogaard, Ryan Harvey, Greg Birkett, Trevor Slette, and Jerry Johnson.



5. Keynote Speaker and Sales Presenter Dennis Wade charmed the audience.



6. MFCP members received sales training from Dennis Wade.



7. Dennis Wade presenting one of his packed sessions.



8. Vice President Peggy Loveless and Executive Director Dick Colvin conducted the General Membership Meeting.



9. Vice President Peggy Loveless honors outgoing Executive Director Dick Colvin at the General Membership Meeting.



10. Isaac Cronkhite and other representatives of the U.S. Postal Service conducted a special session for MFCP Publishers.



Photos provided by MFCP.

It's Not Your Grandmother's Cruise Anymore!

CRUISING HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE THE "LOVE Boat" days. The regimented schedule a passenger followed left much to be desired. In today's cruising, the choices are endless!

THE EVOLUTION OF DINING

In the past, passengers had two choices to dine – early seating at around 6:00 p.m. or late seating at about 8:00 p.m. And if you didn't book early enough, most likely you could not get the choice you wanted. Can you imagine going on vacation and being told when to eat? Well, not on today's cruise ships!

Sure, if you want traditional dining it is available, but today there are a multitude of options to choose from. Most cruise ships even have specialty restaurants with a nominal cover charge averaging \$20 per person. This dining experience equates to any five-star, land-based restaurant that costs hundreds of dollars to dine at per couple.

Then there's Lido dining – more like a smorgasbord for anytime casual or buffet dining. Royal Caribbean ships even have hangouts like Johnny Rockets – the famous hamburger joint. Norwegian Cruise Line touts "Freestyle Dining" where you have upwards of 17 different restaurants to choose from,

and you can dine anytime and with whomever you want. Dining on today's cruise ships is a phenomenal experience.

ENTERTAINMENT IS TOP NOTCH

On the cruises of yesteryear, you could take in an early show or a late show, depending on your dining time. Year after year, the variety show lived on. Now fast forward to today – Royal Caribbean has shows like the Broadway hit "Hairspray", and they built an AquaTheater on their newer ships where a full aquatic show is performed with high divers and synchronized swimmers.

Comedy and jazz clubs are also in full swing such as Fat Cats on NCL's Epic. Love Karaoke? There's always a lounge onboard where you can sing to your heart's content each night. NCL's Epic also features the famous "Blue Man Group", a Cirque dinner show and "Legends in Concert". Want to bowl or play a supersized Wii? Just jump on an NCL ship and the family is sure to have fun.

DAYS AT SEA ARE NEVER BORING

During days at sea, gone are the beer drinking and men's hairy chest contests! They have been replaced on



Photo credit: © Can Stock Photo Inc. / Isantilli

NANI & AFCP Launch NCPtravel

by Loren Colburn, AFCP Executive Director



Loren Colburn

THE NATIONAL ADVERTISING Network Inc. (NANI) and The Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP) announced that they have joined Cruise Planners under the business name NCPtravel, as an American Express Travel Representative, the nation's largest travel agent franchise network in the industry.

NCPtravel was established by AFCP under its solely owned subsidiary, NANI, to utilize the NANI Classified Network while supporting the member benefits and initiatives of AFCP.

NCPtravel is excited to be a part of an independently owned and operated Cruise Planners franchise as well as being a part of the American Express Travel Representative network and the nation's largest travel agent franchise company.

AFCP Executive Director Loren Colburn said, "It affords

us the opportunity to utilize the NANI Network for the advertising and to direct the proceeds to the benefit of the NANI Rebate Program. In addition, our members and their readers will have a travel agency that will provide the personalized customer service and affordable pricing that they can trust and enjoy."

NCPtravel can be reached at 877-270-7260 or through their website, <http://www.ncptravel.com>.

As a franchise owner, NCPtravel will be able to offer travelers exclusive pricing on a wide range of cruises, destination wedding packages and all-inclusive resorts. Packages with all available options including cabin upgrades and special amenities such as shore excursions, discounted fares, travel gifts and more can be included at the lowest available prices. As a Cruise Planners travel advisor, NCPtravel can also provide specialized land and tour packages to the most sought-after destinations around the world.

For all your personal vacation packages or to build an incentive travel program to reward your business team, just give them a call. **INK**

It's Not Your Grandmother's Cruise Anymore!

Continued from page 15

Royal Caribbean ships with FlowRider, a surfing simulator, or you can hang loose during your ride on the zip line. Want to play putt-putt golf, basketball, ping pong, or climb a rock wall? It's all happening onboard.

Celebrity Cruises has glass blowing at sea. Watch a Corning Museum of Glass gaffer present a live demonstration on glass blowing, or play a game of bocce on their beautifully manicured lawn on the top deck. Carnival's fun is by the pool at Waterworks. Take a plunge down their 104-foot-long slide. It's a real rush!

Wine tastings, cooking demonstrations, lectures, computer classes, spa treatments, and state-of-the-art workout facilities can also keep you busy during your days at sea. Or grab a book from the library and enjoy sitting by the pool, relaxing while the ship takes you to your next exciting port of call.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Interior and ocean view cabins were the typical choices in years past, and if you were one of the lucky few to enjoy a balcony you paid a huge premium. Most

new ships now offer primarily balcony cabins – and even some inside staterooms now have views overlooking promenades with natural lighting.

The cruise lines continue to be innovative. Now on the new Royal Caribbean ships, Loft cabins are available featuring two-story, floor-to-ceiling windows, two bathrooms, a living room and a second-floor master bedroom. Private villa guests aboard NCL's Epic have exclusive access to their own pool, lounges and restaurant. It's a ship within a ship.

If you haven't cruised in a while or just thought cruising was for old people, think again! For more information and to reserve your next cruise vacation, contact Loren Colburn or Cassey Recore, your Cruise Planners/American Express Specialists, at NCPtravel, 877-270-7260. Or go to NCPtravel.com and sign up today to stay on top of all the great travel deals available.

Booking your travel through NCPtravel not only assures you of personalized service and the best pricing available, it also helps support the Association of Free Community Papers and its member benefits programs. **INK**

The LEADERSHIP Institute

by Jim Busch

The Leadership Institute is a structured sales and sales management training program sponsored by the Association of Free Community Papers.



To date, 1,814 free paper professionals have attended classes at the AFCP, state and regional conferences, earning over 10,935 class credits in 66 different course curriculums. A total of 81 people have completed all the requirements and been certified as Associate Advertising Executives (AAE) by the AFCP Board!

"It is the service we are not obliged to give that people value most."

– J. C. Penney

RECENTLY, MY COMPANY'S ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT received a package from one of our vendors. It was a framed "Certificate of Appreciation" for always paying our invoices on time. This created quite a stir and the plaque now hangs proudly in the lobby beside the awards won by our editorial department. This was not something they had to do – we didn't do anything special – but it was greatly appreciated.

This is what the folks in New Orleans call a "lagniappe," which translates to "a little something extra" and it is a hallmark of that city's legendary hospitality. They often bring a little sweet when you've finished a meal or put an extra beignet in your bag. These surprises make your meal much more pleasant and make you want to patronize that business again.

A few years ago, psychologists conducted an experiment with the wait staff at a restaurant. They instructed half the servers to follow this procedure. They were told to leave the check and a mint for each person on the table and then begin to walk away as usual. Then they were to turn around and lay down a few extra candies saying, "You look like nice people, here's a few extra mints for you."

The researchers found that the servers who did this received significantly larger tips from their customers compared to those who did not. Surprising the diners with something more than they expected put them in a generous mood and made them want to reward the server for their kindness. The increase in the tip far exceeded the value of a few mints and many of the people actually left the extra mints on the table.

The true value of the extra mints was how the server's actions made the diners feel. They expected to be served their meal and to pay for it, a simple transaction. "You do this for me and I'll do this for you." By going beyond the expected parameters of the transaction, the server was sending a signal, "I care about more than your money, I care about you as a fellow human being."

Surprising your customers by doing more than what they expect will pay a big dividend in the long run. Mr. Penney understood that these "lagniappes" make a big impression on your customers and will help you to build strong, profitable relationships with them. **INK**



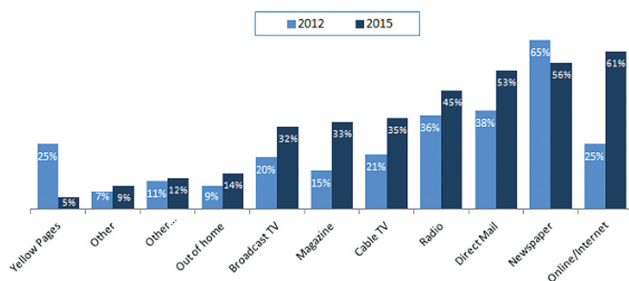
How much do Your Publications do in Co-op? ANY IDEA?

by TIM BRENNAN, MultiAd

CHANGES ARE UNDERWAY AND THE CO-OP BENEFIT with AFCP will disappear when the ball drops in Times Square this New Year's Eve. Over time it just got too difficult to distinguish the difference between the full Recas co-op support service and the base information login provided through the association. Of course, we'll still be very involved with the organization and hopefully working more closely with your publications to help you earn more of those elusive dealer co-op budgets.

Ironically this comes at a time when there are a couple of high-profile reports on co-op advertising usage. One came out in August from Borrell Associates focusing on the changing face of co-op programs with the inclusion of digital spending options. The study of 3,741 SMBs found broad adoption of digital platforms, although complications with many programs showed fairly slow dealer progress with their brand partners in co-op support. Borrell also compared business co-op spending versus a similar study they did in 2012 and released the overall media detail report.

Change in Use of Media for Co-Op



Sources: Borrell Associates local advertiser surveys, April-May 2012 and June-July 2015

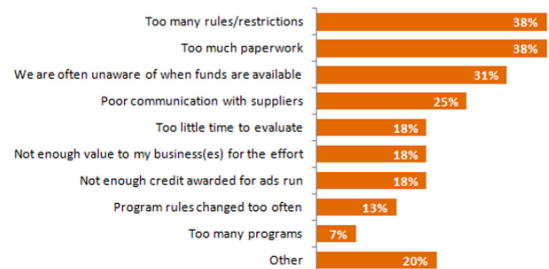
We can probably guess why Yellow Page spending is down, but why would you say newspaper spending is down? Is it maybe because your reps don't know it very well? Maybe your dealers don't know it very well? Maybe you don't know it very well? And 9% in 3 years...wow.

Tallying total available co-op at \$36 Billion, Borrell goes on to estimate unused co-op at \$14 Billion. Both figures, I would argue, are underestimated. Co-op budgets are small percentages of wholesale purchases across a vast array of business categories and brands and often lost by accounts in the shuffle of day-to-day priorities. I've seen estimates that range much higher

on both scores with guesses as high as 48% of total co-op going unused. Of course it's all mostly speculation since it would be near impossible to gather anything close to a real number. Let's all just agree that it's a lot.

The real question comes down to why. Here are the responses the dealers gave:

Obstacles to Participation in Co-Op



Source: Borrell Associates local advertiser survey, June-July 2015

It's always been part of the media sales gig to help walk local advertisers through the process involved. Their main concern is making the cash register ring and they spend very little time overall with marketing since they're the ones answering the phones, sweeping the floors, ordering inventory, helping customers, etc. Most brand dealers know they have co-op, but may be a little muddy on the details and how to make it pay for itself.

There's another study from the folks at Brand-muscle who last month released their 2016 State of Local Marketing report. It gets a little more granular on the detail but boils down to the same thing. Your local advertisers need help with this stuff. And if you won't, who will?

Feel free to reach out to me directly at 309-678-8745 or at tbrennan@recas.com and I'd be happy to send along copies of these reports. I could give you some specifics on who, what, where, and how we could help in your market. Just say when. What's a few billion dollars, right?

This information is provided by agreement with AFCP and MultiAd Recas to help take the mystery out of co-op advertising. This Member Benefit will expire 12/31/2015. For more information, contact the AFCP office at 877-203-2327.

Kidsville News!

Marketing Partnership Opportunity

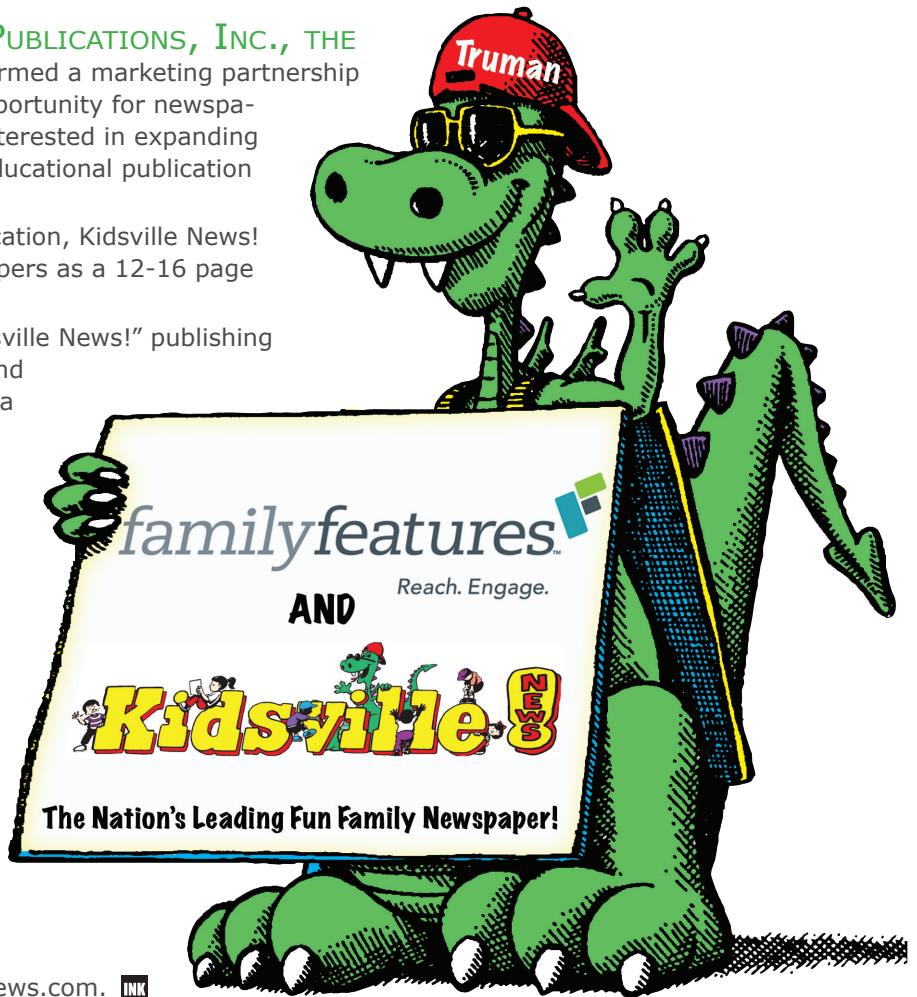
FAMILY FEATURES AND MERRIGOLD PUBLICATIONS, INC., THE parent company for Kidsville News!, have formed a marketing partnership to promote a unique revenue-generating opportunity for newspaper publishers, editors and entrepreneurs interested in expanding their markets by publishing a literacy and educational publication for their local communities.

In addition to being a free-standing publication, Kidsville News! is now available to daily and weekly newspapers as a 12-16 page educational insert or Special Section.

The availability and versatility of the "Kidsville News!" publishing model will be communicated to publishers and editors nationwide as an opportunity to add a proven and profitable publication to their existing publishing business. Also, independent sales and marketing entrepreneurs can create an entirely new educational publishing company with the Kidsville News! program.

Kidsville News! was founded in 1998 by Up & Coming Weekly newspaper publisher Bill Bowman, as a local and self-sustaining "Newspaper in Education" program in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Bowman and Up & Coming Weekly are members of the Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP), the Independent Free Papers of America (IFPA), the Southeastern Advertising Publishers Association (SAPA) and the North Carolina Press Association.

For more information visit www.kidsvillenews.com. 



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"We're serious about the funnies!"

Changes are taking place All Over

KEVIN HAEZEBROECK HAS NAMED THE EXECUTIVE director of the Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP).

Haezebroeck has a long background in the publishing industry. He was employed with Lee Enterprises from 1986-1997 and with the Journal Register Company/Digital First Media from 1999-2012.

He has held positions as a sales rep, sales manager, publisher, senior publisher and Senior VP Advertising. Most recently he was the advertising director of a group of 14 weeklies in the North Dallas area. Haezebroeck has a track record of success selling and managing print as well as digital products, and he will bring that experience and support to MFCP members.

The search committee consisted of Greg Birkett, Robin Noth, Trevor Slette, Steve Fisher and Peggy Loveless.

Loveless, the next MFCP president and current

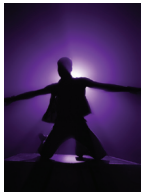
vice president, said, "We started the hiring process a few months ago with a great group of candidates and one tough decision.

"Who would take MFCP to the next level? After our long standing and dedicated leader Brian Gay became ill, Dick Colvin along with Charleen Oligmueller, a new office assistant, have helped pull the organization back together into one of the leaders in the industry, especially in network ad sales.

"Haezebroeck is known to be a great revenue driver of both print and digital products as well as having an extensive knowledge of the industry overall.

"We are excited to have him on board and look forward to what the future will bring under his leadership."

Haezebroeck replaces Dick Colvin who recently resigned. His date of hire was effective November 9th. Colvin will work with him through the transition. **INK**



As the holiday season approaches, we'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued partnership. It is being associated with people like you who make our jobs a pleasure and keep our organization successful.

May your holiday season and the New Year be filled with much joy, happiness and success. We look forward to working with you in the coming year and hope our relationship continues for many years to come.

Happy Holidays!

From all of us at AFCP

Keep Classifieds Simple

by Ashley Ann Lewan, Rising Star

WE'VE HEARD IT TIME AND AGAIN – OUR classified sales are down. With the looming monster that is Craigslist, the strength of Facebook classifieds groups and the dawn of classifieds apps, it's no surprise that our numbers have waned. But do we just lay down our swords and give up? Definitely not. We need to make ad placement an easy and pleasurable experience for our customers so that they prefer to place their ad with us as opposed to an automated system.

Simplification

It's safe to say that most free papers have their own website where readers can peruse local ads, articles, commentary, photos and more. And most sites boast online ad placement. Now, as we all know, we are a digital society – whether that makes you grumble or not. Your web form needs to be simple to navigate and **MUST** translate easily to a mobile device.

On average we check our phones 150 times a day, more consumers are opting for mobile devices like tablets and our smartphones keep getting bigger. We might all be used to the convoluted way our ad forms work, but look at them with a fresh eye. It's essential they are easy to use! How approachable is it? If there are problems, how easily can you troubleshoot? How simple is it to place an ad via phone or tablet?

More Mobile Options

Have you ever thought, "Man, it would be so nice if I could just text my order to a restaurant"? Well, so have your advertisers. At my home publication we introduced a separate text line so that advertisers can easily send us an ad order, or the photo for their picture classified, as opposed to having to navigate our ad form. Our text line has become wildly popular, especially with Realtors. Most of

my Realtors text me a photo with their MLS# and I write their ad for them. It literally takes them seconds, and I've made the easiest sale ever.


Don't want to spend the money on a whole other cell phone line? There are plenty of programs and apps available that can do it for you. One example is an app called Burner. Before we set up our permanent line, we used this simple iPhone app and I had it directly on my own phone. You buy credits, it provides you with a legitimate phone number and you select the plan that fits you best. Twenty-five credits costs only \$11.99 and that can keep you going for months. Our text line definitely pays for itself and has helped build trust between salespeople and advertisers.

Social Media

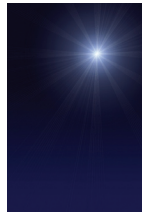
I could sit here and talk about social media all day. We all know that social media is necessary for marketing, but it's also a great way to connect with customers. Take Twitter, for instance. Twitter is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to business-to-business relations. With the help of our

social media managers our followers have skyrocketed, making it easy for advertisers and potential advertisers to direct message us or send us a tweet inquiring about ad placement. And you know what? It happens all the time!

Our advertisers and readers are on social media constantly. Having an active (that's the keyword here) presence on social media like Facebook and Twitter make it another platform to start a conversation and grow a relationship with a local business. But you have to be consistent! Programs like Buffer and Hootsuite can help you set up tweets in advance.

The secret to increased classified sales is an open mind and active participation in new technology and communities. Utilize the tools that are right there! Convenience is key! 

We need to make ad placement an easy and pleasurable experience for our customers so that they prefer to place their ad with us as opposed to an automated system.



Reward your advertisers.

Reward
your staff.

Reward
Yourself.

Enter AFCP's 2015 Annual Best of the Best Awards Contest and show the world your best work. Use your winning entries to highlight your staff and advertisers and promote your award-winning publication.

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Calendars!
Entries are due
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so download
your entry
materials today!

Entry forms are available on the AFCP Website. Just go to www.afcp.org or email the AFCP staff at afcp@afcp.org.

GRAPEVINE

THE MONROE PUBLISHING Co. in southeast Michigan has been sold to GateHouse parent New Media Investment Group.

The purchase includes the Monroe (MI) News which publishes 14,000 during the week and distributes 21,000 on Sunday.

According to Michael Reed, president and CEO of New Media, "The publications are located near our current cluster in Michigan which makes them the ideal tuck-in acquisitions to integrate into our current operations."

WHAT'S GOING ON...

New Media owns 22 papers in the region. The acquisition follows several other purchases earlier this year, including the Las Vegas Review-Journal and the Columbus (OH) Dispatch. **INK**



We wish you an abundance of peace & joy this holiday season.

Merry Christmas!

Dave, Barbara & the CPF Board of Directors

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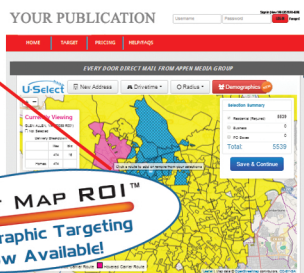
Your advertisers (or sales reps) target postal routes, choose design and print options, and order online – in 10 minutes or less!

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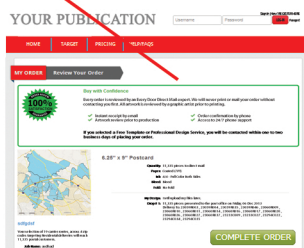
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Kevin B. Kamen
President/CEO

"Kevin Kamen works relentlessly. Whenever he speaks about the publishing business or companies, I pay close attention."

– Paul Tash (Mr. Tash is Chairman of the Pulitzer Board and CEO/Chairman of the Tampa Bay Times.)

"Kevin Kamen is one of the world's best-known and most-prolific brokers of media properties and companies."

– Gypsy C. Gallardo, CEO/Publisher of The Power Broker Magazine

Whose judgment do they trust?

"Kevin Kamen correctly predicted as far back as 2010 that a buyer would be willing to pay \$42 million to \$51 million for The Journal ... 'They paid about \$4 million to \$5 million more than they should have,' Kamen told WPRI.com ... Kamen suggested Gatehouse was motivated to pay a premium in part to ensure a competing newspaper chain didn't get The (Providence) Journal instead."

– Ted Nessi, WPRI 12, Providence, Rhode Island

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The best word to describe Minnesota Newspapers: PHENOMENAL

by Kevin Slimp

THERE'S A REASON I LOVE MY WORK SO MUCH. There's a reason that there are folks around the country waiting for me to return their calls while I'm writing this column. They can wait. This is more important.

I love my work for the same reason that many of you do. I've got something important to tell you and it can't wait while I make phone calls.

In my opinion, "Awesome" is the most overused word in the English language. I cringe when I hear it, and as the father of two teenagers, I hear it a lot.

So I got out the dusty thesaurus and found a synonym that would work: phenomenal. That's the best word I know of to describe the trip I just took to Minnesota. Yes, that's right, Minnesota.

I've worked with more than 100 papers in Minnesota this year. I know, that's a lot of papers. And there is something that's very apparent as I crisscross the frozen tundra (OK, tundra might be a stretch) of Minnesota, visiting papers from McGregor to Pipestone to Preston: newspapers in Minnesota are doing really well. That truth was never more apparent to me than in late October, when I visited papers in the central and western areas of the state.

I've got John Stone to thank for the visit. John manages Quinco Press in Lowry, a small town in West-Central Minnesota. I've visited Quinco a few times since 1997, and my official reason for traveling to Lowry in October was to do an afternoon of training for area newspaper staffs, then a day of press tests on Quinco's new press.

Following the afternoon of training on day one, I had the real pleasure of having dinner with John and his wife Mary, along with Reed and Shelly Anfinson,

old friends who run weekly papers not too far from Lowry. I had just seen Shelly a week earlier at The Institute of Newspaper Technology in my hometown of Knoxville, Tennessee.

We discussed the plight of the newspaper industry, with more and more newspapers being bought, only to be closed by large corporations. I did as I sometimes do in such situations, realizing I was becoming way too excited about the subject.

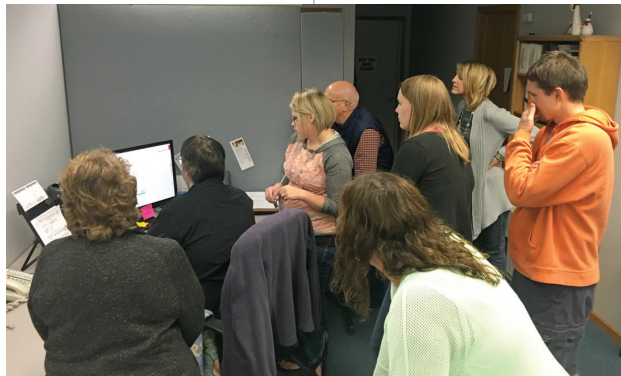
I loved it when Reed looked at me from his end of the table and said, "Keep going. You're preaching to the choir here."

Most Minnesota newspapers, it seems, aren't owned by far-away corporations. They're owned and operated right in the towns where they're located, or within a few miles. And unlike newspapers in some areas, most aren't suffering from staggering circulation declines and disappearing profits. The more than 400 newspapers in Minnesota are doing something right, and I'm starting to understand what that is.

On the evening of day two, I found myself in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, a thriving town two hours north of the Twin Cities. Dave Simpkins, recognized nationally for his phenomenal success, had invited me to spend a day with his staff. But first he invited me, along with a few other folks, to dinner.

As we sat at our table, a young man in an electric cart drove up to our table. Having several friends with cerebral palsy, I immediately knew that was the reason he was in the cart.

Dave introduced me to Mike Imeike and I quickly learned that he is in charge of tearsheeting at the Sauk Centre Herald.



Kevin sat down to show a designer how to improve the blue areas in her ads (above). When he turned around, he was surrounded by designers and editors from all over the building.

Reed Anfinson (L) and John Stone look over one of their products while at dinner with Kevin in Glenwood, Minnesota (below).





Ten years ago, Mike received a call from Dave Simpkins telling him he had a job for him. Ten years later, he's in charge of tearsheeting for the papers published in Sauk Centre, Minnesota.

It's difficult for many folks to understand someone with cerebral palsy when they speak, but I had no problem understanding Mike when he quickly volunteered, "Dave called me on the phone ten years ago. He said, 'I've got a job for you. Come down to the paper.'"

Mike did as instructed and has been in charge of tearsheeting in Sauk Centre for ten years. It's obvious the rest of the staff loves working with him and Mike, Dave tells me, is a great employee.

I compare stories like that with the trend of large groups to buy newspapers, cut staffs to bare minimum, then watch their circulation and profits deteriorate.

Dave Simpkins has a good heart. Of that, there is no doubt. But he also knows something about running successful newspapers.

I'm sorry that most folks don't have the luxury of visiting places like Sauk Centre, McGregor and Pipestone. These are places where newspapers are valuable assets to their communities, where writers, editors and designers feel a part of something greater, and where the future continues to look bright.

As Dave Simpkins and I had breakfast at a local cafe in Sauk Centre to begin day three, I noticed the love and respect that was shared between him and everyone we encountered.

When Dave introduced me to a group of six folks and told them I was there to improve their newspaper, one man quickly spoke up, "Don't do anything to mess up our paper. We love it."

So do I. **INK**

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All proceeds from the silent auction goes to the Bill Welsh Memorial Foundation to provide scholarships for Rising Stars to attend the AFCP Annual Conference. Our first auction in 2015 was a success and we need your help to keep that success going in 2016!



SAN DIEGO

Annual Conference and Trade Show 2016

Contact Alix Browne in the AFCP office at:
alix@afcp.org or call 1-877-203-2327

Associations IN the NEWS

THE NORTH AMERICAN Mature Publishers Association (NAMPA) presented 94 awards to member publishers at their 2015 National Convention at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Melbourne, Florida in September.

NAMPA publications were independently judged by the

prestigious University of Missouri School of Journalism, widely considered one of the top journalism schools in the country.

The highlight of the conference was the Best of Show award winners. They were: The Best of Times (Louisiana), Senior Times (Florida), The

Baltimore Beacon and The Washington Beacon (Washington, D.C.).

Founded in 1994, NAMPA is the only non-profit international association of boomer/senior publications in the United States and Canada.

To submit your "associations in the news" story, please contact Dave Neuharth by fax (1.352.347.3384) or email: DJNeuharth@aol.com.

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The AFCP Digital Toolbox helps members find the right product and service providers to meet the varying needs of their publications. This handy resource tool lets you locate an appropriate provider and see a brief description of their products and services. If the company looks like they will be able to meet your needs, you have the ability to click right to their website for additional information and direct contact.

We encourage you to investigate and take full advantage of these partners in our industry, as their business is targeted at helping you improve your bottom line.

Check it out under the Member Benefits tab at...

www.afcp.org





2016

ALTOONA, IA : MARCH 10-11, 2016
Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP). Spring Conference at Prairie Meadows in Altoona, Iowa. For information contact Kevin Haezebroeck at 319-341-4352.

GREEN BAY, WI : APRIL 15-16, 2016
Wisconsin Community Papers (WCP). Annual Conference at the Tundra Lodge, Resort and Waterpark, Green Bay, Wis. For information contact Janelle Anderson at janderson@wisad.com.

SEVEN SPRINGS, PA : APRIL 22-23, 2016
Mid-Atlantic Community Papers Association (MACPA). Annual Conference, the Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Seven Springs, Pa. For information contact Alyse Mitten, info@macpa.net.

SAN DIEGO, CA : APRIL 28-30, 2016
Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP). Annual Conference & Trade Show, Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina on the shoreline of San Diego Bay, San Diego, Calif. For information contact Loren Colburn, loren@afcp.org.

DENVER, CO : SEPTEMBER 25-28, 2016
North American Mature Publishers Association (NAMPA). National Convention, the Magnolia Hotel, Denver, Colo. For information contact Gary Calligas at gary@maturepublishers.com.

ORLANDO, FL : SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 2, 2016
Independent Free Papers of America (IFPA), Southeastern Advertising Publishers Association (SAPA) and Community Papers of Florida (CPF). Joint Conference, the Caribe Royale All-Suite Resort, Orlando, Fla. For information contact Douglas Fry, info@sapatoday.com, or Dave Neuharth, djneuharth@aol.com.

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**LOUISVILLE, KY
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Association of Free Community Papers (AFCP). Annual Conference & Trade Show, Gait House, downtown Louisville, Ky. For information contact Loren Colburn, loren@afcp.org.

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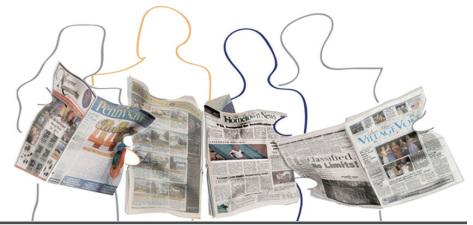


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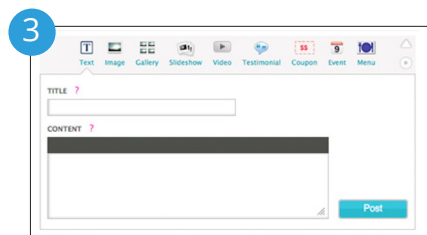
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