

MIP

MISSOURI PRESS
NEWS

Meet 2025

MPA President Peggy Scott

*She's excited
about
newspapers
and wants
you to be too.*



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Hang on to your hats, friends. The ride is starting

Hello, fellow newspaper folk. Welcome to what may be a wild ride. I'm Peggy Scott, publisher at Leader Publications, and I'll be your tour guide and MPA president as we embark on a series of adventures in 2025. This year may be many things, but I predict it will not be boring.

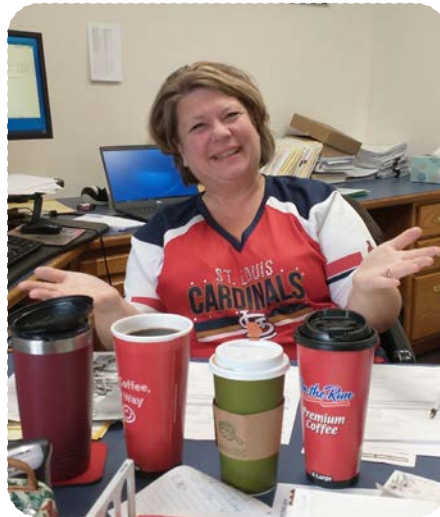
We start with a big change in the Missouri Press Association team. Chad Stebbins has joined us as the new MPA executive director. Don't worry. Chad has years of experience in the industry, and you'll learn more about him in an upcoming edition of *Missouri Press News*.

Plus, our retiring MPA leader, Mark Maassen, will remain close by to help Chad with the transition and to support us. Mark joins Doug Crews, Mark's predecessor, to maintain the strength of our organization. It's a job worth doing right.

Bonus plus, a retirement celebration is being planned for Mark for later this month. Find out more on page 19.

I feel fortunate to follow Amos Bridges as MPA's president. He deftly guided us through a year and a half of changes and has promised to stick around. He is leading MPA's new Legislative Committee. Thank you, Amos.

You can read a little more about me in the story that MPA editor Matthew Barba prepared for this edition. I'm always shocked when people seem



Peggy Scott is Missouri Press Association's 2025 president. Eager for the possibilities the new year will bring, she wants the Association's members to join her for an exciting year. Just make sure you have enough coffee on hand to keep up. (Submitted photo)

interested in my origin story. One of the reasons I love being a journalist is because, at heart, I'm really a pretty boring person. Everyone I interview seems far more interesting or more passionate than me.

As a reporter, I get to learn about someone or something interesting, delightful, outrageous or just plain wrong. Then I get to tell everyone else. Often our journalism rights the wrong, stops the bad guy or moves people in the community to make a difference. It's the perfect job.

Over four decades in the business,

my passion for our industry has grown. I'm now steering the ship of a four-newspaper group near St. Louis. I like to say the Leader is the unicorn of newspapers. Few do local news like we do. We are locally owned. Our news coverage is hyper-local.

Our papers are delivered free to readers via the United State Post Office. We utilize a requester mailing permit.

We hold events. We think of things to make our communities better and to make our product stronger, and then we do it. We are a start-up, a rag-tag group of newspaper believers who think doing things a little differently makes sense. Our readers and advertisers agree and have made us a strong part of the communities we serve since we launched in 1994.

As Matthew prepared his story, he asked me for some photos. I pored through pictures from the past and learned something about myself. While I may be a little boring, based on the pictures I found, I also smile and laugh – a lot. Don't let my grin fool you. Happy doesn't equal weak, complacent or satisfied. I'm not always pleased with the state of things in our community or our industry. I'm not afraid of a fight.

My MPA friends, I hope we find a way to band together in good humor with strong convictions to face the foes together. Hold on to your hats and let's get started.

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PRESIDENT: Peggy Scott, Leader Publications, Festus
1st VICE PRES.: Bryan Chester, *Columbia Missourian*
2nd VICE PRES.: Bryan Jones, *The Morgan County Statesman*, Versailles
SEC.: Donna Bischoff, Bridge Tower Media, St. Louis
TREAS.: Jaime Mowers, *Webster-Kirkwood Times*, St. Louis
PAST PRES.: Amos Bridges, *Springfield News-Leader*
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Mark Maassen/Chad Stebbins
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Ted Lawrence
EDITOR: Matthew Barba

DIRECTORS:

Ken Garner, Garner Media Holdings, Maryville
Ron Schott, *Wright County Journal*, Mountain Grove
Gary Castor, *Jefferson City News Tribune*
Sandy Nelson, *The Courier-Tribune*, Liberty
Tim Schmidt, Westplex Media, Montgomery City
Lucas Presson, *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau
Mike Scott, NEMO News Media Group, Kahoka
Kimberly Combs, Better Newspapers Inc., Piedmont
NNA Rep.: Hannah Spaar, *The Odessan*, Odessa

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Continued from Page 2: *Meet your local legislators at the Capitol. It's worth your time.*

You can get some immediate affirmation about the state of our industry by attending Missouri Press Association's Day at the Capitol on Jan. 23 in Jefferson City. The day gives news folks the opportunity to meet with legislators on their turf instead of ours.

Often reporters, editors and publishers talk with legislators via email, phone calls and texts, at press conferences or at fundraisers. They come to our offices and to events in our communities. The dynamic is different when we go to the Capitol.

The first year I attended, I was skeptical that spending a day in Jefferson City would be beneficial. I was wrong. The small contingent from the *Leader* had a chance to see our local legislators in their "natural habitat."

The legislators representing Jefferson County and our coverage area were genuinely happy that we made the trek. They showed us features of the historic Capitol building, introduced us on the House floor, took photos with us and revealed legislation they were working on that

if passed would impact our local community.

We learned the best way to reach our legislators while they are in session, even while they are on the floor. We got a first-hand glance at the pace of work at the Capitol.

It's important that our state legislators know who we are. We need to tell our own story about the value of local news in our communities. Journalism done by real journalists and delivered by trusted news sources is key to maintaining democracy. The work we do on behalf of voters can't be replaced by a social media account or a website. We know that. They need to understand also.

The first step is to introduce yourselves to the politicians who govern our state. The Day at the Capitol makes that step easy. In addition to signing up with MPA, I recommend you schedule appointments with your legislators for that day. Bring copies of your papers. Show the legislators what we do and why they should care about local journalism.

Learn more about Day at the Capitol on Page 4.



CALENDAR

January

- 22** — Missouri Press Association, Service and Foundation Board Meetings, Jefferson City
- 23** — Missouri Press Association Day at the Capitol, Jefferson City
- 23** — Mark Maassen Retirement Celebration, Tiger Hotel, Columbia
- 23** — Day at the Capitol, Jefferson City
- 30** — SEMO Sales Boot Camp, Rust Center for Media, Cape Girardeau

April

- 10-11** — Missouri Press Advertising Managers and Executives Meeting, Sheraton Westport Chalet, St. Louis

June

- June 5** — Kevin Jones Memorial First Amendment Golf Tournament | Loutre Shores Country Club, Hermann
- June 6** — MPA/MPS/MPF Board Meetings, Hermannhof Inn & The Tin Mill Restaurant
- June 6** — Show-Me Press Association Meeting, Hermann

Did you know?

You can find all of the latest registration forms for Missouri Press' events online at www.mopress.com.

The website also has award nomination forms, board of director applications and much more.

Missouri Press Association / Service / Foundation

802 Locust St., Columbia, MO 65201-4888
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Doug Crews: Legislative Director, rdcrews@socket.net



SAVE THE DATE

35th Annual Missouri Press Association Day at the Capitol • January 22 & 23, 2025

Tentative Agenda

Wednesday, January 22, in Jefferson City

12:00 Noon: Missouri Press Foundation Board Meeting

2:00 p.m.: Missouri Press Association and Service Board Meeting.
235 E. High Street, #301

5:00-6:15 p.m.: Reception,
Courtyard by Marriott Lobby | 610 Bolivar Street, Jefferson City
To reserve a sleeping room for the special MPA Rate of \$149 at the Courtyard
Jefferson City on Wednesday, January 22, please use this link:
<https://tinyurl.com/n6mx4bz9>

Thursday, January 23, 2025 in the State Capitol, Jefferson City

8:00-8:45 a.m.: Breakfast for MPA Members
(pastries and coffee) **3rd Floor Senate Alcove**

8:45-10:05 a.m.: Meet with your legislators

10:10-11:45 a.m.: Day at the Capitol program, **3rd Floor, House Lounge**

Program to be Announced

11:45 a.m.: Program to adjourn. Attendees will leave the Capitol for a
brief walk to the Governor's Mansion.

Noon: Luncheon, **The Missouri Governor's Mansion**

**You must be registered with Missouri Press Association to
attend the luncheon. Missouri Press Association pays
for breakfast and lunch costs. If you registered and
don't attend, your newspaper will be charged
a \$35 cancellation fee.*

Registration details to be announced.



One leader, four *Leaders*

By Matthew Barba

Missouri Press News

Walking into the global headquarters of Leader Publications in early December, it's clear Peggy Scott, publisher of the company's four newspapers and Missouri Press Association's 2025 president, is very excited.

Standing at her big desk in the front office, she's holding a new special section appearing in that week's edition of the *Leader*, so fresh it hadn't even been put on racks or delivered to readers yet. Scott flipped the pages, smiling wide, admiring the newspaper's first-ever holiday coloring book.

"I forgot to bring in the crayons. I was planning on us taking a break later today to color some pages," Scott explained. The *Leader* staff did end up finding crayons and taking that break, a combination of stress-relieving activity combined with a bit of self-promotion for the newspaper to post on social media.

Originally from Festus, Scott studied journalism at Southeast Missouri State University before joining the *Southeast Missourian* in Cape Girardeau in 1985. She says she never intended for her journalism career to lead to the publisher's chair, managing a staff of more than 20 and being excited about a coloring book in the newspaper.

"I was happy being a reporter. I loved being in the community, writing stories and making a difference," Scott said.

But following a demonstration Scott helped put on about using the internet in the late 1990s, she caught the eye of the



Peggy Scott stands at her desk in the front office of Leader Publications, the single location for the company's four newspapers covering various parts of Jefferson County. The company's motto is, "Once a week but never weakly." (Staff photo)

Leader's former publisher Patrick Martin and former editor Peggy Bess. "Back before the internet was everywhere, we did these presentations for people to teach them how to use it, and I guess they [Martin and Bess] liked me."

Scott was offered a job with the *Leader*, a role that brought her back to her hometown in 1999. At the time, she and her husband, Rob, had four kids, ages 2, 4, 6 and 8 and the hope was that by being closer to family, they could better manage raising their young children and growing careers. It all seemed to work out as she made her way up the ranks at the newspaper company, becoming publisher in May 2022.

In that time, Leader Publications also grew, expanding from the *Jefferson County Leader* and *Arnold-Imperial Leader* that were publishing when Scott joined to include the *West Side Leader* in 2014 and the *Eureka Leader* in 2017.

Passion for community journalism

Today, Scott doesn't get to write as much as she'd like. During this interview, she talked about sitting on a story she wanted to keep for herself. It's about a woman in the community who makes scrapbooks with clippings from the *Leader*.

With other obligations, Scott was worried she wouldn't have time to write it and would have to give the story to one of her reporters. But the story itself is the kind of feature any publisher would be excited to tell in their newspaper's pages.

Excitement for telling stories is one piece of the *Leader's* plan for staying relevant in readers' lives.

Continued on Page 6



Above, a photo shows Peggy Scott when she joined the staff of the *Southeast Missourian* in 1985. At left, Scott's ID as a student journalist from 1984 when she attended Southeast Missouri State University." (Submitted photos)

Continued from Page 5: *Maintaining reader relevance.*

"The delivery system is far less important than the message," Scott said. "Right now, we get the most from print, but we have made sure we have all the ways to share our communities' stories no matter what form it takes."

Scott sees print making a comeback for younger newspaper readers as more of them hit various life milestones.

"I've always said, when you start paying property tax, that's when you become a newspaper reader," she said, adding, "I also think print is the new vinyl, and younger readers see newspapers as a niche product they can get excited about."

"Young people have more passion, too, for taking care of their community, for the planet and for each other," Scott said.

Maintain journalistic relevance

Having the newspaper reflect the community is also important. Sales staff can better assist clients in finding the right advertising solutions and editorial better understand how to tell stories from the community.

But hiring new staff who want to work at a newspaper is one of the greatest challenges facing the industry right now, Scott said.

There are stopgaps to help, such as Earn Your Press Pass, which some of her newsroom employees have completed, and training opportunities like the Potter Digital Ambassadors from the Reynolds Journalism Institute that help the newspaper address shortcomings in its online presence.

"It's always the goal to have more trained reporters because you need real journalists to tell those stories that are important to the community," Scott said. "When people come to us, I want them to ask what it is we do here that makes us special. That's the kind of enthusiasm I'm trying to instill in every member of our staff."

In December, Scott was in the middle of helping organize a special sales training program through the



Leader Publication's Christmastime events benefit from the company's very own Santa Claus, portrayed by Peggy Scott's husband, Rob. Above, attendees of the recent Leader Holiday Market had photos taken with Santa Rob, including Leader Sales Specialist Kayla Rhineberger, far right, and her family, from left, husband Michael, and daughters Layla and Laney. (Submitted photos)



The Leader Publication staff show off new headwear featuring the company's logo. Peggy Scott and company are constantly trying new things to get people thinking and talking about the newspaper in the communities they serve. Pictured, from left, are Russell Korando, sports editor; Teresa Inserra, reporter; Katelyn Mary Skaggs, digital marketing manager; Lindsay Recar, special sections editor; and Kevin Carbery, reporter. (Submitted photo)

Southeast Missouri Press Association, for which she serves as "Historian." She was prompted to do so because a couple of her new salespeople were excited about their roles with the newspaper but needed extra training.

"They want to be here, they want to do the work, but I'm not in sales, so I can't train them," Scott said. "But I can find someone who can get them the tools they need to succeed."

Channeling that enthusiasm to the benefit of the newspaper also helps remind readers and advertisers in the community why local journalism is so important.

"We're always telling someone else's story," Scott said. "But if you help shape something in the community, it's important that people know where it came from."

Collaboration, partnerships and events

Scott believes newspapers need to be willing to experiment and branch out past publishers' comfort zones to explore new ways of making money. In addition to established events and special sections, the *Leader* is often trying new things.

"We have lots going on all the time. It keeps things lively," Scott said. "And it's important to remember, you can't have a second year if you don't have a first."

Many of the newspaper's events are hallmarks of the community, such as a wedding fair almost as old as Leader Publications itself. The occasion sees the newspaper partner with a local charity to help raise money.

"This year, we partnered with a community theater group. I wanted a tuxedo fashion show to complement the wedding dress show, and it worked out wonderfully," Scott said.

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Continued from Page 6: Success through collaborating.

Scott wants to see the new-for-2024 Leader Holiday Market grow into a full-fledged Christkindlmarkt with time. Featuring 47 vendors, many of which were local to Jefferson County, and an appearance by Santa Claus (portrayed by Scott's husband, Rob), the event seems to have established a foundation on which to grow.

Recent efforts to work with other traditional media have allowed Leader Publications to expand its reach in the region. Scott sees such working agreements becoming more important as the newspaper industry evolves.

"Collaboration and partnerships are critical for all of us and our futures," Scott said.

An agreement with the NBC television affiliate in St. Louis has been really good for the newspaper publisher.

"We benefit from their 24/7 staff, and they benefit from us being entrenched in this community," she explained. "That's just not something you can reproduce unless you immerse yourself in a place."

The newspaper has also been working with regional radio stations to share advertising, another agreement that has proven beneficial for everyone involved.

"We have skills they don't have, and they're able to reach an audience that we might not otherwise, so it works out to everyone's benefit," Scott said.

An even newer partnership is with the Twin City Area Chamber of Commerce to produce a standalone book featuring profiles of community businesses. The book will be placed at locations throughout the newspaper's coverage area, instead of being mailed with the newspaper.

"This is a huge departure from what we usually do. Traditionally, everything has been tied to the paper's distribution," Scott said.

Leader Publications has also recently started work to launch a "Best of" campaign with readers voting in multiple rounds. Going live later in 2025, Scott said the combination of online components and special sections in the newspaper is very exciting.

She added that the Leader's staff has received a lot of guidance and ideas from other newspapers around the country that have done similar campaigns, including Trevor Vernon in the Lake of the Ozarks region.

Of the various things the newspaper puts on and publishes, Scott says her favorites are the special sections involving reader participation. Of particular note is the Family Holiday Album, which sees readers send in photos from the holidays, Scott explained with a smile.

"We get all kinds of photos from the holidays," she said. "New photos, old photos, pictures of peoples' pets, of their families, it's really wonderful."

The coming year

Scott said Leader Publications continues to explore ways it can keep publishing while giving readers the quality product they've come to expect from its newspapers. The company's Support Local Journalism campaign, which launched in early 2024, will return as the response from readers was immense.

One wall of the Leader's office is covered in letters and cards



Peggy Scott sets up the Leader Publications booth for a recruiting event. She says hiring and training staff for newspaper work is one of the industry's biggest hurdles. (Submitted photo)

from donors in the Support Local Journalism campaign who expressed their appreciation for all the work the newspaper has done over its 30-plus years.

"We received lots of donations from very small donors, \$5, \$10, but we're appreciative of each one," Scott said. Her goal for that campaign will be to eventually add an additional full-time reporter to the newsroom.

In 2025, Scott hopes Missouri Press Association's members will take an active role in guiding the industry's future. First up in the year will be Day at the Capitol, scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 23, in Jefferson City.

Scott said she initially didn't see the value in that event until she went to it herself, and it made her a believer in the power of meeting lawmakers where they do the people's business.

"At first, I wasn't sure it was that important, but now I'm a believer. Your legislators care that you come to see them in their natural habitat. We need as many of our people attending that day as possible," Scott said.

Doing what she can to promote the newspaper industry serves another purpose more important to her personally.

"I care a lot about the people in this building and that they have a good solid place to work because I see our impact in the community every day. I know we matter to the people here, but we have to make sure others see our importance too," Scott said.

As of sending this issue of *Missouri Press News* to print, Scott still hadn't had a chance to write that story about the scrapbooking reader, although she remained optimistic. "You can't predict the opportunity that presents tomorrow."

Peggy Scott is MPA's 2025 President. She officially took office on Jan. 1, after being elected during the Association's 158th Annual Convention in Springfield. She lives in Crystal City with her husband, Rob, and they have four children.

MPA's 159th Annual Convention and Tradeshow is scheduled for Sept. 11-13, at The Wildwood Hotel in Wildwood, Missouri. Look for more information in future editions of *Missouri Press News*.



Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives

MPAME

2025

BEST AD CONTEST

Enter the 2025 MPAME Best Ad Contest and show everyone the great work you have done to drive revenue and maybe help others out in the process!

CONTEST INFORMATION

To find full information and rules, go to <https://mopress.com/ad-contest/>

To access the MPAME contest template, please go to newspapercontest.com/mopress early to register your newspaper and setup a password. You must re-register each year you enter the contest. The Better Newspaper Editorial Contest is a completely separate contest and you will have to register separately when you enter your editorial entries. Please contact us with any questions, we want to help you with anything you might have questions on.

Entries must have been published between January 1, 2024, and December 31, 2024.

The contest is open to all staff members of publications holding an Active, Active Online, Friend of, or Specialty Publication membership in Missouri Press Association.

All entries must be submitted as FULL-PAGE electronic tear sheet files. Please name the file(s) in a way that clearly identifies the ad(s) being submitted for judging. You may also circle or include other graphic markings to indicate which ad is to be judged. Please combine PDF's when submitted as one entry.

All entries must have been conceived, written, designed and sold by full or part-time employees of the newspaper.

Note: For large files, you may use an outside file hosting site and submit the URL. **You MUST make sure the file is public, or otherwise shareable and/or that a password is provided, so it can be viewed, printed or downloaded for judging and/or display purposes. Submit smaller files as PDFs within the template.**

The 2025 Best Ad Contest entry fee structure is as follows:

Entries uploaded before Dec. 31: \$7/entry

Entries uploaded January 1-24: \$8/entry Entries uploaded January 25-31: \$10/entry

Payments may be paid online, mailed or called in by time of entry deadline. Pay online at:

<https://bit.ly/2Lg6FVe>. If mailing payment, please mail check to: MPAME Contest, 802 Locust Street, Columbia, MO 65201 or call credit card payment into the MPA office: 573-449-4167

ENTER ONLINE AT: newspapercontest.com/mopress

Missouri Ad Contest Deadline: January 31, 2025

Association Code: MOPRESS

If you have any questions OR feel your newspaper is in the wrong class, please contact Kristie Fortier at kfortier@mopress.com or call 573.449.4167

AWARDS & MEETING INFORMATION

Make plans now to attend the Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives meeting being held on April 10-11, 2025.

Winners will be recognized, and awards presented **Thursday, April 10, 2025**

Event Registration form will be available in January of 2025, at www.mopress.com under **EVENTS**.



Malden

Frances Black

Frances Jane Black, 96, of Malden died peacefully Dec. 4, 2024.



A dedicated professional, Black worked alongside her late husband, Allen, for more than 40 years publishing the *Malden Press-Merit*.

She was a member of several community organizations and supporter of many local causes, including the Malden Historical Museum through which the family helped preserve the community's history.

Black was an avid golfer and as such, following funeral services later this year, the family will host a nine-hole round of golf in Malden to honor her life's contributions.

She is survived by a son, David, and a daughter, Vickie; and many more family and friends.

St. Louis

Bill Greenblatt

William "Bill" David Greenblatt, 70, of St. Louis died Dec. 15, 2024, after a battle with cancer.

Greenblatt was an accomplished photojournalist who covered many events and happenings around St. Louis. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Greenblatt provided many of the photos that helped fill the pages of *Missouri Press News*.

A former firefighter, Greenblatt was the official photographer for the St. Louis Fire Department and the first photographer to join the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame.

In addition to his wife, Barbara, he is survived by three children, Mitchell, Lilly and Ethan; and many more family and friends.



Clarence

Marge Williams

Marjorie Williams, 98, of Clarence died Dec. 19, 2024.

Beginning in 1958, Williams owned the *Clarence Courier* with her late husband, Herb. They later sold the newspaper to their son, Dennis, who operated it until selling to Mike and Sue Scott in 2016.

In addition to her son, Dennis and wife Deborah; she is survived by three granddaughters, Staci, Heidi and Tiffany; five great-grandchildren; and many more family, friends and newspaper colleagues throughout the state.



Missouri Press, A-Mark Foundation will award journalists, newsrooms up to \$15,000

From Missouri Press Staff

Later this month, Missouri Press Association will begin accepting entries for the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism. More information about how to enter, including the specific entry form needed, will be made available closer to the contest's opening date.

Recognizing excellence in investigative reporting, the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism will award a first-place prize of \$5,000 to the winning journalist and \$2,500 to their news organization. Second place awards \$3,000 to the journalist and \$1,500 to the news organization. Third place awards \$2,000 to the journalist and \$1,000 to the newsroom.

This contest will be open to all news media organizations based in Missouri and their staff members and includes newspapers, broadcast outlets and digital-only platforms. Freelance journalists based in Missouri whose reporting is published or aired by Missouri news media organizations are also eligible to enter.



Entries must have been published or aired during 2024 (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2024). Entries must also include a written statement (500 words or less) outlining the background and scope of the entry and highlighting potential outcomes resulting from the reporting. News organizations will be allowed up to three entries for consideration.

The A-Mark Foundation is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to supporting and encouraging journalism and investigative reporting through grants to organizations that offer awards recognizing journalistic excellence.

Missouri Press Association is the state's trade industry representing newspapers, digital outlets and other media-adjacent organizations.



Bob Ripley (Submitted/Quad State Ink)

Sweet Springs — In late December, the *Herald* marked its 150th anniversary with a celebration in downtown Sweet Springs. Community members attending the event shared the stories the newspaper had covered that were important to them, browsed past issues from throughout the newspaper’s 150 years in bound copies and capped everything off with a toast to the newspaper’s legacy.

Herald Publisher Kathy Dohrman told those attending she is grateful for the community’s continued support of the newspaper. “This celebration isn’t just about the history of The Herald, it’s about the people of Sweet Springs and the role this newspaper has played in connecting, informing and uniting us.

“A local paper like ours is the heartbeat of a small town, and it’s incredibly rewarding to see so many people here tonight who value what we do.”

Troy — Lakeway Publishers announced in early December it had sold its Missouri newspapers to CherryRoad Media, effective Jan. 1. The sale included the *Lincoln County Journal*, *Troy Free Press*, *Elsberry Democrat*, *Centralia Fireside Guard*, *Hermann Advertiser Courier*, *The Lake Gazette* in Monroe City, *Pike County News* and *Vandalia Leader*.

A subsidiary of CherryRoad Technology, CherryRoad Media now operates more than 90 newspapers in 18 states. The family-owned, New Jersey-based business focuses on using technology to strengthen communities through their local newspapers.

“We are excited to be the new stewards of these community news outlets,” Jeremy Gulban, CEO of CherryRoad Media, said. “There is rich history within these communities, this region, and these newspapers have been an integral part of that history, have chronicled that history. We look forward to continuing to serve the citizens of these communities and carrying on the legacy of their newspapers.”

Lakeway is a family-owned media company with headquarters in Morristown, Tenn. The company also owns and operates community newspapers and magazines in Tennessee and Virginia.

Oregon — Bob Ripley announced last month he would be retiring and closing the *Oregon Times Observer* in Holt County, effective with the Thursday, Dec. 26, edition. Ripley operated the Times Observer with his mother, the late B.J. Ripley, until her retirement in 2011. They purchased it in May 1989 from Kent Ford, former editor for Missouri Press Association.

Bob Ripley worked in the newspaper business for 53 years, starting in June 1971 at the *Holt County Sentinel*, which would later be renamed the *Times Observer* after an ownership change. In June 1974, he started at the *Mound City News-Independent* under Roy Sims, making plates for print jobs, creating ads and gathering the week’s courthouse news.

Ripley, who lives in Oregon with his wife, Gina, will continue to check into his office following the newspaper’s closure and help readers transition to the *Mound City News*, which will be Holt County’s only newspaper. He will also take orders for some print jobs for Quad State Ink at Holt County Publishing.

Use Jumbl to request press passes

From Missouri Press Staff

The process for requesting press cards in 2025 is a little bit different as members will now need to go through the Jumbl platform to submit names and other information.

Missouri Press’ press pass request form can be found here: <https://bit.ly/492tR2P>.

In addition to names for press passes, you can provide job titles and email addresses for staff, although that information is not required to receive press passes.

The form is also available in the “Forms” section of Jumbl. For more information about getting started, please contact kfortier@mopress.com or mbarba@mopress.com.

You will also be able to request 2025 calendars and up to six “PRESS” auto stickers for your staff. Please remember, the PRESS auto stickers you received in 2024 will continue to be valid in 2025.

Finally, the form includes a field where you can indicate which staff should receive emails from Missouri Press.

MPA's 2025 officers, directors take office

From Missouri Press Staff

Peggy Scott, publisher of Leader Publications, which includes four community newspapers throughout Jefferson County and St. Louis County, was elected president of the Missouri Press Association during the 158th Annual Convention in Springfield.

Learn more about Scott on Page 4 of this month's *Missouri Press News*.

Other 2025 MPA officers and directors elected Sept. 20, include First Vice President, Bryan Chester, *Columbia Missourian*; Second Vice

President, Bryan Jones, *Morgan County Statesman*, Versailles; Secretary, Donna Bischoff, Bridge Tower Media, St. Louis; and Treasurer, Jaime Mowers, *Webster-Kirkwood Times*, St. Louis.

Directors for three-year terms include Ron Schott, *Wright County Journal*, Mountain Grove; Kenneth L. Garner, Garner Media Holdings, Maryville; and Gary Castor, *Jefferson City News Tribune*.

Hannah Spaar, *The Odessan*, Odessa, was elected as the National

Newspaper Association state chair.

Continuing on the MPA Board in 2025 will be directors: Kimberly Combs, Better Newspapers Inc., Piedmont; Tim Schmidt, Westplex Media, Montgomery City; Lucas Presson, *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau; Sandy Nelson, *Courier Tribune*, Liberty; and Mike Scott, NEMO News Media Group, Kahoka.

Amos Bridges of the *Springfield News-Leader* will continue on the MPA Board of Directors through 2025 as past president.

MPA has Active Online application to consider

From Missouri Press Staff

The Missouri Press Association has received an Active Online Newspaper application for *Excelsior Citizen*. It is published by Jason and Courtney Cole.

An online digital publication, the *Excelsior Citizen's* website is www.ExcelsiorCitizen.com. Contact information includes mailing address:

Excelsior Citizen, 518 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, MO 64024; contact email: info@excelsiorcitizen.com, and telephone: (816) 826-1270.

Membership applications are considered by the MPA Board of Directors at its first meeting after this notice has been published in at least three issues of the MPA Bulletin,

eBulletin and/or the Association's magazine, *Missouri Press News*. The next meeting of the MPA Board is scheduled for Jan. 22, 2025, in Jefferson City.

Comments about this application can be sent to MPA Executive Director Mark Maassen at mmaassen@mopress.com.

Southeast Missouri Press Association Sales BOOT CAMP



Keep your sales moving in the right direction with **FREE** sales training

Thursday, Jan. 30
Rust Center for Media
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AGENDA

11:30 am: Lunch on your own; brown bag it and join us
Noon: Registration
12:30 pm: Back to basics, the sales training you know you need
1:30 pm: Roundtable: Sales pitches and rebounding after a "no"
2:30 pm: To be announced
3:30 pm: Advanced digital sales
4:30 pm: Show & Tell - Share your best ideas for a chance to win cash
5:30 pm: Networking/happy hour - first drink is free!

Is your newspaper prepared?

From Missouri Press Staff

Newspapers have a unique and important responsibility to the community in times of disaster and need to plan ahead how to operate during times of emergencies, whether natural or man-made, or other times of disruption to their business, the community or both.

Developing a checklist of items for your specific newspaper(s) can help you and your staff continue the newspaper's mission of keeping the community informed because in times of crisis, a trusted source for information is needed more than ever.

By pre-planning for times of disaster, your staff will know what steps they need to take for their roles.

Set aside time each year on a specified date, i.e. around Jan. 1, to update your plans, review information for industry contacts, talk to and train employees on what to do in the event of a disaster and inventory supplies needed for your newspaper to properly respond.

Digital preparedness

Newspapers rely on electronics more than ever, including networks that allow different sites within a company to collaborate, teams to work remotely and each internet-capable device to connect to the World Wide Web.

While critical to newspaper creation, those electronics also represent a weak link for your newspaper's production process, so you need to take steps to protect your network, your devices and, most importantly, your data.

For devices and networks, keeping drivers and operating systems updated is important and working with a trusted local IT company will help ensure your network is protected from intrusion.

As for your data, there are lots of options for protecting it, but a solution from a fellow Missouri Press member could prove beneficial to your newspaper.

Over the past year, Warden Publishing in Gasconade County and Vernon Publishing in Miller County have been working together on a data

backup solution with several benefits. Each company hosts two networked storage servers, one for itself and one for the other publisher, that store back-ups of their most important data.

The system was set up by Jacob Warden, who explained that the large distance between the publishers means it is unlikely a single natural disaster would take out both sets of servers.

Another benefit is that in the event a search warrant is issued, and a newspaper's computers are seized in one county, they are unlikely to be taken into custody in the other. Warden explained that the storage servers should make it much easier for a newspaper to get up-and-running in the event a situation like what happened to the *Marion County Record* in Kansas ever happened here.

The overall cost of the set-up would vary for newspapers, but Warden has said options exist that are very cost effective for any size publisher. He is also offering to help any publisher in Missouri with determining the right storage solution for their newspaper.

If you're interested in learning more, email Jacob Warden at jwarden@wardpub.com.

Employee preparedness

Reynolds Journalism Institute last month published an article titled, "Creating systems to keep journalists safe," which outlines steps publishers and editors can take to identify and mitigate risk for their journalists.

Based on The Fundamentals of Safe Commissioning online course from the Editor Safety Hub, authors Michelle Kanaar and Alyssa Schukar discuss the basic steps publications should take to keep journalists safe online and when on assignment.

The article can be found on RJI's website at rjionline.org or by going here: <https://bit.ly/3BpNtSt>.

While some of the article focuses on freelance journalism, much of the information is relevant to any journalist going out on assignment and at any experience level, so use it to better prepare your staff for whatever challenges 2025 might bring.

In a disaster, one person should be in charge who will assess the situation, determine priorities, gather resources, initiate specific orders to staff and adjust plans as needed.

STEP 1 - Priorities in the event of a disaster are:

1. Remove people from the disaster site and further danger. Administer first aid if needed.

2. Alert public safety authorities.

3. Turn off power, isolate or remove equipment, records, etc. Secure premises to eliminate danger and destruction of evidence.

STEP 2 - Follow a plan:

1. The person in charge (disaster manager) will deal with emergency and insurance personnel, loss consultant, and internal/external communications.

2. Authorize and delegate to employees so they will implement subsequent phases of the plan — relocation, back-up resources, implementation of short term goals (i.e. we're not going to miss an issue), etc.

STEP 3 - Short term survival and long-term recovery:

SHORT TERM ACTIONS:

1. Gather the personnel needed to continue business. Have them use appropriate backup facilities or alternate sites as set up in preplanning.

2. Maintain records of all transactions, rentals, purchases and other recovery items for insurance.

3. Begin updating inventory list immediately while property and equipment are fresh in your mind.

4. Call frequent staff meetings to boost morale, uncover staff needs. Encourage employee input.

5. Recognize and deal with post-disaster stress of all involved parties. It is there whether seen or not.

LONG TERM RECOVERY:

1. Re-evaluate your business strategy. Determine the true need to replace items. You are under no obligation to replicate loss.

2. Work to solidify your master recovery plan as you would to build a new business. Do not overlook the positive aspects of recovery.

3. Plan a Grand Opening.

A preliminary disaster checklist

The following checklist will get you started thinking about ways to prepare your newspaper and your employees for responding in emergencies.

Know your disaster(s)

YES NO

- I have made a list of all possible disasters that might affect my paper. (Include tornado, flood, bomb, fire, sabotage, lawsuit, computer system failure, employee death or disability, other types.)
- I have ranked the list of disasters from most likely to least likely.
- I have evaluated what areas of my operation would need to be restored first if a disaster strikes my whole paper, or just a portion of my business.

How will you respond?

YES NO

- I have made decisions on what to do if the paper avoids a direct disaster, but the disaster involves my town, subscribers, advertisers, employees, a family member, independent contractors, or our key suppliers.
- I have made a list of steps to take if one of these “contingent” disasters affects my newspaper.
- I have made a list of key employees we depend on for the basic newspaper function and what the key responsibilities of those employees are in order to get the newspaper published.
- Employees know what to do if the newspaper is spared but disaster strikes their own home or family.
- Employees know whether they can take vacation or sick leave for disaster-related absences.
- I have considered what to do if an employee or a family member is killed or disabled by a disaster.
- I have set priorities on what lines of business (i.e. print shop, office supplies, book store, tag agency, etc.) the newspaper will operate in the wake of a disaster.

Insurance, interruptions and loss

YES NO

- My insurance agent has reviewed my policy and operation(s) during the last year.
- My policy is tailored to specific needs of my newspaper; not a general policy.
- I know where my insurance policies are located, and keep them in a safe place.
- I have reviewed the list of my equipment and understand what is covered by insurance.
- I have replacement cost insurance, including incidental costs.
- I have business interruption coverage, and know the length and limits of that coverage.
- I am certain my insurance policy covers all the risks that I listed above.
- I have determined some items are minor and not worth covering through insurance.

Getting back to business

YES NO

- I have thought about exactly how long it would take to restore my paper to normal operation after each type of disaster.
- I have made a list of which newspapers or businesses I will call on to help with critical functions.
- I have a list of their names, numbers, and critical functions they are to perform.
- I have documented my newspaper’s technical configurations and a list of critical software.
- I have a list of necessary “non-publishing” software, such as accounting and circulation.
- I have a list of the exact number and type of machines I need.
- I have a list of alternate phone numbers to use in case of a disaster.
- I know where to get internet access and email for me and my staff.
- The staff knows where to assemble if the newspaper equipment or offices are unusable.
- If I print other newspapers, I know where I would send my customers and know what to tell them so they help my customers immediately.
- We have established a plan if I am printed elsewhere and my printer has the disaster.
- We know what to tell carriers, post office workers, convenience store distributors and others in case of changes to the delivery of the newspaper.

Backups and emergency responders

YES NO

- I have a list of all vital records pertaining to my newspaper.
- I have made a detailed, room-by-room inventory list of everything at the newspaper.
- My inventory also has descriptions and model numbers of all pieces of equipment and software.
- I have a copy of the layout of my paper, list of addresses and phone numbers of key personnel.
- I have backed up all my computer information and a plan to regularly back up that information.
- I know if I there is “third party property” at my newspaper office and included it in my inventory list.
- I store the back up information and a copy of all vital records in a safe and secure place.
- Local emergency personnel (i.e. fire, EMS, police) have toured my paper in the past year to familiarize their personnel with our building, hazards, exits, etc.
- Local police, fire and medical personnel know us, will vouch for us, and won’t shut us out when other media arrive on the scene.

Judges still needed for NYPA's contest

We want you!



From Missouri Press Staff
For Missouri Press News

Want some new ideas for advertising, photography or editorial coverage in the new year? Well, here's the perfect opportunity to learn more by judging the New York Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest.

Sign up to judge NYPA's contest here: bit.ly/4fDczMc.

Like Missouri Press Association, NYPA's contest uses the Advanced Contest Entry System, or ACES.

It is a requirement of all MPA members to provide at least one judge per newspaper if you plan to enter Missouri's Better Newspaper Contest or the Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives Best Ad Contest. Volunteers will receive their

judging assignments by the third week of January, along with log-in directions and rules. You will have two weeks to complete judging.

The sign-up form does allow you to request categories for judging, however, the more flexible you can be in judging, the more helpful it will be to ensuring all entries are reviewed in a timely manner.

And the more judges you can provide, the more chances you have to learn from others in the industry.

NYPA's members will reciprocate judging for Missouri's Best Ad Contest, which is open now and you can find more information on Page 8 of this month's magazine or online at mopress.com, and the Better Newspaper Contest, which will open in January.

Capitol reporting brings state news to your readers

From Missouri Press Staff

Two services available to Missouri Press Association members can help ensure readers are better informed about what's going on in Jefferson City and throughout the state.

Each legislative session the Missouri School of Journalism sends reporters to Jefferson City for the State Government Reporting Project. The 2025 legislative session begins Jan. 8.

The Capitol Report is available to all MPA members for republishing. A weekly recap of the stories produced by reporters in the Capitol is distributed by Missouri Press.

Newspapers wanting a more localized approach to their statehouse reporting are encouraged to contact Fred Anklam with story ideas or requests for comment from legislators in response to specific legislation

or state policy. Anklam can be contacted by email at anklamf@missouri.edu.

To receive the Capitol Report weekly emails, email Matthew Barba at mbarba@mopress.com.

Missouri Independent

The Missouri Independent is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization covering state government, politics and policy. It is staffed by veteran Missouri reporters and dedicated to investigative journalism that sheds light on how decisions in Jefferson City affect the Show-Me State.

Missouri Independent's work is free for other news outlets to republish. Requirements for republishing include only editing for style or to shorten a story's length, provide proper attribution and a link to the Missouri Independent website, <https://missouriindependent.com>.

OH NO!
Is that really happening?

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Click here for public notices to learn more about:

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Use graphics like this one from the Public Notice Resource Center to remind readers (and elected officials) why public notices need to be in printed, third-party publications like yours.

For more information, contact Matthew Barba at mbarba@mopress.com.

Resources to get your story started



Every Business Needs an Online Presence.

Contact Ted Lawrence at Missouri Press.
tlawrence@mopress.com
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Coming soon!

Missouri Press Foundation's Better Newspaper Contest will open in late January. Are you ready?

Last year, Missouri switched to the Advanced Contest Entry System and will continue to use that platform for the 2025 contests.

A couple tips learned from last year's contest:

- Remember to only include one item for judging with each entry. For example, if you want to enter three items in Best Sports Photo, you will make three separate entries.
- Please combine your entries that consist of more than one piece of content or more than one page, such as Best Columnist entries. This will make uploading AND judging much easier.

And remember, the Missouri Press Advertising Managers and Executives Best Ad Contest is open and accepting entries through Jan. 31. Check out Page 8 for more information about that contest.

**Have questions about either contest?
Contact Matthew Barba (mbarba@mopress.com) or
Kristie Fortier (kfortier@mopress.com) for help.**



Missouri Newspaper Organizations

SHOW-ME PRESS ASSOCIATION: President, Roxie Murphy, *Maries County Advocate*; Directors: Hannah Spaar, *The Odessan*, Odessa; Gary Castor, *Jefferson City News Tribune*; Tim Schmidt, Westplex Media; Jacob Warden, Warden Publishing; Ethan Busse, *Washington Missourian*.

OZARK PRESS ASSOCIATION: President, Jordan Troutman, *Cassville Democrat*; Vice President, Steve Pokin, *Springfield Daily Citizen*; Treasurer, Dan Wehmer, *Webster County Citizen*, Seymour; Secretary-Past President, Amanda Mendez, *Howell County News*, Willow Springs. Directors: Pat Hindman, *Cedar County Republican*, Stockton; Kimball Long, *El Dorado Springs Sun*; Kyle Troutman, *Cassville Democrat*; Ron Schott, *Wright County Journal*; and Deanna Moore, Carpenter Media Group, Bolivar.

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI PRESS ASSOCIATION: President, Jay Forness, Jackson; Second Vice President, Tamara Buck, Cape Girardeau; Secretary-Treasurer, Gina Raffety, Jackson; Historian, Peggy Scott, Festus. Past President, Lucas Presson, Cape Girardeau. Director, Kim Combs, Piedmont.

NORTHWEST MISSOURI PRESS ASSOCIATION: President, Ken Garner, *The Maryville Forum/Grant City Times-Tribune*; Vice President, Brent Rosenauer, *The Savannah Reporter*; Secretary, Kathy Conger, *Bethany Republican-Clipper*, and Skye Pournazari, *The Maryville Forum/Grant City Times-Tribune*; Treasurer, W.C. Farmer, *The Atchison County Mail*, Rock Port.

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Judge rules witness names should stay in court records

Also, is artificial intelligence just ‘memorizing’ news organizations’ work?

Pleasantly, I needed to rewrite this column because right before Christmas, a Cole County judge declared unconstitutional the statute requiring redaction of witness names in court records. The lawsuit – Gross v. Parson, 24AC-CC04658 – had been pending for about six months, and oral argument had been held in early December.

The court in its judgment stated the sections of the redaction statute requiring removal of victim and witness names, addresses and contact information from court pleadings to “violate the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution and the Open Courts requirement of Article I, § 14 of the Missouri Constitution.”

Quite a gift for those of us covering the news!

Normally, such decisions are appealed. That’s likely to be the case here too. But it is also possible the Missouri Attorney General’s office decides to not appeal this outcome. The office took an intriguing position in its argument regarding the redaction statute that it “should be interpreted as mandating redaction only when victim and witness names are required by [law] to be kept confidential.” Such a position essentially concedes that the redaction statute, as written, would offend the Missouri Constitution.

The state likely has 30 days to appeal this decision, so mark your calendars for the end of January.

I was in Willow Springs in October for the Ozark Press Association convention when I asked the attendees if they had ever attempted this experiment: Querying an

The court in its judgment stated the sections of the redaction statute requiring removal of victim and witness names, addresses and contact information from court pleadings to violate the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution and the Open Courts requirement of the Missouri Constitution.

AI product to write a news story in the style of their newspaper. Interestingly, someone raised a hand – and recounted how the AI product had reproduced a copy of one of the newspaper’s own articles.

This is the gist behind several of a trio of lawsuits brought by the Center for Investigative Reporting, the New York Times and the Daily News and other media companies against various AI companies in federal court in New York.

AI products are based upon large language models (LLMs). LLMs work by predicting language responses, and those predictions are based on the potentially billions of language examples used to “train” the model.

These lawsuits allege that companies fed LLMs vast quantities of their content without permission, and then often spit out identical copies or nearly identical copies when queried by a user. This is a phenomenon called “memorization.” Copyright violations are the chief cause of action in these lawsuits, but the media enterprises are also suing under common law for misappropriation of their content.

All of these cases are currently in early-stage litigation. The defendants, which include companies like Microsoft and OpenAI, have sought to have various portions of the plaintiffs’ cases dismissed. But it seems likely at least some claims will survive and that the cases will move forward.

Interestingly, last year OpenAI struck a deal with the Associated Press to license use of its news articles going back to 1985. It has similarly signed deals with The Atlantic, Vox Media, and News Corp. publications such as The Wall Street Journal.

These lawsuits are not “class actions” – these papers do not represent any of your interests. But they will set important precedent. You might take a moment and ask the AI product of your choice to write a news story about the town your paper covers. It would be interesting to see how many Missouri Press Association members find that their content has been “memorized.” Let me know what you find.



Dan Curry,
is MPA's Legal Hotline attorney.
Contact him at (816) 756-5458;
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Written by Carolyn Mueller | Illustrated by Philip Goudeau

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