

MIP

MISSOURI PRESS NEWS

Younger readers:

Let your newspaper be an outlet for high school journalists

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Let's work together to meet AI challenges head-on P 12-14

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Let's deliver

Hey Post Office, let's remember our history and agree that delivery is a priority

As newspaper publishers and all Americans brace for a proposed postal rate increase in July, I thought I'd remind everyone about the long history newspapers and the U.S. Postal Service have.

In my opinion, the post office remains the best and most reliable method to deliver newspapers. It's a complicated relationship sometimes. I think the farther you get from your local post office, the more complicated things are.

We are lucky to have some of the best local postmasters in the *Leader* circulation area. They share our desire to get newspapers delivered promptly to our readers once a week and never weakly. That's the association I want. At the federal level, the desire to deliver every day to every door seems less important.

It wasn't always that way.

Recently, I had the honor to visit our nation's capital and the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C. I was shocked to see how much of the museum was dedicated to the historic partnership between newspapers and the post office.

From the giant statue of Benjamin Franklin to the moody path of a colonial delivery road, the museum includes things you might expect – a fabulous stamp collection, history of the Pony Express and Air Mail, a look at baseball through a Postal Service lens. You can try your hand at sorting mail. It's not easy. It also has lots of references to delivering the news over the centuries.

In retrospect, the connection between the post office and newspapers shouldn't have been a surprise for me. After all, Benjamin Franklin was both America's first postmaster general and a colonial newspaper owner, printer and writer.

The first major postal law, passed in 1792, encouraged delivery of

“The postal museum’s website reports that those early leaders recognized that newspapers were necessary to inform people in the brand-new nation. Thomas Jefferson once said, ‘Every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.’ James Madison said newspapers should be moved easily through the mail to give citizens of our fledgling nation information ‘to monitor its elected representatives.’”

newspapers in the U.S. Mail to help grow the nation.

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monitor its elected representatives.”

Before visiting the D.C. museum, I really hadn't thought about it, but many traditional newspaper names are tied to our shared postal connection. You'll recognize Missouri newspaper names that include *Courier, Dispatch, Post* and *Mail*.

The Washington, D.C. museum includes a display of newspaper front pages from across the country. The headlines in this exhibit mark important events in history. I was delighted to recognize quite a few Missouri newspapers.

If you visit Washington, D.C., schedule a stop at the National Postal Museum. I hope our federal legislators also take the time to visit and learn a little bit more about our history. Perhaps our new postmaster general will stop by also. A little knowledge goes a long way.

MPAME

Congratulations to Stephanie Schumer-Vandeven and the board of the Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives organization for bringing home another terrific MPAME meeting in April. Anyone who is interested in generating or preserving revenue for newspapers should make plans to attend next year. This event brings both great training and even better collaboration. Those who attend are eager to share what works and what doesn't, the ins and outs of kick-starting new projects or revitalizing something that's grown dusty over the years. In case you missed it, winners of this year's MPAME Best Ad Contest were published in the April edition. A highlight is seeing the best of the best and making plans to amp up our own ads and revenue for 2025.



Know a photojournalist who belongs in the Hall of Fame?

From Missouri Press Staff

Each year, the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame seeks to recognize those people who have made outstanding contributions to Missouri photojournalism, as well as provide an exhibit venue to showcase the work of these visual reporting pioneers.

Nominations for the 2025 class of inductees is open through May 13, and nominees can be either living or deceased.

All nominations should include a statement explaining the nominee's contributions to Missouri photojournalism along with accompanying examples of their work or portfolio. Additional letters of support are also encouraged.

Inductees to the Photojournalism Hall of Fame will be recognized for one or more of the following: outstanding photojournalism achievement; long-term photography for a Missouri newspaper or other publication/journalism outlet; leadership in education; ethical values and integrity; contributions to community.

Nominations should be submitted to the Missouri Press Foundation by May 13. If you have questions about a nomination, please contact Executive Director Chad Stebbins at (573) 449-4167, ext. 308, or by email at cstebbins@mopress.com.

To view current inductees and their work, visit www.photojournalismhalloffame.org.



CALENDAR

May

13 — Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame Nominations Due

June

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

September

11-13 — MPA 159th Annual Convention and Trade Show, The Wildwood Hotel, Wildwood
 21-27 — 77th Missouri Photo Workshop, Union

November

13 — Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, Columbia

We value your opinion!



Share your thoughts on future MPAME Meetings by completing this short survey!

<https://tinyurl.com/hapddsm7>



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Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives held its annual meeting in April at the Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel in St. Louis. Between Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, April 10-11, the group spent time sharing advertising ideas, learning how others meet needs in their communi-

ties and celebrated some of the best advertising work in the state from 2024. Pictures from this year's MPAME meeting are online at www.mopress.com. While there, check out the April edition of *Missouri Press News* to see the winners from this year's MPAME Best Ad Contest. (Staff photos)

MPAME meets in St. Louis

From Missouri Press Staff

Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives met in St. Louis last month for this year's annual meeting. In addition to adding a new director to the group's board, attendees of the meeting learned from each other, celebrated some of the best advertising work in newspapers from 2024 and shared a few laughs.

MPAME will continue to be led this coming year by Stephanie Schumer-Vandeven of Perryville, with the group's other officers consisting of First Vice President, Jennifer Early, Lebanon; Secretary-Treasurer, Kristie Fortier, Columbia. Joining the group's board of directors was Gina Rafferty of Jackson.

Other directors include Robin Gregg, Paris; Katelyn Mary Skaggs, Festus; Karl Giddens, Columbia; Bryan Chester, Columbia; and Stephanie Watkins, Jackson.

The MPAME annual meeting, held April 10-11, at the Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel included learning sessions with Mark Millsap, executive director of Tennessee Press Association. Millsap had previously visited Missouri earlier in the year to provide training to members of Southeast Missouri Press Association in Cape Girardeau.

His topics covered everything from how to make money using reader's choice-type special sections, even when your area might not initially seem suited for that kind of promotion, to how to utilize AI tools to improve your advertising.

Thursday night of the MPAME meeting included the Best Ad Contest awards banquet, along with presentation of this year's Dee Hamilton Memorial Sales Pro of the Year to Norene Prososki. Owner of the *Ozark County Times* in Gainesville, Prososki started her newspaper career there in 1992 selling ads.

Continued on Page 5



Norene Prososki, left, owner of the *Ozark County Times*, Gainesville, is this year's Dee Hamilton Memorial Sales Pro recipient. Prososki was presented the award by her daughter, Jenny Yarger, who also works at the newspaper as publisher and advertising manager.



MPAME President Stephanie Schumer-Vandeven gets ready to start the Best Ad Contest awards presentation. Awards photos are available online at www.mopress.com.

From Page 4: Ad execs share ideas at MPAME.



Mark Millsap was the featured speaker at the Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives meeting in St. Louis. He covered a variety of topics, including AI in advertising, special sections focused on reader's choice and effective prospecting strategies. (Staff photos)

After three years (1995-1998) at the *Baxter Bulletin* in Mountain Home, Ark., Prososki returned to Gainesville in January 1999 as general manager and later publisher of the *Times*. In 2015, Prososki purchased the *Times* from Dalton Wright.

Prososki is joined at the *Times* by her daughter, Jenny Yarger, who now serves as the newspaper's publisher and advertising manager. Yarger presented her mother with the Sales Pro Award during the MPAME meeting.

Photos from the event are available on Missouri Press Association's website, www.mopress.com.

You are also invited to join the MPAME Facebook group, which can be found by searching for "Missouri Advertising and Marketing Executives".

If you are interested in becoming more involved with MPAME, please contact a board member or Kristie Fortier at kfortier@mopress.com or by phone at (574) 449-4167.

The location for next year's MPAME meeting is still being determined.

Want to provide feedback for the planning process? Take MPAME's survey at tinyurl.com/H8pddsm7 or by scanning the QR code on Page 3.



Above, Kelley Wright with Westplex Media and the *Warren County Record* shares an advertising idea during the Best Ideas session. Wright explained that during the spring storm season she works with a client in the construction trade to provide timely social media advertising posts, in addition to the client's regular print advertising schedule. Above right, Katelyn Mary Skaggs with Leader Publications, left, listens as Stephanie Watkins with the *Jackson Cash-Book Journal* presents during the Best Ideas session. Watkins' newspaper recently did a trivia contest focused on their southeast Missouri community that proved popular with readers.



From left, Stephanie Watkins, Gina Raffety and Jeanine York talk about some of the things they learned during the Thursday afternoon sessions of this year's Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives meeting in St. Louis.

Gasconade County Republican engaging with student journalists

Newspapers are always looking for ways to engage younger readers, and the *Gasconade County Republican* seems to have found a great opportunity.

The newspaper has started partnering with Owensville High School (enrollment 514) to start a journalism class and produce a monthly student paper, *The Dutch Mill*, inside the pages of the *Republican*. The first issue came out in March.

Owensville High School previously had a student paper, the *OHS Spectator*, but it was discontinued nearly 15 years ago. Roxie Murphy, a co-editor-in-chief of the *Spectator* in 2006-07, is now the assistant editor of the *Republican*.

"We were understaffed and felt there were areas in the city that needed more coverage," said Murphy in explaining the collaboration with the school. "We wanted to pull in younger readers. We wanted to improve views on local news sources.

"I'd just been promoted to assistant editor and felt there were ways to cover the gaps, including working with the OHS journalism team, only to discover there wasn't one! Helping the school restart its program would benefit everyone. COVID eliminated a lot of the community's engagement in a district that has traditionally welcomed volunteers."

Murphy and Jacob Warden, general manager, first pitched the idea to publisher Dennis Warden, who said to "run with it." Meetings with the superintendent and principal followed. Amy Quertermous, an English teacher with no journalism background, agreed to become the adviser. Quertermous, who understandably goes by "Mrs. Q.," completed the "Earn Your Press Pass" program made available through the Missouri Press Association.

Continued on Page 7

The **DUCH MILL** Bringing GCR2 to YOU

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025 ■ VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2 ■ www.TheDutchMill.us



Dutch Mill staff members launch first print edition

Dutch Mill staff members on March 5 celebrated their first published issue. New founding members are (front row, left) Abigail Morgan, Eliana Thompson, Marissa Brenner, Lexis Manning and Amy Quertermous (advisor). In the back row, left, Kyle Bollman, Hunter Lang, Jadan Zelch, Kyle Blair and Xavier Bayless. Not Pictured- Arianna Baguio.

PHOTO BY SUBMITTED

FFA contests ignite passion, skill in future farmers

BY ARIANNA BAGUIO
DUTCH MILL STAFF WRITER
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The Owensville High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) Agriculture Sales Team on March 3 toured Blues Hog in Washington to prepare for their contest season.

"What we did to prepare was write some questions to ask about the products we wanted to sell," said Kelly Herbel, a member of the Ag Sales Team.

Blues Hog is a well-known barbecue sauce brand, and they toured the barbecue sauce factory.

The group met owner Tim Scheer and learned about the history of Blues Hog. They toured the entire warehouse, visited various departments, and got a sneak peek at new products. They were shown where products are packaged, and promotional videos



OHS FFA students on March 3 toured the Blue Hog in Washington. The FFA sales team posed for a picture following the tour with the owner of the company. The group included Bryson Kitchell, Grant Huebner, Kelly Herbel, owner Tim Scheer, Lily Barker, Lillian Sample, and Kaydin Carr.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

are created, and they explored several other workplace areas.

Additionally, they had the chance to speak with employees to gain insight into how Blues Hog is promoted.

VFW hosts OHS students at Honors Luncheon

BY KYLE BLAIR
DUTCH MILL STAFF WRITER
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Every year, a selection of high-performing academically-minded students attend the Honors Luncheon at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall.

These students have to demonstrate a 3.5 GPA or above for the first semester and 95 percent or above attendance.

The March 7 luncheon featured speaker Katie Pilgram-Kloppe, an Owensville High School (OHS) alumni who graduated in 2004 and went to Westminster College in Fulton. She spoke on the importance of

See HONORS LUNCHEON on Page 12



PICTURED SENIORS have attended the VFW Honors Luncheon all four years of high school.

Investing in Our Future By Supporting Our Youth

At Legends Bank we know the importance of empowering students as they participate in sports, math and science, the arts and learning how to communicate with the written word. Congratulations to the OHS Journalism Class on the "Dutch Mill."

Above, the April edition of *The Dutch Mill*, a newspaper section produced by students at Owensville High School with the help of Warden Publications. The students' work is incorporated into the *Gasconade County Republican*. On the cover, Jacob Warden presents during the Missouri Press Advertising and Marketing Executives meeting about *The Dutch Mill*. Warden Publications staff help the school faculty and students produce the section, along with lessons adapted from the Earn Your Press Pass program. (Staff photo/Matthew Barba; Submitted graphic/Warden Publications)



MJ ORF giving a pep talk to woodwind ensemble members (from left) Jadan Zelch, Dalaney Hefflin, Bailee Dare, Harper Fuqua, and Lexi Manning before their performance.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

Students earn top ratings in East Central College High School Solo and Ensemble Competition

ABBY MORGAN
DUTCH MILL STAFF WRITER
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The High School Solo and Ensemble Competition at East Central College recently showcased an impressive group of young musicians, all putting their hard work and dedication to the test.

Among the many students who participated, some standout performers earned top ratings for their remarkable performances. Here's a look at the students who excelled and earned well-deserved recognition at the competition.

Exemplary Ratings:
• Bailee Dare, Harper Fuqua, Dalaney Hefflin, Jadan Zelch, and Lexi Manning

• Chris Kroon – trombone solo;

• Jadan Zelch – tenor sax solo;

• Jadan Zelch – vocal solo;

• Eli Shields – vocal solo;

• Jayden Hubbard – vocal solo;

• Cece Clancy – vocal solo;

• Brendyn Mooney – vocal solo; and

• Hunter Leach – vocal solo.

• Cinnamon Ensemble: Jadan Zelch, Brendyn Mooney, Ashden Murphy, Sam Fischer, Eli Shields, Aydan Depeu, James Cooper, and James Stahlman;

• Dancing Darkness Ensemble: Abigail Lange, Eli Shields, Ashden Murphy, Cece Clancy, Kiana Wehneyer, Elaina Leibish, Alex Schuenemeyer, and Destiny Steele.

• Outstanding Ratings:

• Percussion Ensemble: Hunter Lang, Jay Stewart, Cris Reyes,

Logan Kiestling and Bailee Dare;

• Abby Morgan – euphonium solo;

• Kien Bayless – trombone solo;

• Kelly Herbel – tuba solo; and

• Jayden Hubbard – horn solo.

Many students earned an "Exemplary" rating, the highest honor in the competition, showcasing their outstanding talent and dedication.

Jadan Zelch earned Exemplary ratings for both his tenor sax solo and vocal solo, securing a spot at the state competition.

"I got an Exemplary, making it to state," Jadan said, excited about the achievement after months of preparation.

Chris Kroon also earned an Exemplary rating for his trombone solo, surpassing his expectations.

"I expected to get at least another outstanding, especially with Hillary Winter's help," he shared. "I ended up getting an Exemplary."

Several group performances also earned Exemplary ratings.

The East Central College High School Solo and Ensemble Competition was an incredible event that highlighted the talent and commitment of young musicians.

From Exemplary performances to Outstanding ratings, the students who participated in the competition showed immense growth and skill.

For those moving on to the state competition, this is just the beginning of what promises to be an exciting musical journey.

From Page 6: *Helping young journalists get started early can pay off for your community.*

“The Press Pass program was extremely helpful; each video was clear and easy to follow,” Quertermous said. “Switching writing focus to that of a journalist was a tricky transition to make. The videos helped students know what topics to look for, how to approach people, interview strategies, and gave them visual permission to carry a small journalist notebook.”

The collaboration with the high school officially started in August 2024, with the students learning how to write newspaper stories. Rather than calling the publication the *Spectator* again, they chose *The*

Dutch Mill to reflect the Owensville High School Dutchmen mascot and the community’s heritage.

The staff of 12 creates a run sheet for each issue listing the suggested headlines, word counts, potential artwork, and placement priority. Mrs. Q and the students edit the stories, then Murphy gives them a final edit. Jacob Warden and *Republican* editor Dave Marner help coordinate the student photography, and Warden designs the pages. The *Republican*

staff drops off 100 copies of each issue containing the pages of *The Dutch Mill* in the school cafeteria.

Mrs. Q said the students’ favorite experience was visiting the Missouriian Publishing Company in Washington, where the *Gasconade County Republican* is printed.

“Students could see the process from the graphic design department to the printing process itself,” she said. “That morning’s issue of the *Republican* was still hanging. Then fast-forwarding to our first mock pages prior to print was a great motivator into the next issue.”

Mrs. Q said the goal of *The Dutch Mill* is found in its tag line—“Bringing GCR2 (Gasconade County R-2) to YOU.”

“We want to share what is going on in our school community with our local communities,” she said. “When the students approach an article, they are thinking about students directly involved, sponsors of the event, and what we want to share with our local community. Collaboration with the local paper has given our students a more realistic hands-on experience

and responsibility than working on a strictly in-district paper.”

Murphy sees a distinct advantage to the project.

“Printing the student production brings the school’s news directly to the community and vice versa,” she said. “Students are picking up the whole *Gasconade County Republican*. They are reading community news at the same time that they are reading about themselves. We wanted to encourage the school and community to take pride in each other.”

Warden sees yet another benefit. “Schools spend a ton of time and effort on FFA, band, football — all those extracurricular activities,” he said. “But one of the most important things to do is to learn how to write and communicate your ideas. This class is teaching students how to do that.”

“We hope printing the student publication within the *Republican* will increase both youth and adult readership,” Murphy said. “We also hope that establishing this relationship with students will encourage both the community and students to take pride and ownership in their local newspapers.”

Murphy also wanted to acknowledge Hannah Spaar, news editor of *The Odessan* and *Focus on Oak Grove*, for her support.

“Her grandmother started a journalism program between the newspaper and the school district in Odessa,” she said. “When I began researching ways to pitch this idea to the district, Hannah’s was the only program that came close to what I wanted to do, and helped lay the foundation of our proposal.”

“Schools spend a ton of time and effort on FFA, band, football — all those extracurricular activities. But one of the most important things to do is to learn how to write and communicate your ideas. This class is teaching students how to do that.”
— Jacob Warden,
Warden Publishing



In recognition of the upcoming Route 66 Centennial next year, Missouri Press is exploring producing a series of stories focusing on the route travelers would have taken through our state.

Scan the QR code or click here in the digital edition of the magazine to learn more and take a survey to help Missouri Press better determine how to approach this project.



Chad Stebbins,
Missouri Press Association
Executive Director



Missouri Press Insider

Profiling the staff at MPA member newspapers who drive the industry forward.

Where in the state are you located?

Harrisonville, serving Cass and Bates counties.

Who owns the newspaper?

We are locally owned by two businessmen, John Foster and Scott Friedrich; my wife, Leslie; and me.

Population of the town and county:

Harrisonville 10,000;
Cass County 110,000; Bates County 16,000

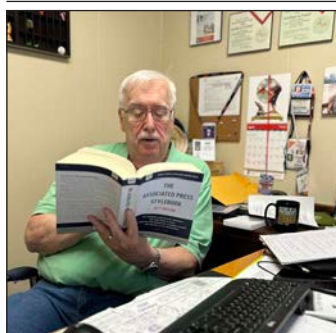
Is the town growing, declining, or holding steady? While the county is growing, Harrisonville is holding steady.

Your greatest challenge: The post office. We lose about 10 percent of our subscription base every year simply because of papers not being delivered. It doesn't hurt as much locally because we have seen retail gains, but out-of-town people simply don't renew subscriptions.

Newspaper's biggest strength: We have a dedicated reader base and good working relationships with local governments and organizations. We know the area well.

Newspaper's biggest weakness or obstacle to overcome: We are now the newspaper serving four markets which previously had their own newspapers, so finding a way to make sure everyone feels like we are their local paper and balancing content for various cities/schools as well as a very diverse demographic that ranges from very rural to upper-middle-class suburban.

If you weren't an editor or a publisher, what do you think you would be doing? Years ago when things would get stressful I would say "I'm going to quit and get a job selling shoes at the mall." I might have been a good shoe salesman.



Dennis Minich
Publisher, *Tribune and Times*,
Harrisonville

EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

Circulation of newspaper: 2,300. Website has about 2,500 subscribers.

Number of issues per week/ publication day: Weekly on Thursdays

Number of full-time and part-time staff: Five full-time, three part-time

Your family: My wife, Leslie, and I married in October of last year. I have an adult son, Derek.

Your hobbies/interests: First: I am a Kansas City Royals fan. But I accidentally stumbled on a new hobby a couple years ago. I have been in journalism for so long that I don't really get "starstruck" or "in awe" of very many people. Two years ago I did a story about the Christmas-Con sponsored by Hallmark in Kansas City. While I was there I met a few of the "celebrities" who were on hand and really enjoyed just meeting them and chatting about TV or movie characters. Since then I have attended a few fan conventions in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. I'm still not starstruck, but I do enjoy getting to meet the actors as a fan, not a reporter.

List something that is interesting or unusual about you: I like to tell people I appeared in a porno. When I was in college I saw a group of people heading down a hill so I wondered what was up and I followed them. I found a group of people gathered around with a big movie camera and lights — the whole set up. They were filming a movie called "Linda Lovelace for President" and this crowd of people was supposedly listening to her speak. The funny thing was, she wasn't there; they just took shots of us in the crowd and then superimposed her in later. But, if you find the right screen grab there is a promotional picture where she is there speaking and I am standing right over her shoulder.

What is your favorite journalism accomplishment? I probably should have a specific story or two that really stand out, but really my favorite accomplishment comes when I pick up a copy of the paper each week. Even though I've spent a week writing and editing, there is still a great sense of satisfaction when you see the final result in print. That appreciation is even stronger on weeks when we put out a paper that has "it" in it. The "it" is that story that people appreciate, or breaks news or puts out information that is necessary for our readers to know.

It's special to know when you put out a paper that was worthy of the lives of the trees it took to be printed.



The *Tribune and Times* staff meet for their weekly meeting, including, from left, Leslie Minich; Dennis Minich; Jimmy Gillispie, editor; John Foster, co-owner; and Luis Saldarriaga, sports editor. (Submitted photo/*Tribune and Times*)



St. Louis

Fred Lindecke

Fred W. Lindecke, longtime political correspondent for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, died March 8, 2025.

Lindecke received his journalism degree from Washington University, in the course of which he also spent two years serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

His career included working for United Press International in the Chicago, Milwaukee and Washington, D.C. offices before joining the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1963. He became the *Post-Dispatch's* Missouri Political Correspondent in 1967 and retired in 1997.

In addition to working for the



newspaper, Lindecke wrote five plays primarily based on his experiences in the Missouri state legislature and that were performed by a local theater troupe in St. Louis.

A longtime St. Louis sports fan, he also held tickets to the Indianapolis 500 for nearly four decades and in celebration of his life, the family is planning a private memorial service at this year's race later this month.

In addition to his wife, Elaine, he is survived by two children, Steven and Stacy, and many more family and friends.

Mt. Vernon

Virginia Oehlschlager

Virginia Anne (Fairchild) Oehlschlager, 42, died March 27, 2025, at her home and surrounded by family.

Oehlschlager received her mass communications degree from Missouri Southern State University. Later, she would write, edit and do just about every other role necessary during her time at the *Lawrence County Record*.

Later, she purchased a small



farm with her husband, where she embraced the farm life and shared her experiences through her "My Home on the Farm" column. In addition to homeschooling their four children, Oehlschlager also tutored Chinese children online.

In addition to her husband, Matt, she is survived by their children, Kadence, Rylan, Bella and Masen, and many more family and friends.

Scottsdale, Ariz.

Michael Conger

Michael V. Conger, 76, son of the late *Bethany Republican-Clipper* publishers Vincent and Bedonna Conger, died March 27, 2025, at a hospital in Scottsdale, Arizona, of a lung disease.

He was the brother of current publishers, Phil and Kathy Conger.

He received a journalism degree in 1971 from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and went on to receive a law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He practiced law for more than 50 years in Kansas City and Scottsdale.

He leaves behind his wife, Meg, daughter Gigi and son Maximilian.



Washington

Jackie Miller

Jacqueline "Jackie" Miller (nee' Pfeffer), 93, of Washington, Mo., died Friday, April 25, 2025.

The wife of Bill Miller Sr., Missouri Press Association's 2000 president and former publisher of the *Washington Missourian*, she was a constant presence at industry events throughout the years, including MPA's annual convention and the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame induction ceremonies.

In addition to her husband, Bill, she is survived by a son, Bill Miller Jr. and wife Anne of St. Louis; four daughters: Patricia Miller-O'Donnell and husband Jim, and Molly Miller, all of St. Louis, Susan Warden and husband Doug, and Jeanne Wood and husband Mike, all of Washington; 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild; along with other relatives and many friends, both personal and from throughout the newspaper industry.



Missouri Press News
needs your help
to remember
those
industry
colleagues who
are no longer
with us.
Send obits to
mbarba@
mopress.com.

ON THE MOVE



Harrisonville — Luis Saldarriaga joined the *Tribune and Times* as a sports and news reporter in March. This marks a return to Missouri where he recently graduated college.

Born in Orlando, Fla., Saldarriaga attended Culver-Stockton College in Canton, and while there, he worked for the *Wildcat Wire*, covering events on campus. He was also the voice of the men's soccer team, commentating their games for four years on the school's Wildcat Network, as well as reporting on the other sports teams at the school.



After graduating, he went to work with the Boca Raton Bowl in Boca Raton, Fla. as the head of operations. He then went on to work for the Orange Bowl in Miami Gardens, Fla. as an operations assistant in the same year.

In his free time, Saldarriaga enjoys film photography, watching a variety of sports especially those from his home state of Florida. He also enjoys visiting new places and stepping out of his comfort zone, which he did when he visited several European countries during high school and college.

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KEVIN JONES
1st Amendment Golf Classic

JUNE 5, 2025
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From headlines to crime reports: AI's growing role in newsrooms

By Mike & Alex Buffington

Mainstreet Newspapers, Jefferson, Georgia

Editor's note: ChatGPT wrote the headline for this story and generated the image on this page. Background images were created with Adobe Firefly.

A few weeks ago, we asked the ISWNE Hotline for editors to tell how they're using AI in the newsroom. A lot of people responded, some aggressively using AI while others remain reluctant to pursue its newsroom use.

Of course, some AI tools have been around a long time, including spellcheck software and early grammar-checking software.

For the past year or so, we've been experimenting with more advanced AI and its potential to help manage the flow of news on a consistent basis.

We've found some things it's very good at, but it does have some flaws.

Like a lot of small-town newspapers, we face financial and staffing limitations. Even if we could afford more staff, finding and keeping people is increasingly difficult. Plus, we publish five weekly papers and while each has its own editor, we do share resources and help support each other.

So, our experiments with AI have been to find ways to be more efficient with the weekly workload, especially routine duties. In that, AI is proving to be a great tool, and we believe it has a lot of potential for the future at most weekly newsrooms.

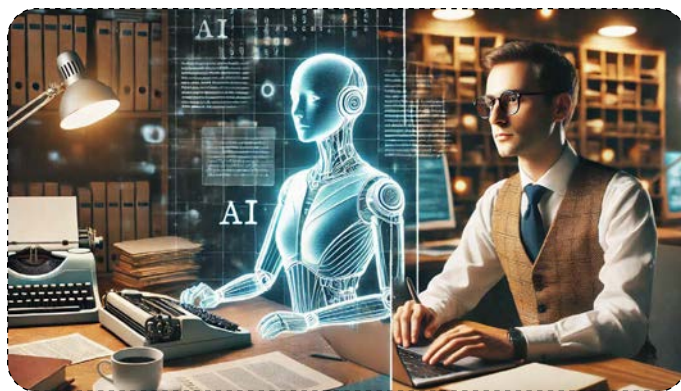
Here are some of the ways we've been using and experimenting with AI, starting with some simple examples working up toward our more complex and problematic experiments:

Transcribing/Otter

Like many of those who commented on the ISWNE Hotline, we too use Otter and other transcription software (iPhones now have that ability) to get quotes and to recall other comments from public meetings. We record all meetings we attend, as do all our editors and reporters. The problem is sound quality; it is often poor and the transcription becomes muddled. Still, as more local governments set up their own recording devices for audio and video, the quality may improve, especially if we can link our recording into those systems. (More about using audio transcriptions later.)

Simple editing

We get a lot of emails with data in a variety of formats and conditions. We've found that AI is excellent for processing this information and is much faster than doing it manually. (Note, we're currently using ChatGPT with the upgraded paid version because it is more robust. There may be better AI software for newspaper use, but this was a way to start.)



Boots-on-the-ground example: If you're in the United States, you may receive college/university dean's/president's/graduates lists from Merit Pages. They often capitalize the degree names (Bachelor of Arts in Journalism) and include the ZIP code for each student. Depending on the college, that can be over 100 students in our area.

Copying and pasting that copy with the instructions to "De-capitalize non-proper nouns and remove ZIP codes," Chat can edit in 30 seconds what would take us 10 minutes to do manually or through the "Find and Replace" function on Microsoft Word and similar software. Saves time and frustration.

Another example is that Chat can refine submitted copy and even enhance it. We recently had a story submitted by a school about some awards local students had won. We put it into Chat to clean it up and to our surprise, Chat recognized the award program, linked to the state department of education website and pulled in relevant background about it.

One caveat about this, however, is that Chat tends to be too rah-rah promotional and needs command language to force it into third-person and tamp down extraneous language.

Extracting data from flyers

ChatGPT is good at extracting the words from a picture flier and creating an announcement from it (we get these because people make them to post to Facebook and other social media.) The command you give Chat is key on this. For example, you could upload a flyer for a church open house announcement and give Chat the command to: "Write an announcement from the information in this flyer using Associated Press style and in third person." Again, this saves time and frustration, especially on deadline. (Note: Chat will also extract data from PDF files and clean it up to remove line breaks and it will also read PowerPoint files. We've not tried Excel files, but it will likely read those as well.)

Continued on Page 13

From Page 12: Journalism's AI evolution.

Sports data

In Georgia, some sports upload results into a central database (especially for track & field and cross-country). That data can be copied and pasted into Chat and cleaned up by removing extraneous information and showing local schools' results. It can also analyze sports data if you have that information available.

Headlines

Stuck for a headline? Put the story in to Chat and tell it to give you three suggestions.

It does a fairly good job with that. If you don't like the first draft, you can tell Chat to tweak it or focus on a particular aspect of the story. Good for when you're tired and on deadline.

Cutlines

AI is proving invaluable in this, especially for those routine school photos that we have submitted each week (we have three school systems and a multitude of schools in our county and they compete to see who can send in the most school news). Often, the photos are of kids doing something, but no names. We put those photos into Chat, tell it what the school name is and what the activity is and it will spit out suggested cutlines for each photo.

The most interesting example of this was a local high school sent its band to London to participate in that city's New Year's Day parade. We received a bunch of photos of the kids marching through the streets of London and some of them posing around the city, but no specific names. We put the photos (12-15 of them) into Chat, told it the school's name and what the event was and asked for cutlines. We got some terrific cutlines back within seconds; it even recognized one of the specific locations in a photo and named that in the cutline.

Copy editing

We all make writing mistakes and typos. We've found that putting a story, or even an entire page, into Chat and asking it to look for errors and typos helps. It will also make grammar suggestions (in bold) and sometimes will improve the flow of an article. While some may bristle at the idea of AI doing something traditional editors have done, we believe this is the trend for the future, especially as AI gets trained. Plus, there's really no downside. You can use some of the suggested changes or not.

Art

We've not really experimented much with using Chat to create images, but plan to do so for creating editorial cartoons to go with some editorials.

Now for the more advanced uses we're experimenting with:

Data stories

One of the things most reporters hate are budget, audit and tax stories. They're often complex and involve a lot of numbers and calculations. This is an area Chat excels in.

There are two ways to go about this: One is to drop a PDF (or other format) of a budget or audit into Chat and

tell it to analyze the data and give you a summary of the major datapoints and from that, you can write a story. The second way is to drop the data into Chat and tell it to write an AP-style story and see what it gives you back.

We did this recently with an old city budget (64-page PDF) we had on hand to see what would happen. It gave us a story, but we didn't think it had the right focus. We then told Chat to rewrite the story and "add more details to the above story including millage rate data and additional percentage increases or decreases in data." Chat then rewrote the story with more of a focus on the millage rate and additional percentages of how the budget had changed from the year before. It wasn't a bad story; at the very least, it would give someone a starting point to write from.

In a related experiment, we dropped a PowerPoint audit summary into Chat from one of our local towns and told it to write a story. It wrote a great summary of the audit's highlights and did so in a few seconds. Chat really does do data well and fast if you give it the right command.

Crime processing

Crime processing takes a lot of time for us. Our local sheriff's department makes approximately 100,000 reports a year, and that's not including the various city police departments and the arrest log. It's a lot to sort through on a weekly basis. We've been experimenting with using ChatGPT to handle some of the more routine aspects of crime reports, but we're still just in the experimenting phase for that.

Meeting stories

This is where Chat begins to falter. Some of that is in the commands given to Chat; the more specific and detailed, the better the outcome will be.

There are a couple of ways we've experimented with this idea. One has been to feed the minutes from a meeting into Chat and tell it to write an AP-style third-person story. Chat can do that, but the quality depends on the complexity of the meeting.

In a multi-topic meeting, if you tell Chat to lead with a specific issue, that helps it focus. But minutes are often sparse and filter out controversy, so it's not the same thing as a reporter covering a public meeting. Still, if like us you have multiple meetings on the same night and have to rely on minutes to backfill, Chat could be a way to quickly get a draft done which can then be refined. (An interesting experiment we've not done would be to feed a year's worth of a government's minutes into Chat and ask it to look for trends.)

Beyond minutes, we wanted to see if Chat could take a transcript from a recording and write a news story based on that. This is where AI struggles. For one thing, as mentioned above, transcripts are often muddled because the initial recording wasn't very clear. Chat can figure out some of that by context, but not everything.

Recently, we've tried this with two very different meetings.

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From Page 13: AI is a tool for your newspaper staff.

The first was a single-issue public hearing by a small-town council about a controversial new tax law. We covered the meeting and wrote a story. Later, we put a transcribed recording of the meeting into Chat, told it the name of the city and the topic being discussed, then told it to write a story. We wanted to see how close the Chat version would be to the version we had written.

The short answer is, better than we anticipated. Chat did identify the topic as having been confusing, which we also mentioned in our story's lead. And it was able to filter out some of the extraneous comments from the audience sitting nearby and pull information from the actual discussion.

Still, there were several aspects to the story that Chat didn't know but we did, like how the discussion fit in with similar discussions being held by other local governments and the fact that for that community, the financial impact would be very small anyway. In other words, Chat couldn't give context to the story that we could.

In addition, Chat couldn't identify the names of those speaking, although it was able to distinguish by context if a speaker was a public official or a citizen.

The second experiment was more complex. We covered a county government meeting that had a lengthy agenda including many zoning issues. We wrote two stories from the meeting, one about the zoning and another about other issues that had been voted on by the board.

Later, we put the lengthy agenda (274-page PDF that had supporting documents) that had been supplied by the county and a transcript of our recording of the meeting into Chat and told it to write two stories, one about the zoning issues and another about the rest of the agenda. The idea was to see how closely Chat matched our "human-written" stories.

The first version of the Chat stories was boilerplate and read like minutes with no real lead and little detail.

We then told Chat to rewrite the stories and pick out a main lead and to expand on that topic with more details. This time, Chat did a pretty good job with the general, non-zoning story and had a lead. But it wasn't the lead we had used and it didn't summarize the other issues very well.

Likewise, for the rewritten zoning story, Chat did have a lead in the second version, but it was the wrong issue to focus on. We then went back a third time and told Chat to rewrite the zoning story and gave it a specific lead we outlined. That time, Chat did write a good lead, but it also created a major problem – it made up a couple of quotes

and inserted them into the story. It just made them up. While Chat had access to the transcript of the meeting to query, those quotes were not in that.

We've seen this with Chat a few other times as well, so for future commands, we will include verbiage for it to not create any quotes. (We suspect this tendency by Chat to make up quotes is related to its use to write promotional materials for social media. It's a bad tendency for newspapers and perhaps it will "unlearn" that habit as we give it more commands.)

Summary

Overall, Chat (and maybe other AI software) can be a huge help today with routine newsroom processing duties and it can help copy edit, write headlines and cutlines. It can also help analyze large data sets, such as budgets and audits and synthesize that into a summary or perhaps even a full story if given a good command or series of tweak commands.

As for news writing from public meetings, Chat has a lot of promise, but is not ready for prime time if the only data it is fed is a transcript from a meeting. It can do OK with minutes from meetings if there is no other choice.

Another hurdle will be to train AI to recognize what is important in a meeting and to create a lead. That's possible by delineating some criteria for it to follow, or simply picking a lead based on the agenda and putting that into the command.

As AI learns from these exercises, we expect it will get better. One area we're exploring is to see if we can make our entire digital database of past stories in BLOX available for Chat to query. That knowledge base would be very helpful to have as a real time resource that AI can quickly scan and find relevant data to give more context to current stories.

Based on our experiments and use, we believe that in the coming years, AI will become as big a revolution in our newsrooms as the transition from hot to cold type was in the 1960s and the transition to computer-digital layout was in the 1990s.

Mike Buffington is co-publisher of Mainstreet Newspapers and was the 2004 president of the National Newspaper Association. Alex Buffington is news editor of the group's flagship newspaper, The Jackson Herald. Email Mike at mike@mainstreetnews.com. This column was originally published in the March issue of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editor's newsletter and is reprinted here with permission.

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Whether it's editing with ChatGPT, generating images with Adobe Firefly or even just wondering if you should say "please" and "thank you" to the computer, Missouri Press has your back when it comes to AI. No matter what questions you have about this evolving technology, we've got answers. And if you come across something we don't know, we'll find someone who does.

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SCRAPBOOK

Boonville — The *Boonville Daily News* announced late last month it would be shuttering its downtown offices at 301 Main Street and moving to remote operations for the time being beginning the last week of April.

Readers shared the notice from the newspaper on social media and bemoaned the loss of the local newspaper's physical presence. However, in an example of proactive social media engagement beyond the newspaper's official channels, staff members explained that efforts are underway to find a new space in Boonville for the newspaper's office.

Several respondents said the *Daily News* had made great strides in its return to local coverage and applauded current staff for their reporting work.

The *Daily News* has been owned by CherryRoad Media since 2021, purchasing it from Gannett.

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Kathy Kiely, University of Missouri Professor
- 3:00 p.m. | Branding Your Newspaper Establishing a Positive Community Relationships | Group Discussion Led by Peggy Scott, Leader Publications
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Printed legal notices are effective because of their permanence

Failure to publish proper notices in our newspapers has real-world consequences. I am sometimes asked what happens when a city fails to run a required notice before making a decision – and the answer I give is that it depends on whether there’s a party interested in challenging the action. Recently this spring, the Missouri Court of Appeals gave us a real world example.

A property owner, Arch Energy, L.C., had been assembling parcels to potentially expand a convenience store and gas station in the City of Brentwood. However, after a new director of planning and development was named in 2021, things changed. The director proposed rezoning the area to not permit gas stations. The new zoning ordinance was eventually adopted in early 2022 at a meeting of the Board of Alderman. At that point, as the Court of Appeals put it, Arch Energy’s “plans began to unravel.”

Missouri’s Zoning Enabling Act is contained in RSMo Sections 89.010 through 89.140, and it is “the sole source of power and measure of authority for cities, towns and villages in zoning matters,” the court wrote. The law requires that, prior to any zoning regulation taking effect, a public hearing must be made. Notice of the hearing must be published “in an official paper or a paper of general circulation in such municipality” at least 15 days in advance.

“Fighting to preserve public notice laws, and their enforcement, will be a constant struggle. In my view, they are becoming more important as the world moves into one where AI can generate any online creation in a matter of seconds.”

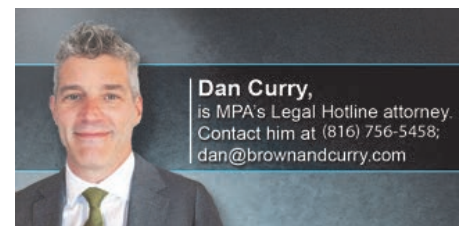
The City of Brentwood did not publish notice in the newspaper prior to the meeting where a public hearing was to be held. Instead, it mailed notice of the meeting to its citizens.

Arch Energy seized on this and filed suit to ask a court to declare the city failed to follow the correct process of publishing notice in the newspaper. The trial court ruled against the

company and for the city, but on appeal, the Court of Appeals sided with Arch Energy. The analysis was fairly straight forward: Because the City of Brentwood “failed to publish the statutorily required notice of a public hearing on Ordinance 5008, the ordinance ‘is invalid and cannot be enforced.’”

If you care to read more, the case is Arch Energy, L.C., v. City of Brentwood, Case No. Ed112714 (Mo.App.E.D. March 18, 2025). It might be a good example for you to use to remind reluctant officials of the importance of following the publication laws.

One thing to note though. Even though Arch Energy prevailed in the Court of Appeals – it actually first lost in the trial court. Fighting to preserve public notice laws, and their enforcement, will be a constant struggle. In my view, they are becoming more important as the world moves into one where AI can generate any online creation in a matter of seconds. Public notice in a newspaper preserves a much harder record that can stand up in court.



Curious to learn more about the court cases and decisions within the Hotline Attorney’s column? In the digital version of *Missouri Press News*, you can click on cited court cases to learn more about what Dan is referencing in his legal column. In fact, the entirety of the digital version of

Missouri Press News has a lot more functionality to make it easier to get information you need and find more resources to help you. We love printed editions of *Missouri Press News*, but if you’re reading this online, click around and find out how much more you can discover.




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