

MP MISSOURI PRESS NEWS

Congratulations

to this year's Outstanding Young Journalists | P4



Anna Campbell

*News Tribune
Jefferson City*



Collin Willard

*Maries County Advocate
Vienna*



Joseph McGraw

*DailyAmerican Republic
Poplar Bluff*

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Tales from the vault: GOP royalty and chocolate cake

The death of Christopher S. “Kit” Bond (May 13, 2025) reminds me of a story that links me to a pair of Missouri GOP celebrities – Christopher Bond and John Ashcroft, although neither had any idea. The story includes a toddler and a piece of chocolate cake.

In the early 1980s (Yes, I’m that old. Hush!), before I began my journey down the newspaper road, I thought perhaps I would pursue a career in politics. I had no aspirations to run for office.

Instead, I was fascinated by the behind-the-scenes work that took place for both campaigns and office holders. I joined the Southeast Missouri State University’s chapter of College Republicans. Don’t worry. This is not a partisan story.

For several years, I served with an army of volunteers who helped make the annual Cape Girardeau Lincoln Days banquet happen. During this era, the Cape Girardeau event celebrating the Republican party was the largest in the state and volunteers didn’t mess around.

In April 1984, I found myself at Cape Girardeau’s Arena Building making sure all the seats were properly arranged and tables pre-set with homemade desserts for the event.

I had strict instructions that then Missouri Attorney General John

“The event taught me some important lessons that I carry with me. Toddlers and politicians love chocolate cake. Details matter, and people will notice. Take the extra step whenever possible. And always strive to exceed expectations.”

Ashcroft MUST have chocolate cake. For others, the dessert selection wasn’t so important. I proudly placed a luscious piece of chocolate cake with chocolate frosting at John Ashcroft’s seat. It looked beautiful. I was proud of my job.

As people began arriving, it turned out Lincoln Days was a who’s-who event for Missouri Republicans of the time. Among the dignitaries at the event was then Gov. Christopher S.

“Kit” Bond and his family, including his very young son, Samuel.

Sam wasn’t a fan of the dessert pre-selected for him. I watched in horror as someone quickly and quietly swapped Sam’s dessert for the chocolate cake designated for John Ashcroft.

Horrors! What should I do? Should I call out Missouri’s Governor for swapping desserts? Would John Ashcroft really mind cake of a different flavor? Was it a big deal?

I decided I better let the organizers know. Perhaps we could quickly sub in another piece of chocolate cake at Ashcroft’s seat and no one would be wiser.

As the chocolate cake caper was unfolding, the room was filling quickly with GOP dignitaries. Roy Blunt, Gene McNary, Mel Hancock, Bill Emerson and Wendell Bailey were among the attendees. It was such a big deal that the *Southeast Missourian* later carried two separate articles about the night.

Neither mentioned chocolate cake.

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PRESIDENT: Peggy Scott, Leader Publications, Festus
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Continued from Page 2: The great chocolate cake crisis.

When I revealed what had happened, event organizers flew into a tizzy. Alas, replacement chocolate cake proved elusive as people were choosing their seats based on the dessert in place. We had to act fast. Ashcroft and his entourage had arrived. From my inexperienced point of view, Ashcroft seemed to glance at his cake and note that it wasn't chocolate.

Those in charge of desserts decided the only reasonable option was to conjure a fantastic chocolate sundae for the state's Attorney General. I'm not sure how the dessert magicians did it, but the offensive not-chocolate cake was removed, and just as Ashcroft finished his meal, a beautiful hot fudge ice cream parfait arrived. Both Sam and John seemed happy with the outcome. Crisis averted.

One of the *Southeast Missourian* stories mentioned that toddler Sam Bond made an impression.

"And Samuel Bond, son of the governor, ran laps around the inside of the Arena Building," the reporter wrote. Later in the news story, the reporter added, "Gov. Bond was also present and made a short

speech, although he was almost upstaged by his toddler-age son, who skipped through the crowd while the candidates spoke."

No mention of chocolate cake, but perhaps we all know a little more than before.

Shortly after the fateful Lincoln Days, I made the shift from political science to journalism. I wanted a chance to tell the stories and to help readers make good decisions about our communities.

Two years later, I was assigned to cover the 1986 Lincoln Days for the *Southeast Missourian*. Then Gov. John Ashcroft and then former Gov. Christopher Bond both attended. My story doesn't mention what either was served for dessert.

The great cake crisis of 1984 had been deftly managed. Only a few people were aware it even existed. The event taught me some important lessons that I carry with me. Toddlers and politicians love chocolate cake. Details matter, and people will notice. Take the extra step whenever possible.

And always strive to exceed expectations.



CALENDAR

June

- 5 — Kevin Jones Memorial First Amendment Golf Tournament | Loutre Shores Country Club, Hermann
- 6 — MPA/MPS/MPF Board Meetings, Hermannhof Inn & Festhalle
- 6 — Show-Me Press Association Meeting, Hermann
- 12 — Covering the Courts Training, Marion County Courthouse, Hannibal

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, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia

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

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Missouri Press celebrates three outstanding young journalists

From Missouri Press Staff

In recognition of their journalistic excellence, three reporters have been selected by Missouri Press Association to receive this year's William E. James Outstanding Young Journalist award.

MPA President Peggy Scott announced Anna Campbell of Jefferson City, Joseph McGraw of Poplar Bluff and Colin Willard of Vienna will receive their awards Saturday, Sept. 13, in Wildwood, Mo., during Missouri Press' 159th Annual Convention and Trade Show awards luncheon.

"This is the 17th year for Missouri Press to recognize young journalists with this award, and its 13th being named in honor of our late colleague, William E. James," said Scott, publisher of Leader Publications in Festus. "It is of critical importance that Missouri Press and its member newspapers celebrate young talent and show appreciation for the next generation of journalists in this very demanding profession."

Winners of the William E. James Outstanding Young Journalist Award have demonstrated excellence in the field of journalism and maintained the quality, ethics and standards of The Journalist's Creed, written by Walter Williams, founding dean of the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

"While the three individuals we are recognizing this year work in very different communities, they all share a passion for providing the absolute best coverage for their readers," Scott said. "Journalists can come from all sorts of different backgrounds, but one thing that unites us is a desire to uphold the highest professional standards of the craft."

Anna Campbell

Anna Campbell joined the *Jefferson City News Tribune* in 2021, the same year she earned her master's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. Covering the newspaper's education beat, she is known for breaking down complex issues or trends and explaining them in easily understandable ways, which has helped readers see the challenges and opportunities that schools and students in Mid-Missouri face.

News Tribune Editor Gary Castor wrote of Campbell that she is a "craftswoman" who "demonstrates a creativity, dedication and passion for the craft she pursues" whether it's as a turner on a wood lathe, creating wooden works of art such as bowls, pens and other pieces, or at the keyboard, deftly tackling education issues with "strong problem-solving and technical skills, as well as a commitment to quality and continuous improvement."



Anna Campbell



Joe McGraw



Colin Willard

"And like any artisan, she seeks to push herself and grow her skills," Castor wrote. "She has asked to learn and participate in other types of reporting, from general assignment work to covering the courts. Her goal is to challenge and expand her skills."

Campbell's work ethic and approach has made her a mentor to her co-workers, and her journalistic methods and integrity have been noted by several others within Jefferson City's schools and the wider community.

"Anna is such a steady rock on our team," said Ryan Pivoney, *News Tribune* assistant city editor. "She's well organized and has a plan for what she intends to cover each week, which tells me she's thoroughly ingrained in her beat and has a solid sense of what the community needs to know. She is definitely a role model for our other reporters."

Continued on Page 5



Anna Campbell, left, speaks with student Jillian Schmidt where she and other high school students were laying wreaths on veterans' graves at the Roscoe Enloe Cemetery. Campbell covers the education beat for the *Jefferson City News Tribune*. (Provided)

From Page 4: *Young journalists are expanding their newspapers' capabilities.*



Joe McGraw waits in the *Poplar Bluff Daily American Republic* newsroom on election night in November 2024. He is joined by his wife, Jess, and son, Eli, and the DAR's assistant editor, Samantha Tucker, a previous recipient of the Outstanding Young Journalist award. McGraw has been with the newspaper since January 2024. (Provided)

Joseph McGraw

Joseph McGraw joined the staff of the *Daily American Republic* (DAR) in Poplar Bluff and *Dexter Statesman* newspapers in January 2024 as a staff writer. McGraw received his bachelor's in political science from the United States Naval Academy with a minor in Arabic and served as an administrative and personnel officer in the U.S. Navy after graduating.

"Since joining our staff, Joe has proven adept at writing not only breaking news stories but also features and complex stories that require detailed investigation," wrote Donna Farley, editor of the *DAR* and *Statesman*, in her nomination letter.

Farley said McGraw's work to inform and educate readers has seen real results for the community. "An article about a tax increase revealed the special district in question had not made any reassessments in approximately a century and did little to inform its taxpayers before an increase of tens of thousands of dollars in some cases. Joe's coverage helped bring county officials back to the mediation table, although finding a resolution to the situation is ongoing," Farley wrote.

Through McGraw, the newspapers have expanded their multimedia coverage, including using more video. He also oversees production of the *Statesman* when Farley is otherwise unavailable.

Repeatedly, McGraw has proven a willingness to meet every deadline and excel at any task that is asked of him.

"Currently, we are without a sports staff and Joe has also

taken on new responsibilities to help make sure our sports pages are completed in the interim," Farley wrote. "This is the one area he specified when interviewed that would be a challenge for him to help with, but he's taken on the new duties without complaint and proven adept at them."

Colin Willard

Colin Willard joined Warden Publishing in October 2022, filling the role of the *Maries County Advocate's* Vienna reporter position following the retirement of former longtime community journalist, the late Laura Schiermeier. He earned his journalism degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism the year before.

Advocate Assistant Editor Roxie Murphy wrote in her nomination letter that Willard's perfect balancing of reporting the news and writing features, along with clean and consistent copy has resulted in his acceptance by the community.

The sole employee working in the *Advocate's* Vienna office, Murphy says Willard is responsible for self-directing his beat, which includes everything from city and school boards to county commission meetings, along with crimes and courts. Through it all, he has proven time and again he has his finger on the pulse of the community.

"In a few short years, Colin has inspired the community to call him their local news reporter with pride, even as he reports on divisive subjects such as the removal of the newly-elected county coroner and a local business owner pursuing a criminal complaint against the sheriff's office following an investigation into his business license," Murphy wrote.

Continued on Page 6



Colin Willard, right, is joined by his Warden Publishing cohorts Roxie Murphy and Jacob Warden in meeting with State Representative Bruce Sassmann, R-Bland, on the floor of the Missouri House during a previous Missouri Press Association Day at the Capitol. Willard has been a reporter with the *Maries County Advocate* since October 2022. Pictured from left, Murphy, Sassmann, Warden and Willard. (Provided)

Nominations needed for MPA's 2026 board of directors

From Missouri Press Staff

The Missouri Press Association nominating committee will meet during the summer to decide on candidates for 2026 MPA Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and four Directors.

The terms of current directors Mike Scott, NEMONews Media Group, Kahoka; and Tim Schmidt, Westplex Media, Montgomery City; are expiring Dec. 31, 2025. MPA Secretary Donna Bischoff, Bridge Tower Media, St. Louis; and MPA Treasurer Jaime Mowers, Webster-Kirkwood Times, St. Louis; are serving one-year terms that also expire Dec. 31, 2025.

A director's position formerly held by Lucas Presson of the *Southeast Missourian*, Cape Girardeau, and another Director position left vacant by the election of an existing Board member to Second Vice President will also need to be filled. Presson's term would have expired on Dec. 31, 2025.

Anyone wanting to be considered for any of the positions, including those currently serving members whose terms are expiring, must complete a nomination form and return it to MPA by July 1.



A copy of the nomination form is available online or by contacting members of Missouri Press staff.

Amos Bridges, *Springfield News Leader*, immediate past president of MPA, is chairman of the nominating committee this year. Elections will be held during the MPA Business Meeting on Friday, Sept. 12 in Wildwood during MPA's 159th Annual Convention.

If you have any questions about the nomination process, please contact MPA Executive Director Chad Stebbins at (573) 449-4167, ext. 308, or at cstebbins@mopress.com.

From Page 5: Outstanding young journalists to be recognized at MPA's Annual Convention.

"Even when Colin writes about the low times in the community, such as the five-year anniversary of a rural county house explosion that injured nearly every member of the volunteer fire protection district, he brings the community together in solidarity."

In addition to his weekly assignments, Willard always makes sure he is available to help when needed and provide input when asked. "Our newsroom staff value's Colin's contributions as a writer and editor and his opinions as a colleague," Murphy wrote.

About the William E. James Outstanding Young Journalist Award

William E. "Bill" James, the namesake for this award, served as publisher of the *Warrensburg Daily Star-Journal* from November 2007 until his death in November 2013. He

was publisher of the *Cass County Democrat-Missourian* in Harrisonville from 1985 to 2000 and was president of the Missouri Press Association in 1998. He was inducted into the MPA Newspaper Hall of Fame in 2001.

Editors or publishers submit nominations for the awards and nominees must have been younger than 30 years old on Jan. 1, of the award year. The aim of the award is to reinforce the importance of a journalist's role by recognizing and nurturing talent to further promote quality journalism.

The nomination form is online at www.mopress.com.

Stay tuned to Missouri Press emails and our website, www.mopress.com, to receive updates on the 159th Annual Convention and Trade Show, including how to register to attend.

Be on the lookout for BNC results

Congratulations to the Better Newspaper Contest awards winners! Results of judging for this year's contest have been or will be soon shared with your newspaper's BNC contact.

Contestants are asked not to publicize results of the BNC until after the awards luncheon at the 159th Annual Convention in Wildwood.

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- When you make a sale into the MPS ad Networks, your newspaper will collect the payment from your client.
- The newspaper will keep 50% of the gross sale and send MPS the other 50%.
(Must be prepaid by the Wednesday prior to the first run date.)
- MPS will need the sales rep to fill out a W9 and submit it before receiving a commission check.
- You, the sales rep will receive 10% of the gross sale amount, after submitting a W9.
(If multiple run dates for the same client are ordered, payout date is based on the last run date per order form submitted).
- To submit an ad go to: <https://tinyurl.com/485dh6wr>
- Payment to MPS may be made on-line or called in by credit card. Any payment mailed will have to be received by Missouri Press before the ad can run. **Call CC payments in to Marcie at 573.449.4167 ext. ***
- Please visit <https://tinyurl.com/2r79h5um> for info on participating publications and pricing structure.

**For more information please contact Ted Lawrence or Jeremy Patton at
tlawrence@mopress.com / jpatton@mopress.com
www.mopress.com/mo-press-service**



Missouri Press Insider

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

Who owns the newspaper? I am the sole owner.

Circulation: Around 900 per week.

Number of issues per week/publication day:
Weekly on Thursday.

Number of full-time and part-time staff:
I'm full-time. I have three part-time staff in the office and two high school kids that will both be working through flex next school year. They both currently work part time for me, including one being the main ad sales person.

Population of the town and county: According to the 2020 Census – coverage towns are Salisbury, 1,500; Brunswick, 801; Keytesville, 440; and Mendon, 163. Chariton County is about 7,400.

Is the community growing, declining, or holding steady? The county as a whole is showing a slight increase.

Your greatest challenge: Getting it all done. As a startup, I've been learning what the area will respond to and in the meantime, I'm wearing all the hats. The goal is to establish a routine so I can eventually train others to take on specific roles. I have been blessed to have tremendous support and patience. My daughter has even stepped in to help with billing and we are learning the process for legal paperwork together.

Newspaper's biggest strength: Business, community and government entity support. They went three months without any kind of paper whatsoever and realized what it meant to be a news desert. They can get state and local news just about anywhere but as a rural area, we are completely ignored by regional news outlets. I focus solely on local news with a sprinkling of columns from state elected officials. This area wants to know what our schools and local governments are doing, and that is a full-time job keeping up with four schools/towns.

What is your favorite journalism accomplishment?

This paper! Not only by getting off the ground from absolutely nothing but a computer and a dream with a massive underestimation of what it was going to take but also the fact that I am able to use the paper to highlight the absolute great aspects of living in a rural area.

From highlighting veterans to the county schools to the "everyday" citizens doing amazing things, I love being able to put forward the best of the best in our county. We may not have a coffee shop on every corner, but we always have someone willing to buy you a cup or make a whole pot and



Melanie Latamondeer
Publisher, *The Chariton Marquee*,
Salisbury

EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

sit around the kitchen table and help you through life's trials. I take a lot of pride in highlighting the strengths of Chariton County every chance I get.

Newspaper's biggest weakness or obstacle to overcome: For me the biggest obstacle is letting people know I'm here. When the *Chariton Journal* went out of business, their subscription list was lost. I have picked up the biggest majority of local people as I did an every door direct marketing drop the first two weeks I was in print. Also finding a balance between print and online.

I have both and online is a total money pit. I'm not sure where the balance is with that!

If you weren't a publisher, what do you think you would be doing? Well, if I could win the lottery, probably living in an RV in a different campground every week. But reality says I would probably be doing bookkeeping from home as there seems to be a tremendous need for that in the area.

Your family: I have two adult children. My daughter, Joni, is married to Brandon and has three kids. My son, Jake, has a son. Those four grandkids (Braelyn, Jayden, Brecklyn and Stetson) are my world. I have a friend and partner in crime, Richard, and a fur step-child Gizmo.

Your hobbies/interests: My grandkids are my favorite hobby. Customers always chuckle at the note on my office door that says Grammy Uber is everyday for school pickup – be right back. Dick and I love to go camping and enjoy watching auto racing in several formats but you can always find us in Talladega, Ala., in the fall for the NASCAR race.

Something interesting or unusual about you: My signature on my email makes most people cringe. Not only do I have the newspaper, but I am a member of the Salisbury City Council, the Chariton County 911 board, the Salisbury Chamber of Commerce president and on the Board of Directors for Larry's Warriors Foundation. When my husband passed away in 2016, his best friend and I established Larry's Warriors to assist cancer patients in Chariton County with travel expenses to and from treatment. We gave out the first checks on the first anniversary of Larry's death on Dec. 26, 2017. Since that time, we have raised and distributed more than \$215,000, as well as established the start to a perpetual fund in hopes that there will always be assistance for cancer warriors. As proud as I am of the newspaper, the foundation is by far my greatest and most humbling accomplishment.

OBITUARIES



St. Louis

Linda Lockhart

Linda Lockhart, 72, longtime St. Louis journalist, died May 4, 2025, from complications from cancer.

A St. Louis native, she attended the Missouri School of Journalism on a full ride scholarship the *Post-Dispatch* offered at the time to outstanding Black students. After earning her degree, she joined the *Post-Dispatch* in 1974, reporting on police and education.

In the 1980s, she began a 17-year tour of upper Midwest newspapers, working stints at the *Milwaukee Journal*, *St. Paul Pioneer Press* in Minnesota, and the *Wisconsin State Journal* and the *Capital Times* in Madison, Wis.

In 1998, she returned to the *Post-Dispatch* as a Metro section editor, editorial writer and an editor on the national and international news desk. She retired from the newspaper in 2007 but after former *Post-Dispatch*

staffers started the *St. Louis Beacon*, Lockhart was asked to join them, which she did through her second retirement in 2019. She did spend three months during the pandemic editing the *St. Louis American* before she retired for a final time.

Lockhart helped found the Greater St. Louis Association of Black Journalists, which advocates for Black reporters and editors and helped to train new ones. She was recognized as a "Living Legend" by the St. Louis Black journalists chapter in 2014 and was inducted into the St. Louis Media History Foundation Hall of Fame in the print category in



2024.

In addition to her husband, Steve Korris, she is survived by two children, Rachel and Paul; two grandchildren; and many more family, friends and colleagues throughout the journalism profession.

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

Covering the Courts Training



**Marion County Courthouse
Hannibal
June 12, 2025 / 10 AM - Noon**

Speak directly with judges, media coordinators and fellow journalists. This is a great opportunity to grow working relationships and for station employees to ask questions about court coverage, such as audio/video recording protocol.



Newspapers unscathed as 2025 legislative session ends

My first legislative session helping to represent the Missouri Press Association ended on May 15 with great relief.

Relief that the state's newspapers didn't lose any ground. Relief that bigger issues diverted most of the attention away from legislation that would have negatively impacted us. Relief that the majority of legislators still seem to have a fondness for their local paper.

I learned that MPA legislative director Doug Crews is one of the most trusted and respected people in Jefferson City. Twenty-six years as MPA executive director and nine more in his current role make him a familiar face in the offices, hallways, and elevators of the Capitol. We visited dozens of legislators, attended numerous committee hearings, and testified several times. In the interest of time, Doug would often cut right to the chase: "We don't like this bill..."

One of the primary bills we didn't like was the one that would allow the self-storage industry to remove their foreclosure notices from newspapers and instead advertise their lien sales "in any other commercially reasonable manner."

What is a commercially reasonable manner to advertise, you ask? It could mean anything, but in most instances would be the self-storage company's own website. (Have you ever visited a self-storage website? Neither have I.) If at least three independent bidders attend or view the sale, it would be deemed commercially reasonable. That could be the operator's uncle, cousin, and neighbor.

The self-storage change was actually filed as part of **three** separate bills in 2025: House Bill 668, sponsored by Dane Diehl (R-Butler); HB 757, sponsored by Don Mayhew (R-Crocker); and Senate Bill 513, sponsored by Justin Brown (R-Rolla). The Mayhew bill

focused on preventing the theft of catalytic converters but included two sentences that allowed the removal of foreclosure notices from newspapers.

The three bills in Missouri caught the attention of the Public Notice Resource Center, which tracks such legislation across the country. "The self-storage industry tortures transparency advocates in the Show-Me State by introducing multiple versions of the same bill every year, forcing their opponents to play whack-a-mole to ensure self-storage operators are required to inform the public before they sell their lessees' property," it wrote in its April newsletter.

The Mayhew bill was approved by the House on April 22 and sent on to the Senate, where it was never heard. The Brown bill passed the Emerging Issues and Professional Registration Committee on April 1 but never went any further. After an April 1 hearing on the Diehl bill by the Economic Development Committee, it never went any further either. Perhaps some of our behind-the-scenes lobbying paid off?

I can say with almost complete certainty that the bill(s) will be back next year, as the MPA has been battling this issue for at least five straight years. The Missouri Self Storage Owners Association has a strong lobbying presence at the Capitol and always seems to find a sponsor (or three) for this particular bill.

How can you help? By getting to know your representatives and senators before we need their help in quashing legislation that would negatively impact newspapers. As I mentioned in my April column, they really appreciate any coverage you give them. If you can swing it, it's worth an annual trip to the Capitol to spend a few hours with them, to see firsthand how they are serving

their constituents and the challenges of appeasing all the visitors and lobbyists who stop by their office.

I'd like to thank Mike Jenner and Dennis Warden again for testifying against bills we deemed harmful. Mike, a former newspaperman who spent 14 years teaching in the Missouri School of Journalism, spoke against two bills that would have eroded Missouri's Sunshine Law. Dennis and I both testified against one of the self-storage bills. The Economic Development Committee showed far more interest in what Dennis had to say, asking him at least a dozen follow-up questions.

If you would like to join us next year in testifying for or against any of the bills affecting papers, please let Doug or me know.

We are OK that a bill that would allow condensed county financial statements to be published in newspapers passed in 2025. Sponsored by Peggy McGaugh (R-Carrollton), the bill also moves the deadline from the first Monday in March to June 30. Agreeing to the smaller financial statements was a compromise agreed to by MPA seven years ago; we ran the risk of losing them altogether.

I mentioned that most of the legislators still seem to take pride in their local paper(s). We observed copies on many desks or elsewhere in their offices. One of my favorite memories is Rep. Jeremy Dean (D-Springfield) digging through a pile of publications to show us a recent copy of the *Springfield News-Leader*.



What an MPA membership does for you:



- Free legal advice from MPA Hotline Attorney Dan Curry
- Ability to participate in, and sell into, the Print and Digital Ad Networks. Member commissions range from \$175 to \$1,250 for a single sale
- Opportunity to receive additional revenue from quotes Missouri Press Service sends to ad buyers, ad agencies, and state offices
- Print edition of the monthly Missouri Press News
- Special delivery of the weekly Missouri Press eBulletin and other important announcements
- Listing in the membership directories for increased visibility
- Press credentials and press cards
- Lobbying for and against bills affecting the newspaper industry and safeguarding of the Missouri Sunshine Law
- Invitation to the annual Day at the Capitol
- MPA annual convention and regional press association meetings
- Ability to earn cash prizes and recognition in MPA news and advertising contests
- Free access to Earn Your Press Pass and Digiversity.TV video training
- Free professional content (NIE serial stories, legislative updates, poems, etc.) to publish
- Newspaper In Education content to foster lifelong readership and promote literacy
- Access to grants and stipends from the Missouri Press Foundation to help pay the salaries of summer interns and new college graduates
- An industry network you can rely on for guidance and support



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Missouri Press awards two more scholarships for rural newspaper program

New recipients will receive stipends after going to work at a newspaper.

From Missouri Press Staff

Two students entering their junior year at the University of Missouri School of Journalism have been elected as the 2025 recipients of the Rural Missouri Newspaper Scholarship.

The scholarships result from a partnership between the Missouri Press Foundation, the J-School, and the Reynolds Journalism Institute. Former MPA Executive Director Mark Maassen initiated the establishment of the scholarships in 2021, which requires recipients spend two years working at a rural Missouri newspaper following graduation.

Selected students receive a \$10,000 scholarship from the J-School for both their junior and senior years. RJI provides \$5,000 for a summer internship between their junior and senior years, and they receive \$10,000 stipends for two years following joining the staff of a rural Missouri newspaper, in addition to their salary from the newspaper. The total value of each Rural Missouri Newspaper Scholarship is \$45,000.

The 2025 recipients are Alivia Roach, a 2023 graduate of Jackson (Missouri) High School, and Audrey Ellis, a 2023 graduate of Dallas Center-Grimes High School in Grimes, Iowa.

Roach served a summer internship with *The Cash-Book Journal* in Jackson before heading to Mizzou. "It opened my eyes to the underappreciation toward rural

newspapers, and how the simple support of the community can make a world of difference," she wrote in her application essay. "To return to my hometown and offer my service as a journalist would be an incredible privilege, as I would get to serve the community of rural Missouri that raised me."

At Mizzou, Roach has been a member of the Society of Professional Journalists, Kappa Alpha Theta, Matchbox Marketing, and StuMo (Student Mobilization).

Since arriving from central Iowa, Ellis has been a Vox magazine contributing writer, a student worker at Digital Initiatives, and a member of Mizzou Women in Media and the Anthropology Student Association.

"My passion lies in serving communities like my own, where curiosity exists but resources do not," Ellis wrote in her essay. "It is unfair to poke fun at rural communities for being uneducated and uninformed but offer no solutions to remedy their lack of knowledge. Quality journalism should not be a luxury, especially when journalism has been built on the notion of informing each and every member of the public."

Alyssa Fitzgerald, a Boonville High School graduate who was selected for the Rural Missouri Newspaper

Scholarship in 2022, will be serving an RJI-sponsored internship with the *Jefferson City News Tribune* this summer. Samuel Cox, a Logan-Rogersville High School graduate; Allison Boedges, a Hermann High School graduate; and Emma Jones, an Odessa High School graduate, are 2023 and 2024 scholarship recipients who are still pursuing their journalism degrees at Mizzou.

The Missouri Press Foundation will work directly with Missouri newspaper publishers to find the best match for scholarship recipients. The intent is for the student to fulfill the two-year post-graduation requirement at the newspaper where they intern. Newspapers will be expected to help the student find housing for the summer

internship program and assist with finding housing for the post-graduation period.

Questions about the Rural Missouri Newspaper Scholarship can be directed to Missouri Press Association Executive Director Chad Stebbins at (573) 449-4167, ext. 308, or at cstebbins@mopress.com.

Applications for the scholarship are accepted at the beginning of each year, and funds are applied in the fall semester of the following school year.



Alivia Roach



Audrey Ellis

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An Adventure in Arrow Rock

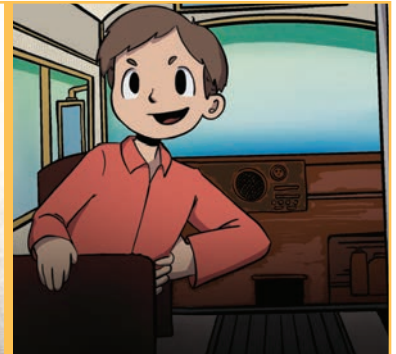
This eight-chapter NIE series will be offered free of charge to newspapers for publication from January 1st until June 30, 2025. Visit mo-nie.com to download the entire series.

Download Code: arrowrock

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Missouri Press Foundation names new chief advancement officer

From Missouri Press Staff

Chris Peck has been named Chief Advancement Officer for the Missouri Press Foundation.

In his new role, Peck will serve as the principal fundraiser for the foundation and work closely with the Missouri Press Association on projects, scholarships, and research to ensure Missouri newspapers thrive in the 21st century.

Peck joins the foundation after a distinguished career in newspapers and philanthropy. He served 11 years as editor of *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis, Tenn., and then served as CEO and state director of the ACE Awareness Foundation, Tennessee's first collaborative effort to address adverse childhood experiences.

Earlier in his career, Peck worked as editor of *The Spokesman-Review* in Spokane, Wash., and was the first Belo Distinguished Chair in Journalism at Southern

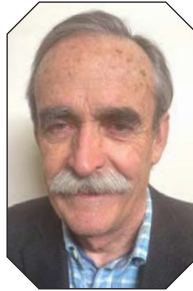
Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He is past president of two legacy national newspaper professional organizations, the American Society of News Editors and the Associated Press Managing Editors.

Peck grew up in a newspaper family in Wyoming where his father and brother owned *The Riverton Ranger*. His first job was as a newspaper janitor sweeping up lead filings from a Linotype machine.

Peck met his wife, Kate, at Stanford University. They have two children, four grandchildren, and moved to Columbia, Mo., in 2024.

The Foundation was previously led by Michael Harper, who left the role in April for a position with the Missouri Military Academy in Mexico.

Anyone interested in learning more about giving opportunities through the Missouri Press Foundation can contact Peck via email at cpeck@mopress.com or by phone at (573) 449-4167, ext. 303.



Chris Peck

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Find more information and a course outline at:



earnyourpresspass.com

Periodicals, other postage rates set to increase in July

From Missouri Press Staff

The U.S. Postal Service in April filed with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) to increase postage rates, including seeking a nearly 10 percent increase for periodical rates.

Periodicals are expected to see an overall increase of 9.385 percent if the postage rate changes go into effect on July 13. Outside county rates will increase by 9.352 percent and within county rates will go up even more, 9.763 percent.

The July postage increase will mark the 9th rise in rates since January 2020.

In USPS' April 9 filing with the PRC, the agency laid out its intent to use



almost the entirety of its available 9.4 percentage points in pricing authority for the Periodicals class. USPS said the attributable cost for Periodicals exceeded the revenue it received.

Specifically, the April filing cites the Delivering for America plan and that "price changes are an integral component of that plan" to achieve "financial sustainability and service excellence".

Changes to First-Class Mail rates will also affect newspaper members. Both stamped and metered single-piece First-Class Mail is increasing by 5 cents, to 78 cents and 74 cents

respectively.

You can read the entirety of the postal service's filing with the PRC here: bit.ly/3YYkCgy.

Earlier this year, Missouri Congressman Sam Graves introduced the USPS Services Enhancement and Regulatory Viability Expansion and Sustainability Act with the intent of updating and reforming the postal regulatory process.

Known as the USPS SERVES US Act, the bill is H.R.3004 and has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. You can read the text of the bill here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/3004/text>.

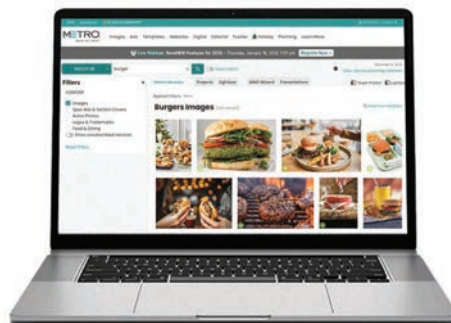
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Should your newspaper use AI?

By Matthew Barba
Missouri Press News

Everywhere you turn, artificial intelligence, or AI, is being touted as the thing that will revolutionize work.

Text-to-image generation has captured our imagination, and the potential for text-to-video generation has resulted in some very interesting creations that have gained more than their fair share of social media likes. It also creates opportunities for extreme disinformation, something the 2024 election made extremely evident.

Some technology companies now expect programmers to be “vibe coders,” using natural language to describe a project and have the machine write code.

There are even services that let laypeople code. I recently tried my hand at creating an app with a tool called Bubble, and the process has proven both painless and time consuming. I just had to wait for the coding to happen off screen, but the fine tuning of the app still requires significant oversight on my part.

In April, Pew Research Center looked at how the American public and AI experts view artificial intelligence tools and end results of what those tools can help produce. The full results of the survey can be found at <https://pewrsr.ch/43E83cK>.

Key among researchers’ findings was that AI experts feel more positive and enthusiastic about AI than the public. For example, AI experts surveyed are far more likely than Americans overall to believe AI will have a very or somewhat positive impact on the United States over the next 20 years (56% vs. 17%).

Pew found that U.S. adults as a whole – whose concerns over AI have grown since 2021 – are more inclined than experts to say they’re more concerned than excited (51% vs. 15% among experts).

The study is an interesting showcase of how AI is being marketed, touted in the public eye by the people selling it as the “the future” but the public, your readers, remain just as hesitant



Graphic created through use of AI.

as you likely are to adopt these new technologies.

Ultimately, I think this is a good thing as we go back to the initial question posed in the headline: Should your newspaper use AI?

The answer, of course, is, it depends.

At the recent Media and the Law seminar held in Kansas City, one of the panels discussed how AI will help media report the news of tomorrow. Adi Kamdar, a Washington, D.C. attorney on the panel, said AI tools are becoming more the norm. “Everyone is working on artificial intelligence, whether we like it or not.”

Ayan Mittra, another panelist and senior managing editor of local news for *The Texas Tribune*, said his publication has cautiously experimented with AI, but it is important to know AI’s limitations and capabilities.

AI can create content, but it can’t create knowledge, Mittra said, so consider it for uses that focus on efficiency and accessibility.

Amy Kristin Sanders with Penn State University and moderator of the Media and the Law panel, said newsrooms using AI tools is not new.

“For news organizations, a level of human intervention is a fundamental part to have in place,” Sanders said, later adding, “[Use of AI] does not give us license to stray from the good fundamentals of journalism.”

What does that mean for you? Even if you’re not comfortable disrupting

your workflow with AI, it is important you do not ignore it and even familiarize yourself with what it is, for two reasons.

First, as more journalism is created using AI, it is imperative your publication be able to point to the work produced entirely by humans, entirely by AI or that is a product of human and AI collaboration.

Pew’s study found there is a lot of skepticism of industry efforts around responsible AI, with 59 percent of the public and 55 percent of surveyed experts having not too much or no confidence in U.S. companies to develop and use AI responsibly.

Second, the next generation of your newspaper’s employees will be versed in AI’s use. You want to embrace that. Even if you don’t think yourself capable of adapting AI tools to your workflow, these new journalists will be thinking in completely innovative ways.

Attorney Kamdar recommends putting your news organization’s guidelines for AI use on your website in order to be completely transparent with your audience. If reporters aren’t prevented from using ChatGPT or similar AI tools, he said they must make sure they talk with editors to ensure fact checking takes place.

These tools, Kamdar said, “do not change that you have to rigorously fact check and confirm. Regardless of what tools we use, it’s still coming from the publication and readers aren’t going to separate something coming from the publisher and the AI tool.”

In the meantime, if you are already using AI in your organization, do you have an ethics guideline for staff? If not, Poynter created a framework for newsrooms to get started, and it can be found here: bit.ly/43DKII9.

Also, I hope you will consider attending (or sending a staff member) to this year’s Annual Convention and Trade Show. One of our scheduled speakers is Austin Lewter with the Texas Center for Community Journalism, who will be talking about AI’s use in community newspapers.



Missouri Newspaper Organizations

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You're requesting public information, not guessing file types and formats

Also, be thinking about how you disclose use of AI.

In the story of Ali Baba, the hero speaks the phrase “Open Sesame,” and the cave door swings open, revealing a fortune. Ali Baba, though, had a brother, named Cassim, who guessed at another phrase, “Open Barley.” The door did not swing open, and Cassim met a grim fate.

In February I wrote about the case *Weeks v. City of St. Louis No. ED112624* (Mo.App.E.D. January 28, 2025), in which the Court of Appeals held that the city did not have to turn over a database because it would have had to convert the database into a different file type than the one the requestor asked for. In April, the Missouri Supreme Court accepted transfer. At the time I am writing this column, we are putting the finishing touches on an *amicus* brief in support of the plaintiff.

I mention the story of Ali Baba's brother in that *amicus* brief. Reporters should not be forced to guess what the magic words are to spring open public documents. Specifically, a records-seeker should not need to know the name of the type of file under which an electronic record has been stored. The file type does not matter – the underlying information is what is important.

The Sunshine Law, I argue, is on our side. It contains no language placing the burden on the requestor to specify the data file. In fact, the Sunshine Law strongly suggests the opposite – that a public body should give the requestor the file, even if the specified file type is not available.

I also push back against the lower courts' rulings that tend to use the requestor's follow-up emails against him. Often a records request involves several good-faith exchanges between a reporter and a records custodian before both parties comprehend what documents are being sought, and that is perhaps necessary and normal.

A requestor's attempt to clarify

“Until we get clarity from the Missouri Supreme Court, it is probably a good idea to state overtly in your records request that you will accept the record in whatever format the City maintains the file if your preferred option is unavailable.”

should not be used to catch the requestor up on a technicality.

In the case of Mr. Weeks, in his effort to help the City of St. Louis understand what the database was he was seeking, he suggested the city could produce it in an Excel file. It was this type of suggestion that the City and the Court of Appeals used to deny the request – even though the database was in the possession of the City and clearly a public record. That shouldn't be how this works.

Until we get clarity from the Missouri Supreme Court, it is probably a good idea to state overtly in your records request that you will accept the record in whatever format the City maintains the file if your preferred option is unavailable.

The Sunshine Law seems to be under siege these days. Mr. Weeks' request for a database was denied because he said “Open Barley.” The Missouri State Highway Patrol's

decision to remove crash reports continues to be nettlesome. Efforts to silence elected officials from revealing closed session violations are disturbing. On a daily basis, I hear from you on notice and meeting deficiencies.

Your association continues to stand up to efforts to ratchet back the Sunshine Law. I urge everyone to remain vigilant and to keep our public bodies informed about their duties.

In other notes, it has finally happened: I've fielded a Hotline phone call on using AI to help write a news story. The question was about disclosure, ethics and copyright.

I anticipate that at some point, many of you will face the same questions. I don't pretend to have all the other answers, especially in regards to a paper's internal journalistic policies. I recently attended the 2025 Media and the Law Seminar held in Kansas City. This always informational conference draws journalists and lawyers from across the nation.

AI and disinformation were the hot topics this year, and I took this away from the panelists discussing AI in the newsroom: First, you do want to have a policy on AI. It probably should address when to disclose use of AI; it probably should require human oversight; and caution should be used on using it for audience-facing content.

The Poynter institute has a good website discussing key considerations, and even a policy generator to help you create your own AI policy at bit.ly/43DKII9.

I anticipate the Association will have more to offer on this topic soon.





Take a Road Trip Down



159th Annual Missouri Press Convention and Trade Show Wildwood Hotel • 2801 Fountain Place Wildwood • Sept. 11-13, 2025

To register, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/4bwmf96f>

Call The Wildwood Hotel at 636-733-9100
and ask for the Missouri Press Association Rate

Deadline for Sleeping Rooms: August 11

MPA Rates \$120/per night Sept. 11, \$160/per night Sept. 12 & 13

Deadline to Register for Convention: September 3



Tentative Schedule

Thursday, September 11

11AM | Registration Open | *Pre-Function Area & Augusta Ballroom*
Noon | MPF Lunch/Board Meeting | *Grover Room*
2PM | MPA/MPS Board Meeting | *Chesterfield Room*
6:30-9PM | Foundation Fundraiser | *Big Chief Roadhouse*

Friday, September 12

7:30AM-6:30PM | Registration and Better Newspaper Contest
Displays | *Pre-Function Area & Augusta Ballroom*
8AM-4PM | Trade Show Open
8:15AM | Breakfast Program & Welcome
Wildwood Mayor Joe Garritano | *Wildwood Ballroom*
9AM | General Session | Susan Croce Kelly
Route 66: The Highway and Its People | *Wildwood Ballroom*
9:45AM | General Session | Jeremy Gulban | CherryRoad Media
Connecting What Matters | *Wildwood Ballroom*
10:45AM | Break | Trade Show Area | *Augusta Ballroom*
11AM | Vendor Networking and Info Blasts from Exhibitors
Augusta Ballroom
Noon | Lunch | *Wildwood Ballroom*
12:15PM | Lunch Program | Elizabeth Eikmann
Missouri Humanities | Unseen St. Louis | *Wildwood Ballroom*
1PM | Business Meeting | *Wildwood Ballroom*
1:15-1:40PM | Break and Networking in the Trade Show
Augusta Ballroom
2PM | General Session | State Treasurer Vivek Malek
Remarks and Q & A | *Augusta Ballroom*
2:30PM | General Session | School Coverage in Missouri
Augusta Ballroom
3PM | General Session | Great Ideas Session | *Augusta Ballroom*
5PM | MPA Board of Directors Reception | Milk & Honey
(across the street from Wildwood Hotel entrance)

6PM | Hall of Fame Reception
Wildwood Ballroom

6:20PM | Silent Auction Ends

Last Call for Bids!

6:30 PM | Hall of Fame Dinner |
Introducing MPA's Signature Drink – the Missouri Press Mule
Wildwood Ballroom

Est. 8:30 PM | Hospitality Space Opens

Saturday, September 13

7:30AM-Noon | Registration and Better Newspaper Contest
Displays | *Pre-Function Area & Augusta Ballroom*

8:30AM | Breakfast Program | Don Corrigan, book author and
former newspaper editor | Publish That Book:
How News of the Weird Can Be Your Blockbuster
Augusta Ballroom

9:15-10:25AM | General Session | Roundtable Discussions
Augusta Ballroom

- Newspapers In Education | Helen Headrick & Hannah Spaar
- Future of Newspaper Ownership:
How YOU become the publisher | Tim Schmidt
- Adapting to the Digital Age:
Monetize social media engagement and impact
Katelyn Mary Skaggs
- Speaking their Language:
Connecting with the next generation of journalists
Austin Lewter
- Writing the Future with a Student Journalist Project
Jacob Warden & Roxie Murphy

10:25-10:35AM | Break in *Augusta Ballroom*

10:35-11:35AM | General Session | Austin Lewter

Texas Center for Community Journalism | AI: Create Your
Policy & Know What You're Dealing With | *Augusta Ballroom*

11:30AM | Better Newspaper Contest Awards Lunch
Wildwood Ballroom

Save the Date

159th Missouri Press Annual Convention & Trade Show



September 11-13
Wildwood Hotel, Wildwood



Take a Road Trip Down

HIGHLIGHTS

- MPF fundraiser at Big Chief Roadhouse
- Trade show
- Hall of Fame banquet and introduction of the MPA Mule!
- Better Newspaper Contest awards
- Industry-leading speakers and topics
- Roundtable discussions
- Networking
- And, of course, fun, fun, fun!



Photo credit: Tiezi Moss



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