

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2024

Online Media Campus Upcoming Webinars

[Following the Money in the 2024
Elections with OpenSecrets](#)
Sept. 27, 2024, 1 p.m.

[10 Ways Every Newsroom
Should Be Using AI
with David Arkin](#)
Oct. 10, 2024, 1 p.m.

•
[Specialized Training
Workshop for Journalists
Mental Well-Being
@Auburn University](#)
Oct. 21, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

•
Save the Date
**APA Winter Media
Summit**
Birmingham Marriott
Birmingham, AL
Feb. 14, 2025

Plan now for National Newspaper Week

Statement of ownership filing due in October

The Western Star in Bessemer has a new owner

APA Journalism Foundation internships pay off
for newspapers

Clifton joins the Montgomery Advertiser

Graning named publisher in Natchez

Two things that will never change

One checklist for election countdown



Alabama Press Association
Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service Inc.
2180 Parkway Lake Drive
Hoover, AL 35244
(205) 871-7737
(205) 871-7740 (fax)
www.alabamapress.org

Board of Directors

Darrell Sandlin, Chairman of the Board
TimesDaily, Florence
Denise DuBois, President
The Citizen of East Alabama
Teresa Woodruff, 1st Vice President
The Moulton Advertiser
Robert Bozeman, 2nd Vice President
The Evergreen Courant

Brady Cox, East Lauderdale News
Arlan Blevins, Mountain Valley News
Catherine Hadaway, The Selma Times-Journal
Paige Windsor, Montgomery Advertiser
Robert Blankenship, Brewton Standard
Eddie Dodd, The Abbeville Herald
Tom Mayer, The Cullman Times
Tippy Hunter, The Outlook,
Alexander City
Jeff Martin, The Montgomery Independent
Vince Johnson, Gulf Coast Media
Ashley Trice, Lagniappe, Mobile
Maury Wald, Over The Mountain Journal

APA Staff

Felicia Mason, Executive Director
Brad English, Marketing/Governmental
Affairs Director
Leigh Leigh Tortorici, Senior
Marketing Representative
Parrish Wright, Network Coordinator
Jaelyn Langan, Membership Coordinator
Cassidy Armstrong, Tearsheet Clerk
Dennis R. Bailey, General Counsel
Evans Bailey, General Counsel
Scott Goldsmith, APA Accountant

Plan now for National Newspaper Week

National Newspaper Week 2024 will be observed **Oct. 6-13**, 2024. This 84th annual National Newspaper Week is a recognition of the service of newspapers and their employees throughout the United States and Canada and is sponsored by Newspaper Association Managers.

The theme this year is Telling Our Stories. Every one of us has a story about what led us to this profession. Maybe it was the thrill of chasing a breaking news story, the joy of telling the untold tales of our community, or the drive to hold the powerful accountable. These are the stories that define us, inspire us, and keep us committed to the work we do every day.

Materials, including editorials, cartoons, promotional ads and more, are now available at no cost to APA members. You can access the information [HERE](#).

Use this National Newspaper Week as an opportunity to remind your readers—and yourselves—why journalism matters. Whether it's a personal essay, a column, or a special feature, let's come together



to highlight the passion, dedication, and resilience that drive us.

Share your story with your readers and join the conversation using the hashtag #TellingOurStories2024. Our voices are powerful, and our stories are worth telling. Let's celebrate what it means to be a part of the newspaper business and inspire the next generation of journalists to carry the torch forward.

Also, make it local by editorializing about your newspaper's unique relevance. This can be about your duties as government watchdog, your coverage of community events, publication of timely public notices, etc.

APA has paid a fee so that members can download the information at no cost.

Statement of ownership filing due in October

The publisher of each publication sending Periodicals Class Mail must file USPS Form 3526 by Oct. 1 of each year at the original entry post office.

The information provided on Form 3526 allows the U.S. Postal Service to determine whether the publication meets the standards of Periodicals mailing privileges. Newspapers with electronic subscriptions to claim will also use Form 3526x.

The required information must appear in an issue of the newspaper:

- Not later than Oct. 10 for publications



issued more frequently than weekly.

- Not later than Oct. 31 for publications issued weekly or less frequently, but more frequently than monthly.
- For all other publications, in the first issue whose primary mailed distribution is produced after Oct. 1.

Please send a copy of your Statement of Ownership to the APA office at: 2180 Parkway Lake Drive, Hoover, AL 35244 or email to jaelyn@alabamapress.org.

Specialized Training Workshop for Journalists Mental Well-Being

The School of Communication and Journalism and the Department of Psychological Sciences at Auburn University invite journalists to our 2024 Journalism Mental Health Workshop on Monday, **Oct. 21** from 8:00am to 2:00pm. This event is supported by the Alabama Press Association Journalism Foundation.

All sessions will take place at the Biggio Center on Auburn University's main campus, with complimentary

breakfast, lunch, and snacks provided. Space is limited, so please register [HERE](#) today to secure your spot. Registered participants will get free parking permits.

In addition to the workshop, you will have the opportunity to participate in research led by scholars from Auburn University. This research is intended to better understand critical issues that threaten journalists' well-being, including trauma exposure, moral injury, and burnout.

The Western Star in Bessemer has a new owner

John Allan Clark, who also publishes The Greensboro Watchman in Hale County and the Times-Standard-Herald in Perry County, has purchased the Bessemer paper from Bibb County Media, Inc.

The Western Star was founded in 1984 by Hal Hodges, but traces back to 1887,

with The Bessemer Advertiser, Tribune-Advertiser, Bessemer Weekly and The Bessemer.

For Clark, this acquisition is more than just business deal. It is a return to his family roots. His father grew up in the area and his grandmother lived in the area until

her death last year.

The staff, led by Editor Matthew Bryant, Social Editor Donald J. Howton III, and Reporter Robert Burgins, Jr., will continue to provide the community-focused journalism that has made The Western Star a trusted source for local news.

APA Journalism Foundation internships pay off for newspapers

TAB Media Group was among 10 newspapers to receive a \$2,000 internship from the APA Journalism Foundation this year. Below is a report from intern, Tucker Massey, a senior at Auburn University.

My summer with TAB Media Group

For the past two months, I have had the privilege to work with TAB Media Group, which houses The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper newspapers. In every way, this experience has allowed me to grow and excel, and I know what I have gained here will stick with me as I move closer to graduation and into the workforce.

Admittedly, I remember after my first day, I was talking to my fiancée and my family, and I was complaining an awful lot about how boring my first day was. They all told me it was probably just because it was orientation day, and I shrugged their suggestions off because I just like to complain sometimes.

However, the second day and beyond proved them right and me wrong. I was too quick to complain because as soon as I was given the chance to do the job I have grown to love so much, my entire mindset turned around.

Ever since that second day, I have

loved coming to the office, getting a story assignment (or being given the room to pursue my own stories) and editing. In the mix of school and student journalism, the student journalism portion can oftentimes get drowned out. But with a focus on my work with TAB and nothing else, I was able to rediscover how much I loved journalism and writing and editing.



I have been blessed to meet and speak with some of the most wonderful people this summer and write about them. Even though I have never quite had social prowess, meeting new people and hearing their stories is inspiring, and it is something I have always enjoyed about

this line of work.

Each day, I was given my space to work freely and at my own pace, and I am grateful for that. I have been given deadlines and expectations for my work, but I have never felt lorded over or belittled because I am just an intern. I have been respected and encouraged every day by my boss and coworkers.

Through this experience, I have higher expectations for my work. I have been taught (or reminded) the power of telling a story as opposed to simply saying something happened. My eyes are more trained to see both simple errors as well as larger revisions that bring clarity and impact through their correction.

This internship has not been easy by any means. I was pushed into new territories and given the same opportunities as my coworkers. But I knew through it all that this opportunity and the work I was given was for the glory of God and the informing of His people, not for myself or TAB.

I am beyond grateful for this experience, and I will treasure the people I've met and the lessons I've learned for years to come.

Clifton joins the Montgomery Advertiser

Sarah Clifton has joined the Montgomery Advertiser as the new business reporter. She is a native of Louisiana.

Clifton has a bachelor's degree

in English and news media and a master's in English from the University of Alabama. While in school, she was an award-winning news reporter at the

Crimson White, the student newspaper at the University of Alabama, where she served as a news reporter and an assistant copy editor.

Graning named publisher in Natchez

Former Troy Messenger publisher, Stacy Graning, has been named publisher of Natchez Newspapers Inc., The Natchez Democrat and affiliated print and digital products. Natchez Newspapers Inc. is owned and managed by Boone Newsmedia Inc. (BNI).

"Stacy has a long history with BNI, and we are pleased to have her home in Natchez, where she began her career as

lifestyles editor," said Catherine Boone Hadaway, senior vice president of BNI.

Graning began her career at The Democrat in Natchez, and went on to lead the newsroom as its editor, earning a reputation for excellence in serving the community and training and developing journalists. Under her leadership, the editorial team was consistently recognized with state, regional and

national awards. She continued her work with BNI as publisher at Troy Publications Inc. for 20 years, where she developed strategic community partnerships and led an award-winning team.

Graning served four years on the APA board of directors, and was serving on the APA Journalism Foundation board before returning to Mississippi.

Obituaries

James Jones



James Jones

James Jones, a long-time, award-winning journalist who served as the managing editor of The Selma Times-Journal, has passed away after battling a brief illness over the past month.

Jones had been with The Selma Times-Journal since 2018. He previously worked at the SunHerald in Biloxi for 26

years. Jones grew up in Cottdale, later graduating from Holt High School. In 1992, he graduated from Stillman College with a degree in journalism. While a student, Jones worked as a sports correspondent with The Tuscaloosa News.

"It is with a heavy heart that I must inform you that our good friend and colleague, James Jones, has passed away this morning," said Selma Times-Journal Publisher Brent Maze on Friday. "James has been the heart and soul of The Selma Times-Journal over the past six years.

We are deeply saddened by his loss. Our thoughts and prayers go out to James' family and his numerous friends, many of them he considered just like family."

James has won 14 Alabama Press Association awards and was a part of the Pulitzer Prize winning staff of the SunHerald following their coverage of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

In 2016, James was inducted into the Gulfport Sports Hall of Fame after his service covering sports on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Bill O'Connor



Bill O'Connor

Former APA Executive Director William F. (Bill) O'Connor passed away on Sept. 9, 2024, after a brief illness.

Bill O'Connor built a national reputation as an innovative strategist and problem solver with wide-ranging management talents serving public and private sector clients. His consulting firm, Results LLC, specialized in education, governmental affairs and public relations issues. Bill led successful legislative initiatives ranging from economic development to technology, biomedical research, public health, literacy and other key projects. He advised candidates, officeholders and business leaders with equal measures of precision and candor. Bill was known for his unmatched ability to foresee emerging trends before they developed and recommend insightful proactive solutions.

As CEO of the Business Council of Alabama, Bill led the 5,000-member trade organization during a period of significant growth. His career experience also includes the executive director of the

Alabama Press Association from 1978 to 1982, and served as director of public relations for the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

With two degrees in Communications from the University of Alabama, Bill O'Connor devoted a sizable portion of his career to his alma mater. Administrative positions included tenure as Assistant to the President and later as UA System Vice Chancellor for Governmental Relations. Committed to providing high quality instruction to his fortunate students, Bill savored his time in the classroom as associate professor of advertising and public relations for the College of Communication and Information Sciences.

Continuing his campus involvement, Bill chaired the Advisory Board for the Blackburn Institute and was inducted into the prestigious Blackburn Society. He served on the College of Communication Board of Visitors for 20+ years and received the College's Dean's Medal in recognition of unsurpassed loyalty and commitment as well as the Bert Bank Distinguished Service Award and the Outstanding Alumnus in Advertising. He chaired the College's National Advisory Committee for the 2002 UA Capital Campaign.

Bill was a dedicated member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity and chaired the Phi's record-setting capital development campaign.

Bill is survived by his wife Vicki Gray O'Connor and daughter Anna O'Connor Norris. He was a hero to his five siblings and their spouses: Frances O'Connor Morgan (John), John Talty O'Connor (Carrie), Julia Bradford O'Connor, Michael Brady O'Connor and Patrick Sheperd O'Connor, and his brother-in-law Dr. Steven Mark Gray (Dana). He was blessed and loved by his many nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews, who gave him much joy. Bill was predeceased by his parents William F. O'Connor Sr. and Mary Elizabeth Cooper O'Connor and Jean Townsend O'Connor.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations in Bill O'Connor's name to the College of Communication and Information Sciences. Memorial gifts can be sent to The University of Alabama to benefit the College of Communication and Information Sciences/Capstone Communication Society Gift Fund. Mail to: The University of Alabama Office of Advancement Services Box 870101, Tuscaloosa, AL 35486.

Amanda Whisenant



Amanda Whisenant

A m a n d a Rutledge Whisenant, 49, of Allens Crossroads died Tuesday, Sept. 3, 2024, at Huntsville Hospital after suffering a medical emergency. She and

her husband, Charles Whisenant, were co-owners of The Arab Tribune.

Mrs. Whisenant was born Aug. 9, 1975, in Huntsville to Dan and Beverly Berzett Rutledge. She was married to Charles Whisenant for 26 years.

She was a graduate of Lee High School in Huntsville, the accounts payable coordinator for PZI International and a long-

time employee at Walgreens in Huntsville.

Her family was most important in her life, especially her three grandchildren, and she was so excited about the upcoming birth of her fourth grandchild in December. She loved unconditionally and gave so much of herself to others, expecting nothing in return.

Amanda continued on page 5

Amanda

continued from page 4

She worked tirelessly to help bring awareness to Kelley’s Rainbow, the domestic violence shelter in Marshall County that is named for her sister.

She loved watching Alabama football and Atlanta Braves baseball.

She is survived by her husband: Charles Whisenant; daughters: Brooke (Dale) Mahathey of Arab and Courtney (Shane) Pardue of Madison; sons: Drew

(Taylor) Whisenant of Meridianville, Matt Whisenant of Monrovia, and Daniel (Mollie) Johnston of Huntsville; grandchildren: Luke Johnston, Everett Whisenant, Avery Kate Mahathey, and Ryan Pardue (due in December); father: Dan Rutledge; brother: David (Nikki Talley) Rutledge; sister: Kim (Bryan) Taylor; grandfather: Dr. David Howgate; sister-in-law: Gayla Shedd; nieces: Elizabeth (Will) Head, Kasi (Bill) Schultze, Jordan (Bryan) Young, Sydney (Jacob) Spencer; nephews: Aaron (Erica Allredd) Shedd,

Brent Shedd, Hunter (Erika) Whisenant, Cash Whisenant, Austin Simmons and Stephen Whisenant; great-nieces: Linlee Head, Hazel Whisenant, Journey Young, Helen Young and Victoria Young; great-nephews, Hudson Shedd, Ezra Schultze and Landon Spencer; and work family, friends, and customers from Walgreens and PZI International.

She was preceded in death by her mother: Beverly Rutledge; and sister: Kelley Rutledge Johnston.

Columns

Two things that will never change



Luke told me about a business panel discussion in which he participated. He represented the ad department of the local newspaper, and others represented industries like banking, accounting, and various office services.

The moderator asked each panelist to introduce themselves, identify their company and position, then give a brief, one or two sentence statement of one thing they would like the audience to know about their specialty.

The brevity requirement was broken immediately. The accountant’s statement was several minutes long and, according to Luke, completely forgettable. The banker rambled for a minute or two and ended up saying how much she liked her job. The other panelists were equally vague and unmemorable, until it was Luke’s turn. After introducing himself, he said, “People don’t buy features, they buy benefits.”

That was it: People don’t buy features, they buy benefits. In one sentence, he summed up the most important thing that a salesperson needs to know – whether it’s selling through advertising or selling in a one-to-one conversation.

Luke’s strategy was right on target. “My kickoff statement was easy to remember,” he said. “Some of the people in the audience had never considered the concept of seeing products in terms of features and benefits. As the meeting progressed, their interest gave me a chance to cover important details about advertising. Some of them even wanted to set appointments.”

His experience reminds me of the story about the old sea captain who was famous for his years of success in always delivering the ship’s cargoes on time. In the face of countless storms and dangerous high seas, he never lost a ship, a crew member or a passenger.

Every morning, the old captain went through a strange ritual. He opened the safe in his quarters, opened an envelope and pulled out a small piece of paper. After staring at the paper for a few minutes, he locked it up again and went about the day.

When he retired, the first mate said, “Captain, we feel the secret to your success is on the piece of paper in your safe. May we see it?” The captain smiled and handed the key to him. A few minutes later, the first mate opened the envelope in front of the entire crew.

They were stunned when they learned that the paper read, “Port left. Starboard right.”

The old captain’s focus was on the most basic of sailing basics. From a canoe to a battleship, port is always the left side and starboard is the right side. That will never change.

In advertising – as in any kind of selling - people don’t buy product features, they buy what those products can do for them. That’s the most basic of advertising basics. And that, too, will never change.

As long as advertising people remember that in every sales presentation – and as long as they remember that in every ad they create – they’ll stay on course.

John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com.

Help Wanted/For Sale

Magazine Editor- Alexander City, AL

Are you passionate about writing stories that readers can’t put down? Do you love meeting new people? Are you ready to make a real impact? Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc., is looking for a creative, passionate writer to become the next Magazine Editor for Lake and Lake Martin Living magazines and a portfolio of annual publications.

This position drives content for TPI’s award-winning magazines, researches and writes compelling stories; works with freelance writers; maintains editorial deadlines; and safeguards the editorial integrity of our products.

Minimum Requirements:

- Bachelor’s degree in journalism or equivalent combination of education and experience
- 1-3 years experience (preferably) in journalism or marketing field, specifically content creation
- Excellent writing and reporting skills adaptable to diverse audiences
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- High level of creativity with the ability to strategize content
- Thorough knowledge of AP style
- Ability to prioritize projects and meet

(sometimes tight) deadlines

- Knowledge of social media platforms and digital publishing technologies and a willingness to keep up with new trends

Please contact: Betsy Iler, TPI Magazine Editor-in-Chief, betsy.iler@alexcityoutlook.com or by phone at, 256-234-4282.

For more information and to see the latest listings [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the APA Help Wanted page.

Columns

One checklist for election countdown



by Jim Pumarlo

Election Day is fast approaching. Newsrooms are likely starting the countdown when they take a collective breath from the exhaustive campaign season and return to some level of normalcy.

to ignoring the churn of statements that are repetitive and/or level a series of unsubstantiated charges against opponents.

- **Letters to the editor:** Do your best to provide a forum for readers to endorse their favorite or unendorse their least favorite candidates or referendum issues; letters are the lifeblood of an editorial page. Do not be afraid to edit letters aggressively, especially those that have all the signs of an orchestrated effort.

local slate of candidates.

- **Eleventh-hour charges:** Do take the time to investigate the legitimacy of 11th-hour charges against a candidate to see if they warrant attention. Do not feel compelled to report if a campaign had the information in hand for weeks and waited for the last minute to try to blindside a candidate.

- **Deadlines:** Do stick to deadlines, especially the ones specifically set for election season – i.e. the date for letters to the editor that raise new issues. Do not accept such feeble excuses as someone was caught in traffic or the clock on the home computer was five minutes slower than the editor's computer.

- **Election reports:** Do take the opportunity to take a collective sigh of relief – even celebrate – after your election edition is put to bed and you've reported the votes and quotes. Do not let this signal the end of election coverage. Use your shared knowledge to translate the results, providing valuable analysis and insight for readers.

Election coverage truly tests the thick skin of newsrooms. That's all the more reason to place a premium on fair and consistent coverage. Don't be surprised if the brickbats still outweigh the bouquets tossed the way of editors and reporters. If all sides are crying foul, it's a good bet you've put your best foot forward.

It's understandable for newspapers to feel battered and bruised by the time ballots are cast. In truth, we should be grateful for the attention placed on each and every word, photo, ad or other element of election coverage. Despite today's fractured media landscape, newspapers have the edge in their ability to devote resources and space for comprehensive and meaningful election coverage. Candidates recognize that and care deeply how they are portrayed to the electorate.

The vibrant newspapers are seizing the challenge of remaining the fortress of local information that is the backbone of our democracy.

“The vibrant newspapers are seizing the challenge of remaining the fortress of local information that is the backbone of our democracy.”



Elections coverage is put under the microscope by readers, especially if newspapers have a strong editorial voice. The scrutiny is ratcheted to new heights in today's hyper partisan political climate. Editors and reporters confront passions through phone calls, emails, letters and a variety of social media avenues. Candidates as well as their supporters and detractors are quick to challenge all aspects of election content.

Pressure only builds in these final weeks as campaigns seek to elevate their candidates and issues. Newspapers should seize the opportunity to reaffirm the principles that have guided their coverage for all these months and resolve to not get hoodwinked on election eve.

Here's one checklist of dos and don'ts to guide coverage:

- **Press releases:** Do consider press releases of substance, and strive to give all parties opportunity to comment, if warranted. Do not give a second thought

- **Candidate forums:** Do report on those forums that offer the potential for exploring new territory or feature races where candidates are running neck-in-neck or are generating especially high interest. Do not feel compelled to devote staff time and resources on events that offer little more than a regurgitation of issues and statements that have been reported to death.

- **Whistle-stop tours:** Do report on touring politicians who are seeking statewide office if you have the ability to quiz them on issues that connect with your readers. Do not feel driven to publish a photo and outline of politicians who make a 10-minute stop as part of a statewide whistle-stop tour.

- **Candidate endorsements:** Do report endorsements and noteworthy statements for or against candidates, especially those contrary to the political norm; include reaction from the respective campaigns. Do not waste precious time covering a press conference from political party chairs offering their obligatory support for a

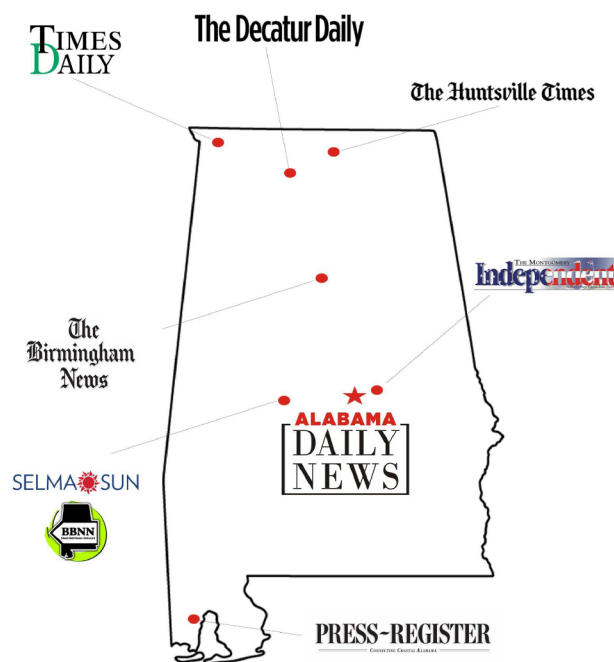
ALABAMA DAILY NEWS

Editors & Publishers:

Do you miss the days of having a reporter dedicated to government and political coverage? Do you want to run regular stories about what's happening in the Legislature and with Alabama's congressional delegation?

If the answers are yes, your newspaper needs to subscribe to the **Capitol News Service** from **Alabama Daily News**. Now in its sixth year, the Alabama Daily News team of **Todd Stacy, Mary Sell and Alexander Willis** provides timely, meaningful news for readers at an affordable price for publishers. And, this year we are adding a reporter in Washington, D.C. to offer on-the-ground coverage of Alabama's congressmen and senators.

Eight newspapers statewide currently subscribe to ADN's Capitol News Service:



CONTENT OFFERINGS

- Daily stories on activity from the Legislature, Governor's Office, executive agencies, Congress and campaigns;
- Regular enterprise stories going deeper into topical issues;
- Photos from the State Capitol, State House and U.S. Capitol.

For story samples & rates contact Publisher Todd Stacy at todd@aldailynews.com or 202-815-3863.