



Happy Holidays,
Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year!

from the
Alabama Press Association
Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service

Cassidy

Julia

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AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2024

Online Media Campus Upcoming Webinars

[7 Ways to Not Get Ghosted
After a Great Advertiser
Meeting](#)

Jan. 9, 2025, 1 p.m.

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Save the Date APA Winter Media Summit

Birmingham Marriott
Birmingham, AL
Feb. 14, 2025

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APA
Media
AWARDS
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All Contests Open!

TimesDaily Empty Table Fund

APA executive director recuperating

NEW AMA Contest incentive

Help APA keep your newspaper off the *naughty list*

Corporate Transparency Act put on hold

The Cullman Times moves to new office

House and Senate introduce the Free Speech
Protection Act



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TimesDaily Empty Table Fund

by Alyssa Sutherland, TimesDaily

TimesDaily-sponsored Empty Table Fund is this year celebrating its 50th campaign with a \$50,000 goal.

One of the Shoals' longest running Christmas collection funds, all donations collected through the Empty Table go directly to the Salvation Army of the Shoals.

In the last 20 years alone, \$795,529 have been raised throughout the annual campaign and poured back into the community.

TimesDaily Publisher Darrell Sandlin called it an honor to support the 50th annual Empty Table Fund drive.

"The longevity and impact of this program in addressing a real need in our community is amazing," he said. "The community's continued support every year as folks step up to help those in need is just one example of what makes the Shoals a special place to live."

The proceeds collected through the Empty Table Fund benefit the Salvation Army's direct services, which provide things like rent and utility assistance, food, and shelter to those in need throughout the year. Alongside the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program and Red Kettle Campaign — both of which kicked off

earlier this month — Empty Table fills significant needs in the community during the Christmas season and beyond.

While the Angel Tree program will provide Christmas for more than 900 angels this year, the Red Kettle Campaign, like the Empty Table Fund, will fill needs in the community in the year to come. Last year, Lt. Tim Cook said approximately \$225,000 was raised in Red Kettles around the Shoals, which fell short of the campaign's \$250,000 goal.

However, this year, the goal is \$300,000. The iconic kettles and bell ringers are at various businesses around the Shoals and will remain through Christmas Eve.

An anonymous donor has agreed to participate in a match day on Dec. 14, matching all donations

collected that day.

Past match days have generated more than \$70,000 in donations.

Lt. Tim Cook said the Salvation Army's budget has a deficit for fiscal year 2025, and programs like the Red Kettle Campaign and Empty Table Fund will "fill in some of that gap." We're excited and looking forward to it," he said of the two major fundraisers. "If we can fill that gap, all the glory and honor goes to God, and we'll be able to help as many people as we can."



APA executive director recuperating

APA Executive Director Felicia Mason underwent open heart surgery on Dec. 5th in Birmingham to replace the mitral valve in her heart. She knew about a small leak earlier in the year that her doctor was watching, but something changed and it became unavoidable, and she had surgery to replace the valve.

The surgery went very well, and she is back home recuperating. It will take some time to get her strength back, but her doctors are very pleased with her

progress. If anyone would like to reach out, her address is:

Felicia Mason
 3212 Midland Drive
 Vestavia Hills, AL 35223

We are not sure how long she will be out of the office, but she will probably not be back for several weeks.

Please contact Brad English or any of the staff if we can be of assistance during her absence. We all wish her well!

NEW AMA Contest incentive for 2025!

As a way to encourage more entries and provide some assistance towards attending our awards banquet, the AMA committee has put together the following incentives for entries:

For every 50 entries submitted in the editorial contest and every 50 entries submitted in the advertising contest, you will receive one complimentary reception and banquet ticket (a \$95+

value).


For every 25 entries submitted in the magazine contest, you will receive one complimentary reception and banquet ticket.


There are no limits but all entries must be for the same publication title; not per company.


Click [HERE](#) to find the rules, portal link and more information.


Help APA keep you off the naughty list!


We are sharing a few holiday housekeeping tips to help you get the most out of your APA membership.


 • Dues letters and invoices were mailed on Friday, Dec. 13. If you participate in the ANAS Networks, you also received a check for your 2024 pooled earnings in that mailing.

 • Make sure you are running your network ads each week and uploading your public notices to www.alabamapublicnotices.com.

 • If you haven't already, please update APA if there are any changes to your APA directory listing for 2025. Your listing includes: print day(s), website, phone, mailing and office addresses, key personnel, associated email addresses and ownership.

 • Please pay your 2025 dues or make arrangements with APA (i.e. some participating newspapers have their dues deducted from their pooled earnings) before submitting entries in the AMA contests.

 • If you haven't received your 2025 dues information/pool check and it has been more than a week, please reach out to APA.

 • Save the date (Feb. 14, 2025) and plan to attend APA's annual media summit, to be held in Birmingham. Stay tuned for more information in the New Year!

Thank you to all of our members. We are so appreciative of your participation and look forward to serving you in 2025.

The Cullman Times moves to new office

by *The Cullman Times*

The Cullman Times newspaper office will move from its 4th Avenue SE location to a new location in Cullman, effective Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024. The move reflects a more centralized and permanent location for the newspaper that has served the county for more than 120 years, said Tom Mayer, editor of the paper. "Given technology advances, our staff resources and the growth direction of the county, it makes sense for us at

this time to move to a more accessible location in Cullman," Mayer said.

Beginning Thursday, subscribers, customers and advertising partners can find The Cullman Times at Cherokee Crossing, about two miles from the old location. The official address is 1850 Cherokee Ave. SW, suite H, Cullman, AL, 35055.

Phone numbers, email addresses and other contact information will stay the same, and can be found in the print paper and at www.cullmantimes.com.

There will be no disruption to newspaper production, and subscribers and those who purchase the paper throughout the county will notice no difference to their delivery schedule, Mayer said.

"Once we get fully settled, we look forward to hosting an open house for the community," Mayer said. "After all, a local newspaper like The Cullman Times belongs to the community it serves — a partnership we will continue to grow from our new location."

Industry

Corporate Transparency Act put on hold

by *Lynne Lance, National Newspaper Association*

The Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) has been put on hold in a far-reaching order that prohibits the federal government from enforcing it anywhere in the country.

In its decision in the case (Texas Top Cop Shop, Inc., et al. v. Garland, et

al., Case No. 4:24-cv-478 [E.D. Tex.]) the court found that the law is likely unconstitutional. Among its requirements was an obligation for 32.5 million companies including small businesses to submit sensitive information regarding "beneficial owners" to the United States Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN)

by January 1, 2025, or face a \$500 per day penalty for failure to report.

As a result of the ruling, no business will be required to file Beneficial Owner Information. However, there will likely be further litigation, so the decision could be overturned at a higher level. NNA will be on the alert for any developments that might restore the reporting requirement.

House and Senate introduce the Free Speech Protection Act

by *Charlotte McBirney, Senior Counsel and Director of Public Policy for the News/Media Alliance*

The News/Media Alliance applauds Representatives Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Kevin Kiley (R-CA) and Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) for introducing the Free Speech Protection Act which would provide protections on the federal level from strategic lawsuits against public participation ("SLAPPs") designed to chill free speech.

The bipartisan Free Speech

Protection Act, introduced on December 5, allows a federal judge to quickly dismiss SLAPPs that target free speech and to award attorney fees to mitigate the burden on the defendant and deter future SLAPPs. This procedural move helps protect journalists and the public from retaliatory lawsuits intended to intimidate the free exercise of their First Amendment rights. The bill addresses a significant gap in the law, as 34 states and the District of Columbia currently have anti-SLAPP laws, but no such law

exists on the federal level.

Alliance President and CEO Danielle Coffey stated, "We are proud to support this important measure to promote free speech and protect the free press against SLAPP lawsuits that are designed to prevent an individual or organization from exercising their First Amendment rights, and we applaud Rep. Raskin, Rep. Kiley and Senator Wyden for their leadership in championing these essential liberties."

Find the bill text [HERE](#).

Columns

I shot an ad into the air



*Ad-libs
by John Foust*

When I was a kid, my family went on a family vacation to the mountains of North Carolina. For a couple of nights, we stayed at a motel which had a play area with a few activities for children. The thing I most remember was a small archery range, which consisted of a couple of straw-filled targets, a bow and an arrow. One of the motel employees – probably a college student with a summer job – was there to make sure no one got hurt. Along the way, he taught a few basics about shooting a bow. The only advice I recall was to make a T-shape with the arm that is extended to hold the bow and the arm which is bent at the elbow to pull back the string. The bowstring arm should be straight back, not against the archer's side.

I think about that little archery range every now and then, because I've been relating advertising to archery for more than 30 years. Archery provides us with

a good comparison – and an easily understood visual image – to share with advertisers. When you narrow the subject to three elements – the bow, the arrow and the target – you have the key ingredients of an advertising campaign. Use the bow to shoot the arrow at the target. It's that simple.

Let's take a closer look at this comparison:

1. The target represents the target audience – a specific group of consumers who fit the profile of likely buyers of certain products or services. It would be ridiculous for an advertiser to try to aim an arrow at more than one target at a time. The object of archery is to hit the bullseye on one target.

Likewise, the object of advertising is to reach a clearly defined target audience.

2. The arrow represents the message. An arrow with a bent shaft will veer off course and probably fall to the ground. An arrow with a blunt end might hit the target, but won't stick. And an arrow with faulty fletching (the fin-like stabilizers at the back) will wobble its way into the ground.

Like an arrow needs to be straight

and true in order to make its way to the target, an advertising message should exhibit the time-tested principles of effective advertising.

That means a compelling offer, a strong headline, relevant illustrations, audience-centered copy, an identifiable logo, and specific purchasing information.

3. The bow represents the delivery system – in our case, print and digital newspapers. In order to function properly, the bow should be of the right design and construction, in the form of market coverage, creative guidance, high production standards, and superb customer service. From the advertiser's perspective, it's crucial to build in an adequate advertising budget, a solid media plan, and a consistent strategy.

Each of these elements is crucial to the success of an advertising effort. The good news is that you are in position to positively influence decisions on all three. Do that – and you're on your way to bullseye results.

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

Help Wanted/For Sale

Director of Communications and Marketing for the College of Sciences and Mathematics (COSAM) - Auburn University

The College of Sciences and Mathematics (COSAM) at Auburn University seeks a dynamic, results-oriented, well-rounded and experienced professional to lead the communications and marketing services for our college as its Director of Communications and Marketing. The ideal candidate will have had career experience as a technical content provider and in a news media, public relations, and/or communications management role, including working with broadcast, electronic and print communication, and graphic design.

Review of applications will begin March 1, 2025, and continue until the position is filled. For questions about the position, please contact Dr. Tim Hawthorne at th0069@auburn.edu.

Asst. Journalism Professor - Auburn University

The Department of Communication and Theatre at Auburn University at

Montgomery (AUM) seeks a tenure track, Assistant Professor in Journalism beginning Fall 2025. This position represents an exciting opportunity to help shape and grow our journalism curriculum as part of a dynamic department focused on preparing students for success in today's multimedia environment.

Visit <https://www.jobs.aum.edu/postings/6939> and complete an online application.

Magazine Feature Writer - Alexander City, AL

Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc., is seeking a feature writer to join their award-winning magazine team. If you love meeting new people and telling their stories, this could be your job. The successful candidate will have a bachelor's degree in journalism or a related field and be familiar with AP style (Associated Press). Photography experience with a 35mm camera is also required, and familiarity with InDesign is a plus. Must be willing to relocate to our coverage area. This is not a remote position.

Our team produces a full menu of glossy lifestyle magazines, including our

signature monthly publications of Lake and Lake Martin Living magazines and three to five annual special edition publications. This is a full-time, entry-level position with paid vacation, insurance plan, 401K, and you get to work at beautiful Lake Martin! Salary range \$30-\$34K, commensurate with education, experience, and writing test.

Growth opportunities to advance within the company

Send resume and writing samples to shaylee.moore@alexcityoutlook.com.

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



Plan to Grow in 2025

Kevin's 7 Tips to Grow Your Newspaper in 2025

By Kevin Slimp

In this digital age, I suppose we've all become accustomed to quick bites of information. With that in mind – and in honor of the final days of 2024 and the early part of 2025 – I've composed a list of tips for my newspaper friends and readers. I'm calling it:

Seven Tips to Grow Your Paper in 2025

Tip 1: Make your customers feel special.

Whether it's your paid subscribers or advertisers, find ways to make them feel special in the coming year. Send hand-written notes to say "thanks" for supporting your local business. Make your subscribers feel special by adding a note with each subscription reminder. Make it a group effort. At many newspapers, staff take turns writing "thank you" notes with each subscription reminder. Personally deliver simple gifts to advertisers this year. I remember how much I always loved it when a vendor would drop by my office with a box of cookies or another small gift. I teach classes in communications and customer service. I often remind students that gaining a new customer takes 20 times more effort than keeping an existing customer. Job #1 is keeping our current customers happy.

Tip 2: Replace outdated equipment.

Before you start yelling, I ask you to remember that I don't get hardware and software for free either. I purchased a new M4 Mac Mini in November, and I've not looked back. The speed at which I get my work done sometimes amazes me. I don't have time to wait on slow equipment, and I don't want to spend more on payroll so others can work on slow equipment. As the new year begins, look around your newsroom and make a list of outdated computers. Replace (or add to) your on-site backup drives each year. External drives tend to last two or three years. Designers should not be working on old computers. The larger the monitor, the less time it takes to design a page. Time really is money.

Tip 3: If you haven't already, create a master chart to track your sales calls.

This tip is so important that I'm including it for a second straight year. Be sure to include columns for "in-person," "phone," "text," and "email" calls. Look over your calls with your ad manager or publisher at the end of each week. A master chart is a straightforward method for increasing the number of calls, guaranteeing increased ad revenue. It is also an excellent reminder to make more in-person calls rather than relying too much on email or other contact methods.

My publisher friends tell me this step often makes a significant difference in sales.

Tip 4: Research and apply for grants.

I spent an hour with a publisher who recently received a \$100,000 grant this morning. Two newspapers I work with have received six-figure grants over the past few months. Several other clients received grants in 2024 for \$15-25k. Call the Small Business Bureau (in some states, grants come through the Economic and Community Development office) and ask about grants for small businesses. You can also find information about grants at grants.gov.

Tip 5: Redesign your newspaper.

I can't think of anything that will kick-start excitement about a community newspaper more than a total redesign. If you've redesigned your paper in the past five years, feel free to skip the rest of this paragraph. If, however, it's been more than five years since you've redesigned your paper, you are losing an excellent opportunity to keep existing readers and win over new readers and advertisers. A common theme among papers I've redesigned (no, you don't have to hire me to redesign your newspaper) is growth in readership, subscribers, and ad revenue afterward.

Tip 6: Brainstorm with your staff in '25.



Schedule a time in advance so everyone can begin formulating ideas. There's no better time than the beginning of a new year to gather your staff and ask, "What can we do to be better?" Get everyone away from their desks and hold the meeting in a conference room, or leave the office and meet in a restaurant meeting space. I've been around for many of these sessions, and the results are often remarkable. Ideas flow. Plans are made. Improvements happen almost immediately.

Tip 7: Get a high school reporter. Find a high school student – or a group of high school students – to provide weekly stories for your paper. Hold these stories to the same guidelines as other stories in your newspaper. At focus groups, I often hear readers speak out about their desire to learn more about what's happening at the local high school. Plus, you might just attract younger readers.

I had planned to include ten tips for newspapers in 2025.

However, I passed my 800-word limit around the end of the sixth tip, and I learned long ago that most readers will never make it past 800 words. Let me take a personal moment for those who made it to the end of this column. I have been swamped with work in 2024, and 2025 doesn't appear less busy. There are a lot of newspapers making serious plans to grow their papers. I'm noticing younger publishers and staff. I'm seeing a return to local ownership. Something good is happening in our industry, and I'm thankful to be a part of it.



Kevin Slimp

"The News Guru"
kevin@kevinslimp.com

Kevin Slimp is a popular consultant, advisor and trainer in the newspaper industry. From 1997-2018, Kevin directed The Newspaper Institute of The University of Tennessee. He currently serves as CEO of Market Square Publishing and Chief Guru at NewspaperAcademy.com.