

# *AlaPressa*

*THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION*

*AUGUST 2025*

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

**APA Winter Media Summit**  
Montgomery, AL  
**February 13, 2026**

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**Online Media Campus**  
**Upcoming Webinars**

[Increasing Your Digital  
Sales and Closing Ratios](#)  
**August 28, 2025, 1 p.m.**

[Reader-Driven Strategies for  
Local Engagement](#)  
**September 4, 2025, 1 p.m.**

**English becomes APA's 12th executive director**

Jim Oakley: A Life of Service, Leadership, and  
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APA Journalism Foundation internships bringing  
young journalists into newsroom

The future of the Selma Sun is here

North Carolina Press executive elected NAM  
president

Center that Rufus Friday heads is aiming to  
restore trust in the news media

**Column: Reliability means paying attention**



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## English becomes APA's 12th executive director

Brad English will become APA's executive director effective Sept. 1, 2025. He will be the 12th director in APA's 154-year history.

English is a native of Evergreen but calls Elba his hometown. His family moved to Elba when he was nine years old. He graduated from Elba High School in 1983, and attended the University of Alabama.

During his time at UA, he worked for The Crimson White, the student newspaper, first as an advertising sales rep and later was named advertising manager. In 1990, when Joel Mask, the associate director of UA Student Media, was called to serve in the Gulf War, English became the interim director.

English joined APA in 1991 as an



advertising sales rep with the Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service. He was named associate advertising manager in 1998, and promoted to advertising manager in 2000.

In 2010, he began lobbying in Montgomery on behalf of the newspapers in the state. He was instrumental in getting legislation passed to strengthen both the state's Open Meetings Law and Open Records Act. In addition, he has worked on numerous bills to protect the publication provisions of public notices in newspapers.

Brad and his wife, Nancy, have two adult daughters and one grandson.

Leigh Leigh Tortorici, who also joined APA in 1991, will take over the role as advertising manager of the Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service.

## Jim Oakley: A Life of Service, Leadership, and Love for Bibb County

by Sheila Duncan, Centreville Press

Jim Oakley's name is etched into the very fabric of Centreville and Bibb County, not simply because of his many titles and accomplishments, but because of his deep-rooted love for the community he has always called home.

Born and raised on Walnut Street in Centreville, Oakley's childhood was filled with simple joys and strong connections. "There were many people my age, and we always had something going on," he recalled. "We rode bicycles through town—I probably put a million miles on my bicycle as a kid." It was a time when community life was bustling with camps, contests, and friendships that helped shape his values.

Oakley credits his father, Jim Oakley Sr.—a longtime mayor from the 1950s through 1972—as his greatest influence. Watching his father lead the town and serve the community laid the foundation for Oakley's own journey into public service. "People in town encouraged me to get involved and run for office," he said. "Seeing my father's involvement also

inspired me."

Over the years, Oakley has worn many hats with distinction. After his father's passing in 1972, he became editor of The Centreville Press, a role he held until 1986.

He was also appointed by Governor Patterson to serve as Bibb County's Tax Collector; a role he later held for 12 years after being elected. Beyond that, he served as president of the Alabama Press Association and chaired the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for over 15 years.

But when asked what role meant the most to him, Oakley didn't hesitate: "Being involved with the hospital and seeing how

far it has come makes me the proudest." Alongside former hospital administrator Terry Smith and other board members, Oakley helped lay the groundwork for the growth and success of Bibb Medical Center—a vision that has now become reality.

Oakley's style of leadership has always been rooted in collaboration and humility. "I've always worked very well

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## Oakley continued from page 2

with people and always wanted what's best for our community," he shared. One of his proudest moments came from helping to identify a young hitchhiker who was tragically killed in 1961. Known only as the "Unknown Boy" for decades, Oakley spearheaded efforts to utilize DNA and public outreach to uncover his identity. The young man's family was finally located, and he was reburied with the honor and dignity he had long been denied. "I was one of the original pallbearers when he was first buried," Oakley said. "Years later, my grandson Pate served as a pallbearer at his reburial. That was very emotional for me."

When asked about the changes he's most proud of, Oakley points to the transformation of Centreville's downtown through the Main Street USA program. His son, Mike Oakley, led the charge to secure the designation, and since then, Centreville has seen revitalization, new businesses, and a surge in local pride. "All you have to do is drive through downtown and uptown and see what's going on," he said.

Even with a lifetime of accomplishments, Oakley remains focused on what matters most: family, education, and community. A proud graduate of The University of Alabama and the first in his family to attend college, he has passed that legacy on. "I'm extremely proud of my granddaughters who've become nurses and my great-granddaughter who will

soon earn her RN," he said.

Oakley hopes to be remembered as someone who always worked to make Bibb County a better place. "I turned down a U.S. Senate appointment to better serve my hometown," he said. "I wanted to leave a legacy of caring and service that our children have carried forward."

His advice to future leaders is simple but powerful: "If you don't have a burning desire to serve your hometown and are willing to donate your time and effort, you shouldn't run for office. But you can still be a valuable volunteer."

As Bibb County continues to grow and evolve, Oakley's vision remains clear: "Love your county. Love your fellow citizens. Help improve life here. That's how you make a difference."

## APA Journalism Foundation internships bringing young journalists into newsrooms

*The Messenger in Troy and The Decatur Daily were among 14 newspapers to receive summer internships from the APA Journalism Foundation. Twelve were college students and two were from high school. Below are reports from two of this year's interns, Carrie McLendon, a recent graduate of Pike County High School in Troy and Raven Sanders is a student at the University of North Alabama.*

### Thank you, Troy Messenger by Carrie McLendon

Over the last couple of months, I have spent much of my time expanding my journalistic capabilities at The Messenger. This internship has been an incredible experience for me, and I am so sad to be saying goodbye so soon.

I started this internship at the end of May, just days after graduating from Pike County High School. This is a difficult time in life for us graduates as we all rush to find our true purpose in life. Thankfully, I have begun to crack the surface of mine. Journalism was something I only recently realized was my true passion, and I could not be happier with how it has treated me so far.

Last fall, I decided to start writing for The Tropicopolitan at Troy University, and I immediately realized that it was what I wanted to do. At the beginning of this year, I took a chance in applying for an internship with The Messenger, and thankfully it paid off in every way.

I have learned something new about myself during this time that I would not have expected. I was always a shy kid, struggling to find the right words when I would talk to people, but writing has always come so naturally to me.

Coming into this internship I knew I had the writing skills, but maybe not the communication skills that were necessary to get the job done. Overall, I learned that I actually really enjoy talking and getting to know new people.

When I started, I pretty much just dove straight in and hoped for the best. Thankfully, that worked out well, and it all turned out amazingly.

Besides gaining the practical experience I needed, my favorite part was getting to know the amazing people that make up our community. This internship truly made me feel more involved with my hometown than I have in a while.

One of my biggest dreams is to travel and learn about as many people as possible and while this may be a small start, it is definitely a good one. This internship has broken me out of my shell in ways that I didn't know were possible. Now I will admit, I can still be shy and awkward, but this internship truly has prepared me to get to know the world.

I enjoyed every minute of my time at The Messenger, and I could not be more grateful for what it has brought me.

At the beginning of the summer, I was unsure of what my goals were, but for the future they have become a lot clearer now. As I begin my formal education in Multimedia Journalism at Troy University, I am excited to continue learning all about the business and how I can play my part.

Coming out of this internship with my new and improved skills in writing, communication and interviewing, I cannot wait for what is ahead of me. Through this internship, I have also been able to expand my portfolio, which will help me in so many ways as I navigate this wonderful

career.

It may have taken me until now to learn what I really wanted, but I am so thankful that I have been able to jump-start my career so soon. I'm still figuring things out to a degree, but the last couple of months have really solidified my passions.

I would just like to thank The Messenger and everyone that helped me through this experience for helping me realize my passions.

### Thank you, Decatur Daily by Raven Sanders

The 2025 summer internship with The Decatur Daily has been an amazing and informative experience that I will always remember. As my 2025 spring semester ended at the University of North Alabama, I began my search for how I would spend the summer. I had often considered interning at The Decatur Daily after hearing great things about the paper from multiple classmates.

Upon receiving the news that I had been chosen for an internship at The Decatur Daily, I was elated. I remember reading and analyzing the paper before my first day so that I could make sure I wrote in a similar format. As I reflect on my internship at The Decatur Daily, I am grateful for the work experience filled with, improved conversational skills, valuable news writing experience, and various learning opportunities that I have gained during my time here.

Interning at The Decatur Daily has greatly improved my conversational skills. On my first day, I was tasked with writing a weather brief. I remember feeling so excited, but also extremely nervous.

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It was my first time writing something that was not just for school, but for an actual newspaper. I used to always get nervous before making important phone calls, so before calling the National Weather Service in Huntsville, I took the time to write out each of my questions word for word and my name and introduction. I did that for every interview I did during my first week. As I continued to interview people both in person and over the phone, it got easier, and I was surprised to find how friendly and helpful people in the community were.

I am beyond grateful for the valuable news writing experience that I have received here. Writing has always been a passion of mine, so when I chose my major at UNA, communications with a focus in journalism was an obvious choice for me. I loved getting to find and write interesting articles about things going on in the community I live in. I also enjoyed getting feedback on my work from Mr. Fleischauer who not only reiterated the things I learn in school but also taught me so much more about AP style and the newspaper format.

In my time at The Decatur Daily I was able to pursue various learning opportunities. I got to cover a speech, camps, and

other events in the community. Interning at the Decatur Daily has also kept me informed of all the things going on in the community. I loved it when friends, family, and others in the community would come up to me and tell me they read a story I wrote in the paper. Essentially, I enjoyed every part of my experience interning, and I am very thankful for the work experience and learning opportunities from Mr. Fleischauer, Mr. Shelton, and everyone here at The Decatur Daily.

*Editor's note: Wouldn't it be nice to have this kind of energy and enthusiasm at your newspaper? Watch for information to apply for an internship early in 2026.*

## People

**Jaeden Day**, is the new high school sports reporter and Alabama State athletics beat writer for the Montgomery

Advertiser.

He is from Bloomfield, NM and is a graduate of Colorado State University.

He has been covering high school sports for his hometown paper as a freelance journalist since 2023.

## Industry

### North Carolina Press executive elected NAM president

The executive director of the North Carolina Press Association was elected president of Newspaper Association Managers, Inc. (NAM), during the group's 102nd Annual Summer Conference Aug. 7 in Asheville, N.C.

Phil Lucey will serve a one-year term as president of NAM. He has served as chief executive in North Carolina Press Association since 2016. He previously served as executive director of the New Mexico Press Association and was advertising director for the New England Newspaper Association. He is a communications graduate of the University of Connecticut.

Also elected to officer positions were Vice President Ashley Wimberley, executive director of the Arkansas

Press Association, and Secretary Emily Bradbury, executive director of the Kansas Press Association. Rebecca Snyder, executive director of the Maryland-Delaware-DC Press Association, was elected to serve an unexpired term on the board. Lynne Lance, executive director of the National Newspaper Association, was elected to serve a three-year term.

Brian Allfrey, executive director of the Utah Press Association, becomes immediate past president. Continuing director is Carolyn Nolte, executive director of the Florida Press Association. Founded in 1923, NAM is a consortium of state, provincial, and national trade groups representing the newspapers and affiliate digital media in the United States and Canada.



*Incoming NAM President Phil Lucey (right) of the North Carolina Press Association presents a plaque of appreciation to outgoing President Brian Allfrey of the Utah Press Association.*

### Center that Rufus Friday heads is aiming to restore trust in the news media

*by Brier Dudley, Seattle Times Free Press*  
Rufus Friday has a difficult but extremely important job.

The longtime newspaper executive was recently hired to lead an organization that aims to restore trust in the news media.

In today's environment, that's a bit like trying to clear a minefield while bombs are dropping and bullets are flying from the right and left.

But Friday is undaunted and the Center for Integrity in News Reporting is, I think,

taking a smart approach.

While other organizations are responding to the profoundly un-American assault on the free press by the current federal government, the center is focused on bolstering the news industry's standards.

These standards, including impartiality, objectivity and fairness in reporting, differentiate professional journalism from the array of digital media and opinions permeating our culture and lives nowadays.

The center is urging news organizations to adopt newsroom standards, if they haven't already, and make sure they are seen and heard by viewers, readers and listeners.

This won't resolve ongoing debates within academia and parts of the industry about standards like objectivity. But it could help the public better understand where individual news organizations stand and what they strive to deliver.

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**center**  
continued from page 4

Pew Research Center recently found the majority of Americans continue to trust information from national and local news organizations, especially local ones.

But increasingly, they also trust news from social media sites that don't have similar standards.

A Pew survey released in October found 52% of those aged 18 to 29 have a lot or some trust in information from social media, compared to 56% that trust national media.

Whether they are seeing professional journalism via social media, or trusting whatever comes across the newsfeed, is unclear. But it suggests that fewer appreciate the importance of journalism standards, and the industry will have an even harder time selling subscriptions if the trends continue.

Friday is now based in Kentucky, where he was publisher of the Lexington Herald-Leader until 2018. From 2005 to 2011 he was publisher of the Tri-City Herald and maintains ties to Washington state.

The center was started by Walter Hussman Jr., the former publisher of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and now chairman of WEHCO Media, a group that includes multiple newspapers plus magazines and cable TV and broadband companies.

Hussman has been an outspoken defender of newsroom standards. That led to a 2021 clash over hiring at his alma mater, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where the journalism school bears his name.

An organization like the Center for Integrity in News Reporting seems like a good vehicle to pursue this mission. It should complement other groups working on news trust and integrity and the work of nonprofits funding different approaches to news, including partisan outlets with less traditional standards.

"Walter is kind of an individual that goes against the grain, and he knows that it's an uphill battle, and there's a lot of detractors, saying there's no way you're going to be able to regain the public trust

in media again," Friday said. "But he wanted to do his best to give it a try, and I wanted to come alongside and try to help as well."

Hussman told me his concerns grew starting around 2017.

"I could see this was really becoming a problem, a problem for our newspapers as well," he said.

"Of course, no one can be objective, as Walter Lippmann said over 100 years ago," Hussman said. "But the idea was the objective method of reporting, getting both sides, or all sides, approaching the story with a humility that maybe you don't know all the answers before you start."

At WEHCO, Hussman drafted a short statement of core values that runs every day on page two of his company's newspapers.

"As soon as we started doing it, I started hearing from people: 'Thank you for telling us what your journalistic standards are, now we know how to hold you accountable,'" he said.

The center is taking several approaches to rebuild trust.

One is to highlight and reward journalists doing good work, through an annual awards program that began last year. The center offers \$25,000 prizes for "excellence in impartial, objective and fair journalism."

Another is to help bring distinguished journalists to journalism schools to give lectures and teach classes explaining how to report news "impartially and without fear or favor," Friday said.

The center won't be a critic — there are plenty of other media critics, Hussman said. It's also working to change the industry from within, so its trustees and staff have all worked in the business, he said.

Friday is also traveling the country to meet with leaders



of news organizations. He's encouraging them to adopt a statement of their core journalism values "and more importantly, to display them so that readers and viewers and listeners know what those core values are," he said.

The center is simultaneously fundraising, after raising about \$1.5 million so far, and looking for a university to partner with and locate the organization.

There's more at stake than just the news industry and Hussman's legacy.

"If Americans can't trust reporting to give them the facts," he said, "we're in big trouble trying to have a democracy."

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

## Statement of core values

"To give the news impartially, without fear or favor." (Adolph Ochs, 1858-1935)

Impartiality means reporting, editing, and delivering the news honestly, fairly, objectively, and without personal opinion or bias.

Credibility is the greatest asset of any news medium, and impartiality is the greatest source of credibility.

To provide the most complete report, a news organization must not just cover the news, but uncover it. It must follow the story wherever it leads, regardless of any preconceived ideas on what might be most newsworthy.

The pursuit of truth is a noble goal of journalism. But the truth is not always apparent or known immediately. A journalist's role is therefore not to determine what they believe at that time to be the truth and reveal only that to their readers, but rather to report

as completely and impartially as possible all verifiable facts so that readers can, based on their own knowledge and experience, determine what they believe to be the truth.

When a newspaper delivers both news and opinions, the impartiality and credibility of the news organization can be questioned. To minimize this as much as possible there needs to be a sharp and clear distinction between news and opinion, both to those providing and consuming the news.

"A newspaper has five constituencies, including first its readers, then advertisers, then employees, then creditors, then shareholders. As long as the newspaper keeps those constituencies in that order, especially its readers first, all constituencies will be well served." (Walter Hussman, 1906-1988)

— Walter Hussman, Jr.  
Publisher 1991-2022

An example of a "statement of core values" as it appears in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette.



Do you have news to share with your fellow APA members? Are you doing something successful in your newsroom or on your sales beat?  
**Email APA to submit stories or ideas for future programming.**

## Help Wanted | Training Tools

### Times-Journal, A Southern Torch Newspaper of Fort Payne, AL

#### MANAGING EDITOR:

- We are looking for a department leader for a growing news department.
- Qualified Applicant should have a thorough knowledge of AP style, a passion for local journalism, excellent writing and reporting skills, strong leadership and interpersonal communication skills.
- The right person will have the ability to

- prioritize projects and meet deadlines.
- Familiarity with Adobe InDesign necessary and page layout skills preferred.
- This person will represent the newspaper at community events and applicant must have the ability to develop and maintain strong community ties.
- ON-SITE POSITION.


#### REPORTERS/WRITERS:

- Applicants should possess news reporting/writing skills and a passion for local

- journalism.
- Knowledge of Microsoft Word
- Photography skills a plus
- ON-SITE POSITION

The Times-Journal newspaper is published each Wednesday and Saturday.

Email resumes to: Katie@southerntorch.com OR mail to: Southern Torch, Attn: Katie, 225 Gault Avenue N., Fort Payne, AL 35967



### DEDICATED & COMMUNITY-MINDED EDITOR WANTED

Lead print, digital, and special section content; write local stories; manage freelance contributors; ensure accurate, fair, and timely reporting; represent publication at community events. Preferred: journalism or related degree; minimum 1 year newsroom experience; strong editing, writing, and headline skills; photography experience; detail-oriented; able to multitask and meet deadlines independently.

Bonus: Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, WordPress, AP Style, social media management.

Apply: Send resume to [jeff@jmmediagroup.net](mailto:jeff@jmmediagroup.net) or drop off at 207 Dunson Street, Andalusia, AL 36421.

We know many of our members have open positions and may be looking in their community for newsroom help. APA created tips sheets avail-

able for use on the [APA web-site](#). Find them under **Member Services>Resources>Reporter Resources**. These resources can be used

to train on: getting the story, interviewing, covering a meeting, writing a news story, writing a headline, laws and liability and press ethics.

## Columns

### Reliability means paying attention



*Ad-libs  
by John Foust*

I remember a billboard on an interstate in North Carolina which caught my eye. It was large 14' x 48' painted sign which promoted a law firm. The headline read, "We help people hit by drunk drivers." Below the headline was a photo of a wrecked car and the name of a local attorney. Advertising folks like us would like the fact that the message was easy to read, because it was in a legible font on a white background.

But the billboard had a problem. The word "by" was covered by an overgrown tree limb on the left side. Instead of reading "We help people hit by drunk drivers," it read, "We help people hit drunk drivers." The missing word changed the message into something entirely different.

Quite a blooper, isn't it? The problem wasn't with the sign itself. Someone should have been responsible for sending someone to check on overhanging limbs. Ideally, the limb should have been

cut before the advertiser noticed.

Thinking of that sign reminds me of the cover of an upscale clothing catalogue my wife showed to me recently. Suellen pointed out that the model in the photograph was wearing a summer-style dress, but it had obviously been photoshopped onto a scene of a European tourist attraction with people wearing winter coats in the background. To make matters worse, the model was wearing stiletto heels on a cobblestone street. To people who pay close attention to such things – like my wife – that was a big mistake. "It hurts their credibility," she said. "The cover gives readers the impression that they don't pay attention to details. It creates a complete mismatch and goes against their established brand image."

I'm sure that both of these examples were produced by professionals, but they somehow lost track of the details. Their mistakes resulted in miscommunication and incongruent images.

These mistakes could have easily been prevented. Just ask Everett, who manages his newspaper's ad department. "We follow the old carpenter's philosophy to measure twice and cut once,"

he told me. "In our world, that means we check ads more than once. By the time an ad runs, we like to feel we've done everything to make sure it's correct. The headline has to be right, the copy has to be right and the illustration has to be right. Beyond those obvious things, we double-check phone numbers, name spelling, business locations, email addresses and web addresses."

"There's another saying we take to heart," he said. "Do it right or do it over." Even a one-character typo – in something as small as a phone number – can ruin the effectiveness of an ad. If that happens, it costs the paper money to correct the problem and it damages our reputation in that advertiser's eyes. That's a lot to risk."

Everett is right. Whether its billboards, catalogue covers or this business of newspaper advertising, it's all about reliability. We should keep working on the little things to show advertisers they can count on us.

*John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Email for information: [john@johnfoust.com](mailto:john@johnfoust.com).*