

Alabama Publisher



Summer 2026

Volume 79, Number 1



ONE LESS THING GOING UP

Customer rates are frozen through 2027.

While costs are rising on nearly everything, we're **freezing rates through 2027**. Your bill reflects how much energy your home uses – and that can change with the seasons and daily routines. Our tools give you a clearer picture of what's driving those changes and help you find ways to keep your bill more consistent.



Download our app and find
all our tools and resources at
alabamapower.com/summer.

Welcome!

As your President, I am absolutely thrilled to welcome you all to the Alabama Press Association's 2026 Summer Convention.

This annual gathering is so much more than just a meeting on our calendars—it is a true celebration of you, our members, and the vital, game-changing work you do every single day.

Together, we carry the proud responsibility of informing the public, fostering transparency, and strengthening civic engagement across Alabama.

We have a golden opportunity to connect, share our best ideas, and learn from one another.

You will gain fresh, actionable insights to take back to your newsrooms to better serve your readers and advertisers.

The absolute highlight of our weekend takes place Saturday night at our annual awards ceremony. The APA Media Awards are our moment to honor the exceptional dedication, creativity, and hard work you poured into your communities throughout 2025. I cannot wait to applaud your achievements and get inspired for the year ahead.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to journalism. Let's make this an unforgettable convention in the sunshine!



Robert Bozeman
President, Alabama Press Association



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

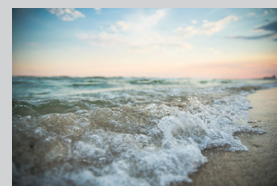
Board of Directors

Teresa Woodruff, Chairman of the Board
The Moulton Advertiser
Robert Bozeman, President
The Evergreen Courant
Jeff Martin, 1st Vice President
The Montgomery Independent
Brady Cox, 2nd Vice President
East Lauderdale News

Patrick Graham, Mountain Valley News
Catherine Hadaway, The Selma Times-Journal
Christa Jennings, Coosa County News
Michael Lambeth, The Monroe Journal
Eddie Dodd, The Abbeville Herald
Charles Whisenant, The Arab Tribune
Tippy Hunter, The Outlook,
Alexander City
John Allan Clark, Times-Standard-Herald
Vince Johnson, Gulf Coast Media
Ashley Trice, Lagniappe, Mobile

APA Staff

Brad English, Executive Director
Marketing/Governmental Affairs Director
Leigh Leigh Tortorici,
Marketing Representative
Jaclyn Langan, Membership Coordinator
Lauren Franks, Tearsheet Clerk
Evans Bailey, General Counsel
Scott Goldsmith, APA Accountant



Cover Photo: Courtesy
of Gulf Shores & Orange
Beach Tourism

Program Speakers



Jim Pumarlo



jim@pumarlo.com



www.pumarlo.com



Jim Pumarlo spent 27 years working at small daily newspapers in International Falls and Red Wing, Minn. He served as editor of the Red Wing Republican Eagle for 21 years. He resigned in 2003 and served 16 years as director of communications and media relations at the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the state's largest business advocacy organization.

He remains active in the newspaper industry through his writing, consulting, speaking and custom training. He is involved in the Minnesota Newspaper Association as a member of its Journalism Education and Legislative committees. He is a former member of the Minnesota News Media Institute, the training arm of the Minnesota Newspaper Association. He served on the hearing panel for the Minnesota News Council, which promoted fair, vigorous and trusted journalism by engaging the news media and the public in examining standards of fairness.



Leonard Woolsey



leonard.woolsey@sninews.com



www.sninews.com

**southern
newspapers**

With more than 30 years in the newspaper industry, Woolsey joined Southern Newspapers in 2014 after working 20 years with Paxton Media Group serving as publisher and eventually group publisher.

Besides serving in smaller communities, Woolsey's experiences also include managing properties in metro markets, including St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and Atlanta. Woolsey is also a longtime Rotarian, board member for America's Newspapers, Texas Press Association as well as local organizations including the Boys & Girls Club, and The Salvation Army.

Woolsey is a native of Kansas City, Missouri, and is married to his college sweetheart, Maryrine Woolsey. They have two adult children. In his spare time, he likes to read, write, travel, surf, and plink on a piano.



Evans Bailey



ebailey@rushtonstakely.com



www.rushtonstakely.com

RUSHTON
♦
STAKELY

Evans Bailey joined Rushton Stakely in 2008, and became a shareholder in 2016. He has worked with APA as general counsel and on the Legal Hotline since 2008.

His practice is devoted to civil litigation with a focus on commercial litigation, insurance defense, professional liability, collections, construction law, media law, and appellate practice.

He has experience handling a variety of matters in all state trial and civil appellate courts, federal district court, bankruptcy court, and the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

He has represented newspapers, television studios, podcast producers, builders, banks, lawyers, small businesses, insurance companies, cooperatives, and manufacturers of products large and small.

APA Journalism Foundation continues to support Alabama newspapers

For the last 58 years, the APA Journalism Foundation has provided grants to Alabama colleges and universities, scholarships for high school and college students, and provided money for newspapers to hire summer interns in their newsrooms.

The Foundation began with a 10-year \$100,000 fund drive. A second \$100,000 fund drive was launched in 1984. In recent years, APA's advertising arm, Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service, has donated more than \$200,000 to the Foundation.

In 1994, the Foundation purchased an office building in Homewood, which was sold in 2018 for a profit of more than \$500,000. These funds, along with donations and memorials, now provide the endowment to fund grants, internships, and scholarships.

While the funding mechanisms have evolved over the years, the mission of the Foundation remains the same: to be APA's primary liaison with college journalism programs, and support and foster high school journalism in Alabama.

This has been a special year for internships for Alabama newspapers. The Alabama Power Company Foundation made a \$25,000 donation to fund internships this year. Because of this donation, the APA Foundation awarded fifteen \$2,000 internships to Alabama newsrooms, and an additional two \$1,000 internships to high school students to cover area school news for local newspapers.

"We have never had that many students in our newsrooms at one time," APA Journalism Foundation coordinator Felicia Mason said. "This is more than twice the number of internships we are normally able to award, and it would not have been possible without the generous donation from Alabama Power."

continued on page 5



The APA Journalism Foundation provides scholarships for students to attend the annual winter media summit (shown in photos above). Many internship connections begin at this event!

continued from page 4

Many interns continue to work for their host newspaper either on a freelance basis or as a fulltime employee after graduation. Kaitlin Hoskins, a former internship recipient, is now the editor of The Messenger in Gadsden and a member of the APA Journalism Foundation board.

The Foundation board assembles each spring on a college campus where they meet with the faculty and students in communication schools. In April, the board visited the campus of Troy University.

In addition to the internships, the board has also supported grants to Alabama schools for programs such as workshops for high school students; students visit Montgomery to cover the Legislature, lab newspapers and more. These schools include Jacksonville State University, University of Alabama, Troy University, Auburn University in Montgomery, University of North Alabama, and Miles College.

This year, one grant helped fund the University of Alabama Multimedia Journalism Workshop. Students come to campus for a week and are exposed to many aspects of journalism. They visit the newsroom and television station, and at the end of the week they present a project of their choosing on various platforms.

The Foundation offers two scholarships each year. The \$5,000 Metz Scholarship is named for William H. (Bill) Metz who was president of

APA when the Journalism Foundation was founded in 1968. In Alabama, he worked as vice president of the Birmingham Post-Herald and assistant general manager of The Birmingham News.

The scholarship is open to rising juniors and seniors enrolled in a university or college in Alabama. Students must have either declared a major in journalism or worked at an APA member newspaper or on a high school or college newspaper staff.

The J.B. Stevenson Scholarship is selected each year by the Alabama Scholastic Press Association from among the winning portfolios of their top individual awards. The winner must be a high school senior and must plan to major in journalism to receive the scholarship.

continued on page 6



Top Left - Board members visit with members of Troy's student newspaper, The Tropolitan.

Top Right - Students at the 2026 Multimedia Journalism Workshop at The University of Alabama, an event sponsored by the APAJF.

Middle Left - From left to right: Jonathan Stinson, Joseph Bryant, Linda Stefiel, Anthony Campbell, Stephanie Rebman, P.J. Gossett, Ashley Remkus, Kaitlin Hoskins, Alec Etheredge and Felicia Mason.

Middle Right - Last year, Jonathan Stinson and Felicia Mason visited with a media law class at Auburn University in Montgomery.

Bottom - Jonathan Stinson and Felicia Mason joined the students of the MJW for lunch recently on their trip to Birmingham.



continued from page 5

This scholarship is named in memory of J. B. Stevenson, son of the late John W. and Rachelle Stevenson of The Randolph Leader in Roanoke. J. B. was 17 years old in 1998 when he was killed in an automobile accident. He had grown up in the newsroom of his family's newspaper and

had become a part of the newspaper family in Alabama.

The Foundation is a vital part of the Alabama Press Association and the role of journalism in Alabama. The benefit of having young and enthusiastic students in newsrooms is a vital step in building the next generation of the press in Alabama.

The Messenger in Troy and The Decatur Daily received summer internships from the APA Journalism Foundation in 2025. Below are reports from two of those interns, Carrie McLendon, a graduate of Pike County High School in Troy and Raven Sanders, 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 Tropic 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 peo-

ple, 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. 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 jumpstart 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 local newspaper in Decatur after hearing great things about the paper from multiple classmates. Upon receiving the news that I had been chosen for an internship, 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. 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 has greatly improved my conversational skills. On my first day, I was tasked with writing a weather brief. I remember feeling so excited,

continued on page 7

continued from page 6

but also extremely nervous. 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 a newspaper 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 at The Decatur Daily.

Wouldn't it be nice to have this kind of energy and enthusiasm at your newspaper? Watch for information on internship grants in Spring 2027.



PROUD SPONSOR
Alabama Press Association



Visit our website, www.waltonpress.com, to learn more about what we do.



WWW.WALTONPRESS.COM
402 Mayfield Drive • Monroe, GA 30655

CONNECT WITH US
info@waltonpress.com

CALL US
1.800.354.0235



YOU SAID IT BEST

APA MEMBER
PUBLICATION COLUMNS
ABOUT OUR INDUSTRY
AND PROFESSION



After seeing an encouraging AMA contest entry about the importance of local journalism, APA found some more wonderful columns to share, of members sharing their story with their communities.

Print is NOT dead...

by Sarah Chase

Some might think my least favorite question during my undergraduate years was what my plans were after college, and while that question does send a wave of anxiety to most college students (especially college seniors), it was not the one I hated the most.

The question that made me do a mental eye roll was the "Am I going to see you on TV?" after I shared I was a news media major. It also made me realize a sad fact: people think print is dead.

I have always been a lover of physical media. I have a hard time not buying a book I read electronically, and I tend to keep random magazines and newspapers although I know they will just collect dust. I keep letters from old friends, crushes and exes, and I do not like throwing away birthday cards, especially if they have

Serving the Dadeville & Lake Martin area since 1897

THE RECORD

personable messages in them. I have always appreciated the written, and I guess more often in today's time, typed, word.

I also learned very early on through my broadcast classes I would not enjoy working in the broadcast industry. Broadcast journalists are strong individuals that lug around heavy cameras, tripods and write their own scripts. They are also increasingly doing their video news coverage by themselves, which involves getting multiple 10 second wide, medium and close angled shots, and as journalists, this will be done multiple times a day.

Needless to say, learning the ins and outs of broadcast news made me realize that route was not for me; yet people who asked me that dreaded question believed it to be the only way to be a successful journalist. I was also often asked if people even read the news anymore, and I feel I always looked slightly dumbfounded because I still read the news. The only way I stay informed are through two national news apps and one local news app.

Discouragement was not lost on me either. Imagine a young and eager

journalist, excited to take on the adult world, and all she hears is how she is entering a dying industry. I will admit, print and newspapers are not as socially vibrant as they once were (thank you, internet), but they are still just as vital.

Creating, keeping and providing tangible access to information has probably never been more crucial than it is now. And now that I am working in the print news industry, I get to see just how alive it is.

I see it in the phone calls our staff gets when someone does not receive their newspaper. I see it when someone comes to our office to purchase a paper, and how excited people get when you reach out to cover something in their community. I see it every day when I clock in with individuals working tirelessly to keep local journalism running.

So no, print is not dead, and I firmly believe with how hard journalists around the U.S. work to keep it alive, it will continue to have a long and informative life.

Sarah Chase is the Dadeville beat reporter for Tallapoosa Publishers Inc.

You judge the paper, but do you see the people behind it?

by Audra Spears

“Everyone hates me.”

Over the years one person or another has repeated this very phrase, myself included.

The other day, my son came home from school and said the same thing. As a mother, hearing your child say this pulls on your heartstrings. You do everything you can to reassure them that “everyone” does not hate them, and while some days it may feel like the world is against them, they have friends, family and loved ones that care about them.

Unlike children, we as adults, have the ability to successfully weather negative experiences, we can analyze the problem and hopefully arrive at a solution. But what if you work for an organization and that hatred is coming from your community? How do you change people’s perception?

I have worked at Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc. for more than 16 years, and I have never written a single article or column. What can I say? I’m an artist not a writer. Most of the time I sit back and observe without speaking up; however it’s getting harder to stay silent, hence this column. I can proudly say that I love my job and the services it provides for our communities. Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc. has dedicated more than 125 years of service and investment into the Alexander City, Dadeville and Lake Martin communities.

In those 16 years, times have changed, staff have come and gone, our business has successfully evolved, but one thing has always bothered me — this community’s stigma for The Alexander City Outlook. It’s not everyone and “everyone doesn’t hate us,” but for as long as I can remember it seems the thing to do in this town is to diss The Outlook.

I guess we are an easy punching bag. Most people see us as a media organization void of any feelings. Our

job is to report the good, the bad and sometimes the ugly truths, while keeping an unbiased stance. One time I heard someone say, “The Outlook is not worth the paper it’s printed on.”

Do people know how much newsprint costs? It’s not cheap, but I digress.

We do occasionally read your Facebook comments and we’ve heard all the name-calling — my favorite one is The Outhouse. Most of the time, people are calling to boycott The Outlook or recently someone said, “A conservative needs to buy The Outlook and fire all the liberals.”

Well, for one, we are not all liberals. I myself am a conservative if I had to put a label on it, but I like to approach things with an open mind instead of fitting into one box, label or category. One of the greatest parts about our organization is the diverse backgrounds and beliefs that each of us bring to the table which makes for an overall great team.

In fact, one of the key principles of journalism is to provide comprehensive coverage, which is best achieved with diverse newsroom voices and backgrounds. We all strive to make the communities we serve a better place.

That’s why I don’t understand where all this animosity comes from. The Outlook and its parent company, Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc., is locally owned and operated. We are not some big corporation out-of-town or out-of-state.

Think about this: we are your local source for news, with local ties to this community. We have a stake in this community, the same as you. We are your next-door neighbors, your friends, your church family.

Do you think anyone other than your local media is going to give you all the facts about utility cost increases, road closures, new businesses coming to the

area, your child’s first day of school or the big game?

The answer is no.

TPI supports the community in other ways through financial contributions, employee volunteerism, event promotion and hosting, educational initiatives and partnerships with organizations like the Lake Martin Area United Way, the local chambers of commerce, our school systems, and the list goes on.

We welcome feedback, tips, story ideas, constructive criticism. If you like or dislike the topics we are covering, speak up. Stop by the office, email us, write a letter to the editor, we are listening. Let us know what’s important to you. That’s the blessing and advantage of being your local source for news.

I am on a mission to change the community’s Outlook. Pun intended. That’s why I’m challenging every one of the naysayers and haters to give us a chance — subscribe for a month, two or even a year. See for yourself the value of staying connected with your community through local news. With affordable print and digital options, there’s a subscription that fits everyone. Give us a chance to change your perception about us.

“I’ve said it
before and I will
say it again. “A
city without a
local newspaper
is bad news.”

***Audra Spears is the creative
director at Tallapoosa
Publishers Inc.***

RUSHTON ♦ STAKELY

Lawyers Since 1890

Rushton, Stakely, Johnston & Garrett, P.A. has been serving clients for over a century and serving Alabama newspapers, television, and radio stations since the 1980s.

334-206-3100



J. Evans Bailey
General Counsel
Alabama Press Association

A rule of the Supreme Court of Alabama requires the following: No representation is made that the quality of legal services is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers.



Thank you to our 2026 sponsors!

We are so appreciative of your participation and support of our association and members.



Alabama Power

ALDOT



ALDOT NEWS



PUBLICATIONS **PLUS**



A-Mark Foundation

SNPA SOUTHERN
NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS
ASSOCIATION
FOUNDATION

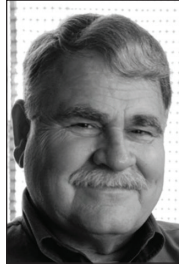


The News Courier

THE FIRST AMENDMENT: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

(The Owl's Eye) What's a free press

As an Owl who likes to fly around our little world here along the Elk and Tennessee Rivers, one fact stands out. We have an independent press. Better said, we have a local newspaper which addresses what goes on here; it offers ways to make this a happy, prosperous, and fair community. In hometown newspapers you can find the local impact of the grand issues discussed around the world, across America, and in Alabama. President Eisenhower once said 'Writing farm policy looks easy from 1,000 miles away. It only gets hard once you begin to farm.' Such impacts of big ideas on our real neighbors are important to understand. Why? Local newspapers are important because with them you get past the hype, propaganda, and less than realistic



**JOHN
DAVIS**

Columnist

expectations you might hear from partisan talk radio, political hacks, and pundits.

In short, freedom of the press, and the ability to exercise that, should be for everyone, not only those with a lot of money or electronic media backing. Everyone can write a letter to the editor. This Owl hopes to demonstrate how a tiny county of one state can impact, and be impacted by, events near and far. Local issues matter. Where better to explore them than right here, where

we live. I begin with simple assumptions.

Our audience for the most part is fair minded, reasonable, but above all practical. They appreciate original comments; that is, observations that aren't canned partisan boilerplate. Most people I've encountered don't designate themselves by political parties. Almost everyone is open to practical ideas, well explained, with examples. We are not generally ideologues, slogan slingers, or cultists. By observing, then asking for clarity, I've found true ground for real community building. That is, we can be a community known not by how we exclude others, but how we live well, welcome others, become good neighbors, and prosper together. We strive to be welcoming.

Readers like articles about

continued below

local issues. Owls like me try to show how local issues reflect, and influence larger events and policies. Several commented they never realized how far away issues affected their lives here. Most here appreciate that morality can play a role in modern life. Elementary kindness, honesty, and justice can be encouraged in so many ways, all for the common good.

I try to express simple beliefs. I fly hither and yon to give examples of how the real lives of others play out. There's no mystery to anything I write, as my every article is based on simple principles.

Our country is based on the idea that wonderful things can come from ordinary people, of any race, creed, or station in life. All most folks want is to be given a fair chance. That's what our democracy is all about.

One great President said the cord that binds us all together comes from our Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." We Americans have found when we live up to this truth, we cannot fail. We bring out the best in others when they feel a part of the shared adventure of life. Our goals are the same now as when President Roosevelt expressed them years ago. We all want freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of worship, and freedom of speech and expression. When we offer this guiding idea to the world for each and every person, our world is safer. We can all do wonderful things if we work together.

Athens resident John William Davis is a veteran and author.

ALDOTNEWS.COM KEEPS YOU INFORMED!



STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE

ALDOTNews is the official Alabama Department of Transportation digital news source offering timely information about road projects, traffic conditions, safety, public involvement and more. Launched by ALDOT in 2024, ALDOTNews provides the most up-to-date information about the projects, programs and people of ALDOT.

REGIONAL PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

NORTH REGION

SETH BURKETT

256.505.4964

burketts@dot.state.al.us

X @ALDOT_NRegion

SOUTHEAST REGION

BRANTLEY KIRK

334.353.6862

kirkb@dot.state.al.us

X @ALDOT_SERegion

EAST CENTRAL REGION

LINDA CROCKETT

205.327.4973

crockettl@dot.state.al.us

WEST CENTRAL REGION

JOHN MCWILLIAMS

205.562.3115

mcwilliamsj@dot.state.al.us

X @ALDOT_WCRegion

SOUTHWEST REGION

JAMES GORDON

251.470.8351

gordonj@dot.state.al.us

X @ALDOT_SW_Region

MEDIA & COMMUNITY RELATIONS BUREAU

TONY HARRIS

Chief of Communications &
Government Relations

334.242.6552

harrist@dot.state.al.us

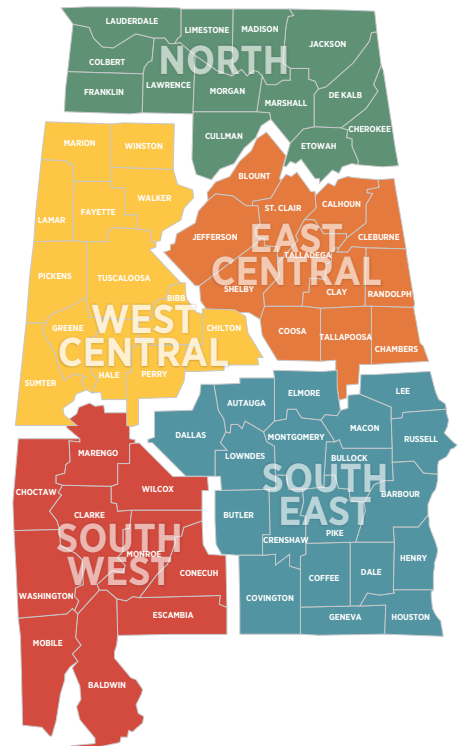
ALLISON GREEN

Communications Manager
Drive Safe Alabama
Coordinator

334.353.6534

greena@dot.state.al.us

For the entire staff directory, visit [ALDOTNews.com](https://alldotnews.com).



ALDOTNEWS.COM

ALDOT Alabama Department
of Transportation

The Cullman Tribune

The cost of chaos, blogs, livestreams and the erosion of local news

Noah Galilee

noah@cullmantribune.com

There is a growing sickness in our information culture. It is not new, but it is getting bolder, louder and far more destructive.

It is the rise of local social media blogs that trade in trauma, chase emergencies and exploit other people's worst moments for views, likes and algorithm clicks.

This week our community saw one of the worst examples yet. A local blog livestreamed the aftermath of a car crash while the vehicle was still on fire.

A young woman had died in that car. Her 7-month-old child, rescued by bystanders minutes earlier, was inches away from losing both mother and life.

Yet the camera kept rolling.

There was no hesitation. No pause. No dignity extended to the victim or her family.

No respect for first responders who were working to control a chaotic and dangerous scene.

Just a phone pointed toward tragedy and a steady stream of comments pouring in from viewers who had no business witnessing something so raw, so personal so devastating.

At The Tribune, we have long refused to go to crash scenes for this exact reason. Not because we lack interest or access, but because we respect human life.

We respect families who deserve privacy in the worst moments imaginable.

We respect fire, EMS and law enforcement personnel who need room to work without cameras shoved in their way.

That is a baseline standard in real journalism.

Blogs are not bound by that standard. Most are not accredited media. They do not operate under ethical codes recognized by the profession.

They are not trained in public safety, crisis reporting or victim protection. They simply show up, turn on a livestream and hope tragedy performs well online.

This is not news. This is

voyeurism.

And it is time for it to stop.

County officials and law enforcement leaders must take this seriously. Deputies and officers have the right and responsibility to maintain safe working perimeters at crash scenes, especially when a vehicle is actively burning, when lifesaving operations are underway or when a deceased individual is present.

Accreditation matters. Training matters. Professionalism matters.

When unaccredited blogs push themselves into these scenes, they are not just being irresponsible. They are endangering themselves, interfering with emergency operations and inflicting unnecessary trauma on families who will forever know that their loved one's last moments were broadcast on Facebook for entertainment.

This should outrage every elected official who claims to care about community standards. It should outrage every agency head who believes in professionalism. It should outrage every resident who understands the difference between journalism and chaos.

We need accountability, and we need it now.

A countywide protocol is overdue. Real boundaries, real enforcement, real clarity about who belongs inside an emergency perimeter and who does not.

Respectable news outlets will follow those guidelines because we always have. Blogs will fight them because guidelines stand in the way of views.

But the truth is simple. A community cannot claim to value human life while allowing people with cell phones to livestream death.

The families who suffer these tragedies deserve more. Our first responders deserve more. Cullman County deserves more.

It is time to rebuild the foundation of local news and shut the door on exploitation. It is time for leaders to step up. It is time for a higher standard.

And it is time for this era of reckless, sensational livestreaming to end.

CALL NEWS

In a world of noise, local news speaks clearly

There are pillars that hold the fabric of society together in every community. Hospitals care for the sick, schools educate the young and businesses provide goods and services. Among these essential institutions stands another cornerstone: the community newspaper.

Each week, local newspapers inform, engage and connect the people they serve. They cover school board and city council meetings, report on community events and share the stories that make small towns and rural communities home. They ensure that residents understand the decisions being made, how their tax dollars are spent and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

At the heart of every successful community newspaper is a team of dedicated professionals

committed to local journalism. They sit front row at council meetings, take photos on the sidelines Friday nights and report from the scene of accidents, fires or severe weather. Our reporters, editors and staff are your neighbors. They shop where you shop. Their kids go to school with yours. And, like you, they care deeply about the place they call home.

I've been in the newspaper business for nearly 40 years. I've seen many changes in how we gather and share information but one thing has never changed — the newspaper's commitment to truth, accountability and service.

A newspaper is not just a news source, it's the thread that weaves a community together. And like every part of a thriving community, a newspaper depends on support.

readers are just as eager to learn what's on sale at the local clothing store as they are to read about what's happening at city hall.

The partnership between newspapers and the business community is vital and mutually beneficial.

This point was brought home to me recently in an email. At the bottom of the message, a note read: "Due to an increase in internet and email hacking, we strongly recommend that you call our office directly to confirm wiring instructions." That statement perfectly illustrates a reality we all face today — the internet, while powerful, can be unreliable, confusing and at times dangerous.

We've all heard it: "You can't believe everything you read online." And it's true. In today's digital age, misinformation spreads fast, fueled by AI-generated content, fake videos,

misleading headlines and out-of-context clips. The burden of verifying facts increasingly falls on readers.

That's why local newspapers matter more than ever. We take the time to confirm facts. We name our sources. We stand by our reporting. We don't just recycle headlines, we do the work.

With a weekly newspaper, most readers know who's behind the byline. Our people are real. You see them at church, at ball games and at the grocery store. You know they're working hard just like you to make your community better. They are not just telling your story, they are living it.

So, what happens if these newspapers go away? Who will hold local government accountable? Who will report on school board meetings, community projects or high school

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK



Rhonda Gray, co-publisher
Email: rhonda@deepsouthmediagroup.net

We are incredibly grateful for the advertisers who make it possible to put out each edition, but the truth is newspapers cannot survive on 75-cent sales alone. Advertising covers roughly 80% of the costs of producing a newspaper. Without it, there is no newsroom, no coverage, no updates, no watchdog.

Advertising is news, too. In fact, many of our

continued below

football? Who will shine a light when no one else is watching?

Supporting your local newspaper isn't just about staying informed, it's about sustaining the voice of your community. It's about investing in truth, transparency and connection.

So, the next time one of our sales representatives sends you an email, stops by or drops off a newspaper, please consider purchasing an advertisement for your business and let's keep the newspaper industry alive.

Weekly newspapers have loyal readers and advertising in them puts your business directly in front of thousands of engaged, local shoppers. Let's work together to keep the presses running and your business growing. Your support doesn't just help us, it helps all of us.

APA Summer Convention *Agenda*

Friday – June 26

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	APA/ANAS Board Meeting Lunch	Sand Castle II
12:30 – 5:30 p.m.	Registration Desk open	Registration
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	Legislative Committee Meeting	Sand Castle II
1:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Journalism Foundation Board Meeting	Sand Dollar
3 – 4:15 p.m.	Sources and Beats: Reconnecting With Your Community <i>Jim Pumarlo</i>	Salon FGH
4:15 – 5:15 p.m.	Barrister and Brews: Ask Your Legal Questions <i>Evans Bailey, APA Legal Counsel</i>	Salon FGH
6:30 – 8 p.m.	Opening Reception Sponsored by Alabama Power	Beach Deck

Saturday – June 27

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Newsroom Roundtables Breakfast	Salon E
9:30 – 10:45 a.m.	Business News: An Everyday Beat <i>Jim Pumarlo</i>	Salon ABC
10:00 – 11 a.m.+	Headshot Clinic	Registration
11:00 – Noon	Why Your Newspaper Matters <i>Leonard Woolsey</i> <i>Southern Newspapers, Inc.</i>	Salon ABC
Noon – 1 p.m.	Luncheon and Membership Meeting	Salon E
5 – 6 p.m.	Resolutions Committee Meeting	
6 – 7 p.m.	AMA Exhibit Reception	Salon D
7 – 9:30 p.m.	Awards Banquet and Reception	Salon EFGH

