

COSTLY NOTICE:

PG 06 | *Missing words could prove costly for taxpayers*

NOMINATIONS DUE:

PG 10 | *Dec. 31 deadline for Musselman, Century Club*

SOCIAL NETWORKING:

PG 13 | *Create an online community around your newspaper*

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Shawnee News-Star becomes dogs' best friend

Alan Baxter didn't hesitate to rescue a hundred puppies that were malnourished, filthy, matted – and some even pregnant. Since Baxter and his wife, Cara, head up the TriCounty Humane Society near Shawnee, it fell to them to save the dogs.

However, taking in a hundred dogs is an overwhelming task. There's the issue of food, shelter, veterinary care ... the Baxters needed help so they contacted their local newspaper.

The call came into the Shawnee News-Star on Tuesday, Oct. 20. In the span of two days, thanks to the News-Star and the community that reads it, more than 60 of the dogs were placed in new, loving

homes, and over a ton of dog food as well as a thousand dollars was donated to the cause.

The front-page article in the paper the day after Baxter called contained a notice that the News-Star would be accepting donations of dog food and cash. That morning bags of kibble started showing up, dropped off by readers.

Jeri McIntyre, News-Star business manager, read the story and went to Publisher Brian Blansett with an idea. She asked if the newspaper might hold an adoption fair to help place the puppies.

The issue was close to McIntyre's heart. Three years earlier she had adopted a dog from a similar

Continued on Page 3



These three pups found new homes, thanks to the efforts of the Shawnee News-Star.

Photo by ANDREW ADAMS, Shawnee News-Star – Reprinted with permission

Eastern Oklahoma County newspaper closes after three decades

After serving the communities of eastern Oklahoma County for nearly three decades, The Sun, a twice-weekly newspaper in Midwest City, ceased publication on Oct. 28, 2009.

Formerly titled Midwest City Sun, the newspaper served eight cities in eastern Oklahoma County: Midwest City, Del City, Harrah, Spencer, Choctaw, Nicoma Park, Luther and Jones.

The Sun was delivered Sundays and Wednesdays to 3,000 subscribers, who, according to Publisher Lance Moler, will receive refunds on their account balances.

"There were financial struggles," said Linnie Pride, vice president and division manager for the paper's owner, Community Newspaper Holdings Inc. based in Birmingham, Ala.

"It's been struggling for

several years, but the last two years have pushed us over the edge," Pride said.

The company owns 21 other newspapers in Oklahoma. Pride said the company has no plans to close its remaining newspapers in the state.

The Sun's final issue featured stories by staff members saying goodbye to the community, readers' reactions to the closing – and local, community news.

"It's not the big events that I will miss," wrote Moler. "It's the everyday interaction with the people of EOC (Eastern Oklahoma County) that I'll choose to remember."

Editor Aaron Wright spent some time looking through old editions of The Sun before it closed.

Marcy Nash, who had only been with the paper a short time but had been a subscriber since The Sun

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New journalism professors at OSU

Two distinguished journalists joined the Oklahoma State University faculty this semester – Russell Carollo and Wayne Wanta.

Carollo serves as editor in residence in the OSU School of Journalism. He won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 1998 and was selected as a finalist in 1992, 1993 and 2002. He also served as a Journalism Fellow at the University of Michigan.

Wanta earned a master's degree and a doctorate from the University of Texas. He served as a professor at University of Missouri's School of Journalism and as the executive director of the Center for the Digital Globe, a program blending journalism, law, business and human environmental sciences. He also is a past president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Dogs' best friend

Continued from Page 1
situation when a puppy mill in Chandler was shut down.

"I posed the question to the publisher," said McIntyre. "He said that everyone was going to have to help and that I needed to make sure they (the staff) wanted to be involved.

"They all said, 'Yeah, let's do this. We want to help.'"

The next step was to contact Baxter and offer the newspaper's help in placing the puppies.

When Baxter agreed, News-Star staffers stepped into high gear and began calling local businesses for cages, donations and food.

The response was tremendous. Photos of adorable puppies in need and a call to action from the local newspaper brought the community out in full force. Members of the newspaper staff collected donations from all over town.

On Thursday, the News-Star ran a story announcing the time and location of the adoption fair, which would be held in front of the News-Star's office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

By this time, The Oklahoman and several television stations had picked up on the story. People came to the rescue from all over Oklahoma. One caller from Canada said she saw the story on CNN.com and wanted to know how she could help.

Prospective parents lined up in front of the News-Star's office dozens at a time, some standing in line for three to four hours in light drizzle. Baxter would bring in as many dogs as his pickup could safely carry and offload them.

Within minutes of arriving, the dogs had found new owners. Three of the dogs

were even adopted by News-Star employees.

Shawnee residents continued to bring in sacks of dog food throughout the day. Norma Blevins, a dog groomer from Norman, volunteered her services and set up shop in the print warehouse at the News-Star, washing and clipping dogs as television news crews rolled tape.

Two local veterinarians donated coupons to help with the cost of vaccinations and worming as well as discounts on spay and neuter services.

"I think it makes a pretty good statement about what impact and influence a local newspaper can have," said Blansett. "It's certainly not something you can generate any other way."

Traunya Starnes, a News-Star advertising executive, said, "We had so much participation as far as contributions from the community."

"It was fun and it was heartwarming and I enjoyed the fact that we found homes for these pets," Starnes said.

"They were dirty and their hair was matted and people just came in and fell in love with them."

The News-Star followed up with a report on the number of pets placed, the amount of food and money raised and even included a special article regarding the health issues some of the dogs face.

In the end, dozens of dogs that might otherwise have faced starvation, disease or euthanasia found homes, food and families thanks to Oklahomans, a motivated community and the Shawnee News-Star – a local, community newspaper run by real people in touch with the readers they serve.

Sun closes

Continued from Page 1

started, said she would miss 'her' newspaper.

"It may be replaced by another paper, and I certainly hope that this area will have a local paper, but I feel like I am losing a good friend," she wrote.

Sun readers offered their condolences after learning that their local newspaper was closing its doors.

"The publisher and staff have suffered but we, the citizens of this area, are the greater losers," one reader penned. "In time, we will come to realize how great is our loss."

Dick Hefton, founder and former editor and publisher of the Midwest City Sun, wrote of the importance of newspapers – and the competition the industry is facing.

"I have been proud these 29 years to have been the founder of The Sun newspapers," he concluded in his letter. "No one hates to see them pass more than I do."

The old Beatles' song 'Here Comes the Sun' was once the motto of the newspaper, said Hefton.

Today, Eastern Oklahoma County residents may be humming Elton John's "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me."

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OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Complete Listing of Events at
www.OkPress.com

DEC. 2 – LAWTON

DEC. 3 – ENID

OPA REGIONAL MEETINGS

OPA's advertising staff wants to let you know how it's trying to increase advertising in your newspaper. Find out what ad agencies said about newspapers, and why we're loved and hated at the same time. Hear what OPS is doing to recruit political advertising, and chat about OPS rates and commissions. Visit okpress.com/2009-regional-meetings to register and find out the other topics to be discussed.

DEC. 31

NOMINATION DEADLINE FOR ONF BEACHY MUSSELMAN AWARD & OPA CENTURY CLUBS

Nominations may be made by anyone. The Beachy Musselman Award recognizes a journalist for his or her contribution to the field of printed journalism or its related field. The recipient receives a plaque and \$1,000. To be eligible for membership in the Half Century Club, nominees must have completed any 20 years of their newspaper experience at an OPA-member newspaper. To be eligible for induction into the Quarter Century Club, nominees must have completed at least 10 years of their newspaper experience at an OPA-member newspaper. Complete nomination criteria for the Musselman Award and OPA Quarter and Half Century Clubs is available on the OPA website at www.okpress.com/contests--awards.

FEB. 4-6, 2010 – MIDWEST CITY OPA MID-WINTER CONVENTION

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the annual convention at the Sheraton & Reed Center in Midwest City.

For more information on upcoming events, visit the website as noted in the calendar, go to the OPA website at www.OkPress.com or contact Member Services Director Lisa Potts at (405) 499-0026, 1-888-815-2672 or LPotts@okpress.com.

Dedication held for Gaylord Hall

The second phase of Gaylord Hall, the University of Oklahoma's home of journalism and mass communication, was dedicated in a public ceremony on Oct. 13.

The \$19 million project added about 46,000 square feet to the facility.

"Gaylord Hall, which we dedicate here today, is a place where dreams are formed, where curiosity is in our DNA, where creativity thrives, where public service dominates, and where community matters," said Gaylord College Dean Joe Foote.

Phase two features include computer and multimedia labs, a video production studio, a 180-seat auditorium and the new student-run advertising and public relations firm called Lindsey + Asp.

Author and columnist to receive Gaylord Prize

Thomas L. Friedman, author and foreign affairs columnist for the New York Times, will be honored next month by the University of Oklahoma Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Friedman will be the second recipient of the Gaylord Prize, given to Jim Lehrer in 2008. The Prize is funded from an endowment established by the Edward L. Gaylord family.

The Gaylord Prize will be awarded to Friedman at a luncheon at the Sheraton Oklahoma City Hotel at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 7.

Friedman is the author of five books on foreign affairs and globalization including the best-selling "The World is Flat," "From Beirut to Jerusalem" and his latest, "Hot, Flat and Crowded." Several of his books focus on world affairs following the

The agency, housed on the second floor, gives students the opportunity to work with nonprofit and small businesses in an actual work environment.

The third floor provides a professional writing area and offices for the college's graduate and new doctoral programs and for the Institute for Research and Training.

The Inasmuch Foundation donated \$5 million to the project; the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation gave \$4 million and the E.L. and Thelma Gaylord Foundation contributed \$2 million.

Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

He started his career as a general assignment reporter for the London Bureau of United Press International in 1988 before being assigned to Beirut as a UPI correspondent where he stayed for three years before being hired by the New York Times. At the Times, he worked as general financial reporter, as chief of both the Beirut and Jerusalem bureaus, as Chief Diplomatic Correspondent and as Chief White House Correspondent during the Clinton administration.

In 1995, Friedman became the New York Times foreign affairs columnist.

He has received three Pulitzer Prizes in Journalism for his work as well as the Overseas Press Club Award for lifetime achievement.

Police incident reports open to public again

As of Nov. 1, police incident reports not involving an arrest are once again open to the public.

House Bill 1049 rectifies a 2005 amendment to the Open Records Act that police departments interpreted as allowing the release of incident reports only pertaining to an arrest.

Rep. John Carey, D-Durant, introduced HB 1049 this past spring to undo the 2005 amendment.

The Open Records Act now requires police to make available "a chronological list of all incidents, including initial offense report information showing the offense, date, time, general location, officer, and a brief summary of what occurred."

Islia Barnes new owner of Freedom Call paper

The Freedom Call is under new ownership.

Donna Hodgson sold the weekly newspaper to Islia Barnes on Oct. 29.

Barnes has been an active member of the Freedom community for more than nine years. She was owner of Our Place Café in 2000 and most recently operated The Longbranch Café.

The Freedom Call began publishing on April 19, 1906, as The Freedom Express. In 1923, the name was changed to The Freedom Call.

In 2000, the paper sold to Pebbles Ludington and Hodgson. Hodgson published the paper for nine years.

Yale's bid for trash contract violates Open Meeting Act

The Yale Board of Commissioners is sending the city trash collection contract out for bids again after violations of open meeting laws made the previous award improper.

During the prior bidding process, the bid opening was held in a private session, which violates Oklahoma's Open Meeting Act. However, the vote taken to once again open bids was not on the agenda of the special meeting the commissioners held, which also violates the state's meeting act.

Gazette turns 30

The Oklahoma Gazette celebrated its 30th anniversary in October 2009.

The weekly newspaper, located in Oklahoma City, was founded by Publisher Bill Bleakley.

In the anniversary issue, Bleakley recounted changes in Oklahoma City since Gazette's first issue in 1979.

Bleakley said the initial focus of the paper was historic preservation but over the years Gazette has grown to include opinion, investigation, features, arts and entertainment.

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Supreme Court's rule limits access to records

On Oct. 5, the Oklahoma Supreme Court declined an open records request from an Edmond company for all state court records currently in electronic form.

Chief Justice James Edmondson explained that the requested records were readily available on either the state's website or directly from individual court districts.

Three days later, the Supreme Court issued a ruling forbidding the large scale distribution of state court records to anyone by district or appellate courts or third-party contractors.

Edmondson said the ruling is meant to cover only those requests made by commercial interests.

Requests from the media and non-commercial entities will be handled on a case-by-case basis. However, the ruling itself makes no such exceptions.

The Court said "electronic access is available only to the electronic case infor-

mation of a particular case. When a search for electronic case information returns multiple results, each result may be viewed only individually."

The order forbids the bulk distribution of all or any "significant subset" of the information available through the state's website or through KellPro's On Demand Court Records website.

KellPro, a technology company located in Duncan, Okla., recently signed a \$1.5 million contract with the State of Oklahoma to gather, process and store court data from more than 60 counties in Oklahoma.

KellPro offers advanced search, tracking and download of multiple cases on a paid subscription basis at the website www.odcr.com.

Open records advocates worry that limiting access to court records could stifle any effort to analyze court actions or trends and cut off research by the media and watchdog groups.

Yale newspaper, citizens file criminal complaints

For The Record and citizens of Yale have filed eight criminal complaints against Yale City Commissioners and Roger McMillian, the city attorney/management consultant.

The complaints allege numerous violations of the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act and improper procedure.

In a recent commission meeting, when one Yale citizen stood to voice concern over a possible illegal agenda item, McMillian told the citizen to hire an attorney and to take it up with the district attorney.

At this time an attorney has not been hired, but For the Record, along with a group of Yale constituents, presented a

binder with eight formal complaints to Yale Police Chief Phillip Keeling.

Among the evidence is meeting minutes, tape recordings of commission meetings and a leaked memo from McMillian to commissioners.

The newspaper and some Yale citizens said items discussed in the memo should have been presented in front of the public, but were kept private under the auspices of attorney client privilege.

Keeling said he would pass the complaints to the district attorney for consideration. Copies of the charges were sent to state representatives, senators and Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson.

New executive editor takes over at Neighbor Newspapers

Oklahoma Neighbor Newspapers has named William Swaim as its new executive editor.

Swaim was previously managing editor of the Montrose Daily Press in Colorado.

Swaim will handle 12 papers including the Bixby Bulletin, Broken Arrow Ledger, Catoosa Times, Collinsville News, Coweta American, Glenpool Post, Jenks Journal,

Mannford Eagle, Owasso Reporter, Sand Springs Leader, Skiatook Journal and Wagoner Tribune.

A graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Swaim ushered in new technology for the Daily Press' website, redesigning it and introducing staff-produced video and live webcasts of local high school football games.

Judge rules to allow cameras in courtroom of murder trial

A judge recently ruled that television cameras will be allowed inside the courtroom for the murder trial of a pharmacist.

Oklahoma County District Judge Tammy Bass-LeSure granted a motion filed on behalf of several media outlets to televise the first-degree murder trial of 58-year-old Jerome Ersland.

Oklahoma City and Tulsa television stations asked the judge for permission to televise the trial. The stations plan to use one "pool" camera.

The Oklahoman asked for permission to take photos inside the courtroom and to access the television feed so the trial can be shown on its website, NewsOk.com.

Oklahoma law prohibits cameras or recording equipment inside courtrooms, unless authorized by the individual judge.

OPA Attorney Michael Minnis said he was pleased with the judge's ruling.

"This particular case has aroused the interest and passions of the community like no other," Minnis said.

"It's important in our country that we have open justice. That's the biggest protection we have against injustice."

Ersland is accused of gunning down 16-year-old Antwun Parker at the Reliable Discount Pharmacy where he worked in south Oklahoma City.

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Missing words may cost residents \$12.5 million

By JOHN M. WYLIE II,
Editor/Publisher of the Oologah Lake Leader
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*For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

PRYOR – In the Rogers County version of this nursery rhyme, for want of a few words in a legal notice a decade ago taxpayers now may face paying a \$12.5-million jury verdict awarded last month to a limestone mining company.

Assistant District Attorney Barry Farbro insists that a final judgment anywhere close to that amount is unlikely in the dispute over zoning regulations.

But the county has already lost three rounds including two at the appeals court level.

"It (has been) a war," Farbro said of the court fight.

He also confirmed that jury awards involving such claims are uninsurable, meaning taxpayers will be responsible for any final judgment.

The amount of the judgment would be paid through a sinking fund over a three year period. Payments would be financed by increased property taxes.

Final damages, if any, won't be known for a long time because of expected appeals.

County Assessor Melissa Anderson said that if the final amount were to be \$12.5 million and the tax increase were based on the most recent valuation, the property tax increase would be 6.355 mills each year for three years.

For a property with a fair market value of \$100,000 without a homestead exemption, that would mean an added tax of \$69.91 for each of the three years. A property worth \$100,000 but with a homestead

exemption would have an added tax bill of \$63.55.

BASICS OF THE CASE

Although the legal questions are incredibly complex, court documents indicate that the basic facts are fairly simple.

In February 2000, Rogers County Commissioners annexed almost 100,000 acres of land into the jurisdiction of the City-County Planning Commission.

Essentially, the area included all land "West of the Verdigris River to Washington and Tulsa Counties, and everything North of the Caney River to Nowata County" except for property in the town limits of Oologah and Talala.

There's no question that the Planning Commission published notice of the intended annexation, including a legal description of every parcel involved and a detailed map.

However, the Commission failed to include the date, time or place of a public hearing on the proposed annexation.

That omission, involving perhaps 20 words, was critical because in December 1999, Christopher Neal Begley had signed a lease allowing Material Service Corp. to mine limestone on a 320-acre tract.

The land was within the area annexed into the Planning Commission on Feb. 28, 2000.

Suddenly, the property went from being unregulated to a status where mining was prohibited by zoning regulations.

That meant Material Service could not get a state mining permit.

Material Service filed suit against the Planning Commission and county in June 2000, saying the omission meant that no "public notice" was provided as required by state law.

Three years later, after a battle at the district court level, the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals agreed with Material's argument.

In July 2003, acting on that ruling, the district court issued an order finding that the annexation was void as far as the 320 acres were concerned.

Almost simultaneously, county commissioners reinstated the zoning annexation for the remainder of the land.

Material Service filed a second lawsuit in May 2004, seeking damages for "inverse condemnation," (action by a county that does not take property but diminishes its value).

In July 2006 Begley joined the lawsuit, saying the county's improper annexation had damaged the value of his land because it blocked him from receiving royalties under the mining lease signed more than six years earlier.

SETTLEMENT, TRIAL

Begley settled the case for \$150,000 in April 2009. The \$150,000 was paid out of the county's 101-T Highway account July 20 in exchange for Begley's agreement not to pursue the issue further.

However, no agreement could be reached between the county and Material Service.

"Two attempts to mediate the case were made," Farbro said.

The case was moved to Mayes County, with Craig County Associate District Judge Gary L. Maxey assigned to preside over a jury trial last month.

The trial began Oct. 27 and two days later, after a few hours of deliberations, the jury returned the verdict awarding Material Service \$12.5 million in damages against the county.

Farbro immediately made two motions, one for a judgment in favor of the county notwithstanding the jury's decision and a second for a new trial. The judge gave him 30 days to file a brief supporting each motion, and Material Service will then have 30 days to file responses.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

No matter what happens, Farbro said, the case is almost certain to make a third visit to the Court of Civil Appeals.

"This is a complex case. I predict new law will be made in this case," he said. "It's a doozie."

Although state law about public notice was not satisfied, approximately 50 people attended the Planning Commission hearing and almost as many attended the County Commission meeting where the annexation decision was made on Feb. 28, 2000.

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Owasso's Aaron Colvin loses his hat, but hangs on for the tackle during Owasso's 41-3 loss to No. 1 Jenks.

Photo by Rick Heaton, Owasso Reporter, Published Sept. 22, 2009



Oklahoma State wide receiver Dez Bryant dives into the endzone for a touchdown during a football game against Georgia at Boone Pickens Stadium in Stillwater on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009. OSU defeated Georgia 24-10.

Photo by BEN WOLOSZYN, Stillwater NewsPress, Published Sept. 6, 2009

WITH ALL YOUR POWER



WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

OSU journalism students recipients of OPA scholarships

The Oklahoma Press Association Print Scholarship Committee awarded 20 scholarships totaling \$20,000 to Oklahoma State University journalism students for the 2009-10 academic year.

The scholarship committee reviewed the recipients when they met Oct. 6, 2009, at the Paul Miller Building on the OSU campus.

Attending the meeting were Jason Caniglia, Mary Daniels, Sean Dyer, Derina Holtzhausen, Melissa Powers and Peter Sherwood.

The OPA scholarships were established in the 1980s when funds were raised and invested with the OSU Foundation for the purposes of scholarships and to aid the journalism school.

Four scholarships went to incoming freshmen and 11 went to students for continuing study.

Recipients of the OPA Freshman Scholarship Mentor Program were Krystyna Biassou and Marissa Belzer, who each received \$2,000 scholarships, and Tiffany Vincent and Sara Fevurly, who each received \$1,500 scholarships. Each scholarship winner is assigned a mentor from the news editorial faculty, who corresponds with the student in person and by e-mail.

Associate professor Mike Sowell is serving as the mentor for Biassou and Fevurly; assistant professor Ray Murray is serving as the mentor for Belzer and Vincent.

Students receiving OPA Continuing Student Scholarships in the amount of \$1,500 each were Allison Broyles, Meaghan Roberts, Phyllis McLemore and Courtnie Simpson. In addition, seven students – Jessica Hamm, Brad Ulrich, Ashlee Harris, Wes Young, Stephanie Rowe, Courtney Ned and Stacey Brandhorst – received \$1,000 scholarships.

Notes of appreciation from the students appear at right.

In other business, the committee elected new officers for the coming year. OSU School of Journalism and Broadcasting School Director Derina Holtzhausen will serve as chair; Sean Dyer, publisher of the El Reno Tribune, will serve as vice chair.

Dear Oklahoma Press Association,
Thank you so much for granting me this amazing scholarship! Thanks to your generosity I am going to be able to live out my dreams at the perfect school for me. My future is so much brighter because of you!

A million thanks,
Krystyna Biassou

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for much for the opportunity of a scholarship for the Oklahoma State School of Journalism and Broadcasting. With your help, I am one step closer to fulfilling one of my dreams. I plan to work my hardest while in school to show how appreciative I am of this scholarship. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness and consideration.

Yours truly,
Marissa Belzer

To the Oklahoma Press Association Endowment:
I want to thank you for the scholarship. I truly appreciate your generosity. The money will be put to good use, I promise. Thank you again, for if it were not for your help I would not be able to attend OSU and be a part of their outstanding journalism program. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Vincent

Dear Oklahoma Press Association Endowment,
Thank you so much for choosing me for the Oklahoma Press Association Freshman Scholarship. It is a huge honor. Journalism is my passion and this scholarship will help me on my pursuit at Oklahoma State. I greatly appreciate this scholarship.

Thanks again,
Sara Fevurly

Oklahoma Press Association,
Thank you so much for the generous donation. I appreciate your facilitation of my education. It means so much to me that you recognize my achievement and believe in me.

Sincerely,
Allison E. Broyles

Dear Members of the OPA,
I want to thank you for the Oklahoma Press Association Scholarship that I have received! I greatly appreciate your generosity! I am sorry that I am late in getting this to you, but I am studying in Madrid, Spain, for the semester; therefore, it is a little bit harder to correspond with my coordinator at OSU. Once again, thank you very much for awarding me this scholarship!

Thank you!
Meaghan Roberts

Dear OPA Endowment Committee,
Thank you for the generous \$1,500 contribution to my education. I am grateful for the scholarship and am proud to win an award carrying the name of the Oklahoma Press Association. Having an exciting future ahead, I am pleased you chose to invest in it. I will do my best to make you and the OSU School of Journalism and Broadcasting proud of me.

Thank you,
Phyllis McLemore

To the Members of the Oklahoma Press Association,
I would like to officially thank all of you for choosing me as a recipient for this scholarship. I am so grateful, and cannot say thank you enough!

Sincerely,
Courtne Simpson

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your generous scholarship donation. I am honored to be a recipient. Your scholarship will directly pay for undergraduate fees and help prepare my savings for graduation and law school. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Jessica Hamm

Dear Oklahoma Press Association Endowment,
I would like to thank you for your incredibly generous scholarship of \$1,000. It helps so much more than you know, especially with my unpaid internship in Florida coming up this summer. I will strive to keep my grades high and remain an active participant in the Oklahoma State Journalism program.

Thankfully,
Brad Ulrich

Oklahoma Press Association Endowment,
Thank you very much for your contribution.
Sincerely,
Ashlee Harris

Dear Members of the OPA,
Thank you for awarding me the Oklahoma Press Association Scholarship for the 2009-2011 school year. I appreciate your investment in my future and assure you the results will be beyond measure.

Wes Young

Dear Oklahoma Press Association,
Thank you for awarding me the \$1,000 Oklahoma Press Association Scholarship. The award will help me to continue my journalism studies at OSU. I plan to get my Bachelor of Science with a specialty in News Editorial, and then I plan to go to pharmacy school. This scholarship will help me achieve those goals.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Rowe

I would like to express my gratitude to the Oklahoma Press Association Endowment for selecting me as a 2009 scholarship recipient. The financial assistance I am receiving will aid in covering the expenses needed. Due to the loss of my father, this scholarship will aid in achieving academic excellence. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Courtney Ned

Dear Oklahoma Press Association Endowment,
Thank you so much for your support of the Oklahoma State University School of Journalism and Broadcasting Scholarship program. I have been awarded the Oklahoma Press Association Scholarship this year and I am so thankful for the financial burden that has been lifted from my family because of this award.

Thank you again!
Stacy Brandhorst

OSU
JOURNALISM
STUDENTS
EXPRESS GRATITUDE
FOR OKLAHOMA PRESS
ASSOCIATION'S PRINT
SCHOLARSHIPS.

Foundation accepting nominations for annual Beachy Musselman Award

Nominations will be accepted through Dec. 31 for the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation's Beachy Musselman Award.

The award recognizes a journalist for his or her contribution to the field of printed journalism or its related field. Extra consideration is given on the basis of service to the community, initiative in reporting, photography or interpreting the news.

Nominations must include biographical information showing work in the newspaper industry or related field and reasons you believe the person is deserving of the award.

Nominations may be mailed to ONF, c/o Oklahoma Press Association, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105, faxed to (405) 499-0048, or e-mailed to Lisa Potts at LPotts@okpress.com.

Established in 1969 to recognize and encourage quality journalism in practice, education and research, the award is named after the late Norman Beachy Musselman, former editor and general manager of the Shawnee News-Star.

Musselman was born July 17, 1897, in Falls City, Neb., graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1918 and did graduate work at Kansas University in 1920 and 1921. From 1922-23, he was city

editor of the Arkansas City Daily News in Kansas and, from 1924 to 1942, served as advertising manager of the Arkansas City Traveler.

He was editor and general manager of the Shawnee News-Star from 1945 until his death on Aug. 6, 1963.

A few months after his death, his widow, the late Ruth Musselman, asked the OPA to administer a Norman Beachy Musselman Memorial Fund.

The memorial contribution proved to be the catalyst needed to establish the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation, which was established to serve as a trust for donations of money, securities or other property.

Musselman was a consistent winner of editorial writing awards and his columns, "Beachnut and Newsbeams," also won many awards. He served as president of the Oklahoma Press Association in 1961, which coincided with building and moving into the OPA office at 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

"Beachy made a high mark upon the tide of a man's worth by his infectious friendliness, his personality, his deeds and the fire of enthusiasm he could kindle in his associates," former OPA Executive Vice President Ben Blackstock said of the Shawnee newsman.

December 31 deadline for nominations into OPA Quarter and Half Century Clubs

The Oklahoma Press Association's Quarter and Half Century Clubs are accepting nominations to be considered for induction through Dec. 31.

The Quarter and Half Century Clubs honor those who have served in the newspaper industry.

To be eligible for membership into the Half Century Club, nominees must have completed any 20 years of their newspaper experience at an Oklahoma Press Association member newspaper. Inductees into the Half Century Club receive a handsome plaque, an engraved brick in the OPA Centennial Plaza and recognition at the OPA Mid-Winter Convention, Feb. 4-6, 2010, in Midwest City, Okla.

Eligibility requirements for the Quarter Century Club require nominees to

have completed at least 10 years of their newspaper experience at an OPA member newspaper. Inductees receive a plaque and recognition at the OPA Mid-Winter Convention.

Credit is given for work as a carrier or stringer (including photographers and reporters) as well as wartime service.

All nominations must include biographical information or resume detailing the nominee's years of service to the newspaper industry.

Nominations may be mailed to Oklahoma Press Association, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105, faxed to (405) 499-0048 or e-mailed to LPotts@okpress.com. A nomination form is available online at www.okpress.com/century-clubs.

All the news that's fit to wear...



Norman High School fashion design student Jaley Smith readies her outfit made out of Norman Transcript newspapers prior to a class presentation.

Photo by KEVIN ELLIS, The Norman Transcript — Reprinted with permission

Journalism Hall of Fame seeking nominations

The Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame has set Dec. 1, 2009, as the deadline to accept nominations. Next year's induction will take place in early April.

Dr. Terry Clark, a professor of journalism at the University of Central Oklahoma who serves as director of the Hall of Fame, said several nominations have already been received, but more are welcome.

The selection committee of the applicants is made up of members of the Oklahoma Press Association, the UCO and Oklahoma Professional chapters of the Society of Professional Journalists and the UCO Journalism Department.

Each year all the applications are reviewed, including those made in earlier years.

"The induction ceremony has become a

homecoming celebration for the many previous members of the Hall," Clark said.

Founded in 1971 by former UCO Journalism Chairperson Dr. Ray Tassin, the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame is supported by funding from UCO, the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation and the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation.

Nine or ten journalists are chosen for recognition each year from among those who have made outstanding contributions to the journalism field for at least 10 years. They must either be Oklahoma natives or have worked in Oklahoma journalism for 10 years.

For more information, contact Clark at (405) 947-5122, or Sherry Sump at (405) 974-5121.

DEATHS

William G. Boykin, a former executive director for the Inland Press Association who once worked at the Oklahoma Press Association, died Oct. 14, 2009, in Austin, Texas.

Boykin died from injuries suffered when a car struck him while he was crossing a six-lane street on foot. He was using a walker at the time of the accident.

A native of Shidler, Okla., Boykin served as a radioman in the U.S. Navy in World War II. After the war he graduated with a degree in journalism from Oklahoma A&M in Stillwater, which became Oklahoma State University.

After college, Boykin worked in broadcast news and in advertising sales for newspapers in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

He was employed by OPA from 1955 to 1957. He later was employed by Allied Daily Newspaper Association in Seattle and then Florida Press Association, where he served as manager for 18 months before joining Texas Press Association in 1971.

He left TPA in 1973 to accept a position as manager of Inland Daily Newspaper Association in Chicago. He retired from Inland in 1983.

Boykin was a longstanding member of the National Press Club.

Blackwell paper updates website

The Blackwell Journal-Tribune's website has a new look.

Blackwelljournaltribune.net features all the news coverage in the paper's print version in addition to new content, said Publisher Bruce Jones.

"The Journal-Tribune's online presence is becoming more of an important part of our subscribers' lives," said Jones. "We have over 700 visitors a day to our site looking at news and events in and around the Blackwell area."

The newspaper has had an online presence for over two years.

Altus editor pens book

Michael Bush, managing editor of the Altus Times, recently published "Down the Mountain." The book is a fictional story based on dreams Bush has had about heaven. Bush has spent most of his career in the newspaper business and was inducted into the Oklahoma Press Association's Quarter Century Club in 2007. The book is available at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com or publishamerica.com.

New flag brands Duncan as 'Crapemyrtle Capital of Oklahoma'

The Duncan Banner recently introduced a newly designed flag for the daily newspaper.

The flag features full-color crape-myrtles behind the newspaper's name and the tag line "Crapemyrtle Capital of Oklahoma."

Banner Publisher Kevin Hook explained that he felt the top of the page needed "a

bit of life" and that the newspaper wanted to work with the Duncan Beautification Committee in branding the city as the Crapemyrtle Capital of Oklahoma.

The flag, created by the Banner's graphic arts department, will be a permanent change.

"Anytime we can work with the city to brand itself and bring in more business to



The Duncan Banner's new flag.

our community partners, we're willing to make the effort," said Hook.



The wins.

The losses.

The stats.

The crossword.

The comics.

The coupons.

The people.

The politics.

The police blotter.

The tax hikes.

The scandals.

The truth.

Our towns.

Our lives.

Our news.

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Newspapers.**

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www.newspaperproject.org

Let's talk turkey about Windows 7 and XP

computer notes from the road by WILMA MELOT

Now that it's Thanksgiving, I thought we would take a look at Windows 7 and determine whether it's a complete turkey or whether it will actually entice us to switch from Windows XP.

Glancing at Windows 7 for the first time, I thought I was using Vista; it has that look and feel. Vista users will be right at home with this operating system. As I looked deeper, though, I found that most of the menus were cleaned up and are simpler to use than Vista.

Control Panel no longer has a "classic view" but there is an "icon view" that is very much like the XP interface. The default category view is pretty decent. The first time you see it, you're forced to stop and read but once you understand Microsoft's intent, it gets much easier to use.

The help menu seems more helpful than in previous versions of Microsoft's OS; it even includes a few icon-based menus at the top.

The task bar has adopted many of the features that the Macintosh dock has had for many years. You can see multiple documents minimized and parked at the end of the taskbar. The system even allows you to hide all application windows by clicking the "show desktop" button on the far right side of the task bar.

These features are certainly welcomed by those of us who perform multiple tasks at once. It seems very easy to use and intuitive... very Mac-like.

The Finder in Windows 7 has changed. They added an area called "libraries" to the sidebar and one called "favorites" that lets you build shortcut folders to any directory you visit frequently – even if they're on another server. This, too, is something that Mac has done for awhile but it's a welcome addition to Windows Finder.

It's simple to use. Select Libraries on the left, right click on the New Library button at the top of the window, give the new button a name and navigate to the folder you want to include. Once you get this feature set up, you'll love it.

While we're discussing Finder improvements, in Windows 7 you can view windows side by side with a key stroke or by simply dragging a window frame. It's not exactly Mac's Expose, but darn close.

You can drag a window to the top of the screen to maximize it or drag it to the side of the screen to pin it there. Shaking the window to minimize all but the active screen is pretty cool but it takes a little practice to do it on a track pad. The windows key and the arrows in some combination control this feature. Experiment... you may like it.

Most programs I installed did so with no problem and ran without a hitch; even Open Office worked well.

My new favorite toy in this OS is the Note1 Windows Journal, which allows you to use your mouse or track pad to handwrite a note to yourself. It's handy for those times when you need to draw something to explain it.



There's a function for math, too, which allows you to create math formulas with mouse gestures.

A clean install of Windows 7 clears off all of your old garbage but wipes away your old programs and games as well. You'll have to back them up and reinstall later but this is definitely the way to go. A clean install starts your machine off fresh and it will likely run better and faster than trying to keep the past moving forward.

If you're upgrading from XP, how many years has it been since you started fresh?

Even with the new operating system, you still need to buy anti-virus software. I would suggest you buy it when you purchase the Windows 7 upgrade. Norton 2009 does not support Windows 7, so you must use 2010.

I'm still a fan of Norton over other brands, even though I've tried many in the name of review. It seems to operate in the background less obtrusively than it did with XP and does not slow down the computer. It's almost a reason to upgrade in itself.

To run Windows 7, you'll need at least 1GB of RAM and a newer coprocessor. 1.6mhz seems to run everything reasonably well but I would not go lower than that. Microsoft makes a version of the software specifically for the little netbooks.

This is the future for the PC platform. You may want to install it on one machine and try it out. There are a number of interface improvements you'll like once you get to know them and you'll certainly appreciate the speed increase.

Microsoft XP will only be supported until 2014, then it's gone.

Best method for downloading PDFs from e-mail clients

E-mail clients all handle attachments differently, which makes them a joy to support.

I'm often asked why a PDF attachment works one week and doesn't the next. Let's see if some general discussion about downloading procedures can help.

If you're downloading from the Web

or e-mail and the steps you use work, don't change them.

If you are having problems, try this. Look at the link in your e-mail client and right-click or control-click on it to bring up the contextual menu; select "save as" instead of dragging the file to the desktop. In some e-mail clients, there will be a "save as" button next to the attached file

– using that is just as good. Most people save PDFs as Acrobat 4 files for layout.

If you double-click the file and it opens in Acrobat, do not save from Acrobat. It changes the file in many cases, updating to the version that it is saved as, which means older layout program may not be able to use it.

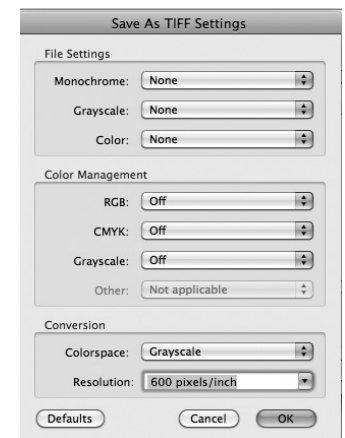
plugged IN

PDF to TIFF

I know all the designers of those wonderful ads are going to hate this, but in the interest of getting the paper published, sometimes you have to rasterize a PDF that simply refuses to work on publishing night.

Let's talk about how to do it right and make it look good.

If you have the full version of Acrobat and not simply Acrobat Reader, I suggest you use it. Select File > Save As and then select TIFF (tagged image file format). Go to settings and turn all compressions off.



We don't want to recompress an already compressed file. It just loses quality. 300 dpi is the minimum resolution – some newspapers use 600 dpi. When you're trying to make small type and halftones look sharp, resolution is everything.

Choose CMYK or grayscale and go. Acrobat should keep the settings for you.

If you use Photoshop, start by setting the resolution and color. When you save, be sure to turn compression off.

Again, Photoshop should cache the settings for you and you can reuse them later.

Note that with Photoshop you can lighten a photo that you know is too dark for your paper by selecting it with the marquee tool separately from other elements of the ad and treating it like you would any photo.

SOCIAL NETWORKING: *Feeding an addiction for fun and profit*

That **InterWeb** Thing

by KEITH BURGIN, OPA STAFF

Sometimes the mere mention of some technologies gives you the urge to cram a dinner fork in your ear to stop the pain.

“Are you on Twitter?” “What’s your Facebook address?” “I blogged about that last week.” “Did you see that video on YouTube?”

If you gave into your urges every time someone talked to you about this stuff, you’d spend your life with silverware hanging out of your ears like a bad impression of Bullwinkle J. Moose.

Instead, I suggest you embrace the near addictive properties of these services and use them to your advantage.

The fact is, many of the people who enjoy “tweeting” and “blogging” are regular folks who hold down steady jobs, buy local goods, eat at the pizzeria around the corner and read your newspaper. They’re the kind of people your advertisers want to reach.

They also happen to be the kind of folks who want to be involved... in something, sometimes anything. So involve them.

TWITTER

Twitter is the phenomenally popular micro-blogging site where people from all over everywhere exchange short text snippets or “tweets” of 140 characters. If you allow your readers to follow you on Twitter, they can join in a discussion of the issues you cover.

Something interesting happen at the town council meeting? Text it to your Twitter account from your cell phone. Ask readers their opinion. Everyone has an opinion and the people who use Twitter love to share theirs.

Let them know that details will be coming in the next edition of the paper and that you might even use some of their comments. Now you’ve combined the ability to voice an opinion with 15 minutes of fame. That’s attractive.

FACEBOOK

Facebook is a social networking community made up of individual accounts where people share photos, text, songs and whatever else trips their collective triggers. It’s very useful for creating a following and keeping people informed.

Whether you have a website or not, an online point where readers can interact

with your newspaper without disrupting the flow of the actual product is definitely useful. Companies all over the country have found that engaging clients or buyers via Facebook creates loyalty and a sense of interest because people feel a connection to the product.

If you’re a weekly newspaper, you might consider keeping readers in touch with local events on Facebook on days you don’t publish; you might even ask for feedback or updates from them. Readers with Web access or smart phones can be terrific newshounds and, once again, they’re involved in the newspaper.

YOUTUBE

Have videos you’d like to post? Try YouTube. It’s free, easy to use and allows you to upload video without much conversion. YouTube’s account features allow you to insert a link from the video to your website, bringing them to you for more information. YouTube also makes a great companion to Twitter.

When you upload highlights from that high school football game, let everyone know they’re up and provide a link to the video via Twitter. It’s instant notification and those who get the update can send it to friends right away.

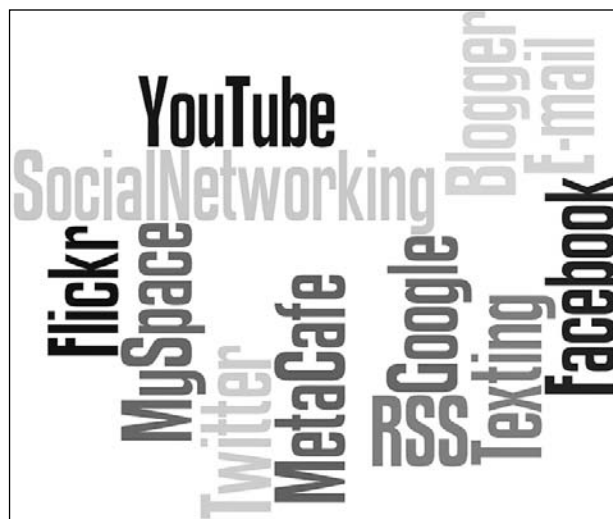
FlickR

Flickr is a free, online photo gallery... with extras. You can upload your photos either in a mass collection, such as images of the county fair (by uploading a .zip file), or individually. Parents and relatives love seeing those graduation photos and with Flickr, you can share them with the whole county.

With Flickr, though, the bonus is the ability to allow or disallow comments and control access to your gallery. There is a limit as to how much space you can take up with a free account but an upgraded Flickr account is only \$25 per year.

BLOG

Blog... the word that never was. Blog is a combination of the words Web Log. It’s an online journal that categorizes and



publishes entries and offers readers the opportunity to comment, if you choose to let them. “Blogging” is the term for this type of journaling.

Blogging is probably the most popular way of creating an online community around your product. It allows lengthy comments and real discussion about issues and current events.

Readers of blogs are fiercely opinionated and since almost anyone can create one free of charge, everyday people love becoming an instant pundit. This is highly useful in creating brand loyalty.

Again, I would use the blog to bring people back to the newspaper website or promote the newsprint product.

All of these technologies may be a bit self-indulgent but that’s the whole point, isn’t it? Indulge your readers, get their feedback, make them important to the discussion of local issues and they will come back for more.

Keep them up-to-date in more than one medium and you become not only the local

newspaper, but the go-to source for any current event or issue.

As with anything you do above and beyond your current daily responsibilities, using social networking to gain readers takes a few extra steps. You must keep information current to bring people back.

Above all, you must have someone monitor these networks and keep the “trolls” away. Troll is the term for people who post in these venues to create drama or drop obscene, racist or inappropriate content of some sort into the mix.

A clear policy must be established and posted detailing what is and what is not accepted and a trusted staffer must police reader comments regularly. Readers should feel free to voice their opinions but they have to know that there are boundaries.

THE POINT IS...

Social networking can be your best friend in the world. Think of it as an online community based around your newspaper, work to build that following and your readership will certainly grow. As the traffic grows on your website it becomes more attractive to advertisers, too.

The services I’ve mentioned are all available on the Web free of charge and are fairly easy to set up. If you can use e-mail or Microsoft Word you can easily master any of these systems.

So the next time someone mentions Facebook to you, instead of reaching for the flatware, give them your Facebook address and ask them to jump into the current discussion of the last town council meeting. Point them to Twitter and invite them to follow your posts.

Your ears will thank you and, in the end, so will your readers.

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BELL TOLLS FOR PASSING OF MIDWEST CITY SUN

Clark's Critique

BY TERRY CLARK, Journalism Professor,
University of Central Oklahoma
TClark@uco.edu

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; ... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind..."

"Perchance he for whom this bell tolls, may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me ... therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

—John Donne

Not all deaths are depressing, but those that seem unnatural, or freakish, or unfair, or unnecessary, or untimely, or hit close to home, drag me down with reality. Such as with the execution of The Midwest City Sun this past month. I'm a newspaperman, a journalist, and I've become almost numb to almost steady pronouncements of the demise of daily newspapers. I mourned with the death of The Rocky Mountain News last year. Changes in technology coupled with the recession are killing more advertising for the future.

But I'm also a weekly newspaperman, and I believe the community press still has a future, as long as there is a viable community to serve – one with population and business, and therefore readership and finances for support.

That's why the death knell for the Midwest City Sun depresses me. I had three former students working there, putting out a good paper – Aaron Wright, Jeff Massie and Nicole Maxwell. I know them. They're hard-working, committed to excellence, good journalists. I mourn for them, but I also mourn for all the people in eastern Oklahoma County. There are several communities that were served by this paper, and those communities are losing a vital part of their identity and existence. Communication has the same root word as community – one is essential to the other. Where will those people go for information about flu shots, about local government, about schools, about people marrying and dying? They will be ignorant and thus detached, and isolated and separated. An ingredient of the adhesive holding them together is gone.

I know putting out a newspaper is a challenge, an ordeal, a demand of hard

Community newspapers, large and small, cover the H1N1 epidemic. Two outstanding examples are the front pages of The Purcell Register and Tulsa World.

work and worry and stress, but I believe local ownership could survive here. I agree with my forward-looking, tech-savvy friend Jeff Mayo from the Sequoyah County Times in Sallisaw, an excellent family-owned newspaper. He read my note on my blog and responded, "I smell opportunity here."

I quote John Donne for several reasons. First, while I've repented of being an English major and devoted myself to writing to be read, literature has made me a better writer. Second, Donne's lines about "No man is an island, entire of itself" have stuck in my mind for decades, and now it applies to newspaper people.

I don't mind being a dinosaur – it's actually sort of fun – but I don't like being a lonely dinosaur, separated from the rest of my kind. That is what upsets me about the death of The Sun. A newspaper's death diminishes me. I can hear the bell tolling, and I know who it is tolling for.

LOOKIN'EM OVER: There's a new acronym everybody in the state can recognize: H1N1. This may be the top news story of the year in terms of people affected and news coverage.

In the last few weeks every daily paper in the state has carried front page stories on the swine flu, as have a majority of the

weeklies, providing essential health information to their communities. Most of the coverage has been about time and locations for health clinics, and availability of vaccine coming in.

Several newspapers found new angles and impressive ways to cover the news. I am happy to report that among the headlines, I didn't find one using the cliché "bugged by the flu."

My favorite coverage and front page was the Oct. 15 *Purcell Register*, with Suzie Williams-Allen's impressive effort.

For dailies, the *Tulsa World* on Oct. 30 combined a package of stories by Kim Archer and Shannon Muchmore, photo by Sherry Brown, maps and a "Flu Fact Forum" to tell the story as six more people died in the state.

At Checotah, *The McIntosh County Democrat* on Oct. 29 ran the great headline "Been shot yet?" over the story, photo by Shauna Belyeu and handy info box showing where to get information. Their sister paper, the *Eufaula Indian Journal*, did much the same, under the headline "Had your flu shot?"

The *Marietta Monitor* carried an in-depth story about the flu under: "It's not just the shot."

At the *Edmond Sun*, Mark Schlachtenhaufen reported on the impact of the flu

on social activities, under "Social distancing scarce – so far." He found one church that had suspended hospital visits by its deacons.

At the *Shawnee News-Star*, Johnna Ray loaded readers up with a story and photo to answer, "When to call the doctor?" Steve Biehn at *The Daily Ardmoreite* wrote about the dangers at Halloween: "It could be especially scary this Halloween."

Other headlines: "More Doses" at the *McAlester News Capital*, by James Beaty; "Vaccine is here" at the *Enid News & Eagle* by Cass Rains.

Other stuff: Good feature story and headline in the *Newcastle Pacer* by Darla Welchel about a local woman who won a big cash prize in wedding cake competition: "That really takes the cake."

Liz McMahan of the *Muskogee Phoenix* writes a story that can probably be localized all over rural Oklahoma: "Small town police fight to stay on job."

Another good idea for making friends and assuring readership comes from Steve Booher at the *Cherokee Messenger & Republican*. Column one of page 1 each week is a Q&A interview with local people and officials about their jobs. (See sample at right.)

News tip: Many of our papers are reporting funding problems for senior citizen meals and centers. Wayne Trotter of *The County-wide & Sun* reports:

"Senior Meal Cutbacks Spark Protests."

Congratulations to *The Oklahoman* for winning the national honor by APME for Innovator of the Year. The award was for their big use of video!

Finally, you know a newspaper is doing its job when elected officials start criticizing you in public. Salute to Korina Schneider at the *North Central Reporter* in Medford in a fuss with the county clerk. Big 'ol 72-point headline screams: "Clerk calls NCR a liar." That'll keep 'em reading and on their toes.



Ask
the
Mayor

Jim Blackledge, Jet

Q: How long have you been mayor of Jet?

A: I've been on the board for 19 years and I've been mayor eight of them (years).

Q: Why did you want to become mayor?

A: To make a difference in my community more than anything. I grew up here.

Q: How long have you lived in Jet?

A: Thirty-five years at least.

Q: Why did you decide to stay in the community and not move somewhere else?

A: I like the small town environment and I grew up here. I know everybody.

I lived in Enid when I was in the oil field and it's nice for the conveniences but I didn't even know my neighbors. They didn't want to know me even though I tried to be sociable. It's just not the same.

Post Office personnel reviewing postage statements

Postal Notes

by BILL NEWELL, OPA POSTAL CONSULTANT

The post office has personnel in the field reviewing periodicals postage statements for completeness and some have received letters indicating discrepancies.

It is the responsibility of the mailer to provide a completed postage statement to the post office with their mailing.

At right is a reduced version of the postage statement highlighting areas that are to be completed by the mailer or the post office.

A full-size, color version of this form is available on the OPA website at www.OkPress.com/postal-resources

Mental health group honors three Tulsa World staffers

Three Tulsa World staff members were recently honored with the Mental Health Association in Tulsa's 2009 Communication Award at the group's annual awards ceremony.

Omer Gillham, Deon J. Hampton and Adam Wisneski were recognized for their work on "Suicide: Hidden Epidemic," a three-day series that appeared Oct. 4-6 in the World and also featured online media content.

The articles revealed that Oklahoma's suicide rate is twice the rate of homicides. The series also told the stories of several families and individuals whose lives were affected by suicide.

"The Tulsa World is to be commended for the incredible resources it has dedicated to bringing the issues surrounding suicide to the attention of our community," said Michael Brose, executive director of the Mental Health Association in Tulsa.

Gillham, who has worked at the World since 1998, was named to the investigative team in 2003.

Hampton is a general assignment reporter who joined the World in 2007.

Wisneski, who completed an internship at the Tulsa World, was a freelance photographer before joining the World staff as multimedia production technician.

He produces video content and photos for tulsaworld.com.

Police incident reports open again

By MICHAEL MINNIS, OPA ATTORNEY



As of Nov. 1, the public again has a clear right to prompt and reasonable access to police incident reports.

Unlike all other public bodies, law enforcement agencies are not required to keep their records open.

Law enforcement agencies may keep their records confidential unless the record appears on a list of the records that the agency is required to keep open.

During their last session, the legislators closed a loophole created when Section 24A.8 was amended in 2005.

For reasons that are not presently known, the 2005 amendment, among other things, split up the list of records required to be open by law enforcement agencies.

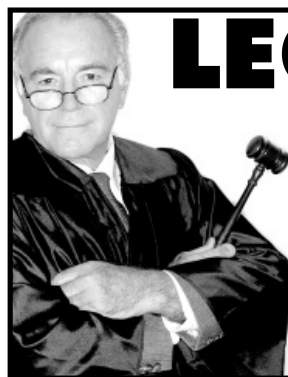
In doing so, language was added ("pertaining to the arrest") to the incident report

section leaving the impression that the public was entitled to copies of incident reports only when the incident resulted in an arrest.

The 2009 House Bill 1049 eliminated the split and made it clear that law enforcement agencies are required to keep open incident reports for public access whether the reports involve an arrest or not. Language from HB 1049 shows the difference:

"3. A chronological list of all incidents pertaining to the arrest, including initial offense report information showing the offense, date, time, specific address, if known, or general location, officer, and a brief summary statement summarizing non-investigatory observations and facts of what occurred at each incident."

Clearing up this language is significant legislative action. It enhances the public's ability to monitor what their public employees are doing. Incident reports are often more important to the public when no arrests are made.



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SEPTEMBER 2009 EDITORIAL WINNER **JOHN M. WYLIE II, OOLOGAH LAKE LEADER**

Make OSSAA accountable to taxpayers, students

We're not sure what the most shocking revelation was when Danny Rennels, who served for a decade as the chief regulator of Oklahoma high school athletics and activities, was charged with felony embezzlement Monday. Among the revelations contained in a probable cause affidavit used to secure an arrest warrant:

The total amount taken is at least \$457,500—almost five times the amount acknowledged by his employer, the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association, when it fired him in March. According to the affidavit, Rennels has admitted embezzling the funds.

The man responsible for ensuring legal and ethical conduct of student athletes admitted to OSSAA officials that he spent the money on Internet gambling.

He apparently took \$100,000—the first installment under a five-year endorsement deal with Reebok that required all Oklahoma schools to use their basketballs in tournament play even though the schools weren't consulted—that school officials were told would provide catastrophic injury insurance for high school athletes.

Even though OSSAA is governed by a board composed of school officials, "Rennels had exclusive control over the day-to-day handling and expenditure of OSSAA funds."

Rennels' fund diversions began with \$16,000 in rights fees from an Oklahoma City television station in 2005 and escalated to \$174,000 in rights fees and sales of a prime billboard location in 2006. He obtained an OSSAA credit card in 2007 which he used for personal expenses totaling \$26,000 over two years and embezzled another \$14,000 in

TV rights fees. In 2008 it was \$217,000 (including the Reebok money) and in 2009—when he was employed for just three months—\$161,000.

Although the DA investigator handling the case wanted 10 felony counts filed, his boss filed only one and bond was set at a measly \$2,000.

Why is the last point important? Because it reeks of a deal in the works, and since OSSAA is classified as a "private, non-profit" organization it is not subject to the state's Open Records Act. (New Executive Secretary Ed Sheakley said no one has ever submitted a request for records and he is uncertain how such a request would be handled.)

Never mind that OSSAA regulates the lives of every student athlete and activity participant in the state.

Never mind that it wouldn't have a dime without drawing funds from taxpayer-supported programs ranging from football to debate.

Never mind that taxpayers have no way to ensure that OSSAA is properly handling their money.

The Rennels case makes it abundantly clear that OSSAA must be classified as a public agency. It is funded with public money and should be subject to all the laws that go with that—including annual state audits. Giving OSSAA the discretion to choose what state transparency laws it follows would clearly be a case of letting the fox guard the henhouse.

We hope lawmakers will make OSSAA's status clear in the next session. Lawmakers who balk can expect stiff opposition in Nov. 2010.

It is the public's money, not OSSAA's, and the public has a right to know that it is being spent responsibly.



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