

## OPA Board of Directors waives fees for entries in Better Newspaper Contest, Magazine Contest

The Oklahoma Press Association Board of Directors is waiving entry fees in all categories of this year's Better Newspaper Contest.

The board made the unanimous decision when it met by conference call on Dec. 10.

The entry fee for the annual OPA Magazine Contest will also be waived.

"This year has been a tough one for a lot of reasons and that includes the financial challenges the pandemic has created," said OPA President Mike Strain. "Despite all that, newspapers in the state have done a great job serving their communities.

"I appreciate Mark Thomas suggesting making contests free this year and also appreciate the OPA board's vote to approve

that. I hope it will help more papers share their best work during this difficult year."

Zonelle Rainbolt, OPA Awards Committee Chair, also expressed appreciation to members of the board who voted to eliminate the fee.

"This year has been full of unusual challenges, and opportunities, and I am very thankful the board has taken the step of eliminating entry fees for the contest," said Rainbolt. "It will provide our member papers with an excellent opportunity to receive recognition for their great work in these extraordinary circumstances."

The deadline for all entries in the contests to be submitted is Monday, February 8, 2021. Winners will

**ENTER FOR FREE IN ALL 20 CATEGORIES AND MAGAZINE CONTEST**

**ENTRY DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 8, 2021**

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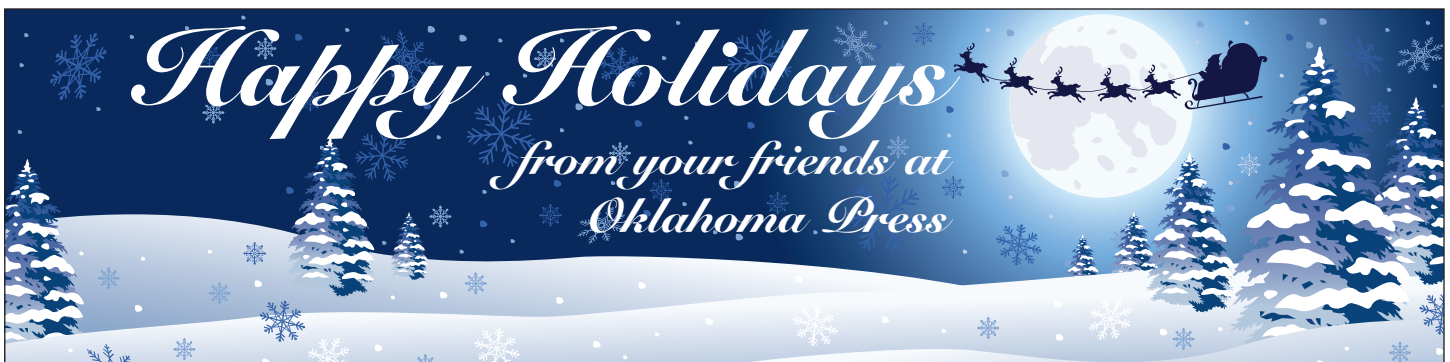
be announced during the OPA Annual Convention in June.

"I will be glad when 2020 is over, because I am looking forward to when we can get together in person for a convention in 2021 that will honor the terrific work by so many people," said Strain.

February 8 is also the deadline for entries to be submitted for the ONF Ray Lokey Memorial Award

for Excellence in Reporting, the ONF Joseph H. Edwards Outdoor Writer of the Year Award, the ONF Beachy Musselman Award, and the OPA's Quarter Century Club and Half Century Club.

Complete contest rules for the Better Newspaper Contest, Magazine Contest and other awards are available on the OPA website at [okpress.com/awards](http://okpress.com/awards).



3 District Judge Thomas Baldwin finds the City of Norman "willfully" violated the state's Open Meeting Act.

5 Senate clears House-passed bill honoring fallen journalists; Fallen Journalists Act now awaiting president's signature.

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14 Get an idea or give us an idea to use in Worth Mentioning. Send your ideas to [news@okpress.com](mailto:news@okpress.com).

# From the President

By Mike Strain, Tulsa World  
OPA President 2020-2021



When I started my year as OPA president, a past president told me he was surprised to discover that a challenging part of the role was writing a monthly column.

I thought, "Well, at least there's December. I can always write a column about things we are thankful for." Of course, in the year 2020, nothing is easy; but I'm going to give it a try. Here's a top 10 list of things I'm thankful for.

10. I'm thankful my high school English teacher won't see this column. I've already ended two sentences with a preposition. That wouldn't have flown in her class, or with a few editors I've known over the years.
9. I'm thankful no one at OPA editing this column changed those prepositions. (Of course, if this top 10 list has shrunk to eight, then they changed it!)
8. I'm thankful 2020 is almost over. That's the best I can say about this year.
7. There is no No. 7. I blame this on 2020, not my lack of creativity.
6. I'm thankful for public officials who not only follow the Open Records Act but follow the spirit of the Act. In recent weeks, I've corresponded with some who quickly responded to requests and seemed genuinely interested in keeping their constituents informed.
5. I'm thankful for frustrated subscribers. I know that sounds crazy, but hear me out. I once had someone who angrily told me about their concern but later apologized for being upset. I told him it was no problem, because subscribers like him obviously care deeply about the community and the newspaper's role in it. (Quick aside: In my opinion, there's a difference between frustrated and disrespectful.)
4. I'm thankful for happy subscribers and readers. I'm not completely crazy. Happy readers are more fun than the ones who are upset. Stop for 30 seconds and do a quick mental exercise: Think of a note you received from someone thrilled with the work you or someone at your paper produced.
3. I'm thankful for Oklahoma's editors and publishers. While you're thinking of that nice note from a reader, remember this: Your work is making a positive difference in people's lives and your community. Even if you don't hear it often, know this: There are people – many of them – who are thankful for the work you're doing.
2. Let's just skip this one, because two groups have more than earned a spot at the top of my thankful list.
- 1 and 1A. Healthcare workers and teachers. I know this monthly column is about the newspaper industry, and I could make this thought into something about it. After all, it's no stretch to suggest that honoring their work in 2020 in your pages is worthwhile. The fact is these folks make immeasurable differences in lives every year. In 2020, it's been even greater.

*Here's wishing everyone a  
happy and healthy  
holiday season ...  
and a better 2021.*

## City of Tahlequah fails to publish ballot measures

Five proposals listed on Tahlequah's Nov. 3 city ballot will not be counted after questions were raised over whether the ballot measures were published, as required by state law and City Charter.

A local resident contacted the Tahlequah Daily Press on Oct. 23 in regard to the Notice of Municipal Election not being published as it should.

Section 92 of the City Charter states that the notice must be published in the newspaper of general circulation for four consecutive weeks before the election.

"The City Charter does indicate that a proposed Charter modification must be published each of the four weeks prior to the election," said Tahlequah Mayor Sue Catron. "State statutes require publication three consecutive weeks, with the election date not less than 20 days or more than 30 days after the last publication."

Catron said the city clerk was provided with instructions of the need to publish the notice for four weeks prior to the election, but the requirement was not met.

After talking to the state Election Board, Catron said they had the option of pulling ballots from the process or proceeding and collecting vote information, even though it would not be used to alter the Charter.

During an emergency meeting on Oct. 27, the Tahlequah City Council took no action to amend or

*See City of Tahlequah, Page 3*

# District judge sides with Norman FOP, rules city violated Open Meeting Act

A Carter County district judge has ruled in favor of the Norman Fraternal Order of Police, finding the City of Norman “willfully” violated the state’s Open Meeting Act, court records show.

Judge Thomas Baldwin’s order, filed Dec. 3, means the Norman City Council’s decision to deduct \$865,000 from the NPD’s budget was invalid.

“The Court finds that the language used in the (city’s) advanced public notice of the agenda for the June 16, 2020, meeting was deceptively worded or materially obscured the stated purpose of the meeting and is therefore a willful violation of the act. The City Council’s action of defunding the Norman Police Department’s budget and reallocating funds to other departments and projects

exceeds the scope of the purpose of the meeting and is therefore, invalid,” his order reads.

“Any person who read the language used would not have understood that there would be a defunding, reallocation or modification of any underlying department’s budget,” Baldwin wrote.

A prepared statement from the City of Norman reveals it respectfully disagreed with the ruling.

“While the City respects Judge Baldwin’s professionalism throughout the case, we fundamentally disagree with his decision in regards to the Open Meeting Act and its potential negative future impact on citizen involvement in government,” the statement reads.

Court records show that the \$865,000 was kept in

reserve because of the lawsuit.

The City said it plans to appeal.

“The City believes its citizens have a right to influence the decisions of their elected officials through open public disclosure,” the statement reads. “We believe this court’s decision has a direct negative impact on this right and is inconsistent with the Oklahoma Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Open Meeting Act. The City will file an appeal to protect the right of its citizens to suggest amendments and changes to government decisions in open public meetings at the City of Norman.”

Punishment for the misdemeanor violation carries up to a \$500 fine and a year in county jail, according to Oklahoma Statute 25, section 314.

## City of Tahlequah continued from Page 2

repeal City Charter proposals on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Peggy Glenn, who chairs

the City Charter Review Committee, said the majority on the panel agreed to

keep the propositions on the ballot and use the information as a survey.

## You’ve Got Questions!

- Can I photograph minors without consent?
- Can police deny access to records by issuing a press release?
- Should I alter my archives when a person demands it?
- Can I report inaccurate testimony given in open court?
- What are the laws about liquor advertising?

These are questions answered by the attorneys for the OPA Legal Services Plan members in recent months. Newspapers always need timely legal advice on issues related to newspaper publishing.

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When it comes to achieving the Oklahoma Standard, we've come a long way. All state property is 100% smokefree, and the age to purchase tobacco is now 21.

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## Reporters Committee urges congressional leaders to pass Open Courts Act

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press is urging U.S. lawmakers to pass a bill that would improve transparency in the federal court system for both the press and the public.

In a letter sent to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) on Dec. 1, the Reporters Committee expressed support for the Open Courts Act of 2020 and urged congressional leaders to bring the bill to the floor for a vote.

The legislation would eliminate burdensome fees that discourage or block access to federal court records. The current system, known as the PACER paywall, has long been a source of frustration for

journalists, news organizations and members of the public. As the Reporters Committee's letter notes, the per-page fees represent a significant barrier to accessing public court documents – records the press and public have a right to access under the First Amendment and common law.

"When reporters cannot access court records because of excessive fees, the public loses," the letter states.

"By removing the PACER paywall, the Open Courts Act of 2020 will increase access to records of the federal judiciary, promote accuracy in news reporting, and further advance the public's knowledge about the federal judicial system."

## State auditor confirms audit for the City of Pauls Valley

Oklahoma State Auditor and Inspector Cindy Byrd recently announced that her office will be conducting a special audit of the City of Pauls Valley in response to a successful citizen petition request.

However, Byrd estimates it may be June 2021 before the special audit gets underway. Once underway, special audits generally take an average of six months to complete, although that can vary, said Byrd.

With the addition of the Pauls Valley audit, the SAI's

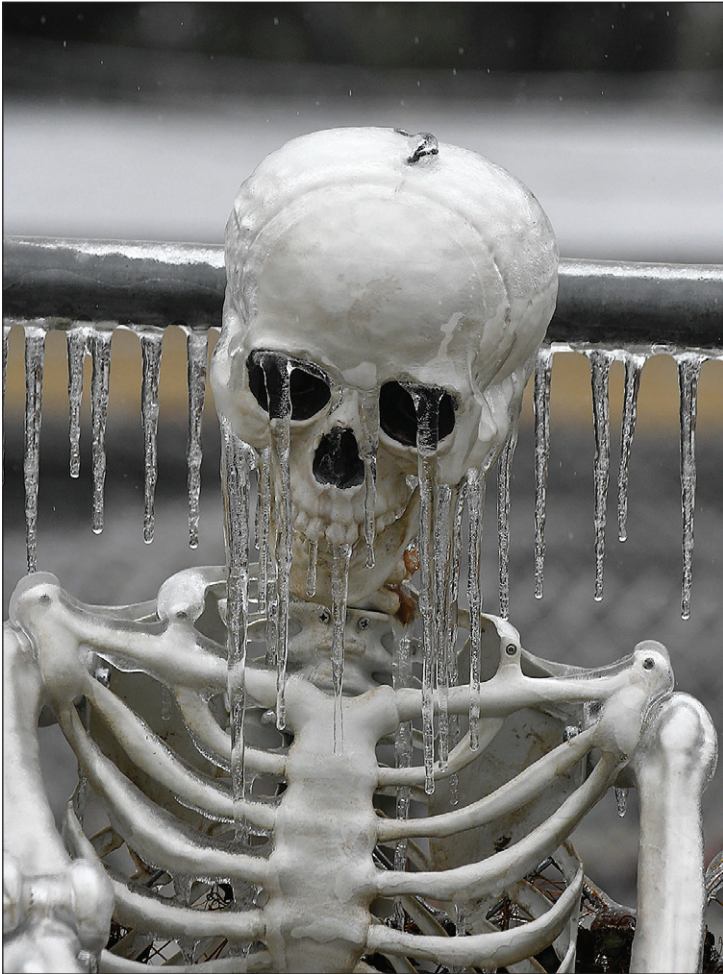
Forensic Audit Division has nine special audit requests underway or pending.

The petition asked the auditor's office to conduct a special audit into records and events related to the October 2018 closure of Pauls Valley's hospital.

The petition lists eight specific areas of concern, occurring between 2015 and 2020, to be examined, including possible violations of the Open Meeting Act and Open Records Act.



# OG&E<sup>®</sup> PHOTO CONTEST



Icicles from the ice storm hang on a Halloween skeleton on October 28, 2020.

*Photo by BILLY HEFTON, Enid News & Eagle, Oct. 29, 2020*



Choctaw's Jordan Mukes jumps to break up a Bixby pass.

*Photo by LINDSAY TESIO, Choctaw Times, Oct. 14, 2020*

OCTOBER 2020  
WEEKLY WINNER:

**LINDSAY  
TESIO**

*Choctaw Times*

OCTOBER 2020  
DAILY WINNER:

**BILLY  
HEFTON**

*Enid News & Eagle*

The October 2020 contest was judged by a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

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## Ardmoreite publisher announces retirement

After a 37-year career in journalism, Kim Benedict has announced her retirement.

Benedict has served as publisher of The Ardmoreite for the past 13 years. She also serves as Gannett Sr. Group Publisher for The Ardmoreite, Shawnee News-Star and Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise.

She was named publisher of The Ardmoreite in 2007. Prior to that, she held the same role at publications in Kansas and Michigan.

During her time in Ardmore, Benedict's role expanded to oversight of properties in Tennessee and Louisiana and, most recently, the two additional Oklahoma properties.

"I've worked in the newspaper industry for close to 40 years and experienced a great many changes in both technology and process. But the one thing that never changed was my commitment to the communities that I've served and the mission to make a positive difference through news coverage, advertising information and staff engagement," Benedict said. "I know The Ardmoreite and other Oklahoma properties



**KIM BENEDICT**

will continue to thrive and serve their respective communities."

During her career, she chased tornadoes and other big stories.

Benedict recalled the February 2009 tornado in Lone Grove.

"It was a big deal in the amount of devastation and loss of life that it caused," she said. "We did a video of all the photos we took and sold it as a fundraiser for Red Cross donations."

She's covered a lot of big stories during her career, some very positive like the growth of Ardmore and southern Oklahoma.

"While there hasn't been just one big story, it has been exciting to see the development in the commu-

nity and across the area," she said.

Benedict has been an active member of the business community. She served as Ardmore Rotary Club president for two terms, and on the Children's Shelter Board for 10 years.

"What I have always liked about my particular job is that it's not the same every day," Benedict said. "When I go in in the morning, even though I have a task list, I know different things are going to happen that are going to change that."

"I've been blessed to have worked with quality people throughout my career and that's particularly held true with The Ardmoreite staff over the past 13 years and more recently with the staff in Shawnee and Bartlesville."

"I've also been fortunate to call many of the people that I've worked with friends and will continue to maintain those relationships."

Benedict plans to spend time with family, travel when the COVID-19 threat declines, and do contract projects to provide the diversity that she enjoys.

## New editor at Mustang News, Yukon Review



**MARK CODNER**

Mark Codner has been named managing editor at the Mustang News and Yukon Review, announced Paula Settle, associate publisher of the two publications.

Codner succeeds Terry Groover, who accepted a position at the Oklahoma State Capitol.

Codner is an established journalist specializing in local community news.

He has lived and worked all over Oklahoma.

He was owner and publisher of The Madill Record and has been an editor at several newspapers in the Tulsa area including the Tulsa World.

For the past three and one-half years, Codner was editor at The Edmond Sun.

He is a graduate of the University of Central Oklahoma with a degree in journalism.

"I love the newspaper business and telling the stories important to our local communities," Codner said.

## Weeks new editor at Claremore Daily Progress

Chelsea Weeks has been named news editor of the Claremore Daily Progress.

Weeks previously worked as a reporter with the Stroud American.

She started her journalism career as an intern at the American in 2017 and became a full-time reporter.

Weeks graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University in 2019.

Weeks was born in Broken Arrow. She lived in Missouri, New Mexico and Arizona before returning to Oklahoma to attend college.

"I feel honored to be in the position – it's been a dream of mine to be an editor," Weeks said. "I look forward to learning more about this community while serving the readers of the Daily Progress."



**CHELSEA WEEKS**

# DEATHS

**SHERRY L. BARBY**, who served as editor at the Harper County Journal for many years, died Nov. 17, 2020. She was 73.

Barby was born Jan. 14, 1947, in Boise City.

After graduating from high school, she continued her education at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in Alva, where she earned a degree in education.

Barby taught school in

Garber, Okla., and Karvel, Colo., before moving back to Buffalo and working as editor at the Harper County Journal.

Barby is survived by her husband, Russell; daughter

Sara of Meade, Kansas; son Ben of Laverne, Okla.; brother Robert Dotson of Burlington; and three grandchildren.

**DOUGLAS ALLAN DAVIS**, who worked at several newspapers in Oklahoma, died Dec. 7, 2020. He was 63.

Davis was born Jan. 23, 1957, in Wichita, Kansas. After graduating from high school, he joined the

National Guard where he spent eight years.

In 1984, Davis moved his family to Okmulgee while he attended the Graphic Design program at OSU Tech. He spent the next nine years working as a graphic artist at newspapers across Oklahoma,

Kansas and Missouri. In the mid-'90s, he taught technology to middle and high school students.

In 2001, Davis and his wife, Diane, moved to Ada. Doug Davis worked for the Ada News until 2003. For the next 11 years, he served

as a graphic designer for Pre-Paid Legal.

Davis is survived by his wife of 43 years, Diane; sons Eric of Tecumseh and Michael of Pauls Valley; daughter Leah Worcester of Pickett, Okla.; and five grandchildren.

**BRANDON RAY JOHNSON**, who once worked at The Duncan Banner, died Nov. 21, 2020. He was 39.

Johnson was born July 16, 1981, in Oklahoma City. After graduating from

Duncan High School, he attended the University of Oklahoma majoring in journalism.

Johnson worked at The Duncan Banner as a photographer and columnist.

He later worked for the Duncan Police Department and Oklahoma Highway Patrol as a communications officer.

He is survived by his parents, Jeff and Carla

Johnson of Duncan; sister Christi Karcher of Cranberry Township, Penn.; grandmother Pat Johnson of Hollister, Mo.; nephew Kannon Karcher and niece Brooklyn Karcher.

**C. DENNIS SCHICK**, former executive director of the Arkansas Press Association, died Dec. 7, 2020. He was 83.

Schick and his wife, Jan, moved to Arkansas in 1979 where he served as the

executive director of the state trade association. He retired from that position in 2004 after 25 years.

Prior to that, Schick taught full-time for 15 years at the University of Texas, Oklahoma State University,

Southern Illinois University and Texas Christian University. He also worked on daily and weekly newspapers in Texas, Illinois and Oklahoma, in both advertising and news editorial positions.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Jan; his three children, Leslie Gorrill, Greg Schick and Tim Schick; four grandchildren; his brother Darry Schick and sister Kay Weaver.

**RAY SOLDAN**, who covered sports for The Oklahoman for more than half a century, died Dec. 1, 2020. He was 91.

Soldan was born Sept. 18, 1929, in Manhattan, Kan. He graduated from the University of Kansas in 1951 where he was sports editor of the University of Kansas Daily Kansan. After graduation, he worked at the Beatrice Daily Sun in Nebraska and at the Lawton Morning Press.

In 1952, The Daily Oklahoman hired Soldan over the phone. He spent the next 33 years there covering games, compiling stats, ranking teams and picking All-Staters.

Much of Oklahoma's high school sports history could have been lost if not for the efforts of Soldan. He researched and compiled comprehensive records dating back to 1919 and is considered Oklahoma's

foremost historian of high school sports.

Soldan was named Oklahoma Sportswriter of the Year in 1959 by the National Sportscaster/Sportswriter Association, the first year the awards were given.

He also was one of the first inductees in the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame and is in the Oklahoma Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame.

Soldan was inducted into

the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 2009.

He traveled the world with wife LeClaire, visiting 60-plus countries on six continents. With his daughter Angela, he trekked through some eastern states to complete his list of visiting all 50 states.

Soldan is survived by his children Tim, Nanette, Angela and Penny; eight grandchildren 11 great-grandchildren and a great-great grandchild.

*Deaths Continued on Page 9*

# DEATHS *continued from Page 8*

**LYNDA CAROL WATKINS**, who worked at her family's newspaper in Cordell for many years, died Nov. 28, 2020. She was 76.

Watkins was born Aug. 16, 1944. She graduated from East Central University with a teaching degree

in education and received a Masters degree from Wichita State University before embarking on a 35-year teaching career in southwest Kansas and western Oklahoma.

She moved to Cordell in 1979 and spent several

years helping run the family newspaper business as an advertising manager at the Cordell Beacon.

Watkins was preceded in death by husband Kenny Watkins; father Charles Edgar Burchfiel and mother Donna Maxine Burchfiel.

She is survived by two sons, Bill Hess of Pueblo, Colo., and Robert Hess of Lake Forest, Ill.; five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

## *Remembering our friends & colleagues who died the previous year*

Frances Jane Bryant  
Nov. 10, 2019

Charles William Hooper  
Nov. 22, 2019

Patsy Willene  
Muchmore  
Nov. 7, 2019

Wayne L. Caldwell  
Dec. 12, 2019

Jerry Ray Pogue  
Dec. 11, 2019

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# Big Sur update has arrived; Flash Player reaches end of life



## Computer Notes

from the road  
by Wilma Newby  
wnewby@okpress.com

Apple's Big Sur 11.0.1 is in the update box on many computers around the state. If your computer is set to automatically update, Big Sur may already be installed.

There are many bugs with the new system. Much of our software will be running under the emulator Rosetta 2. This program translates older software to run on the newer operating system.

The new Apple M1 chip requires all software developers to rewrite their code to run natively in Big Sur.

We are once again in the halfway zone. Some of the bigger programs may run native, but not all of their plugins will be updated, which will cause problems.

You can check to see if your programs will work with the new OSX Big Sur at <https://isapplesiliconready.com/>.

Adobe Creative Suite works under Rosetta 2, but Acrobat does not. Preview may need to be your PDF program until Adobe catches up. It lets you copy and paste but not save as a Word document. Hopefully Adobe fixes Acrobat soon.

Our main problem at the

moment is that many printer/scanner drivers have not been updated for the new system. A workaround is to re-install the printer, which may require using its IP address.

To find this go to **Apple > System Preferences > Printers and Scanners**. In this dialog box delete the printer that is not working by clicking on it and using the subtract button at the bottom of the box where the printers are listed. Then hit the plus to add the printer back.

Now go to the physical printer and find out its IP address. Many printers display the IP address on the printer screen. On others, you need to hold down a couple of buttons at the same time to get it to print out the specs.

Once you get the info, go back to the printer menu on your Mac and click the network icon that looks like a globe at the top of the screen and put in the printer's IP address. It will look something like 192.168.000.16 or could be something like 10.10.0.12. The fourth set of numbers is unique to each device on your network.

Take a look at the **Use:** area at the bottom of the window. It will say **Generic Postscript Printer** or have the name of the printer listed. Generic works for most

printers. You can give your printer a name in the **Name:** line and the **Queue:** line can be left empty. Now click **Add** and try printing.

Big Sur updated **System Preferences**. There's a new **Dock & Menu Bar** area that hosts the **Control Center** settings. The **Control Center** is where many apps like sound are controlled. The **Dock & Menu Bar** can be used to hide the **Menu Bar**. The menu will show up if the pointer is at the top of the screen just like the **Hide and Show Dock**. Something you should know is that it hides the menus in all programs.

The **Notifications** area harbors another change. The icon has gone from the menu bar on the right. To see **Notifications** now, when they're not popping up automatically, take the mouse pointer to the top right hand corner of the screen and they'll come up. The grouping can be controlled in the **Edit Widgets** button at the bottom of the list. It works like the launchpad App. The iPhone interface merging with the Mac OS has started.

## ADOBE KILLS FLASH

Adobe will stop support of the Adobe Flash player on Dec. 31, 2020. Many websites and video games will have their video content broken by this event.

Your Windows computer may be sending you notices to uninstall Flash, and several web browsers will completely remove it.

Many websites have not done the conversion yet because of time and money constraints. Some games may never make the leap as it's much harder for them to convert to the newer code. Interactive HTML5 is the main coding replacing Flash.

Reasons given for its demise are that Flash has many security risks and iPhones and Chrome browsers already don't support it. It's not open source software. It is a 10-year-old program that has not kept up with changes to the internet.

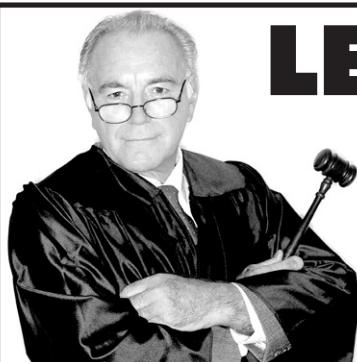
Some programs that are used to convert to HTML5 are Adobe Animate CC, Google Web Designer and OpenFL.

If your browser isn't working after the conversion, try another browser. Or, if you need the content, try using an older computer with older browsers where the plug-in still works.

## IPHONE PHOTO PROBLEMS

Apple iPhone recently released an update that has the cameras shoot in a new format – .heif – instead of .jpg. The main problem with High Efficiency Image Format is that older software won't open the file.

To change your iPhone back to .jpg default go to **Settings > Camera > Format** and select **Most Compatible** instead of High Efficiency.



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# Thanksgiving spirit of Waynoka residents keeps two young girls out of harms way

Mark Carson was in the right place at the right time on November 21.

Carson, publisher of the Woods County Enterprise in Waynoka, was on his way home from a football game in Maysville accompanied by three passengers.

As he drove down U.S. Highway 281 south of Chester, Okla., at around 12:30 a.m., 17-year-old Kaden Ramos, one of the passengers in the car, spotted two little girls crouched under the cover of weeds in the bar ditch.

After Carson was convinced that Ramos had seen the children, he quickly found a place to turn around and headed back. Another car on its way home from the game also turned around.

Pulling up, the occupants of the vehicles saw the two young girls crouching in the weeds. After calling 911, the rescuers attempted to talk to the children.

"It was very apparent our attention or help was most unwelcome," Carson wrote in the Enterprise's Nov. 26 edition.

As the girls ran in opposite directions, another car stopped to assist.

There were now 13 Waynoka residents working to keep the girls safe until the authorities arrived.

"It never ceases to amaze me the kind, generous and loving nature of the Waynoka people who go out of the way to help someone in need," Carson wrote. "With all the tragedy that surrounds us this week it's

good to remember those things that are just and right.

"Driving the last 30 miles home with a heavy heart for those two little girls, I contemplated the series of events that just took place and was truly thankful for my parents and the community in which I was raised.

"I am also thankful for answered prayers that the Lord put just the right people in place to handle a difficult situation."

The next week, the foster mother of the two girls who ran away followed up with "Thanksgiving Runaways – The Rest of the Story."

The foster family, who has been caring for foster children for the past 18 years, expressed apprecia-

tion to those who found the girls.

The foster mother told the Woods County Enterprise that her family wasn't aware the girls had run away until she and her husband heard someone banging on the back door. When her husband opened the door, he found the sheriff and a DHS caseworker standing there. After the foster parents discussed the situation with the authorities, the girls were turned back over to them.

Carson said the foster mother told him that the girls wanted to have an adventure.

"Thank you again to the ones that found them and kept them safe during their adventure," the foster mother said.



Yale News and Drumright Gusher Associate Editor (and volunteer elf) Allie Prater works the photo booth as kids visit Santa during the Yale Christmas celebration on Nov. 29.

## Enid cancels Pillars of Plain

For the first time in 18 years, the Enid News & Eagle will not have a Pillar of the Plains recognition at the end of this year.

Faced with the possibility of selecting and honoring people in a remote fashion, previous Pillars honorees decided to skip this year and resume again next year.

The News & Eagle still wants to share stories of good deeds being done in Enid and Northwest Oklahoma and is asking readers to email story ideas.



For cookie lovers, the **Tulsa World** expanded its 12 days of cookies to 25. Starting Dec. 1, the World is counting down every day until Christmas with some of their favorite reader-submitted cookie recipes.

**Coffee-glazed oatmeal cookies are true favorite**

Editors note: Instead of 12 days of cookies this year, we are counting them every day until Christmas with one of our favorite reader-submitted cookie recipes. It's been so much fun going back and remembering all of our favorite cookies. We share our every day, and you will have a cozy holiday cookie collection. The 2020 Cookie Countdown is sponsored by the Made in Oklahoma Coalition.

**Coffee-glazed oatmeal cookies**

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup butter-flavored shortening
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups old-fashioned oats

1. Cream the softened butter and Crisco with the sugar, add eggs and blend.

2. Add vanilla, then the cookie mix, and mix until combined. Add the oatmeal cookie mix, coffee-glazed oatmeal mix. At this point, you can still dough or bake.

3. Roll into balls, about 2 tablespoons per ball. Place balls on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 10-12 minutes.



**The Sequoyah County Times** encouraged its readers to make this winter a little warmer for a child or teen by pinning a pair of mittens, gloves, a hat or scarf on the Christmas Giving Tree in the newspaper office. All donations are given to the Catholic Charities Program in Sallisaw.

**Make this winter a little bit warmer for a child or teen!**

Please stop by Sequoyah County TIMES at 111 N. Oak in Sallisaw on or before 12/11/20 from 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Mon-Fri and pin a pair of mittens, gloves, a hat or a scarf on our Giving Tree.

All donations will be given to the Catholic Charities Programs in Sallisaw.



**The Paper** in Pryor is giving its readers an opportunity to win a share of \$6,250 in its annual Christmas Giveaway promotion, which began Nov. 23 and continued through Dec. 9. Residents could enter the contest by visiting any participating stores, making a purchase and registering. Winners were announced Dec. 14.

The **Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise** is once again a proud sponsor of the 21<sup>st</sup> annual "Shop at Home for the Holidays" Green Country Christmas promotion.

Residents pick up a complimentary green ticket at businesses displaying the "Green Country Christmas" poster and may receive an additional ticket for each \$10 in purchases. Each participating store has donated prizes and gift certificates with a value of at least \$50. Beginning Nov. 2, ten daily prize numbers from the tickets are drawn. The event concludes on Dec. 22 with the drawing for major prizes ranging from \$5,000 in cash to a custom coffee bar.

Chris-Giving is the name of the promotion the **Weatherford Daily News** is sponsoring in cooperation with the Weatherford Area Chamber of Commerce. The event launched Nov. 11 giving shoppers an opportunity to register with participating sponsors to win surprise gift boxes delivered to their doorsteps. Merry Mondays began Nov. 16 when the first of 50 boxes filled with holiday cheer gifts worth about \$200 each were delivered. The Weatherford Daily News also features one of the sponsors in a front page story each week.

**Chris-Giving launches**

at The Cup

**Tell Robinson** writes for the **Weatherford Daily News**, an online newspaper for the Weatherford Area Chamber of Commerce, in a story about the Weatherford Daily News' holiday promotion for 2020. "Weatherford's Chris-Giving will be a fun and exciting way to spend holiday cheer. The promotion started November 11 and shoppers can begin to register with participating sponsors to win surprise gift boxes delivered to their doorsteps. Merry Mondays will launch November 16, and this is when the surprise boxes will be delivered to people's homes." Robinson writes the article for the **Weatherford Daily News**.



Weatherford Daily News Publisher Philip Reid speaks with The Cup owner Tyler Hughes about Weatherford's Chris-Giving. The Cup is one of the sponsors for Chris-Giving.

The **Midwest City Beacon** is asking its readers to support its sixth annual holiday food drive. Newspaper staff members collect nonperishable food items to benefit the Mid-Del Food Pantry. Last year, the holiday food drive collected more than 400 pounds of food that provided 319 meals to families in eastern Oklahoma County. Also assisting in food drives for their communities are the **Choctaw Times** and **Mustang Times**.

It was a virtual event for the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Candy Cane Cash drawing, sponsored by the **Enid News & Eagle** and other local sponsors. More than 1,000 people tuned in online Dec. 8 for a chance at \$15,000 in winnings. Shoppers collected tickets from Oct. 29 until noon Dec. 8 at participating businesses, receiving one ticket for every \$10 spent. Jeff Funk, publisher of the News & Eagle, said they wanted to continue the 17-year tradition of this shop-at-home promotion, but wanted to do it safely. Instead of the previous must-be-present-to-win drawing, a virtual event was conducted live with the audience of shoppers at home. Winners called in instead of running through a crowd of people up to a stage. The Enid News & Eagle featured all the winners in its Dec. 9 issue.



Frank Baker, April Dondaly and Miss NCC Enid Emily Hall work during the virtually streamed Candy Cane Cash drawing, Tuesday at Enid High School. Billy Nelson / Enid News & Eagle

**Candy Cane Cash drawing**

Over 1,000 shoppers join virtual stream for 17th annual event

By **Kate McKeon** / Enid News & Eagle

More than a thousand people tuned in online Tuesday evening for a chance at \$15,000 in winnings during the 17th annual Candy Cane Cash drawing. Due to COVID-19, the drawing was conducted virtually this year. The audience of shoppers watched from home on televisions, computer screens, laptops and cell phones and called in winning tickets. Winners then texted a photo of their ticket for confirmation. Shoppers collected tickets from Oct. 29 until noon Tuesday at participating businesses, receiving one ticket for every \$10 spent.

Despite a few technical issues in the beginning, the virtual event streamed live on several outlets and concluded around 8:00 p.m. Emily Hall, Miss Northern Oklahoma College Inc. for the second consecutive year, drew the tickets, with two \$500 winners, two \$1,000 winners, one \$2,000 winner, one \$2,500 winner and one grand prize \$5,000 winner. Anita Chance held the winning ticket and took home the grand prize of \$7,500, receiving her ticket from Jumbo Foods. She said she plans to spend the winnings on bills and Christmas gifts for her family. Chance, who has participated in the drawing for all 17 years, said she hasn't worked since February and takes care of her

90-year-old father, so the winning comes at just the right time. "It's unbelievable," Chance said. "This is wonderful." Michelle Southwick, who took home the second-place prize of \$2,500, also received her ticket at Jumbo Foods and has participated in the drawing several times but never won until now. "It was very exciting," Southwick said. "We do all of our shopping in Enid. It's just such a fun program. I just never thought I'd win." With her winnings, she plans on upgrading her Christmas list — along with her shopping. See CANDY CANE CASH, Page A6

A tradition at nearly every newspaper is the annual Letters to Santa Claus. Kids are invited to write letters, which are printed without editing in issues of the newspaper. From the youngest readers to the oldest, this time-honored tradition is a favorite.

While it's easy to spot promotions in newspapers during the holiday season, it's important to remember that community newspapers support local businesses throughout the year.

# WORTH MENTIONING

## McAlester News-Capital puts spotlight on local businesses

The McAlester News-Capital is running spotlights on local businesses with a spot on the front page to help spread the word or reintroduce people to them – all for free to the businesses. This feature is similar to the newspaper’s “5 Things to Know” and appears in the same spot on the front page once per week in a feature called “Community business.” The five questions asked each week are: 1) What’s your business name? 2) What do you offer? 3) Where can we find you? 4) Who are the owners? and 5) Why did

COMMUNITY BUSINESS

### Tannehill Furniture and Mattress a one-stop shop

**WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS NAME?**  
Tannehill Furniture and Mattress

**WHAT DO YOU OFFER?**  
We are a one-stop retail furniture store. Since 1989 we have been offering living room sets, recliners, dining sets, bedroom suits, mattresses, and more. We also carry smaller items such as lamps, pillows, sheets, and some home décor items. We

carry styles ranging from rustic to modern and have pieces at all price points. We also offer financing options, including our new partnership with Wells Fargo Retail Services and are currently offering up to 18 months with 0% APR w.a.c.

**WHERE CAN WE FIND YOU?**  
We are located at 311 E. Oklaw Ave. in beautiful downtown McAlester, OK!

**WHO ARE THE OWNERS?**  
Trevor Tannehill is the current owner. He is a third-generation owner and is the grandson of the late Bernice Tannehill.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE OUR COMMUNITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS?**  
As a third-generation owner, the community chose me I chose to stay in the McAlester community because I enjoy the

smalltown feel and really getting to know my customers because they are also my friends and neighbors. The community also supports us which in turn allows me to support the community. I enjoy being able to support local events through the giving of my time and resources, whether it be bottles of water for events or a donation for Relay for Life or the VFW. I enjoy supporting others.

—Adrian O'Hanlon III



you choose our community for your business?. There is a limit of 100 words for each answer so the information will fit on the front page. A picture can also be submitted to help readers associate faces and names. “We hope this helps our friends, neighbors and fam-

ilies operating and working at businesses in our community,” the News-Capital editorial board wrote. “Our employees go to the same churches, stores and schools as you do, so we want to ensure that our community thrives. We’re all in this together.”

## Column in Country Connection News promotes reading

The Country Connection News, which covers Northern Caddo County, is having great success in promoting reading and writing with a new weekly column, Okie Library. The column features Oklahoma authors from all over the state, with their biographies and book blurbs. Most of the authors are members of the Oklahoma Writers Federation Inc.,

where Connection Publisher Joyce Carney is a member and a delegate from the “Invite to Write” affiliate. The Okie Library column has featured genres from Science Fiction to Romance to Poetry and has gained readers who now subscribe to the newspaper in order to choose new books, and thus have discovered newspapers offer information they

have been missing along the way. In addition to the Okie Writer’s column, The Connection is also proud to publish stories from the journalism classes at Lookeba-Sickles School and Hydro-Eakly School. The Country Connection News was started by Joyce Carney. It began its 40th year of publication this September.

## Sand Springs Leader looks back in special end-of-year series

Sand Springs Leader 1/10/2022 Copy Released 9% from original to 10 letter page

2020 SAND SPRINGS LEADER PERSONS OF THE YEAR



### Humble heroes

SSPS nurses Wright, Sinkheil play crucial role during pandemic

Sand Springs High School nurses about 4000 daily and continue to work around the clock. SSPP Person of the Year Wright and Sinkheil have been instrumental in their efforts to help the school district in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of hours these two put in each and every day is a testament to their commitment to the health and safety of our students and staff. Watching them stand at the helm as leaders through the pandemic has been phenomenal as they put their heart and soul into their work. They do this without complaint every single day. I am grateful for their steady and constant expertise.”

Sherry Burke, Sand Springs Public Schools Superintendent

The Sand Springs Leader is recognizing some of the biggest moments over the past 11 months in its special four-part end-of-year series. The Dec. 9 issue took a look back at the past year and a look ahead at what is to come. That issue also revealed the Sand Springs person of the year. The Dec. 16 issue will feature the top local stories from the past year while the Dec. 23 issue highlights the top photos of the year. The series concludes on Dec. 30 with Sand Springs people to watch going into 2021.

## Cordell Beacon engages readers with ‘Guess Where?’ and face mask contests

The Cordell Beacon is asking readers to “Guess Where?” in a contest that shows part of a photo. Thomas Martinez, editor of The Beacon, said readers are asked how well they know Washita County by asking them to identify a partial photo. There’s even a hint to help identify the photo. Martinez said the previous week’s winner is usually announced with the next week’s photo. “There’s

almost always more than one guess, so we pick one of the correct guesses at random and enter them in our drawing for the monthly prize,” Martinez said. This month the prize is a subscription to the newspaper. Other months will be gift cards to local businesses.

### MASK CONTEST

With masks mandatory in Cordell, The Beacon is asking readers to send in

**Guess Where?**

How well do you know Washita County? Here’s a partial photo of something pretty recognizable. HINT: This photo was taken in a community in western Washita County. Guess what it is and where it was taken. Send your guess to us at [editor@cordellbeacon.com](mailto:editor@cordellbeacon.com) or call us at 580-832-3333.

PHOTO BY THOMAS R. MARTINEZ



a photo of their most colorful or creative face mask for a chance to win a prize sponsored by West Okie Boutique.

published in January and the winner will receive a \$25 gift card from West Okie Boutique.

The best photos will be

# A different kind of question creates more interest

BY JOHN FOUST

One of the basics of selling is to get the right kind of information from prospects. There is a big focus on asking about prospects' goals, target audiences, marketing budgets and previous campaign results. That's how we put ourselves in position to create effective ad campaigns.

Monica, a long-time sales manager for a publishing company, told me about a different kind of question. "Years ago, I heard about a technique to turn the process around and ask questions to ourselves," she said. "The objective is to create more interest in what you are selling. It all starts with the words, 'If I were in your position, I would want to know...'"

"For example," she explained, "let's say you're meeting with someone who doesn't talk much or someone who seems to be running down rabbit trails during your presentation. Simply say something like, 'If I were in your position I would want to know how The Gazette's coverage compares to other media outlets in this market.' Then transfer ownership of the question from you

to them, by asking if that is something they would like to know. That opens the door for you to answer the question and cover an important sales point. It's a way to keep everyone on the same path."

Let's take a closer look at this technique that works so well for Monica:

## 1. Prepare a list of questions in advance.

"As you do research on your prospect, some questions will become obvious," Monica said. "Experienced advertisers will want more detailed information, while new business owners will be most interested in fundamentals."

## 2. Make sure the questions are specific.

She advises to stay away from vague topics like "Why is The Gazette the right choice?" or "Can The Gazette stay within my budget?"

"I've learned that it's better to concentrate on specific areas, like audience numbers, procedures, and print and online options."

## 3. Avoid questions that are blatantly self-promotional.



"It's not smart to ask, 'Why is advertising in The Gazette better than running TV commercials?' to someone who is advertising heavily on TV. In addition to killing your credibility, it might end the conversation."

## 4. Don't overdo it.

"Moderation is a key," Monica said. "Resist the temptation to start every other sentence with 'If I were you.' In fact, you may not need to use this kind of question at all. Use your common sense."

## 5. But you can put questions in strategic groups.

"This is a good way to establish a road map for your sales points. For instance, you can say, 'If I were

in your position, I would want to know three things about any media choice: First, do they reach my target audience? Second, what kind of track record do they have in my industry? And third, can they produce the ads themselves?' Then you can add, 'Would you want to add anything to this list, or is this a good place to start?'"

Monica's approach makes a lot of sense. There's no question about it.

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# OKLAHOMA NATURAL GAS CONTEST WINNERS

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE OCTOBER WINNERS

Column: **THOMAS R. MARTINEZ**, *The Cordell Beacon*

Editorial: **KIM POINDEXTER**, *Tahlequah Daily Press*

### OCTOBER COLUMN WINNER

**THOMAS R. MARTINEZ**, *The Cordell Beacon*

## It's Movember: Let's bring awareness to men's health, suicide

Every year for the past decade or so I've grown a beard or moustache during the month of November.

I do it to support the Movember movement, which brings awareness to men's health – specifically testicular and prostate cancer and suicide prevention.

That last one, suicide, hits close to home for me.

August marked the 18th anniversary of my brother's death, a suicide.

Circumstances in Chris' life had backed him into a corner, and I guess he didn't see a way out.

So, he chose suicide, sending surviving family members searching for answers to questions that will never have any.

According to the Movember website, about one in four adults in the U.S. will experience a mental health problem in a given year. Three out of four suicides are men.

I once thought suicide is a selfish act. My view of that has changed over the years as I became more educated on the subject.

Now, I view suicide as a desperate act. I can't imagine being in a position to choose between living and dying.

As for my brother? Chris saw an easy way out – maybe for him – but left his family battling emotions we weren't equipped to handle.

Anger. Guilt. Abandonment. Embarrassment. Denial. Numbness.

For me, guilt may have been the worst. Chris and I grew up only a couple of years apart.

As an older brother, he was my protector, confidant, teacher and a measuring stick to whom I wanted to be. He helped me navigate my parents' divorce and other childhood predicaments. Mostly, he was my friend.

His suicide left me frazzled, defeated, questioning. Where was I? Did I miss something? Were there signals? Did I not ask the right questions in our conversations?

Years later, I realize those answers will never come.

But his choice robbed my family of our brother, son, cousin, nephew, grandson, a passionate, beautiful, awesome and fun-loving guy.

Every year around the anniversary of his death I find myself in a sullen mood. I try to think about his suicide in the scope of a bigger picture.

Here are some sobering Oklahoma statistics.

Suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in Oklahoma, according to the latest numbers by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people ages 10-34.

That's right. Kids as young as 10 are committing suicide. Sadly, multiple times a year, you hear about students who commit suicide because they were bullied, or for some other asinine reason.

Suicide knows no age limits.

In Washita County, during 2013-2016, there were between 7.5 to 16.3 suicides per 100,000 population. In that same time range, the state averaged 21.7 per 100,000.

On average, one person dies by suicide every 11 hours in Oklahoma, according to the AFSP.

More than four times as many people died by suicide in our state in 2017 than in alcohol-related motor vehicle accidents.

Mental health matters. And men's mental health is really important. In 2018, men died by suicide 3.56 times more than women.

But suicide, like all fatal and nonfatal injuries, is preventable. If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, I urge you to seek help.

The Movember website asks "What can we do?"

The answers: Talk. Ask. Listen. Encourage action. Check in.

There is also the QPR method. A couple of years ago, I went to a training that featured QPR – Question, Persuade and Refer – a three-step method that anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide.

People trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis – how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help.

Would things have gone differently on that hot August day years ago if I had some training like this? Maybe, maybe not.

For November, let's put down the razor, men, and help bring awareness. I'm choosing this year to grow a moustache – the "mo" in Movember. We can use this month as a chance to focus on men's health and help figure out solutions to the suicide problem.

I choose to think there's always a solution. There was for my brother. He just didn't take it.

Rest in peace, brother. I'll see you on the other side.



## Enter and Win a \$100 Check from Oklahoma Natural Gas!

The October 2020 Oklahoma Natural Gas Column and Editorial Contest was judged by a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

1. Each month, send a tearsheet or photocopy of your best column and/or editorial to Oklahoma Natural Gas Contest, c/o OPA, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105-5499. Entries also may be emailed (full-page tearsheet) to [news@okpress.com](mailto:news@okpress.com).
2. Include the author's name, name of publication, date of publication and category entered (column or editorial).
3. Only ONE editorial and/or ONE column per writer per month will be accepted.
4. All entries for the previous month must be at the OPA office by the 15th of the current month.
5. Winning entries will be reproduced on the OPA website at [www.OkPress.com](http://www.OkPress.com).

*Entries must have been previously published in print.*

*Contest open to all OPA member newspapers.*

Although Oklahoma Natural Gas Company selects representative contest winners' work for use in this monthly ad, the views expressed in winning columns and editorials are those of the writers and don't necessarily reflect the Company's opinions.