

Legislative leaders address members of OPA at annual Legislative Summit



House Speaker Charles McCall speaks to members of the press at the February 8 OPA Legislative Summit. See more photos on pages 11 and 12.

Nearly 80 members of the Oklahoma Press Association met at the State Capitol on February 8 for the OPA's annual Legislative Summit.

OPA President Sheila Gay, publisher of the Woodward News, welcomed those attending.

"Your presence here today

is critical to OPA's legislative success," said Gay. "It is vital that we inform legislators of our concerns with bills that affect our industry, including government transparency and freedom of information."

Gay then turned the podium over to OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas, who

discussed bills of importance to the media.

Attendees were given the opportunity to meet with their state legislators before reconvening for the afternoon session featuring several state legislative leaders.

Those speaking were House Speaker Charles McCall,

House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson, Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat and Senate Democratic Caucus Chair Kevin Matthews.

Topics discussed in the afternoon included tax cuts, education and public health.

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From the President

By Sheila Gay

Publisher of the Woodward News • OPA President 2023-2024



Making your voice heard in the legislative process

Wow, what a week!

Legislative Summit always brings an opportunity for us as an industry to visit with our state representatives, as well as hear others and their points of view.

Many of our communities follow up after Legislative Summit with Eggs and Issues platforms, which allow them to speak to their constituents on a more personal level. Allowing the debate of what is needed and how we are moving forward is important.

I do not consider myself the most political person. Oh, I have my opinions and beliefs, and I will stand for them.

However, I also know when to keep silent and listen. My daughter recently shared a post on social media that said, "I'm mastering the art of being silent even when there's a lot to be said."

At first thought, people shouldn't always be silent. Each of us need to be heard. But my second thought understands that sometimes, we have to pick the right time and the right words in order to be heard.

I think a fellow veteran said it best just today – "The ego has to die in order for us to be good team members."

Debating is not always my strongest asset. I like to thoughtfully reflect on what is said, how it applies to me, and if it changes how I see it.

My former leader, Robbie Davis Carie, taught me to allow this important time for me to wrestle with something and then come back with the statement, "I'm sorry, I needed time to get over myself first in order to see the bigger picture."

The summit allows our

industry to be heard. We are given opportunities to speak with our legislators about our concerns that involve all facets of our communities as well as the state.

To be a part of the conversations about legislative bills that are affecting each of us is a critical part of what we do and must be handled thoughtfully, not emotionally.

OPA does an outstanding job and delivers on our purpose of essentially saving newspapers and, by proxy, the ability for the public to be fully informed.

I applaud, as I am sure we all do, the work that Mark Thomas and his staff do, and continue to do to make sure EVERYONE knows newspapers are relevant.

Thank you!

OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information on upcoming events, visit okpress.com/events

March 10-16, 2024

SUNSHINE WEEK

Sunshine Week is a nonpartisan initiative that shines light into the dark recesses of government secrecy through public records and open meetings.

Thur., March 14, 2024 USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO BUILD YOUR BRAND AND CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Ty Rushing, co-founder and president of the Iowa Association of Black Journalists and senior editor of Iowa Starting Line, will share some tips, tricks and examples of how him and others have used social media to grow their digital presence.

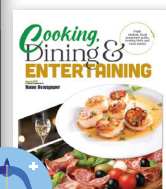
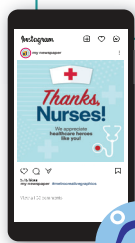
Thur., May 2, 2024 OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2024 INDUCTION

The induction ceremony begins at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, May 2, in the Grand Ballroom of the Nigh University Center at the University of Central Oklahoma.

Fri. & Sat., June 7-8, 2024 2024 OPA ANNUAL CONVENTION

Mark your calendar and plan to attend OPA's convention.

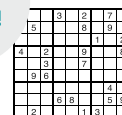
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Got News?

Share news about your newspaper with other OPA members!

If you have a new hire, sales promotion, contest, or have received an award or honor tell us about it so we can put it in The Oklahoma Publisher.

Send your news or story ideas to

aanderson@okpress.com

or call 405-499-0020

OPA Board of Directors tentatively approves 3 membership applications

The OPA Board of Directors reviewed three membership applications during its Feb. 8 meeting. The applications were tentatively approved, pending completion of a successful protest period.

The Pryor Information Publication has applied for General News Media membership. Owner Tim Lawson created the community news website at pryorinfopub.com in 2019 where he serves as both editor and publisher. The business mailing address is 409 NE 1st Street, Suite 5, Pryor, OK 74361; phone number is 918-530-1293.

Ellis County Star in Arnett, Okla. has also applied for General News Media membership. The community newspaper is owned by Last Refuge Media,

Inc., and Dub Wagon serves as publisher. Its first issue was Sept. 22, 2022, and the website is elliscountystar.com. The street address is 193001 E. County Road 168, Arnett, OK 73832; the phone number is 580-885-7554.

STATE Magazine at Oklahoma State University has applied for Affiliate News Media membership. The magazine is printed three times per year and distributed to paid alumni association subscribers. Its website is news.okstate.edu. The application was submitted by Mack Burke, associate director of media relations at the university. The business mailing address is 305 Whitehurst Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078 and phone is 405-744-5540.

Written protests to a membership application must be submitted to OPA by March 11, 2024. Protests may be emailed to OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas at mthomas@okpress.com or mailed to Oklahoma Press Association, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

Any current member filing a written protest will be entitled to be heard by the Board of Directors at its next scheduled meeting.

Information and application forms for OPA's membership classifications may be found at okpress.com/join. Lists of current members may be found at okpress.com/members.

Grace period granted for hard copy postage statements

Periodical mailers have been given additional time to comply with the discontinuance of hardcopy postage statements policy change.

During that time, the Postal Service will continue to accept and process hard copy postage statements presented to PostalOne! locations.

The Postal Service will allow this grace period through March 31, 2024. It was scheduled to change on January 28, 2024.

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. OPA members always need timely legal advice on issues related to publishing.

You should join OPA's LEGAL SERVICES PLAN!

See www.OkPress.com/LSP or contact Mark Thomas at (405) 499-0033 or toll-free in Oklahoma 1-888-815-2672 today!



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New federal rule requires businesses to report beneficial ownership information with FinCen

Beginning January 1, 2024, many businesses, including newspapers, will be required to report their beneficial ownership information (BOI) with the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN).

The Corporate Transparency Act (CTA), enacted in 2021 to curb illicit finance, requires companies doing business in the United States to report information about the individuals who own or control them.

Companies that are required to comply must file their reports by the following deadlines:

- Existing companies: Reporting companies created or registered to do business in the United States before January 1, 2024, must file by January 1, 2025.

- Newly created or registered companies: Reporting companies created or registered to do business in the United States in 2024 have 90 calendar days to file after receiving actual or public notice that their company's creation or registration is effective.

BOI reporting is not an annual requirement. It only needs to be submitted once,

unless it needs to be updated or corrected.

Reporting companies must provide names, dates of birth, residential address, and images of a current U.S. driver's license, U.S. passport, ID issued by a state, local government or Indian tribe of anyone who has a 25 percent or more ownership interest in the business.

Businesses that file documents with the Secretary of State for any reason are covered by this law.

The company must also submit information about itself, such as its name and

address. Reporting companies created on or after January 1, 2024, are required to submit information about the individuals who formed the company ("company applicants").

The U.S. Treasury has created a website at <http://tinyurl.com/5n8s93dk> that offers a Small Entity Compliance Guide to assist your business in complying with the rule. To file a report, go to <https://www.fincen.gov/boi>.

The Act provides for daily penalties of up to \$500 for failure to register, and up to \$10,000 per violation and possible prison time.

FOI Oklahoma requests nominations

FOI Oklahoma is seeking nominations for its five awards.

The honorees will be announced March 10 during Sunshine Week with a formal presentation during the First Amendment Congress.

If you know a person or organization that should be recognized for their contribution or work regarding transparency and the First Amendment, get more details and nominate them. Nominations are open all year long, but to make this year's nominee list, your submission must be received by Feb. 23.

Nominations may be made for the following awards at foioklahoma.org/nominate.

- Marian Opala First Amendment Award. Named for the late state Supreme Court Justice Marian Opala, this award recognizes individuals who have promoted education about or protection of the individual rights guar-

anteed by the First Amendment.

- Ben Blackstock Award. Named for retired Oklahoma Press Association Executive Director Ben Blackstock, this award recognizes a non-governmental person or organization that has shown a commitment to freedom of information.

- Sunshine Award. Recognizes a public official or governmental body that has shown a commitment to freedom of information.

- Bickham-Hale Service Award. The Bickham-Hale Service Award is awarded to the volunteer or board member who provides outstanding service to FOI Oklahoma. It is named after FOI Oklahoma's founder Sue Hale and longtime executive director Kay Bickham.

- Black Hole Award. Recognizes an individual, agency or organization that has most thwarted the free flow of information.

Gannett to appeal defamation verdict

A Muskogee County jury has awarded former high school coach Scott Sapulpa \$25 million after finding he was defamed by The Oklahoman.

The parent company of The Oklahoman, Gannett, said it plans to appeal the ruling.

"There was no evidence presented to the jury that The Oklahoman acted with any awareness that what was reported was false or with any intention to harm the plaintiff in this case," a Gannett spokesperson said.

An attorney representing Sapulpa said in a news release that the inaccurate reporting by The Oklahoman had "severe consequences."

Sapulpa filed a civil defamation lawsuit against Gannett seeking compensatory and punitive damages.

After a two week trial,

the jury awarded Sapulpa \$5 million in actual damages and \$20 million in punitive damages.

The incident occurred in March 2021 when Sapulpa was incorrectly identified as the person cursing and making a racial slur during a livestream basketball game broadcast

Sapulpa was one of two announcers for the broadcast. The other was Matt Rowan, owner and operator of the streaming service.

Rowan later issued a statement admitting he was the person who made the remarks.

The Oklahoman removed Sapulpa's name from the online story within 2 ½ hours and posted a correction.

Sapulpa's name did not appear in the print version of the story that appeared the next day.

Open Meeting/Records Roundup

LAWTON CONSTITUTION COMMENDS CITY

The Lawton Constitution recently commended the City of Lawton for demonstrating transparency.

In an editorial on January 28, The Constitution wrote that a question about the validity of the Streets and Bridges Committee arose when Constitution reporter Kim McConnell mentioned that the committee never posted a meeting agenda on the city's website or in a public place.

The city, which had recently upgraded its website, showed that the meeting was posted. However, McConnell and another person said they never saw it.

The city manager said the meeting would be held again since the city could not prove that the notice was posted as it should have been.

"That's transparency in government," stated The Constitution's editorial. "We give kudos to City Manager John Ratliff for rescheduling the meeting."

The editorial is available to read on the Constitution's website, swoknews.com. (<http://tinyurl.com/yhsejsyp>)

FINDINGS OF WYNNEWOOD AUDIT REPORTED

The Garvin County News Star reported that a forensic audit for the City of Wynnewood found financial mismanagement.

Oklahoma State Auditor and Inspector Cindy Byrd said citizens of the City of Wynnewood requested a review of eight concerns including compliance of Open Meeting and Open Records Acts and whether the city enforced ordinances which were not legally codified.

Byrd said many instances of missing agendas, minutes and records were noted.

In addition, the city did not follow proper procedures for passing ordinances, Byrd said.

"Our team reviewed 12 ordinances and 11 of them were not properly published in the newspaper for the public to view," she said.

The full audit is posted on the Oklahoma State Auditor & Inspector's official website at <https://sai.ok.gov>.

OKLAHOMA WATCH SUES PONCA CITY FOR RECORDS

Oklahoma Watch and reporter Whitney Bryen are suing Ponca City for details about the arrest of Patrick Hansen who died at the Kay County jail after being taken in by police.

Bryen, who was investigating deaths in Oklahoma jails, requested the arrest report from the Ponca City Police Department under the Oklahoma Open Records Act on July 19.

The document provided to Bryen was missing the officer's summary of the incident and arrest.

Bryen was told by a Ponca City records employee and city attorney John Andrew that the department does not release officer narratives to the public, despite the state law that requires law enforcement to release a brief summary of what occurred.

Fifteen other police departments and county sheriffs from across the state provided Bryen with officer summaries for her investigation.

The complete story is available at oklahomawatch.org. (<http://tinyurl.com/44zddaz8>)

(See court case on OSCN.net: CV-2024-00014, Kay County.)

OKLAHOMA LAWMAKERS TAKE ACTION

In another article from Oklahoma Watch, Keaton Ross reports that two Oklahoma lawmakers are suing District 6 Attorney Jason Hicks for copies of communications sent before, during and after death row inmate Richard Glossip's clemency hearing last April.

The Open Records lawsuit, filed by Reps. Justin Humphrey, R-Lane, and Kevin McDugle, R-Broken Arrow, seeks the immediate release of documents.

Hicks refused to produce records in response to a May open records request, saying the documents were personal and therefore exempt from public inspection.

A 2009 opinion from former Attorney General Drew Edmondson states that emails, text message and other electronic communications sent or received in connection with public business fall under the Oklahoma Open Records Act.

Read entire story at oklahomawatch.org. (<http://tinyurl.com/4tvvhfw3>)

(See court case on OSCN.net: CV-2023-00204R, Stephens County.)

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AND PARENT FILE LAWSUIT

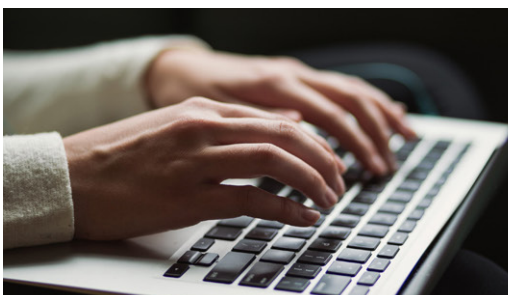
Two Tulsa Public Schools board members and a charter school parent recently filed a lawsuit over the superintendent hiring process.

The suit alleges violations of the Open Meeting Act and Titles I and VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through the approval of the district's separation agreement with the former superintendent and by naming the new superintendent on an interim basis in August.

The suit claims that the board violated the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act through the processes followed to hire the new superintendent on a permanent basis in December.

Read entire story at tulsaworld.com. (<http://tinyurl.com/yc4ys-jnn>)

(See court case on OSCN.net: CV-2024-120, Tulsa County.)



Learn the best practices for Public Notices at
okpress.com/public-notice-training

The Oklahoma Press Association offers three videos that describe and illustrate the standards and best practices for publication of notices along with downloadable material.

OG&E[®] PHOTO CONTEST



Dewar's Cash Faulkner watches the referee's hand strike the mat for a pinfall victory over his Olive opponent during the 2023 Gary McKee Classic at Brock Memorial Gymnasium in Okmulgee.

Photo by LARRY OWEN, Okmulgee Times, December 6, 2023



Santa gives out a sympathy cry for this youngster, who was also not so happy at Moon's Alley on Main.

Photo by JOHN FERGUSON, Wagoner County American-Tribune, December, 6, 2023

DECEMBER 2023
DAILY, SEMI- AND
TRI-WEEKLY WINNER:

**LARRY
OWEN**
Okmulgee Times

DECEMBER 2023
WEEKLY WINNER:

**JOHN
FERGUSON**
*Wagoner County
American-Tribune*

*The OGE Photo Contest
was judged by a member of the
Oklahoma Journalism
Hall of Fame.*

View all winning photos
and contest rules at
**OkPress.com/
OGE-Photo-Contest**

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oqe-photo-contest](http://okpress.com/oqe-photo-contest)



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Gannett veteran Shane Morris named general manager of The Oklahoman

The Oklahoman recently announced that Shane Morris has been named general manager for Gannett's Oklahoma City market.

In this role, Morris will work closely with executive editor Ray Rivera to strengthen local connection points with businesses and brands to drive community-based strategies and engagement.

Morris, who assumed his new role Feb. 5, has been with Gannett for 17 years, holding a variety of local and regional sales leadership roles. Most recently, he served as the senior sales



director for The Oklahoman and the Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise.

"We look forward to working closely with Shane in Oklahoma City to ensure the con-

tinued strength and success of The Oklahoman while working with the USA TODAY Network across the country," Rivera said.

"Empowering our community to thrive is critical to our success, and Shane will be a key partner as we implement strategic plans to benefit consumers, partners and this community, which we deeply care about."

Morris, who earned a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Michigan State University, said he was looking forward to the opportunity to build new relationships.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to lead The Oklahoman as general manager and continue to work alongside our incredible teams and award-winning journalists," Morris said.

"I look forward to building upon our existing partner relationships while establishing new connections, all in an effort to continue serving our local community."

Walters Herald sold to longtime editor

Deborah Connely, longtime editor of The Walters Herald, recently purchased the weekly newspaper from Brett Wesner.

In addition to serving as editor of The Herald, Connely has operated a retail tax business, Scott Income Tax, since 2008. The tax business is located inside the same office as The Herald.

She said she decided to purchase the newspaper because she wants to keep The Herald in Cotton County and encourage people to continue to read the newspaper.

Connely, who was also a

teacher, said younger people don't think about reading the newspaper since they all have phones, iPads, etc.

"But I have always been an advocate to encourage students to read everything they can get their hands on," she said.

Connely hopes to get some students involved in reporting for the paper.

"Our plan is to continue to improve the newspaper to make every age enjoy reading it," she said. "I'm working to have more access to local information to share with

our readers so we can all be informed and involved."

Wesner, publisher of the Herald for more than 35 years, described the transaction as bittersweet.

"My publishing career began with the Herald in 1988," he said. "I have such fond feelings for the city and people of Walters.

"But I think at this time, the best opportunity for the Herald to continue is to be owned locally by someone who already knows the business and can carry on our responsibilities to the community."

Sapphire Jade Smith makes '25 Under 35' list

Sapphire Jade Smith, who works for Cimarron Valley Communications LLC in Cushing, made the list of Editor & Publisher's 25 Under 35.

There were so many deserving nominees this year

that E&P stretched its 25 to include two more.

Smith is business and design manager for Cimarron Valley, which publishes the Cushing Citizen, The Keystone Gusher and Yale News.

A graduate of Central

Technology in Graphic Design, Smith has now been in the industry for more than six years.

To see all the 25 Under 35 winners, see www.editorandpublisher.com/stories/eps-2024-25-under-35,247978.

Chamber honors Sharon Maggard



The Prague Chamber of Commerce presented its Pride of Prague Award

to Sharon Maggard at its annual banquet January 25.

Maggard is editor of the Prague Times-Herald.

She has been employed at the weekly newspaper for 49 years, starting there at the age of 21.

Maggard is active in the community. She served on the board and as president of the annual Kolache Festival, retiring last year after promoting the event for 28 years. She has also been active with the Prague Chamber of Commerce and the Prague High School Alumni Association.

Tupa receives citation of appreciation

Retired Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise sports editor Mike Tupa was honored January 5 during the Arvest Friday Financial Forum.

Tupa, who retired in November 2023, received a Citation of Appreciation from the State of Oklahoma.

Tupa was recently nominated by the National Sports Media Association as the 2023 Sportswriter of the Year. He was also inducted into the Bartlesville Sports Commission Hall of Fame in 2019.

Tupa continues to write for the Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise as a freelancer.

Ten journalists, two Lifetime Achievement honorees highlight Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame's 54th anniversary class

Ten longtime journalists, a prominent First Amendment attorney and a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient will be among those honored at the 54th annual luncheon and induction ceremony of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

The induction ceremony will begin at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, May 2, in the grand ballroom of the Nigh University Center at the University of Central Oklahoma.

"The seven men and five women being honored this year represents the best in journalism from a number of different areas and in their service to journalism," said Director Joe Hight, who is also UCO's Edith Kinney Gaylord Endowed Chair of Journalism Ethics and a OJHOF member since 2013. "The decisions become harder every year because of the quality of journalists and individuals who have served Oklahoma and this country."

The 2024 induction class will be Mary Cecile Carter, a longtime editor whose work included a Pulitzer Prize-winning project; Richard M. Crum, a journalist and educator who was a longtime National Geographic reporter and editor; Galen Culver, who originated the broadcast franchise "Is This a Great State or What!" on KFOR-TV; Tom Gilbert, a pioneering photojournalist at the Tulsa World; Mark Hanebutt, a journalist, lawyer, author and longtime educator; Blaise Labbe, the first Black news director in Oklahoma City and Kansas City; Anne Nelson, a war correspondent, author, playwright and former director for the Committee to Protect Journalists; Penny Owen, a longtime reporter for The Oklahoman and past president of the international Dart Society; John Perry, national award-winning database editor in Oklahoma and Georgia; and Christy Brunken

Wheeland, a longtime community reporter and editor in northeastern Oklahoma.

The 2024 Lifetime Achievement honorees will be Suzan Shown Harjo, a 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient whose lifetime of work includes being a pioneering Native American journalist and founding trustee for the Smithsonian National Museum for the American Indian; and Robert D. Nelson, an attorney who has represented numerous media organizations and journalists on First Amendment and freedom of information issues.

All 12 honorees will become members of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, which now has inducted 500 members since its beginning.

They were chosen from among more than 90 nominations submitted to the hall of fame. They were first selected by a 15-member Finalist Committee and then a

12-member Selection Committee via a balloting process. All on the committees were hall of fame members and representatives of diverse types of media and journalism organizations.

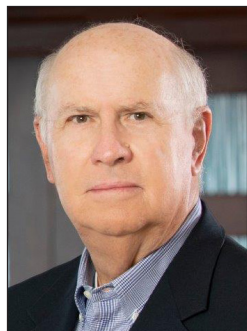
Invitations to the induction luncheon will be sent by the first of March, and reservations at \$40 each must be made by April 12. More information can be found by going to the hall of fame website at okjournalismhalloffame.com.

The Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame was founded in 1971 by former UCO Journalism Chair Dr. Ray Tassin and Dennie Hall, with both serving as directors. Hight is the fourth director and succeeded Dr. Terry Clark. All members are featured on the hall of fame website. Past honoree plaques are on display at the hall of fame gallery on the third floor of UCO's Nigh University Center.

Lifetime Achievement Award Honorees



SUZAN SHOWN HARJO (1945-), born in El Reno, is a Cheyenne citizen, Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes, and Hodulgee Muscogee, Nuyakv. With WBAI-FM, Pacifica Network's free speech flagship in New York City (1967-74), she directed one-third of the airtime and co-produced *Seeing Red*, the first national Native issues show. In Washington, DC, she was News Director, American Indian Press Association; Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians; political appointee, Carter Administration, and legislative liaison, Native American Rights Fund. Widely published and anthologized, she has written for all versions of *Indian Country Today* and served on boards from Native American Journalists Association to Howard Simons Fund for American Indian Journalists. A Founding Trustee, Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, she was Editor/Curator, "Nation to Nation" (Treaties) book and exhibition (2014-27). President of The Morning Star Institute (1984), she holds Honorary Doctorates from the Institute on American Indian Arts, 2011, and Princeton University, 2023, and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2014.



ROBERT D. NELON (1946-), a native of Shawnee, is an Oklahoma City lawyer who has devoted much of his career to representing media organizations and their employees on First Amendment and freedom of information issues. After graduating from Northwestern University and the University of Oklahoma College of Law, and serving as a Marine Corps JAG officer, he worked for Andrews Davis (1975-95) and Hall Estill (1995-). He has represented KFOR, KOCO, KWTW, KOKH, KJRH, KTUL, ABC, CBS, NBCUniversal, AETN, Discovery, and CNN; USA Today, The Oklahoman, Tulsa World and other Oklahoma newspapers; magazine and book publishers; and organizations such as RCFP and IRE. He was counsel in many media cases that shaped Oklahoma law. He is a past-president of the Defense Counsel Section of New York-based Media Law Resource Center and an alumni of Leadership Oklahoma and Leadership Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma Journalism Hall Of Fame 54th Anniversary Class

Class of 2024



MARY CECILE CARTER (1963-) entered journalism at age 15 as a proof-reader/copy editor/office assistant/circulation clerk at the Countywide News in Tecumseh. During college she worked summers and Christmases at the Shawnee News-Star. After graduating from the University of Kansas, she worked for 20 years at The Dallas Morning News, as a copy editor, deputy National editor, interim National editor, deputy Politics editor and WorkLife editor. She was a member of the team that received the 1994 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. At CNN, she was the founding senior producer of CNNHealth.com. At WebMD, she was associate director of the editorial content team. After her return to Tecumseh in 2019, she was a breaking news editor at NBCNews.com and a freelance editor and consultant.



RICHARD M. CRUM (1938-) was a National Geographic staff writer and editor for 25 years. He received his Bachelor of Journalism, University of Missouri, and Master of Arts in Journalism, University of Oklahoma. He was a journalism instructor, University of Central Oklahoma; director, The Vista; and professional writing instructor at George Washington, Georgetown, and Pepperdine universities. He freelanced for several publications, including The Daily Oklahoman, Navy Times, The Wall Street Journal and Harcourt Brace books. He won the Department of Defense Newspaper Award, Editor of the Year (1980); three Addy Awards; PRSA Bronze Derrick Award; AAA Award for Excellence in Script Writing; and Distinguished Teaching Certificate, Georgetown. He co-founded the Romero Prize magazine scholarship at the Missouri School of Journalism. He is founder/owner of The Editorial Annex publishing house.



GALEN CULVER (1963-) graduated from Washington State University in 1984. From 1985-1989, he worked at KFSM-TV in Fort Smith, Ark., as a general assignment reporter, assignment editor, producer and weekend anchor. In 1989, he started at KFOR-TV (then KTVY) as a photographer. Two years later, he began the franchise "Is This a Great State or What!" as an MMJ. His solo travels across Oklahoma featuring its people, places and history have resulted in over five thousand broadcast stories. Other career highlights include covering the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building bombing, the Atlanta Olympics and the May 3, 1999, tornado outbreak. His numerous awards include a Wrangler Award from the Oklahoma Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum and the Oklahoma Heritage Association Distinguished Editorial Award.



TOM GILBERT (1966-) spent his journalism career at the Tulsa World. He was a photojournalist at the newspaper starting in 1988 after graduating from UCO. He was named chief photographer in 1998. He was the state's first full-time digital photographer in 1996. He has covered national championships, the Oklahoma City Bombing and Tulsa's historic floods. He started a beer blog called What the Ale in 2013, covering the changing laws of alcohol and breweries in Oklahoma. He traveled to Venezuela, covering the country's diverse landscape, and Nicaragua after a national disaster. He has earned numerous honors from the AP, SPJ, Great Plains and Oklahoma Press Association. Gilbert continues to cover concerts in Tulsa and the alcohol industry for Tulsa People magazine.



MARK HANE BUTT (1951-) graduated from the University of Evansville in 1973 while working at The Evansville Courier. He then spent the next eight years at The Orlando Sentinel, covering everything from the Ted Bundy murder trial to attempts to find Amelia Earhart's airplane. In 1987, while finishing his master's degree, he began teaching journalism at the University of Central Oklahoma, adding a law degree from Oklahoma City University in 1998. While still teaching and practicing law, he began writing journalism and media law textbooks used at universities across the country. His awards include fellowships from the American Press Institute and the Gannett Foundation, and in 2023, the Teacher of the Year Award from the Oklahoma Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

Honorees continued on following page

Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame

Oklahoma Journalism Hall Of Fame 54th Anniversary Class

Class of 2024



BLAISE LABBE (1965-) began his broadcasting career in his adopted hometown of Lawton, Okla., in 1984. He started as a studio camera operator and is now serving as Regional News Director overseeing news operations in 14 markets in six states for Sinclair Broadcast Inc. Blaise made history twice, being named the first Black News Director in Oklahoma City and Kansas City. As News Director for Oklahoma City's KWTW, the station finished as the No. 1 late newscast in the country eight times. Blaise's awards include The Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism, four Emmys, two National Award of Excellence from the National Association of Black Journalists, and his stations have won 15 Regional Edward R. Morrows and two National Morrows awards. Blaise attended Cameron University in Lawton.



ANNE NELSON (1954-) graduated from Stillwater High School. Among the earliest female graduates of Yale College in 1976, she joined the staff of The New Yorker but left to freelance. From 1980-1983 she reported on the wars in Central America for The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, the BBC, NPR and others. She directed the Committee to Protect Journalists from 1988-1992 and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism's international program from 1995-2002. She has subsequently taught at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, where she's currently a research scholar. A recipient of the Livingston Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship, Nelson is the author of four books and several plays and screenplays, including her 9/11 drama "The Guys."



PENNY OWEN (1959-) began her career at The Oklahoman in 1992, where she was hired after graduating with a B.A. in Journalism from the University of Central Oklahoma. Three years into her career, she found herself on the front lines covering the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing. She ultimately covered the trials of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols in Denver and McVeigh's 2001 execution, as well as several national tragedies. She won many awards, including two regional Katie awards. She saw the world during her 20-year career as a Navy reservist public affairs officer and as an aide to two admirals. She was deeply involved with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, based at Columbia University, was named an Ochberg Fellow and served as Dart Society president.



JOHN PERRY (1956-) became database editor at The Oklahoman in 2000 after nine years as a reporter and editor. In 2006, he was named Senior Computer Assisted Reporting Fellow at the Center for Public Integrity. Perry joined The Atlanta Journal Constitution investigative team in 2008 as a data reporter. There he uncovered systematic test score irregularities in Atlanta Public Schools that resulted in racketeering convictions of 24 school officials. In 2014, the AJC created a separate data journalism team with Perry as Technical Director. This team was instrumental in many of the paper's investigations, including winners of the IRE's award for investigative reporting and Phillip Meyer Award for data journalism. Perry is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.



CHRISTY BRUNKEN WHEELAND (1964-) graduated from Northern Oklahoma College and Oklahoma State University. She began her journalism career in 1987 as a reporter for the Logan County News. She worked as a reporter then news editor for the Coweta American/Wagoner County American-Tribune from 1988-2021. From news/feature writing, sports coverage and photography to layout/design, she was proud to record community history in the pages of the newspaper. The publications earned three Sequoyah Awards and other top honors from the Oklahoma Press Association. She is a Leadership Wagoner County graduate, member of the Coweta Baseball Hall of Fame and was the grand marshal of the 2015 Coweta Fall Festival Parade. She is now executive director of the Coweta Chamber of Commerce.

Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame

Legislative Summit Snapshots

Photos from the February 8 OPA Legislative Summit in Oklahoma City.

To see more photos visit [Facebook.com/okpress](https://www.facebook.com/okpress).



Jeff Funk, Enid News & Eagle, OPA President Sheila Gay and Johnny McMahan (right), Woodward News, visit with Representative Mike Dobrinski.



Mary and Tom Lokey, Johnston County Sentinel, meet with Senate Minority Leader Kay Floyd.



John Denny and John D. Montgomery of The Purcell Register meet with Representative Cynthia Roe.

February 2024 | The Oklahoma Publisher

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Legislative Summit Snapshots

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M. Scott Carter, The Oklahoman, visits with Oklahoma Watch's Ted Streuli.



Scott Wesner, The Ponca City News, shows his son William his front page displays for legislators.



JoLana Ferris and Arianna Parkinson of The Thomas Tribune prepare for the morning meeting.



David Stringer, The Lawton Constitution, talks with Representative Trey Caldwell.

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The Seminole Producer digs for the news



Looking Them Over

by Rod Serfoss
rserfoss@okpress.com

Seminole is often referred to being a town filled with news. We tend to believe that many other communities across the state have just as much news, but very few newspapers cover the events in their town like the *Seminole Producer*.

Too many reporters have come to believe the way to find news is to regularly check for emails and then publish what was sent. It is good to be reminded that most press releases only contain what the sender wants you to know and are filled with information that makes them look good. The real stories are usually found when reporters ask questions.

The *Seminole Producer* has a decades-long reputation of digging for the news and when they find it, they aren't shy about letting the people know what is taking place.

The newspaper lives up to its circulation advertisement, "Covering our Community! Stay informed about the news and events in our community ... Subscribe to the *Seminole Producer*!"

An important role of a newspaper is to preserve the history of its town. But as the population in rural Oklahoma continues to decline, some small communities across the state are no longer able to support a newspaper as we think of one.

In the Lincoln County town of Davenport, the history of the area continues to be put in print by *The Monthly New Era*.

The New Era has been in business for more than 50 years. According to its founder and current publisher Don



Sporleder, the newspaper originally hit the streets every Wednesday. That changed two decades ago when shoppers chose to do business at a Walmart that opened a few miles down the road, instead of shopping in Davenport.

When that happened, it forced local businesses that once supported *The New Era* to shut their doors. It would have been easy for the newspaper to do the same, but Sporleder did what it took to make sure his hometown continued to have a newspaper — even if it only came out once a month.

While *The Monthly New Era* does not publish legal notices, it is filled with page after page of local stories, pictures and advertising when it comes out on the 4th Wednesday of each month.

The Blanchard News columnist/reporter Stephen Ussery did a great job putting some humor on the recent bitter cold weather. In the January 18 edition he wrote: "BRRRR! Since we had our first really cold snap of the 2024 winter season, and everyone seemed to have a 'It was so cold ...' joke."

"It's so cold outside politi-



cians have their hands in their own pockets.

"It's so cold that we didn't have to clean the house. We just defrosted."

"It's so cold Jack Frost changed his name to Jack Froze."

"It's so cold that pet stores are selling penguins."

"Just remember it is only about two months until spring. By then, we will have something else to complain about."

It was good to be reminded that even in the bad times, we can keep things in perspective with laughter.

The *Miami News-Record* consistently produces a quality newspaper in far northeast Oklahoma.

The balance of feature stories and crime reporting makes the paper inviting to everyone.

It is also good to see quality pictures accompanying the well-written stories on almost every page. The good balance of advertising and easy to read legal notices are the icing on the cake.

The *Enid News & Eagle* did a great job telling how things that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. championed 60 years ago may be more fitting today than when he was alive. *News & Eagle* writer Tanner Hol-



ubar's story was well written and easy to read as it pointed out how the words of Dr. King are very relevant today as people throughout the world continue to face division, segregation and separation.

Quotes from a local city commissioner also helped convey the importance of history and how knowledge of it can be used to help make the world a better place.

TOP FIVE HEADLINES:

5. **Stealing Christmas**
— *Atoka County Times*
4. **Sticky situation**
— *The Stillwell Democrat Journal*
3. **Thief trades bike for truck**
— *McCurtain Gazette*
2. **Owner's dream has 'gone to the dogs'**
— *Wagoner County American-Tribune*
1. **Be nice, or pay \$185**
— *Sequoyah County Times*

Rod Serfoss, OPA Business Consultant, looks over OPA member publications for a monthly column, "Looking Them Over." To contact Serfoss, email rserfoss@okpress.com.

Setting up a dot matrix printer for cards



Computer Notes

from the road
by Wilma Newby
wnewby@okpress.com

Using a dot matrix printer is very old school, although many newspapers still use these reliable printers to print not only labels but renewals and statements.

This tutorial was done on a Windows 11 computer with Microsoft Word from Office 365. We were trying to print renewals with the mail merge features to tracker feed cards.

The cards can be text only or you can add art for a holiday. You could use a heart for Valentine's Day or a shamrock for St. Patrick's Day.

The following steps show how to set up renewal cards with a dot matrix printer using the custom label setup in Word's mail merge.

We are not using the mail merge wizard for this job, only the buttons along the top of the mailings ribbon.

To start, create the **Page setup** under **Layout** menu. The easy way to do this is to click the small button to the right of the words **Page Setup**. This brings up a **Page Setup** box with all the setting pulled into one place. Set the margins, paper size and layout with the three tabs at the top. Under **Layout > Section start**: choose **Continuous** to set up for tracker feed.

Then choose the **Mailings** menu from the ribbon and go to **Start mail merge > Labels**.

In the next window, choose **Continuous Feed Printer**. Under **Label Vendors**: choose **Other/Custom**. Select **New Label...** and put in the width and height of the paper you're using.

Set up side margins, give the label a name and click the **OK** button. Pay attention to the exact page size using the diagram in the window.

Now insert or type the copy to be printed on the card layout. If you want to use art such as a heart or shamrock, go to **Insert > Shapes or Pictures**. Your art will print in black and white so simple images are best.

For the merge, locate or set up the file with all the names and addresses in it.

If your file is comma delimited be sure it has the header row at the beginning of the document. If it's missing, go back and re-export it with the proper settings.

Back in Word, place the

cursor in the location of the first spot where your data will appear. That means the flashing "I" beam is where you want the first name to appear on the card.

Next, click the **Select Recipients** button and choose the data file to link the two files.

Now click the **Insert Merge Field** button. Choose **First Name** and click the Insert button. Then close the dialog box and put a space before the **Last Name** field so the names don't run together.

Click the **Insert Merge Field** button, choose **Last Name field**, **Insert and Close**. Repeat this process for all the fields you want to insert.

You can put a whole address block in at once using the button on the ribbon that says **Address Block**. It will put the **First name, Last name, Address** and **Zip** fields from the database in your document all at once and will display as <<Address Block>>, but it may take up several lines of space.

Now click the **Preview Results** button. If it looks good try printing and see how it goes. If you want to change it click undo and fix the problems. Then click the **Preview Results** button again and then the **Finish & Merge** button.

Choose **Edit individual document**, which will create a new document that you can look over for problems before

printing. If everything is correct, you're ready to print to the dot matrix printer.

Some dot matrix printers don't have drivers that work well with newer software programs since many of these drivers were written years ago.

If the printer starts printing extra white pages you may have a driver problem, which requires a special setup for the exact size of the printing you're doing.

In Windows 11 this setting has been move to the **Settings** area of the **Bluetooth & devices > Printers and Scanners**. Scroll down and click the line that says **Print Server properties**.

In that window click **Create a new form** check box, then put in the paper size.

Set it up for your tracker feed card stock and give it a new settings name such as "Card Stock" and click OK.

In the **Properties** of the dot matrix printer, the "Card Stock" setup can be chosen under three different tabs: **General > Preferences, Advanced tab > Printing Defaults** and in **Device Settings**.

All of this works best on a newer dot matrix printer with newer print drivers.

A similar set up can be done for laser printers. It's easy to set up for cards.

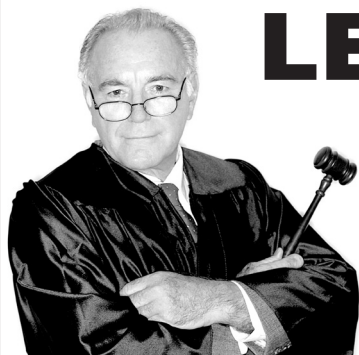
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**Remembering our friends
& colleagues who died
the previous year.**

James 'Jim' Gilbert Allen Jr.
January 15, 2023

Meredon Francis Cable
January 17, 2023

James 'Jim' DeSilver
January 1, 2023

Christine Michelle Edens
January 12, 2023

John R. Hokanson
January 21, 2023

Mary Elizabeth Claiborne
February 3, 2023

Dayle McGaha
February 27, 2023

Keith Skrzypczak
February 11, 2023

DEATHS

ROY EUGENE DEERING, JR., a longtime journalist and schoolteacher, died January 23, 2024. He was 60.

Deering worked at The Ada News as a staff writer and sports editor from 1982 to 1985 and as news editor between 1992 and 1998. He was managing editor of the paper in 2007.

He graduated from Latta

High School in 1982 and earned a bachelor's degree in mass communications from East Central University in Ada in 1990.

Deering was teaching at Vanoss Public Schools and had previously taught at Latta Public School and Moss Public Schools.

He also wrote two books,

"Finders Keepers" and "The Day Old Faithful Stopped."

Finders Keepers won the Oklahoma Book Award for young adult fiction.

Deering is survived by his wife Beverly; children Noah Deering, Caleb Deering, and Grace Thompson; one granddaughter; his father, Roy Sr.; and siblings Tamra, Greg and Diane.

PATSY ANN NOLAND HAMMERT, a former reporter for the El Reno Tribune, died February 2, 2024. She was 82.

Hammert was born December 12, 1941, in Anadarko.

Hammert graduated from

Central State University (now University of Central Oklahoma) with a bachelor's degree in journalism.

Her first journalism job was at the Bethany Tribune. She later began working at the El

Reno Tribune as a reporter, and was there for almost two decades.

Hammert is survived by her son, John Kord Hammert; daughter Holly Ann Connolly; and her grandchildren.

ROBERT GUY MASON, former publisher of the Okemah News-Leader, died January 28, 2024. He was 84.

Born October 12, 1939, in Mound Valley, Kansas, Mason and his mother moved to Norman, Oklahoma, when he was five.

Mason graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1963 and joined the Pauls Valley Democrat as advertising manager.

After marrying Joyce Ann Helmer in 1964, the couple moved to Frederick in 1965 when Guy became advertising manager there.

The Masons moved to Oklahoma City in 1968 when he was employed by the Oklahoma Publishing Company in display advertising. He was named Salesman of the Year in 1970.

In 1975, the Masons purchased 51 percent of the Okemah News Leader, which was published twice a week.

Several years later they became sole owners of the Okemah newspaper.

Mason served as president of the Okemah Chamber of Commerce and the Lions Club. He also served eight

years in the Oklahoma National Guard.

The Masons sold the News Leader in 2008 but remained in Okemah until Guy's death.

He enjoyed traveling with his wife and celebrated his 80th birthday by skydiving with his grandchildren. He followed that up by buying a Corvette the next year.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Joyce Ann Mason; daughters Michelle Parrick and Melinda Wall; two grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DECEMBER WINNERS

Editorial: **MIKE McCORMICK**, *The Lincoln County News*

Column: **DAVID STRINGER**, *The Lawton Constitution*

DECEMBER EDITORIAL WINNER (Read all winning editorials at okpress.com/ong-contest)

MIKE McCORMICK, *The Lincoln County News*

Editorial

Meeker's Town Board of Trustees has decided to have two Trust Indentures. At least that's what it appears will happen when they meet in January.

During their Dec. 18 meeting, one of the agenda items was to correct errors on a previously approved Meeker Growth and Development Authority Trust Indenture or create a new Trust Indenture for Meeker Growth and Development Authority.

That previously approved Trust Indenture, which was created in 2008, was never filed with the Lincoln County Clerk's Office or the Secretary of State, as required. However, it wasn't until recently that it was learned it hadn't been filed.

So that indenture has been and still is non-existent legally.

Another item on the agenda was "to consider or take possible action for the previously approved Trust In-

denture or if a new Trust Indenture is approved to allow the Meeker Growth and Development Authority to resume operation.

Both items were tabled at the suggestion of the Trustees' legal counsel, James Hodgens, so he can work on them.

We honestly don't see the need for a town the size of Meeker to have two Trust Indentures. Most of the activities that the Meeker Growth and Development Committee does and has done since its inception don't require a Trust Indenture.

The Pumpkin Festival, the Pecan Festival, the Community Garden and similar activities are all good and worthwhile projects that draw vendors and bring consumers to the Town and area.

None of those require a Trust Indenture. After all, the Growth and Development Committee has been

doing them, some maybe since the inception of that legally non-existent indenture.

From what we understand, Hodgens will work on fixing the one indenture and also create a new one, then present drafts of those for the Trustees to review. He's indicated he will have a bond counsel review them as well.

It would seem more efficient if one new Trust Indenture for the Meeker Growth and Development Authority is created by the attorney which encompasses all aspects of the Town's needs. Among them would be the ability to buy and sell property and all aspects of that which needs to be included.

The same new Trust Indenture could stipulate that the Meeker Growth and Development Committee would continue to function as it has for the past 15 years.

DECEMBER COLUMN WINNER (Read all winning columns at okpress.com/ong-contest)

DAVID STRINGER, *The Lawton Constitution*

Riding on the crazy train

"Remember when we were the crazy ones?"

I'm paraphrasing, but that was a question asked at a small get together I attended last week.

The question was only partly tongue-in-cheek but seems more and more apropos. No matter where you look, there's a seemingly new breed of crazy being more "normal." Watching the statehouses or U.S. Capitol, or even the line at the check-out counter, we're treated to more and more outlandish behavior. Folks seem to think they can say anything, or act with impunity and no one's allowed to intervene. "I'm right and you're stupid."

I'm part of a generation which came of age before the internet, before smartphones and before social media. Most of us probably have at least one thing in our past we know would be a viral TikTok video

today. What's most astounding is the number of wackadoos that video their own questionable behavior and out themselves as the nutjobs they are.

Today we've transitioned from the crazy train to an innumerable number of clown cars, each trying to out-maneuver the other to the front of the pack. From viral "influencers" to elected officials, each one seems hell bent on being memorable. "That's the best you can do? Here, hold my beer."

Previously, we might have been allowed to only be a passenger on the crazy train, jumping to safety, rolling down the embankment, then looking back to see if all the cars made the curve. Now, we're required to stay in our seats until things have come to a full and complete stop, even though the destination is nowhere near your ticketed destination.

I really don't think we have a bigger

dose of crazy than before. It's just that they've all got a broader stage and a platform to brag about it. Most are content to sit on the world's front porch and watch the parade of lunacy. And when the "fun" spirals and unintended consequences come home to roost, as they often will, you can know you warned them. But somehow I sense the tide is turning.

Because that's the other side of smartphones. Everything is recorded. Someone, somewhere, has probably captured your stupidity and will bring it up at the most inopportune moment. Maybe we're finally beginning to get our belly full of crazy and are willing to send those folks back to the dark corners of the internet where they belong.

After all, it IS the season of hope, isn't it?



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3. All entries for the previous month must be at the OPA office by the 15th of the current month.
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