

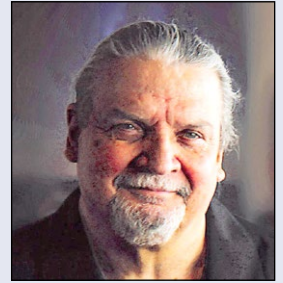
OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM HALL OF FAME

56th anniversary celebration to honor 12 journalists, authors, pioneers during induction ceremony at UCO

CLASS OF 2026 INDUCTEES



GENE ALLEN
Lifetime Achievement



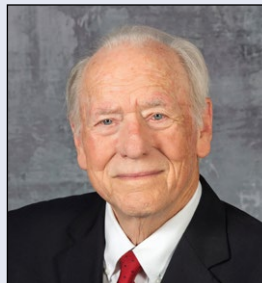
MICHAEL WALLIS
Lifetime Achievement



CINDY ELLIOTT ALLEN



MIKE BROWN



H. WILLIS CHOATE III



JASON COLLINGTON



RUSSELL A. LaCOUR



KATHRYN SHERRY McNUTT



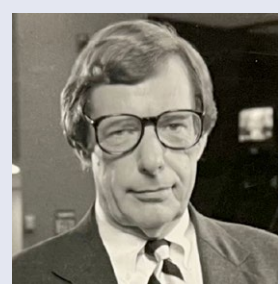
JOYCE REED



PHIL ROGERS



PATRICK SPENCER



ED TURNER

Longtime journalists, a nationally known author and television news pioneers are among

those who will be honored at the 56th annual induction ceremony of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

The induction ceremony will begin at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, May 14, in the grand ballroom of the Nigh Univer-

sity Center at the University of Central Oklahoma. A reception toasting the honorees will

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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PAGE 10 Kathryn McNutt retires from The Journal Record

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From the President

By **Suzie Campbell**

Publisher of the Countywide & Sun • OPA President 2025-2026



Not Flashy, Just Faithful: *Local journalism's kind of love*

February is the annual visit to the state capitol by the Oklahoma Press Association members. It is an opportunity to meet our legislators where decisions are made and to discuss what bills we like and those we have concerns about.

If you haven't registered for this event, you should do so now.

February is also the month filled with cards, flowers, chocolates and other flashy displays of love.

There is the honeymoon phase, where you consistently remind that special person of how much you love them. Then there is the 'we're in it for the long haul' love.

This is the kind of love that shows up every single day, during the good times and the bad, for the laughter and for the tears. It is the love local journalists have for their communities. It's not flashy, but it always pays attention and shares community stories as honestly as possible.

I see this commitment, this love for our communi-

ties, displayed in newspapers across our state. We continue to cover school boards, city councils, county commissioners and community events. We are there for the school sports, homecomings, anniversaries, and the births and deaths of our friends and families in our community.

Local journalism is built on relationships, trust with readers, fairness with sources, and accountability when mistakes are made. It means we attend the meetings that went viral on social media. We also attend the meetings that don't draw any spectators but mean a lot to the people who live there. None of this happens by accident. This consistency is a choice made on a week-to-week basis.

The next generation is watching us. The young people in our towns are learning what true journalism is by observing how we practice it. They notice whether accuracy matters, whether we correct our mistakes, and whether we treat people with respect, even

those with whom we don't agree.

For many kids, the local newspaper is the first place they see their name in print, their photo in print or their achievements recognized.

All of these moments help shape how they understand their communities. Newspapers teach civic responsibility by example. When strong journalism is present, it shows what it looks like to care about a place enough to truthfully tell its story.

Local journalism is not a one-time gesture. Journalists choose every week to make a long-term commitment to accuracy, accountability, and to the people and communities we serve. Newspapers continue because their communities depend on them.

Remember, while doing what we love, that a young reader is paying attention and learning from our actions – learning what it means to show up, tell the truth and care about the place they call home.

OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information
on upcoming events visit
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FEBRUARY 19, 2026

OPA LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

Join us at the State Capitol for the annual Legislative Summit.

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

2:00 – 3:10 PM

NA WEBINAR: IMPROVING THE DESIGN OR REDESIGNING YOUR NEWSPAPER

One of Kevin Slimp's most requested services is improving the design and/or redesigning community newspapers. Join Kevin for this 70-minute session to learn ways to make your newspaper much more inviting to potential readers and advertisers.

MARCH 19, 2026

2:00 – 3:10 PM

NA WEBINAR: ADVANCING SKILLS IN ADOBE INDESIGN FOR NEWSPAPERS

Kevin Slimp – who has been teaching InDesign since it was first released – will be teaching skills to increase the speed of your productivity and quality of your design. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the guru himself!

JUNE 5 & 6, 2026

OPA ANNUAL CONVENTION

Mark your calendar and make plans to attend the annual convention at the Norman Embassy Suites Hotel & Conference Center.

Download Guidelines for Public Notices

New rates for legal notices and important reforms to improve accessibility and readability of notices are in effect. Download new guidelines at

okpress.com/public-notice-training

Guthrie News Leader names Nikki Bos as general manager

The Guthrie News Leader recently announced the appointment of Nikki Bos as its new general manager.

Bos previously served as content and sales manager.

“Her understanding of both the editorial and business sides of the operation, including our expanding digital services, makes her uniquely qualified to step into the role of general manager,” owner and publisher Rochelle Stidham said. “We are confident she will continue to move the newspaper forward.”



Since joining the Guthrie News Leader, Bos has emphasized the importance of small-town journalism as a trusted voice, a community record and a connection between

neighbors, while remaining focused on guiding the paper forward.

“Local news matters because people matter,” Bos said. “Guthrie has a rich history and a strong sense of pride, and it’s an honor to be part of a newspaper that has shared this community’s stories for generations. Carrying on the Guthrie News Leader’s long history is not something I take lightly, and I am committed to serving this community with care and dedication.”

Enid News & Eagle converts to postal delivery

The Enid News & Eagle converted to postal delivery on February 3.

Now deliveries of the newspaper arrive along with daily mail from the U.S. Postal Service.

“This action is a result of ever-increasing printing and delivery costs,” News & Eagle

Publisher Mike Kellogg said. “As we face strong headwinds battling surcharges, tariffs and continuous expense increases, it is our desire to continue to bring our readers a news report that impacts Enid and surrounding communities.”

The change will not affect

current subscribers in any way, Kellogg said.

For those who want their news even faster, subscribers can activate total digital access to view the complete News & Eagle electronic paper at enidnews.com before 4 a.m. each day.

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Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame (continued from Page 1)

occur immediately after the ceremony in the University Center's Heritage Room.

The hall of fame will induct two Lifetime Achievement honorees and 10 journalists at the ceremony.

This year's Lifetime Achievement honorees are the late Gene Allen, an Oklahoma television pioneer and author, and Michael Wallis, a nationally known nonfiction author and journalist who has become famous for his Route 66 work.

The 2026 induction class are Cindy Elliott Allen, a longtime news executive in Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas; Mike Brown, a longtime sportswriter for the Tulsa World; H. Willis Choate III, a third-generation publisher and longtime columnist for the Marietta Monitor; Jason Collington, former executive editor of the Tulsa World and a

digital news innovator; Russell A. LaCour, a longtime journalist, copy editor and founder of the National Association of Black Journalists' high school program; Kathryn Sherry McNutt, who just retired from The Journal Record and was a longtime editor at The Oklahoman; Joyce Reed, the first vice president for News for Griffin Media in Oklahoma; Phil Rogers, a longtime radio and TV reporter who began his career in his native Oklahoma; Patrick Spencer, a news executive and producer with KFOR-TV; and the late Ed Turner, a founding CNN executive who pioneered many of the national cable news network's hallmarks in news coverage.

"This year's class and Lifetime Achievement honorees show again how Oklahoma has the greatest journalists and news pioneers in this coun-

try," said Joe Hight, director and member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

"This year's inductees remind me of why this hall of fame is so important and how it continues to show the depth of journalism produced here in Oklahoma and by Oklahomans."

All 12 honorees will become members of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, which now has inducted nearly 550 members since its beginning.

They were chosen from among nearly 100 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 \$50 each must be made by April 10. More information can be found by going to the hall of fame website at <https://okjournalismhalloffame.com>. Sponsorship tables can be purchased starting at \$1,000 per table.

The Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame was founded 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 permanent hall of fame gallery on the third floor of UCO's Nigh University Center.

OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM HALL OF FAME 56th ANNIVERSARY CLASS OF 2026:



CINDY ELLIOTT ALLEN (1959-) began her career in journalism at 17 with the Shawnee

News-Star and went on to build a career defined by newsroom and community leadership. She served in senior news executive roles in Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas, leading daily newspapers through periods of transformation while overseeing editorial, digital and business operations. Her work has emphasized strong local reporting, ethical standards and modern audience engagement. Beyond journalism, Allen has held senior communications and advocacy roles in the corporate and nonprofit sectors, developing public messaging, media relations and fundraising strategies. She also served as

mayor and city commissioner of Pittsburg, Kansas, where she led a successful citywide initiative to fund major public improvements. Across her career, Allen's work has centered on civic leadership, public trust and community engagement.



MIKE BROWN (1952-) passionately covered high school sports during most of his

43 years with the Tulsa World, gratified to have worked with a literal generation of great athletes and coaches. He also wrote about college football and basketball, WNBA basketball and covered all 11 seasons of the Tulsa Talons' indoor football team. Brown attended Charles Page High School in Sand Springs and graduated

from the University of Oklahoma in 1974. He relished the small-town newspaper experience and worked in Holdenville, McAlester and Edmond before going to the World in 1979. In 2016, he was chosen as the National Sports Media Association's Oklahoma Sportswriter of the Year. After retirement in 2022, the newspaper instituted the Mike Brown Inspirational Award for its annual All-World Awards Banquet.



H. WILLIS CHOATE III (1938-) is the third generation of Choates to publish the

Marietta Monitor. His grandfather H.W. Choate began work in 1897 at the Marietta Monitor, launched two years earlier, and became sole owner within five years.

After he died in 1924, ownership passed to his wife, Madoline, and 13-year-old son, Willis Choate Jr. Willis Jr. died in 1952, leaving the newspaper to his wife, Wilma, and 13-year-old Willis III. After graduating from the University of Oklahoma in 1960, Willis III, his wife, Norene, and son Willis IV returned home to help Wilma with the paper. His front-page column has appeared for 65 years. He strongly believes a weekly newspaper should provide fair and honest news coverage, and its publisher should be a community leader.



JASON COLLINGTON (1975-) spent 26 years at the Tulsa World, serving the last five years

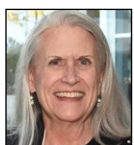
Continued on Page 5

as the newspaper's 10th executive editor in its 120-year history. He could tell a good story but knew the profession's future was a digital one. After writing a memo making the case, he was named the first digital intern at The Oklahoman. After working at The Associated Press in Oklahoma City, he started as a feature writer at the Tulsa World before being promoted to editor of tulsaworld.com, where he worked to connect audiences in the new era of digital journalism. He developed one of the first classes on digital content at his alma mater, Oklahoma State University, where he still mentors the student media staff.



RUSSELL A. LaCOUR (1957 -), a freelance journalist with The Oklahoma Eagle,

continues his career as founder/mentor for high school students through the National Association of Black Journalists' high school journalism workshop (JSHOP). He began in journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., as a newsreader on WNUR and later at Radiovision KWAB in Tulsa. While news director at KJMM in 1999, LaCour began a 17-year career as a copy editor at the Tulsa World winning awards from AP-ONE, SPJ, and NABJ Salute to Excellence. A University of Tulsa graduate, LaCour served more than 17 years as president of NABJ-Tulsa, as a state director, and two-terms on the NABJ Board as a regional director. He is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Metropolitan Baptist Church.



KATHRYN SHERRY McNUTT (1956-) worked at three family newspapers before they were

owned by chains, beginning at The Norman Transcript in 1979 after earning her journalism degree from the University of Oklahoma. Next was the Enid News & Eagle, where she was a reporter then

promoted to Lifestyles editor. She worked in both newsrooms as they transitioned to computers, reporting on local government and community news. Her 19 years at The Oklahoman included stints as metro editor, breaking news editor, and mentoring dozens of reporters covering everything from suburban squabbles to tornado destruction. On the higher education beat she covered the tumultuous year when OU President David Boren's successor, Jim Gallogly, slashed budgets and staffing while revealing "years of overspending." She retired as a business reporter for The Journal Record.



JOYCE REED (1954-) began her journalism career at KYTV in Springfield, Mo., as

a reporter/anchor and, later, as KYTV's first female news director. She also led newsrooms in El Paso, Richmond, and Kansas City before joining News 9 (KWTU) in Oklahoma City in 1995 -- just three weeks before the Murrah Building bombing. From days of 24-hour coverage, to arrests of suspects and through trials in Denver, News 9's owners, the Griffin family, provided every resource to capture the historic events, and Reed relied heavily on advice from the seasoned staff of mostly native Oklahomans to guide the coverage. Reed became the first vice president of News for Griffin Media, which grew to include KOTV and KQCW in Tulsa. She retired in 2016.



PHIL ROGERS (1956-) began his journalism career in his hometown of Stillwater at KVRO

and KOSU radio. After graduating from Oklahoma State University, he worked at KOMA in Oklahoma City and, in 1979, began a 14-year career with CBS at WBBM Newsradio in Chicago. That was followed by a 31-year television career in Chicago with NBC.

Throughout his career, he reported not only thousands of stories in the Chicago area, but also national and overseas assignments, including the invasion of Kuwait, the war in Iraq and three Olympic Games. Rogers' reporting brought him back to Oklahoma many times, including the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 2013 F5 tornado in Moore. He has been honored with numerous Emmy Awards and will be inducted into the Chicago Television Academy's Silver Circle.



PATRICK SPENCER (1978-) began his journalism career at KFOR-TV while still in high

school. At just 16, he was already telling stories of how Oklahoma teenagers were helping heal the community after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Over the next 30 years, Spencer witnessed Oklahoma history unfolding while covering the execution of Timothy McVeigh, the May 3, 1999, tornado and countless other breaking news events. He served in leadership roles as a producer, executive producer and assistant news director, with tenures at KFOR-TV, KWTU, and KOCO-TV, helping guide coverage and mentor generations of journalists. Spencer's work earned numerous honors, including multiple Heartland Emmys, Edward R. Murrow, OAB and AP awards. He was also part of KFOR's team honored with the prestigious duPont-Columbia Award in 2025.



ED TURNER (1935-2002) had three great loves: news, Oklahoma and University of

Oklahoma football. Trained by OU's legendary Ned Hockman, Turner transitioned to anchor at KWTU in the early 1960s. After working on Bud Wilkinson's unsuccessful Senate campaign, he became a news director in Washington where he introduced the East Coast to its first 10

p.m. newscast. After a stint as producer of the CBS Morning News and news director at KWTU, he took on the greatest challenge of his life. He was one of the four founding executives of CNN. At CNN, he pioneered extensive live coverage, specialized reporting by experts, in-depth political coverage and live breaking news, a term he created. These became and still are CNN hallmarks.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT:



GENE ALLEN (1928-2025) guided many award-winning WKY documen-

taries on history. He won a 1963 Emmy nomination for "Pioneer Painter," while 1961's "The Freedom Riders" was named Sigma Delta Chi's best documentary. He highlighted people previously neglected: a missionary to the Kiowa at Rainy Mountain and a Quaker sergeant whose diary illuminated both sides' Civil War deaths. After accolades for OETA's Oklahoma Passages, facilitated with expert commentary, he wrote books: "Voices on the Wind" (early radio), "Helina" (biography of a Polish girl's escape from Nazi-held Poland), "The Vision and the Dream" ("not a history, but rather the reminiscences of a small group of people who watched the first flicker of television") and an autobiography, "The Boy with Four Eyes," explaining how his adoption made him a grateful "son" in these words: "To my grandparents who at the end of their lives, gave me mine."



MICHAEL WALLIS (1945-) is a best-selling author and award-winning

reporter who has gained international notoriety as a speaker and voice talent. In 2006, his distinctive voice was heard in "CARS," an animated feature film from

Continued on Page 6

Cyril News saved from closure by new owner

The Cyril News, a fixture in the community for 107 years, will continue publishing after a local resident stepped in to assume ownership just as the paper was preparing to close its doors.

In January, owner and editor Robbie Snider announced that the newspaper's final issue would be printed Jan. 29, 2026, marking the end of more than a century of local journalism.

"I had hoped that someone would have wanted to continue on with the paper making it their own," Snider wrote at the time.

Before an issue was missed, Sarah Alexander, a longtime Cyril resident, decided she and her family would take over the weekly publication. In the Feb. 5 edition, Alexander shared her reasons for stepping forward.

"As a long-time resident of Cyril, I was disappointed to see that The Cyril News was closing down," Alexander wrote. "The Cyril News has been a part of our community for 107 years. I couldn't bear the thought of our town losing our newspaper."

"I have always enjoyed seeing the school and community events in the paper. I didn't want to see Cyril and



Sarah Alexander and her family – Bradley Alexander and daughters Stella, 7, and Adley, 3 – are the new owners of The Cyril News.

our neighboring towns lose the paper," she continued.

Alexander said she is excited about the opportunities the paper will bring to her family, including her husband, Bradley Alexander, and their daughters, Stella and Adley. She also outlined future plans to expand the publication's reach by offering a digital edition.

"I want the paper to appeal

to all generations in our community and highlight the progress happening in our area to ensure that Cyril's story continues to be told for years to come," she wrote.

Snider served as editor and publisher of The News for 11½ years. She said the decision to step away was driven by a desire to spend more time in Pittsburgh with her mother, family and childhood friends.

Free webinar offers tips on covering courts

A free online webinar scheduled in March will bring together legal affairs journalists and judges to share practical guidance on covering courts at both the state and federal levels.

The "Covering the Courts" webinar, sponsored by the Colorado Pro Chapter, Society of Professional Journalists, is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. central time. The program features three panels focused on reporting about the federal judiciary, state courts and the work of judges.

The event is free and open to the public. To register, see www.tinyurl.com/covering-courts.

The first panel will center on the federal courts and the U.S. Supreme Court. Panelists include Mark Joseph Stern of Slate and Nate Raymond of Reuters.

A second panel will shift the focus to state courts. Participants include Bob Egelko of the San Francisco Chronicle, Toluwani Osibamowo of KERA News and Michael Karlik of Colorado Politics and The Gazette.

The final panel will feature members of the judiciary. Scheduled panelists are Senior Judge John L. Kane of the U.S. District Court in Colorado; Magistrate Judge Richard T. Gurley of the same court; and Justice Mariano-Florentino (Tino) Cuéllar, a retired justice of the of the California Supreme Court.

The webinar will be moderated by Andrea Katz of Washington University School of Law.

Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame

(continued from Page 5)
Pixar Studios. Wallis is co-founder of the Route 66 Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of the Mother Road. In 2023, President Joe Biden appointed him to the Congressional Route 66 Centennial Commission. A

storyteller who likes nothing better than transporting audiences across time and space, Wallis has published 20 books, including "Route 66: The Mother Road." His work has appeared in hundreds of national and international magazines and newspapers, including Time, Life, People,

Smithsonian, The New Yorker and The New York Times. Michael has been nominated three times for the Pulitzer Prize and was also a nominee for the National Book Award. In 2016, he received an Emmy Award for his work in the documentary film, Boomtown.

Sequoyah County Times co-sponsors mayoral forum



The Sequoyah County Times and KXXM Mix 105.1 co-sponsored a public forum for Sallisaw's three mayoral candidates on February 2 at the People Inc. Conference Center in Sallisaw. Candidates Marley Abell, Kenny Moody and Jeanne Moore each answered 12 identical questions posed by moderator and former Sallisaw mayor Shannon Vann. The election for the three-year term was held February 10. A QR code published in the February 6 edition of The Sequoyah County Times allowed readers to watch the forum. Pictured are Abell, Moore, Sequoyah County Times Publisher Jeff Mayo, and Moody.

Photo by Amie Cato-Remer, Sequoyah County Times

Reid Newspapers cut the cords

Reid Newspapers' offices have cut the cords — phone cords, that is.

The company has officially unplugged traditional desk phones across its newspaper offices and embraced a fully mobile, headset-driven, cell-based calling system.

In their place are wireless headsets, mobile call routing to cell phones and the freedom to answer business calls from anywhere in the building — or beyond.

“We had already gotten to the point where employees were making more and more business calls on their cell phones,” said Reid Newspapers Publisher Phillip Reid. “When I asked them why, their answer was simple: they were more comfortable talking on a cell phone and were bothered by the clumsiness of a desk phone.”

Now no one has to wonder which phone is ringing — or where it is.

Journal Record presents awards throughout the year

Throughout the year, The Journal Record offers a variety of statewide recognition programs aimed at connecting readers to important people, companies and projects that impact Oklahomans.

These high-profile awards include Health Heroes, Top

Projects, Most Admired CEOs and Achievers Under 40.

The Journal Record also presents the Beacon Award, which honors companies and organizations for their charitable, philanthropic and nonprofit service, as well as

the Woman of the Year Awards Gala and Leadership in Law.

In addition to these events and awards, The Journal Record publishes many special publications recognizing the people and businesses that power the state.

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PUBLIC NOTICE JOURNALISM CONTEST

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AMANDA PARKS

Woodward News

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- (a) highlights the impact of a public notice or the omission of a public notice,
- (b) helps readers understand a specific public notice, or
- (c) explains the consequences of a public body's failure to publish a notice in a newspaper.

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ELIGIBILITY:

Staff at all OPA legal newspaper and general news media member publications as well as Individual members are eligible to compete. Entries must have been previously published in print or on the publication's website. All entries will compete together. One entry per writer per month will be accepted.

HOW TO SUBMIT ENTRIES:

Each month, submit your entry at okpress.com/public-notice-contest. Attachments should be in PDF format. Entries may also be emailed (full-page tearsheet) to amarshall@okpress.com. Include the author's name, name of publication and date of publication.

ENTRY DEADLINE:

All entries published in the previous month must be received by OPA by the 15th of the current month.

AWARDS:

One winner per month will receive a Certificate of Achievement, a \$100 check and recognition in The Oklahoma Publisher. Annual Sweepstakes winner will receive a plaque, a \$200 check and recognition in The Publisher.

ENTER ONLINE AT:

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Woodward County commissioners call for a re-run on sales-tax election

PAGE 1

December 10, 2025

AMANDA PARKS, Staff Writer

Woodward County commissioners on Monday approved a resolution to re-run a special election on a portion of the county's existing sales tax and opened a slate of bids for road materials, equipment and services.

Attorney David Floyd with Floyd & Driver from Norman, told the board the measure is being put before voters again after publication requirements for the previous election were not met.

"This is the election proclamation notice, the resolution calling for a special election on Feb. 10 to re-put before the voters the question of extending a portion of the existing half cent sales tax and making one cent permanent and three of the remaining four extended 15 years for county economic development purposes," Floyd said. "We're rerunning this, as we said last week, because there was a problem with the publication requirements for the previous election. Those were not met and so it's been our recommendation for lack of an abundance of caution in order to make sure that the will of the voters accurately reflected and is not subject to the challenge at any time. Then we put this question back before them and ask them to approve. We will take care of qualifications for this, board will publish six times in public newspapers in the county. The requirement is four. We are going to go ahead and do six," Floyd added

Read entire winning entry at
okpress.com/public-notice-contest

Worth Mentioning

MANGUM STAR NEWS Mr. & Miss Valentine

The Mangum Star News celebrated the Valentine's Day season by asking readers to submit entries for the 2026 Little Mr. & Miss Valentine contest.

For \$10 per entry, readers could submit photos of their child or grandchild.

Photos of all entries were printed in the February 13 edition of the Mangum Star.

One Little Mr. Valentine and one Little Miss Valentine were chosen by impartial out-of-town judges and won a Valentine's prize package and certificate.



COUNTYWIDE & SUN Inspiring Women of Pottawatomie County

For 2026, the Countywide & News is launching Inspiring Women, a community feature honoring women of all ages in Pottawatomie County who inspire others.

Nominations closed on Jan. 31 and eight women will be chosen for feature stories to be published March 19 during Women's History Month.

Only women ages 16 and up, who live, work or attend school in Pottawatomie County, are eligible. Nominees include students, educators, business owners, non-profit leaders, volunteers and community advocates.

Businesses and organizations were also encouraged to participate by placing their message alongside positive stories of local women making an impact in Pottawatomie County.

Countywide & Sun Publisher Suzie Campbell said Inspiring Women is the first of the Community Impact series that the Countywide has planned for 2026.

OKMULGEE TIMES Valentine Word Scramble

The Okmulgee Times and Henryetta Free-Lance sponsored a Valentine Word Scramble, giving readers an opportunity to win prizes for their Valentine.

Words were hidden inside sponsoring business ads with each having different words in four separate editions – Jan. 28, Jan. 30, Feb. 4 and Feb. 6.



To participate, readers searched for the hidden words and put them together in the correct order to solve a Valentine's Day phrase.

Two local businesses participated as headline sponsors, said Carrie Carberry, advertising manager for Cookson Hills Publishers Inc. One was a restaurant that donated a dinner for two and the other was a flower shop that provided a floral bouquet and a men's shaving kit and cologne.

On February 11, a drawing was held from all the correct entries and the lucky winner was notified.

WEATHERFORD DAILY NEWS – Dinner on Us

The Weatherford Daily News is hosting its annual "Dinner on Us" promotion for the sixth consecutive year. Over an eight-week period, the newspaper will give away 80 gift certificates valued at \$25 each to encourage readers to dine at participating local restaurants.

Publisher Phillip Reid said the promotion has become one of their favorite annual traditions because it celebrates and supports local eateries.

To enter, participants must scan a QR code inside any participating restaurant and register for the giveaway. Each week, winners will be selected to receive "Munch Money" gift certificates, which can be redeemed at local restaurants.



CHEROKEE MESSENGER & REPUBLICAN – Love is in the Air

The Cherokee Messenger & Republican asked readers to share their favorite love stories for a chance to win prizes and see their stories published in the newspaper.

Entering the "Love is in the Air" contest was simple. Participants submitted a story of 300 words or less describing how they met their sweetheart.

The first-place winner received dinner for two at Smok-Shak, \$50 cash and a one-year subscription to the Messenger & Republican. The second-place winner received \$30 cash and a one-year subscription.

Cash prizes were sponsored by Jet State Bank, Cleo State Bank and Meno Guaranty Bank. Smok-Shak donated the dinner for two to the overall winner.



After four decades in journalism, Kathryn McNutt announces retirement

Kathryn McNutt, an Oklahoma journalist for more than four decades, is retiring from The Journal Record.

McNutt joined The Journal Record in January 2021 and recently celebrated her five-year anniversary.

“Kathryn is a well-loved and highly respected journalist,” said Heather Warlick, editor of The Journal Record. “She has covered so many of Oklahoma’s most important moments, and she exemplifies journalism ethics and professionalism.”

At The Journal Record, McNutt covered Oklahoma City government and business news.

She began her journalism career in the 1980s at the Enid News & Eagle, where she met her husband, fellow journalist Michael McNutt. She went on to spend many years as a reporter and editor at The Oklahoman, covering education, government and a wide range of community issues.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Kathryn



Michael and Kathryn McNutt

worked as a freelance journalist for Oklahoma Watch.

A graduate from the University of Oklahoma with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, her work has appeared in numerous publications including PBS Frontline, U.S. News & World Report, Seattle Times, Washington Times and Government Technology.

Her retirement follows that of her husband Michael, who

retired in 2025 after a distinguished career that included 30 years at The Oklahoman and recent work as managing editor of NonDoc Media.

“Kathryn will be dearly missed by her fellow journalists, but we are also very excited for her as she begins a new chapter of her life,” Warlick said.

“We wish her all the best for her retirement.”

Columnist celebrates 90th birthday

John Bill Martin, long-time eastern Oklahoma educator and journalist, celebrated his 90th birthday on January 12.

Martin was born in 1936 in Holdenville. After graduating from his hometown high school, he attended East Central University in Ada, and later the University of Oklahoma for advanced degrees in education.

He taught and coached for nearly 60 years at several Oklahoma schools.

Martin remained a moonlighting journalist through his education career and is still active at 90.

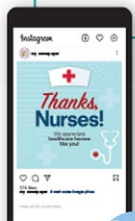
His journalism career began in high school and continued through college. In the 1980s and 1990s, he worked for the Midwest City Sun and other eastern Oklahoma County newspapers.

Martin later worked for the Harrah News, Eastward and Friday Gazette.

The Choctaw Times was quick to hire the veteran journalist, bringing him on board to continue writing his “Around Town” column as well as sports coverage, which he still does.

His column is now shared each week in all publications under the Central Oklahoma Weeklies umbrella, which includes the Choctaw Times, Midwest City Beacon, Mustang Times, Tuttle Times, Minco-Union Times and Blanchard News.

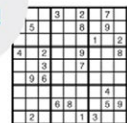
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DEATHS

JERRY FINK, editor of the Eufaula Indian Journal and McIntosh County Democrat, died Friday, January 30, 2026, in Eufaula. He was 80.

Fink, who was born April 20, 1945, in Vian, was a reporter for more than 50 years.

He began his journalistic career in 1974 at the Sequoyah County Times under the leadership of then

General Manager Jim Mayo. His duties included editing, reporting, photography and feature writing. He remained at the Sequoyah County Times until 1977 when he went to work for the Tulsa World as a general assignment reporter. In 1980, he joined the state staff and covered breaking news, trials, education, government and features in Eastern Oklahoma.

For the next five years, he served as State Editor, recruiting and working with a staff of freelance writers as well as capitol bureau reporters.

In 1997, he joined the Las Vegas Sun as a senior reporter.

In 2012, Fink returned to Oklahoma and came full circle, serving as editor of the Eufaula Indian Journal and the McIntosh County Democrat, both Mayo family newspapers.

In 2025, he was inducted into the OPA Half Century Club.

Fink is survived by two sons, Jason of Washington and Paul of Boaz, Ala.; three daughters, Sarah O'Rourke of Massachusetts, Jerri Fink of Wyoming and Laura Padek of Colorado; six grandchildren; and one sister, Barbara Risley of Vian.

PEGGY GANDY, a former staff writer for The Oklahoman, died February 5, 2026, in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she had recently moved. She was 93.

Gandy was born September 13, 1932, in South Carolina. After her marriage, she and

her husband lived in Charlotte, where they raised their daughters.

In 1969, the family relocated to Oklahoma City, which she called home until 2025.

Gandy was society editor for The Oklahoman for many years. She also wrote numerous columns for other local

newspapers and magazines and was particularly known for her humor and keen observations about everyday life.

In later years, Gann shared her wit and perspective through her personal blog.

After retirement, she found happiness gardening and spending time with her dogs.

Gann is survived by her daughters, Robin Curlin and Cathy Miller; four grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; her sister, Elizabeth Scoville; and her beloved companion, David Tarpenning.

MIKE McCORMICK, reporter and editorial writer for the Lincoln County News, died February 8, 2026, at his home in Shawnee. He was 78.

Born in Oklahoma City on May 3, 1948, McCormick graduated from Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School. He attended St. Gregory's College, the University of Central Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma.

He married the love of his life, Pat Gray, on July 1, 1978. McCormick began his news-

paper career in 1967 as a reporter at the Shawnee News-Star. He worked there for 47 years, becoming city editor in 1977, managing editor in 1991 and executive editor in 1999.

Although he retired from the News-Star in November 2014, he soon returned to journalism, reporting for the Tri-County Herald in Meeker and the Lincoln County News.

He often won awards from the Associated Press and Oklahoma Press Association for his reporting and editorials.

McCormick was inducted into the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 2005, was president of the Associated Press/Oklahoma News Executives committee and served on many committees with the Oklahoma Press Association.

In 2016, he was inducted into the Oklahoma Press Association's Half Century Club.

He was a past chairman of the Greater Shawnee Chamber of Commerce, served on the board of the Salvation Army and St. Gregory's University

and was a past president of the Shawnee Rotary.

McCormick is survived by his wife, Pat, of Shawnee; grandson, Liam Jackson, of Norman; son-in-law, Terry Jackson, Jr., of Norman; and sister, Maureen Giese, of Oklahoma City.

He was preceded in death by his daughter, Meghan Jackson; brother, Kevin McCormick; and his parents, John, Mary Elizabeth and Robert McCormick.

The Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation offers an appropriate tax-exempt memorial as a tribute to the memory of Oklahoma newspapermen and women. All contributions in memory of an individual are acknowledged

and notification is given to the family. The purpose of the Foundation is to advance newspapers, and to provide for journalism education, study and research.

Recent Donations: Clytie Bunyan

Donate Online At: [OkPress.com/Donations](https://okpress.com/donations)

Or send a check to Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Remembering our friends & colleagues who died the previous year:

Phyllis Mae Argyle
February 1, 2025

Marilyn Joyce Carney
February 18, 2025

Timothy Joe Farley
February 11, 2025

Dan Hogan III
February 11, 2025

Elizabeth Ann Waters
February 3 2025

Year in Review highlights the strength of community journalism



Looking Them Over

by Rod Serfoss
rserfoss@okpress.com

I recently watched an old episode of “The Andy Griffith Show” about a stranger from New York who arrived in Mayberry with a smile on his face, calling everyone by name and knowing things that were going on that an outsider shouldn’t know.

When the town folks got nervous and turned against him, he told them he learned about Mayberry and the town’s people by subscribing to the local newspaper. He loved what he read about them and the community so much that he began telling folks that Mayberry was his hometown.

That show reminded me why I enjoy reading the *Woods County Enterprise*.

Its publishers, Mark and Karen Carson, who may be the only two people I know who live in Woods County that have the ability to connect with readers in a way that

makes everyone – including strangers – feel like they are part of the northwest Oklahoma town of Waynoka.

A year’s worth of excellent work was exemplified in its four-part series titled ‘Looking Back Through 2025 Enterprise Pages.’

Readers were treated to an average of 24 stories and 25 photos in each segment of the four-week series – and all of that was done without shortchanging readers of the normal coverage they regularly receive.

The *Woods County Enterprise* earns an A+ for always doing what is best instead of what is easiest.

It is interesting to see the wide variety of ways the year in review is published in Oklahoma newspapers.

The *Vici Vision* did an excellent job composing more than a dozen pictures to tell the 2025 visual story of the small Dewey County community of roughly 600 people.

But the icing on the cake was how it described last year’s news in the small rural town it serves.

“As the calendar turns and another year slips quietly into memory, 2025 stands out as a year that reminded Vici, and communities like it, of the value of connection, resilience, and shared experience,” wrote *The Vision*. “While national and world events continued to shift rapidly, life in a small town moved forward in the ways it always has: through schools and seasons, celebrations and setbacks, and the

steady work of people showing up for one another.”



Clinton Daily News Publisher Sean Stephens compiles a list containing 20-30 of what he thinks were the top local stories. He then lets the *Daily News* staff, local advertisers and community leaders rank their top 10 stories. Once the votes are counted, a 50-word summary is combined with a picture for each. The Top 10 package appeared on the bottom one-third of the front page of its first edition of the new year.




The *Newkirk Herald* also ranks its top 10 stories of the year, but they are selected by the newspaper.

“For Newkirk, the past year has been one of extreme highs and lows, as well as periods of progress,” wrote the *Herald Journal*. “There was a story of a high-profile resignation and

a surprising comeback. Here are the top 10 stories as judged by the *NHJ* during the past year that left the most impact.”



The *Watonga Republican* reported it was taking a slightly different approach to come up with its top five stories for 2025.

“We have revisited the top stories for the year,” wrote *Republican* Editor Connie Burcham. “These were selected by the impact they had on the community, not whether the newspaper supported or disagreed with the topic. If readers think we dropped the ball or skipped something, feel free to contact us...”



The *Kingfisher Times & Free Press* published its four-part year in review from Dec. 31, 2025, through Jan. 11, 2026.

“From tragedy to triumph. From championships to spe-

Continued on Page 13



cial honors. Weather. Sports. School news. Government. Politics,” wrote *The Times & Free Press*. “All that and more is included as we revisit the headlines that made 2025 the year it was.”



The *Sequoyah County Times* published its complete ‘Looking back at 2025 in review’ in its Dec. 31 edition.



Doing a review in one edition can make for a very lengthy story that can turn away readers. The *Times* eliminates that concern by writing separate concise stories with a dated headline for each news item.

Headlines like 1-22 – “Jordan’s body found following second search”; 2-26 – “Charges filed vs. county assessor”; 4-16 – “Federal jury convicts 2 in death of Sallisaw man”; and 5-28 – “Jury awards \$50M in bad faith insurance case” make it easy to scan the pages of copy and pick and choose what to read.



As the stories from 2025 are moved to the archives, it is good to know Oklahoma has an abundance of excellent newspapers.

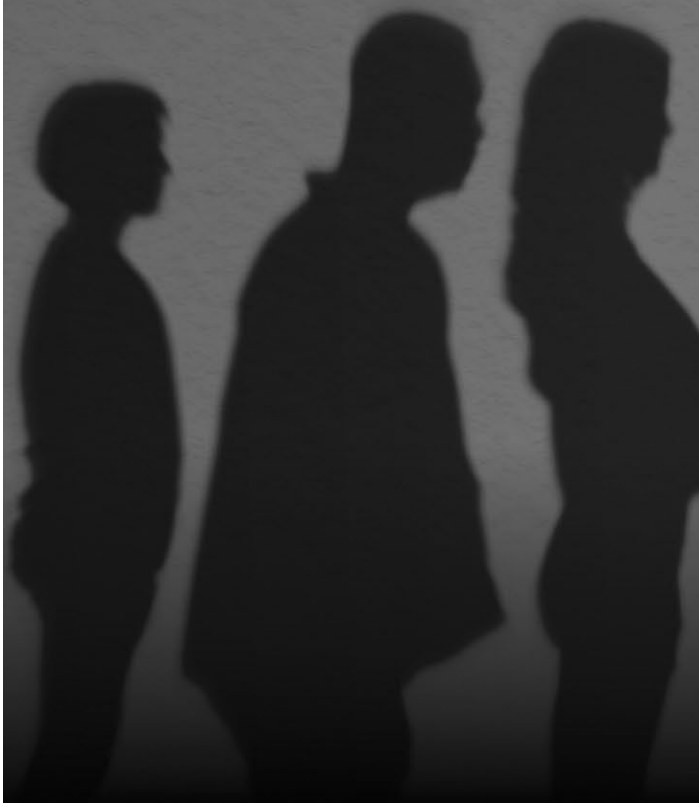
The stories they publish, and an episode of “The Andy Griffith Show,” are a reminder that people pay attention to what appears in a newspaper, that being part of a hometown you can be proud of is priceless, and a good newspaper in a small town can make a lasting impression on others – including a stranger from New York!

TOP FIVE HEADLINES:

5. **A landmark of curiosity and conversation**
– *The Norman Transcript*
4. **Get your goat**
– *Tahlequah Daily Press*
3. **Life after letting go**
– *The Claremore Daily Progress*
2. **We’re the people that do stuff**
– *The Ada News*
1. **Burglar traps woman in her bedroom, nails door shut** – *McCurtain Daily Gazette*

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

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How to show PDF first-page previews on your computer



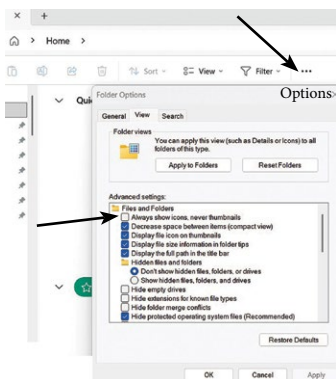
Computer Notes

from the road
by Wilma Newby
wnewby@okpress.com

I'm often asked how to get PDF files to show a preview of the first page of the document in Windows Explorer. That's a good question. Let's explore how to make this happen.

If you're on a Windows computer, it can be hard to get icons of PDF files to show a preview of the first page, but it is possible. What I'm about to show you works for Adobe Reader or the full version of Adobe Acrobat.

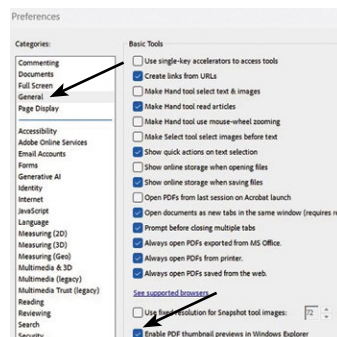
To start, open a folder that contains a PDF. In Windows 11, go to the top of the window right next to the View dropdown menu and look for the three dots "..."



menu. Click it to open the drop-down menu. Once there, go to **Options** and click the **View** tab in the Options menu.

In View, the second line under Advanced setting is **"Always show Icons, never thumbnails"**. Make sure this is unchecked.

Now open Adobe Acrobat and go to **File > Preferences** and click the **General** button on the left.



Then check **"Enable PDF thumbnails preview in Windows Explorer."** Once you tell it OK, an installer will run asking for permission to install the program. Click **"Yes"**. Then go to **File > Quit Acrobat** and restart your computer.

Re-open the window with the PDFs in it and choose **"large icons"** from the view menu. Your previews should start to show up.

On an Apple Macintosh computer, the icon view is controlled by Apple software, not Acrobat. Here you're going to open a folder window on the desktop and go to **View > Show View Options**. This dialog box has changed quite a bit over the years. On Mac OSX Tahoe 26.x it has check-boxes for **"Always open in icon view"** and **"Browse in icon view"**. This changes with the view selected in the finder window below. For example, if you've selected **"List or Columns"** mode it

will say **"Always open in list or Columns mode."** It's easy to set the defaults for the Mac in this location.

Make sure that **"Show icon preview"** is checked in this dialog box as well.

In Tahoe, folders can be customized to choose a color, symbol or emoji. Simply control click the folder and choose your preference. An easy way to organize folders is to group them by project and assign each project a different color.

While you are at setting up the computer to be more useful, try going to **"view menu"** with a folder window open and go to **"Show Path Bar"** and **"Show Status Bar"**.

The status bar is useful for keeping an eye on the hard drive space. The path bar lets you go back to previous folders in the path. It's an easy way to navigate.

CLOSE THE LAPTOP

Another question I was recently asked is how to work with the laptop lid closed while using a larger monitor.

On Windows PC, go to search and type **Control Panel**. Open the program and choose **Power Options**. On the left side click **Choose what closing the lid does**. Then under **"When I close the lid:"**, choose **"Do Nothing"** on both setups.

On newer Apple computers, just close the lid. When it tries to go to sleep mode, click the

mouse or a key on the keyboard. You have to be plugged into a monitor for this to work.

CREATOR STUDIO

Apple's new Creator Studio came out this month and opened the door to compete with the Adobe Creative Suite, in some ways.

Pixelmator Pro is a new Apple program that's included in the software package Apple just released. It's not Photoshop – it's hard to compete there – but if you're using the built-in Photos app to touch up photos, the new Pixelmator Pro adds many more tools. It's very similar to the Affinity program I reviewed in last month's column. For \$12.99 a month for the whole Apple suite of software, it's a fair deal. It adds good tools for editing video for your website.

The standard office type Apps Numbers, Pages, iMovie and Keynote remain free for Apple users. But when you add a subscription, more features are added to these programs – mainly AI and more content. Some advanced features for Numbers and Keynote are withheld without a subscription.

Creator Studio works well with all the other Apple software and integrates with Photos very well. However, it doesn't work on Windows computers like Adobe's Creative Cloud. But if you're editing a lot of videos it might be worth the price.

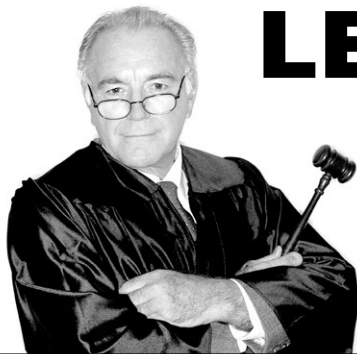
Apple's Creator Studio apps can still be bought as one-time stand-alone programs, but all of the AI powered tools and intelligent features are behind the paywall.

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DECEMBER 2025 WINNERS

All entries judged by members of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame

Multi-Day & Online-Only Photo Winner:

ANDY DOSSETT

Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise



OGE Energy Corp. provides monthly winners with a \$100 check and certificate. Sweepstakes winners receive \$200 and a plaque from OGE. Contest open to staff at OPA Legal Newspaper and General News Media members, as well as OPA Individual members. Complete contest rules and online submission form available at okpress.com/oge-photo-contest.

Weekly Photo Winner:

BRIAN BLANSETT

The Lincoln County News



View winning photos at okpress.com/oge-photo-contest

Column Winner:

AMANDA PARKS

Woodward News

What my mom taught me at the movies

Thanksgiving weekend in Woodward comes with a few guarantees: football cheers in the background, left overs never truly disappearing and the movie theater becoming the place everyone funnels into the moment the dishes are dry.

I should have known better when I took the kids to opening day for "Zootopia 2" let alone on Thanksgiving day. I learned my lesson and bought tickets online for Friday. But even with tickets in hand, it still looked like half the county had camped out overnight.

Families had already arrived saving seats with blankets like they were waiting for Taylor Swift to appear. Every row filled before the previews even warmed up. Note to self for next year: booking online is only half the battle.

Editorial Winner:

MARK CODNER

The Newcastle Pacer

Missed opportunity for our kids and for our community

We have failed our students and our community by not passing the recently proposed \$10.7 million bond issue.

Passage would not have increased the millage rates on properties, and these types of bond issues are a key part of school infrastructure and building funding in Oklahoma.

It should have been an easy decision.

Because of our growing school district we have a growing amount of residences that provide property taxes, and saying yes at this election would have allowed our school district to layer bond issues on top of each other as each one gets paid off. These funds could have been used to take care of some immediate needs ...

Oklahoma Natural Gas provides monthly winners with a \$100 check and certificate. Sweepstakes winners receive \$200 and a plaque from ONG. Contest open to staff at OPA Legal Newspaper and General News Media members, as well as OPA Individual members. Complete contest rules and online submission form available at okpress.com/ong-contest.

Views expressed in winning columns and editorials are those of the writers and don't necessarily reflect the company's opinions.

Read winning columns and editorials at okpress.com/ong-contest

Big news about small advertisers

By John Foust
Greensboro, NC

A number of years ago, I shared a story about an ad manager named Jay, who talked about the financial impact of happy and unhappy customers. On average, a customer will tell nine to 12 people about a good experience – and up to 20 people about a bad experience. That's a dramatic ripple effect.

Using that formula, let's say a business owner spends \$300 a week in Jay's newspaper. In a lot of media circles, that would be called a small advertiser. But if she has a negative customer service experience – or if her ads fall short of expectations – she might pull the ads out of Jay's paper and move them to a competitor. Over a year, that \$300 a week adds up to \$15,600 in lost business. If she tells ten of her business friends about her experience – and if her story discourages them from advertising in Jay's paper – that's an additional yearly loss of \$140,400.

In this hypothetical example, consider the power of habit. Suppose those 11 advertisers eliminate Jay's paper from their media purchases for ten years. That amounts

to \$1,716,000 in lost revenue over a decade.

Imagine what the numbers would look like if we started the calculation with a \$1,000 budget. Or if the initial disgruntled advertiser tells 20 people? And what if some of those 20 tell even more advertisers?

Whatever the damage assessment, this is a mighty good reason to take good care of advertisers, isn't it? Like the old saying, "If we don't take care of our customers, someone else will."

Although my conversation with Jay still rings true today, it happened before social media became such an important factor. Multiply the figures he mentioned by a hundred or a thousand or more – and a few extreme customer experiences can have a serious impact on a business.

According to the TechWyse Internet Marketing site, "Reviews, ratings, recommendations, and user-generated content... hugely influence people's buying decisions. With a large amount of information available online, more consumers are looking for social proof to learn about others' experiences and

help guide their purchasing choices."

Forbes magazine writes, "With 80% of consumers making buying decisions based on a friend's social media post, the era of virtual word-of-mouth recommendations is in full effect."

All those years ago, Jay told me, "Every contact with a customer puts our reputation on the line. If someone in our office is rude to an advertiser, waits too long to return phone calls, or is sloppy about billing – we could lose business."

On the opposite side of the coin, if ad teams have positive contacts with customers – and if advertisers get positive results from their marketing campaigns – there's a lot to gain. Remember, someone with a good experience is likely to tell nine to 12 others. News travels fast, whether it's good or bad.

When you look at things this way, it's difficult to consider anyone a small advertiser. They're all big.

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'Demo' cat says goodbye to Checotah office

Phoenix, the well-known "Demo Cat" of the McIntosh County Democrat, will miss greeting visitors at the newspaper's former Checotah office.

The Democrat staff recently relocated to Eufaula after the Checotah building was sold. The team is now sharing space with the Eufaula Indian Journal.

Phoenix belongs to LaDonna Rhodes, affectionately known around town as the "Paper Lady."



Now back home in Muskogee with Rhodes, Phoenix is "still living her best life."

Though the Checotah office has closed, Rhodes will

continue reporting on local news in Checotah and the surrounding communities – just without her four-legged coworker.

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