

OPA members meet with state lawmakers during Legislative Summit at the Capitol

Staff members from publications across the state gathered at the Oklahoma State Capitol on February 19 for the annual Legislative Summit hosted by the Oklahoma Press Association.

Opening the event, Brett Wesner, chair of the OPA Government Relations Committee and owner of Wesner Publications, welcomed attendees and emphasized the importance of meeting with state lawmakers.

Wesner said the summit provides an opportunity for members of the press to engage directly with legislators. He noted that advocacy from the press played a major role in last year's successful effort to address public notice issues and prevent unfavorable legislation.

"That does not happen by accident," Wesner said. "As Mark Thomas says, 'You have no idea how much time it takes to make sure nothing happens.'"

He encouraged members to visit legislative offices during the day and speak confidently about the role of local newspapers.

"Lawmakers want to hear from you," he said.

Wesner also urged attend-



OPA members attend a session at the February 19 Legislative Summit at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City.

ees to stress the importance of transparency in government.

"Transparency is not just a media issue," he said. "It's a public issue, and it's about the people's right to know."

As Wesner concluded his remarks, he introduced OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas.

Thomas thanked attendees for participating and reviewed materials distributed to participants, including posters featuring legislators on the front pages of their newspapers.

A new initiative distributed at this year's Legislative

Summit was an OPA "challenge coin," which highlights the association's support for transparency through open meetings, open records and public notices on one side. The other side features the Oklahoma Press Association logo and its founding year, 1906.

Thomas encouraged attendees to present the coins to legislators and their staff as a reminder of the importance of open government.

Thomas also reviewed several pieces of legislation affecting open government, public notices and access to

public records. Many proposals that could have affected newspapers have already been set aside, he said, thanks to early advocacy efforts.

He encouraged attendees to speak diplomatically with lawmakers about these issues and share the perspective of local journalism.

In closing, Thomas reminded participants to return later in the day for a barbecue lunch sponsored by The Lawton Constitution and the afternoon session featuring presentations from legislative leaders.

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From the President

By **Suzie Campbell**

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



What a high school career fair reminded me about local news

In February, I referenced how the young people in our communities are watching what we do in local journalism.

Last week, I had a chance to see that firsthand.

I was invited to speak at a local high school career fair. I enjoy sharing the behind-the-scenes processes of producing a newspaper.

Career fairs and classroom visits provide the perfect occasions to share the job opportunities available at a newspaper. Graphic design is how I got my foot in the door, but other opportunities include photography, marketing, social media and, of course, reporting.

Reporting also requires skills in interviewing, investigating, researching and writing.

As someone who stumbled onto the journalism path about 21 years ago, I can say with certainty that I did not know all the different job opportunities that were available behind the headlines.

Before introductions were made, and while passing out a basic information sheet to the students, I asked them to raise their hands if they had ever read a printed newspaper.

I was pleasantly surprised

to see more than half of the hands in the room go up.

Now, I'm fairly certain most of those students are turning to the sports section first. They are looking for photos of Friday night games, checking scores and seeing if their name or a teammate's name made it into the story. While this may be what initially draws them to the newspaper, it is also a doorway into other information found only in the local newspaper.

Right next to those game stories are other parts of the newspaper—stories about school board decisions, reports from city council meetings, features about local businesses and announcements celebrating the achievements of people in the community. A sports fan will begin to notice those other stories.

That's one of the strengths of community newspapers. They bring together all the pieces that make up daily life in a town.

Seeing those hands raised at the career fair reminded me of what I wrote earlier this year: the next generation really is watching.

The second question I asked the students was where they got their news. Their

overwhelming answer was TikTok.

This provided the opportunity to question how many times TikTok had covered the school's athletic games and their playoff trek.

There are so many ways to share what we do, why we do it and why it is important, not just with students, but with our community.

As journalists, we spend so much time promoting our communities and our people, but we often forget to promote ourselves. Take the time to visit your local business groups. Be willing to stand before your fellow businesses and give them a look into our world.

Seeing all those hands raised in that classroom was inspiring, encouraging and motivating.

Yes, we live in a world filled with unending information available 24 hours a day. But the stories we share about our communities and the history we document each week remain meaningful.

If we take the time to share what goes into producing those stories, we can educate (or remind) our communities about the importance of local journalism and our role in keeping them connected.

OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

MARCH 26, 2026

1:00 – 2:00 PM

OMC WEBINAR: YOUR EMAIL LIST IS A REVENUE PRODUCT

Meagan Danielsen, a senior product VP at AlignSimple, will explore how local newspapers and broadcasters can design, manage and monetize their email programs.

APRIL 1, 2026

OCMA CONFERENCE 2026

OSU CAMPUS, STILLWATER, OK

Oklahoma college media students should attend the OCMA Conference to connect, learn, and celebrate the state's college media achievements! For more information and to register, see okcma.org/conference/

APRIL 23, 2026

1:00 – 2:00 PM

OMC WEBINAR: THE MODERN EDITOR TOOLKIT

Explore the essential skills editors need to lead in today's faster, more complex and more visible newsroom environment.

MAY 14, 2026

11:30 AM

OKLAHOMA JOURNALISM HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY

UCO CAMPUS, EDMOND, OK
56th Anniversary celebration honoring 12 journalists, authors and pioneers during the induction ceremony at UCO. For more information and to purchase tickets, see okjournalismhalloffame.com/rsvp/

JUNE 5 & 6, 2026

OPA ANNUAL CONVENTION

Plan 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



OPA to review membership applications

The OPA Board of Directors will consider the following applications for membership at its next meeting.

TCC CONNECTION

The student media website, TCC Connection, at Tulsa Community College has applied for Affiliate News Media membership. TCC Connection's website is tccconnection.com and the staff is led by adviser Jerry Goodwin, an associate professor of mass communication.

BISKINIK

The Biskinik, a monthly newspaper for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, has

applied for Affiliate News Media membership. The publication is distributed to 72,000 households and its website is at biskinik.com. The application was submitted by Kellie Matherly, content development director.

PRYOR PULSE

The weekly newspaper Pryor Pulse has also applied for Affiliate News Media Membership. The Pulse is owned by Dean Majors and its first issue was published on Nov. 5, 2025. Its office is located at 3 North Adair, Suite 7, in Pryor, OK 74361.

OBJECTIONS

Any written protests to the

above membership applications must be received by OPA by March 26, 2026. 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 an upcoming 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.

Grant helps save Stillwater News Press photo files

The Stillwater Public Library is working to preserve the photographic history of the Stillwater News Press. With support from a grant provided by the Oklahoma Historical Society, the library is preserving photographic negatives and contact sheets from the newspaper's archives. These

materials were collected prior to the newspaper's move to its current location last year.

The archive documents the history of organizations, government entities and individuals in Stillwater from approximately 1950 to 2000. In total, about 29,000 files

will be preserved during the project.

Preservation work includes rehousing the material into acid free envelopes and film sleeves, transcribing all of the metadata on the old envelopes and entering it into the library's archive catalog to make it discoverable.

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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!



Kristen Wright named Executive Editor of Tulsa World

The Tulsa World recently tapped Kristen Wright as the newsroom's top leader.

Wright is a veteran journalist and multi-platform communications expert who has been operating her own communications firm.

"Twenty-six years ago as a journalism student at OU, I set a goal to lead the Tulsa World someday," Wright said. "Since then, I've grown to understand the magnitude of informed local communities, and what happens when local news disappears. I can't imagine a better Tulsa without a strong Tulsa World, and I'm thankful to be part of it."

Wright joins the Tulsa World after five years of leading the communications firm she founded, Tulsa-based



Kristen Wright Strategic Communications. There she led digital newsrooms and teams for nongovernmental organizations, government agencies and corporations in the U.S., Canada and other countries. She also led crisis com-

munications and media ethics training for leaders from more than 40 countries in Bucharest, Romania, in connection with The Center for Independent Journalism, IREX and the U.S. Department of State.

Her career includes six years with the Petroleum Equipment Institute as editor-in-chief and head of global communications roles, and 12 years with former Tulsa-based media company PennWell Corp., where she served as senior editor.

A native of Owasso, Wright began her career in journalism in 2001 as a staff writer and photographer for the Owasso Reporter.

She holds an MBA in strategic communication from Southeastern Oklahoma State

University and a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from the University of Oklahoma.

Wright, a member of the Choctaw Nation, lives in Tulsa with her husband, daughter and son.

"The Tulsa World will continue to serve the people of Green Country," Wright said. "That's not going to change. I'm an old-school, just-the-facts, ma'am' journalist who loves good storytelling about people, places and things.

"What will change is a bump in the number of ways you can interact with the Tulsa World and our journalists as we grow digital readership.

"I'm confident about our future. I envision the Tulsa World as a model of trusted, modern journalism."

Governor stops in for visit at Kingfisher Times & Free Press



Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt paid a visit to the Kingfisher Times & Free Press office on February 28 for a sit-down discussion with Times & Free Press Publisher Barry Reid. Stitt and Reid discussed a variety of topics including education, immigration and tribal nations. Stitt also toured the Kingfisher High School while he was in town.

(Photo from Kingfisher Times & Free Press reprinted with permission.)

Reporter Andrea Eger joins Oklahoma Watch newsroom

Andrea Eger, an award-winning investigative reporter and longtime journalist at Tulsa World, has joined the staff of the nonprofit newsroom Oklahoma Watch.

Eger brings more than two decades of experience in education and investigative reporting. During her 26-year career at the Tulsa World, Eger distinguished herself with investigations that sparked criminal charges against an athletic director and numerous child sexual predators, leadership changes at school districts and state agencies and parole revocation for a notorious convicted murderer.

She's also received accolades for exposing a series of unnatural deaths in veterans' nursing homes and questionable financial practices at Epic Charter Schools, which Oklahoma's state auditor later declared the largest abuser of



taxpayer funds "in the history of this state."

Eger earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma with a journalism major and minors in political science and Spanish.

She was inducted into the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 2023.

Sapulpa Herald appoints new ad director

Erica Smith was recently named as advertising director of the Sapulpa Herald.



Smith, who is in charge of all the Herald's advertising sales, previously sold real estate.

"I've basically been selling something my entire life," Smith said. "I feel like I can sell anything. I've never been in a specific advertising sales position, but I feel more than qualified to do this and I'm excited about it."

Smith has lived in Sapulpa for many years. She graduated from Glenpool High School in 2005, and received an AS degree from ITT Technical Institute-Tulsa.

Eufaula mayor issues proclamation honoring late News Editor Jerry Fink

The Eufaula City Council opened its regular meeting on March 2 by honoring the life and legacy of longtime journalist Jerry Fink, who died January 30.

Eufaula Mayor James Hickman read a formal proclamation recognizing the late Eufaula Indian Journal editor for his decades of service to the community and his steadfast commitment to local journalism.

Hickman described Fink's more than 50 years in journalism as "defined by clarity, fairness and respect for the public's right to know."

In Eufaula, Fink was known for his steady presence at City Hall and throughout the community, Hickman said. In addition to official meetings, he was a familiar figure at school programs, fundraisers and other community events.

"Now, therefore, as Mayor of the City of Eufaula, I



Eufaula Mayor James Hickman presents a proclamation to the family of the late Jerry Fink on behalf of the Eufaula City Council. Pictured are Mayor James Hickman; Jerry's sister Barbara Risley; Jerry's niece Karleen Cox; and Shauna Belyeu, General Manager of the Eufaula Indian Journal.

Photo from Eufaula Indian Journal reprinted with permission.

hereby issue this proclamation honoring and remembering Jerry Fink for his lasting contributions to journalism and to the Eufaula community and expressing gratitude for the steady presence he provided

in documenting the life of this city," Hickman said.

Fink's sister Barbara Risley and his niece Karleen Cox accepted the proclamation on behalf of the family, along with Fink's coworkers.

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Oklahoma lawmakers discuss literacy, costs, wildfire prevention at OPA event

Legislative leaders discussed priorities for the 2026 session during the Feb. 19 OPA Legislative Summit, highlighting education reform, rising living costs and wildfire prevention as key issues for the upcoming year.

The event, hosted by the Oklahoma Press Association, brought together policymakers and journalists to review challenges facing the state and outline policy goals for the legislative session.

HOUSE SPEAKER KYLE HILBERT

House Speaker Kyle Hilbert said improving early childhood literacy remains his top priority. He cited data showing about 30% of Oklahoma fourth-grade students read at a first-grade level or lower.

Hilbert is backing Oklahoma House Bill 4420, which aims to improve reading proficiency through earlier intervention and increased accountability for schools when students fall behind in the early grades.

“We know what the right vote is,” Hilbert said. “If we pass House Bill 4420, we know our reading outcomes will get better for our kids.”

Hilbert also criticized the growing number of districts adopting four-day school weeks, saying fewer classroom days limit learning opportunities. He said lawmakers should reconsider policies that move schools away from the traditional 180-day academic calendar.

The speaker also addressed potential changes to the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association, which



HOUSE SPEAKER
KYLE HILBERT



SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEM
LONNIE PAXTON



HOUSE MINORITY LEADER
CINDY MUNSON



SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER
JULIA KIRT

oversees high school athletics and activities statewide. Hilbert said any proposal to abolish the organization would need a clear plan for how school sports would be governed.

Other topics included the role of artificial intelligence in education and politics, possible changes to state testing schedules and proposed fentanyl safety legislation known as Leo’s Law.

SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEM LONNIE PAXTON

Senate President Pro Tempore Lonnie Paxton said wildfire prevention, education and the rising cost of homeownership are among the Senate’s priorities this session.

Paxton highlighted legislation that would give county commissioners clearer authority to issue local burn bans during dangerous fire conditions. Current law requires certain drought conditions before bans can be enacted.

A longtime volunteer firefighter, Paxton said the proposal would allow local officials to respond more quickly to wildfire risks.

Paxton also addressed concerns from the Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association about the state’s business climate after several

oil companies moved headquarters to Texas. Lawmakers are reviewing regulatory policies and property assessments to determine whether changes could help keep energy companies in Oklahoma, he said.

He also pointed to rising homeownership costs, including higher insurance premiums and property taxes. Several bills addressing insurance costs are moving through the legislative process, Paxton said, though he cautioned against strict rate controls that could drive insurers out of the state.

Paxton said the focus of Democratic leaders this session is lowering everyday costs for Oklahoma families.

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER CINDY MUNSON

House Minority Leader Cindy Munson said the House Democratic Caucus has advanced more than two dozen bills through committees addressing wages, insurance costs and consumer protections.

Munson highlighted proposals to raise the minimum wage and address rising home insurance premiums. She also proposed requiring large retailers to maintain a balance between traditional checkout lanes and self-checkout kiosks,

though that measure stalled in committee.

Munson also criticized the state’s private school tax credit program, saying it has cost about \$250 million and primarily benefits families already sending children to private schools.

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER JULIA KIRT

Senate Democratic Leader Julia Kirt said Senate Democrats are focusing on lowering the cost of living while improving education and government transparency.

Kirt said rising housing costs, property insurance and child care expenses are among the most common concerns she hears from constituents. She also questioned proposals focusing on lawsuit reform as a way to reduce insurance premiums, saying research suggests litigation is not the primary driver of rising rates.

On education, Kirt said Democrats support improving literacy but cautioned against frequent policy changes and an over reliance on standardized testing. She said reducing class sizes and increasing resources for teachers should come before measures such as extending the school year.

Oklahoma Press members meet with legislators at annual Legislative Summit

OPA LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT
FEBRUARY 19, 2026 • OKLAHOMA STATE CAPITOL



Lori Battles, Perry Daily Journal, visits with Rep. Ross Ford during OPA's Legislative Summit.



Tamara Gregor of The Duncan Banner speaks with Sen. Kendal Sacchieri during OPA's Legislative Summit at the State Capitol.



Sara Acosta and Amanda Parks of Woodward News visit with Sen. Casey Murdock at his Capitol office during OPA's Legislative Summit.



John D. Montgomery of The Purcell Register, Rep. Jonathan Wilk, John Denny Montgomery of The Purcell Register and Mark Codner of The Newcastle Pacer at the OPA Legislative Summit.



Rep. Suzanne Schreiber meets with William Wesner of Wesner Media, left, and Brett Wesner of Wesner Publications.



Shauna Belyeu of the Eufaula Indian Journal visits with Rep. Tim Turner.



John Clark of Spiro Graphic stands with Democratic Leader Rep. Cyndi Munson.



PUBLIC NOTICE JOURNALISM CONTEST

JANUARY 2026 WINNER

AMANDA PARKS

Woodward News

Monthly
Public Notice Journalism Contest
sponsored by
Oklahoma Press Service

The contest recognizes a
news story or series that:

- (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.

PUBLIC NOTICE CONTEST RULES

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:
okpress.com/public-notice-contest

Mooreland community calls for 10 a.m. Jan. 16 meeting on mining proposal

Online article

January 9, 2026

AMANDA PARKS
Reporter

An informal conference has been scheduled for Friday, Jan. 16, regarding a proposed sand mining and dredging operation south of Mooreland, according to a letter circulated to residents this week.

The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. at the Mooreland Community Center, 115 SE Sixth St., and is connected to a permit application that could bring industrial-scale mining activity near family land, farms and homes.

Concerns outlined in the notice include potential silica dust and air pollution, increased heavy truck traffic on dirt and farm-to-market roads, road damage, safety risks, noise and long-term impacts on health, property values and rural life. The letter emphasizes that public attendance is important, noting that decisions related to the permit could move forward quickly without resident input.

"We've owned this land for 45 years," said Lonnie Reazin, who signed the letter urging residents to attend. "I doubt we'll get anywhere, but there's strength in numbers. I hope people come out because there are a lot of health and safety concerns."

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

RCFP expands free legal support to local newsrooms in Gulf states and upper Midwest

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press is expanding its Local Legal Initiative to Louisiana, Mississippi, Minnesota and Michigan – nearly doubling the size of the program and adding four new attorneys who will provide journalists and news organizations across each state with legal support to pursue enterprise and investigative stories in their communities.

The new states join established programs in Oklahoma, Colorado, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

The growth comes in response to requests from journalists and newsrooms in each state, with many citing increased legal roadblocks to their reporting and a lack of government transparency as key drivers of the growing need for a state-based Reporters Committee attorney to support local journalism.

“The Local Legal Initiative is a critical piece of infrastructure for local newsrooms, and the program’s growth speaks

to its tangible success at a time when local journalists need free legal support more than ever before,” said Reporters Committee President Bruce D. Brown. “We are especially proud to expand the Local Legal Initiative deeper into the South and into the upper Midwest, regions where the Reporters Committee’s services can have an outsized impact on the local news landscape.”

The expansion in the Gulf states is made possible in part by \$1.25 million in new funding awarded as part of Press Forward’s Open Call on Infrastructure, which is providing \$22.7 million to 22 projects that address the urgent challenges local newsrooms face today. Lead funding in the upper Midwest is from the McKnight Foundation in Minneapolis and the Joyce Foundation in Chicago, leveraged by a wide array of Michigan philanthropies.

Virginia Hamrick has joined the Reporters Committee as the Local Legal Initiative

attorney for Louisiana, and Andrew Coffman as the Local Legal Initiative attorney for Mississippi.

The Reporters Committee is actively recruiting in Minnesota and Michigan, and those attorneys will be announced later this spring.

“We’re thrilled to welcome Virginia and Andrew to the Reporters Committee, and to build upon our previous work in these four states with dedicated, on-the-ground support,” said Eric Feder, director of the Local Legal Initiative.

“With each new attorney we add to the Local Legal Initiative, the journalists and newsrooms we serve get stronger and the journalism they produce gets bolder. That’s a huge win for the communities that rely on their reporting to stay informed.”

Since its launch in 2020 with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Reporters Committee attorneys in Local Legal Initiative states have suc-

cessfully pushed for greater transparency from cities and counties, police departments, state agencies, public universities, and more, prying loose records that shed light on everything from fatal police shootings and secret school board meetings to medical marijuana oversight and violence inside county jails.

They’ve also defended journalists from libel suits and subpoenas of their newsgathering sources.

Their work has helped shape laws and change city and county policies in favor of greater government transparency and more informed communities.

Outside the courtroom, initiative attorneys have trained thousands of journalists on their First Amendment and newsgathering rights, responded to hundreds of calls to the Reporters Committee’s free Legal Hotline, and reviewed investigative stories before publication.

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From front-page drama to smiling faces, Oklahoma newspapers continue to deliver



Looking Them Over

by Rod Serfoss
rserfoss@okpress.com

“Two deputies recovering after officer-involved shooting, standoff,” was the only headline on the front page of the Feb. 11, edition of the *Okmulgee Times*. But it was everything that accompanied the headline that took the *Times* reporting to the top!



Its coverage included four superb action-packed pictures on page one – and seven more inside, an extremely well written story with excellent use of subheads and an outstanding layout that displayed it all in a way that made readers feel like they were at the scene as the event unfolded.

Several newspapers throughout the state take time to salute their schools’ FFA programs and students during National FFA Week.

One that stood out was a special FFA section produced by *The Newcastle Pacer*.

The combination of advertising, including 14 quar-



ter-page ads, and numerous letters from local FFA members thanking the community for its support and describing how FFA has impacted their lives, made this a section that will be in scrap books for years to come.

■■■■
The Journal Record in Oklahoma City works hard to make sure its readers are educated on the importance of legal notices.

“What Are Public Notices?” is the title of a full-page ad in *The Journal Record* that explains it in a concise and easy-to-understand format.

It begins with, “A public notice informs citizens of government or government-related activities that may affect

the citizens’ everyday lives. Public notices are required by law to be published in a newspaper meeting specific legal criteria. *The Journal Record* is proud to meet those standards – defining us as a trusted source for community news and information.”

It went on to inform readers about the three types of legal notices, their purposes and examples of each.

There was also an easy-to-understand portion titled, “Foreclosure Notices: What you need to know” that outlined the entire foreclosure process. The ad concluded with how to check *The Journal Record’s* searchable database for public notices.

■■■■
The first stop for many *Blackwell Journal-Tribune* readers is to see whose picture appears in its page one feature titled “Smile of the Week.”



In recent editions, the feature showed a young girl smiling at a father daughter dance, the recipient of the City of Blackwell’s Employee Spotlight, a student who was recognized for scoring his 1,000th point in basketball and a little baby making silly faces at her mommy!

And the icing on the cake is that the weekly “Smile of the

Week” is sponsored by a local dentist!

■■■■
I often share with publishers the importance of knowing their audience and publishing a newspaper that connects with them.



One of the Oklahoma papers that does that is *The Black Chronicle* in Oklahoma City.

The Chronicle is a treasure trove of information that lives up to its motto as being “The paper that tells the truth.”

It is a joy to read *The Chronicle* on a regular basis. It does a superb job reporting the news, writing features, covering the arts and following government agencies and elected officials so its readers will understand the impact of their actions – or the lack thereof.

And for the record, it was a story in *The Chronicle* that inspired me to attend the play “A Beautiful Noise: The Neil

Continued on Page 11

Public Notice

The Journal Record publishes the official public notices for Oklahoma County.

What Are Public Notices?

- A public notice informs citizens of government or government-related activities that may affect their everyday lives.
- Public notices are required by law to be published in a newspaper meeting specific legal criteria.

Types and Examples of Public Notices

Type	Purpose	Examples
Citizen Participation Notices	To inform citizens of government activities and provide an opportunity for public input.	Public hearings, community meetings, and public consultations.
Business and Commercial Notices	To inform the public of business operations, changes, and legal matters.	Business listings, change of ownership, and legal notices.
Court Notices	To inform the public of court proceedings and legal actions.	Foreclosure notices, probate proceedings, and court orders.

Foreclosure Notices: What You Need to Know

Foreclosure is the legal process by which a lender takes possession of a property when a borrower fails to make payments on a mortgage. This process is governed by state law and involves several steps, including notice of default, foreclosure sale, and deed in lieu of foreclosure.

Searching Public Notices Online:

Visit our website at www.journalrecord.com/public-notices to search for public notices.

Okmulgee Times, Henryetta Free-Lance raise funds for local humane society with annual Pet Calendar Contest

The Okmulgee Times and Henryetta Free-Lance recently raised \$1,559 for the OKCO Humane Society through proceeds from the newspapers' second annual Pet Calendar Contest.

The funds will help support animal care, food and vaccinations at the facility's new state-of-the-art pet adoption center.

Pet lovers across the county were invited to share photos of their favorite furry, feathered and scaly companions as part of the 2026 Pet Calendar Photo Contest.

Participants submitted entries either online or in person at the newspaper offices. A \$15 entry fee guaranteed each participant a spot in the printed calendar.

The 12 pets receiving the most votes were featured as the main photo for one month in the calendar, while other entries were included as honorable mentions. Each entrant also received a complimentary copy of the 2026 calendar, a \$10 value.

Voting was open to the community, with each \$1 donation counting as one vote. Supporters were encouraged



Staff members of the Okmulgee Times and Henryetta Free-Lance presented a check for \$1,559 to the OKCO Humane Society. The donation came from proceeds of the newspapers' second annual Pet Calendar Contest and will help support animal care, food, and vaccinations. In the photo, from left, are Denise Frost; OKCO Humane Society Board President Aimee Robinson; Executive Board Member and Treasurer Nicole Winters; and Tammy Shoemaker, along with Barley, the dog. Frost and Shoemaker are staff members of the Times and Free-Lance.

to vote as many times as they wished.

The contest was presented in partnership with the Okmul-

gee County Humane Society to highlight the importance of animal care and community support.

Black Chronicle magazine features 50 under 50

The Black Chronicle's latest edition of TBC Magazine features Oklahoma's rising Black stars.

50 Under 50: Up Next shines a light on young community leaders in business, education, sports and more.

Among those featured in the magazine is Darwin Franklin, a math instructional coach, assistant AD and head football coach at Millwood High School in Oklahoma City.

Also on the list is Haylie Calicott, vice president and business development officer and a mortgage loan officer at First Security Bank & Trust, Oklahoma's only Black-owned bank.

Also included is Aaron "AJ" Johnson, the owner and CEO of Oasis Fresh Market, a purpose-driven grocery enterprise transforming food access in underserved communities.

That's just an introduction to a few of the rising stars that are recognized in TBC Magazine: Up Next.

Looking Them Over, Continued from Page 10

Diamond Musical," at the OKC Civic Center Music Hall.



One of the best ways to make your newspaper the go-to place for information is to publish an easy-to-read accurate calendar of events. The *Countywide & Sun* in Tecumseh does just that as part of its front page.

Instead of driving down the street and wondering what is happening, readers know all they have to do is pick up a

copy of the *Countywide & Sun* to find out what is scheduled in the area.

Kudos to newspapers like the *Countywide & Sun* that understand it can be just as important to tell people what and where something is going to happen as it is to report on what has taken place.



The *Kiowa County Democrat* regularly promotes band members attending school in Snyder.

A regular feature in the *County Democrat* is the "Band Spotlight" that includes individual pictures and biographies of band members from grade school through high school.

In what may be the cleverest name of a school booster club, the feature is sponsored by the "Snyder Band Aids."

TOP FIVE HEADLINES:

5. **Shooter leaves message on rock**
– *Broken Bow News*

4. **Pencil me in for a colorful adventure** – *The Lawton Constitution*
3. **They're still there** – *Fairfax Chief*
2. **Strutting their stuff** – *Tahlequah Daily Press*
1. **Two arrested after deputies find dogs, goat living in camper** – *Vian Tenkiller News*

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

Apple releases MacBook Neo; how to cut out photo images



Computer Notes

from the road
by Wilma Newby
wnewby@okpress.com

Apple recently released a new laptop, the MacBook Neo, with an iPhone-class co-processor (A18 Pro). This computer is intended to compete with the Chromebooks that PC manufacturers have released over the past several years.

The Neo is designed as an “on-the-go” computer for general tasks such as checking email, browsing the web or remotely logging into a more powerful machine. It starts at \$599 with 8 GB of RAM and a 256 GB SSD; it cannot be upgraded after purchase.

At a similar price point is the Mac Mini with an M4 processor (M5 is likely coming soon) and starts with 16 GB of RAM. The Mini is a much more powerful computer with more upgrade ports, although it does not include a monitor.

The MacBook Neo will likely struggle to run Adobe InDesign. According to Adobe’s system requirements, InDesign recommends a multicore Intel processor or Apple silicon (M1/M2/M3/M4), SSE4.2 or higher SIMD engine, AVX2 support, and 16 GB of RAM recommended.

While the A18 processor might technically run the software, it may not provide adequate performance for production layout work. A stronger option for a low-cost pagination workstation is the

Mac Mini. Apple will likely release an M5 Mini around June at around the same price as the MacBook Neo.

Affinity software should run on the Neo if you need to quickly build a simple advertisement.

HOW TO CUT OUT IMAGES

There are several ways to cut an image out of a photo that you want to use in an ad. Let’s take a look at some of the easiest ways to do this using a phone or computer.

IPHONE: On an iPhone, find the photo in question in the Photos library.

Press and hold your finger on the person (or object) you want to cut out. A white outline will appear around the subject as the phone selects it.

While the outline is active, tap Copy or Share, then go to an email or text message and paste it. The image will paste into the message already cut out from the background.

If your phone has the Adobe Photoshop app installed, open Photoshop and choose the photo you want to edit. Then select Remove Background.

In testing, Photoshop often does a better job than the Apple tool, but it requires signing in to an Adobe account.

ANDROID PHONE: Most Android phones also have a native way to cut out a person from a photo.

1. Open the Camera app.
2. Look for the icon at the bottom left of the screen

showing the last photo taken and tap it.

3. Tap the Back (<) icon at the top left and choose the photo you want from the gallery.
4. Once the photo is open, tap the Edit button (the small pencil icon). Now the photo is in edit mode.
5. Tap the four dots at the end of the options row and choose the Lasso tool.

In Lasso mode, loosely draw around the person or object you want to cut out in the photo using your finger. The Snap to Shape option helps refine the selection automatically.

Tap Next, then review the results. If you’re happy with the cutout, tap Done. If not, tap Previous to go back and adjust the selection. You can manually add or subtract areas from the selection, and you can zoom in for more precise work.

After finishing, tap the three vertical dots next to Save and choose Save Copy. This creates a new image that can be emailed or texted.

ADOBE EXPRESS: Adobe Express is a free program offered by Adobe. It works in a web browser or as an app on Apple, Windows, iPad, iPhone and Android devices. The only requirement is an Adobe account.

When opened, the home page includes a Remove Background option. Upload your photo and the program automatically begins removing the background.

This works best when the subject is clearly separated from the background. Editing options are somewhat limited after the cut is made, but it’s a quick and simple way to create a cutout on a phone.

PHOTOSHOP: If your organization already pays for Adobe software, downloading Adobe Photoshop on your phone gives you access to the full AI editing tools. Once Photoshop is open:

1. Tap Add from your photos
2. Select the image
3. Tap Remove Background from the toolbar

Photoshop has one of the best AI background removal tools available. In testing, it produced the cleanest results of all the options mentioned here. It can remove backgrounds even from small enclosed areas and usually completes the work in seconds.

DESKTOP PROGRAMS can also cut out photos, including GIMP, Affinity Photo, Krita, older versions of Photoshop and even layout programs like InDesign and QuarkXPress.

Most of these programs use a Bezier drawing tool or similar selection tool to trace around the image. You then invert the selection and delete the background. This has been the traditional method used for the past 20 years. While it takes more time and requires a steady hand, it offers the most precise control.

FINAL THOUGHTS: Cutting out a photo used to take a lot of time and patience. Today, thanks to AI tools built into phones and apps, it can often be done in just a few seconds.

For quick ads or social media graphics, your phone may be all you need.

OPA Computer Consultant Wilma Newby’s column is brought to you by the Oklahoma Advertising Network (OAN). For more information on the OAN program, contact Oklahoma Press Service at (405) 499-0020.



LEGAL ADVICE

is just one of the benefits of being a member of the Oklahoma Press Association’s Legal Services Plan. Remove the worry of needing professional advice by enrolling today. For more information contact:

**OKLAHOMA PRESS ASSOCIATION’S
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DEATHS

JAMES “JIM” ROAN GRAY, former Osage Nation Principal Chief, died February 12, 2026, at his Skiatook home. He was 64.

Gray was born in Pawhuska on June 11, 1961, and graduated from Northwestern University in Tahlequah.

He was the former co-owner of the Native American

Times, and a former advertising executive at the Tahlequah Daily Press.

Gray served two terms as Principal Chief of the Osage Nation.

During his tenure, the Osage Nation redesigned its government.

He also served on numerous boards throughout Indian

Country, including the Native American Rights Fund, the Council of Energy Resource Tribes and the Flower Hill Institute.

Gray is survived by his wife, Olivia “Libbi” Gray, of the home; his sons, Henry Gray of Tulsa and James Gray of Norman; his daughters, Naomi Gray of Durango, Col-

orado, Annette “Nettie” Gray of the home, Mary Hammer of Skiatook, Sarah Ramirez-Hernandez of Tulsa, and Olivia “Oli” Ramirez of Skiatook; seven granddaughters; and his sisters, Jacqueline Butler and Margo Gray.

LAWRENCE “MIKE” McCORMACK, who worked at The Duncan Banner for more than 50 years, died March 1, 2026. He was 74.

McCormack was born Nov.

12, 1951. He was a 1970 graduate of Elk City High School.

He married Sherrie Gayle Williams in 1975. Mike and Sherrie began working for The Banner as carriers that same year.

Before both accepted full-time positions at The Banner, they threw more than 1,000 editions six days a week. Mike worked in the circulation department for his entire career,

concentrating on getting the papers to subscribers.

He was also the owner of McCormack’s Vending.

McCormack is survived by his wife, Sherrie; and several nieces and nephews.

WILLIAM ROBERT “BILL” NEWELL, former Oklahoma Press Association Postal Consultant, died February 17, 2026. He was 86.

Newell was born August 10, 1939, in Great Bend, Kansas, but moved to Oklahoma at a young age.

He spent years working in quality control for the United States Postal Service’s Oklahoma district.

After retiring from the United States Postal Service in 1999, Newell became the OPA’s Postal Consultant, traveling across the state to help newspapers navigate the postal system, improve delivery efficiency and reduce mailing costs.

Newell retired in 2012 after 14 years of service with the OPA.

He was a devoted 32nd De-

gree Mason and past member of Bethany Lodge 529. He was also a member of India Lodge 551 and active in the Knights Temple.

Bill was married to LaDonna Rae Hogg from 1959 until her passing in 1991.

He later married Sue Ann Stranathan on November 29, 1997. Together, Bill and Sue shared a love for travel and adventure.

Newell is survived by his wife, Sue, of the home; sons Todd Newell of Oklahoma City, and Sean Newell of Atchison, Kansas; daughter Tammy Davis of Yukon; stepsons Curtis Moore of Yukon, and Chris Moore of Salt Lake City, Utah; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and his beloved fur baby “Cuddles.”

HAROLD LEE STREETMAN, a former Oklahoma journalist, died February 11, 2026. He was 78.

Streetman was born November 12, 1947. He attended John Marshall High School, where he got his start in journalism as sports editor of The Advocate. He graduated from

Oklahoma State University in May 1970.

Streetman served in the U.S. Army Reserve during the Vietnam War. He graduated with honors from the U.S.

Department of Defense Information School at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, where he received the Golden Quill

Award as editor of the Quill and Scroll newspaper.

His career in journalism spanned more than three decades. He began as a summer intern at the Daily Oklahoman, then worked as a reporter at the Oklahoma City Times. He spent four years as a writer and photographer in the Uni-

versity of Oklahoma’s Media Information Office before joining Oklahoma Farmers Union in October 1978, where he would remain for 26 years.

Streetman is survived by his wife Janet; son Kyle Streetman; daughter Erin Honious; and five grandchildren.

Please donate to the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation

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**

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	Dan Hogan III February 11, 2025	Barry L. Newton March 26, 2025
Marilyn Joyce Carney February 18, 2025	Elizabeth Ann Waters February 3, 2025	Anita Faye Reding March 10, 2025
Timothy Joe Farley February 11, 2025	Carl Henry Ketchum March 13, 2025	Pat Reeder March 5, 2025

Earn Your Press Pass

Free Online Training Available



Ready to sign up?

It's easy to begin the training.

Email amarshall@okpress.com or call **405-499-0035** to request an account.

Please provide the following info in your email:

- your name
- email address
- news organization name.

When you've been added to the system, you'll receive an automated email with your password and an invitation to log into the system.

Access provided only to OPA member publication staffs.

It's time to “**Earn Your Press Pass**” through **FREE** video training that covers the basics of community journalism. *(A benefit of OPA membership.)*

This on-demand program is designed to teach journalism fundamentals to new reporters with little to no experience so they learn to create valuable news coverage. Recruiting a new experienced reporter can be difficult, but if you find someone that wants to write and cover their community, then this course will teach them the journalism basics to succeed. Long-time reporters may even pick up a few tips!

COURSE TOPICS:

A variety of practical course topics are offered. Each video is around 10 minutes in length; and the full course is approximately eight hours. Some PDF materials are also available with certain courses so you can print or save them for easy reference.

Video Training covers:

- Interviewing (6 videos)
- Types of Stories (8 videos)
- Writing Techniques (6 videos)
- Editing (3 videos)
- Journalist Rights & Ethics (4 videos)
- Photography (3 videos)
- Newspaper Terms
- AP Style Common Rules

A user can log in when they want to brush up on a particular topic or when they find a free hour. The videos may be watched in any order and at your own pace.

Then when a user completes all courses, they receive a certificate of completion. There are no assignments or quizzes, so there's no need to stress. Just focus on digesting the information to be ready for future assignments.

“Earn Your Press Pass” was developed by Kansas Publishing Ventures in 2022. Owners Joey and Lindsey Young own three weekly newspapers and a few marketing businesses in southeast Kansas. Lindsey, a former journalism teacher, expertly teaches the basics in the course videos.

JANUARY 2026 WINNERS

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



Multi-Day & Online-Only
Photo Winner:
GLEN MILLER
El Reno Tribune



Weekly Photo Winner:
JEFF HARRISON
Midwest City Beacon

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.

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

Column Winner:
M. SCOTT CARTER
Southwest Ledger

Under the Dome: Oklahoma needs its public health system

Last Thursday, my son Zachary participated in Senior Night for his wrestling team.

Zach, a senior at Putnam North, has been on the team for a couple of years now. He loves wrestling and is a typical teenaged boy. He's also spent his entire life dealing with catastrophic heart defects.

Born with only three chambers in his heart, Zach had open heart surgery three times from the time he was born to the age of three. Each surgery was done at the state's publicly funded hospital, OU's Children's Health Center.

Since then, he's thrived. So, why am I telling you this?

Editorial Winner:
KIM POINDEXTER
Tahlequah Daily Press

Listen, learn, and influence rationally

For those who haven't made a New Year's resolution but would still like something to strive for, here's an idea: Pledge to take up whatever small role you can to unite the country, the state, and the community.

Being a "uniter" doesn't necessarily mean being complacent and keeping your mouth shut when controversy rears its head. Nor does it mean "going with the flow" and accepting as truth all situations with which you're not comfortable. It does mean listening, and being open to different ideas and opinions, and then offering your own thoughts in a rational, respectful way.

Whatever President Trump's most loyal supporters might think about his policies, he is not a "uniter."

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



MONTHLY CONTEST WINNERS



Moments at the OPA Legislative Summit

FEBRUARY 19, 2026 • OKLAHOMA STATE CAPITOL



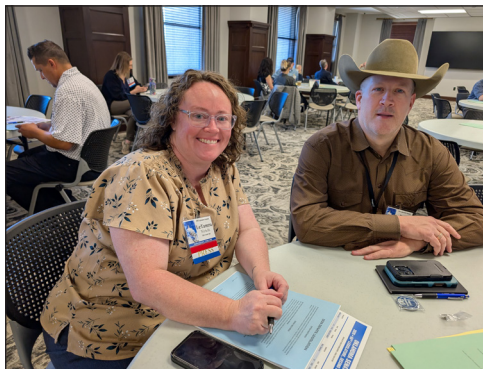
Eric Swanson, M. Scott Carter and Murray Evans from The Lawton Constitution review Legislative Summit handouts.



Phillip Reid from Reid Newspapers with Mark Codner, The Newcastle Pacer, at the Legislative Summit.



OPA's Mark Thomas talks with Jeff Harrison, Midwest City Beacon, and Ryan Horton, Choctaw Times, in the Capitol rotunda.



Tamara Nichols and Walter 'Dub' Wagnon of the Ellis County Star at the Legislative Summit.



Sara Acosta and Amanda Parks from the Woodward News at the Legislative Summit.



The Norman Transcript's Paxson Haws, Katherine Miller and Peggy Dodd review materials at the Legislative Summit.

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