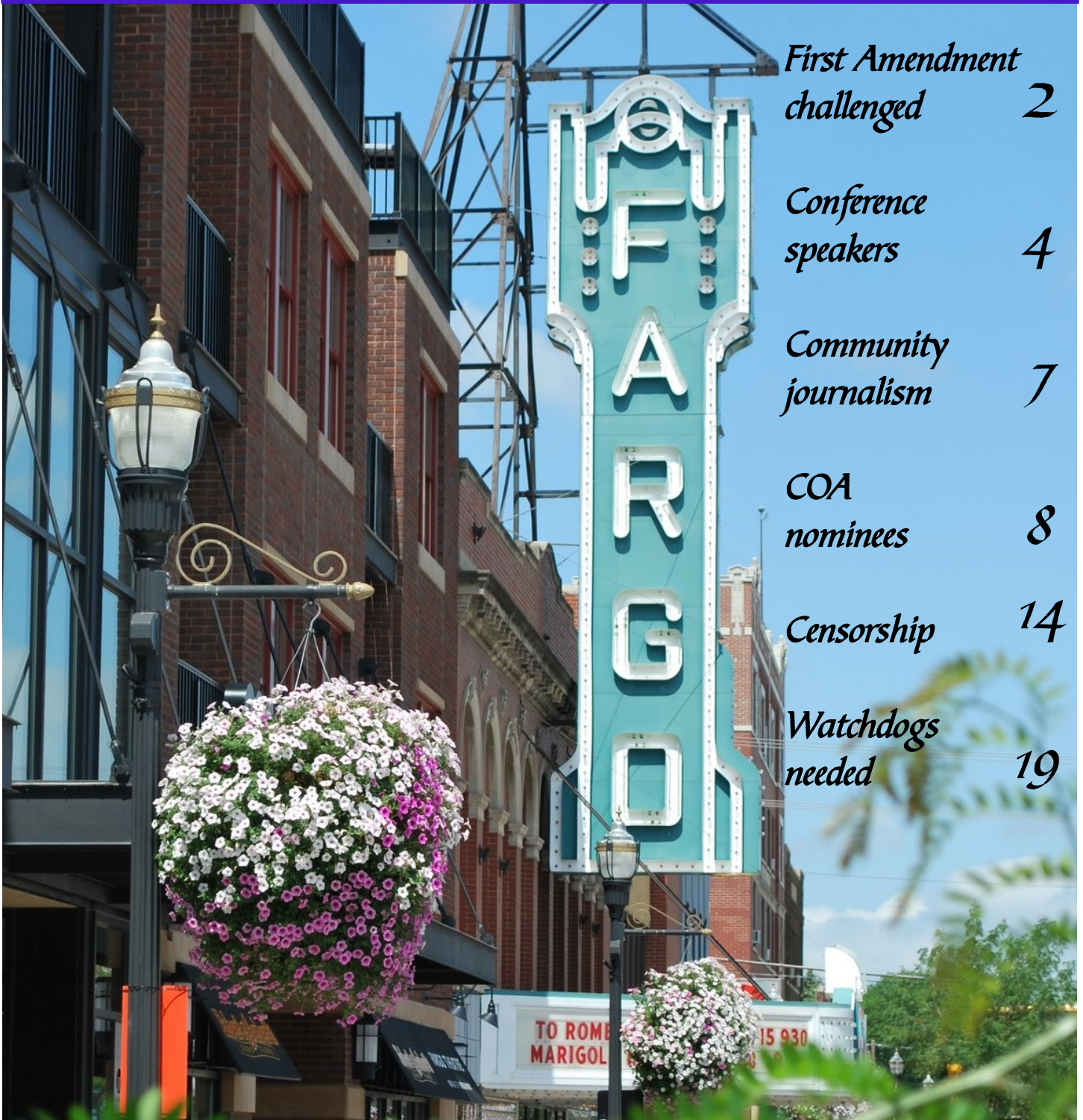


Spring 2022, Vol. 84, No.3

# Agenda



Quarterly Newsletter of the  
National Federation of Press Women



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## President's Message: First Amendment challenged

**Karen Rowley**  
NFPW President

I've been thinking a lot lately about the critical role the First Amendment has played and continues to play in our country. It's easy, I think, to take it for granted because it's been a part of the fabric of the United States for almost as long as the country has existed.

In its entirety, the First Amendment reads:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

Forty-five words—just 45 words that have helped shape this country and what we value most about it.

All of this came to mind with the news that the Russian government has enacted a law that makes it a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison to spread "false information" about the invasion of Ukraine. That could include referring to the invasion as a war—Russian officials maintain it's a "special military operation." According to a March 4 New York Times story, the law essentially criminalizes public opposition to or independent reporting about the war against Ukraine.

The story, which was written by New York Times Moscow Bureau Chief Anton Troianovski, goes on to say that "Russian officials claim that journalists writing critically about the war—or calling it a 'war' or an 'invasion'—are undermining the national interest, even referring to them as traitors."

As a result, many independent Russian news outlets have shut down, and the BBC has suspended its operations in the country. In addition, Russian authorities have

blocked access to Facebook and Instagram and to Russian language content produced by entities outside the country, such as Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Deutsche Welle.

This is what government-sponsored censorship looks like. Anyone who speaks, writes or broadcasts criticism or opposition to the government's actions faces harsh penalties. The goal, of course, is to silence citizens, the media and anyone else who would speak out.

In this country, the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment have been challenged time and again, particularly those related to freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Sometimes the press has prevailed and sometimes it hasn't.

For instance, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the media's position in such historic cases as *Near v. Minnesota*, *New York Times v. Sullivan* and *New York Times Co. v. United States*. In other cases, however, the Court has sided with the plaintiffs and against the media, as in *Branzburg v. Hayes*, *Zacchini v. Scripps-Howard Broadcasting Co.* and *Cohen v. Cowles Media Co.*

A recent survey commissioned by the nonprofit Freedom Forum and released in fall 2021 found 94 percent of the respondents believed the First Amendment was vital, 63 percent said they would keep the 45 words of the amendment as adopted in 1791, 23 percent said they would make some changes, and 15 percent said the five freedoms guaranteed by the amendment go too far.

Interestingly, the survey also found that 58 percent of the respondents viewed the news media as an essential watchdog over government, but only 14 percent said they strongly trusted today's news media, with public broadcasting being the most trusted. Not surprisingly, but de-

*(Continued on page 3)*

### On the Cover:

NFPW members attending this year's national conference in Fargo, North Dakota, will get the chance to visit the city's colorful downtown, home of the Fargo Theater.



## President's Message:

(Continued from page 2)

pressing nonetheless, only 38 percent of the respondents said they looked at news outlets with perspectives different from their own. The “news bubble” problem is real. (You can read more about the survey and its results at [www.whereamericastands.org](http://www.whereamericastands.org).)

Having had the good fortune to live in this country where we place such importance on the freedoms spelled out in the First Amendment, I find it hard to wrap my head around the fact that there are those in power who would willingly and easily quash all debate, discussion and dissension if they could. And yet, the potential is always there—especially if we stop paying attention.

Thomas Jefferson had it right: The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

Except ... Jefferson never actually said that. A little

research found numerous references that debunk this widely held belief. Rather, the quote apparently is a shortened version of the much longer original attributed to John Philpot Curran—an 18th-century Irish politician, lawyer and judge who was also known as a skilled orator and wit.

In a 1790 speech titled “Election of Lord Mayor of Dublin,” he said:

*“It is the common fate of the indolent to see their rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt.”*

Whether you prefer the pithier later variation or the more ponderous original, the warning is still clear.

## Agenda continues call for news literacy articles

**By Jane Newton Falany**  
**Alabama Media Professionals**  
**NFPW Publications Assistant**

Late last year, the Agenda editorial staff asked NFPW members to submit articles about news literacy efforts in their states.

In this issue of Agenda, you can read the second article in this series, written by Erin Coggins of Alabama (please see page 11).

NFPW President Karen Rowley focused one of her recent E-Letter columns on news literacy, a movement “aimed at reinforcing the critical role news literacy plays in a democracy and providing audiences with the tools they need to become more news-literate.”

She talked about the goals of News Literacy Week “to inspire news consumers, educators and students to practice news literacy and to strengthen trust in news media by reinforcing the role of credible journalism.”

The Agenda editorial staff intends to feature articles about this important topic throughout the year. If you

would like to write an Agenda article about news literacy, consider the following:

- What is your affiliate doing to help advance news literacy?
- What are educators in your state teaching students about news literacy?
- What laws have your state government enacted that require news literacy to be taught in the classroom?

A non-partisan effort, the U.S. Media Policy Report 2020 concludes that 14 states have enacted laws about media literacy education. Colorado is one of those states. NFPW member Marilyn Saltzman introduced the topic in the last issue of Agenda.

Please send your contribution to Agenda Editor Cathy Koon at [cathykoon1952@gmail.com](mailto:cathykoon1952@gmail.com). Please enclose photos and artwork when possible. Articles must include a byline that contains the author’s home state or affiliate. Photos must have cutlines. Word counts are flexible and up to the editor’s discretion; rule of thumb, 400 words plus a headline and mugshot fill a page of the newsletter.



# NFPW to celebrate 85th birthday in North Dakota with look ahead to new communications world



North Dakota Professional Communicators (NDPC) is hard at work coordinating the 85<sup>th</sup> annual National Federation of Press Women Conference scheduled for June 23-25 in Fargo, North Dakota.

This year's conference theme is "Be Bold. Be Brave. Be Legendary. Discover the Possibilities of the New Communications World."

And it marks the 85th anniversary of NFPW.

In addition to awards and Communicator of Achievement banquets, the conference offers opportunities to try North Dakota foods and explore the Peace Garden State. The schedule includes three panel discussions focused on turning passionate pursuits into professions, the complex relationship between the media and diverse communities, as well as podcasting tips and tricks.

Back by popular demand, Author Alley will allow NFPW members to share their books with attendees. To sell your literature at the conference, contact conference Co-chair Sadie Rudolph to request a table on Author Alley.

## Keynote Speaker: Nicole Phillips

**Nicole Phillips** is a newspaper columnist, podcaster and sought-after speaker. She will share "Kindness is



**Nicole Phillips**

Contagious in the Workplace" in her keynote address at Friday morning's opening session.

A breast cancer survivor, Phillips spreads the message of the healing power of kindness as host of [The Kindness Podcast](#), and through her weekly column, "Kindness is Contagious," which runs in newspapers in

North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

She is a regular guest on Hallmark Channel's Home & Family Show and the author of three books, "Kindness is Contagious: 100 Stories to Remind You God is Good and So are Most People," "Kindness is Courageous: 100 Stories to Remind You People Are Brave + Kind" and her "how-to" guide, "The Negativity Remedy."

Phillips has her broadcast journalism degree from the University of Wisconsin and worked as a television anchor and reporter in Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin, and Fargo. As Miss Wisconsin 1997, she toured the state, talking to kids and adults about overcoming crisis.

Phillips is expected to explain the research-based chain reaction within our bodies when we lead with kindness. She will also explore an interactive and practical set of micro-actions anyone can do to foster kinder communication and bring out the best in employees. Her kindness tips can have an immediate impact on an entire organization's culture.

Phillips will share ways to say "no" to the negative and "yes" to kindness intended to leave you feeling uplifted, refreshed and equipped to better enjoy life personally and professionally.

## Featured Speakers

In his presentation, "Leaving the Newsroom for the Newsletter," journalist and author **Christopher Ingraham**



**Chris Ingraham**

will share the lessons he learned after leaving an established newsroom to start an independent newsletter. He publishes The Why Axis, a Substack newsletter covering all things data.

Ingraham previously worked as a reporter for the Washington Post and at the Brookings Institution and Pew Research Center. He wrote the book "If You Lived Here You'd Be Home By Now: Why We Traded the Commuting Life for a Little House on the Prairie,"

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Conference . . .

(Continued from page 4)

about his family's move from the Baltimore/D.C. metro area to Red Lake County, Minnesota.

## What will attendees learn?

- ◆ How 2022 email newsletters are a lot like 2012 blogs.
- ◆ What readers want to know about the people who bring them the news.
- ◆ The best and worst things about trading an editor for an audience.

**Michelle Olson** will present "Communicating Inclusivity with Intent." She currently serves on the Public Relations



**Michelle Olson**

Society of America's (PRSA) board as the immediate past chair and is the CEO of Lambert, a full-service communications firm with offices in Michigan, New York and Arizona.

Olson has served clients across the U.S. and internationally and has significant experience in corporate communications and issues management across industries including health care, land use, hospitality and sustainability.

She routinely integrates content marketing, social media, brand journalism and other online initiatives into public relations strategies, reaching audiences efficiently and quickly to effect change.

She routinely integrates content marketing, social media, brand journalism and other online initiatives into public relations strategies, reaching audiences efficiently and quickly to effect change.

## What will attendees learn?

- ◆ How to support a healthy information environment and collectively fight disinformation.
- ◆ Tips for combating prejudice in promoting diverse perspectives in storytelling.
- ◆ Suggestions for understanding the media's role in advancing a free, civil and democratic society.

**Andrea Mokros** has spent a career in communications and event production at local, state and national



**Andrea Mokros**

levels. She will present "Building the Bold North."

Mokros, who served as vice president of communications for the 2018 Minnesota Super Bowl Host Committee, will share how her team used the world stage to turn Minnesota's biggest liability — the cold — into its bold-



est asset and leveraged the opportunity to tell a new story about the North.

Mokros also served in the White House as special assistant to President Barack Obama and director of strategic planning for First Lady Michelle Obama. Prior to joining the White House staff, she served as deputy chief of staff in the office of Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton; deputy chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and director of the executive offices at the Washington, D.C., offices of Kissinger McLarty Associates.

Currently, Mokros is executive vice president and chief public affairs officer at Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis.

## What will attendees learn?

- ◆ Changing the narrative from a negative to a positive.
- ◆ How branding can turn communications tactics into a cohesive story that is easy for the media to tell.
- ◆ Leveraging opportunities to tell a story.

Author, podcaster and consultant **Patrick Kirby** will present "Treating Your Customers the Way Nonprofits Treat Their Donors."



**Patrick Kirby**

Using nearly 20 years of experience in nonprofit fundraising work, Kirby will share some of the best practices that nonprofits use to make transactional gifts and turn them into transformative relationships.

Attendees can use the information to develop the best ever customer relations.

## What will attendees learn?

- ◆ A weekly framework to build better and more purposeful customer relationships.
- ◆ Examples of how to use social media to enhance your customer experience.
- ◆ Tangible and achievable daily tasks to combat "we don't have time to do this."

**2022 Conference Co-Directors:**  
Sadie Rudolph, North Dakota  
Tammy Fogle, North Dakota



The Durning Hills Amphitheater at Medora in the Dakota Badlands will be one of the stops during the post-conference tour.

## Registration and travel info

**Registration** for the conference can be made online on the [NFPW website](#).

**First-timer grants** are available for NFPW members who have never attended the national conference. The application can be filled out [online](#). The deadline to apply is Friday, April 22.

**Hotel reservations** at the Radisson Blu Fargo hotel can be made by calling 701-232-7363 or [online](#). The conference room rate is \$134 plus tax per night for single or double occupancy. Be sure to request the NFPW group rate.

Fargo's Hector International **Airport** (FAR) is served by Allegiant, American, Delta, Frontier and United Airlines. The Radisson Blu offers **free shuttle** service from the airport. Several **car rental** companies operate out of the airport and I-29 and I-94 intersect within Fargo. Lyft, Uber and several taxi companies also serve the area.

The North Dakota Professional Communicators invite you "North of Normal" to Discover the Possibilities of a New Communications World at the 2022 NFPW Conference!

## June is beautiful in North Dakota!

Blue skies and mild temperatures can be expected in Fargo in June. With an average monthly high of 78 degrees and low of 56 degrees with 65 percent humidity, conference attendees are likely to see most North Dakotans wearing short sleeves in June. A cardigan or light jacket is a good addition to your packing list as the evenings can be cool, and air conditioning is commonly used during the summer months.

Those who experience altitude sickness needn't worry about visiting Fargo, as North Dakota's largest city is just 902 feet above sea level. Those who take the post-conference tour will visit the quaint western town of Medora, located in the Badlands, which are full of rocky outcroppings and canyons. The popular tourist destination is 2,267 feet above sea level, making it the literal and figurative high point of the post-conference tour. Recommended conference packing list

- Light layers
- Jacket
- Comfortable shoes for exploring downtown Fargo and the post-conference tour
- Sunglasses and sunscreen for tours
- Day pack for post-conference tour
- Camera



# Community journalism needed to keep public officials 'honest'

By Teri Ehresman  
Media Network Idaho

When I decided to "retire" to what I thought was a peaceful nearby Idaho community, little did I know I would soon return to my roots in community journalism.

Cathy Koon and I spent many years working together on a daily newspaper in eastern Idaho, covering too many city, county and school district meetings to count. We helped keep elected officials accountable for their actions and had a business card with words to use to make sure executive sessions were called for legitimate reasons.

Collecting and reporting building permits, marriage licenses, divorces and other news of record was part of the job.

With the downsizing and elimination of many community newspapers, I am seeing firsthand the issues developing when the news media and public are not closely watching what goes on in meetings when no one is there to see.

Others in my community were also frustrated with the lack of transparency with county government, so we met as a few interested residents just over a year ago to discuss common issues and try to be part of the solution. We started with about 15 frustrated residents and today we have nearly 500 residents involved.

I found that even asking for a list of building permits (something the county freely provided when I was the regional editor for the Post Register) now requires a public records request. So, I have mastered the art of public records requests. In fact,



I'm known as the "queen of public records requests" to some. I take that as a compliment. The county recently put a new layer of information on its public website concerning information about the county, and one of the commissioners asked, "Will this help answer some of the public records requests the county has been receiving." We are making a difference.

Unfortunately, I also discovered some county meetings were not meeting Idaho Public Meeting requirements for notification and posting of the agendas.

Using my reporter skills, I reached out to the Idaho Attorney General's office and learned of an upcoming Open Meeting and Public Records Request online workshop for elected officials and the public. I participated in the session, which refreshed my memory regarding Idaho regulations.

The following day I sent an email to our Fremont County prosecuting attorney sharing what I learned from the Attorney General's office with a handy link to the Idaho code requirements and asking her to remind Fremont County officials of this meeting requirement. I cited a couple of examples from the previous

month where the Idaho code was not followed in our county meetings. She listened and a meeting scheduled the next week that had not been properly advertised was suddenly postponed to properly follow Idaho public notice requirements.

Our weekly newspaper has been extremely supportive of our group efforts. So much so, that I am now writing a weekly column in the newspaper about some of the issues we are finding, some of the solutions we propose to these issues and some of the people involved in making our community better. I realized the community column was needed when the local chamber of commerce executive director sent me an email to let me know our efforts are much appreciated and "you are making a difference."

A background as a reporter not afraid to ask tough questions, demand answers and knowing about the public's right-to-know regulations can be of value even when you plan to step back and enjoy not working as a reporter. Others in our group bring other life skills as lawyers, planning and building administrators, graphic artists, college professors and property managers. By working together, we have formed great new friendships and are helping to build a strong community.

Yes, community newspapers are missed. Without these newspapers, we still have the responsibility to hold our elected leaders, at all levels, accountable to the people who elect them.

Together we all can continue to "make a difference."

# Communicator of Achievement will be honored at conference

## Meet the nominees here

Six communications professionals, named their state affiliates' Communicators of Achievement in 2022, will be honored at the Friday, June 24, evening banquet of the NFPW conference in Fargo, North Dakota.

They are chosen from nominations submitted by their affiliates. The Communicator of Achievement award is the highest honor bestowed on NFPW members.

Here are short bios of this year's nominees:



### **Solomon Crenshaw Jr.**

#### *Alabama Media Professionals*

Solomon Crenshaw Jr. has been a dedicated journalism professional for more than 40 years. He has covered city governments, community and high school sports, and the events that shaped his city of Birmingham, Alabama.

After decades at The Birmingham News and its successor Alabama Media Group, when the company began to shed employees, Solomon chose to continue as a working journalist. He opened SCJr Content Providers and, as a freelancer, has written award-winning stories for The Birmingham Times, BirminghamWatch and Alabama News Center (a service of Alabama Power Company). He also is a photographer and videographer. In the past two years, he won five NFPW awards and six AMP awards. He is active in the Alabama and National Association of Black Journalists.

He serves Broad Street Missionary Baptist Church and the Mount Pilgrim Baptist District Association and on the board of Pathways, a nonprofit serving homeless women and their children.



### **Gwendolynne Larson**

#### *Kansas Professional Communicators*

Gwendolynne Larson has been working in journalism and communication for 36 years. She spent 17 years at The Emporia Gazette as a reporter and editor. She covered cops and courts, health and county government. For a number of years, she shared her husband and three sons with readers in her weekly column, "Full House."

In 2011, she moved to Emporia State University's marketing and media relations department. As director of media relations, she now leads media relations, executive communication and emergency management messaging for ESU.

A member of NFPW since 2004, Gwen has served both appointed and executive board positions for Kansas Professional Communicators. She joined NFPW's appointed board in 2011 before being elected to the board in 2016. She has served NFPW as secretary, vice president and president. She currently is chair of the NFPW Education Fund.

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**National Federation of Press Women**



## Meet the nominees here . . .



**LuAnn Schindler**

*Nebraska Press Women*

LuAnn Schindler took a leap of faith in 2019 and started a weekly print and online newspaper in a town already covered by a nearby weekly. She envisioned helping five small towns with a total population of 1,536 by reporting on village and county boards as well as the people, their activities and concerns.

One such concern was a \$34 million bond issue to merge three school districts and build a new school “in the cornfields,” equidistant from each of the current schools – an idea that had been around for 60 years. LuAnn provided accurate, comprehensive information. The bond issue passed, and her reporting is credited.

COVID 19 forced creative thinking about how to supplement the newspaper’s lost revenue. The solution benefitted the whole area, as did LuAnn’s founding of a historical society and spearheading fundraising to turn a landmark building into a museum. LuAnn and her Summerland Advocate-Messenger have made a big impact on a chunk of northeast Nebraska.



**Margaret Cheasebro**

*New Mexico Press Women*

Margaret Cheasebro, a retired educator and journalist, works part time as an author and alternative health care provider. She has been involved with New Mexico Press Women since 1979, when she began entering NMPW communications contests. Since then, she has won many state and national awards. She was the NMPW historian for a few years and now serves as the high school communications contest coordinator.

Over the years, thousands of Margaret’s newspaper and magazine articles have been published, as well as a few puzzles, plays and short stories. In addition to awards won in NMPW and NFPW contests, she has won writing and editing awards in the New Mexico Press Association competition. She has seven published books.

For several years, Margaret was the volunteer photographer and editor of yearbooks for Camp Quality, a week-long camp for kids with cancer.



**Jo Ann Mathews**

*North Carolina Press Club*

Jo Ann Mathews, president of North Carolina Press Club, taught English and Spanish in high school before turning to freelance writing. She has had more than 1,500 articles published, primarily feature stories on topics from autism to zoology, and three e-books based on her blog, “Women and Adversity.”

She grew up in Joliet, Illinois, and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from College of St. Francis, now University of St. Francis, with a major in English and minors in Spanish and education. She then earned a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from the University of Notre Dame.

She and her husband, Steve, relocated in 2000 to Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina, where she continues to freelance. Jo Ann was an active award winner in the Illinois affiliate of NFPW, and she continued her membership and award-winning in North Carolina.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Meet the nominees here . . .



**Sarah Mudder**

*North Dakota Professional Communicators*

Sarah Mudder is communications and events coordinator at North Dakota Housing Finance Agency, where she works to bring awareness to the state's most pressing housing issues. Her media work for the state's Housing Incentive Fund garnered \$65 million in taxpayer contributions to support development of 2,500 affordable housing units. She is currently transitioning the agency away from a traditional conference format to targeted audience events striving for improved relationships with stakeholders.

As a member of North Dakota Professional Communicators' board, Mudder pushed for and is leading a movement for a united statewide organization, adoption of a consistent dues structure, and updated and consistent branding of the organization.

At the onset of the pandemic, Mudder recommended NDPC invest in a Zoom account that is now used by the districts to host rotating monthly meetings, allowing the members to learn from and make connections outside their immediate geographic area.

## Honor your Communicator of Achievement Nominee

with an ad in the 2022 NFPW Conference program  
of the 85<sup>th</sup> annual conference in Fargo, North Dakota.

Share a special message, Market a business, or Advertise a publication  
to NFPW members from across the country.

Quarter page: \$75	Dimensions: 3.2" X 3.2"
Half page: \$100	Dimensions: 6.5"w X 3.2"h
Full page: \$150	Dimensions: 7" X 7"

**Deadline to submit print-ready ads is May 15, 2022. Submit your print-ready ad  
to [Heather.Syverson@ae2s.com](mailto:Heather.Syverson@ae2s.com).**

**Payment should be sent to:**

North Dakota Professional Communicators  
Attn: Ellen Crawford, 2001 Park Blvd., Fargo, ND 58103

## What is News Literacy?

*Editor's Note: This column is part of a continuing series on news/media literacy planned for Agenda.*

The ability to determine the credibility of news and other content, to identify different types of information and to use the standards of authoritative, fact-based journalism to determine what to trust, share and act on. Being news literate also means recognizing the critical role of the First Amendment and a free press in a democracy and interacting with news and other information in ways that promote engaged participation in civic life.

# Alabama journalism adviser teaches media literacy

**By Erin Coggins**  
**Alabama Media Professionals**

In the age of the 24-hour news cycle, we are constantly bombarded with information. Yet, it remains surprisingly difficult to know if we are actually being informed. For journalism professionals this is frustrating enough, but imagine being a high school student. The difficulty triples.

In my 20 years as a scholastic journalism adviser, I have seen the need more than ever to incorporate media literacy skills into the curriculum. Students obtain their news from social media. They often bring up issues to cover that they read about on social media sites. My first question is always: What site? Followed by the question: Has it been verified by another source? Most of the time, the answers are no, and no.

These very responses led me to first ensure that my students read and understand the journalism code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. Instead of taking a news story or social media posting as fact, the code of ethics allows them to evaluate the ethical implications of a story. They are now equipped to evaluate more closely and from a journalistic point of view.

Besides giving students the knowledge of journalism ethics and roles, I arm them with four words:

Access, analyze, evaluate and create. They learn to locate, identify and comprehend the information; analyze and understand the components that make up a media message; evaluate the truth, accuracy and relevance of media messages; and create and utilize the appropriate skills to ensure the information put out is factual.

Recently, the newsmagazine staff came into class begging to do a story on the reason condiments were taken from the cafeteria. The talk amongst the students ranged from money issues to the administration punishing the student body just to do so. Where had they gotten their news tip? A Snapchat. This gave me the perfect moment to utilize the access, analyze, evaluate and create method.

I had students seek out official sources to find the truth. It turns out after talking with the head of the cafeteria, they were enlightened that the condiments were put behind the counter and now required a request. Why? Students were stomping on them, making a mess and then flushing them down the toilet, creating even more havoc. The story now, based on facts and vetted sources, took on a whole new meaning. Lesson learned, as they say.

In creating these media literacy lessons, I came across a book that has become extremely valuable to me as a journalism adviser and a journalist. The book "BLUR: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload," written by journalists Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenthal, details all the ins and outs of understanding what they call the "new journalism." If journalism is changing with the instantaneous and constant news cycle, then journalists have to change as well. The book provides thoughtful ideas on how, but I will not spoil it for you. Instead, I'll just assign it for homework.

*Editor's Note: Erin Coggins is a freelance and PR consultant in Huntsville and the journalism adviser for the yearbook and newsmagazine at Sparkman High School. She is a 1997 graduate of the University of Alabama.*

The News Literacy Project's [website](#) offers a wealth of information and resources for individual members of the public, the media and educators. Among those resources are a free newsletter, a mobile app and a podcast—all designed to help news consumers learn to be savvier in discerning what is factual and what is suspect. Education is the most effective approach to combat the spread of misinformation.

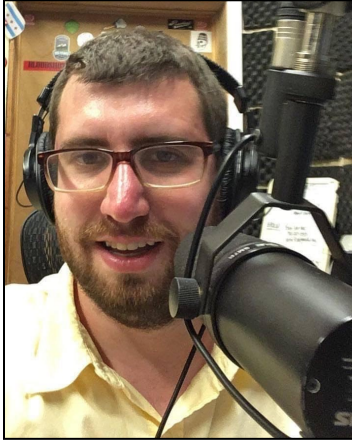


# Have I come full circle?

**By Josh Friedberg**

**Illinois Woman's Press Association**

It's been a wild ride from being bullied for my writing in high school to chairing a high school communica-



**Josh Friedberg**

tions contest as a professional communicator.

In high school, I remember feeling helpless. I was nonetheless very lucky.

I didn't have to go to the local public school because I got a four-year, full tuition merit scholarship from a private school. So, while it could've been a lot worse, it was still awful.

Realizing I was autistic, gay and struggling with mental illness was a recipe for disaster long before the rise of smart phones and cyberbullying. I couldn't do anything about being different, making Jimi Hendrix "uncool" or high levels of anxiety about everything.

I was a yearbook editor, academia trivia team captain, member of clubs for math and French, and I completed a three-week project studying music with Greg Kot, then the rock critic for the Chicago Tribune. But there was a disconnect between how hard I tried and how little I succeeded at socializing.

One person I didn't get along with then put it, "You were misunderstood. People didn't know what to do with you. You didn't fit in any box." I was also a difficult teenager full of self-absorption, but sometimes I still struggle with the feeling that something could have been done about bullying at that school. Regardless, I can't change the past, but I'm realizing acceptance to a greater degree every day.

Back then, I remember students saying I was "retarded" — all the time — and regardless of whether or not I could have known better than to internalize it, it

hurt. I heard that word hurled at me more than I ever got "faggot," and I got "faggot" a lot. What I went through severely hurt people close to me, too.

That can feel hard to live with, but some of the most healing work I've done is with some of the people I clashed with in high school. I'll never forget receiving a message on social media, shortly before I finished my last semester on campus at college, terrified of going home and reliving 18 years of awful memories. The message was an amends letter from someone from high school who was in recovery for drugs and alcohol, and when I read it, I cried.

Fast forward a few years, after a slump of aimlessness, I found graduate school and got a mountain of subsequent publications—and awards, like the ones I longed for in high school as a substitute for social validation. Many of these awards came from an organization I found out about through my department called the Illinois Woman's Press Association, open to professional communicators of all genders, and in the last year I was elected to their board as their high school contest chair for 2022 and 2023.

The IWPA's annual high school communications contest gives high school communicators the chance to enter their best work in 23 categories—from yearbook, news and sports writing to visual media—and get feedback from experts in the field. Last year, I judged multiple categories in the contest at the state and national levels and worked hard to give substantive feedback for every submission.

The process has built my confidence, as my decisiveness has markedly improved since I was younger, like when I changed my major in college multiple times.

Although taking on such a responsibility as chairing the contest made me nervous at first, it has worked out great. I have worked hard to get the word out and find expert judges for different categories.

*(Continued on page 13)*

# Full circle . . .

*(Continued from page 12)*

This endeavor has been a really powerful learning experience of networking in the communications field. I don't consider myself a journalist, though other people have called me one, but I do consider myself a strong writer, which is a massive improvement from where I was in high school.

Back then, I remember students calling me too "retarded" to be in Advanced Placement English classes, and though my English teachers knew better than to take that idea seriously, I internalized a lot of garbage about my worth as a writer.

One of the most useful texts I've read about writing, Matthew Salesses's "Craft in the Real World," discusses writing craft as a cultural construction. I realized how that applied to my own writing as disabled and queer means, among other things, that I don't value the idea of "show, don't tell," often called a hallmark of all good writing.

And yet, I value the feedback I've gotten entering different categories in the IWPA's contest since 2017. I've learned that communicators are not the best judges of their work—in fact, we don't get to decide what our best work is.

That said, I anticipate doing well in the professional contest this year — we'll see if it's my best year yet, as I won first place in four categories last year: video for web/special interest for my TEDx talk, personal essays for one about my relationship with my grandmother, online features for an article on race and gender in country music, and headlines for an assortment of essay titles.

These entries went on to the National Federation of Press Women's contest and three of them won: third for video for web, third for headlines, and honorable mention for online features. This was a major honor for me, as a sometimes-insecure writer who has struggled with major imposter syndrome around a lot of success he's had.

It feels weird to call myself a professional communicator, but I am one. In the past couple weeks, as contest

chair, I've assigned judges, had to inquire about multiple questionable entries and transactions, and coordinated different aspects of the contest. It's like a whole new world.

I grew up thinking I wasn't creative. But I had a number of teachers who encouraged my writing, and one wrote in a report card for my seventh grade English coursework, "Joshua has a great deal of writing talent. I look forward to reading his published works of art in the not too distant future!!!"

I found that report card in 2017, two years after that teacher died, and I cried. She saw things in me that a lot of

**The students in the contest I'm chairing, are doing amazing work. They're writing about topics I never could have and with remarkable clarity, insight and courage..."**

people, including myself, did not. Her words hit me differently after I got multiple publications, including one that would land my first award from the IWPA, a first place for online features. It was a controversial piece about race and 1960s rock, but I was proud of it and of the feedback I got from an expert in the field.

I knew when I got that feedback that I was on my way as a professional writer. Such feedback over the years has

meant a lot to me, but even more meaningful, has been the healing work I've done with people from high school.

In September, I had lunch with someone I didn't get along with in high school. It was powerful to hear what she and some of her friends had been through then, and it made me more empathetic for the students at that school and for an administrator, who, in my family's view, had been awful to us..

It's moments like that that mean more to me than any award, but I won't lie, I've come a long way, and I'm proud of the awards I'm getting for my writing. The students in the contest I'm chairing, are doing amazing work. They're writing about topics I never could have and with remarkable clarity, insight and courage, and I look forward to seeing them rewarded.

So, here's to growth all around the communications field and in me. Especially in this pandemic and in the age of fake news, the communications field matters perhaps more than ever before. I matter, too.

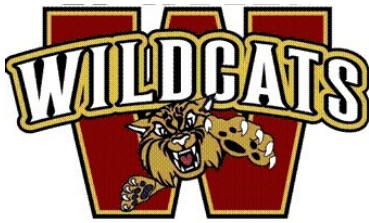
# Texas administrators nix school editorial; 'Solidarity over silence' published here

*(Editor's Notes: "Solidarity Over Silence" was written by a Cypress-Fairbanks High School student in Houston, but school administrators would not allow it to be published. The newspaper adviser has given permission for it to be published here.)*

**By Eshal Warsi**  
**Cypress Woods High School**  
**Cypress, Texas**

"Are we allowed to say that?"

For a nation that claims to embody the fiercest pride for free speech, this question echoes off the walls in high school journalism classrooms across the country, and every time it is uttered, the First Amendment falters.



As social and political divisiveness increases in America, student newspapers have become a constant target. Contentious stories covering topics like mental health, the pandemic and LGBTQ+ communities are repeatedly rejected for printing in school journalism publications.

But even if student journalists are drowning in an endless sea of censorship, why should you, the student body, care?

Because silencing us silences you.

School newspapers are the most local form of journalism. They highlight student achievements, grieve community losses, and bolster student concerns by giving them a platform. No other print publication will have the time and space to cover a local high school's football season, write a tribute to a former teacher or give voice to concerns over the lunch menu and dress code. Who would capture pictures at every sports event, dance and graduation if not for the dedicated yearbook staff?

Students across the nation should stand with their peers against the censorship that discourages intellectual conversations.

Exposure to new opinions sparks necessary conversations between Wildcats and allows them to form their own beliefs. This facilitates dialogue and helps challenge

implicit biases and prejudices within the community and furthers the primary objective of an education: critical thinking.

Censorship violates the basic First Amendment rights of student journalists. Ever since *Hazelwood v Kuhlmeier*, a Supreme Court case that allowed the school to censor articles addressing teen pregnancy and divorce, student publications have faced extreme scrutiny.

According to the Student Press Law Center, an organization that represents victims of censorship in court, the overly restrictive *Hazelwood v Kuhlmeier* decision forces officials "to demonstrate some reasonable educational justification before they can censor anything."

Closer to home, the CFISD 2021-2022 student handbook states in its school publications section that any "material that is controversial or unpopular but not reasonably likely to result in substantial disruption of normal school operations may not be prohibited on that ground alone."

Our case rests on two words: substantial disruption.

Georgetown University compiled a database known as the Free Speech Project, tracking instances of student censorship across the nation, including those in Texas. They have concluded that much of the censorship in school publications is not because administrators find the content to be malicious, but rather want to please the community and not cause any sort of disturbance.

The censorship within public schools is a pre-emptive measure to avoid a barrage of complaints from guardians and others in the community who do not agree with the viewpoints expressed in spreads. From an administrative point of view, it is understandably time-consuming and likely frustrating to respond and resolve outrage over a school newspaper's articles; however, even at Cy Woods, the editorial policy for the journalism program explicitly states:

"The opinion of the staff does not represent or reflect the opinions of the faculty of this school or district."

*(Continued on page 15)*



# School editorial . . .

*(Continued from page 14)*

Although censorship may seem tempting, the consequences are far more devastating.

The public education system should be a microcosm of the real world. If high school is to prepare students for college and the workforce, then schools should expose them to a wide range of opinions.

How can we expect a diverse and informed electorate if we continuously shield that generation from reality? We cannot raise independent thinkers by silencing unconventional voices.

Journalism is supposed to inform and report the facts. If reality makes readers uncomfortable, that is not the journalist's fault. A newspaper's inability to address controversial topics prevents it from becoming an important part of the larger school community. The more relevant the coverage, the more crucial the newspaper will become to the student populace.

Critics argue that high school journalism publications should only cover the most positive aspects of the high

school experience. While it is important to celebrate and record success and progress, the department's real job is to serve as the first and most intimate copy of history. It should be a time capsule that reminds people of the different accomplishments and struggles of our student body, not as a public relations tool.

Journalists have a duty to share the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

High school journalism is integral to a healthy community, and it doesn't have to be difficult to protect. Students can follow social media accounts like New Voices of Texas, an organization looking to improve student free speech rights on a legislative level, or keep up with other groups and movements that advocate for student journalists on a social, political and legal level.

Above all, the most important thing administrators and students can do to support their local newspaper is simple:

Read it.

## NFPW Code of Ethics

As a professional communicator, I recognize my responsibility to the public which has placed its trust and confidence in my work, and will endeavor to do nothing to abuse this obligation.

With truth as my ultimate goal, I will adhere to the highest standards of professional communication, never consciously misleading reader, viewer or listener; and will avoid any compromise of my objectivity or fairness.

Because I believe that professional communicators must be obligated only to the people's right to know, I affirm that freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of the citizens of a free society.

I pledge to use this freedom wisely and to uphold the right of communicators to express unpopular opinions as well as the right to agree with the majority.

— *Adopted in 1975 at the NFPW Conference  
in Sun Valley, Idaho*

## Affiliate and Member News . . .

### Virginia Professional Communicators

VPC is planning to host a spring in-person luncheon event at the end of April to celebrate contest winners and network.

Check out the latest member profiles of new VPC members Melissa Face and Devin Reese, written by Terry Haycock, first vice president for membership.

### At-Large Member

At-large member Dorothy Rosby was the global winner in the 2022 Erma Bombeck Writing Competition in the humor category.

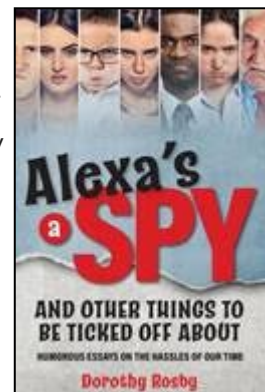


Dorothy Rosby

Rosby won for her essay, "My New British Boyfriend." One of the judges commented, "I loved the voice here, so much like Erma. The little bits of self-deprecating humor ... go a long way toward making her more accessible, more of a 'buddy' to the reader, and that's what makes such a strong connection between reader and writer."

Rosby is an author and self-syndicated humor columnist whose work appears in publications in the West

and Midwest. In 2021, she received the first-place award in the Nonfiction Book for Adult Readers, Humor category for her book "Alexa's a Spy and Other Things to Be Ticked off About, Humorous Essays on the Hassles of Our Time." And she was first-place winner in the humor column category in both 2020 and 2015 in the Bombeck competition.



The award is a joint venture of the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop and the Washington-Centerville Public Library in Centerville, Ohio. Along with the global humor competition there was a global human interest competition and competitions in both humor and human interest in the library's local area.

The four winning writers will receive free registration to the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop in Dayton, Ohio, \$1,000 and publication of their essays online and in the workshop's program. The winners topped the field of 486 entries received from six countries, 48 states and the District of Columbia. Winning entries can be read on the Washington-Centerville Public Library [website](#).

## We Remember . . . compiled by Amy Geiszler-Jones, NFPW historian

### Kansas Professional Communicators

Carol E. Oukrop, 87, a longtime faculty member at Kansas State University and the first director of the A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications, died Feb. 5 at her home in Manhattan, Kansas.



She had earned journalism and communications degrees from the University of North

Dakota and the University of Iowa and had worked in newspapers and in public relations in North Dakota and Iowa.

She taught at Dickinson State College in North Dakota and the University of Iowa before spending 33 years at K-State.

She did pioneering work on the status of women in journalism and mass communication education. Oukrop was honored by Kansas Professional Communicators in 1991 as its Communicator of Achievement.

Send submissions for Agenda to:

Editor Cathy Koon at

[cathykoon1952@gmail.com](mailto:cathykoon1952@gmail.com)

**June 10, 2022**, is the deadline for the next issue of Agenda due out **July 2022**

# A primer for common North Dakota phrases, Or how to sound like a Fargo native in no time

If everything you know about Fargo is based on the 1996 movie or the FX TV series of the same name, you may be pleasantly surprised to learn it isn't a snow-covered tundra year-round. Not only is North Dakota warm in the summertime, it also has the second lowest crime rate per capita in the U.S.



accident in the newspaper?" "Uff da, it sounds like it was really bad."

⇒ **Ope:** A polite exclamation that is often used to alert someone that they are in the way OR in place of the word oops. "Ope - I'm just gonna sneak by you here." "Ope! I spilled my pop."

⇒ **Hotdish:** A casserole that typical-

ly includes a meat, a starch, and assorted vegetables. "What are you having for supper tonight?" "I think I'll make a tater tot hotdish."

⇒ **Ish:** A slightly nicer way of saying something is gross. "Ish, I think this milk has gone bad."

⇒ **Bison:** Another word for buffalo and the mascot of North Dakota State University, located in Fargo. People from the Red River Valley pronounce the S in bison with a Z sound. The NDSU football team's record-breaking number of national championships and associated media coverage has underscored the difference between how North Dakotans say Bison and how the rest of the country says it. The pronunciation is so specific to this area of the country, NDSU students have studied the phenomenon.



## Conference Schedule

Wednesday, June 22

Pre-Conference Tour: Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo area

Thursday, June 23

- 1 - 4 p.m. NFPW Membership Meeting  
Milestones and Memorials
- 5 p.m. Welcome Reception at Radisson Blu
- 6 p.m. Dine-arounds downtown Fargo (attendee pays on own)

Friday, June 24

- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Breakfast buffet, Radisson Blu
- 8:30 - 9 a.m. Welcome remarks and announcements
- 9 - 10 a.m. Keynote Speaker: Nicole Phillips, "Kindness is Contagious in the Workplace"
- 10:15 - 11:15 a.m. Christopher Ingraham, former Washington Post Reporter and author, "Leaving the Newsroom for the Newsletter"
- 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lunch at Radisson Blu; Maureen Jonason from Hjemkomst Center remarks



(Continued on page 18)



# Conference Schedule . . .

(Continued from page 17)

1:15 - 2:15 p.m.

Panel Discussion: "The Media and Diversity"  
OR

2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Breakout Session: Julie West of Prime46 discusses Market Research  
Andrea Mokros, Executive Vice President and Chief Public Affairs Officer at Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis, "Building the Bold North"

3:45 - 4:30 p.m.

Author Alley

6:00 - 8 p.m.

NFPW Communicator of Achievement Award Banquet

## Saturday, June 25

7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast buffet, Radisson Blu

8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

NFPW President's Roundtable Discussion

9:30 - 10 a.m.

Invitation to 2023 NFPW Conference

10:15 - 11:15 a.m.

Patrick Kirby, founder of Do Good Better Consulting, Author & Podcaster  
"Treating Your Customers the Way Nonprofits Treat Their Donors"

11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

National High School Communications Contest Awards (*Lunch at Radisson Blu*)

1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Panel Discussion: "Podcasting: What you need to know to make this medium work for you"  
OR

2:45 - 3:45 p.m.

Breakout Session: Anna Larson of Flint Group discusses Employee Brand Ambassadors

Panel Discussion: "Turning Passionate Pursuits into a Profession"

OR

4 - 5 p.m.

Breakout Session: Kent Kolstad of Livewire discusses Live Event Production

Michelle Olson, Lambert CEO & 2021 PRSA Immediate Past Chair

"Communicating Inclusivity with Intent"

5 - 5:30 p.m.

Author Alley

6 - 8 p.m.

Communications Contest Award Banquet &

Installation of 2022-23 Officers

## Sunday to Tuesday

### Post-Conference Tour:

Legendary North Dakota

**Don't forget  
to register by  
the Early Bird  
deadline to  
get the  
member  
discount.**



## *Just a thought . . .*



One of the first newspapers in eastern Idaho was housed in the building pictured above, left. The small log structure was replaced by the much larger brick building shown at right. By the time I went to work for that newspaper, it had moved to a former theater building downtown and was a consolidation of several predecessors. My high school journalism teacher had owned the newspaper and sold it just before I went to work as a typesetter. It was there I learned valuable, lasting lessons about being a watchdog, protecting the First Amendment and the importance of a free press. (Photos courtesy of Cathy Koon.)

**By Cathy Koon**

**Media Network Idaho, Agenda Editor**

Is everyone feeling as anxious and wary as I am?

Faced with ongoing pandemic, war in Ukraine, uncertain economy, climate change, empty store shelves and constant attacks on the media, we have the added burden of figuring out how we communicate those issues in a truthful and forthright manner.

"The media" is being attacked from all sides, and everyone with a cell phone is suddenly considered a reliable source.

Teri Ehresman's column in this issue of Agenda is a reminder that public officials, once watched closely by competent journalists and newspapers, no longer feel the need or the responsibility of being open and honest in their official duties. Without reporters sitting in what are sup-

posed to be open public meetings, elected officials seem to feel they no longer answer to the public.

And that same public fails to realize that reporters and editors are protecting the public's right to know. Those reporters who sit and listen to the proceedings represent the populace that doesn't have the time or the inclination to sit and listen.

Both my high school journalism teacher and my first editor drilled into me that newspapers are the watchdogs of society.

That responsibility is reflected in two other columns in this edition, one from a former troubled teen and the other from a high school student experiencing censorship.

We are also continuing our series on news literacy. This issue contains a column from an Alabama member who teaches news literacy to high

school journalists. We will be following up in future issues with more from our affiliates on this topic.

And in a totally unrelated vein, I am going into a business venture with my youngest, Tyson. We are buying a bar here in St. Anthony and reopening the attached restaurant.

The building was a service station during WWII, and my maternal grandparents were hired to operate it. They actually lived on-site with four of their children. We will be working with the youngest, the only remaining sibling.

The current owner lived across the street from my family when I was growing up.

It's small world, especially in a small town like mine. Being involved in this project has reminded me of just how connected we all are.

# NFPW Leadership Directory

## 2021 ELECTED OFFICERS

### President:

Karen Rowley, Louisiana

### Vice President:

Julie Campbell, Virginia

### Secretary:

Meredith Cummings, Alabama

### Treasurer:

Debbie Miller, Arkansas

### Immediate Past President:

Gwen Larson, Kansas

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Paula Casey, At-Large

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Karen Stensrud, North Dakota

### FAN Co-Directors:

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Angela Smith, Texas

### Historian:

Amy Geiszler-Jones, Kansas

### Assistant Historian:

Mary Pat Finn-Hoag, Nebraska

### Hospitality and Protocol:

Catherine Petrini, Virginia & D.C.

### Parliamentarian:

Allison Stein, Missouri

### POPPS President:

Mark Fowser, Delaware

### Presidential Adviser — Conference Liaison:

Meg Hunt, South Carolina

### Presidential Adviser — Membership:

Cynthia Price, Virginia

### Presidential Adviser — Contest Director:

Teri Ehresman, Idaho

### Student Membership Director:

Unfilled

### Publications Director:

Cathy Koon, Idaho

### Publications Assistant:

Jane Newton Falany, Alabama

### Web Director:

Cate Langley, NFPW Executive Director

### 2022 Conference Co-Directors:

Sadie Rudolph, North Dakota

Tammy Fogle, North Dakota

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- Half / Page  $8.250 \times 5.175 = \$30$
- Half / Page  $4.063 \times 10.637 = \$30$
- Quarter / Page  $8.250 \times 2.476 = \$15$
- Quarter / Page  $4.064 \times 5.2 = \$15$
- 1/8 / Page  $1.875 \times 10.563 = \$10$
- 1/8 / Page  $4.075 \times 2.476 = \$10$

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- Payment must be made at time of submission.
- Payment by check should be sent to NFPW Headquarters, 140B Purcellville Gateway Drive, Suite 120, Purcellville, VA 20132.
- Payment can be made by credit card over the phone (571) 295-5900.

## NFPW Headquarters

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Purcellville, VA 20132

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