Best Lifestyles Photo
Division 4
2014 MNA Better Newspaper Contest

By Lido Vizzutti, Flathead Beacon

Zane McCaffree swings his rope as he waits his turn to compete in the team roping event during the Blue Moon Summer Series Rodeo.

Camera: NIKON D300S
Lens: 20mm
ISO: 400
Shutter: 1/250
Aperture: f/13
## MNA Calendar

### March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Judging of 2015 MNA Better Newspaper Contest by Kentucky Press Association begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 - 8</td>
<td>National Newspaper in Education Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>University of Montana School of Journalism Job and Internship Fair</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Please RSVP at <a href="mailto:julia.cummings@mso.umt.edu">julia.cummings@mso.umt.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-21</td>
<td>Sunshine Week: Open Government is Good Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Deadline to submit articles for the March Press Pass</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Judging of 2015 MNA Better Newspaper Contest by Kentucky Press Association ends</td>
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### April

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2nd Annual High School in Journalism Day - Don Anderson Hall, University of Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Contact <a href="mailto:julia.cummings@mso.umt.edu">julia.cummings@mso.umt.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Deadline for MNA Hall of Fame and Master Editor/Publisher nominations</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Deadline to submit articles for the April Press Pass</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>MNA and MNAS Board of Directors’ meetings, Great Falls</td>
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### May

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Deadline to submit articles for the May Press Pass</td>
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### June

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>MNA and MNAS Board of Directors’ meetings, Buck’s T-4, Big Sky</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Montana Newspaper Foundation annual banquet and fundraiser, Buck’s T-4, Big Sky</td>
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<tr>
<td>12, 13</td>
<td>130th MNA Annual Convention, Buck’s T-4, Big Sky</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>MNA and MNAS Annual Meeting and election of officers, Buck’s T-4, Big Sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Presentation of the 2015 MNA Better Newspaper Contest Awards, Buck’s T-4, Big Sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Deadline to submit articles for the June Press Pass</td>
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</tbody>
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### Thanks

To our MNA Legal Affairs Committee: Chair Jan Anderson, Boulder Monitor; MNA President Cindy Sease, Bozeman Daily Chronicle; MNA 1st Vice President Matt Bunk, Western News (Libby); Dick Crockford, Dillon Tribune; MNA Lobbyist John MacDonald and MNA Executive Director Jim Rickman.

This group reviews the Legislative Assembly bills that may have an impact on the newspaper industry, establishes the priority of bills of interest and develops our lobbying strategy. The committee welcomes your feedback and appreciates the dialogue you have with your local legislators on bills of interest to the Montana Newspaper Association.

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**OUR MISSION:**

To advance and sustain the news publishing industry in Montana.

Jim Rickman, Executive Director | jim@mtnewspapers.com
Kevann Campbell, Business Development Manager | campbell@mtnewspapers.com
Randy Schmoldt, Accounting Specialist | randy@mtnewspapers.com

mtnewspapers.com  
February 25, 2015
ERIC LOVEC
Publisher, Ekalaka Eagle

PERSONAL Stats
Born (year & place): 1988, Baker, MT

First newspaper job: Owner, Ekalaka Eagle

Family: I grew up on a ranch 30 miles out of Ekalaka. I have three older sisters and a younger brother. My parents still live at the ranch and my mother works at Carter County High School in Ekalaka. I have a fiancée working at the ASCS office in Ekalaka. She moved here with me when I bought the paper in June 2014. She is originally from Sacramento, CA. We have a 3-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old daughter, who is my stepdaughter.

Education: Graduated HS at CCHS in Ekalaka. Graduated from Dickinson State University with a B.A. in Communication and a minor in Graphic Design.

Community involvement and diversions: Member of the Chamber of Commerce.

How did your career lead you to where you are now? While attending college at DSU, I worked as a car salesman at a Ford store in Dickinson. At that store, I was also in charge of maintaining their webpage and in charge of putting together their Co-op advertising through Ford, mostly radio and TV spots.

After graduating, I moved to Billings, MT, and found work in sales. After another short stint in sales, I worked at a dairy plant, followed by an advertising sales position at a print shop. After that, I went back to work as a car salesman for another year and a half until deciding to move back to Ekalaka to purchase The Ekalaka Eagle.

Through it all, I have also held jobs in construction and heavy equipment operation. In addition, I was in a band for three and a half years, performing somewhere around 80-100 shows per year in the Dakotas and eastern Montana. I have also worked weekends steadily as a deejay since graduating high school, and started my own deejay business two years ago with my cousin, who lives in Billings. We continue to work most weekends doing that. I guess you could say I have done a little bit of everything.

I grew up with the previous owners’ (Brice and Lois Lambert) son Reed. I even had my own room at their house during high school. They have always been like my second family, so the transition when I bought the paper went smoothly for the most part. The combination of my work experience, my love of graphic design, photography, and newspapers, along with Ekalaka being such a tight-knit community and fantastic place to raise a family, were all deciding factors in purchasing the business and taking over as editor/publisher.
What’s the most important thing you learned along the way that prepared you for your current role?

It’s hard to choose only one thing that prepared me for this role. To be honest, I don’t think I ever was really prepared. I would say that my education was definitely what prepared me the most. Working in sales has also helped considerably, especially because I sell and design all of the ads, as well. The familiarity with printing I gained while working at a print shop also helped, even though I send the paper off to print at The Miles City Star.

What aspect of the job do you find the most rewarding?

The most rewarding aspect of this job is that I am a part of the local businesses. There are not a lot of businesses left in Ekalaka. I love doing business with the other small, local businesses and what it does for our local economy.

Yet, nothing is more rewarding than when I receive a call, email, or piece of snail mail that is complimentary of what I have put into the paper, whether it be the stories, the pictures, or some of the changes I have made since taking over.

What aspect of the job do you find the most challenging?

The most challenging aspect of my job is the time it requires. Being the sole person putting out a publication takes a lot of time. Sometimes, it is just hard to meet the print deadline. If I have a bunch of good stories and pictures, it seems I am building ads up until the last minute. If I have 50% advertising, it seems that I am trying to finish my last-minute story on a local happening. Then comes the accounting… bookwork… and trying to keep up with the circulation.

What have you done to enhance the brand of your newspaper in your area?

The most important thing, I feel, to help enhance the brand of the paper is to be extremely active in the community. If there is a gathering, function, benefit, HS sporting event, it is important to be there. If you support a small community, it will support you. I also have plans of going digital, expanding on the print jobs that I do apart from the paper, and am working on some promotional materials. All in good time. I have learned I can’t do it all overnight.

What is your digital strategy right now?

Right now, we have no digital strategy. I am in talks with a few companies about web design and building a site. I have some experience in the field, but not enough time or near enough know-how to get it done. I would love to say that there will be a webpage in one to two years, but I know realistically it will probably be five or more before it becomes reality.

I realize that my generation is much more tech savvy and that, at some point, the webpage will be essential. However, I also feel that printed papers will always be alive and well. There is something about picking up a newspaper and getting printers’ ink on your finger tips that is just better than reading the news on a screen. My hope is that the webpage I eventually will have drives up my print circulation.

How does the MNA serve you and your newspaper?

The MNA has been a huge help. It is essential for me to have the ability to talk with people who have been in the business for so long and have much more experience in the field than I. Sometimes, I do feel that the focus is heavily weighted to the western part of the state and that the press and news releases don’t necessarily pertain to my area. I think there is a definite value in the SCAN ad program for customers, although I have yet to sell any. The BCBS campaign has been awesome. But honestly, the value in being a member of MNA is by far the other members and the help they have given me with their experience.
I always thought the term “call to action” sounded a bit corny. As a journalist, it seemed the phrase was one of those tired old clichés used by every group with an agenda it desperately wanted to highlight. But then, one day, I needed one.

In January, I testified on behalf of the Montana Newspaper Association against a bill that would have exempted the state Public Service Commission from certain public notification rules. It was a bad bill; legislation that essentially said that since few people ever showed up for utility rate-increase hearings, the PSC should get an exemption from having to schedule and notice those hearings. I testified in committee that the “lack of public interest, whether perceived or real” didn’t negate the fact that government still had a constitutional obligation to notify the public of its business and allow the public to participate. The bill got out of committee by a single vote. The MNA – Montana’s voice for open government and the public’s right to know – was the ONLY opponent of record and it looked like we had a hard battle ahead to kill the bill on the House floor.

Fortunately, our members recognized the importance of this issue, and when we asked for help, we got it, and we got it fast. The Billings Gazette was first to chime in with an editorial that captured the issue perfectly. It was the MNA that asked its members to call their legislators and tell them about the bill. We put together short facts about utility rate hearings, the PSC and the current rules, and considered a number of amendments to the bill, including those to remove overly broad security exemptions. Our MNA amendments, including those to remove overly broad security exemptions, were added to the bill, which passed the House. The committee eventually tabled the bill, much to our relief.

The day the bill came up for testimony and a full vote on the House floor in late January, I had no idea what the outcome would be. I was comfortable we had confirmed “No” votes from all House Democrats, although only a handful of Republicans had told me they would vote “No.”

But the attention we were able to bring to this bad bill was evident when Rep. Art Wittich, R-Bozeman, and Rep. Tom Steenberg, D-Missoula, both spoke eloquently on the floor against the legislation, and quoted verbatim from talking points we provided and the editorials of our members. The bill died on the House floor, garnering only 21 votes from the 100 members. At the time I’m writing this, it remains the biggest “kill” in terms of votes for any bill on the House floor this session. I can’t thank the members and the MNA staff enough for helping make that happen.

It was also an MNA associate member, The Associated Press, that alerted us to a bill that had First Amendment issues, but which had not gotten our attention because of the subject matter. Rep. Jeff Essmann introduced a bill to ban the use of drones in hunting and to make it a crime to use drones to harass hunters. But the bill contains language making it illegal to use a drone to photograph or film a hunter.

The AP called the MNA on the day the bill was to be heard, alerting it to us in time for me to attend the hearing. The bill had many supporters. Again, only the MNA stood in opposition, telling the House Fish and Wildlife Committee that there is no expectation or right to privacy while taking part in a public activity. We asked for an amendment removing that section of the bill. We attempted to work with the sponsor and the committee to address a number of concerns that arose, including our own, while noting our strong opposition to the existing language. The committee eventually tabled the bill, much to our relief.

Once again, it was the help of an MNA member that kept us on top of this.

Our work on behalf of newspapers and the public’s right to know continues. We have spent a great deal of time monitoring and being involved in the crafting of House Bill 123, the comprehensive bill to reorganize and revise Montana’s open-records laws. I took part in the House State Administration subcommittee that reviewed and considered a number of amendments to the bill, including several of our own. Our MNA amendments, including those to remove overly broad security exemptions, were added to the bill, which passed the House and is now awaiting Senate action.

Additionally, Rep. Kirk Wagoner introduced two bills, HB447 and HB448, which would provide attorney fees to any petitioner who wins or “obtains relief at any stage in an action” regarding open-records or open-meetings cases. The MNA testified in favor of both of these bills and offered amendments that we believe will strengthen the bills. We expect strong opposition as these bills move forward.

I want to close my report this month by again thanking the members who helped us defeat the PSC bill and the drone bill, and who have helped us monitor other bills that may otherwise have slipped under our radar. We may make another “call to action” before the end of the session and I’m happy to know that MNA’s members are so responsive.

February 25, 2015
The Sidney Herald, located in Sidney, MT, is seeking an experienced features editor for an exciting regional editor position serving the MonDak and Bakken region at the Sidney Herald and Williston Daily Herald.

The successful candidate will be capable of designing and producing compelling content, assigning freelance stories and laying out features for the newspaper and specialty magazines. The primary responsibility of this position will be the production of niche magazines for both the Williston Daily Herald and the Sidney Herald in Sidney, Montana. These newspapers produce a monthly Bakken living magazine, magazines focused on the oil boom in the Bakken area, visitors’ guides and other specialty publications.

This is a unique opportunity. Sidney and Williston are in the heart of the Bakken oil boom. The importance of this cannot be overstated. The region is currently producing 1 million barrels of oil per day and this is expected to grow. This phenomenon has been covered by every major media outlet in the United States including NBC, ABC, CBS, the New York Times, the Washington Post, Time magazine and such international news operations as Paris Match and Al Jazeera. The opportunity to produce content that reaches beyond the region is real.

The communities are growing rapidly. This growth presents unique challenges for the newspapers. As the population is changing, the challenge is producing content that is compelling to the new audience. These newspapers need fresh ideas and a fresh approach to features. Experience with InDesign, Photoshop, video and social media are a must.

The Williston Daily Herald and the Sidney Herald are owned and operated by Wick Communications, a privately family-owned newspaper group. Wick Communications is fully aware of the cost of living and housing challenges in this market. It will offer a competitive salary, a full complement of benefits and relocation and housing assistance.

Send your resume with cover letter and samples of—or links to—your work to: publisher@sidneyherald.com. Required experience for features writer is two years. Visit us at willistonherald.com and sidneyherald.com and wickcommunications.com.

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**In Memorium**

**John O. Hurlbut**

John O. Hurlbut passed away Jan. 11, 2015, in Helena at the age of 89 years. John was born in Superior, Wyoming, on July 10, 1925. He and two brothers grew up in Miles City. All three carried newspaper routes. His sons continued that tradition. He enlisted in the Navy in 1943 at age 17 and served at sea as a radio operator in the Pacific Theater. In 1947 he married Dorothy Hall of Stanford. John worked as a photoengraver at the Great Falls Tribune. Weather permitting, he rode his bike to work for many years. Both he and Dorothy appreciated the tempo and cerebral energy that pulsed through that old Tribune building. He always had a camera at hand. His photos documenting the remains of the old Yogo Sapphire Mine near Utica, taken around the late 50s, are in the archives of the Montana Historical Society.

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**Sunshine Week**

Open government is good government

March 15-21, 2015

Join us in the annual nationwide celebration of access to public information and what it means for you and your community. Find all the free resources you need to get started at: [http://sunshineweek.rcfp.org/](http://sunshineweek.rcfp.org/)
Open meetings require notice

By Marla Prell, managing editor, Miles City Star

We’re not surprised that some legislators are once again trying to conduct the public’s business in private, but we are surprised and disappointed that a judge’s ruling is letting them get away with it.

In November, a Great Falls reporter discovered a Republican caucus being held in the basement of a Helena hotel. The meeting was not publicly noticed.

A 1998 court ruling said such meetings must be open. District Judge Thomas Honzel wrote in his decision, “Clearly, legislators gather at caucuses to discuss the public’s business. When they do so, the public has a right to observe their discussions and to be informed about what happens at those meetings.”

So 20 media groups, including the Associated Press, tried to have the November 2014 caucus held in contempt of that ruling.

This week, however, District Judge Kathy Seeley determined that, although Honzel’s ruling said such meetings should be open, it does not specifically require public notice of them.

What? How can meetings be considered open to the public if no attempt at all is made to inform constituents when and where the meetings are happening? In fact, every attempt is made to hold these meetings out of the public eye.

We have the right to know only if we’re psychic?

Judge Seeley’s interpretation effectively guts the 1998 ruling. She did throw media outlets a bone, however, in saying Honzel’s ruling could be the basis for them seeking a requirement for public notice of caucuses.

Why must the media fight this battle again and again? Why must it spend money and time to secure rights that are already in the books?

Article II, Section 8 of the Montana Constitution states: “The public has the right to expect governmental agencies to afford such reasonable opportunity for citizen participation in the operation of the agencies prior to the final decision as may be provided by law.”

Article II, Section 9 states: “No person shall be deprived of the right to examine documents or to observe the deliberations of all public bodies or agencies of state government and its subdivisions …”

According to Montana Code Annotated, failure to comply with notice requirements may subject any decision made in violation of the requirement to be voided.

You cannot separate the need for public notice from the guarantee of open meetings.

One is moot without the other. It is as plain as the nose on your face. And it’s simply insulting when judges and public agencies pretend otherwise.

We don’t send people to the Legislature so they can shut the door on deliberations and expect us to just trust that they know what’s best for us.

MNA internship

The MNA is pleased to welcome Jonathan Faber, who comes to us through the Carroll College internship program. Jonathan will be learning and contributing as the Business Development Intern spring semester, earning college credits and invaluable experience. Hailing from Havre, Jonathan is a 2014 graduate of Havre High School studying business in his freshman year at Carroll. He also plans to minor in political science and is interested in local, state and national politics. In addition to his studies, Jonathan has a leadership role in the campus Residence Life Association and takes advantage of the athletic events and intramural programs at Carroll. The MNA internship will task Jonathan with creating and developing social media platforms and managing data and spreadsheets for marketing and business development. Welcome, Jonathan!

MNA selects Tecnavia as new digital archiving provider

The Montana Newspaper Association is very pleased to introduce Tecnavia as its new digital archiving provider.

Tecnavia is a long-established company, founded in 1975, that started out by creating a system that captured meteorological data for airports, an activity it still pursues today. From this sector, Tecnavia gained an unparalleled expertise in managing and archiving large quantities of images. Tecnavia’s media division now processes and manages over 1500 newspapers and magazines a day.

Tecnavia will supply the content for the MNA public notice website, montanapublicnotices.com; our clipping service, Montana News Tracker, and your individual newspaper research site.

The transition will be very seamless for MNA members. Just follow the same daily or weekly pdf file page upload process and begin using the Tecnavia ftp site: ftp.mna.newsmemory.com. Use the same username and password, and nothing changes in the way you currently name files. Please begin using the new ftp site ftp.mna.newsmemory.com now, and stop using the former ftp site (colormax.com).
The Helena Independent Record. Embracing change, reaching more people than ever.

By Tyler Miller, publisher, Helena Independent Record

There is one thing that can always be said about newspapers: they are always changing. Nothing is ever the same. The news changes every day. The technology changes every day. The readers change and often the people who report the news change. That is what makes newspapers great.

Over the last few years, the Independent Record has seen numerous changes. I will be the first to admit that some of them we would like to change, but, for the most part, those changes have been good, and we are a stronger media for it.

Let me take this opportunity to clear the air about a few things. First, we have all heard the rumors, but they aren’t true. Newspapers aren’t dying. We are evolving and changing, but we are not dying. Quite the contrary. The Independent Record is still the number one media in the Helena area. In fact, our audience is the largest it has ever been. We reach more than 80 percent of all adults in the valley each week. No one reaches more people than the IR, other than the US Post Office. Between print and online our audience continues to grow, and while our print has slightly decreased, our online audience has increased far more than print has decreased. That has been one of the first major changes. We are not a print media anymore; we are a communications company. Print is—and always will be—extremely important to us, but we now serve our news in more ways than ever and across more platforms than ever before. Each story we write, each ad we sell, each headline we produce and each photo we take is transformed and changed to be consumed in hard copy delivered to your door, on your desktop, on your tablet, on your phone and even across social media. Yes, we embrace technology. Social media and the internet are the friend of the newspaper, not the enemy. It is this ever-changing audience that has encouraged us and helped develop the Connect Me Local campaign. For anyone who is not familiar, Connect Me Local is one of the largest changes in the Independent Record in recent years. For one price, and with one account, all people can now consume unlimited content across all platforms. Now, when a husband wants to read the paper and a wife wants to read online, they can— with one subscription. Or, when a parent wants to read via a tablet and a teenager wants to get updates from his or her phone, they can.

Now, I understand not everyone wants to consume the information the same, and I don’t blame them. There are many loyal print subscribers who don’t want to consume information online, and I understand it. I don’t plan to try to change their minds, nor would I ever want to. Print is not for everyone, digital is not for everyone, but for most; we now give the opportunity to consume information throughout the day on different platforms. This is what makes being in newspapers so wonderful. We can all read the best local news, information and ads the way we want. Our goal is simply to empower our community. We want people to be informed of the most important news, the best advertising deals, the most current events and even the opinions of the other people in town.

Along with the change in the way people consume news comes a change with the way that news is produced. News is fast, and people want it now. We have a new breed of journalists. With this change, we have seen a change in faces at the IR. In the past two years, we have a new editor in Greg Lemon; a new advertising director in Stephanie Bull; new reporters; new advertising staff and new digital staff.

Stephanie comes most recently from Missoula. She is determined to ensure the Independent Record continues to be the best advertising vehicle in the community — reaching more people than any other media. She brings in cutting edge technology to help maximize online, from banner ads on the website, to search engine optimization, retargeting, website design and hosting and even social media management. On the print side, she comes from an agency background and will help develop extremely creative ideas to grab attention and make ads memorable to ensure they work for the client’s needs.

Greg Lemon brings a change of focus for the paper. He is focused on the reader and the reader experience. With the growth of the web, national news is easier to find, and, in turn, the focus has turned even more local. From local schools, to local government, to local recreation and natural resources, Greg works to ensure we are delivering the best local news and information. There is no question our readers are invaluable in helping with ideas and tips on stories, and Greg works to make sure those readers’ tips are followed.

No change has been greater than the role of publisher. I am not from Helena, or even Montana, but I can tell you I have fallen in love quickly with this great city and this beautiful state. I bring a resolve to get myself, the IR staff and the paper itself more involved with the community. We are focused on the local. Helena and the surrounding area are so full of wonderful things happening and we want to not only report on them, but we want to be involved in making them happen.

Change is constant, and at the Independent Record we are dedicated to embracing this change to ensure we continue to deliver the most important news to the largest audience across all platforms. That dedication is the one thing that will never change.
January postal rate increase to be offset by hub system changes

USPS inflationary price increase meets a rescinded discount to raise postage rates for publishers

By Tonda Rush, CEO, National Newspaper Association

WASHINGTON-Higher postage rates for 2015, driven by two separate developments, surprised publishers in January as the U.S. Postal Service announced its annual inflationary price increase and quietly rescinded a discount available in 2014 to publishers entering mail at transportation hubs.

The inflation- or “price cap”- based increase at an average of 1.9 percent is scheduled to go into effect April 26.

Although USPS annually increases postage up to the inflation cap allowed under the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, this year’s increase was unusual. First, it did not go into effect in January as in previous years. Second, it was filed despite uncertainty stemming from litigation before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, where both mailers groups and the Postal Service have sued the Postal Regulatory Commission for the 2014 postage increase.

As USPS filed its 2015 increase with the PRC in January, publishers were reporting dramatically higher rates already in effect for mail entered at some hubs installed where former mail sorting plants had been. In the former plants, the mail had earned a Sectional Center Facility discount. The National Newspaper Association’s postal experts had expected the discount to be continued at the hubs in 2015, but learned USPS had stopped recognizing a discount in January. The product of a Hub Work Group under MTAC auspices includes the SCF entry discount, but the final report has been delayed.

NNA President John Edgecombe Jr., publisher of The Nebraska Signal in Geneva, NE, said the NNA postal team was working to restore the discount.

UPDATE

The U.S. Postal Service has not made it official yet, but the implementation of 2015 postage rates on April 26 should ease the pain for newspapers surprised by a postage increase in January.

The increase hit publishers who had been entering Periodicals mail at the new USPS transportation hubs, where “direct” (5-digit, carrier-route, or mix of both) containers destined for local post offices within the territory of a recently-closed mail processing plant can be dropped for speedier delivery. NNA recommends flats trays (tubs), not sacks, for speediest handling.

The hubs were created by the Postal Service after the National Newspaper Association testified before the Postal Regulatory Commission that the hubs would be needed to avoid unnecessary complications when processing plants closed. The biggest value is moving those “direct” newspaper containers from one 5-digit office to another within the same territory of the former Sectional Center Facility, or SCF. But many members are located at a hub, or print and drop there.

USPS has committed to setting up a hub for this purpose wherever a plant is taken out of service. Closure of 82 more processing plants is expected this calendar year.

The surprise came in January when newspapers using those hubs saw an unannounced postage increase. That was because a grace period to use the previous SCF plant discounts expired and the new rate had not kicked in yet.

NNA Postal Committee Chair Max Heath appealed to USPS that Periodicals copies dropped at the hubs should still earn a Sectional Center Facility discount because they avoid using postal transportation to a more distant plant. The Postal Service has informally confirmed that the SCF discount will be recognized. Publication of the new rate will occur only through PostalOne!, the USPS Business Mail Acceptance software system, he said.

“This is an extremely important discount for us because the contraction of the mail processing network puts so much of our subscriber mail in jeopardy,” Heath said. “We must be able to use these hubs to maximum advantage by entering flats tubs with copies destinating for a local post office within the hub area. Because entering at the hub is a classic form of drop-shipping, publishers should earn the discounted rate. I am glad to learn that a fix for this problem is now in the works.”
Round Up for the Montana Newspaper Foundation

The Montana Newspaper Foundation is a 501c3 educational non-profit organization dedicated to raising and accumulating funds for member education, scholarships and the Member Internship Program. Over the past years, thousands of dollars have been raised and dispersed to deserving students attending journalism school and to member newspapers in support of their individual internships.

In 2015 we have a challenge to raise $12,015 for the Foundation. Our plan includes Round Up for the Foundation, BRAWL of the WILD Raffle, and live fundraiser events at the annual Foundation’s banquet to be held June 12th as part of the 2015 MNA Annual Convention at Buck’s T-4 in Big Sky. Friday evening’s action will feature a Spelling Bee, Silent & Live Auctions and Banquet. There are numerous ways for members, associate members, employees and friends of MNA to contribute and support the Foundation. But, most of all, we encourage everyone to attend the MNA Annual Convention and partake in both the fun and the fundraising.

BRAWL of the WILD Raffle
Purchase tickets for a chance to win an all-inclusive trip to the 2015 Cat Griz Game in Bozeman. Tickets for four, lodging for two couples, hosted, catered tailgate party and plenty of fan gear of the winner’s choice! Tickets will go on sale in March.

Spellin’ B
Not your traditional spelling bee, rather for adults who fancy themselves as master spellers. Teams of up to four members will compete for the championship title. Competition includes best team costumes! Now is the time to form your team and spell out your plan of action. Spelling bee team registration will be included with Annual Convention registration. Team entry fee is $125.

Live & Silent Auction
Treasures from the Big Sky and more will be up for auction—everything from vintage collectibles, original art works, craft brew and booze baskets, guided hunting and fishing trips and more! Donations are greatly appreciated. If your newspaper has a special item to donate, perhaps something unique to your community or a collectible from the news publishing industry, please contact Kev at the MNA office.

Round Up for the Foundation
Consider making a voluntary “round up” on your quarterly dues payment with the extra going directly to our Foundation.

*Contributions to the Montana Newspaper Foundation are eligible for tax deduction. Please consult your tax advisor.

Our News Retrieval is Golden!

News Tracker is a digital “clipping” service that tracks, retrieves, manages and analyzes the endless flow of news and information found in newspapers, broadcast, web and social media based on the key search terms you choose.

News Tracker captures all mentions of your search words as published in Montana’s 86 newspapers and delivers pdf clips electronically on a weekly basis.

News Tracker is your customized, technology driven, modern “clipping service” saving time and resources.

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Montana Newspaper Association | 825 Great Northern Blvd. Ste. 202 | Helena, MT 59601 | 406.443.2850 | mtnewspapers.com

February 25, 2015
The most important part of our team

By Darrell Ehrlick, Billings Gazette

Recently, The National Weather Service in Billings said, “Billings had 11-plus inches of snow on the ground for nine straight days. This has not happened since the 1978-79 winter.”

Just a day before, it pointed out, “Snowfall for the season is up to 39.3 inches. This is more than the entire 2011-12 winter (38.6 inches).”

Winter in Montana can be brutal and relentless. In one week at The Gazette recently, we’ve had more early deadlines due to weather than in the previous 18 months.

But our job in the relatively climate-controlled confines of the newsroom is a lot different than the dedicated men, women and youth who serve as newspaper delivery carriers. They are amazing.

And, it’s not just a five-day a week job. It’s every day, weather notwithstanding.

The truth of the matter is that the good folks (myself excluded) listed on A2 in The Gazette, which constitute our management team, are not the most integral part of the operation. That honor goes to the folks who get the paper to your doorstep, driveway, mail tube or business every day. We simply wouldn’t have a newspaper without them.

So thank you to those carriers who have slogged through the ice and cold just to bring you the newspaper. It shouldn’t surprise folks that during these bitter months a few papers are missed or go missing in snow. The real story is how many paper carriers get through places where cars get stuck.

Again, thank you, carriers, for not only doing a great job, seven days a week, but thanks for the extra care during these pretty nasty months.

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2015 MNA Master Editor/Publisher and Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame
nomination forms

Now is your chance to spotlight your fellow newspaper men and women for their accomplishments in Montana journalism by nominating them for the 2015 Montana Newspaper Association Master Editor/Publisher Award or nominating them for induction into the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame.

- The deadline to submit your nominations is Friday, April 10, 2015.
- Instructions for accessing nomination forms are listed BELOW.
- Return your completed forms by mail to MNA, 825 Great Northern Blvd., Ste. 202, Helena, MT 59601 or email to jim@mtnewspapers.com
- Awards will be presented during the 130th MNA annual convention on Friday, June 12, 2015 at Buck’s T-4 in Big Sky.

The nomination form for the Master Editor/Publisher Award:

Past recipients of the Master Editor/Publisher Award:

The nomination form for the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame Award:

Past recipients of the Montana Newspaper Hall of Fame Award:
http://www.mtnewspapers.com/hall-of-fame-award/

If you have questions, please contact:
Jim Rickman
Executive Director
Office: 406-443-2850
Cell: 406-465-3236
Email: jim@mtnewspapers.com
Website: mtnewspapers.com
10 Commandments of local news coverage

By Bill Ketter - CNHI Vice President/News

1. Know your community intimately.
   - Who lives there and why?
   - Check Census reports, demographics and psychographics.
   - Past growth, projected growth.
   - Read legal ads, classifieds. They can lead to stories.

2. Identify the people to meet and go meet them.
   - Elected and appointed officials.
   - Checkout clerks, day care operators, waitresses, gas jockeys, bank tellers, real estate brokers, postal workers, funeral directors, anyone who interacts with the public. Soccer moms know everything.
   - Clergy of all denominations.
   - Retired snoopy people at the senior center. Ex-cops.
   - Regulars at places people congregate - coffee shops, library, restaurants, playgrounds.
   - Town characters. Every community has them.
   - Get on e-mail lists of community organizations. Deputize them as citizen journalists.

3. Find fresh, creative ways to do stories.
   - Start every day with the question: What can I tell people about this community that's interesting and useful? Never let the answer be, “nothing.” And almost never let it be, “a meeting story.”
   - Approach government stories from the standpoint of how they affect local people, not the process.
   - Do stories about ordinary people, especially if they are doing extraordinary things.
   - Look for stories about the concerns of ordinary life: potholes, burned-out streetlights, rusting playground equipment, hazardous intersections, landscape eyesores, dangerous school crossings.
   - Quote at least one non- official person in every local story. One Bubba Rule.

4. Find the money.
   - Who are the town’s biggest employers? Taxpayers?
   - Who are the big property owners? How much property does the town own?
   - Who gets the most overtime on the town payroll and why?
   - Get a copy of the town and school budgets. Know them line by line.
   - Get a list of vendors doing business with the town, what goods and services they provide and for how much.
   - Know the high, low and average tax bills in town. Ditto home sales. Find out how they compare with neighboring or similar towns statewide.
   - Look for stories tied to homes sales. The first million-dollar home sold in town. A barn turned into a house. The unusual.
   - Make friends with the assessor and real estate agents. They know who is buying and selling and for how much.
   - Check public records for nonprofit booster and community organizations. Review how they spend their money.

5. Covering the fire department.
   - Visit the fire station regularly. Chat with the chief and the commanders.
   - Check the log, ask questions, cultivate sources.
   - Look for stories about people, equipment and trends, such as a growing number of condemned buildings or an increase in small fires.

6. Covering the cops.
   - Visit the police station every day. Check the log, ask questions, cultivate sources. Cops love to schmooze.
   - Do feature stories on new officers, promoted and honored cops. New technology. Training techniques.
   - Develop a list of the most notorious crimes in town and do appropriate anniversary stories.
   - Find out what highways or streets pose speeding or safety problems, and why. What's being done about them?
7. Reporting on schools.

- Visit the schools regularly. Look for stories in posters on the walls, bulletin boards, teacher memos, the school paper.
- Know the teachers, custodians, administrators and students. Ask to speak to classes about your job. If a school paper exists, work with the students. Deputize them.
- Look for features about teachers, trends and curriculum.
- Use school board meetings as a jumping off point to bigger, better stories. If the discussion is about a math textbook, visit a math class, talk to teachers, students, parents.
- Know how much the district spends per pupil, where the money comes from, and how it compares with like towns.
- State competency tests are big news. Know where your town stands.
- Get the story behind the scores. And get the scores before anyone else.

8. Getting religion.

- Cover religion in town like the important topic it is. More people attend church, synagogues and mosques on Saturday and Sunday than watch the Super Bowl.
- Read the weekly bulletins and the bulletin boards.
- Profile people and groups. Look for trends. Don’t overlook non-traditional religions.


- Know the business professionals, including chamber people.
- Know the people responsible for phone, gas, oil, water, electricity, cable TV and satellite TV.
- Make a list of employers, largest to smallest. Get to know who is in charge at each.
- Check records for commercial licenses and building permits.
- Identify public companies. A lot of information is available through SEC filings.
- Do stories on companies that import and export goods. Trace the path of these goods.
- Housing is business. Zoning is about money and power. Cover both thoroughly.
- Know the town health and building inspectors, and check their records.
- Attend after-hours and networking events.

10. Covering meetings.

- Prepare before the meeting. Identify the major issue(s) that will probably lead your story.
- Collect the background. Talk with people who will be major participants in the discussion. Write an advancer.
- Look for human-interest stories.
- Report on meetings from the perspective of the people affected, and follow up with a story about their views.
- Watch for news happening outside the meeting. Alliances are formed, opinion ventured in hallways and parking lots. Seize the drama, whatever it is. If there’s a sharp disagreement, use sharp quotes. If there’s conflict, use it to frame your story.

Would you like to find or track a bill?

You can find and track the progress of legislative bills from current and past sessions using a free online service called LAWS (Legislative Automated Workflow System).

Using LAWS, you can find:

- Complete text of legislative bills
- Up-to-date status of bills
- Committee hearing schedules
- Agendas for committee hearings & floor sessions
- House and Senate votes on bills

You can search the LAWS database using one or more of the following search criteria:

- General subject matter
- Keywords
- Bill number

- Bill sponsor
- Bill status

You can also create a preference list. This feature allows you to monitor any number of bills that are of particular interest to you by creating a free, password-protected online account.

You can sign up for notification by e-mail of public hearings scheduled for the bills on your preference lists.

Please go to: http://leg.mt.gov/css/About-the-Legislature/Lawmaking-Process/track-bills.asp
There’s no doubt that it is convention season. The crowds have been large and enthusiastic. In just a few weeks I’ve been from Nashville, Tennessee to Bloomington, Minnesota and Columbus, Ohio to Edmonton, Alberta.

There are more publishers waiting to catch me after keynotes lately. When the last workshop is done, there are bigger lines wanting to talk. And what’s the question I get asked most often? “How can I get my hands on the results of your latest publisher survey?”

Your wait is up. Well, part of it is. You might remember that I conducted a survey of 614 publishers throughout the U.S. and Canada back in October. The results were quite interesting. Mostly, though, they led to more questions.

In late January, I sent out Survey II. So far, after two weeks, more than 300 newspaper executives have responded to the survey. Most are publishers. The results are fascinating to a guy who loves numbers.

In future columns, I’ll share some of my thoughts on the meanings of these numbers. For now, let’s take a look at some of the more interesting results.

Respondents are from papers of all types. They pretty much fit the industry profile in North America. Several publishers of metros completed the survey, as did publishers of mid and small dailies. The largest number of respondents, as you might guess, were from weekly newspapers. That makes sense, since the majority of newspapers are weekly.

A paid newspaper is the primary product of 80 percent of respondents, and 20 percent indicated their primary products were free papers. These were broken down into free newspapers and shoppers. About one-fourth of the free papers classified themselves as “shoppers.”

In future columns, I plan to break the results down in more detail, by size, type, etc. For this column, I will stick with the overall results.

In general, newspaper advertising revenue seems to have dropped a little, but not much. Advertising revenue has decreased for 44 percent of respondents, with most of those indicating it has decreased “a little, but not drastically.”

Advertising revenue has remained “relatively steady” for 26 percent of respondents over the past three years, while 30 percent report their ad revenue has increased.

Over the past year, however, the number who say their ad revenue has decreased is much closer to those who indicate their revenue has increased. It’s almost an even split between decreased, remained steady and increased.

According to 99 percent of respondents, print revenue is the key to profitability, while 9 percent added that, while print is the greatest source of revenue, digital sources make up a significant part of their revenue. 90 percent responded that digital revenue was “negligible.”

It gets a little confusing in the next question. When asked to respond to the statement: “Over the next three years, my newspaper could survive as well without a digital (online) edition,” 70 percent said that was a true statement. While, in the previous question, only 9 percent indicated they get a significant share of their revenue from digital, 30 percent answered they would lose “a lot of revenue,” if they didn’t have a digital edition. Confusing, but true. We’ll look into that in more detail in a later column.

There’s no doubt what the major source of revenue is at most newspapers. Without a print edition, 99 percent of respondents said they didn’t believe they could make it. For further emphasis, 82 percent went so far as to answer, “That’s crazy. We’d never make it without a print edition.”

When asked where the most revenue is generated on the digital platform, 21 percent respondents answered “up-selling print ads to our digital site.” Revenue from ads sold on the digital platform only has been the most advantageous for 14 percent of respondents, while another 11 percent answered, “ Bundling print and digital subscriptions.” Alternately, 29 percent indicated that they have a digital presence, but do not generate any revenue from it, and 14 percent answered that they do not have a digital presence.

We asked questions related to profitability. Responses from 90 percent of executives indicated that their newspapers are profitable and 55 percent added that they foresee profitability well into the future. Four percent reported record profits over the “past year or two.”

That gives you some indication of the pulse of newspaper executives at the moment. While I only discussed roughly one-fifth of the survey questions in this brief treatise, I plan to share more in future columns.

How can information like this affect your newspaper? While with a client in Virginia last week, I was asked for thoughts concerning future changes being discussed at their paper. I asked if they would like to look over the results of this survey, which they did.

Afterwards, the publisher told me, “That is so helpful. I think we’ll hold on some of the changes we were planning.”

More information will come, but I’ve more than used my 800 words for this column.

Kevin is scheduled to speak at 12 conventions and to visit more than 20 newspapers in early 2015. To learn how you can bring Kevin to work with your staff, contact him at kevin@kevinslimp.com.
Thanks to all those who participated in our first Statewide by the Numbers virtual sales meetings. Thirty-one sales professionals from 22 newspapers discussed the basics of the programs and shared best practices via a virtual online. Answers to some of the questions and suggestions have been implemented. Several first-time sales have occurred in the new year and results are super as some weeks in March are already sold out for SDAP! Future virtual sales meetings are planned for March...details to come.

Shout it out for these newspapers selling 57 statewide ads so far this year: BANG (Billings Area Newspaper Group), Blaine County Journal, News-Opinion (Chinook), Big Timber Pioneer, Billings Outpost, Boulder Monitor, Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Choteau Acantha, Cut Bank Pioneer Press, Laurel Outlook, Lewistown News-Argus, Judith Basin Press (Stanford), Livingston Enterprise, Miles City Star, Ranger-Review (Glendive), Yellowstone County News (Huntley).

SDAP
Statewide Display Advertising Program
58 participating newspapers
133,933 Distribution
308,046 Readership
2x2 $406 | 2x4 $812 | 2x6 $1,218

SCAN
Statewide Classified Advertising Network
67 participating newspapers
161,440 Distribution
371,312 Readership
$149/25 words or less; $4.30 each additional word

100% accuracy achieved in the past three weeks for those newspapers inspected. Each week, MNA selects eight newspapers to inspect for accuracy in placement and content of statewide classified and display ads. It is the expectation of advertising clients and the MNA statewide advertising networks to publish all ads weekly, as ordered.

The sales training pieces (BIG SKY. BIG IMPACT. brochures) have been updated to reflect current distribution numbers of current participating newspapers. Both a downloadable brochure that can be printed out and an e-mail version are available on the MNA FTP site along with the promotional display ads. Please use these ads to promote the SCAN and SDAP programs. Access the ad copy files located in the folder labeled Customizable SDAP & SCAN promo ads.

Leverage your own newspaper’s open advertising space by running the SCAN and SDAP promotional ads. Feel free to customize ads with photos and captions. For example, add photos and captions to appeal to resorts seeking to fill slopes and available rooms with winter “staycationers” and spring breakers!

Welcome new SCAN & SDAP participating member newspapers who are selling ads for the first time, with special recognition for Whitney at the Big Timber Pioneer and Tracy at the Glendive Ranger-Review for new clients and ad sales!