MNA unveils new quarterly Press Pass format, plans for monthly eBulletin

By Matt Gibson

After an absence of a month, the Montana Newspaper Association's Press Pass newsletter returns with some new design flourishes. I encourage Press Pass readers to take this new look for a test scroll and let us know if you like how it handles.

To keep up with the prevailing technology and provide more informative content for MNA members and supporters, we plan to reinvigorate our monthly communication routines by creating a new MNA eBulletin, an email message with capsule summaries and links to the latest industry news and insights. The new email format will enable readers to access more content that goes deeper than we can burrow in the current Press Pass.

A lot of the most intriguing content about the publishing industry appears only online, in multimedia packages that can't be duplicated in a conventional newsletter format. The eBulletin will take you straight to that terrific content, so you can experience it directly, in its most compelling presentation. And the eBulletin will include more articles from more sources than we've been able to share in the past, because linking is such a darn easy way to share great stuff.

Look for the first MNA eBulletin just before Thanksgiving and another before Christmas. Those of you who love the more traditional newsletter format can look forward to a new issue of the Press Pass newsletter again in January, with three more issues of Press Pass appearing during each subsequent quarter during 2020.

As we wrap up 2019, please take the time to complete the rate and data questionnaires sent out via email earlier this month and available online at the MNA website. The MNA relies on the rate and data survey to accurately quote ad rates and determine your newspaper's circulation division. Please complete the questionnaires and get them back to us as quickly as possible.

You should also be alert to the application deadlines for the Montana Newspaper Foundation 2020 internship grant program. Recipients of the grants receive $1,500 to defray the cost of a paid intern. The internship grants program gives newspapers a chance to get an up-close, live action look at some of Montana's best journalism students, while giving the students valuable working experience that earns them academic credit.

Applications for the 2020 grant cycle are due by Dec. 3, 2019. To download the application form, visit the MNA website.

Matt Gibson is the executive director of the Montana Newspaper Association.

2020 Montana Newspaper Foundation Internship Grant Program

The Montana Newspaper Foundation has begun accepting applications for the 2020 internship grant program. Recipients of the grants receive $1,500 to defray the cost of a paid intern. Each newspaper selected for the grant must agree to at least match the $1,500 award from Foundation to pay the intern's compensation. In addition to compensation, interns may receive institutional credit, if their school allows it.

Interns must be students enrolled in an accredited post-secondary academic, professional or vocational program. In-state schools, especially students of the U of M School of Journalism, should be given first preference. A profile and photo of the intern is required to be provided by the newspaper. Awarding grants to relatives of a selected newspaper's owners or employees is prohibited.

Continued on Page 4
2020 MNA Rate and Data Survey

The Montana Newspaper Association's annual Rate and Data Survey serves as the authoritative resource for MNA advertising sales and other member services.

With 83 member newspapers, we enjoy the challenge of processing the hundreds of details involved in print and digital advertising, and we strive to develop easy to understand presentations and proposals for our potential clients. Our goal is to respond to our client advertising requests within 24 hours, making the information in the Rate and Data Survey an invaluable administrative tool for the MNA staff.

We ask for your commitment to fully complete the survey and return it to the MNA office by November 1. And, as always, we welcome your updates at any time to help us accurately represent your newspaper.

MNA members can download the survey form from the MNA website at MNA 2020 Rate and Data Survey.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. Please contact Stacy Wirtz in the MNA office with questions at (406) 443-2850 or email stacy@mtnewspapers.com.

Your newspaper can profit by selling statewide

The Montana Newspaper Advertising Service's statewide programs offer a great way for employers to recruit talent from every corner of Montana. With our statewide display program (SDAP), an employer can reach out through 64 newspapers with a total audience of more than 400,000. And our SCAN classified network includes 62 weekly and seven daily newspapers, with ads starting at just $149!

Large employers with significant needs and local organizations looking to fill executive positions search widely for the best applicants. Our statewide programs give them a convenient, affordable way to reach across the entire 406, which we picked as a catchy price point for our SDAP display advertising.

Statewide display pricing
2 col. X 2" $406
2 col. X 3" $609
2 col. X 4" $890
2 col. X 5" $1,250

Advertisers can get even better discounts by bundling statewide advertising buys. If a customer adds on a classified liner the same week as a display ad, that customer will receive a 50 percent discount on the liner. We can also bundle packages together that include statewide digital ads. The best part for member newspapers is that they keep half the money when they sell the ads!

Several notable employers already use our statewide advertising services to find the best people, including:

- Montana Highway Patrol
- Yellowstone County News
- South Dakota Unified
- Trinity Technology
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

In your communities, strong prospects for statewide employment advertising will be local governments, school districts, and health care providers. But any business or organization conducting a search for specialized talent or executive leadership could likely benefit from our easy, inexpensive advertising programs. Ask the employers who regularly place help wanted advertising in your newspaper how they recruit outside the market, and make sure they know about our terrific offers.

Selling the statewide advertising programs is easy. To learn more about how your newspaper can make more money selling statewide recruitment advertising, please contact Stacy Wirtz at the MNA by calling (406) 443-2850 or send an email to stacy@mtnewspapers.com.
SALES CONTEST

The MNA wants to register your entire staff to attend the 135th annual Montana Newspaper Association annual convention, FOR FREE!!!

To promote our statewide advertising programs, we’re running a contest during the fall quarter, and the member newspaper that sells the most advertising in our statewide SCAN, SDAP and SOAP programs will win the opportunity to send its entire staff to our next convention without paying registration fees! And there are chances for additional winners among the newspapers that generate the most revenue in each statewide program.

DATES
Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, 2019

GRAND PRIZE
Newspaper generating the most overall revenue in the statewide programs:
Entire staff may attend 2020 convention and Better Newspaper Contest awards banquet FOR FREE!

SECOND PRIZES
Newspaper with the most SDAP sales:
One free convention registration and BNC awards dinner.
Member with most SCAN sales:
One free convention registration and BNC awards dinner.
Any member that sells a SOAP ad:
One free convention registration and BNC awards dinner for each ad sold.

For more information, contact Stacy Wirtz at (406) 443-2850 or email stacy@mtnewspapers.com.

SELL A CHAROLAIS IN CHOTEAU

From Eureka to Ekalaka and Sidney to West Yellowstone and everywhere in between, advertising statewide leverages the network of newspapers across the state, maximizing your exposure and investment.

REACH 400,000 POTENTIAL NEW CUSTOMERS EACH WEEK

ADVERTISE AN AUCTION IN ALZADA

SDAP Statewide DISPLAY Ads (images, graphics, logos and text) start at just $406 per week... that’s less than $7 per newspaper!

SCAN Statewide CLASSIFIED Ads (lines of text only) start at $149 per week for 25 words...that’s less than $2.50 per newspaper!

ONE CONTACT TO YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER FOR STATEWIDE COVERAGE!

FOR DETAILS VISIT www.mtnewspapers.com
In Memoriam
Montana newspaper veteran Russ Wells, former Sidney publisher, dies at 73
By Lois Stephens, The Roundup

The MonDak region has lost a newspaper icon. Russ Wells, born Dec. 5, 1945, passed away on Sunday, Sept. 29, 2019, just a few months shy of his 74th birthday.

Wells exhibited a talent for newspaper work from the outset. He participated in the publication of his high school paper, and when he attended Dickinson College, he joined the college newspaper staff. He and a friend collaborated on the Me & Mrachek column, a feature that proved so popular everyone on campus knew Wells and his friend, Don, by sight.

After attending Dickinson College, Wells went to work for the Dickinson Press as wire editor and then as sports editor. Wells was hired as Sidney Herald editor in 1967, which made him the youngest editor in Montana at the time. He then moved to Livingston to be editor of the Livingston Enterprise. From Livingston, he became the editor of the Big Timber Pioneer and opened a photography studio, concentrating on wedding pictures.

Wells returned to Sidney in 1972 as publisher of the Sidney Herald. and was promoted to publisher of the Williston Herald.

In 1976, Wells continued to work for Wick Communications, taking a 3-day publication to a daily. While in Arizona, he managed five newspaper publications for Wick in Arizona, plus the Sidney and Williston papers.

Wells returned to Williston to manage Scofield Broadcasting until 1983, when he moved back to Sidney as the publisher of the newly-formed Richland Free Press. After a year, with the help of three investors, he began operations of the Richland County Leader in the basement of his home, and slowly moved to larger locations as he developed it into a viable newspaper.

The Richland County Leader was purchased by Wick Communications in 1988 and was combined with the Sidney Herald, to make the Sidney Herald-Leader. In 1994, Wells purchased The Roundup, which was located in Watford City. He moved The Roundup office to Sidney. In 2008, he sold The Roundup to his son, Jody, and in 2010 The Roundup office moved to its present location in the Yellowstone Marketplace building.

Wells moved to Florida after his retirement, but he returned to Sidney in 2017.

Wells first and foremost loved the news business. He enjoyed the photography aspect and found his niche in the investigative part of newspaper work. He would see a problem in each city, dig into it, and look for ways to solve the problem through the voice of his newspaper.

Wells was very community-oriented. He possessed a great talent for advertising and raising awareness of an event that promoted the town and surrounding area. His brainstormed instrumental in starting the Peter Paddlefish Day, Sidney wrestling program, Western Days, Sugar Days, 4th of July celebration, Sidney’s Got It and Beef Showcase. He was a driving force behind the MonDak Heritage Center, Courage Enough (2 volumes), MonDak Walleyes Unlimited and the Walleyes Unlimited Annual Kids Fishing Derby held at Gartside Reservoir, which included all the 6th graders in the county getting hints from the membership. Each student was presented with his or her very own fishing rod and reel.

Wells also was very agriculture-oriented. His ideas and vision created the monthly Ag Roundup to promote and highlight agriculture in the area. He developed the Ag Days Trade Show, started the Ag Appreciation Golf Tournament where, of course, the Roundup had the favorite hole, the Margarita Hole.

Wells always tried to focus on good news in his publications. He wanted correct, factual information, and wanted to promote events in a positive light so people would attend. The Roundup succeeded in this endeavor because the paper covers all of Richland County, McKenzie County, and the surrounding area.

Wells also dearly loved fishing. He created the fishing page in the Roundup, awarding a new rod and reel to anyone submitting their photo to the page.

Wells will be missed. His many contributions to the MonDak region have benefitted both the public and the private sectors, and the community will continue to enjoy events that Wells initiated and promoted.

A celebration of Russ’s life was held on October 5 at the Yellowstone Marketplace in Sidney.

Grant
Continued from Page 1

Applications for the 2020 grant cycle are due by Dec. 3, 2019. To download the application form, click here.

FAQ
What is the internship program?
The Montana Newspaper Foundation (MNF) Internship Grant Program helps train tomorrow's professionals by providing grants to member newspapers to defray some of the expense of a paid internship.

How much is the grant and how many are awarded?
$1,500 will be awarded to three successful newspapers.

When can I use the internship grant?
The grant can be used (and the money will be awarded) in 2020. We encourage successful applicants to begin the intern recruitment process early.

When will grants be announced by the MNF?
December 19, 2019

Next steps?
Please email your completed application form to Matt Gibson: mgibson@mtnewspapers.com on or before the application deadline of December 3, 2019.
The Department of Labor (DOL) published its final rule on September 27, 2019, increasing the threshold used to determine the exempt status of white-collar employees under the minimum wage and overtime rules of the Fair Labor Standards Act. While the new threshold in the final rule will certainly be difficult for many small market newspapers, the increase – the first in 15 years – is much more reasonable than the agency’s final overtime rule in 2016. The new rule goes into effect on January 1, 2020.

The final rule raises the threshold from $23,660 per year to $35,568 per year by reverting to the methodology used in the 2004 rule that focused on the 20th percentile of full-time wage earners in the lowest-income region of the country (identified as the South).

The Labor Department under the Obama Administration issued a final rule in 2016 that would have raised the threshold to $47,476 per year with inflation-adjusted increases annually. This rule was rejected by a Federal Court in 2017.

Below is a summary of key provisions of the new rule, as well as FLSA exemptions that impact the news industry.

- The final rule increases the current salary and compensation threshold for Executive, Administrative and Professional workers to be exempt from overtime, from the current level of $23,660 per year ($455/week) to $35,568 per year ($684/week).
- The new threshold is pegged to the 20th percentile of full-time wage earners in the lowest income region of the country (identified as the South).
- The minimum total annual compensation for highly compensated employees increases from $100,000 annually to $107,432 annually.
- Employers can count nondiscretionary bonuses, incentives and commissions toward up to 10 percent of the required salary level for the standard exemption. The employer has one pay period to make up for any shortfall in achieving the 10 percent threshold.
- The final rule makes no changes to the duties test.
- The final rule does not implement automatic updates in the salary threshold.
- The final rule does not alter a statutory exemption excluding employees of small newspapers from the FLSA overtime and minimum wage requirements. This exemption applies to “any employee employed in connection with the publication of any weekly, semiweekly, or daily newspaper with a circulation of less than four thousand.”
- Journalists are exempt from overtime and minimum wage requirements if they qualify as “creative professionals.” The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor has released guidance stating that journalists are “creative professionals” if their “primary duty is to conduct investigative interviews; analyze or interpret public events; to write editorial, opinion columns or other commentary.” According to the Division, journalists are not likely to be considered “creative professionals” if they “rewrite press releases or write standard recounts of public information by gathering facts on routine community events.” In short, the less creativity and originality involved in the reporting and the more control exercised by the employer, the less likely journalists are to be considered exempt.
- The final rule is effective on January 1, 2020. For more information visit the U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, Final Rule: Overtime Update.

Paul Boyle is the senior vice president of public policy at News Media Alliance.
Statutorily required notice goes by a number of different names. There’s “public notice,” of course. “Legal notice” is a big one. “Legal ads” is also used quite often. And then there’s plain old “legals,” as in “the legals.”

Ask someone in the newspaper business what they’re called and you may get any one of those answers. Ask someone outside the newspaper business the same question and the response is likely to be, “Huh?”

There are a number of reasons for the public confusion over public notice advertising, including the fact that we in the newspaper industry can’t agree on a name for them. Branding 101 would suggest that’s a problem.

Of course, it’s not all our fault. Legislators have played a role in this. The general statutes of Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky and many other states refer to them as “legal notices.” The laws in California, South Dakota and Oregon call them “public notice.” Some state statutes, like Massachusetts, refer to them as both.

Our policy at the Public Notice Resource Center is as follows:

1. For the sake of clarity, the newspaper business should settle on one name; and
2. For branding purposes, that name should be “public notice.”

Why is “public notice” preferable to “legal notice” or “legal ads?” Because the word “public” has positive connotations. The word “legal,” on the other hand, is a mixed bag.

“Public notices” sound like a civic good. They’re about notifying the public. Who can be against notifying the public?

By contrast, “legal notices” sound kind of scary. Like someone did something wrong and needs to be told about it.

Consider the advertisement posted to the right. Despite what it says at the top, it is not a public notice. It’s a used car ad. But the words “public notice” are so powerful that this auto dealer decided to use them to get people to pay attention to his used car sale. Aside perhaps from that Nigerian prince who keeps emailing all of us, it’s impossible to imagine someone doing the same thing with the words “legal notice.”

From an advocacy and framing perspective, the words “public notice” are a gift. Let’s use them precisely as they have been gifted to us. So, when you talk about them, when you publish them in your newspaper, when you post a link to them on your website, please call them “public notices.”

This story was republished courtesy of the Public Notice Resource Center, a nonprofit organization that provides education and research on statutory notice in the U.S. It was originally published at pnrc.net.
WASHINGTON — The United States Postal Service has filed notice with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) of price changes to take effect Jan. 26, 2020.

The proposed prices, approved by the Governors of the Postal Service, would raise Mailing Services product prices approximately 1.9 percent. Shipping Services price increases vary by product. For example, Priority Mail Express would increase 3.5 percent and Priority Mail would increase 4.1 percent, on average. Although Mailing Services price increases are based on the Consumer Price Index, Shipping Services prices are primarily adjusted according to market conditions. The Governors believe these new rates will keep the Postal Service competitive while providing the agency with needed revenue.

If favorably reviewed by the PRC, the new prices will include no increase in the price of a First-Class Mail Forever stamp, which would remain at 55 cents. The single-piece letter additional ounce price would remain at 15 cents. Also unchanged would be the prices of postcard stamps at 35 cents, and 1-ounce flats at $1.

The Postal Service has some of the lowest letter mail postage rates in the industrialized world and also continues to offer a great value in shipping. Unlike some other shippers, the Postal Service does not add surcharges for fuel, residential delivery, or regular Saturday or holiday season delivery.

The PRC will review the prices before they are scheduled to take effect Jan. 26, 2020. The complete Postal Service price filings with prices for all products can be found on the PRC site under the Daily Listings section at prc.gov/dockets/daily. For the Mailing Services filing see Docket No. R2020-1. For the Shipping Services filing see Docket No. CP2020-5. The price change tables are also available on the Postal Service’s Postal Explorer website at pe.usps.com/PriceChange/Index.

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

The proposed Mailing Services price changes include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters (1 oz.)</td>
<td>55 cents</td>
<td>55 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters additional ounces</td>
<td>15 cents</td>
<td>15 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters (metered 1 oz.)</td>
<td>50 cents</td>
<td>50 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flats (1 oz.)</td>
<td>$1</td>
<td>$1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbound International Letters (1 oz.)</td>
<td>$1.15</td>
<td>$1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Postcards</td>
<td>35 cents</td>
<td>35 cents</td>
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</table>

The proposed domestic Priority Mail Flat Rate Retail price changes are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Flat-Rate Box</td>
<td>$7.90</td>
<td>$8.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Flat-Rate Box</td>
<td>$14.35</td>
<td>$15.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Flat-Rate Box</td>
<td>$19.95</td>
<td>$21.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APO/FPO Large Flat-Rate Box</td>
<td>$18.45</td>
<td>$19.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Flat-Rate Envelope</td>
<td>$7.35</td>
<td>$7.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Flat-Rate Envelope</td>
<td>$7.65</td>
<td>$8.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Padded Flat-Rate Envelope</td>
<td>$8</td>
<td>$8.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Montana Newspaper Association Press ID cards

The Montana Newspaper Association provides Press ID cards (credentials) as a no-cost service to our Professional Members.

To order a Press ID, please contact: Ryan, Member Relations, at 443-2850 or member@mtnewspapers.com

1. Press IDs are for newspaper journalists, photographers, newsroom staff, correspondents, reporters
2. Allow four days for processing and mailing
3. Electronic IDs are available same day
4. Press IDs expire three years from date of issue/renewal

When placing an order, please e-mail the following:
1. Email a current JPEG photo as an attachment and please ID the person in the photo (Beth - red sweater, etc.) if you are requesting multiple passes
2. Include the job title

Guidelines for picture content

1. The picture should be a close-up showing your head and shoulders
2. Pay attention to the background and setting…a solid color background works best
3. The Press ID is a photo identification: remove hats, sunglasses and be sure to look straight on
On an out-of-state trip, I saw a billboard that compelled me to pull off the road to take a closer look. What was so unusual? It had more words than I had ever seen on a billboard – 45 words. “What in the world were they thinking?” I asked myself. “I’m probably the only driver who knows what the billboard says, and that’s because I stopped to count the words.”

The person who designed that sign hadn’t considered what it would look like on the side of that two-lane highway. He or she had created it on a screen or layout pad, with no awareness of the fact that drivers would have only a few seconds to read it. For years, I’ve heard that eight is the maximum word count for a readable billboard. That one had 45.

“Save 40 percent on a new widget” is more effective than “save money on a new widget.”

The billboard needed what a lot of ads need – restraint. Here are three areas that call for that special brand of discipline:

1. The sales call. This is where it starts. It’s understandable for advertisers to be excited about their products and services, but they shouldn’t be encouraged to put unsubstantiated claims and exaggerations in their ads. Salespeople who are close to closing a sale often have a tendency to accept anything their clients want to run. But this is the time to hold firm and gather the raw material that is needed for an effective ad campaign. First, learn about the client’s audience. Then learn about what is being advertised – with a focus on features and benefits.

2. The ad copy. The next step is to translate that information into an idea, and then to transform that idea into convincing words and pictures. Even the best ad concept in the world will fall flat if it is not put together the right way.

   It’s important to use restraint in writing copy. Readers don’t respond favorably to words like “unbelievable” and “fantastic” and “incredible.” They prefer to hear the truth, because that’s what they need to make informed buying decisions.

   Specific language works better than generalities. “Save 40 percent on a new widget” is more effective than “save money on a new widget.” “Three-year warranty” is better than “great warranty.” And “one-acre lot” is more descriptive than “large lot.”

3. The ad design. A store owner once told me about his philosophy of print advertising. “I think white space is wasted space,” he said. “I want my ads to be filled from corner to corner.” It was no surprise that his ads were bursting at the seams with illustrations and blocks of multiple colors. To make matters worse, he thought that all upper-case type made his copy more important. Sadly, his ads looked like indecipherable blobs on the page. I don’t think anyone would make the effort to read them.

   Poet Robert Browning is famous for writing, “Less is more.” Although architecture later adopted the phrase, it is just as appropriate for this business of advertising. Less is definitely more.

   John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com. (c) Copyright 2019 by John Foust. All rights reserved.