

# The Tennessee Press

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## General Assembly ends session with no expansion of electronic meetings

Lawmakers introduced several bills this year to expand the ability of governing bodies to conduct electronic meetings without members having to be there in person. None passed.

The effort to change the nature of public meetings post-pandemic was part of a low rumble to use technology to help government officials, but not necessarily the public and the journalists who report on them.

In all, Tennessee Coalition for Open Government tracked about 50 bills that touched open government in some way. Following is a snapshot of just a few of those. You can see a detailed report of many more on our website at [tcog.info](http://tcog.info).



### TN COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

DEBORAH FISHER

[info/tcog-reports-and-research/](http://info/tcog-reports-and-research/).

### Electronic meeting legislation

After reviewing legislation, TCOG took the position that allowing members of local governing bodies to join and vote in meetings by phone could be a slippery slope away from transparency.

As a longtime newspaper editor, I knew the importance for journalists to have physical access to county commissioners, aldermen and other officials at meetings for follow-up interviews and gathering information. We were also concerned that public comment and public hearing periods would be weakened if citizens were at a physical location of a meeting but speaking to elected officials who were not actually there.

We suggested delaying the legislation until a more comprehensive study could take place about the transparency of public meetings. The bills were supported by local government associations and could re-emerge next year.

### Crime records

We continue to see deterioration of access to information in crime records, fueled partly out of desire to protect privacy of victims and partly from a desire to reduce the stigma of a criminal record. Sometimes, however, it's simply about workload for the government agency.

The Tennessee Sheriff's Association shepherded a bill that made home street addresses and phone numbers of arrested people confidential in records of city and county law enforcement and detention facilities. The city and zip code of the arrestee's address

See **FISHER** Page 5

## TPA plans Aug. 27 State Press Awards luncheon and presidential installation

**STAFF REPORTS**  
**Tennessee Press Association**  
**June 22, 2021**

Plans are underway for an in-person 2021 UT-TPA Tennessee State Press Contests Awards Luncheon tentatively set for Friday, August 27, in Franklin, Tenn.

TPA surveyed members in May. Seventy-nine percent of respondents indicated that they would attend an in-person event. TPA's Board of Directors voted in late June in favor of the event.

A live-stream of the awards will also be planned for those who do not attend the event. TPA encourages registrants to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

In addition to the awards presentation, TPA also plans to install its 2021-2022 president, who is slated to be Rick Thoma-



Thomason

son, publisher of the Kingsport Times-News and Johnson City Press and president of Six Rivers Media.

A convention is not planned around the awards this

year. Plans for virtual educational sessions are being made. The TPA Concurrent Board of Directors Meeting and TPA Business Session is set for Thursday, August 19 at 10:00 a.m. EDT/9:00 a.m. CDT via Zoom. This is the meeting during which officers and directors of Districts 1 and 3 will be elected.

Registration for the awards luncheon will be available on July 23.

## New law targets people who try to abuse public records requests

**DEBORAH FISHER**  
**TN Coalition for Open Government**  
**May 31, 2021**

A new law that went into effect in late April will allow government officials to seek relief in court from people who use the public records process with an intent to disrupt government operations.

The bill was aimed at curbing public records requests from so-called "bad actors" but faced opposition when the legislation was first proposed because it was built around a definition of harassment that some thought was too vague and broad. The rewritten legislation, signed into law as Public Chapter 242, was supported by Tennessee Coalition for Open Government.

The legislation adds a new subdivision in the public records

law, T.C.A. 10-7-503(a)(7)(C). The new provision allows a government entity to petition a court for injunctive relief if a person requesting to view or receive copies of public records is making the request "with the intent to disrupt government operations."

If the records custodian believes a person is making public records requests with an intention to disrupt operations, the custodian must first notify the person in writing stating the specific problem conduct. If the conduct continues, the custodian can then ask a court to enjoin the person from making further public records requests.

The court can enjoin the person for up to one year but must make a finding of the person's intent to

See **NEW LAW** Page 4

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## CONTACT THE MANAGING EDITOR

TPAers with suggestions, questions or comments about items in The Tennessee Press are welcome to contact the managing editor. Call Mike Towle, (615) 293-5771; or email editor@tnpress.com. The deadline for the September 2021 issue is August 3, 2021.

# Summer is here, but not for long

It not only seems like 2021 is flying by, it is. I swear I've seen it has wings. Already it's July, and I'm still wondering where Christmas went. Writing on June 18, we have just finally received our first extended bouts of warmer weather.

Something that always looms big about summer months in our newspaper group (Music Valley Publishing) is vacation season. It seems like some key team member is always gone at any point from late May to August. The time off is well-deserved in most cases, and it certainly is refreshing to take some time to focus solely on family. I've taken two trips this summer, one full week to Panama City Beach with my wife's family, and one weekend trip to Gatlinburg with my parents. Coming back to the office with a fresh perspective and higher energy levels helps. And I definitely need it to catch up on all that has been missed.

I know this is the experience most news people have with time off – the double-edged sword. The enjoyment of spending some time away from the office and the



**YOUR  
PRESIDING  
REPORTER**

DANIEL RICHARDSON

agony of working like crazy to get ahead before leaving, making sure (sometimes not effectively) that must-do tasks are assigned to someone, and then working like crazy to get caught up after vacation. Maybe we wouldn't need a vacation so bad if we didn't have to deal with the stress of taking a vacation (kidding).

Then there's the process of limping by while other key players are out. I'm sure some bloated government bureaucracies can get on just fine when missing some of their staff, but I have yet to see a newspaper that isn't nearly crippled when someone is out. Every person we have on our staff is needed to get the job done. When just one person is gone, we really have to stretch, and I know

that you know that feeling as well. But I guess it's worth the trouble for the regeneration, and it helps us push our boundaries.

Going into fall, I, for one, hope we will be looking at a somewhat normalized fall sports schedule for our Tennessee high schools. I know the coaches and athletes I've talked to are looking forward to getting in more action, and our readers are looking forward to reading about it. At our papers, the sports section is often the most popular. And that's because of local high school sports and some small colleges. People want to read about the kids they know and love.

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer and has an opportunity to take a small break and spend a little more time with family and friends. And then, get back to providing local news to your readers!

*Daniel Richardson, publisher of the Carroll County News Leader, Huntingdon, and group publisher of the eastern division of Music Valley Publishing, is TPA president.*

# Journalism's broken talent pipeline

For decades, the U.S. news industry has been experiencing a collective existential crisis. Beyond an escalating sense of urgency, not much has changed as media pontificators like me and the Columbia Journalism Review continue to ask "What is news?" and "What is Journalism?" every year. Yet, it's impossible to address what journalists do and why we exist (and no, it's not about saving democracy) without understanding how and who becomes a journalist today.

Angel Jennings, the assistant managing editor of culture and talent at the Los Angeles Times, describes recruiting potential staffers as a newsroom-wide effort. She keeps an eye on "who's winning awards and honorable mentions, and reads smaller publications." She's looking for people with a specific set of qualifications. "There are certain basic tenets to have as a journalist," she says. "Interviewing skills, being critical and questioning, the ability to dive into a community and get sources to trust you and open up."



**JOURNALISM  
EDUCATION**

YVONNE LEOW

All of these qualities should sound familiar and comforting. They're the core curriculum of American journalism schools and the foundational traits of professional investigative reporters and editors, but possessing these journalistic storytelling skills are not enough.

Today's digital media environment rewards the experimental and entrepreneurial, but most legacy newsrooms do not. According to Jennings, they're still looking for good journalists who know how to source stories, not the ones who necessarily know how to create and manage a profitable Substack.

Local and regional newspapers, where recruiters have historically turned to find up and coming

talent, have been decimated. In a Pew Research Center analysis, the number of newsroom jobs at U.S. newspapers has plummeted by more than half between 2008 - 2020, while employment in "other news-producing industries," i.e. broadcast television, radio, cable and digital news outlets, have remained relatively stable over the same time period and even slightly grew in 2014.

Journalism's traditional talent pipeline is so broken that a growing area of focus for recruiters has been on schools, says Theodore Kim, the director of early career journalism strategy and recruiting at The New York Times. "We now have a system where there are certain schools that are almost like superpowers. It's like college football where there are five to six institutions that are routinely spitting out the best candidates because they have the most resources or expertise. The students themselves have more access to opportunity and stronger career guidance."

# The PPP helped many TPA members, so can the ERTC

The last 18 months have been a real rollercoaster ride, and, I think to everyone's pleasant surprise, our federal government has stepped up to the challenge and done its best to help small businesses and employers stay financially viable.

Congress acted quickly last year and enacted a number of measures that really helped, starting with the Payroll Protection Plan. Most Tennessee Press Association members applied for and received a PPP loan, getting funding to help pay salaries and other expenses, like rent or interest, when our members most needed help.

Another program that the government has made available to businesses like ours that have



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CAROL DANIELS

been impacted by the pandemic is called the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). In June, the TPA offered a webinar to members focused on the program (I sent a link to the recording out to you, too.) The webinar was full of important information for your business and corrected a lot of misconceptions and misinformation that is circulating about the ERTC. For example:

1) Yes, even if you did receive

PPP loans you are still eligible to claim the ERTC

2) The IRS made eligibility changes for 2021, to encourage more small businesses to take advantage of the ERTC

3) There are two ways to determine eligibility

a. One, that you have had year-over-year losses, OR,

b. Two, you have experienced a DISRUPTION in your business.

i. A disruption is defined as a regulation (imposed by federal, state or local government) that has interrupted the way you do business, such as limiting travel, preventing meetings, interfered with the normal coverage of events, and other similar interruptions.

4) If you have already paid your 2020 taxes (which you probably

have) you need to revise your filing. The Internal Revenue Service will send you a check!

5) If you have not already filed, you can make the adjustments on your filing and you will not be required to pay the taxes.

I encourage everyone to look into this program, there could be great benefit to your business.

Hopefully, you've heard that we are going to meet in person for the State Awards the end of August, the prospect of seeing you not in a Zoom window is exciting. I hope you can all attend.

Carol

*Carol Daniels is executive director of the Tennessee Press Association.*

## OBITUARIES

### Ramona Kemp Washburn

Ramona Washburn, longtime owner and publisher of The McKenzie Banner and the Dresden Enterprise, died Monday June 28, 2021 at her home in McKenzie. She was 88 years old.

Mrs. Washburn was born on October 1, 1932, to James Shobe Kemp and Lillie Mae Chapman Kemp, the eldest of five children. She was born in Weakley County and attended Henry School. She later earned her GED and attended the area state vocational school majoring in office occupations.

She married James L. Washburn in 1948. They attended Caledonia Baptist Church and later First Baptist Church in McKenzie, where she was a member until her death.

Mrs. Washburn held a variety of jobs over the years, including substitute teacher and seamstress. She will best be remembered as an owner and publisher of The McKenzie Banner and the Dresden Enterprise.

With the passing of her husband in 1985, Mrs. Washburn became the majority owner of Tri-County Publishing, Inc. She served as publisher of both The McKenzie Banner and the Dresden Enterprise until April 2015.

Along with serving as publisher and co-owner with her sons, she worked as a sales representative for Tri-County Publishing and



Washburn

secretary of API. She was a charter member of the McKenzie Jaycettes, serving as secretary, president, state director and was named Woman of the Year. She was president of

the McKenzie PTA, secretary-treasurer of the Carroll County PTA, president of the Carroll County Democrat Women, member of the Democrat Executive Committee and served on the Carroll County Election Commission.

She was a member of the Homecoming '86 steering committee, director of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce serving as Membership chairwoman, Cub Scout den mother, member of the Carroll County Voc-Tech School Committee, McKenzie Voc-Tech School Advisory Committee and a member of the VFW Post 4939 Auxiliary.

Besides her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by one brother, Jimmy Fayne Kemp, and one sister, Bonnette Wiles.

Mrs. Washburn is survived by two sons, Jeffery (Jennifer) and Joel (Teresa) Washburn; four grandchildren Jeremy (Kim) Washburn, Amanda (Kent) Guthrie, Brittany (Jason) Martin and James (Audrea) Washburn;

two step-grandchildren Britne Mansfield and Chris Butts; and 13 great-grandchildren: Audrie, Anna Grace, Addison, Amy Kate, Alivia, Bella, Bailee, Lynlee, Conner, Carson, Makenzee, Charles James

"C.J." and Savannah Rose along with two brothers, Jerry and John Kemp.

Brummitt-McKenzie Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

## NEWS & MOVES

### Paxton buys Landmark newspapers

Paxton Media Group has announced the purchase of Landmark Community Newspapers LLC, a chain of daily and weekly newspapers based in Shelbyville, Kentucky. The deal, which was finalized in late May, includes the purchase of all 46 newspapers in the Landmark chain.

"We are very excited to add these newspapers into the PMG portfolio," said Jamie Paxton, PMG president and CEO. "PMG believes strongly in the value of local newspapers and the vital role they play in the communities that they serve. We appreciate Landmark choosing us to be the new stewards of these important community assets."

The Landmark purchase includes three Tennessee publications: the Roane County News, Kingston; The LaFollette Press; and the Morgan County News, Wartburg. PMG, which is



Thomasson

headquartered in Paducah, will now own nine newspapers in Tennessee with a total of 119 publications across 14 states.

"It's part of Paxton's ongoing strategy to acquire newspapers given the conditions and the nature of the newspaper industry," said Jana Thomasson, publisher of The Mountain Press and group publisher for the North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia and

See **NEWS & MOVES** Page 4

### TPA DIRECTORY UPDATES DUE JULY 16

If you have changes to your staff listed and/or want to update who receives The Tennessee Press, please send an email to [rgentile@tnpress.com](mailto:rgentile@tnpress.com).

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR

### July 2021

15: TPA Nominating Committee, via Zoom conference 11 a.m. EDT/ 10 a.m. CDT

### August 2021

19: TPA concurrent Board of Directors Meeting and Business Session, via Zoom conference at 10 a.m. EDT/ 9 a.m. CDT.

19: TPS annual stockholders meeting at 11:30 a.m. EDT/ 10:30 a.m. CDT

27: 2021 UT-TPA State Press Contests Awards Luncheon, Franklin. Registration starts July 23.

### September 2021

1-5: 2021 Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) National Convention, New Orleans, La.

Sept. 30-Oct. 2: National Newspaper Association's 135th Annual Convention and Trade Show, Hyatt Regency, Jacksonville, Fla.

### October 2021

14-17: National College Media Association Fall Convention 2021, offered in conjunction with Associated Collegiate Press, New Orleans, Sheraton New Orleans

15-16: America's Newspapers Family Owners and Next Generation Leadership Conference, The Broadmoor Hotel, Colorado Springs, Co.

17-19: America's Newspapers Senior Leadership Conference, to address challenges newspaper industry continues to face, The Broadmoor Hotel, Colorado Springs, Co.

### March 2022

March 8-13: 2022 Spring National College Media Association Convention, New York Marriott Marquis, New York, NY

### June 2022

23-25: Tri-State Press Convention June 23-25, 2022 Arkansas • Mississippi • Tennessee, to be held in Memphis

**NEWS & MOVES from Page 3**

South Carolina region. “Acquisitions provide opportunity for synergy when we are geographically connected.”

Landmark Community Newspapers traces its roots to 1966 when a group of eight local newspaper publishers decided to pool their resources and purchase a printing plant. The company was incorporated as Newspapers Inc. two years later in 1968. Newspapers Inc. was then purchased by Landmark Communications Inc. in 1973.

In addition to its Tennessee newspapers, the sale includes Landmark’s publications in Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Indiana, Iowa and New Mexico.

*The Mountain Press, Sevierville  
May 27, 2021*

**Marion County News moves offices to Kimball**

Marion County News recently moved its offices within the county from South Pittsburg to Kimball. Space efficiency was the primary motivation for the move. The move has largely been completed, but the paper is struggling to successfully

transfer some of their more rudimentary services. The employees are somewhere between exhausted and excited... well, perhaps more exhausted.

“The building that has housed the newspaper for just over 50 years is just no longer an efficient use of space,” according to publisher David Riley. “We had maintained the office more for the familiarity of our read-



Riley

ers but the decision was finally just too obvious that we needed to look for a more streamlined building for doing the paper in the new century,” Riley said.

There was a very intentional effort to find a buyer that was looking to open a business to generate revenue for the city and the county. “I wasn’t keen on selling to out-of-town investors who would simply sit on the property,” Riley continued, “I really felt like the building could be a goldmine for the right business, and I think we found that.”

The new location is at 969 Main Street, Suite B in Kimball (the former Simply Charmed location).

*Marion County News, Kimball  
April 22, 2021*

**Herald abandons print for digital only**

As we complete our 45th year of service to our community, the Independent Herald, Oneida, is announcing a change. Due to changes in the way Americans consume news and information, the way that businesses spend their marketing budgets, and the challenges these changes present to the newspaper industry, we have made a decision to end our print edition and transition to a digital producer of news.

While this transition will mean the end of the printed broadsheet newspaper, it does not mean the end of the Independent Herald. Make no mistake: The Independent Herald is not going out of business. We are Scott County’s largest circulating newspaper, but with a newspaper that averages 35,000 monthly user sessions (and exceeded 50,000 last month) and a social media following that exceeds 15,000, we already reach far more readers online than in print.

Nevertheless, we realize that this decision will catch a lot of our readers by surprise. The simple fact is that the changing dynamics of the newspaper industry have created difficult financial situations that require difficult choices — not just by this newspaper, but by literally every newspaper in America, large or small, urban or rural. The coronavirus pandemic only accelerated these shifting dynamics. Every newspaper will have to confront these issues sooner or later. We choose now.

*Independent Herald, Oneida  
June 8, 2021*

**Mirabella departs Magic Valley**

After more than seven years with Magic Valley Publishing, the parent company of The Bartlett Express, Editor-in-Chief Pamela Mirabella is handing in her Tennessee Press Pass and looking forward to new adventures.



Mrabella

Mirabella who studied law in college, started

her journalism career in 2005 as a columnist for The Humphreys County News-Democrat. She was hired as a general reporter at The Camden Chronicle in April of 2014. Working her way up the ranks to News Editor and then to the peak as Editor-in-Chief. She took over The Bartlett Express in July of 2020.

Mirabella is moving to her home state of Florida where she was born and raised. Her husband, Steven Mirabella has taken over as plant manager at a chemical plant in Palm Bay.

While she has hung up her

Tennessee Press badge, Mirabella said she still has some creative writing to do. “I plan on finishing up a couple of book projects that I started penning some years back. With news reporting, you seldom get opportunities to open up that creative side and focus on personal projects. This is my chance and I am thankful God provided it to me.

“I am grateful for the time spent here in Bartlett. This community is second-to-none when it comes to hospitality. I will take many new friendships with me. Over the last seven years, I have interviewed celebrities, musicians and politicians, but it is the folks I meet on the streets that are the most memorable stories to tell. They are what make America great and I am so humbled to be the person so many people have trusted to tell their stories.”

West 10 Publisher Scott Whaley said, “Pamela has done an outstanding job as editor of The Bartlett Express. Because of her the newspaper is a much better product. During her tenure we have seen our subscribers base nearly double.”

*Bartlett Express  
June 10, 2021*

**Ponder is new District 2 director**

Keith Ponder, publisher of The Tullahoma News and Regional Vice President for Lakeway Publishers



Ponder

Middle Tennessee, has been appointed as a Director of District 2 on the Tennessee Press Association (TPA) Board of Directors. His appointment by TPA President Daniel Richardson was effective as of June 25, 2021.

Ponder has been appointed to fill the unexpired term previously held

by Brian Blackley, who was the former publisher of The Tullahoma News. Ponder previously served on the TPA Board of Directors when he was publisher of The Daily Herald of Columbia.

*Staff reports  
June 25, 2021*

**Campbell named GM in Manchester**

Cody Campbell has been named as the new General Manager of the Manchester Times by Keith Ponder, middle Tennessee Vice-President of



Campbell

Lakeway Publishers, Inc. Campbell began work in early June.

Campbell is a Warren County native and comes to the Times with extensive management and

customer service background with over a dozen years of leadership experience.

“Cody has a clear strength in customer and community service that made him the front-runner for leading the Manchester Times,” Ponder said. “His background of getting results and working with people is a strength, and I’m happy to have him join our team.”

“I’d like to thank Lakeway for the opportunity,” Campbell said of his introduction, “I’m excited to immerse myself in Manchester and build solid relationships within the community.”

Campbell and his wife Brittany are the parents of five sons.

*Manchester Times  
June 16, 2021*

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**NEW LAW from Page 1**

disrupt government operations using the “clear and convincing” evidence standard.

**Law puts bad actors on notice**

The new law effectively puts requesters on notice that the public records process should not be misused as a method to simply harass government officials, although the law does not use the term ‘harassment.’ A fiscal note



Haile

making requests or stop making requests, avoiding the need for government to go to court.

The bill was largely guided by state Sen. Ferrell Haile, R-Galla-

tin, after the city of Gallatin complained of a citizen who flooded the city with public records requests over several months with seemingly little interest in the records received. The person had asked to inspect the records instead of getting copies, thus avoiding all labor costs. When he would come to view the records, he spent only a few minutes flipping through pages, Haile said.

TCOG supported reducing the impact of bad actors but pushed for safeguards to limit the chance that government officials might

use the process to seek injunctions against citizens with whom they disagreed or found annoying. The biggest concern was for political gadflies and others who have an intense interest in local government and make frequent requests for public records.

Instead of defining the behavior as “harassment” and linking it to a specific volume of requests made, as the previous bill did, the new law targets those who use the public records process itself as a weapon to disrupt government operations instead of as a tool to

gather information.

The law has a built-in tracking component to see how it is applied. It requires records custodians to file a written report with the Office of Open Records Counsel if they seek an injunction that includes the petition and any orders issued by the court. The open records counsel must include a summary of the reports in its annual report to the legislature.

*Deborah Fisher is executive director of Tennessee Coalition for Open Government.*

# Sharpen your editing with these press releases

The hyper partisanship in today's political landscape was on full display with passage of the American Rescue Plan. It passed on a straight party-line vote.

A Minnesota congressman joined in the chorus of his fellow Republicans characterizing the bill as bloated and wasteful.

Weeks later, he issued a new round of statements. This time, he took credit for the millions of dollars allocated for local projects courtesy of the \$1.9 trillion economic relief package.

Double-speak? The lawmaker staunchly defended both his vote and taking credit for the local funding. He was a longstanding advocate for the projects, but opposed the federal plan as full of spending unrelated to COVID-19.

Such exchanges are commonplace at all levels of government as omnibus bills are cobbled together to include anything and everything. It makes great campaign fodder for incumbents and challengers alike in the next election cycle. It's unfortunate, as well, that most incumbents can get by with having it both ways without constituents playing close attention.



## COMMUNITY NEWSROOM SUCCESS

JIM PUMARLO

But such proclamations by politicians are an excellent reminder for editors and reporters to be the eyes and ears for their readers and to pay close attention to the PR machines.

Don't misinterpret. Politicians campaign on the ability to deliver critical votes – for policies and dollars – that benefit local interests. When they do so, they deserve to take credit. At the same time, the partisan debate over the federal relief package should raise the red flag for editors when lawmakers – especially those staunchly opposed to the measure – suddenly “announce” money for local projects.

Incumbents always have taken advantage of the campaign season to step up their public relations efforts. Staffs are adept at seeking and seizing every opportunity.

A lawmaker shows up at a county board meeting to support federal funding for a highway project or a veterans home. An incumbent facing a stiff election challenge coincidentally asks for time on a city council agenda to brief local officials on federal or state legislative issues. A legislative candidate – again, during the heat of a campaign – shows up at a school board meeting to voice support for a building referendum or for more state dollars for education in the interest of closing the academic achievement gap.

Election cycles unfortunately have become year-round affairs, especially the higher you climb the political ladder. Lawmakers routinely seize all chances to get their names in newspapers.

That's understandable, but it's no excuse for newsrooms to ignore the obvious ploys for publicity. A lawmaker announces the rules for a state quilting contest. Another reports that shipping season has closed on the local waterway. Others remind property owners when taxes are due.

These items may well be legitimate news, and kudos to the staffs for creativity. But should a

lawmaker be given credit – even be mentioned – in the story? Absolutely not. There is no connection whatsoever between the news and the politician.

Funding for local projects delivered by the federal relief bill is news. The reports may well warrant mention of a local member of Congress, but it's highly questionable whether that is the story lead. A quote is likely sufficient coverage unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The flurry of press releases announcing details of the federal relief package draws attention to the broader issue of when to acknowledge a connection between the “whom” and “what” in everyday reporting. There is no universal right or wrong, but decisions demand consistency. Newsrooms should develop general guidelines, keeping in mind that all circumstances must be reviewed on their individual merits.

Newspapers typically confront these decisions in connection with “bad” or “uncomfortable” news. Take, for example, a business owner who asks that an embarrassing DWI ticket not be reported on the premise that the company

is one of the newspaper's largest advertisers.

Editors should be especially wary when prominent residents – politicians included – expect favorable treatment. These individuals expect that certain items will be published – and, at minimum, that they will be connected to this good news – items that would not ordinarily be reported.

Newspapers should take pause and evaluate. Bending the rules for “good” news can produce just as many headaches for editors as being asked to look the other way when “bad” news occurs.

*Jim Pumarlo is former editor of the Red Wing (Minn.) Republican Eagle. He writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He is author of “Journalism Primer: A Guide to Community News Coverage,” “Votes and Quotes: A Guide to Outstanding Election Coverage” and “Bad News and Good Judgment: A Guide to Reporting on Sensitive Issues in Small-Town Newspapers.” He can be reached at [www.pumarlo.com](http://www.pumarlo.com) and welcomes comments and questions at [jim@pumarlo.com](mailto:jim@pumarlo.com).*

## FISHER from Page 1

remains public.

The bill originated from Williamson County, where the sheriff's office said it was overwhelmed with requests from attorneys to provide contact information on people arrested, presumably to offer their services.

The bill passed, but not before an amendment to clarify that the street address of a reported crime remains public information regardless of whether or not it's the home address of the arrestee. A clause that would have made video confidential also was struck. The sheriff's association assured that journalists will not bear costs to redact reports. But it's something to monitor.

## Marsy's Law

In a welcome development, the Marsy's Law proposal to rewrite and expand the Victim's Bill of Rights in the state constitution failed after opposition from district

attorneys and law enforcement.

We were chiefly interested in how a new proposed constitutional right to privacy for crime victims would affect access to crime and court records. In other states where similar measures have passed, the location of reported crimes and the names of victims are now withheld.

If a victim had the right to keep their name and possibly details about a crime confidential, how would this affect the transparency of our criminal justice system and confidence in the judicial process?

The measure failed, however, not because of a victim privacy right, but because it proposed to grant a new right of standing to victims in every court action. The district attorney's conference anticipated millions more in cost to expand victim notification to the General Sessions and juvenile courts. Others giving victims standing in court could interfere with or delay plea bargains and sentencing.

Tennessee lawmakers clearly

have watched the messy rollout of Marsy's Law constitutional amendments elsewhere. They likely will continue to grapple with how to enhance services for victims without throwing a major kink in the criminal justice process.

## Bad actors

A new law three years in the making allows government to seek an injunction against people who use the public records process “with an intent to disrupt government operations.”

TCOG and Tennessee Press Association's lawyer Rick Hollow worked with the sponsor to amend the bill away from its previous loose and vague language. Several states have a mechanism to push back on problem public records requesters. Some states limit the volume of requests or allow government officials to not fulfill requests that are “harassing” or “unduly burdensome.”

We think Tennessee's solution is better and more sharply targeted

at a small number of people who might be misusing the public records process — a complaint for years by government officials.

Tennessee's new law requires the government agency prove “by clear and convincing evidence” — the highest standard — that a person made a public records request with an intent to disrupt government operations. A judge can enjoin such a person from making public records requests for up to a year.

The law also has a built-in tracking component so that any petitions or court orders must be filed with the state's Office of Open Records Counsel, who must compile them into its annual report.

*(Please turn to page 1 to see a separate, more-detailed article I wrote on this subject of the new law affecting requests for public records.)*

## Public notice and media control

Of particular concern is an effort

by government to stop spending money to advertise about upcoming meetings, thinking they can reach the same number by simply putting public notice on their website.

We think both are needed — outreach through advertising and website posting — to ensure the public is kept in the know.

Thankfully, a nasty bill to assert control over the news media and reduce press freedom was averted. It would have required the news media to provide “equal coverage in comparable time, place, magnitude, prominence, scale and manner in the same format as the original reporting of a case and controversy” if a final verdict in a court case provided less relief than originally sought by a petitioner. If they did not, they could be exposed to paying damages in a lawsuit.

*Deborah Fisher is executive director of Tennessee Coalition for Open Government. Its website is [www.tcog.info](http://www.tcog.info).*

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE I: Hartsville Vidette

# Oliver writes 1,000th column about Trousdale County history

**CHRIS GREGORY**  
The Hartsville Vidette  
December 31, 2020

John Oliver, shown here at the County Archives building, recently wrote his 1,000th column for The Vidette. His weekly pieces on the history of Trousdale County are among the most popular items among readers.

For nearly 20 years, The Hartsville Vidette readers have been treated to a weekly stroll through the rich history of Trousdale County.

John Oliver's weekly column, "Looking Back," ran in 2000 for the 1,000th time in The Vidette. The historical column has become one of the most popular items found in The Vidette each week and is a labor of love for Oliver, who also serves as county historian and president of the Trousdale County Historical Society.

"I don't think I've ever missed a week as I'll usually write ahead of time before vacation," Oliver said of his streak. "I believe 1,000 ran back in April, so I'm easily over it now."

Oliver, who retired from a teaching career at Trousdale County High School, began writing his column at the request of the Historical Society in the early 2000s.

"The Society had been wanting to do something to encourage people to get involved. At the same time, previous editors of The Vidette had asked me to write

a weekly column — gossip, that kind of stuff . . . I said, 'We have so many nice old pictures and can run something off that.' "

"Reading John's column is one of my highlights each week," said Chris Gregory, who has been the Vidette's editor since 2014. "Not having grown up in Hartsville, it's fascinating to learn something every week about the history of the place I've come to call home. Plus I've always been a history buff myself, which makes it all the more enjoyable!"

Oliver was also inspired to begin writing on Trousdale County history by a series of ads by the old Bank of Hartsville that ran decades ago in The Vidette. Each ad featured a historical photo.

"I started off with just a picture and a couple of paragraphs," he said. "People wanted to know more and since I like to write anyway, I began writing a long article."

Oliver said he actually has to edit himself when it comes to his weekly columns, as "I could go on writing and writing."

Writing a historical column has also helped promote the Historical Society to the people of Hartsville, especially those whose families stretch back generations locally.

"People bring in pictures based on what they see; they'll tell me more," Oliver said. "The best thing is, it makes me do research that I

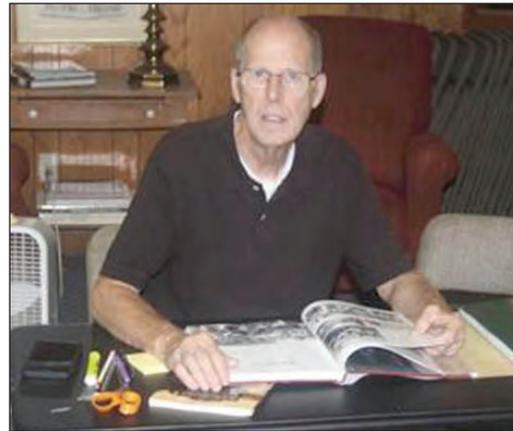


Photo by Chris Gregory, Hartsville Vidette  
John Oliver wrote his 1,000th column for The Vidette in 2020. His weekly Trousdale County history pieces are among the most popular items among readers.

might not have done anyway."

Hearing from Vidette readers also helps Oliver come up with topics for his columns. Typically he will dedicate a month's worth of columns to a particular topic, such as high school football, the founding of Hartsville by its namesake, James Hart, or even December's topic of local grocery stores.

"I've found all kinds of stuff that would have been lost and gone," Oliver said.

One example he gave was of an old school located where the current Vue at Church Street apartments (formerly Academy Apartments) are. In compiling

data on the school, Oliver heard from former teachers and found five different versions of the history — including a woman superintendent of schools in the late 1800s.

"I'd never heard of her; she was gone and had no family here. So we would have lost that! I had to take everything between those five, find what was common and then do the research in Sumner County and old newspapers. I'm still finding out old stuff!"

Oliver said he tries not to revisit old topics but said the influx of new faces into Hartsville and new readers of The Vidette make it easier to justify doing so.

"I'll tell people I wrote about that once before, it might have been 10 years ago," he said with a smile.

Coming up with topics each month is easy, as he said the County Archives and Historical Society provide plenty of material.

"I have a list of things I haven't written about yet," he said. "I have all kinds of people and businesses that have gone on and there's no one here to tell me about it."

In his research, he has come across a firsthand account of the 1862 Battle of Hartsville that ran in the Nashville Banner and also accounts of work along the Cumberland River in the early 1800s.

"I'm constantly getting stuff; it helps that the Historical Society now has a place to store it," Oliver said. "If we'd had this 50 years ago, there's no telling what more we would have."

Oliver said some of his favorite topics have included the Cumberland River, soldiers' accounts of wars including the American Revolution and War of 1812, farming and old businesses in Hartsville.

In addition to his Vidette columns, Oliver has written a novel and also helped put together two books on Trousdale County history. One contains a compilation of his historical columns and the other hundreds of photos of the county and its people. Both books are currently being sold by the Historical Society.

Oliver says he constantly hears from people who have read his articles and recognize a family member in a photo. He typically takes one day a week to write his column and compile his research.

"I hope people enjoy the articles. I don't think I'll ever run out of stuff to write about!" he said. "I try to cover a little bit of everything."

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE II: Kingsport Times-News

# Couple kicked off 2021 by moving bookstore to brick-and-mortar

**MIKE STILL**  
Kingsport Times-News  
January 3, 2021

While the COVID-19 pandemic has made things tight for many small businesses in Southwest Virginia, Carlie and Lloyd Tomlinson saw the pandemic as a reason to expand theirs.

The Tomlinsons kicked off 2021 by moving their online bookselling business, Appalachian Books, into brick-and-mortar quarters on Park Avenue in Norton, Va., with a ribbon cutting with City Council members and full shelves for New Year's Day browsers.

"This has fulfilled my dream to be able to cut a ribbon with

a giant pair of scissors," Carlie said with a laugh as Appalachian Books officially opened in a former florist's shop.

The Tomlinsons, who met as graduates of The University of Virginia's College at Wise, had moved to West Virginia as Lloyd completed his doctorate in history. They found themselves moving back to the area after Carlie was furloughed from her job at West Virginia University last May.

"We sat down and essentially asked what we wanted to do," Carlie said. "I looked at Lloyd and said I wanted to do this."

"It was a conversation and she wanted this," Lloyd added.

Carlie said that a librarian



Photos by Mike Still, Kingsport Times-News

Customers can get a reminder of where they bought their books with Appalachian Books' free stamp inside the cover.

friend at WVU also stirred her interest in a bookselling business along with the possibility of selling rare books.

From those conversations, Appalachian Books began as an online bookseller, Lloyd said.

"Our website had a quiz that customers could answer, and we'd select books for them based on their answers," Lloyd said. "Answer the quiz, pay your money and in a few days you'd get a book and a care package of bookmarks and stickers."

Carlie said the idea of an actual store grew stronger as they realized Wise County and Norton had gone from two or three bookstores in recent years to none as

locally owned shops in Big Stone and Coeburn closed.

Carlie said that a friend and coworker at UVA Wise encouraged her to take the leap to being a bookstore owner.

"If it wasn't for her, we probably wouldn't have done it," Carlie said.

While the quiz model of selling books has passed on, the Tomlinsons have acquired a variety of titles thanks to friends' donations.

The shelves at Appalachian Books, however, are not piles of old paperbacks.

"We have sections for science fiction, history, religion, food,

## TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE III: Murfreesboro Post

# Amelia's Closet founder prepares to offer job training

**JASON M. REYNOLDS**  
Murfreesboro Post  
December 31, 2020

*Editor's note: Time elements in this story have been updated to account for the fact that this story was originally published more than six months ago.*

Amelia's Closet, a clothing ministry for women looking for jobs, is getting an accessory makeover of sorts — the charity is renovating an old garage, where it will offer hands-on job training and food service.

The nonprofit, founded in 2014, as of late December 2020, was in the early stages of converting the old location of Reox Automotive garage in Murfreesboro in the Jackson Heights shopping center. The garage is on the side of Jackson Heights that fronts Medical Center Parkway, behind Toot's. Amelia's Closet is on the other side of the shopping center.

The new effort was to be called Liberty's Station.

Jody Powers, founder and executive director of Amelia's Closet, said she always said she would never do job training or food service.

"Never say never," she said.

Powers at the time said she hoped to open Liberty's Station in the spring. She plans to roll out services in phases. She wants to

offer a café, event space rental, crafts sales, car detailing, a convenience store drive-through, a coffee cart and a cleaning service.

Liberty's Station clients will receive 12-month paid internships in one of seven fields, Powers said. Each will receive a job coach and help finding a permanent job placement. Through a partnership with the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce, they will be certified in particular fields.

About 90 percent of the Liberty's Station clients will be adults with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities, Powers said.

"We want them to soar," Powers said. "We're not giving them a handout — we're giving them a hand up."

Minor renovation work was being done inside the building, but much of the work is waiting on her receiving a building permit from the City of Murfreesboro, Powers said.

The Murfreesboro Planning Commission in November approved the design and site plan for the Reox building, which is in the Gateway Overlay District, a strict zoning category in the Gateway area.

Mike Browning, the city's public information director, said that the plans have been submitted and should be reviewed in the coming

weeks.

"There have been no comments or permits generated yet," Browning said. "Their next step, with respect to the Planning Department, will be to submit for the 'prior-to-permit site plan review' and 'approval process.'"

McFarland Construction offered to be the contractor.

Amelia's Closet will retain its current storefront and continue to operate the clothing ministry there, Powers said. That ministry provides professional clothing and accessories for women for interviews when they are entering the workforce, especially from jail or domestic violence situations or other hardships. Clients also may receive a week's worth of professional and casual clothing when they secure a job. Appointments are by referral only from other non-profits.

Powers said she felt called to found Amelia's Closet after seeing women at church who had left jail and needed clothing for job interviews. After she retired from a graphic design career, she said that God reminded her of a "burden" to do the ministry.

She said she also felt a calling to offer job training despite that not being her skill-set. She said she hesitated to tell her husband, but when she did, he said, "That's too crazy not to be from God."



Photo by Jason M. Reynolds, Murfreesboro Post

Jody Powers is the founder and executive director of Amelia's Closet. The clothing nonprofit is planning to offer job training services in a converted garage. The uniform (at left) is a model of what Liberty's Station female workers will wear. Powers said she felt called to found Amelia's Closet after seeing women at church who had left jail and needed clothing for job interviews. She said she also felt a calling to offer job training despite that not being her skill-set.

## BOOKSTORE from Page 6

rare books, fiction, classics, romance, textbooks and Appalachian-Southern literature," Carlie said.

"We plan to make an area in the back for workshops, book clubs, sewing circles and general craft groups."

"We've got a pretty good children's section and a healthy young adult section too," Lloyd added.

Carlie said that Appalachian Books will even deliver orders to customers in Wise County and Norton.

"We've got reading tables and free tea and coffee too and we socially distance," Carlie said. "Masks are required, and we have those, too."



UVA Wise graduates Carlie and Lloyd Tomlinson have opened Appalachian Books in a former florist's shop on Park Avenue in downtown Norton, Va.. Carlie said, "We plan to make an area in the back for workshops, book clubs, sewing circles and general craft groups."

Carlie said that the bookstore fills a niche that Norton Mayor Joe Fawbush mentioned at the ribbon cutting.

"For young people to have things to do, we figured that we as young people had to move back here," Carlie said.



**CELEBRATING 150  
YEARS OF SERVING  
THE NEWSPAPERS OF  
TENNESSEE**

## NOTICE OF MEMBER MEETINGS

### TPA Concurrent Board Meeting & Business Session Aug. 19

TPA President Daniel Richardson has called a concurrent Board of Directors Meeting and Business Session for Thursday, August 19, via a Zoom video conference at 10:00 a.m. EDT/ 9:00 a.m. CDT. All member newspapers are invited to observe the Board meeting and to participate in the election of officers and directors.

### Annual TPS Stockholders Meeting set August 19

The Tennessee Press Service will hold its annual stockholders meeting at 11:30 a.m. EDT/ 10:30 a.m. CDT on August 19 via Zoom. Stockholders will receive an update from TPS President Dave Gould and will elect two directors to serve three-year terms.

Please contact Robyn Gentile or Carol Daniels for the Zoom registration link via email to: [rgentile@tnpress.com](mailto:rgentile@tnpress.com) or [cdaniels@tnpress.com](mailto:cdaniels@tnpress.com).

# Here's a simple, practical way to develop ad campaign ideas

Let's say you're meeting with a florist who has been running ads with the headline, "For all your floral needs." Of course, you and I know this is an empty headline that speaks to no one in particular. It's a terrible idea and a waste of the advertiser's budget.

What should you do?

**1. Have a conversation.** The first step is to diplomatically encourage the advertiser to consider something else. The headline – as weak as it is – may be near and dear to his or her heart. The florist has been spending money to run it, so don't criticize. Simply say something like, "Your idea opens the door to a lot of ad possibilities. How would you feel about seeing where those possibilities lead?"



**AD-LIBS®**

JOHN FOUST

Every word of your statement is true. "All of your floral needs" does open the door to other ideas. And you do want to encourage a look at other possibilities.

This approach sends a signal that you are not looking for a quick, hit-and-run sale. You're aiming for a low-pressure, collaborative effort to promote the florist shop.

**2. Break it down.** Like a technician who takes a machine apart

to examine its inner workings, it's important to learn specifics. What does "all" really mean? Make a list of the needs which the florist meets. It's better to ask, "What do your customers need?" than, "What do you do?" That keeps the focus where it should be – on the florist's customers.

As you go through the process, you'll probably learn that the florist provides flowers for all kinds of occasions: weddings, anniversaries, proms, funerals, Christmas, church events, Valentine's Day and birthdays, among many others. The point is to turn a generality into specifics. With the right details, you'll have plenty of raw material for new ideas.

**3. Develop a strategy.** The next

step is to look at the yearly calendar and figure out the best times to promote flowers for those occasions. While some are year-round and some are seasonal (Spring for wedding planning, for example), other occasions rely on the advertiser's records and industry trends for development of an ad schedule and a creative strategy.

**4. Create continuity.** How are you going to tie everything together? Each ad should look like – and sound like – it comes from the same advertiser. There are a number of elements to consider: typography, color, illustrative style, ad sizes, frequency, coordination between print and digital, and ways to link to their web site.

This four-step formula can help

you generate more sales for your paper and for your advertisers. The end result will be a series of targeted and consistent messages, instead of the same watered-down ad over and over again. And the good news is that you don't even have to start with a bad idea like, "for all your fill-in-the-blank needs." Just start by figuring out what specific things your advertiser can do for their customers – and you'll find that the future looks rosy.

*(c) Copyright 2021 by John Foust. All rights reserved. John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com*

## PIPELINE from Page 2

That's good for j-schools, but how have they responded?

Kim didn't name names, but Northwestern, Columbia, NYU, USC, UC Berkeley, and Missouri are nationally-recognized journalism schools that have long been premiere training grounds for aspiring journalists. These specific institutions offer undergraduate and/or graduate journalism programs, but based on the curricula listed on their respective websites, journalism students aren't required to enroll in courses that teach them how to be entrepreneurial.

Mizzou's undergraduate journalism program, for example, still notes that "Journalism students find successful careers in a range of disciplines with one factor in common: storytelling (emphasis theirs)." But if everyone with an Internet connection has the ability to become a storyteller, how do journalists survive in a world where there are an infinite amount of stories?

Northwestern's undergraduate journalism program requires six core courses: "Journalism in Practice, Journalism Residency, Media Law and Ethics, Multimedia Storytelling, Philosophy of Modern Journalism, and Reporting and Writing." The Journalism in Practice course offers "hands-on reporting experiences in the Chicago area," which in the past has included a section on "Media Innovation and Chicago's Startup Culture," but that is one out of five sample sections that students

can enroll in. USC, UC Berkeley & NYU's core journalism curriculum also follow a similar pattern: in j-school, media entrepreneurship is simply an afterthought.

We should all be deeply concerned. Our country's top journalism schools have become a critical training ground for the next generation of newsroom leaders, but none of these programs seem to be focused on teaching students how to conduct user research, find product market fit, design and develop products, acquire customers, and sell their products - everything that's required for a media company, or creator, to operate and survive on the Internet today.

Meria Gabel, a 2018 graduate of Columbia Journalism School, makes a similar point in her paywalled Business Insider piece where she describes the lack of freelancing curriculum being taught in j-schools. Despite receiving an Ivy League journalism education and completing six internships, she was unable to land a full-time job in journalism for a year. Instead, she taught herself how to freelance to salvage a journalism career that had barely even begun. "I felt as if the journalism school that taught me to idealize the importance of the craft had failed to teach me the realities of the industry," she writes. "The journalism-school-to-staff-reporter pipeline we were told existed, doesn't anymore."

From a university's standpoint, however, their behavior is rational. Top national newsrooms, like the New York Times and LA Times,



Submitted photo

**New college journalism courses are needed to train budding journalists to be entrepreneurial to forge a career in today's digital environment.**

aren't looking to hire media entrepreneurs so why would they teach those skills? Is this our answer to who becomes a journalist today? Is the future of journalism defined by the lucky few who can land full-time jobs in financially stable news companies, or are they the creative visionaries who learn how to build their own news brands, products, and future institutions?

Terry Nguyen is a staff reporter for Vox.com who graduated from USC's journalism school in 2019. She feels lucky to be working at Vox Media, and runs a free personal Substack, but she shares that her career goal is to eventually launch a nonprofit newsroom and/or a media collective. "Having ownership over your work, your goals and the impact you have on

your community is very appealing to me," Nyugen explains. "A lot of the media business is conducted beyond the scope of the people who produce the work, and I want to reduce the number of situations where the work is out of my control." She humbly adds that the idea of running her own media organization is a "far-fetched vision," but in reality, it's not.

Teenage content creators are making millions of dollars more or less on their own terms, and seasoned YouTubers, like Marques Brownlee who started vlogging when he was 14 years old, and Linus Sebastian, who also started vlogging in 2008, have demonstrated how to build profitable media companies covering niche topics. Journalists can do this too, and

tech platforms, like Facebook, Substack, and Twitter, are now competing with one another to provide financial and operational support. Not everyone will succeed or aspire to be an entrepreneur, but the idea of being one has become massively more appealing, and achievable, for young, talented creatives.

Given their outsized role in cultivating journalism's talent pipeline, top j-schools should think about preparing students for the future, not for the newsroom roles that exist today. As legacy local newspapers continue to downsize and the number of openings in national newsrooms remain limited, we have a responsibility to guide the next generation of journalists to envision and design their own career paths. Arming students with an entrepreneurial mindset, whether they become freelancers or start their own media collective, should be considered mandatory because it's essential for our collective future. The people who successfully pioneer new products and build lasting institutions will ultimately be the ones to resolve our relentless existential crisis: What is journalism and what is news?

*Yvonne Leow is a digital media consultant and founder of Bewilder. In 2018, she co-founded a local media company called By The Bay, and has previously consulted for tech companies like Nextdoor and Sequoia Capital. Yvonne formerly worked for Vox.com, Digital First Media, and the Associated Press. You can find her at @YvonneLeow.*

# Tennessee should allow public review of redistricting maps before finalizing them

The redrawing of congressional and state legislative districts every 10 years can make and break political careers, providing new opportunities for some and placing brick walls in front of others.

But beyond an individual politician's future, the most significant impact of redistricting is the potential reshaping of political power in a state by packing or cracking districts for a particular advantage. We know this as "gerrymandering" and the ultimate goal of some politicians is to increase or decrease the number of Republicans or Democrats in Congress or statehouses.

There are other interests as well, such as keeping communities of interest together to preserve representation. For example, splitting a city or county when it could be kept together could be viewed as weakening that community's voice.

In Tennessee, as in most states, the process is done by state lawmakers, and more precisely, by House leadership and Senate leadership of the majority party. Others may submit proposed redistricting maps, but it's House and Senate leadership maps that will be adopted.



## TN COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

DEBORAH FISHER

Despite concrete steps toward more openness in the last redistricting, which included the House creating a website with information and a hotline, the opportunity for the public to view the draft state legislative maps was still only about one week before they were adopted, and even less for the congressional map.

A recent report by ThinkTennessee compares the redistricting process in our state with others. It points out that Tennessee citizens have had less access to draft district maps than those in most other states.

Citizens in 33 other states are allowed to view draft maps, with

many of those states inviting public comment about the maps. Leaders in 32 states hold public meetings to gather community input before maps are drawn.

A growing number of states, 15 to date, have created commissions, to handle redistricting. Some of them are independent.

Can and should state leaders up their game on transparency and open the door for more public discussion?

Yes, they can and they should.

We are in a fractious political environment in which high stakes are regularly attached to decisions and events. In Tennessee, Democrats fear that Republicans could try to take away a congressional seat by slicing up Davidson County, a solidly blue dot in an otherwise sea of red voters in the state. Republicans want to take back the U.S. House after a contentious and challenged presidential election, and Tennessee could help.

Some think engineering districts to be "too red" or "too blue" further deepens the political

divisions.

Population has shifted away from rural areas and small towns, such as in West Tennessee, and surged in others, particularly in the counties surrounding Nashville. Decisions on how to rebalance political districts to match updated population numbers will not be easy.

On a practical level, lawmakers must develop a plan that will withstand any potential legal challenge in court.

Legislative district maps must meet certain state rules and congressional plans must not violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In fact, the 1962 landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that federal courts could rule on challenges to congressional reapportionment plans was from a Tennessee case, *Baker v. Carr*.

TCOG has advocated for access to public records and public meetings since 2003. Citizens deserve to know what their government is doing. They deserve to know what

their representatives will be voting on in plenty of time before the vote — whether that's at a meeting of a city planning commission or a state legislative committee.

Here, their government leaders are redrawing lines, possibly changing who will represent them in the General Assembly or in Congress. Citizens need a chance to understand the concepts and priorities for the maps before they are a done deal. A chance to provide feedback.

We know from previous years that concept maps for new legislative districts circulate internally months before they ever make it in front of a committee of the General Assembly. Last time, a candidate for a yet-to-be-announced new district in Williamson County even put information on his website.

Those maps, those concepts for change, should be made available to the public earlier.

*Deborah Fisher is executive director of Tennessee Coalition for Open Government.*

# Four reasons your newsroom could use an FPV drone

STACEY WOLEFEL  
Reynolds Journalism Institute  
May 6, 2021

You may have seen it by now. A camera flies toward a neon-lit bowling alley and swoops in the front door, making orbits around the place while pacing a bowling ball gliding down a lane, buzzing the heads of would-be cosplayers of The Big Lebowski, and piercing a window behind the bar to spy on revelers there, all before crashing into a set of bowling pins to end its flight. The movements are so smooth, the flying so precise, you wonder if this is all CGI made by some powerful Hollywood lab. It's not. It's the actual flight of a small FPV drone, done in one take over live people and moving bowling balls.

"FPV" stands for First Person View, a reference to how pilots fly these drones. Rather than a pilot looking down at a screen and flying by watching the images there, FPV pilots wear immersive goggles that give them the feeling they're inside the drone, flying it

like a tiny, on-board pilot. This change in piloting perspective gives FPV drones the ability to maneuver more precisely and fly missions no standard drone pilot would ever attempt.

FPV drones are front and center right now due to DJI's release of its first FPV drone, simply named "DJI FPV." DJI is the worldwide leader in drone sales, with a market share that would make executives at Starbucks or Coca-Cola faint. But the company had, up until this year, focused its drone design on traditional models for photography and aerial survey, never putting its sizable toe into the FPV market. Priced at around \$1,300, the kit comes with a drone, goggles and a traditional controller. Throw in another \$200 and you also get an innovative hand controller that gives pilots even sharper control, using hand motions to fly the drone. Even with the cost of the extra controller, that price is comparable to what newsrooms spend now on drones, falling between the \$1,000



Submitted

DJI Air 2S and the \$1,600 Phantom 4 V 2.0.

FPV drone technology has been the playground of drone racing and thrill-seekers in general. But there's a case to be made that this tech has newsroom applications. Here's a list of reasons you might want to put on the goggles and fly an FPV drone for your next story:

## Speed

FPV drones are fast — really fast. If you're flying a late-model Mavic right now, you're topping

out at about 45 mph in Sport mode. So how about more than doubling that? That's right, the DJI FPV can reach speeds of 97 mph. Considering the FAA limits drones in the U.S. to 100 mph, this is basically as fast as you are ever going to fly a drone. Suddenly, those tracking shots the newsroom needs of trucks on the interstate no longer mean you have to try to get out in front and hold a shot before the vehicle zooms by. The fantastic speeds at which FPV drones are capable give you the ability to

literally fly circles around most moving objects you'd want to track. Only a full-fledged NASCAR race is going to leave these drones in the dust.

## Breaking news

Second only to the viral bowling alley video in terms of recent FPV flying feats are several videos from Iceland. Covering the eruption of a volcano seems to me to be the ultimate breaking news story, and

See **DRONE** Page 10



## Tennessee Press Service Advertising Placement Snapshot

	ROP:	Networks:
May 2021	\$63,095	\$17,788
Year* as of Feb. 28	\$472,700	\$106,808

\* The TPS Fiscal Year runs Dec. 1 through Nov. 30

# Local papers and grocery stores face common problems

America's largest internet-based retailer, Amazon.com, continues to bite into the already meager profits of local grocery stores with additional distribution centers and a growing list of low-priced private label products.

The added warehouses are another step by Amazon to hijack the customer base of local brick-and-mortar stores in large and small communities. The move is affecting ma-and-pa operations and major chains.

Many smaller grocery stores, key advertisers in most community newspapers, will have to reinvent themselves to maintain their local customer base.

According to a University of Minnesota study, almost two-thirds of our nation's rural grocery stores will close in the next 10 years. In most cases there will never be a new store to replace it.

## Community anchors

The economic conditions affecting smaller grocery stores are the same ones affecting other hometown businesses, including newspapers. The local grocery store and the hometown newspaper are part of the backbone of every Main Street. Both, along with a local bank, local health center and community school are necessary to create a complete local community.

The greatest problem effecting the rural grocery store as well as the hometown paper is lack of interest by younger generations in owning or managing a small community business. The grocery business is hard work. Most hometown grocers are expected to



**GET REAL**

PETER W. WAGNER

be open long hours seven days a week. It is a business that requires the owner to be an expert in multiple areas. There are few individuals of today's generation interested in working that hard.

And the same can be said about the newspaper business. Owning and producing a good newspaper requires countless hours attending meetings, taking pictures, selling ads, writing news stories, editing outside material, laying out the paper, managing postal reports, hiring employees and finally overseeing the paper's delivery.

Yet both businesses offer great satisfaction. Grocery stores are necessary for the flavor and health of the community. They are a gathering point in any community. Their customer base reaches far beyond local homemakers to include local restaurants, nursing homes, schools and day-care centers.

The community newspaper, meanwhile, is more than just a billboard of weekly happenings. It is the first writer of local history, the creator of community consensus, the booster of school organizations and public enterprise and the watchdog of local government. It is unfortunate that many schools of journalism have turned their back on teaching print journalism and instead preach the fu-

ture of public relations and digital blogging for financial success and personal satisfaction.

## Competition

More than 90 percent of rural grocers report their most troubling challenges are competition with large grocery chains, high operating costs and narrow profit margins.

This, too, is true of the publishing business. The world's demand for instant information, the many social media companies providing citizen journalism and the declining number of businesses to buy advertising are all curtailing the hometown paper.

Yet, while many praise bloggers and independent websites for their quick delivery of the news, only the local paper has the staff, information resources and credibility to present a balanced a local story in one clear-cut, easy to understand package. Once again, the printed report is the only one that can be easily filed and retrieved when needed. Most important, the story can be as simple as Johnny's winning hit at last week's baseball game or as involved as the city's plan to build a new multimillion-dollar water system.

## Buildings

One final reason the University of Minnesota says local grocers are thinking of calling it quits is the condition of their buildings.

Many grocery stores are housed in structures over 50 years old. They are expensive to keep up, heat, air-condition, light and offer limited opportunities to create higher profit

departments. Putting up a new, modern facility in their limited market is simply out of the question.

Many newspapers also are located in older structures designed for the days of hot type. They are appreciated for their easy-to-find, longtime location but otherwise out of date.

## The future

So, what can newspapers do to expand their financial base in a changing future? Twitter instantly reports the news of a two-car collision in town. CNN can instantly report that a plane crashed while flying from Paris to Egypt. But neither have the heartwarming, refrigerator posting of stories in the local paper.

America's hometowns need their newspapers to create consensus and build awareness. To continue to do so it may be necessary for publishers to expand their services for additional income.

1. These could include opening an in-house digital printing operation with modern short-run digital presses. Digital printing is quick, interfaces with existing design platforms and can be custom addressed as it is printed.

2. Offer web design and social media content services. Most businesses feel they need to be on Facebook and Twitter but don't know what to post to create daily customer interest and response.

3. Provide a retail service not otherwise available in your community. This might be a coffee bar, (a great opportunity to overhearing story ideas), small office supply store, paperback bookstore or a

local product gift store.

4. Create an in-house advertising agency to serve local banks, multi-location retailers, manufacturers, and public service organizations. Newspapers already have quality writers and designers to produce print, radio and social media campaigns and you can outsource desired television commercials.

5. Become a local online only broadcast station with occasional podcasts by local experts on food, family relations, the public schools, agriculture, gardening and whatever else is of interest to the community.

6. Produce local community events such as bridal shows, job fairs, summer theater in the park and color runs. Along with new advertising opportunities charge for participation, booth space and sponsorships. Some papers even get a cut of the food and beverage sales.

The future is changing but it is not bleak. The community paper has a strong future, but it will take vision and imagination to continue to be the king of the hill.

*Peter W. Wagner is founder and publisher of the award-winning N'West Iowa REVIEW and nine additional newspapers and shoppers. He often is called The Idea Man and has been a presenter at more than 300 state and national press association and conventions and publishing group meetings. You can contact him regarding his programs "100 Ideas for Fun and Profit," "Seven Steps to Selling Success" or "Watch Your P's and Q's" by e-mailing [pw@iowainformation.com](mailto:pw@iowainformation.com) or calling his cell 712-348-3550.*

## DRONE from Page 9

it's clear the FPV drone makes closeup photography of the event possible (even if a few get melted). The trademark shots that make FPV drone videos memorable are the ones where the aircraft seemingly threads the tightest of needles, all while flying at high speeds. Imagine that capability focused on breaking news stories.

## Sports

One of the toughest jobs when covering sports is getting the camera off the sidelines and closer to the

action. The FPV drone has the capability of weaving its way through parts of the arena we don't usually get to see, providing behind-the-scenes views that go beyond the action on the field. Or perhaps you just want to simulate what it feels like to take part in events that cover wide areas of ground at high speeds. The FPV drone can travel along right with the athletes, joining them even as they fly through the air.

## News promotion

Just as with sports, the views an FPV drone can provide of what the audience usually doesn't see in the

newsroom, in the studio or in the field can spice up news promotion and give viewers a look at how their favorite newscast gets made. Or use it to show off the natural beauty of the viewing area.

All this promising footage comes with a few caveats. As drone pilots flying commercial missions under the FAA's Part 107 rules, there are some things FPV drones can do, but may not under current rules. The law still prohibits flying over people or over most moving vehicles. But for all the FPV drone shots you see where that happens, I see an easy path to record the same footage legally. And remember that

indoor flying—something at which FPV drones excel—doesn't fall under the FAA's restrictions. The biggest hurdle is flying beyond our visual line of sight (VLOS).

There will be a training task to tackle for any newsroom buying an FPV drone. Pilots need to get used to seeing the flight through goggles and not their own eyes from the ground. The use of a visual observer seems indispensable for newsrooms so that someone can keep their eyes on the drone at all times. And there will need to be practice time to work out a whole inventory of shots standard drone pilots have never attempted before.

The bottom line is that, as any newsroom looks to add to its drone fleet, an FPV drone makes the most sense. It can still capture the traditional drone shots needed day in and day out, but also give the most daring and creative members of the staff a chance to really stand out visually on an increasingly competitive airborne playing field.

*Stacey Woelfel is the director of aerial journalism at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute. Andrew Moore, journalism student at the Missouri School of Journalism and drone pilot, contributed to this article.*

# A Pastor's Progress: Lloyd recalls journey after COVID-19 diagnosis

**ROBBY O'DANIEL**  
The LaFollette Press  
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*Editor's note: This story was edited to fit the space.*

It was Thursday, Oct. 6, and East LaFollette Baptist Church pastor Zach Lloyd didn't feel the best.

He was returning home after work, and he called his wife, Sara.

He told her: "I don't feel great. I think it's my sinuses."

Zach's sinuses are always an issue in the fall, but still, he decided to get it checked out.

Then like so many others, Zach was given the news: he had tested positive for the coronavirus on Oct. 8.

"Completely healthy guy prior to," Sara said. "He's the guy I'd force to go to the doctor once a year, have a sinus infection-type thing, and he was good to go."

Sara and their daughter, Lily, tested positive for the coronavirus on Oct. 12.

Their son, Titus, had symptoms but tested negative, Sara said.

"Mine was just a dry cough and fatigue," Sara said. "Lily and Titus both had the dry cough. She had a fever, and just kinda snotty, almost more like a sinus infection as far as symptoms."

Zach's experience was different.

## The hospital

From that Thursday night going into the following morning, Zach was having a hard time sleeping. He had a fever and a cough, Sara said.

Zach said, "That whole week, I had known of people in the community that had had it, so when I went to the hospital that following Friday on the 16th, I thought, OK, I knew a guy real well that had been in the hospital for 10 days, so I thought, OK, I got it; it's bad, but give it about a week to 10 days, and I'll be back on my feet."

Zach went from the emergency room to being transferred to Methodist Medical Center in Oak Ridge on Oct. 18.

"As we went into their COVID unit, they put this big blue transparent tarp over the top of me, or plastic sheet, and they wheeled me back to the room and I knew then that things were going to be different," Zach said.

Zach wasn't getting better.

"He just continued to get worse

basically just throughout his stay; he had COVID pneumonia at that point," Sara said.

A bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP) helped, Sara said, but on Oct. 24, Zach was intubated, and he was put on a ventilator.

Soon after, Zach was taken to Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"And we sit there, and I remember the first couple of days [in Oak Ridge], but honestly, I don't remember the trip from Oak Ridge to Nashville," Zach said. "I stayed at Oak Ridge for roughly five to seven, eight days something like that, got down here on the 24th of October and I was so sedated and basically paralyzed because I couldn't — if I had any type of stimulation on my body, I would just go into these big coughing fits and cough like crazy."

Calling them coughing fits may be doesn't do justice to just how long they lasted.

"They had him on lots of sedation meds, so he was really unaware of his surroundings, because he was just so sick," Sara said.

"He'd have these coughing fits that would last up to an hour. He just couldn't stop coughing related to the COVID pneumonia, so the only way they could get him to stop coughing was just to sedate him."

Zach was placed on two extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) units at Vanderbilt, Sara said.

Sara, the director of operations at Tennova LaFollette Medical Center, explains ECMO as essentially "artificial lungs outside your body."

Zach said he doesn't remember the month of November or most of December.

"From what I gather from talking to Sara and talking to the doctors, that's a good thing because there were many dark days that they didn't think I was going to make it," Zach said.

He said it was odd to lose time.

"As far as most of it goes, I just don't remember any of those things," Zach said. "My dad talked about coming down on Thanksgiving. I don't remember that. Sara's talked about coming down and just sitting next to the bed. I don't remember any of that."

Sara said he was heavily sedated until around the week before Christmas.

"There were days when we



Photo by Robby O'Daniel, The LaFollette Press

Zach and Sara Lloyd.

didn't know he was going to make it," Sara said. "You just get those calls, and it was very dark, really dark days."

## The transplant

Sara was asked if Zach would want a double lung transplant.

"And I kinda wrestled with that because a transplant is very life-altering," Sara said.

Sara talked with family and friends, and when Zach came to, he said yes.

Sara recalled what Zach said: "If it gives me a day, a month, a year extra with my kids, that's what I want."

There were concerns whether Zach, who hadn't walked in the previous eight weeks, was strong enough for surgery, and the transplant committee met.

"They explained that the committee had approved for him to be on the transplant list and he had one of their highest transplant scores, which means he was really in need of lungs per se, and that was a great Christmas gift," Sara said.

But then the Lloyds were thrown another curveball.

At about 8 p.m. one night, Sara was getting her kids ready for bed when the doctor called.

Sara said, "He called, and he said, 'Sara, I wanted to let you know that we think Zach has had a stroke,' and I said, 'What do you mean?'"

Sara said the doctor told her it didn't show up on the CT scan, but Zach can't see well.

"We're just going to pray," Sara said.

Sara made her way to Nashville. On the way, she sent a text message to others who were praying for them: "I need prayer. This could be really bad."

Sara didn't get there until 1 a.m. "Zach's kinda in and out of it," Sara said. "He's sedated at that point, and he couldn't see anything."

Zach was taken off the transplant list, Sara said.

"So it was just a long night, lots of praying," Sara said, "and the next morning, he was able to see a little bit of light ... just very minimal."

But later that day, when on a Facetime call with his kids, Zach says he is able to see them. They're blurry, but he can see them.

"I would chalk it up to it was a miracle," Sara said. "He was blind, and now he can see."

Zach called the episode strange, but he said God was moving.

"God just opened up doors to where people were there at the right time and the right place to help me come through this, and then from Dec. 24 to when I gave consent to have a double-lung transplant, from that day to the [January] 28th, it was pretty much just a waiting game," Zach said. "They were amazed at my strength."

Zach was off the transplant list for days but was added back.

Now it was just a matter of when the transplant would take place.

"That's emotionally difficult because you think you're going to get a transplant, and then within an hour of surgery, you're told, 'No, you're not going to get a transplant today.'" Sara said. "We just continued to pray because we knew God had a plan, and yeah, it was rough and it was difficult and it was very trying, but we had so many people, such a great support system, people just praying, our church, our friends, our co-workers, people across the U.S. were praying."

Then came the day: Jan. 28, and the transplant was a success.

"To be the first double-lung related to COVID at Vandy is huge," Sara said. "To be the youngest, sickest person at Vandy is huge, and honestly it's just the work of God."

Zach said the only time he thought about dying was just before the operation.

A doctor sat down and talked with Zach about the severity of the operation, and Zach understood.

And he wrote.

He wrote notes to his father, his mother and his stepfather.

He wrote notes to his siblings.

He wrote a letter to Sara, and he wrote individual letters to Titus and Lily.

He sat at night in his room and prayed, telling God that he knows he has a purpose and plan.

"I'm just waiting on you to move, and whatever happens, you receive the honor and the glory from it," Zach said.

Then came a peace. He told the doctor that she could keep all the notes. He wasn't going to need them.

"I don't even remember going into OR," Zach said. "By the time I was down there, the anesthesia had done knocked me out."

## The parade

Today, Zach is making strong progress, Sara said.

"He will be on anti-rejection medicine the rest of his life, which makes him immunocompromised," Sara said. "... Your body's going to think that those are foreign objects because they're not your lungs, so you suppress the immune system to try to trick your body that those are your lungs."

All told, Zach spent 124 days at Vanderbilt University Medical

**PASTOR** from Page 11

Center.

“Ultimately everybody got on board for the transplant, so after the third time of trying to get a set of lungs, they finally happened, and on the 28th, we had the lung transplant, double-lung transplant and from there, it’s just been trying to rehab and get stronger and get my lungs to where they’re full capacity and they’re working at the most optimal level that they can,” Zach said.

He was released from Vanderbilt to begin rehabilitation on Feb. 26, Sara said.

On that day, there was a mini-parade in the hospital, as people lined up on either side of the hall, as Zach was discharged.

“The medical ICU unit, MICU, they became family,” Zach said. “I get a little bit more emotional talking about them. They became

one of my biggest support systems. Again, my family is a great support system, the biggest. My church has been so supportive and a great support system, but medical ICU was right behind all of them. And I created so many friendships with the nurses and nurse practitioners and the doctors there on that floor. There was a whole group of us that sat in my room the night of the Super Bowl and they watched the Super Bowl with me.”

He got the word on Feb. 26 that he was leaving at 2 p.m., to go to Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital.

“It was probably 1:50, 1:55, I heard a couple of people out in the hallway, and I thought one or two are coming to see me off,” Zach said. “And that was more than I expected because they’re busy. Being an ICU unit, they’re super busy, and I remember my legs are so weak after being in a bed for four-

and-a-half months. I was transferring from my bed to the wheelchair that they were putting me on.”

All of a sudden, he heard them cheering him on.

“And I got in the chair,” Zach said. “They pushed me out the door, and I was expecting again to see maybe three or four people, five at the most.”

But there were more than five. “Going back to the elevators to leave, that entire hallway was lined with every doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, RN, it was lined with everybody from MICU, and I was completely overwhelmed,” Zach said. “They had been playing a party song, and they were out there just laughing, talking about some of the times we had together.”

They offered words of encouragement as he passed by, Zach said.

“I don’t know if people realize, and I didn’t,” Zach said. “I certainly didn’t. This is a major strain on the health care system, COVID right now. These people at hospitals are seeing patients lose their lives and families being hurt affected by this and not just COVID but other circumstances that people are going through.”

Zach is still in Nashville for rehab.

**The kids**

Throughout this time, Zach has frequently had video calls with their kids: Lily, 10, and Titus, 6.

“They’ve been troopers,” Sara said. “It’s been very difficult.”

Zach said, since October, he has been able to see his children exactly one time: Jan. 23.

“You could tell she [Lily] was processing it,” Zach said. “It took Titus a while to really understand what was going on. But it was great. I loved it. I can’t wait until I’m able to see them again. We get to talk to each other every day on Facetime.”

Sara said, “I think they’ve learned to cope as much as you can. It’s hard to process. It’s hard for me to process, and I’m an adult. So I can’t even imagine how big of a struggle it was for them.”

Sara said, “I’m not just saying this because he’s my husband, but he’s a good man. Zach’s kinda the life of the party. Everybody loves him. He has such a great heart, a heart for God, and he desires to help people, and he’s just such a great dad.”

Zach was able to be at Lily’s fifth-grade night for basketball earlier this year in an unconventional way.

Lily held an iPad that Zach was on during the recognition at Valley View.

“To be able to do that and to see her and just to encourage her during that time, it was something really special,” Zach said.

**The politics**

Zach prays that people are mindful and understand the situation with COVID-19.

“I’ll be honest with you: Back last spring, last summer, going into the fall, I knew that there was a threat, but I thought OK, if I do get it, it’s not going to be that bad because I was healthy,” Zach said. “I was a healthy individual. I was overweight, but everything else was fine.

“There wasn’t a fear about it, and I did what I could to social distance, and we as a church tried to do things to keep people socially distant, wearing masks. And at my job, I had to wear a mask, and I did everything to do not to get it.”

Zach remembers seeing a Facebook post where people were talking about Zach’s progress, and a person Zach didn’t know, posited that Zach must have an underlying condition.

Zach didn’t respond. He didn’t want to get upset. He didn’t want to get in an argument.

“But I just remember looking at it and thinking, I was healthy — again, 15, 20 pounds overweight — but I was healthy,” Zach said. “I worked every day. I played every day. I had a functioning job. I functioned around my kids, my wife. ... I was healthy, and it hit me and affected me in ways that I never thought it would, so just understanding the urgency that can come with it and how you try to prevent that.”

COVID-19 is not a hoax, Zach said.

“It’s not just something that is just out there to try to scare people,” Zach said. “It can truly affect you in a lot of ways and understand the urgency that comes along with it. Like I said, while I’ve been here at Vanderbilt, there’s been multiple people who have passed away from COVID. And so it’s really, I guess, opened my eyes more to the severity of the disease and how we can help try to prevent it.”

**The church**

Sara says they are humbled by the love shown by the church and the community.

“Our youth pastor took over and really stepped up to take care of the church,” Sara said.

Every Saturday morning is a prayer service, and it’s not just their church, Sara said, and it’s not just prayers for Zach.

“They pray for other patients dealing with COVID and other people in the community dealing with sickness and death,” Sara said. “That is so humbling that people would take time on a Saturday morning to pray specifically for my husband and pray for others that are struggling specifically with COVID.”

It’s an odd role reversal for the Lloyds, who, as a pastor’s family are used to being on the giving end of support, not the receiving.

“We’ve been served by the members of our congregation,” Sara said. “That’s hard because we’re not used to that, but we’re just so blessed by the people.”

**The message**

One thing that has driven Zach since getting into the hospital is the wish to encourage others in a world that is not always encouraging.

“I just want people to know that even in the darkest of times, you can find hope, and I know people don’t want to hear that sometimes, but there’s hope there,” Zach said. “I would encourage people to focus on that. Just the circumstances we went through, I pray that no one else goes through that, but if they do, they can get in touch with me. I’d love to help them, love to encourage them. Because like I said, there were so many people, so many people from literally all over the country — and I don’t even know how some of these people know me, I don’t even know how they heard my story — but they would send cards, text messages, messages on Facebook, e-mail ... and they have taken care of me and my family so much.

Ultimately, despite what he’s gone through, Zach’s message is one of hope.

“Hopefully as we continue to move forward, we can continue to try to make a difference in the lives of people that we meet and the conversations that we have.”

**NEWS & MOVES** from Page 4**Mazer named dean of UTK’s College of Communication and Information**

Joseph Mazer, professor and chair of Clemson University’s Department of Communication, has been hired as the next dean



Mazer

of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville’s College of Communication and Information, effective July 1. Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor John Zomchick made

the announcement to the campus community in late May.

Mazer has more than 17 years of experience in higher education. In 2012, he was named the director of the Social Media Listening Center at Clemson University. In 2018, he was selected to serve as the chair of Clemson’s Department of Communication, and in 2019, he was selected as a Faculty Fellow by Clemson’s Office of the

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

“Dr. Mazer brings a steadfast commitment to diversity and inclusion, extensive experience in academic strategic planning and program oversight, a successful record of innovative collaboration with external stakeholders, and an awareness of change in higher education,” Zomchick said.

Mazer succeeds Dean Michael Wirth, who announced earlier this year that he will return to a faculty role after successfully serving as the college’s dean for the past 15 years. Wirth will be remembered for increasing the college’s research, making the college a campus leader in study abroad opportunities, and nearly doubling its endowment by raising more than \$33 million to support research, scholarships, experiential learning, and facilities upgrades.

“I am honored to join UT’s College of Communication and Information. This is an exciting time for the college to refine its vision while promoting innovation and excellence in line with the university’s land-grant mission,” Mazer said.

*University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
May 24, 2021*

**Staff Writer needed**

The Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, has an immediate opening for an energetic full-time news writer to cover Tennessee Tech University, local business, government and crime. Details are listed at <https://tnpress.com/search-open-jobs/#>