

The Tennessee Press

Volume 85

January 2022

No. 7

INSIDE

Thomason: New Year's wishes, not resolutions

Page 2

Fisher: Police tracking system to help transparency

Page 2

Daniels: TPS turns 75 in solid growth mode

Page 3

Ad-Libs: Lots to be gained with an open mind

Page 2

News & Moves

Page 3

Pumarlo: Turn to social media for timely news tips

Page 5

Spinner: Some gas-price coverage full of hot air

Page 10

Obituaries

Page 11

New Tri-State Defender: Road to 70 . . . and beyond

KARANJA A. AJANAKU
The Tri-State Defender, Memphis
November 4, 2021

In the 194-year history of "the Black Press," The New Tri-State Defender – in multiple forms – has lived 70 of those mission-driven years.

The beginning was a moment of courage born largely in response to a treacherous Jim Crow mindset that propelled white citizens forward with often deadly intent to block African Americans' pathways to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

On Nov. 1, 1951, Lewis Ossie Swingler, who had been the editor of the Memphis World, was in charge as publisher and editor when the Tri-State Defender rolled



Swingler

out its first issue. A 10-point program on page six, the Editorial page, listed this as point No. 5:

"To uphold the principle of equality of opportunity in employment,

education, politics, and all fields of human endeavor."

A single issue was 15 cents. Subscription rates were \$6 for a year, \$10 for two years. Also available was a special introductory offer: seven issues for \$1.

Billed by self-description as "The South's Independent Weekly" and birthed to serve "1,000,000 Negroes



in the Tri-State Area," the Tri-State Defender set forth to be "an expression of the desires and needs of the community."

Its founder was John Herman Henry Sengstacke, who at one

See **DEFENDER** Page 8



Submitted

The first front page of The New Tri-State Defender, Nov. 1, 1951.

Look for the helpers in scary times

SABRINA BATES
Dresden Enterprise
December 15, 2021

Editor's note: This article was written as a sidebar for The Enterprise's coverage of the early December tornados that ravaged Dresden as well as much of the rest of the mid-South, particularly Kentucky, and it aptly and poignantly captures the local devastation.

One of my favorite quotes is from Mister Fred Rogers, who said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" Mr. Rogers, your mother was right. I thought about titling this column, "From the Desk of the Editor." I couldn't come up with anything more catchy and less cliché. Ironically, my desk is currently our oversized coffee table in the middle of my living room.

We were blessed, fortunate, spared, whatever the appropriate term may be. After Friday's tornado pancaked our office in downtown Dresden, we managed to find a way into the back door. The back wall was all that stood up in the storm. The walls are crumbled and the roof is sitting on the front part of our office. We were spared, however, as our in-house server was able to be salvaged. While my office walls and David Fisher's walls caved in on top of my desk, we strategically pulled out my computer. I held my breath for about 20 minutes Sunday evening at home, with a hope and a prayer. We had just finished typing up children's Letters to Santa Friday afternoon. That was heavy on our minds Saturday morning as we surveyed the wreckage.

Friday night was eventful. After trying to get in touch with our graphic designer, who lived around the corner from the court square,



Photo by Sabrina Bates, Dresden Enterprise

The Dec. 10-11 tornados that tore through the Mid-South, to include parts of Tennessee, didn't spare the offices of the Dresden Enterprise. Much of Dresden sustained extensive damage. See more photos on page 12.

myself and our sales manager Laura, felt helpless. Awake at 1 a.m. getting bits and pieces from Facebook posts about a tornado that hit Dresden, we attempted to get in touch with Jasmine Williams. She stopped responding to group

messages around 11 that night. I tried to reach out to the sheriff's department, but couldn't get through. After calling the Martin Police Department, dispatch confirmed there

See **TORNADO** Page 12

The Tennessee Press

(USPS 616-460)
Published monthly by the

TENNESSEE PRESS ASSOCIATION, INC.
412 N. Cedar Bluff Road, Suite 403
Knoxville, Tennessee 37923
Telephone (865) 584-5761/Fax (865) 558-8687/www.tnpress.com

Subscriptions: \$12 annually
Periodicals Postage Paid At Knoxville, TN

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Tennessee Press,
412 N. Cedar Bluff Road, Suite 403, Knoxville, TN 37923

The Tennessee Press is printed by The Standard Banner in Jefferson City, Tenn.

Carol Daniels Editor
Mike Towle Managing Editor
Robyn Gentile Production Coordinator



The Tennessee Press
is printed on recycled paper
and is recyclable.

TENNESSEE PRESS ASSOCIATION

Rick Thomason, Kingsport Times-News, Johnson City Press	President
Jack McNeely, Herald-Citizen, Cookeville	Vice President
Daniel Williams, The Paris Post-Intelligencer	Vice President
Chris Vass, Chattanooga Times Free Press	Secretary
Eric Barnes, The Daily News, Memphis	Treasurer
Daniel Richardson, Carroll County News Leader, Huntingdon	Immediate Past President
Carol Daniels	Executive Director

DIRECTORS

Scott Critchlow, Union City Daily Messenger	District 1
Calvin Anderson, New Tri-State Defender of Memphis	District 1
Victor Parkins, The Mirror-Exchange, Milan	District 1
Maria De Varenne, The Tennessean, Nashville	District 2
Dave Gould, Main Street Media of Tennessee, Gallatin	District 2
Keith Ponder, Tullahoma News	District 2
Sandy Dodson, The Bledsonian-Banner, Pikeville	District 3
Dale Gentry, The Standard Banner, Jefferson City	District 3
Paul Mauney, The Greeneville Sun	District 3

TENNESSEE PRESS SERVICE

Dave Gould, Main Street Media of Tennessee, Gallatin	President
Michael Williams, The Paris Post-Intelligencer	Vice President
Mike Fishman, Lakeway Publishers, Morristown	Director
David Critchlow Jr., Union City Daily Messenger	Director
W.R. (Ron) Fryar, Cannon Courier	Director
Michael Williams, Paris Post-Intelligencer	Director
Carol Daniels	Executive Vice President

TENNESSEE PRESS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

Victor Parkins, The Milan Mirror-Exchange	President
Mike Fishman, Lakeway Publishers, Morristown	Vice President
Richard L. Hollow, Knoxville	General Counsel
Carol Daniels	Secretary-Treasurer

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 March 2022 issue is February 5, 2022.

No New Year's resolutions this year



**YOUR
PRESIDING
REPORTER**
RICK THOMASON

maybe it is too much to ask. Ah, but we can dream!

But here we sit in 2022. And a pandemic still swirls around and among us with all the damning uncertainty only a pandemic can cause. Lots of words and phrases that used to invade our vocabulary only occasionally are now commonplace: Vaccine, inflation, chip shortage, mandate.

Yet in all this uncertainty, newspapers remain as necessary as ever, maybe more so. And with our reach – print and digital combined – greater than it has ever been, we remain trusted, comprehensive news sources for our readers. We're not 30-second bites of highlights. We're depth and breadth and accurate accounts of the history, both good and bad of our communities.

I bet that at this point you're thinking, "Here he goes with some New Year's Resolutions." It crossed my mind, but those aren't part of my personal year-to-year transition, so no point in venturing into foreign territory.

Instead, please indulge me while I dream and wish out loud.

First, here's wishing for an end to the COVID pandemic. That COVID would be eradicated seems mostly like a pipe dream but wishing for more to be vaccinated and the spread to be quelled doesn't seem like too much to ask. Or given the stubbornness of so many

Here's wishing for a stabilized economy with inflation under control. As families hurt financially when dollars don't go quite so far, so too, do businesses that depend on consumer spending. That's especially true along Main Street Tennessee, where the majority of shop owners live locally. And when those businesses suffer, our newspapers suffer. That's why it's important that we support our business communities in the best of times and the worst of times. People remember those who lend a helping hand. But keep that helping hand in your community. Small gestures to a local business owner sometimes can mean the difference between her keeping the doors open or shuttering for good.

Here's to dreaming of a stable news community in Tennessee. Of course, that stability depends in large part on the granting of the two wishes above. COVID under control and a stable economy give us a chance. Wouldn't it be amaz-

ing if at the end of 2022 we could look back at the prior 12 months and know that not one associate had been laid off at a Tennessee newspaper because of finances? As much as that depends on some outside assistance, it also means that change and adaptation must not be just something we think about but something we do.

Fingers crossed for passage of the Local Journalism Sustainability Act in Washington. I know, some of you want no part of it. I heard a publisher (not in Tennessee) say recently, "I'm not taking a government handout." Good for him! I admire his integrity! But the LJSA isn't a handout. It's a chance for short-term stability while we all rebuild our business models for the future.

Finally . . . I wish you all good health and success in 2022. This isn't going to be an easy year. Let's not kid ourselves. But inside every challenge there is opportunity for innovation and victories. When you have those successes – and you will! – please share them with your TPA staff so they may share with all our members. When one succeeds, we all succeed.

Rick Thomason is Tennessee Press Association president for the 2021-22 term. He is the publisher of the Kingsport Times-News/Johnson City Press and president of Six Rivers Media, LLC.

New tracking system on police use of force will improve transparency



**TN COALITION
FOR OPEN
GOVERNMENT**

DEBORAH FISHER

What do we know about law enforcement use of deadly force upon citizens in Tennessee?

Often, our understanding is based on news events, often dramatic and tragic. Some journalists, such as in Memphis, have deeply examined local police departments to better understand the issue.

But overall in the state, the public's understanding, and even policymakers' understanding, is limited by lack of comprehensive information and lack of data.

That's about to change. A new law offers a chance to improve transparency as well as our ability

to identify and target problems. vene if another officer is violating use of force restrictions, and limits when an officer can discharge a firearm at a moving vehicle, motorcycle or bicycle.

In a step toward transparency, the law also creates a new monthly reporting system for use-of-force incidents. Beginning Jan. 1, all law-enforcement agencies will be required to report to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation monthly and the TBI will produce an annual report beginning in 2023 with statewide and countywide aggregate data. TBI is required to

See **FISHER** Page 4

Happy New Year and many wishes for 2022!

I'm still trying to figure out what happened to 2021? In the beginning it felt like it was dragging along as an extension of the pandemic-dominated 2020, but then, starting in July, it seemed to have raced to the holidays!

In any event I am very excited for 2022, though I will miss seeing you in February as the Tennessee Press Association Board of Directors voted not to hold our Winter Convention (a decision that looks smart today as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 rages). However, I am thrilled that we will all have a chance to see one another again in person at the Summer Convention in Memphis, which will be a Tri-State Convention with Arkansas and Mississippi. We should learn a lot, meet some new folks, and enjoy being back in each other's company.



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CAROL DANIELS

Another reason to be excited for 2022 is that the Tennessee Press Service will be celebrating its 75th anniversary! Our entire team loves the support we can provide to TPA member newspapers. Like our member organizations, the TPS sales team has waxed and waned over the years, I'm thrilled that we are again in growth mode.

Throughout the ups and downs, Earl Goodman has been the sales rock for TPS and he continues to be a Rockstar as our senior media buyer. I know you love hearing

it's Earl on the phone for you! In addition to Earl, Becky Moats is our Network Buyer/Coordinator, Alisa Subhakul is our junior Media Buyer, Mary Ella Hazelwood represents all of our newspapers across the state, and Carol Evans joined us late in 2021 as the VP of Business Development for SRMA! And, of course, we have Rebecca McLeskey to make sure all of our advertisers are billed and that you are all paid.

Each month TPS sales numbers are included in the Tennessee Press so you know that 2021 was a bit more of a challenge than 2020, but our fiscal year ended strongly, giving us a pretty good year in total. We are always looking for ways to get more regional and national advertising into your papers, and in 2022, we expect to get some political ads in

your newspapers, as we go into another year of elections. As we ended 2021, I am encouraged by the many conversations we had with clients that are targeting local newspapers as part of the holiday season spend in 2022. You can never start too soon.

I also want to remind you that the week of January 23-29 is Public Notice Week. Our TPA President, Rick Thomason has agreed to write a column for TPA members to run that week in your newspapers, and we are also working on some ad placements for you to use at your convenience.

Here is to a successful year!

Carol Daniels is executive director of Tennessee Press Association.

NEWS & MOVES

Lovelace returns to Citizen Tribune

Don Lovelace has returned to the Citizen Tribune.

After leaving for two years to work with some friends, Lovelace has returned to the Citizen Tribune as vice president for Lakeway Publishers and circulation director for the Citizen Tribune.

"I really missed the newspaper business and did not hesitate to return when the opportunity presented itself," he said.

Lovelace previously served in the same role with Lakeway Publishing from July 2005 to June 2019.

He grew up in Greene County and in 1983, he and his family moved to Augusta, Ga. In January, 1989, he started working for The Augusta Chronicle.

After 17 years, he was ready to come back home to East Tennessee.

In July 2005, he said he interviewed with publisher and editor R. Mike Fishman.



Lovelace

"Two days later, I was turning in my notice and putting my house up for sale," he said.

While working for Lakeway Publishers, he has served as circulation chairman for the Tennessee Press Association from 2008 to 2019 and as a member of the Southern Circulation Managers Association since 1994.

He is married to Katja Lovelace, Crossfit instructor and personal trainer. They have three children, sons Trey Lovelace and Trent, who is a student athlete at Carson-Newman University and a daughter, Nina, a Milligan University signee and current senior at Morristown-Hamblen High School West.

Don and Katja also have a grandson, Levi.

They also have a dog named Neo.

Citizen Tribune, Morristown Dec. 20, 2021

TPA Public Notice Week Jan. 23-29

TPA will mark the 12th annual observance of Public Notice Week, a time to emphasize the importance of public notices as the best possible way for Tennessee's citizens to find out

what their city, county and state governments are doing and planning to do.

Members will be able to access the materials on Jan. 14. Watch your e-mail for links.

*Staff reports
Dec. 29, 2021*

to solve a problem, building new tools, creating a training workshop/program or building resources for journalists. All fellowship projects are built and

See NEWS & MOVES Page 4

TPA Public Notice Journalism Contest Deadline Jan. 14

Contest details posted at tnpres.com



Contests deadlines

State Press Contests (Newsroom) — Feb. 28

Ideas Contest (Advertising & Circulation) — March 7

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

January 2022

- 7: Ballots due on proposed TPA proposed Constitution and Bylaws changes.
- 14: Entry deadline for the TPA's Tennessee Public Notice Journalism Contest, which covers the period Jan. 1, 2021 through Dec. 31, 2021.

February 2022

- 17: TPA Concurrent Board of Directors Meeting and Business Session via Zoom
- 28: Deadline 2022 TPA-UT State Press Contests (Newsroom)

March 2022

- 7: Deadline 2022 Ideas Contest (Advertising & Circulation)
- 8-13: 2022 Spring National College Media Association Convention, New York Marriott Marquis, New York, NY
- 17: 2022 National Newspaper Association Congressional Action Team Summit, Washington D.C.

April 2022

- 8-10: 2022 Women in Journalism Workshop, Reynolds Journalism Institute, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo., <https://rjionline.org/>
- 10-12: News Industry Mega-Conference, presented by America's Newspapers, JW Marriott Bonnet Creek Resort, Orlando, Fla.

June 2022

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

July 2022

- 20-24: 2022 International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors Convention, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.

August 2022

- 25-27: 2022 National Native Media Conference, Native American Journalists Association in partnership with the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University, Tempe, Ariz.

Keeping an open mind is essential in our business

There's a story about an old man who was fishing from a pier. He was catching more fish than anyone else, so a crowd gathered to learn his secret.

His behavior was unlike anything they had ever seen. Each time he caught a fish, he pulled a tape measure out of his pocket and took a measurement. He put the small fish into his cooler and tossed the big ones back into the ocean.

When one of the onlookers asked about his strange technique, he explained that he kept only the fish that were under eight inches long. "Why are you doing that?" he was asked. He said, "Because my frying pan is eight inches wide."

Imagine that. The old fellow was throwing away the fish that



AD-LIBS®

JOHN FOUST

didn't fit his eight-inch frying pan. It didn't occur to him that he could get a bigger frying pan or cut large fish into smaller pieces.

We may laugh at this silly example, but there's a bit of that old fisherman in all of us. It's human nature to resist change. It's no surprise that we have a tendency to discard ideas that don't fit the way we've always done things. We all have eight-inch frying pans in

our minds, and sometimes it takes discipline to break down those barriers.

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction." While there is some debate about what this famous artist actually meant, I think it's safe to say he was talking about the need to let go of former – often stubborn – inclinations to do things in certain ways.

Eight-inch frying pans have no place in a creative profession like advertising. If we discard the ideas that don't fit the way we've always done things, we restrict our thinking and limit our potential. When that happens, we end up in a creative rut – and our advertisers get short-changed.

Abraham Maslow, the noted psychologist and philosopher, said, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail." That's another way of saying, "Stop throwing away the big ideas. Instead, get rid of that old, eight-inch frying pan."

To refocus our thinking, it helps to recognize negative reactions we may have toward new ideas. When a new concept comes to mind – and our initial reaction is to measure it and throw it back – we should stop ourselves in our tracks. That's it. Just stop.

This reminds me of the old saying, "The mind is like a parachute. It only works when it's open." Once we open the door to possibilities, new ideas – big ideas – will

be more welcome.

There is a lot to gain. In the right environment, the seeds of unrestricted creative thinking can blossom into great advertising.

If you want to measure something, measure campaign results. When you have great advertising, you'll have great results. And when you have great results, you'll create loyal advertisers.

(c) Copyright 2021 by John Foust. All rights reserved. John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

FISHER from Page 2

post the report to its website.

Sometimes the gap in transparency in government is because of a gap in collection of data and information about key issues that concern the public.

The new tracking and reporting system moves the state in the right direction.

The law came about after a law-enforcement reform task force was convened by Gov. Bill Lee not long after the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer had set off nationwide protests, including in Tennessee. Floyd died after officer Derek Chauvin kept a knee on his neck for more than eight minutes as a restraint

tactic. Chauvin was found guilty on murder charges. He was sentenced in June to more than 22 years in prison. He also pled guilty to federal charges of violating Floyd's civil rights by using unreasonable force.

What information will be collected in Tennessee's new tracking system? The statute calls for the data to be the same as used in the FBI's voluntary reporting system, which covers any law-enforcement action resulting in the death or serious bodily injury of a person or the discharge of a firearm at or in the direction of a person.

Information collected includes whether the officer approached the subject, the reason for the initial contact, the most serious offense the individual was suspected of,

the type of force used, type of resistance or weapon involvement by the individual, and whether the individual had a known or apparent impairment, such as a mental health condition or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It also includes the age, sex, race, ethnicity, height and weight of the officer, years of service, whether the officer discharged a firearm and whether the officer was on duty.

The bill creating the new restrictions and state tracking system had bipartisan support. The sponsors were the chairmen of the Senate Judiciary and the House Criminal Justice committees, Republicans Mike Bell of Riceville and Michael Curcio of Dickson, respectively. But Democrats signed onto the

bill as well, including Sen. Brenda Gilmore of Nashville and Rep. G.A. Hardaway of Memphis.

"This bill was the work of all the law-enforcement agencies in the state coming together," said Bell when describing the bill in April. "We had several meetings where I asked them, bring us something that will help not just improve — and many of these agencies were doing this anyway through policy — but also to let the public know that our law-enforcement agencies in the state want to be completely transparent. And knowing the environment we're in, they want to put something forward to say that we want to do all we can to be the best law-enforcement agencies in our

country and to lead the way in showing ... that we understand the times we're living in."

During a House committee hearing, Hardaway from Memphis said the bill "is pretty much my Christmas wish list" and that the new transparency will help improve trust.

"Without that trust factor, law enforcement can't maximize their mission to protect the community," he said.

Deborah Fisher is executive director of Tennessee Coalition for Open Government. This column is part of a monthly series that explores transparency in government in Tennessee. More information at www.tcog.info

NEWS & MOVES from Page 3

implemented within the span of the eight-month fellowship.

Past fellows have built a data guide for small newsrooms, a toolkit to help Latina journalists fight discrimination and a guide to starting a community-based publication. Our 2021 fellows are currently working on projects that address accessibility, equity and community engagement.

Whatever your idea, its creation should benefit other news organizations, journalists and the people

who depend on them. You will publish regular updates to share what you're learning for other newsrooms or journalists who want to tackle similar projects.

The final product of your fellowship must be a resource that journalists and newsrooms can utilize – whether it's a guide, toolkit, platform, workshop or tool.

RJI Fellowships are open to U.S. citizens and U.S. news organizations. They also accept proposals from international journalists who plan to partner with U.S.-based news and/or organizations to ad-

dress a challenge that impacts U.S. journalism and newsrooms.

For more information contact <https://rjionline.org/about-rji-fel>

lowships/

Submitted
Nov. 15, 2021



Tennessee Press Service Advertising Placement Snapshot

ROP: Networks:

\$145,930 \$33,171

Year* as of Nov. 30 \$1,166,354 \$273,975

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

Please send your news to editor@tnpress.com and rgentile@tnpress.com

Free webinars

Jan. 20
Employment Advertising

Feb. 17
Storytelling You

Register at www.OnlineMediaCampus.com.
Contact rgentile@tnpress.com for the coupon code.

Don't rely on advisories to be first with the news; engage in social media

Media advisories regularly cross editors' desks with notice of newsworthy events. An individual launches a bid for elective office. Citizen groups organize to both support and challenge a city's proposed garbage ordinance. A nonprofit organization announces a new initiative in the aftermath of racial violence.

Editors dutifully mark their calendars and assign reporters to attend.

Coverage of the event itself should be your second step. If you wait to be spoon fed, you'll likely be embarrassingly late with delivering the news to readers. You must strive to be first if you want to remain relevant in today's fractured media landscape.

Notices of media events often are accompanied with an embargo. In reality, announcements of any significance are news the moment the advisories or press releases are distributed.



COMMUNITY NEWSROOM SUCCESS

JIM PUMARLO

Social media today has changed the entire dynamics of how information is delivered and spread. Announcements are disseminated immediately by emails, tweets, Facebook postings, Instagram and other channels. The news arrives in newsrooms at the same time it reaches hundreds or thousands of others.

The ease and spread of information today prompt two directives for newsrooms.

First, monitor social media regularly. All newsrooms should set aside time to identify and share the social media platforms

most relevant to and visible in a community. Find local bloggers, tweeters and other influencers on Facebook, Instagram and other social media avenues. Follow them and track what's on their minds.

Social media networks of many organizations should be on any newsroom's list to monitor — for example, local government bodies, self-organized community groups, civic clubs, chambers of commerce. Identify the channels of specific individuals associated with these groups as well. Brainstorm with your staffs, and you'll readily come up with a roster.

Then establish a process for who will follow which sites and how information will be shared among staff. You'll likely generate a lengthy list of stories from spot news to features.

Second, use your staff to go beyond what's circulating on social media. Begin by separating the wheat from the chaff. Discard the

misinformation and diatribe; concentrate on the news and dialogue relevant to readers.

Next step, use your journalistic expertise to broaden the coverage and conversation. The specific social media channel is likely presenting a single viewpoint on an issue. That's, after all, the intent. Editors and reporters should dig beneath the basics of any story and seek all perspectives. The more voices in a story, the more balanced the report.

Seeking and incorporating the many varied — yet pertinent — voices in a story is not always easy. It can take time and hard work — and produces solid journalism that benefits the newspaper and readers alike.

The ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic has unfortunately altered many newsroom operations and hindered information gathering. Many meetings are still virtual attendance only. News

sources often prefer to correspond by email only. Diminished resources mean fewer reporters to circulate in the community and connect with everyday readers.

That does not mean an end to community engagement. The digital world presents the opportunity to bring the community to you at any time and any place.

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 and welcomes comments and questions at jim@pumarlo.com.

Why the least-known First Amendment freedom could be the most important (as well as the most threatened)

Many of the nation's founders considered petition to be the most important First Amendment freedom, believing it would protect the rest of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution itself.

Now, just 5 percent of Americans say petition is the most important freedom when compared to the amendment's other four rights — religion, speech, press and assembly — according to the Freedom Forum survey, "The First Amendment: Where America Stands," released Sept. 22.

Petition has been so unknown throughout the years that some call it the "orphan freedom."

What America knows about petition

Fourteen percent of survey respondents could name freedom to petition unprompted. Forty-five percent could identify it from a list.

So what does the First Amendment's "right to petition" really mean — and how do we use it for



FREEDOM FORUM: PERSPECTIVE

GENE POLICINSKI

"redress of grievances?"

There's one answer to both questions: We have the right to tell elected officials and officeholders at any level of government what we want changed, updated, eliminated or acted upon.

In a few words that go all the way back to the idea behind the Magna Carta in 1215 in England, petition means we can "speak truth to power" without fear of government suppression or punishment.

Under the right to petition, we may speak our minds at government meetings. We can bring our complaints to a public official or agency. We can post comments on a government website or send a letter to an officeholder. And in

many states, we can use petition — in this case, an actual document with signatures — to force a ballot initiative or create a referendum reflecting public opinion.

Petition is not a guarantee

There is one practical wrinkle to how it works: We can petition, but government is under no obligation to act. And at times, it has even refused to hear.

The first significant use of "petition" was to flood Congress with requests to end slavery, starting in the 1830s. In 1837 and 1838, Congress received 130,000 such petitions. Under pressure from southern states, Congress adopted a rule that "no petition, memorial, resolution, or other paper praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, or any State or Territories of the United States in which it now exists, shall be received by this House, or entertained in any way whatever." That enforced silence lasted until

its repeal in 1844.

Another thing to keep in mind when petitioning: Sometimes the results can be non-productive or even negative.

- In 1894, a march to Washington D.C. by the unemployed to petition for jobs produced no programs — and some marchers were arrested for unlawfully walking on the grass of the U.S. Capitol grounds.

- In 1932, the "Bonus Army" — veterans of World War I seeking early payment of promised bonuses for their military service — were driven from the nation's capital by mounted troops.

- A section of the whitehouse.gov website called "We the People" — created during President Barack Obama's administration for online petitions — saw mixed success in terms of both the seriousness of petitions and in generating official responses. The site



Submitted

was discontinued by President Donald Trump but revived after public outcry. It was eliminated when President Joe Biden took office.

Petitions have spurred change

Throughout the nation's history, the right to petition has protected those seeking justice or action on issues large and small:

See **POLICINSKI** Page 11

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE I: The Standard Banner, Jefferson City

Reflections on Afghanistan: U.S. withdrawal fuels memories, concerns for veterans

MARK BROWN
The Standard Banner, Jefferson City
November 4, 2021

To be fair to those whose story this is, it seems rational to ask the reader to take a moment to think about some of the hardest and most stressful work you've ever done.

If you've had such an experience, think in terms of being left to feel that all of the effort and emotion invested evaporated in a flash.

That's perhaps a reasonable place to start thinking about Russ Turner, John McGraw and others who fought in Afghanistan and the experience they say they are having this week. News reports from Afghanistan speak to the Taliban's seemingly easy return to power after 20 years of war and U.S. occupation.

"For me personally, and I think for thousands of service members from all of the branches that have been there, it strikes me negatively," said Turner, a retired U.S. Army major. "(I'm) sad, and with a little bit of anger, I guess. It's all kind of mixed together because what I know happened there and what I know of the cost."

Turner was called to serve from his ROTC post at the University of Tennessee and sent to Kabul as part of the OMC-A (Operation of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan). He served under a two-star general who reported to the U.S. Ambassador.

The Washington Post reported that President Joe Biden's April 14 announcement for full troop removal by September 11, came "after an administration review of U.S. options in Afghanistan, where U.S. peace talks have failed



Submitted

Dr. John McGraw saw to the surgical needs of a boy whose leg was lost to a mine as he scavenged for brass shells.

to advance as hoped, and the Taliban remains a potent force despite two decades of effort by the U.S. to defeat the militants and establish stable, democratic governance.

"The war has cost trillions of dollars in addition to the lives of more than 2,000 U.S. service members. At least 100,000 Afghan civilians have been injured or killed."

Troop drawdowns had begun a decade earlier

Troop drawdown operations began 10 years ago, in 2011 during the first term of President Barack Obama, and a deadline for full withdrawal by May 1 of this year was announced by President Don-

ald Trump on Feb. 29, 2020. Pundits and columnists are examining the decisions and ramifications on full-bore.

The politicization of such a monumental decision rankles Turner because it speaks to what he sees as a lack of commitment "on a national level" to sustaining "actions until we have reached all of our goals and objectives."

He struggles with the notion that the United States would pull out of Afghanistan after a generation's worth of involvement to try to change things, almost 20 years, plus, "the enormous cost — \$2 trillion hard-earned American tax dollars."

It's further complicated by Turner's thoughts that some three thousand miles east of Kabul there is between North and South Korea a demilitarized zone. For almost 70 years there has been a constant U.S. military presence and an official buffer between countries, "where they stare at each other," he said. "That's what they do."

Along with that multi-decade investment, he measures the lack of clear objectives in Afghanistan against those of Operation Desert Storm and the U.S. military's involvement in Bosnia, which separated warring ethnic factions and



Submitted

Then U.S. Army Major Russ Turner poses for a photo during a graduation ceremony of Afghan National Army soldiers. "One of the missions of our unit was to train Afghan soldiers to defend not only themselves," he said, "but also their country against a Taliban resurgence and any other threat against (their) nation."

helped initiate calming actions over time.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the official name of the country from 1996 until the U.S. invasion in 2001) functioned as an incubator for al-Qaeda under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden. Turner said the U.S. move into the country to end the "propagation of terrorist forces," was a key goal.

"We were there to permanently eradicate and fix that and, while I was there, I felt that's what we were achieving."

Dr. McGraw is an orthopedic surgeon and retired colonel whose military career included service in the Air Force, the Army and as a reservist. While his work was important, and doubtless life-saving, over the course of three months in late 2011 through February of 2012, perspective gives him pause when he looks back.

"Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. invaded (what is now Afghanistan) and said, 'There's not enough here for us.' And he got out. Russia came in, stayed 10 years, and they pulled out. Why the U.S. didn't at least look at history, I don't know."

He said the level of imminent

danger is hard to grasp and harder to explain.

"Afghanistan was the wild west," he said. "Why, you couldn't drive anywhere. That's why we helicoptered to where we had to get."

Turner agreed, saying, "My six months in Kabul, Afghanistan, was the most stressful, demanding and (was perhaps) a little more dangerous than any other of the combat zones I've been in."

Sadness and grief

Both Turner and McGraw feel general sadness over the situation and both have lingering grief from particular instances of needless loss.

Some of Turner's angst stems from the loss of a member of their unit in a vehicle accident that was clearly the driver's fault.

"His death really rocked our unit," he noted.

"Per his commanding officer's request, Turner was a central part of the investigation and therefore viewed photographs and researched details. He issued a report to the general and helped draft a letter to the victim's family. He said President Abraham Lincoln's November 1864 letter to Mrs. Bixby was inspirational to him in that task."

McGraw is plagued by the memory of a female security police officer at Forward Operation Base (FOB) Salerno who in response to receiving a "Dear Jane letter" used her M-16 to commit suicide. He recalls details, from the EMT who tried to attend to her, the insensitivity of brusque investigators and that evening's ceremony when her body bag was carried to the C-130 transport plane on her last trip home.

"I'll tell you," he said, "it's the most solemn thing I've ever done in my life."

He's been thinking about her for the last few days.

"She was thousands of miles from home . . . She felt so alone that she took her own life."

He said he has also been

See **AFGHANS** Page 7

Judges needed for Hoosier State Press Contests

TPA needs members to judge the Hoosier State Press Association's contests at the end of April. Please sign up to judge at tinyurl.com/JudgeforHoosiers or email to rgentile@tnpress.com. Thank you!

AFGHANS from Page 6

recalling some names but even more faces of Afghan nationals who worked on the base, whether as translators, cooks or in various roles. He fears many of them may be killed for working with Americans. The fears rise at night when he knows he ought to be sleeping. And he has been considering that security officer's family.

"I think about those parents, brothers, sister and whoever, as we have left Afghanistan and the blood of their daughter and sister still stains Salerno."

Both McGraw and Turner are also snagged by the notion that some of the U.S. and UN forces' best work, the education of children, and particularly girls, will be overturned in short order.

"Little girls were able to go to school. That was first, that was it, that was probably the thing I liked most, that I, I probably ..." Turner began, before emotion caught him. It would be 54 seconds before he could return to the sentence. "So, prior to when we got there, little girls could not go to school. The education of girls was just nonexistent, and that was hard to believe in this modern world we live in."

"It was inspiring to see that girls were going to school and that we were establishing schools. I don't think that American society in general knows all that we did do and all that we made happen."

Street violence had been curtailed

Beyond education, Turner said other advances were the establishment of a trained police force and stopping street violence, including the murder of women without burkas (face and head scarves) or the beatings of beardless men.

He recalls meetings in 2003 and 2004 during which his general or others spoke of a plan to return the control of the government back to an Afghani leader by 2012.

"And I thought that gives us time to set the coordinates and secure the environment so that a younger group of Afghans can be raised in an environment where they'll be free from radical Islamist fundamental culture and laws and views and norms."

That the undeclared war transpired another decade for naught is unsettling for both of the Dandridge VFW, Post 3380 members. They are sure it's similar for the almost 800,000 U.S. service members posted there at some point in time.

For McGraw, the memories might incorporate details of surgeries, which sometimes meant stopping a procedure when a more crucial casualty needed to be addressed in the moment. He can feel the intensity of shells coming in from the Taliban-controlled Pakistani mountains that encroached three sides of the FOB. He might apologize for telling hard stories and feel a need to end his thoughts with "a good story, a very good story."



Submitted

McGraw and Captain Rachel Odom, a physical therapist, were blessed with holy serendipity when they connected on Christmas Eve of 2011. Odom was the lead singer in South Jones High School Show Choir, of which McGraw's children had been members with her.

It happened on Christmas Eve of 2011 while he was showing a cell phone photograph of a Wrigley Field marquee that a friend of his had made happen. "CUBS THANK 352nd COMBAT SUPPORT HOSPITAL," the sign read.

Pleased and grateful, he moved about troops to spread the cheer.

A recently arrived physical therapist, a captain, he stepped up to, said, "Colonel, are you Jay's and Beth Ann's father?"

He instantly recognized her as



Submitted

Turner said one of the core assignments of training Afghan service members was to imbue them with a keen sense of national responsibility and to understand their importance to the country's success.

breath, 10 years after the fact.

"It was as if God said, 'I know you want to be with Jay and Beth Ann and your grandchildren, but I've sent you somebody else . . .'

"It was almost as good."

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE II: The Daily Times, Maryville**Hospital Elvis impersonator uses unique appearance to connect with patients**

SHELBY HARRIS
The Daily Times, Maryville
March 3, 2021

Hospitals hire myriad types of employees — doctors, nurses, housekeepers among them — but Blount Memorial Hospital has a unique addition: a janitor who doubles as an Elvis impersonator.

Tom Cunningham officially works in the hospital's environmental services department, where he cleans and does maintenance work. But unofficially, his job is to cheer up patients by resembling the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

"I'm in character 24/7," Cunningham said. "People recognize me when they see me somewhere, and I'm approachable that way,

and people are more comfortable with me that way. It also helps keep me accountable that way because I know what a huge responsibility it is when people do know me."

Cunningham is in his 20th year of impersonating Elvis. He started the gig when his daughter saw Elvis' 1957 film "Jailhouse Rock" and asked him to start dressing up.

"She said, 'Daddy, will you dress up as Elvis for me?' because she loved that movie with all the dancing and everything, so that's what I did, and I've been doing it ever since," Cunningham said. "It was such a big hit and it brought so many people joy and everything, so I got real serious about it, so I've

been doing it a long time now."

It's not just at work that Cunningham impersonates the King. He also puts on concerts at retirement homes and veterans' facilities where he covers Elvis' music, ranging from the popular hits to gospel music. He's performed at weddings, birthday parties and other special events.

During his performances, Cunningham wears Elvis outfits made by his wife, Stephanie, but while on the clock at the hospital, Cunningham wears his janitorial jumpsuit with his bouffant hairdo and thick sideburns.

He's recognized throughout Blount Memorial and often is asked to visit with patients and

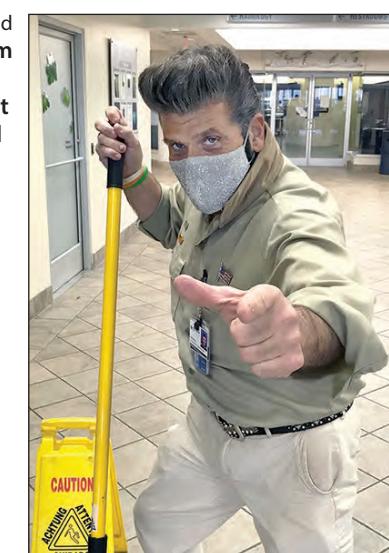
visitors.

"When I'm walking around ... a lot of people will see me and say ... 'Hey, it's Elvis!' or they'll say, 'I love your hair,' and the next thing you know we're talking," Cunningham said.

He takes the social aspect of his impersonation very seriously, viewing it as a gift.

"I use it as a great outreach for people," he said. "It's a really special thing that I get to do. This position enables me to be around somebody all the time, somebody in need."

See **ELVIS** Page 9



DEFENDER from Page 1

point owned the nation's largest chain of newspapers focused on African Americans. A civil rights advocate, Sengstacke in 1940 formed the National Newspaper Publishers Association, which now has 230-plus members, including The New Tri-State Defender.

According to the first edition's lead editorial, a newspaper is "only as great as its readers make it. Its strength comes from the energy pumped into it by the people. Its



Sengstacke

muscles and bones are the determination of the people; and its heart is the conscience of God-fearing men and women."

The newspaper's name – as detailed in that

first editorial – was "chosen" by "you, the people . . . It symbolizes the fulfillment of your hopes and dreams."

With adept leadership in place, the Defender commenced with its effort to present a comprehensive look at the Black communities in the tri-state region. Included in its approximately 15 pages of text were news, pictures, cartoons, household hints, women's and youth pages, sports and entertainment features.

A foundation was laid

Throughout the Defender's inaugural year, the newspaper laid the foundation as a newspaper that was committed to being at the pulse of the tri-state region's Black communities. Always with racial progress at the core, the Defender featured stories ranging from Memphis as a rich African-American cultural center to courageous individuals who challenged the racial status quo of the era.

Not restricted to what happened locally, the Tri-State Defender brought news of segregation cases that happened all over the nation to its readers. Impressively, the newspaper pointed out how Black citizens of the tri-state region were pioneers in forcing racial improvements despite the racial mores of the South. The best example in the 1950s was the local response to the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision that reversed the "separate but equal" doctrine on May 17, 1954.

The Tri-State Defender captured



Submitted

Alongside approximately 60 students from LeMoyne and Owen colleges, the entire Tri-State Defender editorial staff was arrested for attempts to desegregate the libraries at Cossitt and Peabody and the Brooks Art Gallery in the spring of 1960.

the sentiment of the time in its November 6, 1954 newspaper:

"We welcome the decision of the Supreme Court and look upon it as another significant milestone in the Nation's quest for a democratic way of life and in the Negro's long struggle to become a first-class citizen... This is part of an evolutionary process which has been going on in the South and the Nation for some time."

The Tri-State Defender's ability to keep the progress of the race at its core yet remain a newspaper that included all aspects of the African-American community was reflected in how the newspaper connected sports and desegregation. In an article entitled, "Integration is a Two-Way Street," the Defender reminded its readers that

African-American people had a responsibility to initiate integration attempts as well.

The newspaper showed how sports took the lead with several Black colleges competing against white schools on the gridiron. And when banks throughout the state of Mississippi put a "freeze" against loaning money to African Americans to buy homes and start businesses, the Tri-State Defender encouraged all to join an effort to raise funds for those denied credit in their own state.

African Americans in Memphis and throughout the country were hopeful that comprehensive racial discrimination was a practice of the past, yet they soon found out many more battles would have to be fought nationally and locally.

The most memorable incident to remind Blacks that their status had changed little by the mid-1950s was the gruesome death of young Emmett Till in Money, Miss. For Memphians, the proximity of Till's "lynching" and the Tri-State Defender's vivid portrayal of his open casket reminded them that they too were subject to the region's racial violence.

Despite the troubled times, Black Memphians persevered with a renewed vigor and relentless spirit that would fuel their fight for better conditions. Over the next few years, the Defender highlighted the arrival of several "freedom fighters" in Memphis.

By the end of the 1950s, the atmosphere necessary for confrontation was evident among Memphis African Americans and in the pages of the Tri-State Defender.

The demands of Memphis' African-American community chronicled in the Tri-State Defender foreshadowed the events of 1960. Beginning with the Emancipation Proclamation anniversary, Memphis' African Americans pushed for what they described as "real emancipation to Negroes."

"Colored can't come in here today."

At one point, Tri-State Defender writer Burleigh Hines, chief photographer George Hardin and others reported that they were denied admittance to the Auto Show at Ellis auditorium, having been told by policemen that "Colored can't come in here today."

The incident sparked a flood of letters to the Defender and widespread outcry by African Americans. Although many were initially frustrated because they owned automobiles valued at an estimated \$50 million but could not view these particular cars, their refusal entry to the Auto Show sparked them to attack segregationist practices in bus seating, the library, eating facilities at most public places, and schools.

Among the myriad efforts to overturn segregation, the Tri-State Defender staff was involved in one particularly impressive example. Alongside approximately 60 students from LeMoyne and Owen colleges, the entire Tri-State Defender editorial staff was arrested for attempts to desegregate the libraries at Cossitt and Peabody and the Brooks Art Gallery.

Defender staffers along with students charged with disorderly conduct and fined

Along with the students, the Defender staffers were charged with disorderly conduct and fined for their actions. Editor and general manager L.F. Palmer had to pay a higher fine for his alleged leadership in the demonstrations.

Palmer and the entire Tri-State Defender organization received more intense repercussions shortly afterwards when a cross was burned on the front lawn of their office building.

A few weeks after his arrest, Palmer received a citation from Capital Press Club of Washington, D.C. for his distinguished service in mass communication. That small but significant victory for integration was tempered by the death of award-winning journalist L. Alex Wilson – renowned as the man physically assaulted outside of Central High School during Little Rock's desegregation attempt in 1957.

Wilson's presence at Central High School epitomized the courage and passion that he consistently demonstrated as the Tri-State Defender's editor and general manager and later editor-in-chief for the Chicago Daily Defender.

Progress in the struggle for racial equity did not come any easier after 1960, but many African Americans and the Tri-State Defender remained on the front lines.

In an effort to test desegregation in restaurants, Tri-State Defender reporters M.L. Reid and William Little visited several places to see if they would be served. As expected, they received mixed reactions, but their presence made a statement that African Americans in Memphis and the Tri-State Defender were watching closely.

Photographer Withers beaten with night stick and camera film exposed by policemen

Not everyone welcomed the presence of the Defender. While photographing a demonstration after the assassination of Mississippi civil rights leader Medgar Evers in mid-1963, Ernest Withers had his coat ripped off, was beaten with a nightstick and had the film

DEFENDER from Page 8

in his camera deliberately exposed by policemen. Nonetheless, like his colleagues at the newspaper, Withers never backed down from his responsibilities as a newspaper photographer.

The people's perseverance combined with the support of the Defender would remain critical in the tumultuous times during the mid-1960s forward.

The Tri-State Defender continued to be recognized on the national scene throughout the middle and late 1960s. The most prominent example was the nomination of John Sengstacke to the National Alliance of Businessmen's Executive Board by President Lyndon Johnson. The 15-member group advised the government on ways to cope with unemployment.

As the only African American selected, Sengstacke's presence was important for the consideration of African-American concerns. In particular, Sengstacke's appointment was critical for morale as citizens offered their support for the emerging sanitation workers' strike in Memphis.

The presence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. garnered national notoriety for the strikers, yet the momentum from this attention came to a crashing halt with King's assassination on April 4, 1968.

The entire world stood still until



the "King" was put to rest. After a period of grieving, the resiliency of African Americans in Memphis had them back fighting for Dr. King's dream later in the year.

The tumultuous times of the 1960s caused many people to question whether continuing the fight for justice was worth the consequences. Yet as the Tri-State Defender reminded its readers, the unforgettable assassinations of prominent Civil Rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Dr. King were all that the people needed to "keep on keeping on."

Those who marched with Dr. King in Memphis included a young educator named Willie W. Herenton, who became Dr. Willie W. Herenton, the first African American to run Memphis City Schools and later the first African American elected Mayor of Memphis. TSD chronicled the evolution of Dr. Herenton, who became the longest serving mayor in the city's history.

and staff he interacts with while he's working. They look forward to seeing him because he brightens their days. Some of them even ask to see him or ask if he can stop by their rooms. That's really special, and we're glad he's a part of the Blount Memorial team."

Before joining Blount Memorial in January, Cunningham worked at the University of Tennessee Medical Center for eight years. He was well-known there, too, often interacting with patients and being interviewed by news outlets.

"We did have a lot of inquiries when Tom left us, and we were all sort of surprised to hear that he was leaving, but I believe he felt a calling to move on and go elsewhere. Obviously, he was very popular here, and we obviously wish him the best," UT Medical Center spokesman Jim Ragonese said.

Cunningham left UT in late 2020, saying he felt his time there had come to a close after the hospital

Submitted
Bernal E. Smith II: "If we are to have more abundant life today, we must study those that struggled, triumphed, toiled and sacrificed so that we could obtain the lessons expressed in their words and actions. Truly it is those lessons that lead to our greatest tomorrows."

Bernal E. Smith II, a Memphis entrepreneur with deep community roots, was named publisher of the Tri-State Defender in 2010. In October 2013 — and for the first time in its storied 62-year history — the Tri-State Defender became locally owned and operated.

John Sengstacke passed in 1997 and the company's assets were placed in a trust and sold to Detroit-based Real Times Media (RTM) in 2003.

Seven years later, Bernal E. Smith II, a Memphis entrepreneur with deep community roots, was named publisher of the Tri-State Defender. In October 2013 — and for the first time in its storied 62-year history — the Tri-State Defender became locally owned and operated.

RTM sold the assets of Tri-State Defender, Inc. (TSD) to BEST Media Properties, Inc., a Tennessee Corporation established by Smith and backed by a local investment group that became its board of directors.

Smith set an accelerated course forward into the digital and multi-media age.

"The TSD is a great brand with significant historical meaning and respect throughout the Greater Memphis community," said Smith.

"We plan to leverage the brand for future growth and impact here in the Mid-South and ultimately on a global basis."

As headlines about police brutality and discrimination resurfaced, Smith pushed the newspaper to continue going beyond just reporting the news.

"We're getting into the issues and in some instances really being a tool for change," he said.

Tragedy struck toward the end of October 2018 when Smith, who had significantly raised the newspaper's public profile, died at his home at age 45. The ownership group stepped forward, with individual members taking on specific tasks. The TSD's news operation continued steadily under the direction of Executive Editor Karanja A. Ajanaku, who preceded Smith at the newspaper and had been named associate publisher shortly before Smith passed.

As the newspaper-turned-multimedia company dealt with its

internal evolution and moved forward, the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The TSD pivoted, converting to a mostly remote-based operation and jumped full bore into providing the community with solid, news-you-can-use information to navigate through the public health hazard.

Now 70 years old, the TSD is positioned to build upon the vision of Smith and of the Tri-State Defender's founders. The fact that what once was called the community's "baby" is still about the business of service seven decades later is a testament to the need and its roots.

"In this environment when a number of newspapers are dying, we are celebrating the continuity and strength of TSD in this community and the Black Press in general," said Calvin Anderson, president, Best Media Properties.

Beginning with this special edition on the week of the Tri-State Defender's founding and continuing for the next year, the TSD will showcase its body of work over the years while renewing its commitment to be a valued voice in the region.

This story reflects the research of Dr. Russell Wigginton and the Memphis Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

ELVIS from Page 7

Patients often ask Cunningham to take pictures with them, stay in their rooms or pray with them — making janitorial duties personal and impactful.

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, Cunningham has continued to use his unique appearance to spread joy among the staff.

"There's so many people that come in here like the transporters and people that come in for the COVID test or they'll come in for procedures," he said. "The Lord always makes the opportunity."

Despite being at the hospital for only two months, he's well-known among employees.

"(Cunningham) has, of course, been recognized for his signature look," Blount Memorial Environmental Services and Laundry Manager Jeff Vickers said. "But he gets just as much recognition for how he treats the patients, visitors

Submitted
Tom Cunningham has been dressing up as Elvis for 20 years.

expressed discontent at his praying openly with patients and employees.

Ragonese said many hospital employees, in addition to its in-house pastoral staff, pray with patients who request it.

"We do have religion as a part of all that we do to accommodate all the requests that we have and hopefully all of the people and all of their desires — whether they be patients or family members or even staff members," he said.

Cunningham said he's able to pray more openly at Blount Memorial.

"It's always by request. It's always invitation as far as the rooms go because of the situation, but the Lord always makes an opportunity if someone needs encouragement," he said. "Wherever I go, I know the Lord ordained that."



Local media need to fact-check gas stories that are full of hot air

Perhaps you've seen the sticker on a gas pump. Or maybe you saw a photograph on social media. The sticker is a cartoon of President Joe Biden with the words "I did that!" It is positioned so he is pointing at the gas price.

Biden is not responsible for rising consumer gas prices, but the theory is nonetheless being widely shared in conversation and on social media, particularly in conservative circles. When gas prices went up under President Trump—and they did, the first year he was in office, he was blamed, too. Likewise, when gas prices dropped under President Obama, he got credit he didn't deserve.

We love to talk gas in America, even when our theories are full of hot air.

But the fact is that while administrative policies could eventually impact gasoline prices over the long-term, presidents have limited ability to impact gas prices short-term. Joe Biden is not the reason the national retail price for gas is at its highest level since 2014 heading



LOCAL MATTERS

JACKIE SPINNER

into the start of the holiday season. The reason is textbook economics.

Gas prices are about supply and demand. Demand was down during the pandemic. As more people are getting vaccinated and COVID-19 infections are holding steady, or at least not spiking to the levels they were a year ago, demand is up again. We are traveling more. We are driving to work. We are filling our tanks with gas. Prices have gone up because demand is up. US oil production and refineries have not kept up.

It's not just in the US; there are shortages across the globe. Gas prices are also high in Britain, France, Spain, Italy and Greece. Biden isn't being blamed for the increases there; Russia is.



Photo by Tyra Ingram/submitted

to the national news outlets that our readers either aren't paying attention to or are dismissing as "big media."

Many of us are not big media. We are little media, and while we still have to deal with the allegations of "false news" and eroding faith in journalism itself, we are still much better positioned to counter claims like this one. We need to do a better job of speaking frankly to our readers on these topics. Will some people dismiss us? Of course. Like many of you, I have people in my life who would ignore a fact if I smothered it with cheese and served it on a plate even without garnish.

We need to be careful and precise with our explanation so that we show our readers we are not coming from any particular political point of view. This isn't about Biden. This is about the economics of gas. This is why gas prices are higher. This is why your local diner is out of Styrofoam-to-go containers. This is why there is a run on canned pumpkin. Or why

the LOL Surprise OMG House is in short supply, which incidentally I know because I listen to NPR's Marketwatch.

But why can't we tell our readers as well? Even if we have long axed the business page or buried it inside the sports section, our readers are talking about gas prices and pie and hard-to-find toys. We have an obligation to explain the reason, free of political conspiracy theories, which unfortunately are not in short supply.

As long as that holds true, we are also in demand. That is textbook journalism.

Jackie Spinner is the editor of Gateway Journalism Review. This commentary, originally published Dec. 9, 2021, is republished here with her permission. A version of this story first appeared in Publisher's Auxiliary, the only national publication serving America's community newspapers. It is published by the National Newspaper Association. Follow Spinner on Twitter @ jackiespinner.

Some social media perks you should know about

JOSE LUIS ADRIANO
Reynold Journalism Institute
August 16, 2021

Third party design apps and tools for social media are your allies in engaging with audiences

Sometimes, it seems like the more you use social media, the more you realize you don't know about social media. Here are three tips for making the most of social media platforms:

Facebook: The advantages of scheduling content

Facebook Pages have been around for years, as they offer businesses the chance to connect with their audiences, and media organizations use them to share news links, videos, images and infographics.

It is perfectly possible to publish content on behalf of your page using the regular, familiar Facebook interface. However, using Creator Studio gives you many more options and greater flexibility. The tool allows community managers to publish, schedule posts and access statistics about the perfor-

mance of your page.

Scheduling posts on Creator Studio is a great way to keep readers engaged with content being released on a regular basis without having to have someone posting manually 24/7. At the Free Press, I am part of a team where I spend a couple of hours managing posts that then will be posted automatically over the day. Editors and managers can reorganize, edit and move content around if there's something to change.

The main advantages of Creator Studio? Content is easier to share and allows multiple users and roles.

Instagram: Adding links to stories to drive traffic

The Detroit Free Press uses its

Detroit Free Press Hace un momento

The National Weather Service has issued a fire danger warning in the tri-cities area of Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland. Read more here.

FIRE DANGER VERY HIGH TODAY! PREVENT FOREST FIRES FIRE BAN IN EFFECT

FREEP.COM Elevated fire risks near Saginaw, thunderstorm possible for southeast Michigan

Me gusta Comentar Compartir

Submitted

Scheduling posts on Creator Studio is a great way to keep readers engaged with content being released on a regular basis.

Instagram account to share images from its photojournalists, memes about Michigan culture and sports, and informative social cards on breaking news or relevant events. Its content reaches a community of

MY FREE PRESS.

"I love the written word—in lyrics, books, newspapers and magazines, in print and online. Freedom to write and read enriches America, and I'm grateful for both."

Learn more at www.1forall.today.

1 for all FREE SPEECH CENTER MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

This series of ads is available to newspapers at www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/page/1forall-gallery

See SOCIAL MEDIA Page 11

OBITUARIES

Jan King Patrick

Jan King Patrick loved horses and a good story.

Patrick combined both loves in 1976 — with one of her first published stories in the Bristol Herald Courier on chasing down the Grayson Highlands Ponies in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area.

From there, Patrick spent 42 years behind the scenes at the newspaper until she retired in 2018.

On Friday, Dec. 3, Patrick died at the age of 68 due to cardiac arrest. The heart problem happened while Patrick was seeking treatment for a blood clot in her lungs, her eldest son, Evan Patrick said.

"She was too weak to be revived," Patrick, 36, said. "They tried to revive her five times."

Born Feb. 27, 1953, Patrick grew up in Bristol, Tenn., and graduated from Tennessee High School before attending the University of Tennessee.

In recent years, she's served as



Patrick

the web designer for "A! Magazine for the Arts," a publication of Arts Alliance Mountain Empire.

Patrick came to the newspaper in 1974. Her career was quickly elevated from a newspaper writer to editor.

"She was doing layout and design for the newsroom," said Mike Wilson, a design artist who worked with Patrick from 1982 to 1988. "She worked on the Progress edition. If she needed any artwork, she came over and asked me if I could do it."

Wilson, of Glade Spring, Va., worked as an artist with Patrick again from 2015 to 2018.

"We had good communication," Wilson said. "She was good to work with, just kind of laidback. You could joke with her."

Over the course of her career,

Patrick won dozens of awards from both the Virginia Press Association and the Tennessee Press Association for her work at the newspaper.

For a while in the 1980s, Patrick served as the editor of the Bristol Virginia-Tennessean, an afternoon newspaper.

"I worked with Jan for over 23 years, and she was incredibly talented and always a pleasure to be with," Joyce Crockett, a long-time publisher's secretary at the newspaper, said. "I am saddened to hear of her passing."

By the 1990s while working as the features editor for the Herald Courier, Patrick oversaw sections called "Empire Magazine," "Community" and "For Your Leisure."

"Jan always had wonderful ideas," said Bill McKee, a former Herald Courier photographer and page designer from Glade Spring.

Many of the stories that appeared in the newspaper came from Patrick's research, ideas and interests — from artists and animals to music, ballet, religion,

history, education, food and small-town living.

*Bristol Herald Courier
Dec. 6, 2021*

Charles Searcy

Former Tennessean award-winning outdoors editor/writer Charles Searcy, who spent 47 years in the newspaper business, died Saturday, Dec. 18. He was 83.

Searcy, a graduate of East Tennessee State, began his career in 1960 at the Oak Ridger newspaper where he served many roles including sports writer, general assignment reporter, law enforcement writer and photographer.

He then spent 22 years as an outdoors writer for the Chattanooga Times before arriving in Nashville in the early 1980s to be host of the Hydro Sports tournament fishing trail.

Searcy returned to the newspaper business in 1984 when he was hired by longtime Tennessean sports editor John Bibb as the newspaper's outdoors writer/editor.



Searcy

In 1988 Searcy was named The Tennessee Sports Writers Association outdoors writer of the year.

For 22 years Searcy wrote two outdoors columns per

week for The Tennessean while also helping design and lay out the sports section.

He also served as lead writer for the Iroquois Steeplechase at Percy Warner Park and Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration in Shelbyville each year.

Searcy retired in 2006 to his farm in Cottontown and in 2019 was inducted into the Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame.

During his career Searcy also wrote freelance stories for Sports Afield, Trout Unlimited, Bassmasters and Outdoor Life magazines.

*The Tennessean, Nashville
Dec. 18, 2021*

SOCIAL MEDIA from Page 10

125,000 followers.

Aside from creating a community of followers, the Detroit Free Press uses Instagram Stories to lead visitors to its website. Any Instagram account with over 10,000 followers, or any verified account, even below this number of followers, gets the chance to add links to their Stories (see printed screen to the right).

I started promoting daily stories from the Free Press in Instagram Stories in June. Every Story is then published with its respective link, and we invite users to swipe up to access the full content. Results so far have shown an increase in web referrals coming from Instagram. And if you haven't yet, it is a good

QUICK GUIDE TO MICHIGAN PRONUNCIATIONS

Detroit Free Press

1. MACKINAC	"MACK-in-awe"
2. SAULT STE. MARIE	"SOO saint marie"
3. CHARLOTTE	"Shar-LOT"
4. DOWAGIAC	"Doe-WAH-jak"
5. VYSILANTI	"Ip-sill-ANN-tee"
6. MILAN	"MY-lynn"
7. LAKE ORION	"Lake OH-ree-en"
8. GRATIOT	"GRASH-it"
9. SCHOENHERR	"SHANE-err"
10. KEWEENAW	"KEY-win-awe"
11. OQUEOC	"Ah-KEY-ock"
12. GROSSE ILE	"Gross eel"
13. ONEKAMA	"Oh-NECK-em-uh"
14. BOIS BLANC ISLAND	"Bob-LOW island"
15. SODA	"Pop"

detroitfreepress @ Michigander ...
detroitfreepress @ That last one is especially important! Check Freep.com for 20 more pronunciations Michiganders say trip them up the most.
chris_ruffner84 DTE Energy Music Center = Pine Knob New replies (2) ...
ravieira83 Bob-LOW island? 3,974 likes ...
3,974 likes

idea to apply for a verified badge for your newsroom which can open up the possibility of future features getting added to your account first. To do so, go to Settings > Account > Request verification. Further details can be found here.

Another area I have been trying to test, using Instagram, is reaching Spanish-speaking communities. Using social cards, we're experimenting with alternate versions written in Spanish, as in this example where we provided tips for saving on an energy bill.

Twitter: Exploring Fleets and Spaces

You might already know Fleets, Twitter's take on Instagram Sto-

ries, that shows up at the top of your Twitter space in the familiar highlighted circle around the user's profile image. Twitter Fleets does not allow embedding direct links, but it's a great tool for highlighting certain tweets, recording and sharing video, images or plain text in another format.

I have been using Fleets at the Detroit Free Press for sharing the front cover of the Free Press printed edition each day. I also share breaking news with a format similar to Instagram Stories, and then I highlight the tweet where the link for the story is.

Jose Adriano is the RJI's Student Innovation Fellow at The Detroit Free Press in Michigan.

POLICINSKI from Page 5

voting rights for women, civil rights for people of color and for LGBTQ persons, fair wages and safe working conditions, safe drinking water and good roads.

Petition under threat

Today, whether the grievance to be "redressed" involves COVID-19 mask or vaccine poli-

cies, social media policies, police brutality or Black Lives Matter, legislatures in as many as 45 states have considered or enacted laws that seem destined or even designed to discourage use of the right to petition.

Some of those laws:

- Increase minor misdemeanor or protest-related offenses to felonies, which could deny public assistance or pensions.
- Excuse motorists in some

cases from liability when striking demonstrators with their cars.

- Extend time demonstrators would be jailed before bond can be posted.

- Declare all protesters in a mass march liable to arrest and fines if even just one person in the march committed a violent act.

All those proposals, if enacted, will undergo constitutional scrutiny — including questions of why more is needed than existing laws

that already penalize criminal conduct outside of First Amendment protection, such as physical violence, intimidation or destruction of property while demonstrating.

Government can only limit our rights because of an immediate threat, and then only in the least-restrictive way for the shortest time deemed necessary.

Those legal yardsticks are a good way to measure proposals to restrict or restrain — regard-

less of the offered reason — this little-known but essential First Amendment right to petition.

This column first appeared on the Freedom Forum website on Nov. 10, 2021, and is republished here with the author's permission. Gene Policinski, Freedom Forum senior fellow for the First Amendment. You can reach Gene Policinski at gpolicinski@freedomforum.org



Photos by Sabrina Bates, Dresden Enterprise

Dresden's Kountry Korner Restaurant and convenience store was demolished.



The Cumberland Presbyterian Church sustained heavy damage in the tornado.



JK Sadler helped out friend and classmate, Derek Doster, a business owner, after a tornado destroyed Doster's storage units and Vaughan Bros. Hardware. Dresden was one of the worst-hit communities in Tennessee when tornados tore through much of the Mid-South, particularly Kentucky, during the storms of Dec. 10-11.

TORNADO from Page 1

was damage and asked that I not try to venture into town. Our concern was the safety of Jasmine. When text messages finally came through to us, they were broken and sporadic. "Can you help us? Can anyone help us? It's bad bad. I cut my hand. There's a gas leak. The fire department got us out."

'You lose your breath and your heart stops'

Finally, she managed to get a call to us to let us know where she was. Laura's husband headed that way to get her to their house. Hers was hit by the tornado. He managed to send us a picture of our building, or what remained, about 3 a.m. It was one of those moments where you lose your breath and your heart stops. To say that downtown Dresden and parts along the way look like a war zone doesn't accurately describe it. It looks as if a tornado went through the city.

The next morning I received a message from Dresden Mayor Jeff Washburn, announcing a press conference at the sheriff's department. The mayor had been renovating an historic house downtown, owned a business downtown and was the former owner of our newspaper. He spent the night in his home, with his children and grandchildren, in the basement. I didn't have time to gawk at social media images before the press conference Saturday morning and hadn't actually laid eyes on any damage.

I headed from my house in Martin and headed to my hometown. It was on Highway 22 at the intersection of 22 and 89 that the scene took my breath and my heart stopped. Kountry Korner was a pile of rubble. Trees and power

lines were down and pieces of farm equipment littered the fields across from the intersection.

Walking into the sheriff's department, there were buckets in the middle of the floor of the lobby, catching water from the rain overnight. Walking into the room filled with comrades and classmates, the mood was somber. Their tired faces said it all. They had spent hours awake, attempting to go into homes and get people out and to safety, while dodging power lines and debris. Grown men who are the first line of defense choked back tears, shaking their heads. All were shocked and sad.

'Time seemed to stand still'

State troopers were set up at intersections leading to downtown, directing traffic away from an area I hadn't seen yet. I parked two blocks away and took off on foot with camera in hand, not knowing what I would find. I rounded the corner at the top of Wilson Street and time seemed to stand still. The cold wind Saturday morning hit my face and dried my tears as I walked in the middle of the street in disbelief.

Businesses leveled, broken power and phone lines, houses missing windows and roofs, trees on their side everywhere.

That was the scene. Surrounding downtown streets were more of the same. While you internally celebrate the fact there was no loss of life as a result of Friday's tornado, your thoughts then turn to the people who were left homeless. Two weeks before the Christmas holiday and businesses were destroyed. Families are without shelter, sentiments ripped away and carried to only God knows where. But they are alive. Saturday was a day of shock and

awe. We are charged with getting information to people, but how do we get information to our readers who barely had cell service. Helpless sums up the feeling; complete helplessness.

Regrouping on Sunday, some of our team, along with a couple of friends whose brawn and bravery are matched by their wits, headed to downtown Dresden to see what we could salvage. We've never missed printing an edition, since 1883. This week was going to be no different. We salvaged a computer and a handful of archive books from a hole in the front of the building. Leaving, we felt accomplished, although we didn't know if the computer or server weathered the storm.

Helpers were easy to spot

It didn't take long to immediately find the "helpers." People were set up along the court square handing out food, including James Roy Pope and his family, who hauled a concessions trailer there and handed out food. All the while the rest of his team was in neighboring Martin at the annual Santa's Village event. People were walking along the square wearing gloves, offering to sift through debris and carry items. The town was flooded with people bringing chainsaws and their volunteer spirit, what our state is known for, to help their neighbors. When they could have been home on a Sunday afternoon spending time with their family or Christmas shopping, they were in Dresden, helping people pick up the remaining pieces of their lives.

We met a business owner, Matt, who has a sawmill company in Pillowville. He hauled some of his equipment to Dresden and spent the day helping clear debris.

JK Sadler, a Dresden native,

brought some equipment. We found him in the parking lot of Vaughan Brothers, what remained of it, helping his friend Derek Doster, a fellow business owner in Dresden and one of Sadler's classmates. From single moms like Kimberly Yazvac of Martin and people from as far away as Centerville, Tenn., we found the helpers. People who had put their daily lives on hold to help those who are mourning the broken pieces of their lives. Businesses that were lost were pretty much a complete loss. What remains of city hall is the front door, with the sky behind it and a couple of 2x4's, but you can see straight through it. Police cars were damaged and the chief is driving around in a vehicle with busted windows and dents.

The fire department, which was a fairly recent addition to downtown, has bay doors that are caving under the pressure of its weighted top. Turnout gear and equipment are literally gone with the wind.

These mentions are only a handful of damages sustained in Dresden. Where to go from here? How do you pick up the pieces? Clean up seems such a daunting task and it will be weeks and months before all is cleared and hauled away.

Where do we go from here? We depend on our "helpers." People in the communities, counties and states surrounding have offered help. We take their help. They are offering to help us carry our loads of burdens. We take the help, even through tears and disbelief.

We have a team of 15 newspapers within our company. When our freelance writers and photographers, along with team members from our sister newspapers, offered their help this week, we took it. Weakley County Press General Manager Lynette Wagster called

Monday morning. Not to get a story from us or asking us to share anything with them. She called to offer help and an office space. We took her help. This week's edition may look a little different. Our small community newspaper doesn't produce 20 pages each week. But we do our best to preserve our county's history; to tell the stories of people and places in the community that need to be told. We won't stop doing that this week, thanks to the "helpers."

This is why Tennessee is the 'Volunteer State'

The Volunteer spirit of this great state is very much alive, all across our county. Just take a quick trip to Dresden (be careful to stay out of the way of those who are working non-stop to clear debris, repair power and phone lines). You'll see the helpers. It won't take long to find them. They'll be the ones who are handing out hot dogs, using chainsaws to chop up large trees, hauling debris to the side of streets, packing totes of what remains from people's homes and businesses. They'll be handing out essential items to families who have nothing left at the building behind NAPA on Highway 22.

Where do we go from here? Brick by brick, we clean up. We make a list of what is gone, and then we count our blessings. We cry and then accept those shoulders offered to cry on. We help our neighbors. We comfort them; we pray for them. Then we envision what it will be like when all rebuild. We focus on that vision and let others help us make those dreams a reality.

Thank you for your help; we are able to put one foot in front of the other, albeit baby steps, and we slowly move forward.