JUNE 2025

# PAPERCLIPS

the official newsletter of Midwest Free Community Papers

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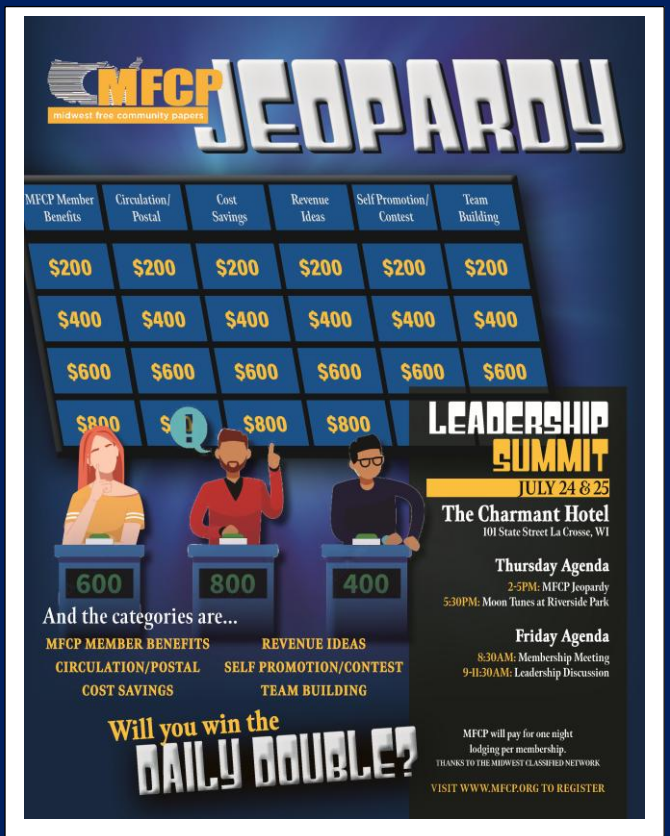


**Who's buying digital?**
**Find out — and learn how your team can close those sales too!!**
**Click Here**

## IT IS TIME TO PLAY MFCP-STYLE!

**Plan to meet us in La Crosse, Wisconsin July 24 & 25 and learn while you play!**

**Click here to register!**

**Register Today! Don't miss out!**
**Room Block Closes JUNE 25TH**

# President's Corner

Lisa Miller

## Words are Hard… But are They Really?

Have you ever had that feeling when you really don't know what to say, so you just say nothing? Our moms reminded us when we were young, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." But have you thought about the opposite of that saying? What if you did a 180-degree turn and you can only say nice things say ALL the time?

I recently ran into one of my former Sunday School students whom I haven't seen in years. She looked right at me and said "Wow, you look great." This was something that caught me off guard. It had been one of those mornings where there were too many things and not enough time. I didn't feel on top of my game at all. Her comment stopped me in my tracks and almost brought me to tears.

Too often, we don't take the time to tell someone "you look great" or "you are doing an amazing job." We get caught up in our everyday lives and forget to take the time to use our words for good.

Summer is here and the busy has begun. Families are pulled in 20 different directions. Employees are taking texts and calls at work because kids are not in school. Stress levels are increased.

We do not know other's situations. We don't know what that business owner is facing. We have no idea if a friend had supper the night before due to increased summer expenses.

Have you ever received one of the positive cards with a purchase you made? I went into a downtown business yesterday and she put a card in with my purchases. After leaving the store, I pulled out the card to read it. It said "The light in me thinks the light in you is freaking awesome."

This is a reminder what we do is hard; however, what we do makes us freaking awesome! Whatever the situation you are in, make sure you focus on the positive. Walk out the door in a positive manner. That positivity could be what helps others. Even if you are not feeling wonderful, take 15 seconds and tell someone else something kind. I guarantee it will change their day and more than likely yours also.

Thank a client for placing that order. Compliment a subscriber who is walking down the street. Buy a co-worker coffee. Compliment someone over Zoom. Make the office a pot of their favorite soup. You might just bring that other person to tears.

Summer is here. People are out and about. Now is the time to be kind to others and use your words for good. Words might be hard, but never forget how powerful they can be.

# From the Office

## Who's Buying Digital?

*Find out — and learn how your team can close those sales with confidence!*

**Lee Borkowski**

**What do a jewelry store, a building contractor, a community-wide event, and a dental office have in common?**

This week, they all purchased digital ad packages from our members!

And you know what made a big difference? The sellers behind those sales felt **confident pitching digital** after attending one of our hands-on training sessions. About three weeks ago, we gathered a small group — each person brought their laptop and a real client in mind — and together we built campaigns, step-by-step, answering every question along the way. It wasn't a lecture; it was a conversation.

Since that session, **three new campaigns have already been sold** — and we're hearing great feedback about how much easier and less intimidating it feels to pitch digital now.

**Good news — we're doing it again!**
Our next training is set for **Thursday, June 5th at 10:00 AM (Central)**. It's a small group setting so everyone gets plenty of time and attention. **We've got two seats left**, and we'd love to see someone from your team grab one.

If you've got a seller who could use a little digital ad know-how (and a confidence boost), send them our way. Just drop me a note to save their spot.

Let's fill those last two seats and keep the digital dollars rolling in. Who's in?

Lee

# MVP at Work

## The Value of Mentorship

By Amy Kyllo
Staff Writer, Editor, Star Publications
Sauk Centre, MN

There is one thing that took me from being green and underqualified for my role to enjoying my work and performing at an acceptable level: mentorship. If you are a boss and want to have happy employees, put new employees with a work mentor/buddy who will help them grow and will look out for them.

When I began as a staff writer and reporter 2.5 years ago, I was straight out of college with a degree in public relations, which was related but not a perfect fit for what I was hired to do. Knowing this, my company immediately put me with a professional writing coach who had written for newspapers for longer than I had been alive. I worked in tandem with this writing mentor for the next 18 months.

It was because of her that my first year went well and I enjoyed my work. I cannot stress enough how important it was to my success and job satisfaction. Motivated employees appreciate investment.

Her mentorship role changed as I grew in experience, but training never stopped. We would meet in person every month or two and discuss what I was working on, struggling with, and my goals.

With her help and encouragement, regular goal setting became part of life. A piece of notebook paper taped on my desk in front of my computer listed what I was working on. We chose goals from the patterns I saw from checking my edits and what she had noticed.

One of the copy editors also took me under her wing, keeping an eye out for recurring issues in my work and patiently explaining to me why my writing was changed in copy editing. She also would call me up and teach me things she saw I did not understand.

With their close mentorship and their above and beyond in investment in me, that year and a half was a time of lots of growth. They helped me gain competency, and when my mentors took other roles elsewhere, I was ready to take on a portion of their responsibilities.

I have worked to begin new mentorships at the company, but I confess that I have slipped personally in my goal setting. When I took on more responsibility, it took a few months to learn how to swim, much less set professional goals. Since then it has been hard to know where to start again.

I still have a few goals. I am working on using better quotes within my stories. Overall, another goal has been to create a reputation of excellence within the community where my work is respected and where the community feels increasing trust in me to tell their stories well. Finally, my work mentor has been encouraging me to have healthier timing in how and when I accomplish my work as a remote employee.

To takeaway: if you are an employer, give your new and/or young employees a professional mentor. Pay them to have coffee and talk through their goals and weaknesses. Their growth and job satisfaction will create a return on investment. If you are wondering about specifics of what this looked like and what I gained, feel free to reach out, I would be happy to share more.

Secondly, set goals. If you are an employee, getting better at your work benefits your company and is a value that you take with you, no matter what. Working towards something brings enjoyment to the present and rewards to tomorrow.

Amy

# Meet Your MVPS

***We asked them: "What do you hope to get out of the MVP group?"***

**Aaron Burns**

Big Green Umbrella Media, CITY VIEW

Advertising Sales Manager

**Years in the industry:** 9

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** I'm looking to improve my management skills and professional growth and get a better look at the publishing industry from different perspectives.

**Rachel Sajban**

Citizen Publishing/Windom Shopper

Composition Staff

**Years in the industry:** 2

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** I hope that I can step out of my comfort zone and as a result grow both personally and professionally.

**Amy Kyllo**

Star Publications - Dairy Star and Country Acres South

Staff Writer, Editor

**Years in the industry:** 2.5

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** I am excited to continue in the MVP program to grow my network — which is vital as a remote worker — and to be encouraged towards professional growth.

**Ashley Huisman**

New Century Press

Graphic Designer

**Years in the industry:** 5

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** Being a part of the MVP group, I've enjoyed getting to know others in the business and bounce ideas off each other and learn from each other. We've had many useful and eye-opening discussions where we learn so much about our industry, our peers and even ourselves.

**Sarah Middendorf**

Star Publications

Special Sections Coordinator

**Years in the industry:** 1

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** I look forward to gaining connections with other individuals in the industry as well as growing professionally.

**Julia Merten**

Star Publications - Country Acres and Dairy Star

Territory Marketing Representative

**Years in the industry:** 3

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** I have been part of the MVP group for one year and have really enjoyed my experience! I have loved attending the MFCP Conference and connecting with others in the publishing industry. I always enjoy our monthly MVP meetings and find value in the topics we discuss. This has been beneficial in both my professional and personal life. I am looking forward to serving on a committee this coming year.

**Kayla Reinhart**

The Cresco Shopper

Office Assistant/Graphic Designer

**Years in the industry:** 11

**What do you hope to get out of the MVP group or what do you enjoy most about the program?** I hope to expand my social group, get out of my comfort zone, meet new people and learn new skills.

# Members Helping Members

## Special Section Ideas at Your Fingertips!

*Check out our new Google Drive Special Section Sharing Site!!!*

Looking for fresh ideas for your next Home Improvement issue? Need inspiration for a Football Contest page or a Senior Living section? We've got you covered — and so do your fellow members!

Don't forget about our **Google Drive Special Section Sharing Site** — an easy, no-cost way to exchange successful special section ideas with other publishers in our association. This living, ever-growing site is organized by categories like **Car Care**, **Christmas**, **Home Improvement**, **Senior Sections**, and more. Members can upload their own sections and access others anytime, from anywhere.

It's like having a special section idea exchange without leaving your office! Best of all, it's open to **all employees at member publications** — so your sales reps, designers, and editorial staff can dive in too.

**We especially encourage publishers to connect their graphics departments to the site**. Ask them to upload their favorite section designs and keep them current. It's a great way to showcase your team's creativity and help inspire others across the association.

We've put together a quick video to walk you through how to upload your content and explore what's already there. **The more we share, the stronger we all become.**

**Check it out today and start uploading your best work!**

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS:

# Members Helping Members

## Real Estate Advertising Tools You Can Use

At MFCP, we're always looking for ways to connect our members and share resources that can help move the needle for your business. Recently, we hosted a **Member Meetup!** focused on **real estate advertising** — a category many of our publishers have been working to grow.

While the conversation offered a chance for folks to compare notes and talk about what's happening in their markets, one solid outcome from the session was a flyer we created to help you pitch real estate advertisers in your area. It highlights five clear reasons why advertising in your paper makes good sense for local real estate professionals. **You'll find it attached to this newsletter** — feel free to use it as-is or tweak it for your market!

If you'd like to hear the discussion for yourself, a recording of the session is available. Just shoot me an email at **director@mfcp.org**, and I'll be happy to send you the link.

**And speaking of sharing ideas, training has been a big focus for us this year too.** From digital ad sales to network classified programs, we've been offering sessions designed to help you build skills and boost your revenue — and there's more on the way.

**Now it's your turn — what topics would you like us to tackle next?** Whether it's a **Member Meetup!** or a training session, we're here to help your business grow. Drop me a note at **director@mfcp.org** with your ideas, and we'll take it from there.

**We're better together — and MFCP is always working to keep those connections strong.**

**Click Here for Real Estate- 5 Reasons to Advertise**

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY PUBLISHERS
& MIDWEST FREE COMMUNITY PAPERS

# Virtual Event Update

## "Summer Learning Series" Virtual Event Announced for June

**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**

### SESSIONS SCHEDULE

**Tuesday, June 10th - 2:00 PM EDT**
**AI in Publishing: Laying the Foundation----------AI SESSION**
Presented by Guy Tasaka
CEO - Tasaka Digital LLC

Curious about how AI can transform publishing, but not sure where to start? This session is designed for publishers at the beginning of their AI journey. We'll break down the core concepts of AI and demystify its practical applications across business operations. You'll begin learning what's possible today and how to start experimenting responsibly -regardless of your organization's size or technical background.

**Thursday, June 12th - 2:00 PM EDT**
**Filling the New Customer Pipeline----------SALES SESSION**
Presented by Dee Evans
Executive Vice President of Advantage Newspaper Consultants

Filling the new customer pipeline: Ways to prospect, research and connect to grow your client base. We'll discuss best practices when it comes to cold calling and warming up that call. We'll talk about the importance of knowing the client and their business, and how to gather that information prior to the call. Making a plan and sticking to it is key to successful prospecting.

**Tuesday, June 17th - 2:00 PM EDT----------DIGITAL SESSION**
**Digital Transformation**
Presented by Natalie Bruno
Executive Vice President of Strategy - January Spring

Join January Spring for a dynamic webinar featuring key insights from ACP and the three publisher personas. You're invited to take part in an interactive exercise to explore where you are in your transformation journey, with resources to help elevate your team and align print and digital strategies. Plus, hear real-world examples designed to inspire and guide your next steps.

**Friday, June 20th - 2:00 PM EDT----------GRAPHICS SESSION**
**Design 101: Back to the Basics**
Presented by Cory Regnier
Composition Manager - Citizen Publishing

In this graphics session, we'll explore the fundamental principles of design and how to apply them effectively in your advertisements. We'll also share practical tips and tricks to help ensure your visuals and messaging are clear and impactful. Whether you're new to design or just need a refresher, this class will help you sharpen your focus on what matters most—creating content that grabs attention and communicates your message clearly.

Tuesday, June 24th- 2:00 PM EDT----------**EDITORIAL SESSION**
**MORE IMPACT: FRESHEN UP YOUR APPROACH TO VISUALS**
Presented by Dave Schwarz
Instructor Dave Schwarz brings nearly 30 years of experience as a photojournalist, managing editor and photo editor at weekly and daily news publications.

Not every reader completes every story, but every reader sees your photographs. This session will focus on ways to approach common subjects in creative ways, giving your visuals more impact and creating more connection with your audience. Whether you're capturing portraits, sports or spot news, this course will outline ways to use lighting, composition and focus to your advantage. If you're bored with your photos, you can be sure your readers are as well. This training is designed to provide inspiration and practical tools that will take your photography to the next level.

# Ad-Libs

## Coffee, Televisions, and Response Advertising

**John Foust, Greensboro, NC**

Karine, who once participated in a Zoom meeting with me, told a story about the impact of response advertising. A few days earlier, she had seen a billboard that caught her attention. It featured a large photograph of a tall coffee cup which was obviously a latte. Droplets of condensation were visible on the side of the cup and whipped cream towered over the top. The headline read "Iced Latte $1.99." The coffee shop's logo appeared on the right side, along with the words "Next Exit." All of the words were large enough to be easily read at highway speed. "As soon as I saw the sign," she said, "I started thinking about that cool and refreshing drink. So I took the exit and a few minutes later, I was enjoying an iced latte."

I asked Karine what made that billboard's message so effective. She said, "It proved that strong advertising is specific and communicates clearly. It offered a reason to make a purchase right away."

The two types of advertising have been discussed in these columns before, but it bears repeating. Image advertising, sometimes called institutional advertising, is designed to portray the advertiser as dependable, caring, safety conscious – or any other description which is called for by the branding strategy. The effect is cumulative. Done properly, it works over time., They're saying, "If we make ourselves (blank) enough, maybe you'll decide to do business with us.

On the other hand, response advertising strives to generate immediate action. There's a sense of urgency. "Buy now," an ad might say, "because we're having a sale"... or "because this offer expires soon"...or "if you miss this exit, you'll miss your chance for a cool, iced latte."

Since our main interest is newspaper advertising, let's look at another example. Gregory told me about the time he was going through a special section which featured appliances and technology products. His family wanted a new, larger TV anyway, but he admitted that the pro football playoffs were on his mind. A particular wall-mounted TV caught his attention, so he discussed it with his family, drove to the store, bought it (at a discount), and installed it before the next day's game. That's response advertising.

Too many advertisers don't understand the difference between these two types of advertising. You probably know merchants in your town who run one image ad after another – and expect consumers to buy now. The misunderstanding usually works in that direction: They run image ads and expect the results of response ads.

Most consumers are like Karine and Gregory – and you and me. We're ready to buy certain products and services, if someone would just give us relevant information about those things and give us good reasons to buy now.

Maybe it's time to have conversations with your advertisers about the two types of advertising. And maybe it's time to talk about realistic expectations – especially when they say they want immediate results as they hand you a suggestion for an image campaign.



John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training DVDs to save time and get quick results from in-house training. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

# Kevin Slimp

## Improving the Front Page

*Making a few improvements will draw readers*

**Kevin Slimp - kevin@kevinslimp.com**

I've had such a great time visiting publishers, editors, designers, and ad reps at conventions over the past few months. At most conventions, I've sat at tables pulled together to accommodate 20 or more publishers and editors as I critiqued their newspapers.

My most recent stop was at the North Dakota Newspaper Association Convention. Having spoken for this group many times in the past, I dutifully planned my trip to Bismarck, only to learn I was heading to the wrong city. One rental car and three hours later, I was in Fargo – in plenty of time for the convention.

I was especially impressed by one young man who had bought his local newspaper when he heard it was about to close. With a full-time job requiring a lot of travel, he assembled the necessary support to publish the weekly paper. As if that weren't enough, he also published a neighboring paper for a few weeks when the publisher there became too ill to work. His dedication is inspiring, and his newspaper is filled with local stories that read like those of a seasoned veteran. We spent some time after the convention sessions discussing possible improvements.

I'm looking forward to seeing his redesigned pages soon.

Since returning from Fargo two weeks ago, I've received several front pages from publishers who wanted me to see what they had done following my critique. It amazes me to see the improvement in these papers after such a short time together. Just yesterday, I opened my inbox to find the front page of The Walsh County Record. Jackie Thompson, publisher, reminded me I had visited their newspaper more than 20 years ago in Grafton, North Dakota. I felt like a proud parent after seeing her new front page.

Here are a few of the changes she had made to the page:

- The Walsh County Record now has a brand-new flag across the top of the front page. There is one critique I have of the new design. It's much better than the previous flag, but I would find a way to spread out the letters in "RECORD" or possibly use "COUNTY RECORD" with "The Walsh County" above. Still, it's so much better than the old flag.

- There is a consistency to the page that draws the reader in. The fonts used for the headlines are visually appealing. I tend to use the same font, a serif, for headlines, but it's perfectly acceptable to have one serif and one sans serif.
- The body font is large enough. I'm surprised how often newspapers use body text that is too small. People won't ready small body text. They might read a paragraph or two, but not more. I advise clients to shorten stories to make room for larger text if necessary.
- The bylines and subheads stand out and draw the readers to the stories. I tend to prefer light sans serif fonts for bylines, but Jackie has found a way to make these work.
- The rules between packages make it more likely readers will read a story rather than be overwhelmed by text.
- The page is balanced. Sure, there are always things I might do differently. A line across the bottom of the page would help create a more balanced look, but the design is already very balanced; people in the photos are facing the right direction, and there's no fear that the page will tilt in one direction or another.
- The red kickers are effective. I'd probably not use more than two on a page, but this is the first issue of the new design. Things like that will work out in time.

This was one of several front pages I've received from publishers in North Dakota over the past two weeks. All were significant improvements over the previous designs. I can always find something I'd do differently (I wouldn't have used the bus artwork on this page), but these suggestions are sometimes a matter of personal preference.

While looking over newspapers spread out over the registration table at the Wyoming Press Association Convention in January, I commented that I'd never seen so many attractive front pages in one state before. I loved the person's response at the table. "It's because you were here last year and showed everyone how to improve their newspapers. Everyone went home and redesigned their papers."

Yes, I'm a proud parent.

*Kevin Slimp has been a popular consultant and speaker in the newspaper industry since developing the PDF remote printing method in 1994. His upcoming webinars on design, circulation, and software can be found at newspaperacademy.com.*

*Kevin Slimp is former director of The University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute and founder of NewspaperAcademy.com.*