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## **Resolve to Get Involved in 2026**

A fresh year is the perfect time to lean in. MFCP is strongest when members participate, celebrate each other, and show up. Whether it's sharing an idea, asking a question, or joining the conversation, your voice matters.

As you plan for 2026, here are a few meaningful ways to get involved and make the most of your membership:

- **Enter the Ad Awards Contest**  
Celebrate great work from your team — entries due **no later than January 12**.
- **Nominate an MVP**  
Recognize an up-and-coming team member who is making a difference.
- **Nominate an Unsung Hero, Graphic Artist of the Year, or Journalist of the Year**  
Shine a light on the people whose work often happens behind the scenes.
- **Attend the Spring Conference**  
Join us **April 16–17 in Cedar Falls, Iowa** for education, connection, and inspiration.

And don't stop there — **ask a question during a roundtable, join a Zoom call, share what's working (or what isn't), or reach out when you need help**. MFCP works best when members learn from one another.

Participation builds community — and community strengthens all of us.

# President's Corner



Lisa Miller

**It's 2026 Save-the-Date Time!**  
*MFCP Spring Conference, Annual Awards Nominations, MVP Nominations and more.*

Spring is right around the corner, and with it comes one of my favorite MFCP traditions—our **Spring Conference! I hope you'll mark your calendar now for April 16–17, when we'll gather at the Hilton Garden Inn in Cedar Falls, Iowa**, for two days of learning, inspiration, and good old-fashioned connection with industry friends.

We've put together a terrific lineup of speakers this year, and I couldn't be more excited about the mix. Ryan Dohrn will join us to talk sales—always timely, always practical, and always motivating. Russell Viers will bring his incredible expertise in graphics and design, sharing ideas you can put to work immediately in your publication. And Trevor Slette will take us into the editorial side of the business, exploring storytelling, newsroom productivity, and how technology and AI are shaping the future of local journalism. No matter your role, there will be something here for you.

**Another highlight of the conference is our Annual Awards Luncheon.** This is one of my favorite moments of the year, as we get to celebrate the amazing talent within our MFCP family. During the luncheon, we'll reveal the winning entries in the Best Ads of 2025 competition—always creative, inspiring, and a great reminder of the excellent work being done across our publications.

We'll also be presenting several special member awards, including Graphic Artist of the Year, Journalist of the Year, and the Unsung Hero Award. These honors are designed to recognize the people who make our papers great—those who create eye-catching ads, tell powerful community stories, and quietly keep everything running behind the scenes. I encourage you to take a few minutes to nominate the stars on your team. If someone immediately comes to mind, that's probably your nominee! [Click here for the Annual Awards Nomination Packet.](#)

And don't forget—it's also time to nominate your MVPs (Most Valued Professionals). This program is near and dear to MFCP, as it highlights emerging leaders in our industry and gives them opportunities for training, connection, and growth. If you have a young professional who shows promise, dedication, and a real passion for what we do, please consider submitting a nomination. [Click here for MVP Nomination form.](#)

Our Spring Conference is about learning, yes—but it's also about celebrating each other and the work we're so proud to do. I hope you'll join us in Cedar Falls this April, bring a colleague along, submit a nomination (or two!), and help us shine a spotlight on the people who make MFCP such a special community.

# From the Office



## A Grateful Goodbye... and an Exciting Hello



This column is a meaningful one for me, as it marks my final issue serving as Executive Director of MFCP. Sue and I have had the privilege of leading this association for the past six years, and it has truly been one of the most rewarding chapters of our professional lives.

When we stepped into this role, we did so with a deep respect for the history of MFCP and an even deeper belief in the strength of its members. Over the years, we've worked alongside an engaged board, dedicated volunteers, and passionate publishers who care deeply about this industry and about one another. Together, we navigated challenges, celebrated milestones (including a very special 70th anniversary year!), and continued to evolve to meet the needs of our members.

Sue and I are incredibly grateful for the trust you placed in us. Thank you for your encouragement, your collaboration, your honesty, and your friendship. It has been an honor to serve this association and to support the people who make MFCP such a strong and meaningful organization.

While goodbyes are never easy, this one comes with a great deal of excitement. MFCP is in excellent hands, and I couldn't be more confident about the future under its next leader. I'm pleased to turn the page and allow our new Executive Director to introduce himself.

*Lee Borkowski*

### **Nice to Meet You**

Many of you may recognize me from my role as Vice President on the MFCP Board of Directors or as Chair of the MVP Program. If we haven't yet met, I'd like to formally introduce myself. My name is Cory Regnier, and as of the first of the year, I am transitioning into the role of Executive Director for the association.

I have been involved in the publishing industry for more than 11 years, working under the leadership of Trevor Slette, owner and publisher of Citizen Publishing Company in southwest Minnesota. I began my career as an ad designer and later advanced to Composition Department Manager.

In 2019, I was honored to be nominated as a Rising Star by the Association of Free Community Papers—an experience that helped me grow both personally and professionally while building meaningful connections across the industry at both the regional and national levels. Following my extended time in the program (thanks, COVID!), my passion for the industry only continued to grow.

That passion led me to serve on the boards of both MFCP and ACP, where I've been actively involved in many facets of each organization over the past two years. Stepping into the role of Executive Director feels like a natural and exciting next step in that journey.

I want to sincerely thank Lee Borkowski and Sue Pilla for their incredible leadership and dedication in guiding MFCP to the strong position it holds today. Their tenacity, enthusiasm, and organizational expertise have been invaluable. I am deeply grateful for their kindness, encouragement, and guidance throughout this transition. The industry—and I—will truly feel their absence, and I wish them nothing but the best in all their future endeavors.

I am excited about this opportunity and look forward to working with all of you and the board to help grow your businesses, strengthen our connections, and continue building a strong association. As our industry continues to evolve, I welcome the challenge of navigating what's ahead and supporting our members as we move confidently into the next era of publishing.

*Cory Regnier*

# MVP at Work



## Take a Moment to Appreciate and Learn from Past Issues

By Sarah Young  
Special Sections Coordinator, Staff Writer  
Star Publications, Sauk Centre, Minnesota

What to do, what not to do, how to act or how to get through things, in my experience, come with time and an expertise's guidance. As a young and less-experienced writer I will take all the advice I can get. A long time ago I received a bit of advice I didn't know would be so important in my current career. "Stop and smell the roses" or in other words, take a break and appreciate the things have or what you have accomplished. I am sure a lot of us have heard or said this before, but have we actually followed what it says?

In the newspaper industry, we are always looking at the next issue, the next story or the next special section. But, do we take the time to slow down and pause to see what we accomplished? For myself, as I got to the end of the year, I am preparing to start the cycle for each of my special sections over again, but looking from a different perspective, I just finished another year of special sections without any major hiccups or problems. I'd say that's a success.

Even taking five minutes to take a peek at what was accomplished can help our perspective. In my opinion, looking at what has been accomplished should be done more than once a year. We all get stuck in our habit of looking forward to what is next, but taking a look back at what was accomplished will help you in the long run. Whether it was hitting your sales goals, making it through all the story assignments, or getting the paper laid out and sent to print on time, those are all successes that we need to acknowledge.

On the other hand, looking back doesn't just need to be what went well. It's also important to look at your struggles and learn from them. Figure out where you struggled and try to do better the next time around. After all the newspaper is for informing the community, and we want to do our best at accomplishing that.

Being able to stop and smell the roses has helped me to find good in everything that I do and appreciate each section I help send out. It also allows me to stop and make notes for next year on what didn't go well and how to improve upon that. Being able to take a moment and appreciate the positives — while learning from the faults — has ultimately made me grow in my career.

What is your New Year's resolution? Maybe taking a second to look back on accomplishments and struggles is something to add to your list this year.

# Member News

## Nominate Your Best for MFCP Annual Awards

*It takes a Team!* The success of free community papers relies on the dedication and hard work of professionals in a variety of roles—many of whom work behind the scenes with little recognition. MFCP is proud to introduce a series of annual awards to honor these individuals. We invite you to submit nominations in the following categories:

### Graphic Designer of the Year

#### Criteria:

- Consistently produces eye-catching, effective ad designs.
- Demonstrates creativity, technical skill, and attention to detail.
- Works well under deadlines and adapts to client needs.
- Plays a key role in enhancing publication quality and engagement.

#### Call for Nominations:

Behind every great ad is a talented designer! MFCP's *Graphic Designer of the Year* award recognizes the creativity and skill that bring ideas to life. If you know a designer who makes a difference, send in your nomination!

### Journalist of the Year

#### Criteria:

- Produces high-quality, engaging, and impactful content.
- Demonstrates journalistic integrity and a commitment to storytelling.
- Covers community news with accuracy, fairness, and depth.
- Helps strengthen the role of local publications in informing and engaging readers.

#### Call for Nominations:

Great journalism keeps communities informed and engaged. MFCP's *Journalist of the Year* award honors those who tell compelling stories and uphold journalistic excellence. Nominate a journalist who makes a difference!

### Unsung Hero Award

#### Criteria:

- Plays a critical role in the daily success of a publication.
- Demonstrates reliability, teamwork, and dedication.
- Goes above and beyond to support the organization

**Call for Nominations:**

Some of the most important contributions come from behind the scenes. MFCP's *Unsung Hero Award* recognizes the essential team members who make everything run smoothly but rarely get the spotlight. If you know someone who keeps things moving, nominate them today!

**How to Submit a Nomination:**

Please submit your completed nomination form and any supporting documents via email to [director@mfc.org](mailto:director@mfc.org) by 4PM, January 30, 2026

**[Click here for your Nomination Packet](#)**

**Thank you for helping us celebrate the best in our industry!**

# Members Helping Members

## 2026 Postal Promotions Now Available Thanks ACP!

The USPS has announced its postal promotions for 2026, and there are good savings to be had for members who mail using USPS Marketing Mail.

**Publishers may participate in the 2026 USPS Enhanced Emerging Technology Promotion – Mobile Shopping Option, which offers a 5% discount on total postage costs.** The promotion allows participating publications to receive the discount for six consecutive months during the 2026 calendar year, with flexibility to choose their own start date.

ACP has created an Omaha Steaks advertisement that meets the requirements of the USPS Emerging Technology Promotion, allowing publishers who run the ad to access the 5% postage discount. While each publisher must still resubmit the ad for USPS approval, the process should be straightforward since the creative has already been vetted. We appreciate ACP's work in doing the heavy lifting to make participation easier.

**Members interested in participating are encouraged to carefully review the USPS pre-approval instructions and ensure all requirements are met.** While the savings can be significant, it is essential that each publisher follows USPS guidelines precisely when submitting materials and claiming the discount through the Business Customer Gateway.

If you mail, this is definitely a promotion worth exploring as you plan for 2026.

[Click here for all the info](#)

[Click for approved ad](#)

PICTURE PERFECT, NOW

WAIT UNTIL <<  
YOU TASTE IT

AMERICA'S ORIGINAL BUTCHER  
**OMAHA STEAKS**  
SINCE 1917

**Butcher's Classic Pack** **SAVE 60%**

- 4 Butcher's Cut Filet Mignons (5 oz.)
- 4 Air-Chilled Boneless Chicken Breasts (5 oz.)
- 4 PureGround® Filet Mignon Burgers (6 oz.)
- 4 Gourmet Jumbo Franks (3 oz.)
- 4 Individual Scalloped Potatoes (3.8 oz.)
- 4 Caramel Apple Tartlets (4 oz.)
- 1 Omaha Steaks Seasoning (3 oz.)

**8 FREE Omaha Steaks Burgers** (4 oz.)

81081XEL separately \$323.93 **\$129.99**

**SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY PRICE**

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**OmahaSteaks.com/ClassicPack7399 | 1.833.897.4133**  
Ask for your FREE burgers with offer 81081XEL

Savings shown over aggregated single item base price. Photos exemplary of product advertised. 8 free 4 oz. burgers will be sent to each shipping address that includes 81081. Limit 2. Standard S&H added per address. While supplies last. Items may be substituted due to inventory limitations. Some products may not be available for sale in your area. Sales are subject to OmahaSteaks.com/terms-of-use. Expires 12/31/26. 25Mod31 | Omaha Steaks, LLC

# Ad-Libs



**John Foust, Greensboro, NC**

## An Important Question: Does This Make Sense?

As I write this, I have on my desk one of the most confusing ads I've ever seen. I saved it, because it's an example of what not to do in an ad. It's an ad for a pizza restaurant, and is unfortunately a jumble of competing offers and special deals.

It's divided into a series of ten boxes, which is in itself a bad idea, because boxes divide a larger space into a series of smaller ads on the page. Several of the boxes feature prices of different choices of pizzas. Others highlight percentage-discounts and a free offer. Still more feature the name of the restaurant, the address, the phone number and the web address. The headline, which reads, "Now open," appears at the bottom of the ad, where it looks like an afterthought. Add a QR code to the mix and you have an unintelligible mess.

In addition to being a visual nightmare, the ad copy doesn't make much sense at all. For example, the most prominent offer promotes "40% off all pizzas, sides and desserts. Not valid with other offers." Well, why would you want to use it with other offers, when the box beside it offers a *free* pizza? Then there are boxes which offer discount prices on specific flavors and sizes of pizzas – one and two-topping pizzas, mix and match choices, extra-large one-topping, and large specialty pizza (what makes it special is not explained).

It's enough to make a pizza lover say, "I'll just stay home and have a sandwich."

I couldn't help but wonder, "Did anybody proofread this monstrosity before it ran?" So I read it myself. There is not a single typo or misplaced punctuation mark. If this final version had been checked by someone who was looking for only grammatical errors, that would explain why the ad made it into print.

The problem is that it sends multiple messages – and none of them match. It reminds me of what one of my advertising clients once said about a new publication: "It has a lot of writing, but not much reading."

One of my favorite advertising stories is about the time I heard a speech by John O'Toole, who was at the time the Chairman of Foote, Cone & Belding, a global ad agency. He also served as President of the American Association of Advertising Agencies. After his speech, I walked to the head table and asked him what he thought was the most important principle in advertising. Without hesitation, he said, "Clarity."

There you have it. One of the most respected experts in the world said the secret to success in advertising is clarity. That secret can make a world of difference in persuasive communication, whether we're selling products on an international scale or pizzas at a local restaurant.

What should we do with this information? We can start by going beyond grammar when we proofread ads and ad ideas. All it takes is one simple question: "Does this make sense?"

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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](mailto:john@johnfoust.com)

# Ryan Dohrn



## Why a Strong Sales Pipeline Makes “No” Easier to Handle

Ryan shares his sales pipeline philosophy in these few lines: ‘When your pipeline is strong, a no is just part of the process. When your pipeline is weak, a no feels personal. The difference matters more than most salespeople realize.’

It is a brand new year. Find out how to build and strengthen your sales pipeline using the 5 steps outlined in this article and make a difference in 2026!

[Click here for his article.](#)

Listen to Ryan’s ad sales podcast, [Ad Sales Nation](#), on [iTunes](#) or on [Soundcloud](#). Keep up to date with Ryan’s ad sales training advice on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/RyanDohrnLIVE>

Ryan Dohrn is an award-winning [ad sales training coach](#), a nationally recognized [internet sales consultant](#), and an international [motivational speaker](#). He is the author of the best-selling ad sales book, *[Selling Backwards](#)*. Ryan is the President and founder of Brain Swell Media and 360 Ad Sales Training, a boutique [ad sales training](#) and [sales coaching](#) firm with a detailed focus on ad sales training, internet consulting, and media revenue generation. Ryan is also the Publisher of *[Sales Training World](#)*.

**80 Prospecting Calls Per Day? Should You Really Make 80 Calls a Day? You Won’t Believe This Answer**

# Kevin Slimp



## Are you Dreaming Big Enough?

*Recent conversations have ignited my passion*

**Kevin Slimp - [kevin@kevinslimp.com](mailto:kevin@kevinslimp.com)**

“Be the flame, not the moth.”  
— **Giacomo Casanova**

If I were to ask you to mark a spot on a line with a "1" on the left end and a "10" on the right end – with "10" representing "extremely passionate" and "1" representing "no passion at all" – how would you rate yourself when you think of your current passion for your newspaper?

Reading a post by Joey Young, publisher in Kansas, prodded my thoughts toward passion this morning. Some of you are familiar with Joey. In many ways, he reminds me of the younger version of me. Joey is very passionate about newspapers, and his passion leads him – and Lindsey, his co-publisher and wife – to many interesting places. In his post, Joey wrote about his recent conversation with NPR podcast host Jake Williams. Jake hosts a podcast titled "Out of Print: The Unmaking of American News."

As I looked back over Jake's podcasts, I quickly realized I knew many of the newspaper folks he had interviewed. He seems genuinely interested in small community newspapers.

Okay, back to passion.

I spent my morning today visiting with the publisher of a well-known periodical about the possibility of taking ownership and moving it under my publishing company's umbrella. We agreed there was great interest on both of our parts. Afterwards, I called a friend and brainstormed ideas to grow the publication and make it much more recognized than it currently is.

Before I knew it, I was listing influential writers (both in the U.S. and internationally) who could help by writing for the publication. I threw out an idea of localizing the periodical by getting news organizations around the world to submit their own material and create localized “issues” that could be accessed online. We discussed who I could recruit to join quarterly focus groups to review the content and brainstorm ways to improve what we’re doing.

The conversation with my friend lasted less than 30 minutes. Still, in that short time, we came up with at least a dozen ideas for monetizing the publication and getting the right people in place to create something we could expand beyond its current audience. By the end of the conversation, we were both “hyped up” about the possibility of growing this periodical.

You can probably guess where I'm going with this. My question for you is, "Are you dreaming big enough?" In the phone conversation with my friend, he kept reminding me that the most essential first step is to lay the groundwork – that is, to dream the dream – of what we're building. Determining where the workforce and money will come from comes later. For now, however, it's critical to dream about what could be. Afterwards, we can figure out how to get there.

Obviously, I don't have enough to do if I'm thinking of taking on a project of this magnitude (yes, that's a joke). Still, allow me to have this moment of passion. Allow me to dream of what could be. It's futile to worry about the details until the dream is in place.

As we move into 2026, it seems an appropriate time to take stock of where we are and to dream dreams of where we could be. Visualizing is an essential step in our personal lives (just call me "Dr. Kevin") and in our role as journalists. Let me take this opportunity to encourage you to visualize where your newspaper could be in six months or a year.

I'm still feeling the passion of my morning conversations, and I'm sure I'll act on them sooner rather than later. However, like most of you, it's time for me to get back to work.

*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](http://newspaperacademy.com).*

*Kevin Slimp is former director of The University of Tennessee Newspaper Institute and founder of [NewspaperAcademy.com](http://NewspaperAcademy.com).*