

news clips

VOL. 20, NO. 4

John Tory's conference call a success

In its constant effort to offer members better services OCNA has begun a conference call program where politicians, business leaders or those from various advocacy groups can speak directly with writers and editors and answer their questions on the call.

The first call was a great success and involved Leader of the Opposition John Tory discussing the provincial budget. Not only did he speak about the broad provincial effects of the budget, but more importantly addressed specific local issues our members put to him.

Bob Stewart, Editor of The LaSalle Post found the call very useful. "The information we gleaned from it formed the basis of two stories about the provincial budget that week. Mr. Tory seemed very at ease with the whole concept, and was very free in his answering of questions. I found it was a great way to get questions answered about issues pertinent to Windsor/LaSalle/Essex



County, but also a great way to get a wider perspective on other communities in the province outside of major centres."

OCNA has a conference call booked with Minister of Energy Donna Cansfield on April 11 which, after it was announced, filled up quickly.

The idea behind the new conference call initiative stems from a common frustration amongst Community

Newspaper reporters, of not having their calls returned. While OCNA is working hard to show ministers and their communications staff that Community Newspapers are important media that deserve the same courtesy and respect as do their daily and broadcast counterparts, talking to 300 newspapers individually isn't always the most efficient way for them to deal with the media.

While topics are chosen by the sponsoring ministry or group, members are free to ask any questions they feel are important. To allow for the speaker to be prepared for questions on local issues they are provided with a list of participating papers ahead of time. This ensures topics that local readers are most interested in get covered.

The conference call program has not only been shown to be popular with OCNA members but with politicians as well.

"Every provincial politician

I've presented this idea to has shown interest in conducting a conference call at some point in the future," said Gordon Cameron, OCNA's Government Relations Associate. "When I tell them about our reach and readership they realize how important our members are and how the politicians can get to Ontarians who aren't well served by other media. They like the idea that they can talk to newspapers from across the province without having to leave their offices."

Information on upcoming calls will be distributed through News Clips, e-clips and through direct e-mail to publishers and editors. Further, if there is a topic you'd like a call on, a ministry/politician you think would be good to host a conference call, or any questions about the conference call service please contact Gordon Cameron at (905) 639-8720 ext. 239 or g.cameron@ocna.org.

OCNA's 2006 Board of Directors

The 2006 OCNA Board of Directors was named at OCNA's Spring Convention, March 31 to April 1. **From left to right - back row:** Director, Dave Sykes, Goderich Signal-Star; Director, Don MacLeod, Osprey Media; Executive Director, Bill Laidlaw, OCNA; Director, Peter Winkler, Metroland Southwest Division; Director, JT Grossmith, Alexandria; Director, Keith Roulston, Blyth/Brussels Citizen; Director, Cam McKnight, Sun Media.

From left to right - front row: Secretary Treasurer - Linda Plumridge, Fort Frances Times; Past President - Dave Armstrong, New Liskeard Temiskaming Speaker; President - Mike Williscraft, Niagara This Week; First Vice President - Rick Shaver, Cornwall Seaway News; Second Vice-President - Abbas Homayed, Sudbury Northern Life.

Not shown in picture Director, Tim Dundas, Osprey Media.



a word from OCNA...

Pulling together for your association

By Anne Lannan
Member Services

As we come down from an eventful OCNA Spring Convention, I would like to reflect on what went well, what areas we can improve on, and why the OCNA staff come back to work so pumped after these types of events.

The last point is an easy one. Our OCNA

staff love working with and for our member newspapers. Getting the opportunity to see them, talk with them, have dinner with them during an event like the Spring Convention is rewarding for them. It reinforces that what they do day in and day out is appreciated and valued, and provides the motivation to continue to work hard for you.

By the same token, we hope our members who spend their time, skills and experience contributing to the Ontario Community Newspapers Association, and indeed our industry, know that their contributions are appreciated by the staff and Board.

Our members do so much for the association. They spend countless hours pouring over newspapers as judges in the Better Newspaper Competition; heart wrenching Junior Citizen nominations; as well as inspiring Mary Knowles nominations. Still, others review the awards upon completion and recommend improvements for the next year. Many of our members sponsor Newspaper Award categories and come out to our awards gala to support the winners.

Our newspaper professionals spend time studying the

issues and challenges our industry faces and work towards the betterment of our business through many of the committees and board of directors with the OCNA. To name a few, they review bylaws and membership applications, to studying digital archives and the finances of OCNA, they willingly give their all.

Others are blessed with special talents such as cartoonist Steve Nease who graciously creates a caricature of our outgoing president each year. This is a tradition that began many, many years ago by the now retired Merle Tingley from London.

We are appreciative of members who use their resources to help us accomplish our goals. A fine example of this are our members with printing operations who contribute all the printing for the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards.

Others share their experience through training opportunities. The list goes on and on.

If you would like to become more involved in the association, please let us know. There is always room for eager and willing volunteers. I'm also sure you will find the experience rewarding to you personally.

Your contributions help OCNA be as strong and vital as it is, and you sure do make our 'work' enjoyable. On behalf of all the staff and board at OCNA, thanks so much for your contributions!

How do we learn about news-worthy kids in our communities?

Our committed and hard-working judges for the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards made an observation on Judging Day and we would like to get your feedback.

More than 130 outstanding young people were nominated by their families, friends, and local newspapers. Their stories speak about their amazing contributions to their communities, their ability to motivate others to become involved, perseverance to overcome limitations and still be able to make a difference, and their drive to do more than just what is expected of them.

Their stories are inspirational.

We are proud that these young nominees are able to get coverage in their local newspapers when their local editors present them with their nomination certificates and write their stories. Every nom-

inee is recognized in their community through the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Awards.

But, ask our judges, why have we not been writing about these kids sooner? Why aren't their nomination packages filled with articles from their local paper about what amazing things they have been doing in their communities? Isn't that what we do so well as community newspapers, promote the contributions our readers make to our towns and cities?

Look through the nomination packages from your community and give us your thoughts. What can editors and reporters do differently to find out about these great kids and spread the word in the newspaper? We'd love your feedback. Please e-mail anne.lannan@ocna.org.

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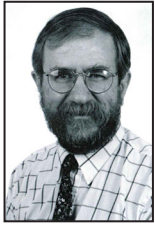
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Tips on scoop writing

By Jim Stasiowski
Writing Coach



The sign in the waiting room of my doctor's office read: "The restroom has moved." Yikes.

As a guy who prefers -- nay, insists upon -- a stationary restroom, I at first found the sign disconcerting. Then I realized the actual room apparently stayed in place, but the office administrators had decreed patients henceforth must use a different restroom, one down the hall.

Surprise in writing usually is a good quality, it catches our attention, it takes us away from the mundane, it makes us think. To a writing coach, the personifying of "The restroom" was overwriting; still, it was a fun image, it made the routine thought come alive.

Coincidentally, the day I visited the doctor's office, I was judging writing contests for a chain of newspapers. The writing categories were: features, enterprise reporting, news writing, scoops, special projects and commentary.

Guess which category had the best writing?

Scoops.

Yep, scoops.

When you think of a scoop, you think of a reporter's dogged hard work just to scrounge up a few basic facts. You don't think of writing excellence.

So when scoopmeisters surprised me by turning out better stories than the writers in the glamour categories of features, enterprise and projects, I set out analyzing the differences.

1. The scoop leads were direct, clear and bursting with news.

I think sometimes when we write features or projects, we think, "Oh, heck, readers'll put up with some fancy stuff here at the top, so I'm going to show off a little."

Showing off is fun. I do it all the time, and sometimes it works. But often reporters

get so enamored of ideas for leads, they ramble and wobble until, six paragraphs later, readers still are wondering where the story is going.

Donald Murray, the eminent writing coach, says in "Writing for your Readers": "The lead tells the writer how to write the story. It focuses, orders, shapes the message, and establishes the story's voice. An effective lead solves most of the problems the writer will face in the first draft and solves them efficiently, ahead of time, when the writer is not trapped in a tangle of prose."

When we have a scoop, we're so proud of the news, we put it right up top. That gets us off to a good start.

“With too many of our stories, we think length equates to significance.”

2. The reporters started with the scoop, then let their curiosity and deductive powers lead them down some excellent paths.

When we get a scoop, we want to write more than just a couple of paragraphs. Greedy for recognition, we want the kind of story that leads the newspaper, that seizes the top of Page 1. Therefore, we creatively dig for information that directly ties into the basic hard news.

By contrast, when we go after features or projects, we are often so eager for every quotation, every scrap of information, that we meander. Instead of focusing on a specific, narrow conflict, we try to cast a long, wide net and get everything.

The magic of the well-written newspaper story comes from the reporter's ability to see the story taking shape as he or she is reporting it. The story doesn't exist in notes or in documents; the story blooms in the reporter's

brain.

In a book called "The Journalist's Craft," Mark Bowden, a much-praised newspaper reporter and author of "Black Hawk Down," wrote: "Unless you begin to make decisions early on about where your story begins and ends, you can become paralyzed by this need to report. I have known superb reporters, some of the best I have ever seen, who utterly lack the ability to assemble the information they collect into a coherent story."

3. The scoop stories were brisk.

When we have a scoop, we do not dawdle. Dawdling means the competition -- another paper, TV news, radio, some mindless blog -- has a chance to scoop us.

So the scoop-reporter looks to finish off the story, to come swiftly to a logical conclusion.

With too many of our stories, we think length equates to significance. Furthermore, editors, who have done no reporting, too often edit with a bias toward adding more information. By adding, they hope to prevent criticism that the reporter missed something.

By contrast, editors usually are so thrilled to have a scoop, they forget to ask the reporter such silly questions as, "Hey, did you call the Intergalactic Personified Restroom Association and ask how many of its members moved last year?"

THE FINAL WORD: The last time you gave someone 'kudos,' do you recall how many you gave?

If you think you gave more than one, you're wrong. 'Kudos' is singular, not plural, despite the -s at the end. 'Kudos' comes from the Greek 'kydos,' which means glory or fame. We use it to pay a compliment, such as, 'Kudos on using 'kudos' with a singular verb, Jim.

Writing coach Jim Stasiowski welcomes your questions or comments. Call him at 410 247-4600 or write to 5812 Heron Drive, Baltimore, Md. 21227.

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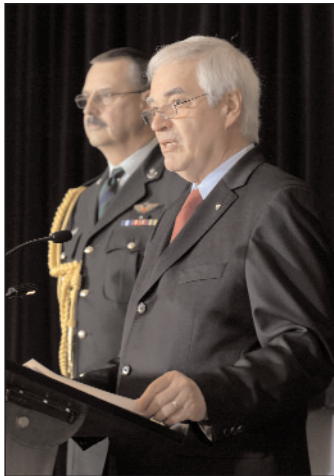
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OCNA Spring Convention highlights



Honourable James Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario



Tembec's Michel Rolland with Junior Citizen Erin Iredale and brother Jordan enjoying The Drum Cafe's interactive entertainment



Tembec's Michel Rolland presenting Junior Citizen John Leslie with a Tembec watch and a cheque



Premier McGuinty with Junior Citizen Bilaal Rajan



Junior Citizens of the Year - From left to right (back row): Leena Bourne, John Leslie, Shawna Kunkel, Kaitlynn Schildroth, Honourable James Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Natalie Kehl, Maylee Bossy, Mackenzie Barnes. Front row: Kyp Little, Rebecca Dixon, Joy Evans, Bilaal Rajan, Erin Iredale and Austin Barnes. Missing: Rebecca Dixon.



Tembec's Michel Rolland presenting Junior Citizen Natalie Kehl with a Tembec watch and a cheque



Junior Citizens of the Year Awards Dinner Entertainment, The Drum Cafe



Junior Citizens of the Year Awards Dinner

March 31 - April 1, 2006

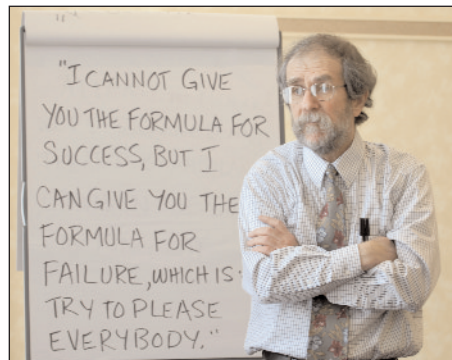


Incoming President Mike Williscraft presenting Premier Dalton McGuinty with bronze newsman

Past president Cam McKnight presenting outgoing president Dave Armstrong with caricature at President's Premiere Luncheon



Incoming president Mike Williscraft at the BNC Dinner Gala



Editorial session with writing coach Jim Stasiowski



BNC Awards Gala Host Ron Bremner



Publishers and production session with Kevin Slimp



Outgoing president Dave Armstrong



Advertising session with sales trainer Chuck Nau



Mary Knowles Award recipient Mark Cripps of Brabant Newspapers (right) with Mary Knowles' mother Doris Traplin and son Ben Riche

OCNA employee profile

OCNA's new controller

As OCNA continues to offer additional 'value-added' services to our members, there have been new additions to the OCNA team. In last month's edition we profiled Wendi Krulicki the new Human Resources Associate. This issue we profile Todd Frees, our new Controller.

One of OCNA's newest employees, Todd Frees started February 20 as our Controller. He has taken over for Shelley Ford-Kohler, Director of Financial Services.

Frees oversees all aspects of financial procedures and policies, budgeting and forecasting, cash flow management, financial reporting and analysis, accounts receivable, preparation of audit material and is in charge of AdReach administration, IT and, of



course, the general accounting team.

He is also the general manager for the Community Newspaper Reciprocal Insurance Exchange (cnrie) which involves dealing with claims management and securing supplementary insurance coverage as provided for members and non-members.

Aside from his regular

duties he is also looking to upgrade OCNA's computer system, working on the highly anticipated digital archive project, and improving the budget process just to name a few.

Frees is a graduate of Laurentian University and then went on to pursue his CGA. He previously worked at TRG Insurance in Niagara as a controller and before that worked in a medium-sized public accounting firm.

Although he has never worked in the newspaper industry before, he says he is enjoying the learning curve.

"I have been taking it day by day, as everyday is a new learning

experience."

To help him understand the industry he is planning to spend time with CCNA to see how they operate, and spend time with a few member newspapers to learn their day-to-day operations.

"During my short time at OCNA, I have immensely enjoyed working with the team of professionals here, who are dedicated to providing service and support to our members and enhancing the image of the community newspaper industry."

Fast Facts on Todd Frees

Born: Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Lives: St. Catharines, ON

Education: BBA from Laurentian University, CGA

Previous position: Controller at TRG Insurance for two years

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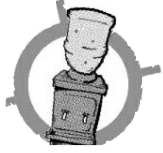
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Water Cooler

- **Peterborough This Week** photographer Kyle Griffin received the first-place award for Best Photo Illustration at the 2006 Metroland Editorial Excellence Awards held in Toronto.
- **The Scarborough Mirror** and the **North York Mirror** have been redesigned and will now be publishing two days a week instead of three with no edition on Sunday. Also, both papers are launching new Web sites.
- The Tuesday, March 28 edition of the **Thornhill Liberal** was the last Tuesday issue to go out. The paper will expand coverage for its Thursday and Sunday editions.
- The **Etobicoke Guardian** Wednesday edition has been redesigned. Also, the Guardian will not be publishing on Sundays anymore.

Congratulations to all our Better Newspaper Award winners for your accomplishments. Anyone wishing to order another Awards Plaque for your personal use, can simply e-mail k.shardlow@ocna.org listing the award category, placement, and newspaper name. Please indicate if you would like to include your name on the plaque as well. Cost is \$28 per plaque.

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CLASSIFIEDS

The Backyard Astronomer Brings The Stars Down To Earth

Written for anyone with a sense of curiosity, The Backyard Astronomer, will turn on the light bulb inside your head and put a smile on your face. Author and amateur astronomer, John Crossen, brings a lively and informative writing style to a subject which he enjoys passionately. And his enthusiasm shows in an intriguing array of articles that entertain readers and score big as the universe on the "wow-meter." Updated weekly, they are available in halpage or quarter-page sizes. The handy PDF formats are an easy "plug-in" to your existing newspaper layout. And at just \$5.00 per article, they're also an easy "plugin" to your budget. Who says a local weekly newspaper can't cover the cosmos? Certainly not The Backyard Astronomer. For samples in pdf format, contact: sconnolly@lakefieldherald.com

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Weeklies'
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The issue of 'free classifieds' puzzles publishers

By Peter M. Zollman
Classified Intelligence LLC
and the AIM Group

The issue of free classifieds won't go away any time soon.

It's a tremendous challenge for publishers, because they're used to getting paid for the ads they run.

But Google, Microsoft and many other companies - including Craigslist, the site that's not really a business - don't plan to get paid for the classified ads they carry. At least not directly. And that makes every traditional classified advertising publisher crazy. Publishers have to adapt to the new business rules while still keeping the old business going and growing.

It's not easy. Not at all.

Here are a few questions:

--- Should you offer free classifieds?

--- If so, what / how / why?

--- Should you allow your ads to be aggregated into Google Base / Indeed.com / Oodle.com / Vast.com / etc.?

Unfortunately, there's no single answer to any of those questions. For each newspaper / market / category, the answer is different. We work with our clients to answer those questions specifically for them.

But since I've raised the questions, I should at least give you my "generic" answers with a very short synopsis of why I

and my colleagues at Classified Intelligence believe as we do.

--- Should you offer free classifieds? Yes. Sometimes. Are there marketplaces you've lost? Like "merchandise under \$500" or personals or "used cars under \$3,000"? If so, that's a good place to start. But make sure you build in revenue streams, such as section sponsorships or options for advertisers who want to sell to the audience you're reaching (low-end

“As long as the advertiser pays you for the results, you're the winner.”

used-car dealers, for example, adjacent to "used cars under \$3,000"). And upsells into print. And upsells online. Best: All of the above.

Why offer free classifieds? To recapture categories you've lost, and / or to hold on to your "endangered species". Make sure you use those free classifieds to promote your newspaper, to build "community" on your Web site (and in print, if possible), and to increase traffic on your Web site. All of those generate revenue through local ad sales.

When you offer free classifieds, make sure you're not sub-

stantially increasing costs. Use them to drive ad placement online. And make sure you include upsell WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) capabilities on your site, so customers who are tempted to spend \$5, \$10, or \$15 for increased visibility online or a print upsell have great reason to do so. Readily, easily and by credit card.

--- Should you allow aggregator / indexer sites like

Google Base and Oodle to include your listings in their databases? This is another tricky question, and I could easily make the argument either way. But in general,

our answer is yes. With more caveats and "ifs / maybes" than just a straight yes.

The bottom line, in my opinion: No one calls your newspaper because they want to "place an ad". They want results. They want to sell that car / rent that apartment / sell that house / find that new employee - quickly, easily, effectively and as inexpensively as possible.

If you're the place they call to place the ad, good for you. If you're the place consumers turn to, you're doing your job. You're serving as the market-

place. As long as the advertiser pays you for the results, you're the winner. As for all the free sites, sure, advertisers could post ads on their own - but they'd have to deal with the complicated and time-consuming task of knowing which sites to visit, actually placing, managing and expiring the listings, and so forth.

But if your brand is the "one-stop advertising source" for finding a job / home / car / etc. in your market, you'll do well.

Again: This is not a blanket endorsement. For more pros and cons, invite one of us from Classified Intelligence to speak at your association meeting; have us work with your company on the specifics of your market, and your objectives, or just call me with specific questions. I'll be happy to try to answer them. No charge. Because these are important issues and publishers should consider them carefully. Before they lose the marketplace.

* * * *

Peter M. Zollman is founding principal of Classified Intelligence LLC and the AIM Group, consulting groups that work with media companies to help develop profitable interactive media services. Zollman can be reached at pzollman@aimgroup.com, (407) 788-2780.



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