

AGENDA

Quarterly Newsletter of NFPW



'25 COA breaks down walls while honoring family's past

By Cathy Petrini, Virginia
NFPW Vice President

Donna Bryson has interviewed South African president Nelson Mandela, covered the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker televangelist scandal and investigated the legacy of U.S. leaders whose ancestors held slaves.

She has explored the "hard history" of her own family and that of other African-American families, and strives to connect those intimate stories to the larger history of the nation and the world.

For her courage, service, professionalism and remarkable body of work, she has been honored by NFPW as the 2025 Communicator of Achievement, the highest honor bestowed by the group.

A Colorado Press Woman member since 2014, Bryson calls herself "a descendant of story tellers and story lovers."

Cathy Koon of Media Network Idaho was named runner-up for her dedicated service to NFPW, MNI and her community. Koon joined Idaho Press Women (now MNI) in



Newly crowned COA Donna Bryson gets a congratulatory hug from fellow Colorado Press Women member Barbara "Bobbi" Gigone, who received her 65-year milestone award at the conference in Golden. *Photo by Solomon Crenshaw.*

1980. She is state president, NFPW publications director and AGENDA editor.

Bryson was born in Florida, grew up in California and says she has wanted to be a journalist since she stopped dreaming of becoming a circus tightrope walker.

As a new graduate from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Bryson began working at the Kansas City bureau of The Associated Press. A year later, she

opened a one-woman AP satellite office in Missouri. Promoted to AP world desk editor, she served as a UN correspondent before moving overseas. She was working in South Africa when apartheid ended and was later based in New Delhi, Cairo and London before returning to South Africa as AP bureau chief.

Bryson's experiences in South Africa inspired her first book, "It's a Black-White Thing," which exam-

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President's Message: *The power of a moment*

By Debbie Miller
NFPW President

First off, thank you, members of NFPW, for entrusting me and the rest of our elected board with leadership roles in an organization we all cherish.

I am honored and humbled to be chosen.

It seems appropriate, in my first message as NFPW president, to thank the Colorado affiliate and the conference organizers for The Next Frontier, the 2025 conference that wrapped up last week.

We appreciate the thoughtful care and countless hours that went into preparing to host scores of out-of-state guests with such grace and genuine hospitality. The program lineup was top-notch, and as a college instructor, I was delighted to see so many sessions addressing topics on the minds of journalism educators.

On the night of the installation, I spoke of standing on the shoulders of giants. The giants include our organization's founders, such as the Illinois Woman's Press Association's Helen Miller Malloch, who recognized the benefits and strength women would attain through membership in a larger national organization. (Some of the phrasing comes from the writings of Past President Marianne Wolf-Astrauskas, another of those giants.)

I intended to give a shoutout to another giant on installation night. I was remiss in failing to mention my own

state's Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder, who served as our organization's president and as the first female president of the National Newspaper Association. Charlotte, who passed away in 2020, was a role model in community journalism and in leadership, making her community, her state and her nation a better place.

Saturday night (Sept. 13), when the historic gavel was passed among the former presidents and then placed in my hands, I was overcome with emotion. This organization has played a big role in my own life. Its members have been there with me through the ups and downs of industry layoffs, career transitions and crises of confidence.

Those former presidents passing that historic hardwood also have been among the organization giants, influencing my own life in ways big and small.

As I assume the role of president, our organization and its mission are needed more than ever. Professional communicators, guided by the values like those mentioned in our code of ethics, need to be seen and heard above the din.

The significance of the moment weighs heavily on me, but I know I have the support of a whole village. Please let me know how I can best serve you and our beloved organization.

Write on!

NFPW Code of Ethics

As a professional communicator, I recognize my responsibility to the public which has placed its trust and confidence in my work, and will endeavor to do nothing to abuse this obligation.

With truth as my ultimate goal, I will adhere to the highest standards of professional communication, never consciously misleading reader, viewer or listener; and will avoid any compromise of my objectivity or fairness.

Because I believe that professional communicators must be obligated only to the people's right to know, I affirm that freedom of the press is to be guarded as an inalienable right of the citizens of a free society.

I pledge to use this freedom wisely and to uphold the right of communicators to express unpopular opinions as well as the right to agree with the majority.

— Adopted in 1975 at the NFPW Conference in Sun Valley, Idaho

Communicator of Achievement 2026 . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ines the struggle to move past racism in South Africa after apartheid and draws parallels with the civil rights movement in the U.S.

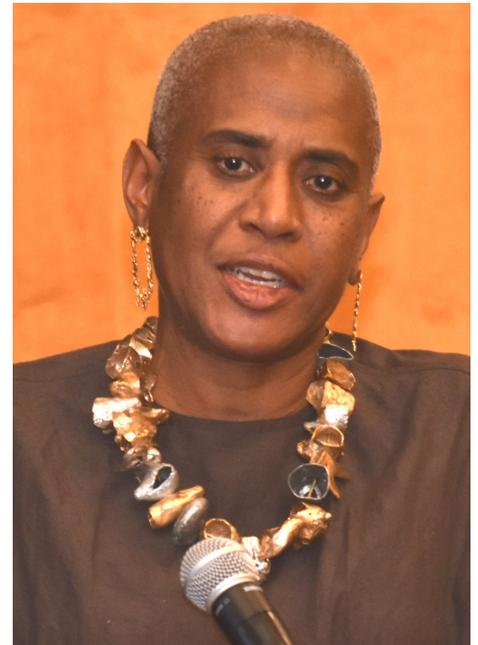
She moved to Denver in 2021 and continued to write, publishing articles in The New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, US News & World Report, the Wall Street Journal and other media outlets. In her books and in her articles, she brings her global experience to state and local news, breaking down walls and bringing people together.

In 2021, Bryson became national affairs editor for Reuters, where she guides coverage of breaking news. She was also a researcher, editor and writer for the award-winning Reuters

Slavery Project, which examined slavery from multi-racial viewpoints and explored its enduring legacy. That series also featured “All We Are Is Memory,” Bryson’s story about her own family’s history, including a harrowing incident in which a mob of white men dragged her great-grandfather from his store and tarred and feathered him. She describes her piece as “an exploration of where my family’s history dovetails with efforts to reckon with some of the bleakest moments of America’s past.”

One of the 2025 COA judges described how Bryson’s impact “ripples through the stories she’s shaped and the journalists she’s mentored.”

Along the way, she has honored her own family’s stories and encour-



COA Donna Bryson

aged others to learn and talk about the hard lessons of history.



NFPW President Julie Campbell, left, congratulated Cathy Koon on being named runner-up to COA Donna Bryson.

Photo by Solomon Crenshaw.

Affiliate COA nominees ‘among our very best’

Nine NFPW affiliates selected outstanding state Communicators of Achievement this year. All of them, said one of the judges, “have in their own way made our world a little better place through service in their communities and to NFPW.”

According to COA director Karen Stensrud, “They are among our very best.” The other nominees were:

- Elaine Hobson Miller, Alabama
- Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, Arkansas
- Vivian Sade, Indiana
- Amanda Silverman Kosior, North Dakota
- Léonie Rosenstiel, New Mexico
- Diane Lund-Muzikant, Oregon
- Terry Haycock, Virginia

Miller suffered a heart attack after arriving in Colorado for the NFPW conference and underwent surgery to implant a pacemaker/defibrillator. For an update on her condition, see the story by Solomon Crenshaw Jr. elsewhere in this issue.

Texas senator earns Sweepstakes award, again

By Helen Sheffield Plotkin, Arkansas
2025 Professional Communications Contest Director

NFPW wrapped up its annual conference with a banquet Saturday, Sept. 13, by recognizing the winners of its 2025 Professional Communications Contest. The evening included an excellent meal, lots of chatter, laughter, applause and many, many photographs.

The ceremony ended with the announcement of the individual Sweepstakes Awards and recognition of NFPW affiliates who earned the most Sweepstakes points, awarded based on first, second, third or honorable mention placement and on how many entries they competed against in each category.

Judith Zaffirini, a Texas state senator and communications business owner, won the individual Sweepstakes Award for the fourth time in five years. She receives \$250 and a plaque.

Zaffirini, the first Mexican American woman elected to the Texas Senate, became the first woman Dean of the Senate in 2023, succeeding 24 men who held the title since 1909 when it was first assigned to the longest-serving senator. She has won numerous awards and honors for her legislative, public service and professional work.

Through her business, Zaffirini Communications, she provides professional communication services, including consulting, workshops and seminars, keynote addresses and writing.

"My staff and I work hard to represent the families of our district and to keep them informed. I treasure my membership in NFPW and am delighted that these awards reflect our transparency and responsiveness," Zaffirini said when notified of her award.

The second- and third-place prizes in the Sweepstakes competition were split between two NFPW members who earned the same number of points, resulting in a tie for second-place. Joshua Friedberg and Amy Wieser Willson will each receive a second-place award and a \$75 prize.

"Congratulations once again to Judith Zaffirini for her Sweepstakes Award. Year after year, she astounds us all with her body of prize-winning work," said NFPW President Julie Campbell. "And congratulations as well to Joshua Friedberg and Amy Wieser Willson for their sec-



From left, Judith Zaffirini, Joshua Friedberg and Amy Wieser Willson.

ond-place tie. Like Zaffirini, they are talented communicators with impressive careers."

Friedberg, a member of Illinois Woman's Press Association, is a TEDx speaker, college writing tutor, academic coach, music historian and singer-songwriter living in Chicago. He has been a regular entrant of NFPW's professional contest for nine years. This is his first time to win a Sweepstakes award.

Amy Wieser Willson, Ph.D., a member of North Dakota Professional Communicators, is president of Neon Loon Communications, a Minnesota-based communications firm.

Before founding Neon Loon, Willson worked in journalism, corporate communications and marketing and served in the military for 20 years. She has won numerous awards for her work from NDPC, NFPW and others. This is her first Sweepstakes award from NFPW.



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<https://www.nfpw.org/education-fund>

Delaware takes home 15th Affiliate Sweepstakes award

Delaware Press Association set a contest record by winning the Affiliate Sweepstakes Award for the 15th time since 2001. The award is given to the affiliate with the most points for winning entries in the NFPW Communications Contest. The Delaware affiliate receives a \$250 prize along with the honor.

“Contest Director Katherine Ward has built a powerhouse program that draws high quality entries in a wide range of categories, making Delaware hard to beat in the Affiliate Sweepstakes race, though that doesn’t keep other affiliates from trying,” said Helen Plotkin, NFPW professional contest director, noting that the 2025 contest drew entries from 39 states, the District of Columbia and one foreign country.

Arkansas Press Women earned the second-highest number of points in this year’s competition, with the Connecticut Press Club earning the third-highest.

NFPW is a nationwide organization of women and

men pursuing careers across the communications spectrum, including print and electronic journalism, freelancing, news media, books, creative writing, poetry, public relations, marketing, graphic design, photography, advertising, radio and television.

Recipients from across the country were honored for excellence in communications during an awards ceremony in Golden, Colorado. A distinguished group of professional journalists, communications specialists and educators judged nearly 2,000 entries in a wide variety of categories.

Only first-place winning entries at the state level are eligible to enter the national contest. All entries were published or broadcast between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2024.

Visit the NFPW website for 2025 Sweepstakes & Contest Winners to access the 2025 winners’ list, slideshow, news release template for individual winners and full news release on Sweepstakes winners.

Time now to get ready for next year’s contest

The 2025 NFPW Professional Communications Contest is history, which means the 2026 contest will be opening soon — Oct. 15 to be precise!

Work published between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2025, may be submitted.

Key entry deadlines, all at noon in your time zone:

Early Deadline – Jan. 21, 2026 (Entries submitted by Jan. 21 avoid a \$25 late-entry fee on the first entry submitted after this date.)

All Books Deadline – Feb. 4, 2026

Final Deadline – Feb. 18, 2026 (Entries received after this date cannot be accepted)

Suggestion: Paying your 2026 Affiliate and NFPW dues when invoices first go out this fall will benefit in two ways: you’ll be sure to get the member rate when you submit your contest entries, and your first-place winning entries at the affiliate level will be ready to move quickly into the national competition!

How can I increase my chances of winning in 2026?

- Enter by the deadline
- Read instructions carefully as you select the best categories for your work to make sure it meets all requirements. Ask yourself:

- o *Can I supply the number of examples requested?* If the category requires that you submit three to six examples, two is not enough; seven is too many.
- o *Did I provide both a photograph for judging and a copy of the image as printed to establish publication in the photo categories?* This is among the most common entry omissions.
- o *Can I provide PDF’s of my work if it’s behind a pay-wall?*

HINT: If your entry moves into national competition, contest directors and judges will open it multiple times as it moves through the process. If your publication or website allows limited access to non-subscribers (usually three to six views before payment is required) that won’t be enough. Take the time to add an access code, a PDF or similar copy of your work that can be accessed repeatedly.

Do I need to submit a one-page statement?

Categories that require a one-page statement are clearly identified and indicate what information the statement should include.

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The passing of the gavel from past presidents to the most recently elected and installed president is a tradition at the annual NFPW conference. It was first used by the Illinois Woman's Press Association in 1885 and stands as a reminder of our traditions as stated in our Code of Ethics. Starting at the left, past presidents are Marsha Shuler, Teri Ehresman, Marsha Hoffman, Gwen Larson, Karen Rowley, immediate past president Julie Campbell and newly elected president, Debbie Miller. Next to Miller are the officers who will serve for the next two years — Cathy Petrini, vice president; Kristen Netterstrom Higgins, secretary, and Karen Stensrud, treasurer. *Photo by Kay Stevens.*

Contest opens . . .

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HINT: Judges read these statements and the information in them can help determine who wins the top awards. Make sure you answer the questions specific to the category you are entering. Answer thoroughly but write concisely.

Did I carefully review the "Judges Will Consider" paragraph in each category?

The information in this paragraph can help you decide which category is the best fit for your entry. When you have a piece of work that you believe is good, but aren't sure exactly where to enter it, reading the "Judges Will Consider" paragraphs can guide you to the best choice. Work entered in the wrong category, as determined by the judge, will be disqualified.

**Send AGENDA submissions to cathykoon1952@gmail.com
The next issue comes out in early January and is dedicated to the
First Amendment and FAN. Deadline for content is Dec. 15.**

NFPW announces '26 conference location: Maryland

By Valerie Ormond, Maryland
NFPW At-large Member

On the last day of the 2025 conference, President Julie Campbell announced the date and location of next year's NFPW Conference:

Sept. 24–26, 2026, at the lovely Turf Valley Resort in Ellicott City, Maryland.

At-large members from Maryland have volunteered to assist in the planning.

Turf Valley's Erik Weinert described the location:

"Nestled on 1,000 scenic acres in central Maryland's Baltimore-Washington corridor, the resort is surrounded by beautiful landscapes. We are a relaxing destination for family getaways and corporate retreats."

He continued, "Enjoy our many amenities that are located on the resort. Play two championship golf courses, rejuvenate at The Spa at Turf Valley, relax by the outdoor pool and savor the local flavors at Alexandra's American Fusion restaurant.

"Turf Valley is 20 miles from Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Fort McHenry and the Baltimore Aquarium. Our resort is less than 40 miles from the historic monuments and landmarks of Washington D.C., including the White House, National Zoo and Smithsonian Museums."

The resort's land was once home to a thriving thoroughbred farm, contributing to Maryland's rich equestrian history. Horse farms still surround Ellicott City, which

boasts the historic Main Street full of 18th- and 19th-century architecture, shops, restaurants and galleries.

In late September, the horses will be racing at nearby Laurel Park, which will host the May 2026 Preakness Stakes.

For planning purposes, Turf Valley Resort is less than 30 minutes from Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) and 90 minutes from both Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) and Dulles International (IAD).

Amtrak and local train systems have stations near the BWI Airport also.

Save the dates and start planning for your visit to the "Free State" of Maryland and another year of camaraderie, celebration and learning with fellow NFPW members.

Resort website - <https://www.turfvalley.com/>

About Ellicott City - <https://visitoldellicottcity.com/>

The Spa at Turf Valley - <https://www.turfvalley.com/spa>

Dining nearby - <https://visitoldellicottcity.com/places/category/dining/>

Valerie Ormond has been an at-large member of NFPW since 2021, a frequent attendee at Virginia Professional Communicators events and a member of the board of directors of the Virginia Press Women Foundation. A longtime resident of Maryland, she contributed thoughts on locations for the 2026 conference and will be assisting with planning during the next year.



Sharing what they learned at workshops

Beat Burnout and Create Balance By Elizabeth Pond

To Emily Guerra, “hustling is just glorifying busy-ness as a badge of honor.” The California-based certified productivity life coach is also a freelancer, director of operations at Mozaic Media and Communications, founder of The Productivity Club and CEO of an AI PR startup.

Despite working five jobs, Guerra has found a path — after experiencing some bumps and potholes along the way — to feeling balanced and avoiding burnout.

She shared her expertise and personal experience in her talk, “Beating Burnout: A Smarter Approach to Work from Home and Life Balance.” She tackled the myth of hustling, why remote burnout hits harder, the myth of balance and the “five balls” method, conceived by Coca-Cola CEO Brian Dyson in 1996.

The method depicts work as a rubber ball that bounces back and the other four domains of life — wellness, family and friends, spirit and self-care — as glass balls, fragile, breakable if dropped.

Guerra admits she wasn’t always an expert in work-life balance. After the COVID-19 pandemic halted her first career out of college, she re-evaluated her path. Now, she says she feels more balanced working five jobs than she did working one, thanks to intentional interventions.

Guerra engaged the audience by walking them through creating a “balanced blueprint,” a worksheet with steps to improve work-life balance. It included listing energy



Emily Guerra speaks during her workshop on work-life balance and beating burnout. Photo by Elizabeth Pond.

drains, identifying which glass balls feel at risk and filling six columns, one for each of the five domains with energy-protection measures and one for the “1 percent, a bite-sized step” participants planned to take going forward.

“This talk came at the perfect time,” said Anna Squires, a conference attendee and employee at the National Renewable Energy Lab. Squires burnt out of her last job, and said Guerra’s talk will help her avoid a repeat in her current position.

Guerra closed by reminding participants that setbacks are inevitable, but modeling the persistence of a GPS — rerouting after wrong turns— can help.

“I want you guys to constantly remind yourselves that you do not have to do it all,” she said. “You just have to start. And as you move 1 percent forward, that is enough—that is more than enough.”

State of Media in Colorado By Marsha Shuler, Louisiana

It is important now more than ever for the media to work on gaining and keeping public trust in what

they do, a panel of top Colorado media professionals told the opening session of NFPW's 2025 conference.

“There is a concentrated effort to erode public trust,” said Ryan Warner, a senior host of “Colorado Matters” on Colorado Public Radio News.

He continued, “When facts result in the label you are biased, we are in a pickle, folks.”

Warner and other panelists talked about the current climate faced by media outlets as they work to inform the public about things impacting readers’, listeners’ and viewers’ everyday lives and the world around them.

Joining Warner were Denver Post Executive Editor Lee Ann Colacioppo, veteran 9NEWS of Colorado anchor Kyle Clark and Colorado Sun Editor Dana Coffield. A Reuters national affairs editor, Donna Bryson, moderated the discussion.

To improve public trust, “we need to ask more people to participate in our coverage,” said Coffield, who runs a nonprofit publication.



CPR personality Ryan Warner takes a selfie with other State of Media in Colorado session participants, from left, Dana Coffield, Lee Ann Colacioppo, Kyle Clark and moderator Donna Bryson. Photo by Marsha Shuler.

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Sharing what they learned . . .

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She said to ask people what they want. The Colorado Sun has participated in the national "Trust Project" which sets about informing people how its work is done and how any conclusions are data-driven.

The Trust Project is an international consortium of news organizations with a mission to amplify journalism's commitment to transparency, accuracy, multiple perspectives and fairness so the public can make informed news choices.

Clark said his television station tells viewers how it puts together stories — "what we do and why." He called it "accountability reporting." The product has to be "grounded in relevance to people's lives."

The reach of social media is having a major impact on trust in mainstream media, the panelists said. And work must be done to combat that. Mainstream media must explain there is a difference between news and info entertainment.

Warner said he engages people on social media.

"I see it as an opportunity to build trust, to interact with the people," he said. "I have made the choice. It can be toxic."

Colacioppo said mainstream media should take advantage of the reach that exists through social media. She said at the height of the media wars, the Denver Post received 90 percent of its revenues from advertisers. Today, she said, it's more like 20 percent and the rest comes from the newspaper's readers through digital subscriptions.

Surveys about trust show that

people tend to trust the media "when it's about your community, what affects their daily lives," Colacioppo said. "When we write about things more divisive, the trust goes down."

Warner said people tend to trust people who are closer to them: "It is important to build relationships...get out of our ivory towers."

He and Clark said they spend a lot of time participating in community events and speaking to civic and other groups.

Clark noted his television station supports various entities in the area. Most recently the station helped raise \$100,000 for public radio stations serving rural Colorado.

"That was an opportunity for people to share values of the community and turn those values into action," Clark said.

Nonprofit New Models

By Richard Plotkin, Arkansas

Median editorial staffing — journalists producing the news — decreased to 1.35 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the typical Colorado newsroom in 2024. This data point was cited by Laura Frank, moderator of "Nonprofit News Models."

Frank's information came from the Colorado News Survey, conducted by the Colorado News Collaborative, of which he is executive director. In addition to staffing and editorial capacity, the statewide survey of 156 news outlets examined financial health and revenue trends.

Of those outlets responding to a question about revenue in 2024, 64.17 percent reported a decrease or

no change compared with 2023. Since 2022, the median number of editorial FTEs has fallen from 1.75 to 1.35, or 22.86 percent.

"With a minimal team handling editing, design, marketing and administration, the operational workload is overwhelming," one respondent stated in the survey.

The survey concludes that many outlets are overextended — with too few employees covering too many roles — and unable to grow or adapt because they lack the resources to make necessary changes.

Using AI Responsibly

By Lillian Harris, Texas

Artificial Intelligence may have halted the clicking that usually happens while doing an online search, but it has given reporters a gift: time and efficiency.

"These tools can make us smarter, more efficient and free us up to do more investigative reporting," Boulder Reporter Lab founder and publisher Stacy Feldman said in the workshop "Using AI Responsibly."

"It frees us up to show up and connect with people."

One of three moderators in the "Scribere Ex Machina" session (translated to "writing from a machine" in Latin), she was joined by Isabel Guzman, Colorado Community Media stringer and junior Sydney McGarr, head news editor for Colorado College's student-run newspaper. The three offered personal experiences, perspectives and policies to use AI responsibly and strategically, and to support human productivity, rather than replace it.

Attendees share what they learned . . .

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"In journalism, the ground is shifting beneath us..." Feldman said. "This higher model is collapsing."

After Feldman shared what she dubbed the "dark side of AI," she switched to the benefits.

"We see so many opportunities if we use AI," she said. "These tools can offload repetitive time consuming work, summarization, data organization and background research. It frees up reporters to do regular reporting."

When Facts are Fiction Cathy Koon, Idaho

"How do we earn back the trust of people lost to the lies of fake news?"

That question jump-started the discussion at the Saturday workshop, "When Facts are Fiction."

Some highlights from speakers:

"Call the President a liar when he lies."

"If we can't say someone said something horrible, we are in trouble as journalists." *(This came in the aftermath of the shooting of activist Charlie Kirk.)*

"How does one stay grounded in ethical principles when faced by the maelstrom of accusations of fake news."

"We have to stand by our own."

TikTok and YouTube were named as examples of broadcasts with massive audiences and income. Their reach can be three times that of The New York Times and The Washington Post.

"How do we reach that audience without eroding traditional journalism? What is the remedy? We look at their business model and how they

build their audience and build trust with their audience. Should our traditions change so we can serve this audience?"

Elizabeth Skewes, one of the panel members, said words have lost their meaning. "The language we need to detect lies isn't the same as it used to be; 49 percent of the people believe false information." She went on to say, "We don't need to be polite anymore. We have to debunk the lies day after day."

"What is damaging our democracy most these days is the lies."

"Journalists are fleeing the Washington Post. You can't report on politics in D.C."

"We speak up. It worked for Trump with lies. I think it will work for journalists with truth."

Bob Steele, another panelist, said we have to stand up for our principles. Ask ourselves what we believe in.

"We have to stay engaged even when we are angry. Our principles give us guidance to our true north ... a sound decision-making process for applying those principles in what we do every day."

A member of the audience asked, "How do you comment without feeling dirty?" Skewes answered, "Just keep saying, this is a lie, it's a lie."

"Journalists pay a price for getting bloody and dirty. We have to fill those spaces with the truth. The key is not mocking. Be respectful, be authentic."

Marsha Shuler brought up media literacy as a way to start early with kids to teach them to recognize truth.

Skewes said we have to get in those spaces occupied by TikTok and

YouTube and as many as we can, and offset the noise that dominates those spaces. We each have a voice and a perspective. We learn to connect to people with different views. Be more precise in how to debunk false information.

"You all be the voices of reason and the truth. Join conversations and be that voice."

Barb Batie of Nebraska said, "You have to get into the fracas, develop a thick skin. Since the advent of social media, we have had to deal with influencers and to develop counter influencers."

"Have courage to have a thick skin."



Welcome Reception Foothills Art Center in the Astor House



Golden Mayor
Laura Weinberg



The Psychology of Adornment: Wearable Sculpture by Jesse Mathes

This exhibit explores the impact dramatic large-scale jewelry plays in interactions between the wearer and the viewer.



NFPW Affiliate meeting: Innovation and inclusion

By Léonie Rosenstiel, New Mexico
2025 COA Nominee

Incoming NFPW President, Debbie Miller, Arkansas, chaired the affiliate membership meeting on the first day of the conference.

Connie Huff, Alaska; Sharon Almivall, Colorado; Becky Funke, Kansas; Janice Denham, Missouri; Jo Ann Mathews, North Carolina; Kay Stephens, Pennsylvania; Catherine Petrini, Virginia, and I sat around a table, comparing notes.



We discussed the issues membership organizations, in general, now face, to give us a better perspective on what NFPW and our individual affiliates are experiencing. Attendees spoke of the declining membership rolls and falling revenue that now worry the Kiwanis and Lions Clubs, and that have also recently forced the sale of some historic Masonic temples.

Particularly since COVID, traditional news staffs have shrunk too, sometimes drastically. We all realize NFPW

and its affiliates must adapt to survive. We considered the place that bloggers and other non-legacy news media now have in our organization and in our communications contests, and reinforced our commitment to inclusion.

We discussed the need to know how many people remain members after the Communications Contest in which their work is entered? We had no idea.

Suggestions for attracting new members ranged from the glossy, full-color, printed newsletter that Pennsylvania has developed, to Zoom sessions, WhatsApp, and two smaller, in-person regional meetings “so local journalists can meet the board.”

That will be attempted in New Mexico this fall and winter. Since most newsrooms are now almost deserted, it will be difficult to make this last alternative work.

This session convinced us all that we need to discover which strategies work and share them, if our groups are going to survive. We agreed to continue meeting quarterly, via Zoom, to discuss what we’ve learned and to share best practices.

Editor’s Note: NFPW Executive Director Lisa Volz says we have five year’s worth of retention data.

POPPS votes to assist with conference expenses

By Cathy Koon, Idaho
AGENDA Editor

POPPS (Parley of Past Presidents, State) is more than just a group that helps with meal-ticket-taking and the Silent Auction. It’s a group of veteran NFPW members who make a difference by paying their dues, literally and figuratively, to help keep NFPW running.

After an extended discussion of finances, budget and past donations, the nearly 20 members at the 2025 annual meeting voted to donate \$750 to help defray conference expenses. In the past, POPPS has donated to the Silent Auction, the Education Fund or conference expenses, depending on where the group felt the greatest need was. This year’s Silent Auction already had an anonymous donor who pledged to match whatever was raised this year. As it turned out, the Silent Auction broke all records, raising \$4,300 from donated items, for a total of \$8,600 for the Ed Fund.

In other business, the members approved a minor up-

date to the bylaws to change the title of chairman to president, to reflect actual usage.

Board elections saw Diane Walters, Alaska, voted in as president to succeed Ann Lockhart, who said it was time for someone else to step up. Angela Smith, Texas, secretary, and Karen Rowley, Louisiana, treasurer, were re-elected by acclamation.

Cecilia Green agreed to continue as newsletter editor. She said she would publish an issue featuring members who didn’t respond last year to requests for updates on their activities.

POPPS members are past state affiliate presidents. Whoever pays the \$20 annual fee is a member. Membership numbers fluctuate and duties are optional. POPPS provides assistance where needed during conferences..

“Some people don’t join because they’re afraid they’ll have to do something,” one member said at the meeting. Participation is strictly voluntary, and one of the perks of membership is the camaraderie and friendship.

Buffalo Bill was a culinary genius? And a buffalo hunter?

By Solomon Crenshaw
Alabama Media Professionals

Friday's luncheon speaker Steve Friesen demonstrated his immense knowledge of American legend Buffalo Bill, who is buried on Lookout Mountain outside the conference venue in Golden.

William Frederick Cody became America's best known historical character. Friesen said it was more than appropriate that he was a presenter at our event.

"Bottom line," he said, "the press loved to write stories about Buffalo Bill, and he wasn't shy at all when it came to working with the press."

Beyond telling incredibly interesting stories about the life of Buffalo Bill, the speaker gave a deep look into the culinary works of Cody. Friesen did this while touting his award-winning book, "Galoping Gourmet: Eating and Drinking with Buffalo Bill."

Pre- and post-tours included the Buffalo Bill Museum in Denver and the wild west showman's gravesite on Lookout Mountain outside Golden.



Steve Friesen dressed as Buffalo Bill.



Top left, Janice Denham (from left), Diane Walters of Alaska, Pam Knudson of North Dakota, Don Denham of Missouri and Connie Huff of Alaska take a break near the grave of Buffalo Bill Cody on Lookout Mountain near Golden. The Buffalo Bill Museum and nearby grave were among stops on a pre-conference tour. *Photo by Mary Pat Finn-Hoag.* Bottom left, at the Buffalo Bill Museum in Colorado, NFPW member Marlene Cook of Illinois was ready to snap pictures after Cindy Cruz, also of Illinois, donned western wear, including a cowboy hat and boots. *Photo by Kay Stephens.* At right, NFPW member Kay Stephens of Pennsylvania gets a chance to take aim outside the Buffalo Bill Museum in Golden. *Photo by Sandy Nance.*

Conference filled with surprises for Arkansas member

By Richard Plotkin
Arkansas Press Women

The 2025 NFPW Conference in Golden, Colorado, was filled with revelations for me.

At the session, "Science Storytelling Workshop," I learned that engineers on the "cutting edge" of space exploration typically lack the communication skills to explain their work. This surprises me. But the facilitators of the session – Camille Bergin and Cassie Lee – should know.

Bergin is an aerospace engineer who is founder and chief executive officer of Modulate Media, which helps space, science and tech organizations develop marketing strategies. Lee, chief innovation officer at the Open Geospatial Consortium, is an aerospace engineer with a Master of Arts Degree in journalism from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Speaking of "cutting edge," I was awestruck by the guided tour of the National Renewable Energy Labora-

tory (NREL) in Golden on Thursday. NREL is doing groundbreaking work to accelerate the advancement of energy technologies to the marketplace.

NREL practices what it preaches, incorporating energy-conserving features into the Golden campus. Its Research Support Facility has won 40 awards for architecture, construction, engineering, sustainability and technology transfer since it opened in 2010.

I walked away from the NREL tour thinking, "With enough imagination, anything is possible." My reaction was similar after the guided tour on Wednesday of the Mines Museum of Earth Science at the Colorado School of Mines in Golden. The colorful mineral collection from all over the world is stunning. I still am amused that only God is capable of creating such natural beauty.

The strongest revelations I had during the conference occurred during the Communicator of Achievement (COA) Awards Banquet Friday evening and after the Communications Contest Awards Banquet the following evening.

I almost came to tears when Arkansas nominee Kristin Netterstrom Higgins was introduced at the COA



Richard Plotkin checks in at the NREL in Denver for a pre-conference tour.

banquet and when Debbie Miller of Bentonville, Arkansas, was installed as NFPW's president shortly before the conference ended Saturday evening.

I discovered during those moments that Kristin and Debbie have become my close friends and, as their friend, I am proud of their NFPW achievements.

And then, there is Marlene Cook. A member of the Illinois Woman's Press Association since 1973, Marlene received the NFPW President's Award from Julie Campbell after the contest awards.

Marlene went back to school when she was 30 and became a gossip columnist at a local newspaper. That was the start of something special. Now in her early 90s, Marlene still writes about local history for The Lansing Journal.



Glowing rocks at the Mines Museum of Earth Science in Golden

Cook given President's award at her 49th conference

By Cathy Koon, Idaho
AGENDA Editor

In her final official act as NFPW president, Julie Campbell presented the President's Award to Marlene Cook of Illinois for her longtime devotion and support of the organization.

Cook hasn't missed a national conference in 49 years and has been an NFPW member for 53 years.

The audience was on its feet instantly, giving Cook a standing ovation that lasted even after she made her way to the podium for a hug from Campbell.

The president has the authority to present the award, considered the top honor bestowed on a member. She started the surprise announcement by saying:

- ◇ *She epitomizes the best of NFPW.*
- ◇ *She has built a satisfying career with staying power — against no small odds.*
- ◇ *She is a faithful attendee of NFPW conferences.*
- ◇ *She is a stalwart member of her affiliate.*
- ◇ *She is kindness and inclusion personified, always welcoming newcomers (like me at my first conference) with a smile.*
- ◇ *We should all strive to emulate her.*
- ◇ *In her 10th decade, she does not have time to check out the books she has on hold at the public library — because she has too many research books on her desk at home for her work, writing for the Lansing (Illinois) Journal.*

The award was last given in 2019 when then-President Teri Ehresman presented one to Delaware member Katherine Ward and in 2018 to past president



Gwen White. Other prior honorees include Meg Hunt, Tonda Rush, Sarah McClendon, Helen Thomas and Betty Ford, according to research done by Campbell.

In another surprising moment, Campbell declined the gift traditionally given to the outgoing president by fellow board members and affiliates. In lieu of the gift, she asked that a donation be made to Sober Apartment Living <https://www.soberapartmentliving.org/>

The nonprofit was founded by one of Campbell's cousins and her husband.

"I am so proud of them. In addition to the family connection, I appreciate that one of their two facilities is in the Denver area, where I started my communications career in 1983, and the other is in Scottsdale, Arizona, where I went to college (Arizona State University, in Tempe) and later worked (in Tucson, for the Arizona Historical Society)," Campbell said.

Sober Apartment Living's website describes its mission:

We provide the lifestyle and support for a successful transition from addiction recovery to an independent, productive life of sobriety and contentment at our sober apartments in Scottsdale and Wheat Ridge. By fostering a tightly knit, supportive community of like-minded individuals, we nurture an environment where residents don't just survive, they thrive.



Debbie Miller accepts term as NFPW president

I'm honored and humbled by your vote of confidence. I want to say "Thank you" to all of the volunteers and our professional administration team that make NFPW go. No one becomes an appointed official or officer in this group without a village of people who play a significant role in making things happen.

Thank you to Julie Campbell for her amazing leadership and guidance. She has left some big shoes to fill.

Thank you to so many past presidents who remain involved and supportive and who have pledged to be there with a helping hand.

I want more than anything to serve and to give back to the organization that has given so much to me.

Julie asked the panel of magazine editors this morning about their "Why." I have been thinking a lot about that question this week. Why do I value NFPW?

Our friend, Kay Stephens from Pennsylvania, tells people that Press Women is an organization for life. That is true in my own experience. For every season of my professional career, NFPW has been there. I was a working journalist at a small newspaper where a co-worker and female editor supported my entry into Press Women. I loved being a journalist, and I valued the friendship within the organization of fellow reporters and editors. Then the industry experienced upheavals, and I didn't want to go through another round of layoffs, even as a survivor, which I had been.

I met a fellow newspaper editor at a conference session in Chicago, where the speaker was encouraging us to think through what skills and characteristics journalists could bring to other careers. Within a year of that conversation, both my fellow member and I had found jobs in higher ed public relations.



I easily found among the NFPW ranks, others who could support me in this new season.

When I became a public relations and journalism educator a few years later, I also found a great network for supporting me and my students. It's not lost upon me tonight that I am a short person standing on the shoulders of giants.

The National Federation of Press Women (NFPW) was organized May 6, 1937, when Helen Miller Malloch and other members of the Illinois Woman's Press Association (IWPA organized in 1885), along with women from five other states and the District of Columbia, met at the Chicago Women's Club to promote communication be-

tween women writers and to advance the interests and standards of women in the press.

I am not the trailblazer those original founders were, but I hope in some way to stand on the shoulders of those giants and to encourage all of us to think about our Why and this organization.

Why is NFPW important to us and to the greater society? Why is the work needed today more than ever? For me, it's about helping to preserve and champion a free press and the First Amendment. It's about upholding that precious trust readers, viewers and listeners place in us. It's about our obligations to the right to know and the recognition of the role a free press plays in a free society.

And for me personally, it's about investing in the future, helping teach and champion the next generation of communicators, some of whom I am privileged to call my students. Thank you for being part of a village supporting me and these students.

Thank you for being my friends.



National Federation of Press Women



Education Fund board members and past NFPW presidents took Betty to the bar to celebrate the highest bid total in the history of the Silent Auction. From left, Gwen Larson, Marsha Hoffman, Julie Campbell, Meg Hunt, Karen Rowley and Karen Stensrud. Photo courtesy of NFPW Education Fund.

We took Betty to the bar in absentia

Betty Packard of California wasn't spearheading this year's Silent Auction, but she was there in spirit and in the hearts of her NFPW family.

Conference attendees were asked to sign a greeting card for her or to have their photo taken with a cutout of Packard, who missed the conference to celebrate her 50th wedding anniversary with a trip.

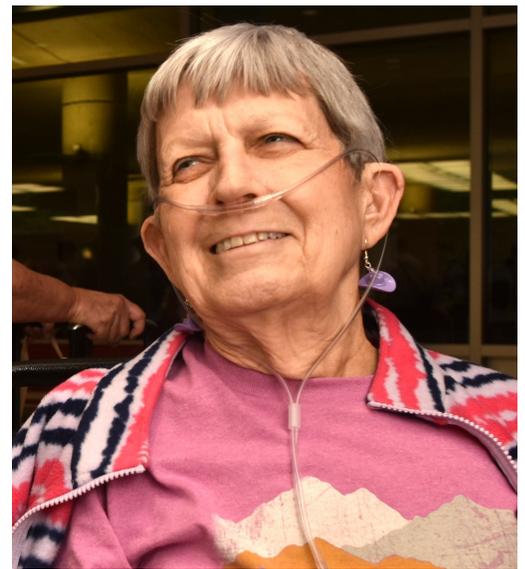
The NFPW Education Fund Board thanks those who donated and bid on Silent Auction items in Golden. A special thanks to the anonymous donor who matched the auction total of \$4,3000, turning it into \$8,600.

Thanks also to an anonymous donor for the \$100 gift for all auction items receiving bids. In addition, many buyers rounded up their final totals beyond their bid amount.

The donations allow the Ed Fund to sponsor first-timer conference grants, education grants and the High School Communications Contest.

Additional thank you's go to those who volunteered to help in the auction since Ed Fund board member and auction guru Betty Packard was unable to attend this year's conference.

News articles and briefs about NFPW affiliates and members should be emailed to AGENDA Editor Cathy Koon
cathykoon1952@gmail.com.
Photos are always welcome.
Be sure to include your name, affiliate and length of membership with stories and photographs.
Obituaries should be forwarded to Amy Geiszler-Jones at *algj64@sbcglobal.net*



At left, Elaine Hobson Miller pets a therapy dog at Denver's St. Anthony Hospital while being treated for cardiac arrest suffered prior to the start of the NFPW conference in Golden. Right, Elaine returned home on a flight to Birmingham Shut-

tlesworth International Airport more than a week after experiencing a cardiac arrest at a Target store in Golden. Photos by Solomon Crenshaw Jr.

Miller can't remember most of NFPW trip, but she'll never forget it

Elaine Hobson Miller had one travel partner – lifelong friend Annette Greaves – when she flew out of Birmingham for the NFPW Conference in Golden, Colorado.

The Ashville; Alabama, resident had two different traveling partners when she returned from the conference – her daughter, Heather Cover, and an oxygen tank.

Elaine has told of many memorable trips to NFPW conferences. This is one that she largely doesn't remember but won't soon forget after experiencing a cardiac arrest during a trip to a Target store in Golden.

"I don't even remember coming to the airport," she said of her flight to Colorado. "I don't remember flying, nothing until I woke up in the hospital. I guess that's some kind of protective mechanism. I don't know. I don't know whether any of it would come back to me or not.

"I keep telling people, God's not through with me yet," Elaine continued while sitting in a wheelchair upon her return to Birmingham Shuttlesworth International Airport. "He's still got some plans for me. I don't know what they are, but we'll figure it out together."

Heather clearly had not planned a weeklong trip to the Rocky Mountains. "No, that was an unexpected, not fun trip," she said. "My sister and I both came out, but she had to go back to work."

Our Alabama COA had a longer than scheduled stay

in Colorado as a device was installed in her chest to regulate her heart rhythm. She was initially told it was a pacemaker and then a defibrillator.

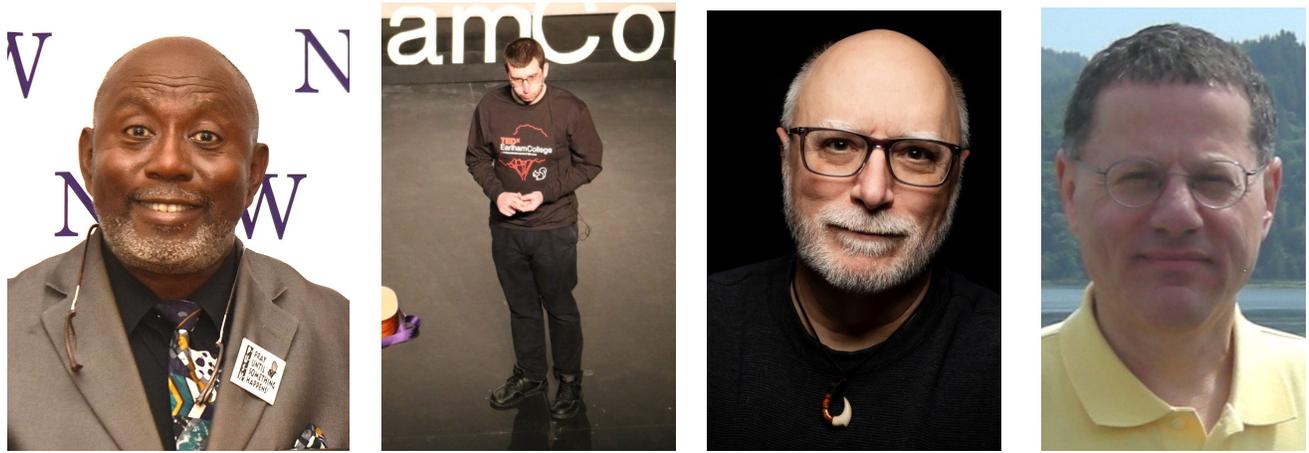
"Actually, I'm not sure what it is!" she said in a text thread. "Daughter says one nurse would call it pacemaker, other a defibrillator. Don't understand the difference."

Elaine was to have returned home Friday, Sept. 19, but a problem arose in getting her oxygen tank for the trip. She ultimately changed her flight for her return Sept. 20.

In a text message, Elaine said she's covered in bruises from IVs and thinks her ribs are cracked from CPR having been performed on her. She acknowledged an ugly wound above her left breast – she said boob – where the pacemaker/defibrillator was installed.

"My nose is sore from oxygen (and I'm) too weak to walk across a room dragging around my oxy tank," she wrote in completing the text. "But, hey, I'M ALIVE! God is good. Keep me in your prayers."

Editor's Note: A week after her return to Alabama, Elaine was in Birmingham's UAB St. Vincent's Hospital. Elaine said she went in the night of Friday, Sept. 26, because of breathing problems, apparently due to fluid around her heart. She expected to be dismissed Monday, Sept. 29. Send well wishes to bamacowgirl47@gmail.com.



Male members of the National Federation of Press Women include, from left, Solomon Crenshaw of Alabama, Joshua Friedberg of Illinois, Fred Miller of Arkansas and Richard Plotkin of Arkansas.

Despite the name, NFPW isn't just for women

By Cathy Koon, Idaho
AGENDA Editor

How does an organization called the National Federation of Press Women recruit men to join? It's a question that's been debated repeatedly over the years.

Meet some of the men of NFPW and hear what they have to say. Solomon Crenshaw, Fred Miller and Richard Plotkin attended the 2025 conference in Golden, Colorado, in September with their wives, but all three men are active members of the organization.

Joshua Friedberg was among the sweepstakes winners of the communications contest but wasn't in Golden to receive his award (See related story on page 4).

C. Linwood Jackson of Delaware and R. Thomas Berner of Pennsylvania also attended the Golden conference, but I didn't catch up with them in time to include them in this story. NFPW doesn't track its membership by gender so Executive Director Lisa Volz couldn't say exactly how many men are members. We've even had a male COA, Randy Richardson.

Crenshaw said he has been part of Alabama Media Professionals for the past nine years. "And more times than I can count, I've explained that gender is not criteria for membership," he said.

"While it can be the source of an occasional chuckle aimed at myself and my fellow male members, I would never press to change the name of the organization that has prompted the pride of generations of women communicators," he said. "I am pleased to be in your ranks and have been honored that my work has drawn praise in the annual Communications Contest."

Crenshaw received first place in Specialty Writing Sports for a story about the Rev. William Greason, a former Negro Leagues baseball player who went from pitching fastballs to pitching the Gospel; first place for his column about Titusville, the Birmingham, Alabama, community where he got his start; third place in Specialty Articles History – a story about the rich history of Titusville, and an honorable mention in Specialty Articles Government and Politics

for a story about Jefferson County, Alabama, renewing its financial reputation 13 years after filing for bankruptcy.

"But I was most proud to have placed second in 2022 for NFPW's Communicator of Achievement. It is a high honor indeed to be part of such an esteemed group who have served our industry and their communities. I missed that conference, opting instead to attend my niece's wedding in Virginia," he said.

Nancy, his bride of 43 years, is not an NFPW member, but Crenshaw said she certainly fit in nicely with the folks at the conference. She traveled with him as an extension of their wedding anniversary in August.

Fred Miller officially became the first gentleman of NFPW when his wife, Debbie, was sworn in as president for the next two years.

"I first became acquainted with NFPW when Debbie joined Arkansas Press Women, our state affiliate. For nearly 30 years, my involvement was limited to driving Debbie to meetings, lifting heavy things and occa-

(Continued on page 21)

NFPW not just for women . . .

(Continued from page 20)

sionally providing limited tech support.

"Debbie kept telling me I should join APW/NFPW and enter the contest and other stuff, but I was already involved with professional organizations related to my work. For the last 25 1/2 years, before I retired, I was a science writer and photographer for the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station," Miller recounted.

In 2015, Debbie was online to renew her APW/NFPW memberships when she informed him she had enrolled him as a member and he should enter the contest.

"I've been a member ever since," Miller said. "I generally found NFPW to be more welcoming and supportive than the organization of agricul-

tural and science writers I belonged to since 1998."

He has maintained his membership since retiring two years ago.

"It's kind of fun to be *first gentleman*," Miller said. "I'm proud of Debbie as she begins her term as NFPW president. She has taken leadership roles in her career and in APW and NFPW for many years, and I'm certain she'll be an excellent president. She's often gets me tangled up in her projects, and I'm sure this will go about the same."

Richard Plotkin was introduced to the National Federation of Press Women by his wife, Helen, who joined Arkansas Press Women in 1977.

He became a member in 2013 during a 25 1/2-year career as an ex-

aminer and financial analyst for the Arkansas State Bank Department.

"In early 2018, I became actively involved in Arkansas Press Women when I succeeded longtime member Terry Hawkins as treasurer. Terry was fighting cancer and, at only 66, died Feb. 24, 2019.

"Membership in NFPW and its Arkansas affiliate benefits me every day, making me a "better me," Plotkin said.

The men of NFPW carry on a long tradition of male membership. Mark Fowser of Delaware served as POPPS president. One of the first men to join was Keith Rounds, whose wife Lin, was NFPW president. Keith was an active member in his own right and was dubbed NFPW's official cowboy poet.

Affiliate and Member News . . .

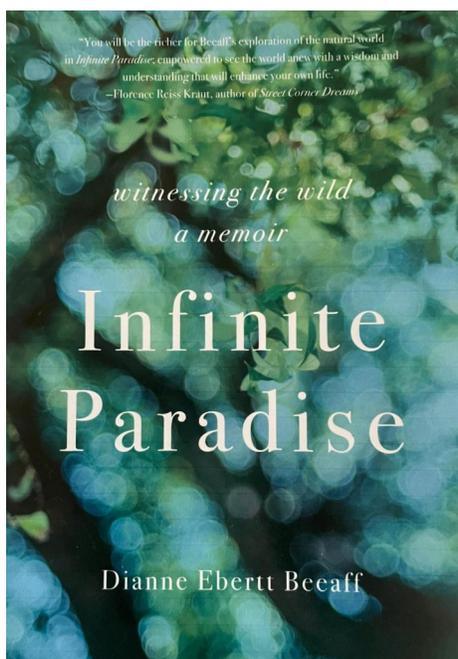
Arizona At-Large

Dianne Ebertt Beeaff's 7th book, "Infinite Paradise, Witnessing the Wild," was published in September by She Writes Press, distribution by Simon and Schuster.



With personal vignettes and color photographs that track the seasons of a single year, "Infinite Paradise" connects readers by seasons with the wildlife on 16 acres of forest and water meadow along the Conestoga River of Southern Ontario, Canada, and "shows them the complexity, beauty and healing power of nature is available to anyone who stays open to the splendid lifeforms

among which they live."



And then there were fun moments in Golden



In Remembrance . . .

Ray Firmani Delaware Press Association

Ray Firmani, a member of Delaware Press Association who was featured in the Winter 2019 AGENDA cover story, died at 103 near the end of July 2025 from smoke inhalation due to a fire in his kitchen.



Having served as a B-17 bomber pilot in World War II, completed 25 missions and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for excep-



tional bravery, he was a living national treasure. As stated on WDEL-FM, on July 30, "A police escort, bagpipes, and a flyover in the missing man formation were all part of the burial, with full military honors."

On Sept. 19, 2025, what would have been Ray's 104th birthday, the Wilmington Veterans Association, which posthumously recognizes veterans "who made significant contributions by serving in the military or in their communities," paid lasting tribute to First Lieutenant Raymond A. Firmani by adding him to their Wall of Honor.

Ray worked for DuPont as an award-winning industrial photographer and videographer for 46 years following service to his country. Schooled in film photography and co-inventor/co-patent-holder of the DuPont Dylux® photographic process,

he thought digital photography offered greater versatility, embraced it completely and wrote about it in his column for Delaware Photographic Society's quarterly newsletter.

Well known for "his stories and his enthusiasm," Ray was the subject of a book written by DPA past president Mitch Topal and edited by DPA Executive Director and Communications Contest Director Katherine Ward: "Against All Odds: The Ray Firmani Story – A True Story of Combat, Heroism and Love during World War II." The book, which received first-place awards in the 2019 NFPW Communications Contest for Nonfiction Book, History; Book Designed by Entrant; and Book Edited by Entrant, gave Ray – 97 when the book was published in 2018 – a new lease on life. He loved the book signings; gave radio, television, and newspaper interviews; presented hangar talks to numerous organizations and at history museums; and promoted it through this past June at the annual Mid Atlantic Air Museum event just as he had every year since publication and happily received hundreds of handshakes and hugs while many of the historic aircraft (the ancient warbirds) were proudly displayed on the ground or breathtakingly were circling overhead. To date, Mitch and Ray have sold about 5,000 books

While flags at all state facilities in Delaware are flying at half-staff for the next several days to honor you, dear friend, we salute you!

Editor's Note: This special tribute was submitted by Katherine Ward in honor of a war hero and fellow NFPW member.



Raymond Firmani, 1st Lieutenant, Army Air Corps, 8th Air Force, WW II European Theatre, B-17G Lead Crew Pilot, 25 Combat Missions

Missouri Professional Communicators

Linda Lockhart, 72, died May 4, 2025. She earned her journalism degree from the University of Missouri in 1974 with a full scholarship from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, where she later worked.



She also edited newspapers in Wisconsin and Minnesota, served as interim managing editor at the St. Louis American and worked for the digital St. Louis Beacon.

Lockhart was a founding member of the St. Louis chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists. In 2024, she was inducted into the St. Louis Media History Foundation Hall of Fame in the print category.

Oregon Press Women

Diane Lund-Muzikant, 86, died July 26, 2025.

As an investigative journalist and founder of the nonprofit Oregon

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

Health Forum in 1990 and The Lund Report in 2008, Lund-Muzikant left a legacy of watchdog journalism that redefined health care coverage across Oregon.



"By revealing the facts, I believe we can create a health care system that benefits everyone, not just the powerful and the rich," she wrote in 2024.

She was this year's OPW Communicator of Achievement. Before focusing on health care reporting in the mid-1980s, Lund-Muzikant had been a freelancer and created a bi-monthly religious magazine.



Closing Resolution

NFPW 2025 Communications Conference

Presented by Allison Stein, Parliamentarian

WHEREAS, at the invitation of our host affiliate, members of NFPW gathered in Golden, Colorado, to:

- * *Explore the Next Frontier*
- * *Learn new ways to engage diverse audiences through traditional and emerging channels, communicate in a crisis, and battle censorship while maintaining ethical journalistic standards without bias and avoiding burnout*
- * *Partake of an authentic New Zealand Hokey Pokey (without turning ourselves around) and marvel at the culinary legacy of Buffalo Bill Cody*
- * *Sigh with relief that we did not have to walk down the stairs following not just one but two false fire alarms*
- * *Welcome First Timers, make new friends, reconnect with old friends, and remember absent friends*
- * *Honor our newest Communicator of Achievement as well as the Best of the Best of the next generation, and our award-winning peers*
- * *Bid high and often on treasures and trinkets (like this one!) to support our Education Fund*
- * *Install our newly elected leaders*
- * *Honor a long-time member who embodies the spirit of NFPW -- integrity, curiosity, perseverance, insight, and humor -- who has also taken many of us under her wing and welcomed us into the NFPW family, and who, when asked who she is, has proclaimed, "I'm a member of NFPW. Who the heck are you?"*

THEREFORE, let it be resolved by acclamation that we thank the Colorado Press Women for their hard work and hospitality, and that we declare the NFPW 2025 Communications Conference to be an unqualified success.

ALL IN FAVOR, say "Aye."



The many faces of me — whoever that is

By Cathy Koon
AGENDA Editor

The first step I take when I start a new issue of AGENDA is to change the date and volume number. As I typed in Fall 2025, Vol. 88, No. 1, I was reminded of the milestones we mark with the passing of time.

I just celebrated 45 years as a member of NFPW. Marlene Cook, who received the President’s Award from out-going President Julie Campbell, has been a member for 53 years and has attended 49 conferences. I’ve attended 17 so far and helped plan three of them.

NFPW has survived 88 years since its beginning in the years preceding WWII, through the war, the Korean War, the Vietnam war, the Cold War, segregation, women’s lib, assassinations of two Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Woodstock, Watergate, 9/11 and Covid (maybe).

The question is, can we survive the decline in public trust of the “media” and cries of “fake” news? Much of September’s conference in Golden addressed various aspects of that question. How can we restore the trust the public once had in us? Check out the workshop reports starting on page 7.

Across the country, journalists, late-night hosts, politicians and Facebook posts were focused on the shooting of conservative activist Charlie Kirk and arguing about the possible motive behind the killing.

Jimmy Kimmel’s show on ABC was canceled over comments he made about Kirk.

According to Google, “The network removal of Kimmel’s show . . . almost immediately morphed into a flashpoint for free speech in America.” Disney, which owns ABC, rescinded the cancellation, but some

ABC affiliates refused to air new episodes of the show.

One panel member in the workshop I attended said we as journalists are in trouble if we can’t say that someone said something horrible.”

As the violence escalates across America, journalists and Democrats (to name a few) have come to fear speaking out, to speak truth or to point out lies. While we vow to protect and defend the right to free speech and freedom of the press, we fear reprisal. We fear for our personal safety.

When I got back to Idaho after the conference, my pickup had a flat tire. When Les Schab took it into the shop, they found a sizeable hole in the sidewall, not a nail in the tread. My first thought, what did I do or say to cause someone to flatten my tire. Reprisal or fear of one?

NFPW Leadership Directory

2025-27 ELECTED OFFICERS

President:

Debbie Miller, Arkansas

Vice President:

Cathy Petrini, Virginia and D.C.

Secretary:

Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, Arkansas

Treasurer:

Karen Stensrud, North Dakota

Immediate Past President:

Julie Campbell, Virginia

APPOINTED BOARD

Archivist:

Vacant

Communicator of Achievement Director:

Karen Stensrud, North Dakota

FAN Co-Directors:

Marsha Shuler, Louisiana

Angela Smith, Texas

Historian:

Amy Geiszler-Jones, Kansas

Assistant Historian:

Mary Pat Finn-Hoag, Nebraska

Hospitality and Protocol:

Catherine Petrini, Virginia & D.C.

Parliamentarian:

Allison Stein, Missouri

POPPS President:

Diane Walters, Alaska

Professional Contest Director:

Helen Plotkin, Arkansas

High School Contest Director:

Teri Ehresman, Idaho

Presidential Advisers:

Marsha Hoffman, Iowa

Meg Hunt, South Carolina

Gwen Larson, Kansas

Publications Director:

Cathy Koon, Idaho

Publications Assistant:

Jane Newton Falany, Alabama

Web Director:

Lisa Volz, NFPW Headquarters

2026 Conference Co-Chairs:

NFPW Board

Valerie Ormond

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- Half / Page $8.250 \times 5.175 = \$30$
- Half / Page $4.063 \times 10.637 = \$30$
- Quarter / Page $8.250 \times 2.476 = \$15$
- Quarter / Page $4.064 \times 5.2 = \$15$
- 1/8 / Page $1.875 \times 10.563 = \$10$
- 1/8 / Page $4.075 \times 2.476 = \$10$

Discounts are available for multiple runs of the same ad.

NFPW Headquarters

Lisa Volz, Executive Director
140B Purcellville Gateway Drive
Suite 120
Purcellville, VA 20132
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info@nfpw.org

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- Payment must be made at time of submission.
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- Payment can be made by credit card over the phone (571) 295-5900.

