



# Nebraska

## NEWSPAPER

March/April 2006 • Volume 59 • No. 2

Published bi-monthly by the  
Nebraska Press Association

### NPA delegation attends Government Affairs Conference

President Bush addresses  
Washington NNA gathering

By Lee Ostdiek  
*Blue Hill Leader*

A delegation representing the Nebraska Newspaper Association attended the National Newspaper Association's annual Governmental Affairs Conference March 8 to 10 in Washington, D.C.

Among those representing the NPA were Ken and Ginny Rhoades, from the *Blair Pilot-Tribune*, Beverly Puhalla, publisher of the *Tecumseh Chieftan* in Tecumseh and NPAS president, Lee and Joyce Ostdiek, publishers of the *Blue Hill Leader*, and NPA executive director Allen Beermann and his wife, Linda.

We listened to some of the nation's congressional leaders: House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), as well as Secretary of Homeland Defense Michael Chertoff. The highlight was the speech given by President George W. Bush.

A luncheon at the Library of



Submitted photo

Members of the NPA delegation attending the NNA's Government Affairs Conference March 8 to 10 in Washington, D.C., pose for a photo with Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson, third from the left. The delegation included Joyce Ostdiek, Beverly Puhalla, Lee Ostdiek, Ginny Rhoades, Ken Rhoades and Allen Beermann.

Congress gave us an opportunity to visit with our representatives in Congress. Sens. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) and Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) and Rep. Tom Osborne (R-Neb.) came over to talk with our delegation. This gave us time to confer with them on some of the issues which affect newspapers and our job in making our readers better informed.

Proposed legislation that was discussed was the Federal Shield Law that would protect reporters from revealing confidential sources and the postal reform legislation that would raise the postage on newspapers, which in turn, would require raises in the newspaper subscription prices.

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### Edgecombe family marks fifth generation

*Minden Courier* owner Jim Edgecombe gets teased about ink being in his blood. As a fifth-generation newspaper owner, it goes with the territory.

"It's a weird deal to be fifth generation," said Edgecombe, who at 34 has worked in the newspaper business for 13 years. He's owned the *Minden Courier* for two years.

As in all small town newspapers, Edgecombe wears many hats, including sports editor and head of adver-

tising sales.

That can be demanding during the school year with all the various sporting events.

Edgecombe and editor Mike Gokie write most of the stories that go into the *Minden Courier*, and employs a typesetter, proofreader and a bookkeeper as well. "It's a team effort for us to put out a paper," said Edgecombe. They are also online now, and the print version recently added color as well as a new look.

Not only is Edgecombe a fifth generation newspaper owner, but his grandfather, great grandfather, and great-great-grandfather are all members of the Nebraska Newspaper Hall of Fame. Edgecombe's parents John and JoAnn continue to own and run several small town newspapers.

"Guess I couldn't go too far away," he said dryly. But he added, "It's a neat deal to say you're part of something like that."

— *Kearney Hub*

### Aurora tackles big business with ad insert

'Shop Aurora' promotes locally-owned businesses

By Russ Gifford  
staff writer

Sometimes it takes a drastic event to move people to do what's right. That's how the Aurora area retail association came to call on Kurt Johnson, co-publisher of the *Aurora News-Register*.

The result is a region-wide "Shop Aurora" brochure that has pulled people into the shops and stores in this small south-central community of 4,200 people.

"It started as an anti-Wal-Mart effort," Johnson said, "but it has ended up being a brilliant strategic move for the area retail association."

What can a 4,200 circulation weekly do for small shop owners when the juggernaut from Bentonville, Ark., decides to open up a Super Wal-Mart? Quite a lot, it appears.

"I'm very pleased. It's early yet, but we are doing much better than we thought we would," said Eddie Ranson, executive director of the Aurora Area Chamber and Development Corporation (AACD). "The 'Shop Aurora' campaign has a lot to do with that. It has made some funny — and wonderful — things happen."

Doing nothing was not an option for the retailers of the tiny town located three miles south of Interstate 80.

A local business owner, known for

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## Aurora

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being a "bit hard to convince," was the first to bring the idea of a brochure to the committee. Johnson had done a full-color insert for the business, and the results had impressed the owners.

"When the retail community, concerned with retail leakage, came to me, they already knew they needed to make an impact," Johnson said. "They asked me to put this together, and they knew it had to make a splash."

The original brochure, a 28-page full-color insert, hit the streets in November 2004, with full-page ads for every business in Aurora, as well as some of the regional industries.

"We knew working together we could make a bigger splash than we could on our own," said Dan Willis, chairman of the Retail Committee, and also a main street shop owner in Aurora. "We needed to make this work, and it certainly did."

Willis credits Johnson with much of the results.

"Kurt does a really good job putting this together. If we had to do all this footwork that Kurt's doing for us, it would never happen."

Johnson said it is a matter of doing the homework. "We knew they'd have more appeal to mass-market themselves as a communi-

## Making it work

Johnson stressed making a regional insert work is a matter of keeping some basic points in mind.

- Make an impact: The original ads were full page and full color.
- Have a good offer: You need coupons, and they need to be deep discounts to move people.
- Extend the shelf life beyond a week: Johnson donated a page to place the community events calendar in the brochure, giving it value and purpose beyond a simple sales flyer.

Johnson has since offered half page ads, which have worked out. "It is a balancing act," he said. "We feared the larger retailers might move to the smaller ads, but they didn't. We gained more smaller advertisers who really wanted the opportunity to be in the insert and everyone is happy with the results."

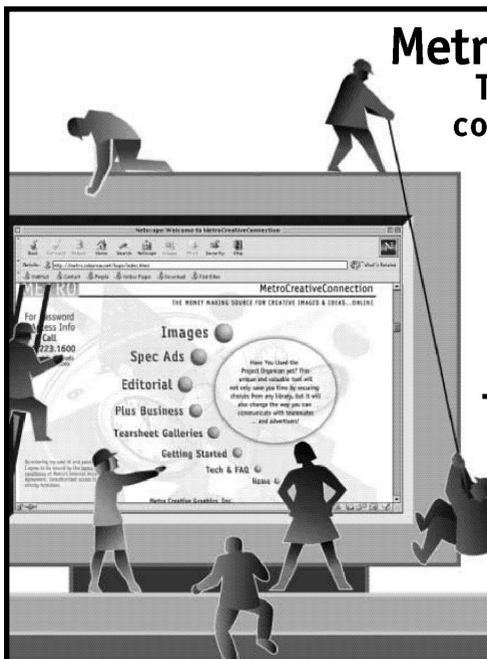
ty," and that meant marketing beyond the borders and the reach of the *Aurora News-Register*.

The first insert, on bright white 50-pound paper — "I wanted a nicer look," Johnson said — was placed in regional papers to reach 33,000 subscribers within a 30-mile radius.

"Some had to change their products, since they couldn't compete on price with Wal-Mart. But they did what they needed to do to offer deep discount coupons, and they are very pleased with the result," Johnson said.

Pleased might be understating it. Stories abound, no matter who is asked.

"The real funny thing was when the Wal-Mart opened," Ranson said with a laugh. "The day it opened, our flyer hit. People were so impressed. Everyone thought we were so on top of it."



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Of course, the precise timing was luck, Ranson added, but the results weren't. "One business had over 300 coupons come back. They know it is working for them." Since then, the town has done it twice more, in April and November of last year, and is about to release No. 4 this coming month. "We asked if they wanted to do it again, and it came back a resounding, YES," Ranson said. The coverage area now reaches 60 miles, and 42,600 subscribers — 10 times the population of Aurora.

The town is small enough that people know when it is working, Willis said.

"You see a car with Hastings plates, and people walking around town with this pamphlet in their hands," Willis said. He pauses, and adds, "Actually, it's just kind of nice to see them in town."

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## Don't miss 2006 NPA convention

By Lee Warneke  
2006 Convention Chairman

Convention time is rapidly drawing closer and if you've looked at the tentative schedules which have been e-mailed or snail-mailed, you'll note that a number of suggestions made by the convention committee, way back nearly a year ago, have been incorporated in the convention plans.

You'll note a variety of workshops, scheduled to educate you and your staff. But more importantly, you'll note that most have been divided into two sessions — one session for dailies and large weeklies, the other session for smaller weeklies. You can take your pick, but you can easily be in a workshop surrounded by people of the same circulation as yours, thus talking apples to apples.

You'll note the nearly total absence of luncheon speakers. Sometimes they are top-notch, sometimes not, but there seem to be so many other things scheduled during the meal functions, with little time for a bit of fellowship at the table. We hope that is corrected this year.

You'll note the absence of a trade show this year, due to difficulties arranging such an event when most people are in attendance. That eliminates the "bingo" sheets and the many prizes given at the trade show. But there still will be prizes.

And don't forget Mr. X. Start shaking hands and introducing yourself the minute you get to the convention. You'll never know whether you might be the 100th person to shake hands with the mysterious Mr. X. If you are, you'll get \$100.

There are other suggestions from the committee that you'll note as the convention proceeds — that is, if you are there!

It certainly is my hope that you'll target the convention dates on your calendar and be in Lincoln — and while you are at it, maybe bring an employee or two.