



JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Move over, Superman

By Deb Erdley

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

I can't remember a time when I wasn't a newsie. Most children liked Superman when he was flying or battling bad guys, but I adored Clark Kent.

Later, news documentaries and photojournalism appealed to me. Even if they couldn't fly, I was convinced journalists could change the world.

I graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor of arts in journalism in 1976. I've been working in daily news ever since, first as a beat reporter, then on special projects, a couple of years on the city desk and then back to reporting, most recently on the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review's enterprise desk.

I joined PWPA at the suggestion of several Trib reporters who have been active in the group.

Unfortunately, I haven't had time to hold office.

It was a terrific honor to be named one of your journalists of the year.

The stories that caught the judges' attention spanned a wide variety of work ranging



Deb Erdley is a reporter with the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review.

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Help still wanted for contest, SC district

Happy summer, everyone!

I hope you all enjoy some rest and relaxation over the next few months. I promise not to bombard you with e-mails or too many tasks. Summer is a time to unwind.

I must admit I haven't done a lot concerning the PWPA since our luncheon in May, but I plan to get refocused come August so I am ready for our board meeting which will be on Sept. 11 in the Reading area.

We are still working on an exact location for that meeting. If any of you have any ideas or topics you would like me to address with the board at that time I will be happy to do so.

We will take some time during that meeting to discuss the online category for our contest because I would really like to get this resolved.

I think we have the issue narrowed down and just need to come up with the phrasing, but if any of you have an opinion on this you haven't shared please let me know so I can present all our options at the next board meeting.

I also am looking forward to the launch of our new website. I believe that site can help us reach out to our members as well as attract new members.

We are still looking for a contest director to replace Diane Bitting so if you know of someone please let me know because I would like that person to get a jump on knowing the responsibility of this job because it involves a lot of work and that will give Diane time to work with the new person.

We also need a South Central director, so please let me know if you are aware

of someone who might be good for one of these positions.

District directors, keep in touch so I know about your upcoming meetings. This is a good time to talk to your members and see to plan for a fall meeting.

Send out an e-mail to your members to see what types of meetings they are interested in. It is better to get a head start so that once fall comes, the time, date, place and meeting topic are already scheduled.

Here's to a safe, happy and healthy summer.

JoAnne Harrop,
PWPA president

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— JoAnne Harrop,
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Watchdog work behind her win

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from human interest stories to hard news.

I love working as a journalist because it gives me an opportunity to experience such a wide slice of life.

Most of my stories center around watchdog-type issues and the expenditure of public resources. I've covered these issues for a long time and routinely request quarterly reports from certain funds.

When the state budget went bust and the state continued to funnel cash to projects through a bond fund, I thought the folks who pick up the tab should know about it.

My editors agreed, and the RCAP story went to press.

Since the public was involved in underwriting our new hockey arena and part of the cash was to come from our on-again-off-again casino project, I monitored cost reports closely. That put me in a good position to break the story about the expanding public obligation when a SWAP went sour.

My story about the pediatrician who survived cancer and then went on to produce an exercise video for breast cancer survivors actually grew out of some political stories I've done.

A source who knew me from that work gave the producer my name as a contact in the press. Her story was simply too good to pass along to someone else.

Likewise, my story about how a bureaucracy kept a real gem of a volunteer in limbo came from a source I've used on hard news. He told me Walter's story, and I couldn't resist it.

Although we may be reading news stories on an iPad or a Kindle in the future, I suspect there will always be a need for journalists.

Unlike bloggers, we always sign our names and stand by our work, and I suspect that will continue to be the case, even though the medium and business model are undergoing major changes. I'm heartened to see the good work investigative outlets such as ProPublica are doing.

During this period of transition, we must encourage young journalists that there will be a future for them.

WINNING STORIES

BY DEB ERDLEY

Pennsylvania Governor Rendell doles out \$361 million in borrowed money

(story appeared Aug. 9, 2009, in the Tribune-Review)

Faced with the growing impact of a prolonged recession and revenue shortfalls, Gov. Ed Rendell last fall froze state hiring, ordered spending reductions and hunkered down for a coming budget battle.

On the surface, it appeared Pennsylvania was mired in a financial morass that would affect spending at all levels.

But records obtained by the Tribune-Review show one thing hasn't been hampered by the state's revenue woes: Rendell's ability to spend borrowed money.

While he was battling revenue

shortfalls and lobbying for an income tax increase, Rendell was running his own economic stimulus program, quietly handing out \$361 million in bond money across the state.

Projects that benefited from the public largesse ranged from a multi-million-dollar movie studio in Chester County that received \$10 million to a proposed UPMC hospital in Monroeville that received \$5 million. Among Pittsburgh projects is the August Wilson Center for African-American Culture, Downtown, scheduled to open Sept. 17, which received \$3 million. ...

Read it online: www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/regional/s_637457.html

State to give Pittsburgh hockey arena \$5 million assist on bonds

(story appeared Sept. 30, 2009, in the Tribune-Review)

Add \$5 million to the money Pennsylvania is giving toward Pittsburgh's pricey Uptown hockey arena.

This time, it isn't site acquisition or construction cost overruns, but a shortfall that occurred when interest on variable rate bonds soared last fall after credit agencies downgraded the bond's insurer, Financial Security Assurance Inc.

That left the city-county Sports &

Exhibition Authority, which is building Consol Energy Center, with an extra \$5.08 million bill and no money to pay it.

The state, which agreed to give about \$40 million in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Budget grants to cover site acquisition and extra construction costs for the \$325 million arena, will tap a different account for this bailout. ...

Read it online: www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/rss/s_645638.html

Sewickley breast cancer survivor helps craft exercise DVD

(story appeared June 7, 2009, in the Tribune-Review)

Read it online: www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/westmoreland/s_628459.html

Red tape forces tutors to sit out term

(story appeared March 2, 2009, in the Tribune-Review)

Read it online: www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/westmoreland/s_614047.html



Treasurer's *Note*

Membership lists sent out last week

By Theresa Hegel
PWPA TREASURER

Well, it took a while, but it's finally done.

I mailed the 2010 PWPA membership list to all members in good standing this week, along with a new membership card.

You should be receiving a copy in the mail by early July at the latest. If you never receive yours, please let me know, and I will make sure you get one.

I changed the format slightly this year, organizing members by their districts. I hope that will make it easier for you and your district directors to connect.

Also, please review your listing to make sure there are not typos, corrections or updates. If you see something that needs to be changed, e-mail me at thegel13@hotmail.com, and I will correct the listing.

As you can see from our bank balances, our checking account has dipped under \$2,000. Our contest this year actually cost us more than we brought in — likely due to awarding two journalists of

the year and the changes to the pay structure we initiated this year.

The PWPA also has made a half payment on our new website. The second installment (to be paid when the work is complete) may need to be drawn from our money market.

BANK BALANCES (as of June 27)

**Checking:
\$1,971.25**

**Money market:
\$13,125.23**

On a side note, I hope you all have been enjoying the monthly newsletters. I like being able to give members a little added value, but it can be a challenge to put together enough material each month.

I'm always eager to hear what members have to say. If you have ideas for newsletter stories or features, I encourage you to send them.

If you've been to a PWPA meeting and took some photos, please e-mail them to me. I'm always looking for visual elements to spruce up the publication.

And if you learned something new or interesting in the course of your work or at a PWPA meeting, write it up and send it along.

Any help would be greatly appreciated.

NEW MEMBERS

APRIL 2010

■ **Frank Craig**, editor,
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

MARCH 2010

■ **Johanna Billings**, editorial assistant,
Northampton Press, Whitehall-Coplay Press

■ **Amanda Clegg**, staff writer,
Altoona Mirror

■ **Amy Crawford**, education reporter,
Greensburg Tribune-Review

■ **Katherine A. Morris**, copy editor,
Altoona Mirror

JANUARY 2010

■ **Rosemary R. Brasch**, columnist,
Spectrum Features Syndicate

■ **Heather Cass**, special sections editor,
Erie Times-News

■ **Karen L. Cimms**, lifestyle editor,
(Lehigh) Times News

■ **Madelyn Dinnerstein**, weeklies editor,
Gateway Newspapers

■ **Gordon Glantz**, managing editor, The
(Norristown) Times Herald

■ **Jodi Weigand**, reporter, Pittsburgh
Tribune-Review

DECEMBER 2009

■ **Trevor James Hawes**, copy editor,
Erie Times-News

JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

A rookie with seasoned instincts

Journalist of the year Amy Crawford is an education reporter for the Greensburg Tribune-Review. She answered some questions about her career thus far and the stories that nabbed her the PWPA's most prestigious award.

Q. What is your journalism background?

A. I've been working at the Tribune-Review, primarily as an education reporter, since fall 2008.

Before that, I was getting my master's at Columbia Journalism School and freelancing at local papers in New York.

I also worked at Smithsonian Magazine for two years as an editorial assistant.

Q. How did you get involved in PWPA, and what positions have you held within the organization?

A. Since I'm new to the area, I just joined PWPA this year. I'm looking forward to getting more involved.

Q. What does it mean to be named journalist of the year?

A. Since it's so early in my career, this unexpected honor is really encouraging. I was especially happy to get the "Rookie of the Year" award.

Q. Can you tell me about your winning entries?

A. I got the idea for the education story, "Increased academic rigor in kindergarten questioned," several months before I began reporting, when I stopped by a local elementary school



Amy Crawford

for another article and wound up chatting with a kindergarten teacher.

I had not realized how much kindergarten had changed — to the extent that some say it's the new first grade — so I visited a few classes to see for myself.

The best part of my job is when I get to hang out with little kids, and it was very impressive how much they knew, even in the first weeks of kindergarten.

But I discovered that some early childhood experts are critical of the changes to kindergarten, which made the story more interesting.

The profile story, "Area woman did duty as WAC following attack on Pearl

Harbor," also started with a chance encounter.

I met Edna Gregar, a spunky 85-year-old, at an area Veterans Day celebration. She mentioned that she had been in the Women's Army Corps, noting, "There aren't many of us left."

The religion story, "Sounds of music revive church," may or may not have been about religion, depending on where you stand on a contentious local issue.

A group called the Church of Universal Love and Music was holding rock concerts on a local man's farm, using their religious affiliation to get around noise ordinances.

The concerts were shut down for a while, but a court settlement allowed them to begin again, and I was sent to see what really went on there.

Many of the participants were adamant that the concerts were their form of spiritual experience, while neighbors complained that the group was abusing a loophole in the law.

Later, the church was shut down after a drug raid.

Q. What is your hope for the future of journalism?

A. That readers and corporate owners realize the value of well-written, in-depth, accurate journalism, whatever the format.

Despite the excitement over blogs and social media, I believe shoe-leather reporting is vitally important.

I also hope we don't see too many more jobs in journalism cut, especially since I want to work in this field for a few more decades, at least.

WINNING STORIES | BY AMY CRAWFORD

■ CHURCH OF UNIVERSAL LOVE AND MUSIC CELEBRATES IN BULLSKIN (MAY 17, 2009, IN THE TRIBUNE-REVIEW): www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/health/s_625515.html

■ INCREASED ACADEMIC RIGOR IN KINDERGARTEN QUESTIONED (SEPT. 20, 2009): www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/pittsburgh/s_644117.html

■ AREA WOMAN DID DUTY AS WAC FOLLOWING ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR (DEC. 7, 2009): www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/westmoreland/s_656579.html?source=rss&feed=7

2010-11 PWPA OFFICERS

PRESIDENT | JOANNE KLIMOVICH HARROP



Job: features writer, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

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Fax: (412) 320-7966

Job history: 1985-1995 — Sales representative for Friden Alcatel/Priority Systems

1997-2007 — Sports writer for the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

2007-present — Features writer for the

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

Your goals for PWPA this year: I would like to see our membership exceed 100 by the end of 2010; I would also like to have some ideas in place for our 75th anniversary in 2012; I would like to have a decision on the online question for our contest by the time of the contest; I would like the website up and running by fall.

Journalism tip: Whenever you feel like you have made all the calls you can for a story ... make one more ... because that may be the interview that turns a good story into a great story.

TREASURER | THERESA HEGEL

Job: staff writer, The Intelligencer

Address: 4712 Buckeye Road, Emmaus, PA 18049

Phone: (610) 462-2238

E-mail: thegel13@hotmail.com

Job history: I've been a reporter since 2008. I cover two suburban school districts and the towns within them.

Our paper just issued us smartphones, so I've been trying to become more Internet savvy, live-tweeting from meetings, and taking video and photos occasionally.

Before reporting, I was a copy editor and

page designer at The Intelligencer in Doylestown and The Vindicator in Youngstown, Ohio.

Your goals for PWPA this year: I want to continue to strengthen the organization's newsletter, filling it with photos, interesting tidbits, and meeting information.

I'm also looking forward to the launch of our new website. I think it will do a lot for the PWPA.

Journalism tip: Never pass up the opportunity to learn something new. If you're not learning, you'll get bored, and your work will get stale.



SECRETARY | STEPHANIE LONGO



Job: Currently unemployed, but I am a freelance writer with the Times Leader Scranton Edition and Celebrate Life Magazine.

E-mail: stephanie.a.longo@gmail.com

Phone: (570) 815-7401

Job history/bio: I began my career as a writer for The Abington Suburban (Clarks Summit, Pa.) and The Triboro Banner (Taylor, Old Forge, and Moosic, Pa.).

I then became the editor of The Villager newspaper in Moscow.

I have a master's in journalism from Regent University in Virginia

Beach and have won several journalism awards.

Your goals for PWPA this year: I would like to see the PWPA touch on issues that would be important to women in the field, such as dealing with sexual harassment from employers and potential sources.

I would also like to see more involvement from younger female journalists.

Journalism tip: Every article gives you the chance to tell someone's story. Remember, you may be the only chance someone has to get their voice heard.

2010-11 PWPA OFFICERS

VICE PRESIDENT | DAWN GOODMAN

Job: education reporter, Washington Observer-Reporter

Office phone: (724) 222-2200, ext. 2481

E-mail: dgoodman@observer-reporter.com

Job history: I've been a newspaper reporter since 1997, covering education for most of that time

Your goals for PWPA this year: I'd like PWPA to look at how we incorporate

the Internet in what we do since I believe that is the future of journalism.

Journalism tip: The best advice I ever heard was at a Poynter conference in Delaware: Don't be afraid to kill your babies.

If it's the best quote you've ever heard, but it doesn't move your story along, get rid of it.

Your story will be better for it.



SOUTHWEST DISTRICT DIRECTOR DAVEEN RAE KURUTZ

Title: suburban reporter, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

E-mail: dmclaughlin@tribweb.com

Phone: (412) 380-5627

Job history/bio: I've been with the Trib for about four years, covering mostly north suburban news and a lot of education stories. While at the Trib, I earned my master's in journalism and mass communication from Point Park University. I consider myself lucky to do something that I love every day.

Personally, I'm 28 and got married

in February during the massive snow-storm that dumped 22 inches of snow on Pittsburgh, starting the afternoon of my wedding. Yes, I have lots of stories. My husband and I are new homeowners, and I'm a big hockey fan.

Your goals for PWPA this year: To increase membership and help our members grow in their careers. Also, to expand our mentoring program.

Journalism tip: Never stop asking questions, and rarely take no for an answer.

CENTRAL DISTRICT DIRECTOR | AMANDA CLEGG

Job: Northern Blair and Hollidaysburg/general assignment reporter, Altoona Mirror

Address: Altoona Mirror, 301 Cayuga Ave., Altoona, PA 16601

Phone: (814) 949-7030

E-mail: aclegg@altoonamirror.com

Job history/bio: I graduated from California University of PA with an English/journalism degree in 2003.

I interned with the Fay West section of the Tribune-Review, and the

Herald-Standard, Uniontown.

I worked part time at the Herald-Standard before and after serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA for a year.

I joined the Altoona Mirror in October 2007 as the education reporter.

Goals for PWPA this year: To get a better feel for the position and to get more people involved.

Journalism tip: Don't just dig for a story, dig into the deepest parts of yourself as a writer and a journalist.



ASSISTANT CENTRAL DIRECTOR WENDY ZOOK

2010-11 PWPA OFFICERS

NORTHEAST DISTRICT CO-DIRECTORS KATHY RUFF



Job: freelance writer, self-employed
Address: 116 Second St., Coaldale, PA 18218
E-mail: katrina@ptd.net
Phone: (570) 645-3059
Job history: Self-employed since 1982, offering business services to small businesses and municipalities; expanded into freelance writing and writing services in 1995.

Co-founder of the Black Diamond Writers' Network and member of the Greater Lehigh Valley Writers Group.

Your goals for PWPA this year: Reach out to fellow writers to offer networking and educational opportunities.

Journalism tip: Write tight with strong nouns and active verbs. Get rid of adjectives and adverbs.

SARA HODON

Job: columnist/correspondent, Times News

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT DIRECTOR REBECCA VANDERMEULEN

Job: freelance journalist with special interest in education, parenting, business, politics and community issues.

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Twitter: @rebeccavm

Facebook:
facebook.com/rebeccavm

Job history/bio: Reporter at the Reading Eagle from February 2005 to April 2009. Freelance journalist since then.

Your goals for PWPA this year: To grow in membership and connect better with the needs and desires of the membership.

Journalism tip: Engage with others as people, not sources.



NORTHWEST CO-DIRECTORS KRISTIN BOWERS

Job: copy editor/page designer, Erie Times-News

Address: 205 W. 12th St., Erie, PA 16510

Phone: (814) 870-1719

E-mail: kristin.bowers@timesnews.com

Job history: Erie Times-News,

2002-present; York Dispatch, 2001-2002.

Your goals for PWPA this year: We hope to be able to expand our district beyond Erie.

Journalism tip: Trust your instincts, and double-check everything.

ERICA ERWIN

Job: City Hall reporter, Erie Times-News

Address: 205 W. 12th St., Erie, PA 16510

E-mail:
erica.erwin@timesnews.com

Phone: (814) 870-1846

Job history: Erie Times-News, 2002-present

Your goals for PWPA this year: We hope to be able to expand our district beyond Erie.

We're still looking for a South Central District director. If you are interested in the position, contact PWPA president, JoAnne Harrop, at jharrop@tribweb.com.