

BNC Awards

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The brunch speaker, Press-Register environmental reporter Ben Raines, gave a powerful presentation on the effects of the Gulf oil spill and the efforts by many to control the story. These programs were strong affirmations to the value of newspapers in documenting the events in our lives as well as maintaining a vigilant search for the truth.

APA President Alan Davis closed the convention by asking delegates to mark their calendars for the 2012 Journalism Summit to be held in conjunction with the Alabama Scholastic Press Association's 75th Anniversary in Tuscaloosa Feb. 17-18, and for the 2012 summer convention when we join with Florida, Mississippi, Georgia and Louisiana in Destin July 5-7.

City takes Anniston Star to small claims court

The City of Anniston recently filed a lawsuit in small claims court stating The Anniston Star owed it for charges incurred as part of a FOIA request, even though the paper stated in the request that it did not want printouts of the material.

The lawsuit claims the amount owed is \$1,473.40 plus court costs, even though the newspaper was never formally billed for the charges, and the city manager told the paper to "forget" about the charges.

The claim includes a 50-cent-per-copy charge for 344 pages; a \$10 per hour labor fee plus 5 cents per copy for copies of 818 of emails; \$768 for the city manager's time; \$412 in legal fees, and \$262.50 for Internet services.

Treating Public Notice with the prominence it deserves



Publisher Joe Thomas of The Tri-City Ledger in Flomaton took to heart the message from the summer convention for newspapers to do a better job of presenting public notices in our newspapers. His front page now carries a sidebar each week telling readers what notices are contained in that edition of the newspapers and where to find them.

The prominently displayed sidebar also contains a public notice logo sent out last month by APA for newspapers to use in both the printed editions and on their websites.

"I'm not putting foreclosures or that type notice, but rather the notices that have an impact on the communities we cover," Thomas said. "Public notices are important to our readers, and we need to quit burying them in the back of our papers."

The logos and headers are just part of an effort by the APA

Board of Directors to be proactive in preserving access to public notices for the citizens of Alabama.

APA President Alan Davis has established a Public Notice Awareness Committee to help develop a comprehensive effort to address every aspect of the public notice process. The committee held its first meeting recently and will be conducting district meetings throughout the state in early fall.

Along with promoting public notice in the printed products, newspapers should also continue to promote AlabamaLegals.com. If you are not already doing so, and many of you are, add a link to AlabamaLegals.com on your website. And, please make sure that every public notice you run in your paper and upload to AlabamaLegals.com is also posted on your own website.

The main thing is to start highlighting your public notices. This is important information the public needs to know. Let readers know the notices are in your paper and where to find them. Treat them like they are among your best clients.

Look for your invitation to attend one of the regional meetings. The schedule will be released soon.

