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# ARKANSAS Publisher WEEKLY

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## Convention underway, registration tops 300

The registration for the annual Arkansas Press Association Super-Convention, which got underway Wednesday, has topped 300 with even more to register late for the annual gathering being held at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in North Little Rock.

The golfers teed off in the annual Arkansas Newspaper Foundation golf outing Wednesday morning. Over 100 were registered to attend the “early bird” party at the Little Rock Zoo Wednesday evening.

The convention sessions this morning included the always-popular **Jack Lauterer** on “community journalism”, and *Waco (Tex.) Tribune-Herald* Editor **Carlos Sanchez** on “Changes that prove successful.”

**Joe Guertin** brought his “Street Fighter” selling approach to a pair of sessions on “Creating an Online Culture at Your Newspaper.”

The SuperConvention continues tonight with a gala silent/live auction to benefit the Arkansas Newspaper Foundation. Tonight’s party will feature “The GroanUps”, a popular Little Rock band, and a return of the “live” auction of a few items with **Louie Graves** of Nashville, APA past president (1986), serving as the auctioneer.

Friday will feature the past presidents breakfast, and the annual “Kids Press Camp” with 16 youngsters signed up to participate.

**Dr. Jennifer Wood Adams** of Auburn University will discuss her national survey of community newspapers regarding their Internet approach, followed by **Gary Sosniecki** of



**ZOO PARTY** - A Zoo volunteer (left) shows off a barn owl to (left to right) **Patsy Jackson, Jeff Christenson** and **Ted Larimer** at APA's welcome party Wednesday night at the Little Rock Zoo.

TownNews.com talking about “Web Solutions for Community Newspapers.”

Friday’s luncheon will feature the “passing of the gavel” as **Roy Ockert, Jr.** of Jonesboro is elevated to president of APA, replacing **Bill Hager** of Van Buren. **Ron Fournier**, AP bureau chief in Washington, D.C. will also speak at the Friday luncheon.

A sampling of community projects will be on tap Friday right after the luncheon, followed by a Web training session with **Jon Rust**, co-president of Rust Communications and **Max Brantley** of the *Arkansas Times*.

The annual “Honors Banquet” will take place Friday evening during which the APA will honor several award recipients. Friday will conclude with a hospitality room to toast the award winners.

Saturday will begin with a panel discussion on “Opinion Writing” featuring **Jake Bleed** of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and **John Brummett** of Stephens Media. That will be followed by a newsroom round table discussion

## PAGE co-op notes change in leadership

**Wally Lage**, president of PAGE Cooperative, has announced leadership changes scheduled to take place over the next two years in preparation for the retirement of **H. Charles “Chuck” Berky**, CEO and Founder of PAGE.

The PAGE Board of Directors has approved a Transition Plan that promotes **John W. Snyder** – currently General Manager – to take over as CEO of PAGE on July 1, 2009. Berky will stay on in an executive advisory role until his retirement, June 30, 2010. In addition, **Stephen Schroeder**, currently Assistant General Manager and Technical Director of the Cooperative, will become General Manager when Snyder becomes CEO.

In making this announcement, Lage expressed the Board’s pleasure in the development and execution of a well-planned, orderly transition that will result in seamless service to the PAGE membership while providing strong, experienced leadership to help the member newspaper/media companies survive and thrive in the challenging future of the industry.

Snyder has been with PAGE for 22 of its 24 years starting as Operations Manager and moving up to General Manager with the management responsibility of the Pennsylvania Headquarters office.

facilities by **Ron Kemp** of Rector and **Byron Tate** of Fort Smith.

The SuperConvention will close with the annual News-Editorial Contest Awards Luncheon with **Barney White** of Crossett’s *Ashley News-Observer* emceeding the awards presentations.

It’s not too late to join in the fun. Call the APA office if you’d like to join the over 300 of your friends and colleagues attending.



# Tom Larimer's Potpourri

It's SuperConvention week! We're at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in North Little Rock. I hope you are, too.

Convention planning is something totally different than any other thing we do at APA. I've spent my entire adult life in the newspaper business, but nothing I learned in the newspaper business really prepared me for staging a convention.

Oh, I've attended lots of them and in several states. I've attended several regional and national conventions, as have many of you. I've been to really good ones and really bad ones, and some that left me sort of rodeo warm to the whole affair.

I will say that having attended several conventions helps when you suddenly find yourself responsible for staging one, but until you've actually done one, you can't imagine the details involved. At least, I couldn't imagine until I arrived at APA in mid-2004.

For one thing, the hotel contract for the APA SuperConvention that is ongoing as you read this was signed almost two years ago. It takes a lot of advance planning to put on a proper convention. We actually do take bids in the process of selecting a hotel site for the SuperConvention.

APA returns to the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in North Little Rock this year for a lot of reasons. Chief among them was the positive experience we've had there in the past. The SuperConvention was last held there in 2005, and we've done an advertising conference there since, too. Each of those has been a very positive overall experience.

Selecting the headquarters hotel is just the first of many details that make up the convention experience. There are a number of things that we expect when we attend conventions. Those things don't just materialize. Someone makes them happen, although we don't always think of that when attending these things. And that's ok. You're supposed to be here to relax, enjoy the fellowship with people of similar interests, and to learn a little something in the process.

If we can create that sort of environment and that sort of program, then our job is done. Just know that when attending a convention session, luncheon or banquet, a lot of thought and planning has gone into making it happen.

I have definitely developed an appreciation for those who staged the conventions I have enjoyed so much over the years. You don't think about it much when you attend a convention. It's either good or it's not so good. You either have a good time and learn something, or you don't have such a good time and you don't learn much.

If you had stopped by the APA office in the past couple of weeks you would have seen quite an array of decorations and other convention necessities spread around the APA classroom. Several decorations have been fabricated by the APA staff in keeping with the "Surfin' Safari" theme of the convention. We get to see a lot of creativity around convention time at the APA office. Actually, we get to see creativity year round at the APA office. We

just get to see it concentrated in the weeks leading up to the convention.

Thank goodness there are those with the vision to "see" what a banquet set will look like in advance of setting it up. Be assured when you see the decorations at the SuperConvention, I had absolutely nothing to do with them. They are the creation of the APA staff, and I think you'll agree they are very good.

Our goal at APA is to put on a very good show that will entertain and well as enlighten, and to have you going away feeling good about your investment of time and money. I think those attending the annual SuperConvention this week will agree it was worth their while to make the effort to attend.

While we don't look ahead to the next SuperConvention until this one is in the books, you can rest assured that thought has already been given to the 2009 version that will be held at the Embassy Suites in Rogers. For one thing, the contract for that one has already been signed, and we're already working on things to do while in that beautiful part of the state for the annual APA gathering.

And then, of course, in 2010 APA will participate in another tri-state convention with our counterparts in Tennessee and Mississippi. That one will be in Tunica, Miss., this time, and yes, the contract for that one has already been signed as well.

You see, these convention things just don't happen. They take a lot of planning and it starts literally months and years in advance.

I hope you enjoy the SuperConvention, and, if you weren't able to attend, I hope you'll make plans to attend the next one in Rogers.

I've mentioned here before that I grew up attending APA conventions with my family. I have some very happy memories of those conventions. For one thing we always knew we'd be seeing some people we only saw at these gatherings.

APA conventions have been a sort of reunion over the years. They're a coming together of friends and colleagues in the newspaper business around the state. And there are always new faces to see and new acquaintances to make at the convention.

The social aspects of a convention are not to be overlooked because they have real value. It's good to know others in similar situations around the state. They become a great resource when a new challenge arises, and can offer support in dealing with them.

We're all in this together. This business I'm talking about. It isn't getting any easier and the more we can learn about it the better prepared we'll be to not only to survive in this business but also to thrive.

There will be plenty of opportunities for that at this APA SuperConvention. Just ask those who are attending.

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Have a great week!