

# Postal Newsletter

## Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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## Examining the rules of responsible journalism

By Tony Carobine, President

At one time or another, most of us have probably said things we later wished we hadn't. As much as we'd like, there isn't any way to turn back the clock and take those words back. On occasion, we also may have fluffed up the details of a story.

These situations bring to mind a tale about a man who called his dentist for an appointment. "I've got a tremendous cavity," he told the dentist. When the man got into the dentist's chair, the dentist peered into his mouth. "Oh, that doesn't seem too big. We can take care of that with a small filling." "Really?" said the man. "When I stick my tongue into it, it's huge." The dentist smiled, "Sometimes it's natural for the tongue to exaggerate."

While we can control what we say by thinking before we speak, we should also be on guard when we publish a newsletter for our members. The responsibilities and demands placed upon an editor are many indeed. Editors are the caretakers of the union publication, a valuable piece of property that belongs to the membership we serve. Whether elected or appointed, editors have been given a sacred trust that must be protected and upheld.

There is no other piece of property that is owned by the membership which has the potential to affect the union and its members more than a union publication. The union newsletter is a mighty powerful vehicle as it reaches each and every member.

A lot of important work the union does may "not be visible," so most people will form an opinion about the union by the visible products the union has to offer, such as the union publication. Taking all of this into consideration, the editor not only has an awesome responsibility, but also has

control of the "voice of the union" so to speak. Given this power, we must never forget that the paper belongs to all members and not certain individuals.

As mentioned earlier, the editor is the caretaker of the union newsletter. The caretaker's duties include the responsibility of being impartial and serving all members,

impartial and not allow personal views to interfere or influence decisions regarding the content of the publication.

3. **Do not misstate or overstate.** Again, an editor must make sure that information submitted for publication, or articles that he or she writes are factual. To view facts in a manner that suits personal views not

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*"As much as we'd like, there isn't any way to turn back the clock and take those words back."*

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regardless of the editor's personal feelings or opinions.

### Responsible journalism

Following are what I call the rules of responsible journalism that editors should consider in order to produce a union publication of the highest ethical quality:

1. **Verify information for accuracy.** Material submitted by others or written by the editor needs to be checked to make sure that all facts and statements are accurate and truthful. Anything less and the publication, union, and editor will lose credibility. Once lost, credibility is extremely difficult to regain.

2. **Be fair and objective.** When dealing with disagreements or differences of opinion pertaining to a specific issue (between members, not management) all sides deserve to be heard regardless of the editor's personal feelings on the subject. The union newsletter should present both sides so readers can form their own opinions. (A disagreement or difference of opinion in this sense is not the same as personal attacks, which do not belong in a newsletter.) The editor should always be fair, objective,

only violates the sacred trust of the office, but also destroys the integrity of the editor, paper, and the union.

4. **Never print an article to punish someone.** Many of us (member and officer alike) have been involved in a conflict with another member at one time or another. Editors need to be especially cautious in this area. It's awful tempting to try to use the newsletter to "get even."

Common sense must prevail. Editors must not let their personal feelings or anyone else's interfere with the obligation to uphold the integrity of the publication and the responsibility to be objective, fair, and impartial.

5. **Never use a publication to further personal agendas.** We should never lose sight of the fact that the publication is not the personal property of any individual. The members are the owners; it's the duty of the editor to ensure that the publication serves their needs and not self-interests. Erroneous statements, puff pieces, ignoring election laws during internal union elections, among other things, are not only shameful and wrong, but also a recipe for disaster. Please see, Responsible journalism, page 2

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**Statement of purpose:** Published by the American Postal Workers Union National Postal Press Association, the *PPA Newsletter* is an educational tool designed to assist PPA members with the performance of their duties as communicators and to help promote the goals and objectives of the APWU.

**This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.**



# Responsible journalism . . .

*Continued from page 1*

A union publication should be used to educate, inform, and further the goals and objectives of the union.

6. **Give proper credit.** When reprinting an article from another APWU publication, always give credit to the publication that originally published the article. The credit can either be placed at the beginning or at the end. If an article is reprinted from a newsletter that reprinted this material from another publication, credit should be given only to the paper that originally published the article.

7. **Do not use copyrighted material without permission.** Most material from commercial sources is protected by the copyright law. Therefore, always obtain permission from the author (copyright owner) before reprinting material from a commercial source.

8. **Avoid the use of foul or abusive language.** Dealing with postal management is not usually an easy task. Frustration over

such encounters sometimes spills over into our publications in the form of profanity when describing dealings with these individuals. While we should publicize our dealings with management and be aggressive when confronting them in our newsletters, foul language should be avoided.

Facts, figures and examples are much more effective while four letter words tend to demean the writer, the union, and may turn the reader off to the message the writer is attempting to convey.

### Rewards

Following the rules of responsible journalism may not always be easy, but it has its rewards. In doing so, the union and the editor will not only earn the respect of the members the publication serves, but others who may read the paper as well. Consequently, this will build support for the union, its goals, and objectives. We should always be striving to serve the members as best we can. After all, isn't that what it's all about?

# Communicating more often in more manageable bites

Like many locals, yours may have a hard time producing a publication that sticks to a regular schedule or that appears more often than four to eight times per year. But it's crucial to communicate frequently and regularly to convey the image of an "issues advocacy" union. Irregular and infrequent publications will have a hard time getting readers activated about what the union is doing, especially if all that is reported is what already is done.

If you can't produce a regular monthly publication, consider complementing your current paper with one that is easier to produce more frequently and regularly. This may mean running fewer long articles and fewer pages and using a simpler design – settling perhaps for just a one-page, two-sided bulletin containing short items. The trade-off is that you will be reaching people in a timelier manner on issues. You will stand a better chance of involving them in the resolution of those issues, and you'll be

more likely to create the impression of an activist organization.



*Your Union Paper  
Keeps You Informed*

# Facebook — love it, hate it!

By Lance Coles, Editor-at-Large

You either love Facebook or you loath it — but either way it is a very good media format to get your word out and stimulate a conversation.

If your local does not have a Facebook page, or a page/group on a Facebook page, you need to consider getting one.

There is a lot of drivel on Facebook, such as too many pictures of food, and worthless comments from people who need to get a life, but in reality, Facebook does have a place in our society and in our locals.

Use Meme's — those graphics or images that you can hit "share" and your whole friend universe will see it.

Share quotes, and comments!

Create a group — A group is where you can have conversations that are only with those that you accept into the group. You have to invite them, and only those you invite can have a conversation within that group.

A group is good for committees or small numbers of people that you need to share information with and have conversations. Remember that even though this is a closed group — nothing is really closed. Even those in your group could share what is going on within your group.

A Page — on your Facebook page, is really a better process for unions to get their message out. You create a page, like you do a group. The difference with a page is that you, or other admins, are the only ones that can post meme's and other things on the page. No one else can post anything other than comments.

This is a great way to use as your own billboard and blog page. You have total control on all postings. With a page, you also get all the stats from that page, so you will know your demographics of your readership.

A page is a sub-page of some one's original Facebook page. Even though it is associated with a specific Facebook page, posts from it, do not show up on the host page, unless they become friends or like the union page.

Keep in mind that even though you may post a hundred posts, not all will be delivered to all that are your friends or have liked your page. Facebook has a formula

where they regulate what postings we see and from who. These are based on our likes and posts.

So even though Facebook may seem to be a waste of time, and for the most part it is, there is some good you can get out of using it.

I suggest you create a page, under someone's personal Facebook account, and add a couple of admin's to it and use it to get your messages out. Don't create a Face-

book page for the local like your personal Facebook page. The reason being, that once you add a friend, they will start to post on your timeline, and that is when things get out of control.

I also suggest that you link your Facebook page to a union Twitter account, that way every post you post will also become a tweet. If you do this, and post something, make sure you give it a title or headline that way Twitter will give it one as well.

## 'Freedom' comes with responsibility

Freedom of the Press does not mean the freedom to libel.

Freedom of Speech does not mean the freedom to slander.

In the last issue of the *PPA Newsletter*, President Tony Carobine wisely pointed out a number of guidelines that will be

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*"Keep in mind that nothing can prevent someone from suing you, or your newspaper, or your local, if the individual or individuals believe they have been defamed."*

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helpful in avoiding the dangers of being sued for libel.

Keep in mind that nothing can prevent someone from suing you, or your newspaper, or your local, if the individual or individuals believe they have been defamed. In fact, suing all three entities is probable in the same legal action. It does not mean that the lawsuit is justified; it means that anyone can sue anyone at any time for any reason. In the United States, suing is a "national pastime" as common (but not the same) as baseball.

Great — so why bother learning guidelines that would help avoid the possibility of being sued if you can be sued no matter how careful you are? Because **suing** is not the same as **winning**. What you are trying to do is avoid giving the individual **justification** for suing you, and the PPA is trying to the best of their ability to provide you with

the tools that will help you be successful.

A number of years ago, the late Moe Biller, APWU National President, and I, attended a trial as observers, a lawsuit for Defamation of Character against an APWU local. The local was being sued for a million dollars by a number of postal supervisors who believed their reputation had been harmed by the personal information circulated by the local.

President Biller and I both agreed, privately, that the information distributed by the local had no justification and most likely would be considered malicious by the court. While we were waiting in the courthouse for the case to be called, the local decided to settle prior to trial. I believe the settlement was for a hundred thousand dollars. This does not include the cost of attorney fees.

After reading the above, it might be a good idea to repeat the closing message from President Carobine which appeared in the last newsletter:

"Unsure of whether or not an article is libelous or inappropriate? Your Postal Press Association can help. Upon request, (if the material has not already been published) the PPA will provide a confidential review and offer an opinion. Over the years this service has helped to avoid many potentially costly lawsuits."

Good advice.

**In Solidarity,**

**Hank Greenberg, Honorary Member  
PPA Advisory Council**

# Tips, tricks for writing fast, professionally

By Frank Antinone, Editor-at-Large

So what do you do when you're pressed for time, swamped under work and you still need to get some stuff written, and written well? Your nerves are tightened up so well that you can't sleep, but you can't squeeze even a sentence out of your mind. I know the feeling so well, but what I did then was, just start writing fast without even thinking, then a professional article was born with the time shorter than usual. It might be even more professional than my previous articles!

We write fast and professionally if we can just limit something, abandon certain habits, and put up some beneficial habits. That's all, it's really easy. I'm going to explain them clearly in this article, so master them all and write like a ninja from today!

## 1. Freestyle writing

To be honest, I hate this method. I'm one of those annoying writers who edits as I write. It just works better for me. I'm able to form better sentences, find my flow and generally write better if I take my time with it. Unfortunately, it doesn't make for fast writing, and just because I hate free style writing, it doesn't mean that it doesn't work.

If you're pressed for time and really want to get some writing done, open up a fresh Microsoft Word document, **and** start typing. Don't worry about how it will sound, whether your sentences are grammatically correct or even if they make any sense. Don't look at the clock. Get it all written.

Editing and cleaning up copy in 10 minutes is more than enough for you to produce a quality article. So you see, there's really no magic here, you just let your brain have more freedom, and it rewards you a completed work; fast and practical.

## 2. Set a timer

I know a lot of people who don't like setting a timer and writing till it goes off. However, I don't know anyone for whom this hasn't worked. So go ahead and try it. Set a timer for 10, 20 or 30 minutes, then sit in front of your computer and start writing. It's okay if you can't think of anything to write and you might be just staring at a blank screen. It's totally fine.

Chances are that as your timer starts to run out, your brain will jump-start and your fingers will start flying on their own. Like what I wrote earlier, it doesn't have to be

pretty and it doesn't have to make sense. It just needs to be written! You can pretty it up later.

Once your timer is off, step away from your computer – even if you're on a roll. Leave your brain wanting for more. If the timer proved ineffective in jump-starting your writing then take a break and come back to it later. Your timer doesn't have to be a clock. You can write after you've put a few cookies to bake in the oven and use that as your timer. Stop when the oven dings and treat yourself to a cookie.

After all, you deserve it!



## 3. Do research before writing

One of the fastest ways to write is to stop the urge to check on your facts or refer to information for accuracy. Before you sit down to write, make sure you've done all your research and are well versed in it. This way all you have to do is write without stopping. Everything is already there in your head – you just need to put it down in writing to make sense of it all.

Research before writing will also stop unnecessary actions like reading off-topic articles while you are writing. You might be even tempted to see a certain YouTube video for "research" purposes and boom . . . another day well spent with nothing but procrastination completed. Surely we need inspiration from different kinds of sources, but not for the time when you need to write fast.

## 4. Write an outline

This is absolutely my favorite tip for

writing fast. Think about what you want to write, then outline it. If it's an article, jot down the subheadings. If it's a web copy, write down the points you want to cover. The process is pretty much the same for any writing you need to get done.

If you prefer, you can also write a more detailed outline for easier writing later. Give some keywords to every topic or even paragraph in the article. Surprisingly this action will possibly spawn more ideas for you in the writing stage later. Most importantly, once you have the outline, writing will be a breeze and doesn't take much time. Before you know it, the work is done!

## 5. Get a writing buddy

If nothing seems to be working, then teaming up with a writing buddy/partner is your best bet. A writing buddy holds you accountable, watches the clock for you and even writes with you. If you have a lot of writing to do or have a big project that needs to get done, partnering up with a writing buddy is going to keep you motivated and on track with your deadline.

Your writing buddy doesn't necessarily need to be your friend. They just need to check in with you to see if you're doing what you have decided to do. Set a few ground rules before starting. What time will you check in with each other? How will you compare notes? Will you exchange each other's work and provide feedback?

For me, the best writing buddy is one who has to do some writing of his/her own. This way, it's a two-way thing and I'm not just getting help but I'm helping someone too.

## What about writing professionally?

Your writing can't be professional if it's not written at first. Concentrate on getting it written first, then spend a few minutes revising, editing and generally prettying it up. You'll notice there is really not much difference between speed writing and common writing, as you've done the research, wrote the outline, and edited the article to make it professional. You just took another approach which costs you less time.

So get it written first, and then make it professional. Use these tips and tricks regularly and you'll find yourself doing lesser editing with time, while enjoying more on writing great articles!

# All is not lost

By Edward J. Brennan,  
Secretary/Treasurer

For the sake of writing this article let us say that you are a long time union postal worker that is part of a local that has been absorbed in a merger with several other postal facilities in your area. Many other smaller rural offices also were part of the merger. Your union local, and possibly others, were dissolved through this consolidation process.

As a dedicated lifelong union member what are you going to do? Your fellow members look to you for where to go and what to do in this new situation. Many workers are young and do not know about unions. Many do not know about their rights and tend to rely on management for guidance and believe every word that comes out of their mouths.

No one wants to lead the way and no one knows how to keep the many workers and offices linked together and informed to the ever changing postal service. You had a newsletter at your office but it has been lost in the move. What can you do?

To begin with all is not lost. Although the problems appear to be insurmountable the presence of dedicated experienced members willing to climb this mountain is a start in the right direction. After the initial work of forming a working local the task evolves into a greater project of bringing all of the workers together in one well-educated, trained and efficient body.

And the number one way in which to do this is to pick up a phone, dial 906-774-9599 and speak to the President of one of the greatest communications networks in the labor movement, the APWU National Postal Press Association. This organization has been a leader in training postal newsletter editors and union officers for over a half a century.

Just one call to President Tony Carbine can get you on your way to beginning a newsletter and getting important information to all of your members no matter how distant they are in the quickest method possible. All members can't or won't go to union meetings but all are able to read the written word and can act accordingly when the need arises. Your entire membership can be educated, represented and united around a well-produced local

newsletter. Your members can be kept aware of changes in operations, meeting notices, grievances, etc. and other matters concerning their employment. They can be members of a viable local through constant communication and good union leadership.

The APWU National Postal Press Association is there for you whenever help with communications is needed. Local

join with others in conducting one of the most efficient and respected educational programs in the labor movement. And all of this is brought to a dramatic conclusion with the awards given to postal union editors for their outstanding work in keeping the membership informed and protected for the good of the American Postal Workers Union.

Protect and inform your membership

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***"Your entire membership can be educated, represented and united around a well-produced local newsletter."***

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and regional workshops are available and everything is brought to the fore with the finest training program available for editors and union officers – the Postal Press Conference on August 19 - 22, 2015. The conference features a training program conducted by the finest hand-picked educators available through the vast resources of the labor movement.

Printing, writing, and legal specialists

for a stronger and more efficient local. Dial the number above if you don't presently have a newsletter. Put wording in your constitution to send your editor and even your president to this outstanding conference. An educated local is a strong local. Start strong and stay strong. Communicate through the APWU National Postal Press Association. It's just one phone call away.

## A newsletter's purpose

- Inform members about the union, its activities, its challenges, its successes.
- Motivate members to retain a high level of interest in the union, and too participate in union activities.
- Show members that the union's interests are the members' interests.
- Interest members in learning more about their union.
- Motivate nonmembers to join.
- Provide a document of record.
- Support a positive image of the union.



# **Attend the 2015 Biennial PPA Conference!**

**Thursday, August 20 – Saturday, August 22  
(Pre-conference session Wednesday, August 19)**

**Concourse Hotel & Governor's Club  
Madison, Wisconsin**

A guestroom rate of \$134.00 per day single or double occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 14.5%. For more information about the Concourse Hotel or to make room reservations, please visit the PPA website, [www.apwupostalpress.org](http://www.apwupostalpress.org) or call hotel reservations at 1-800-356-8293.

## **This intensive four-day event will help you:**

- Better inform and educate members.
- Create a communications program that will stimulate membership participation.
  - Rejuvenate your publication with better content and format.
  - Identify and correct bad writing and editing habits.
  - Master techniques for reporting on issues affecting the membership.
- Explore the subject of electronic communication and how it can complement a print publication.
  - Avoid costly lawsuits by studying the subjects of libel and copyright.
- Infuse your publication with style and personality so members will read every issue.
  - Harness the tools for conducting interviews that get noticed.
  - Map out ideas for developing an editorial policy.
- Discover how labor history can be used to improve union involvement.
  - Acquire powerful labor/political cartooning skills.
  - Revive a lifeless publication by using new design techniques.
- Meet others who perform similar work and share experiences, problems and ideas.
- Get recharged and inspired to put dozens of new communication ideas to work!

**All of this and much, much more!**

# Plan now for 2015 PPA Awards Program

Editors should plan now on entering the 2015 PPA Awards Program by being on the lookout for material to enter from their newsletters published since June 2013. The 2015 program will be developed soon after which editors will be notified of the timeframe to submit entries. The award categories are expected to be relatively the same as in 2013.

First place and honorable mention awards in the following categories were included in the 2013 program: editorial, news story, feature story, headline, cartoon, photo, community service, creative writing, non-postal labor story, new editor, three overall excellence and two website awards.

To assist with selecting material to enter, following are guidelines used as part of the judging process.

## **BEST EDITORIAL:**

1. Does the editorial present the case through effective argument?
2. Is the editorial clearly understood?
3. Is there a clear indication of honesty and sincerity?
4. Is there a balance in the presentation?
5. Is the editorial constructive; does it offer an alternative?

**Note:** An editorial is an article of comment or opinion.

## **BEST NEWS STORY:**

1. Does the news story clearly report an event or events of a timely or current nature?
2. Does the headline capture your attention and accurately reflect the story?
3. Does the lead sentence accurately reflect the subject of the story?
4. Does the writer cover the subject without editorializing?
5. Does the news story hold your attention and interest?
6. Are the 5 W's covered?
7. Is the information accurate?

**Note:** A news story tells news and includes who, what, where, when, why and how. It is written in the "third person"—therefore, the word "I" is not used. There is no editorializing in the article, although the article might have a clear "point of view." Any opinions are included in quotes, with the person having said those words getting credit for having said them.

## **BEST FEATURE STORY:**

1. Is the feature story an original story?

2. Does the feature story cover the subject in depth?

3. Is the headline effective and attention-getting and accurately reflect the story?

4. Is the story written without editorializing?

**Note:** A feature story is an in-depth article exploring background issues, personalities or activities of individuals, emphasizing the human or entertaining aspects of a situation.

## **BEST HEADLINE:**

1. Does the headline capture your attention?
2. Does the headline show originality?
3. Does the headline accurately reflect the content of the article?

**Note:** Judge only the headline, not the article.

## **BEST CARTOON:**

1. Does the cartoon display originality?
2. Does the cartoon capture your attention?
3. Is the cartoon effective in conveying a message?

## **BEST PHOTO:**

1. Does the photo display originality?
2. Does the photo capture your attention?
3. How is the quality of the photo?
4. Has the photo been adequately cropped, if necessary?
5. Is the photo effective in conveying a message?

## **BEST COMMUNITY SERVICE:**

1. Does the story adequately describe the member(s) or organization's contribution to the community?
2. Does the story cover the subject in depth?
3. Does the story hold your attention and interest?

## **BEST CREATIVE WRITING:**

1. This category covers fiction, poetry, humor or any form of serious writing with a distinctively creative touch.
2. Does it have meaning? Is there a point or is it rambling words and letters?
3. Does it have relevance to postal or union life or related issues?

## **BEST NON-POSTAL LABOR STORY:**

1. This category includes stories about non-postal labor union activity or non-postal labor-oriented topics. (The story

need not be a first-hand account.)

2. Is the subject of significance?

3. Is the article clearly written?

4. Is it clear why postal workers should be interested in the story?

## **HANK GREENBERG AWARD FOR BEST NEW EDITOR:**

(Two Different Issues)

Besides the physical makeup and content, this award recognizes a new editor striving to produce a union publication that exemplifies dedication, sincerity and professionalism.

Named in honor of past PPA President Hank Greenberg, this award signifies the type of spirit, determination and leadership that Brother Greenberg displayed as president for over 17 years.

## **BEST WEBSITE:**

1. Look for appealing design.
2. Quality of content and appropriateness of subject matter.

3. Ease of navigation.

## **OVERALL EXCELLENCE:**

(Single Issue)

Best Professional and Non-Professional.

1. Look for planning, layout and overall design.

2. Adequate use of photos and/or graphics.

3. Quality of reproduction.

4. Good use of headlines.

5. Quality of proofreading.

6. Balance of content and appropriateness of subject matter.

## **Entries required**

Consideration for awards is only given to the entries submitted to the Awards Committee. Publications that do not submit entries are not considered.

## **Dues must be paid**

In accordance with the PPA Constitution, current editor members must pay their 2015 dues by February 1, 2015 in order to be eligible to participate in the Awards Program, while new editors have until May 1.

## **Awards Program material**

Awards Program rules and entry forms will be made available upon completion of the Award Committee's work on the program.

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# How to turn off volunteers

People responsible for working with volunteers frequently “demotivate” them. Here’s a list of seven ways to encourage volunteers to become former volunteers:

- Assign your volunteers tasks they dislike.
- Don’t let the volunteers know what the objective is; let them guess. Give volunteers the drudgery jobs. After all, their time isn’t valuable; they’re not getting paid.
- Don’t tell volunteers what’s going on with your organization.

- Since volunteers aren’t important, there’s no need to offer a pleasant “hello” or to bring them coffee, or to acknowledge their presence in any way.

- Don’t bother to thank volunteers. After all, they are gaining the satisfaction of helping a worthy cause.

- Load volunteers up with all the jobs you can think of, almost immediately exceeding the hours they offered to contribute.



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## 2015 dues notice sent

A dues notice letter and membership application for 2015 was mailed to PPA members on Friday, October 10. Occasionally, we find that dues notices are laid aside which then requires additional notices or phone calls as reminders. Your help in making sure your dues for the coming year are paid in a timely fashion would be appreciated.

Upon receipt of your dues, a 2015 PPA Membership/Press Identification Card will be prepared and sent to you provided your digital photo is already on file with the PPA. If your digital photo is not on file (or you would like to submit an updated photo), please email the photo to [ppa@apwupostalpress.org](mailto:ppa@apwupostalpress.org).