



## Planting New Ideas:

• January 16, 2007 • Issue 1

### What do you think?

MPA staff has been publishing Planting New Ideas for some time now and we'd like to find out from our members how it's working.

Please email us at [readership@michiganpress.org](mailto:readership@michiganpress.org) and let us know what you think. What were some of the good ideas? What ideas could you have lived without?

We are also looking for other ideas to help newspapers all over the state grow their readership. If you've seen anything interesting in your travels, or have been doing something innovative at your paper, forward the idea to us and we'll get the word out.

Don't forget to visit our Web site [www.michiganpress.org](http://www.michiganpress.org) to find out what's new at Michigan's newspapers.

## Helping new home buyers

An unfortunate result of the poor economy has been a high number of foreclosures in the last several years. Michigan has seen a rise in foreclosures of 80% to 96%. Newspapers can provide a valuable tool to their community by using online interactive maps that would allow potential homebuyers to locate these properties in their communities.

With nearly 5,000 foreclosures in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, *The Charlotte Observer* created an interactive map that taps into the county's real estate database to display the location of

each foreclosure on a county street map. Clicking on a location brings up real estate information from the county's Web site. This information includes: who owned the property, price and when it was foreclosed.

The real-estate section of your newspaper has always been a section that attracts readers, and the additional tools that your online version can provide might help boost circulation.

To see the foreclosure search feature on *The Charlotte Observer's* Web site visit: [maps.kricar.com/maps/charlotte/2005/fc10.asp](http://maps.kricar.com/maps/charlotte/2005/fc10.asp)

## NIE projects promote learning, literacy and youth readership

Sixth-Grade students in 16 classrooms across the country spent the second half of the last school year using a different kind of textbook to help them improve their test scores: newspapers.

High Five, a Newspaper Association of America Foundation project supported by a \$225,000 from the Knight Foundation, did a field test last January. The project featured a high intensity program five days a week with a curriculum that featured 90 classroom lessons covering media literacy, journalism and newspaper production.

One student participant in San Juan, TX told people involved in the project that the program made her more interested in local events. Teachers say that the project is interesting to students because the "text" changes every day and it's real.

The Michigan Newspapers in Education Committee helps to provide many tools

to promote newspapers to youth readers. Promoting the newspaper as a living textbook to parents and teachers is vital to the survival of the industry. Using newspapers as the tool that helps integrate the latest world and local news, politics and technology into classrooms is easy marketing. It's the most current and up-to-date source of information. It will never be dated.

It's something a parent can do with the kids in the morning, or a teacher can use in the classroom to promote learning. The paper can be carried anywhere. There's geography and science on the weather page. There are current events. You can also use it for English and reading lessons.

To participate in the Michigan NIE contact Lisa McGraw at 517.372.2424 or Richard Vaughn at 810.766.6280

## Interactive Obituaries

Deaths are handled three ways at *The Spokesman-Review* in Spokane, WA. Sure, there are the customary in-paper obituaries and the paid death notices. Then there are multimedia “tributes” —audio reminiscences and online photo galleries that allow survivors to tell their heartfelt stories about a loved one.

“It’s the difference between human beings and human doings,” observes columnist and staff writer Tom Lutey of the tributes he helps to produce for the paper’s “Valley Voice,” the zoned edition serving 84,000 people in Spokane Valley.

Reporters search the regular obits for

good stories about people from The Valley and then they go and report about two per month.

The reporting always entails visiting the family’s home to collect clues about who the person was. Lutey recalls once doing a tribute on a school teacher and discovered four organs in her house. “Four organs! I would never have known, just talking to her family, that she loved music,” he says.

Equipped with a hand-held tape recorder and good microphone, the reporters tape a family spokesperson.

The journalists come away with audio reminiscences and 10 borrowed photos that

tell about the life of the person who died in addition to fodder for a feature story. The best seven of those photos will be used to cover the 30 seconds of audio they will produce for the online tribute.

“The audio and photos are then sent to the main office, where online producers load them into Story Maker to build the online tribute,” says Ken Sands, managing editor of online and new media. The paper also sells the multimedia tributes as CDs for \$25. “People love it,” Lutey says.

This story is a great example of community-based news that will draw in more readers.

## Michigan Ideas

*“Is your newsroom taking old habits into the new world?”*

*The Ludington Daily News* is setting its sails in new directions, guided in part by a 19-year-old broadcasting student who worked for the northwestern Michigan paper last summer.

Last summer Kaitlin Urka, a U of M sophomore, helped determine what equipment and software the *Daily News* needed for multimedia projects.

No novice to broadcasting, Urka worked for a Ludington radio station while she was in high school and is entertainment editor of WOLV-TV, U-M’s student-run television station.

“I know editing equipment and software, so it was easy to work with Andy Klevorn, multimedia services manager.”

Urka then boarded a ferry to Manitowoc to prepare a first-

person story for the paper and a five-minute video to present to the *Daily News* staff to demonstrate what was possible with the paper’s existing equipment.

Urka also produced a web video introducing newsroom personnel. “Our hope here is that the public will be able to gain a sense of the people behind the news. We want people to connect with us.” Urka avoided newsroom “shoots,” preferring to put her subjects at sites throughout the community.

Urka also pitched an idea for Web video commercials “because it’s absolutely necessary to recoup any costs that video production requires,” she says. “The paper already sells advertising space on the Web, why not video sales?”

She also wrote the stories for the print product. Her charge was

to come up with story ideas of special interest to younger readers—like the piece she wrote on wakeboarding and a first-person ride-along with a DNR water safety officer. All this in 20 hours a week.

Given the number of video production classes being taught in high schools and community colleges throughout Michigan, a talented young person from your community can, as a summer intern, bring a great deal of value added to your newsroom. The MPA Foundation will help you find candidates.

Interested? Contact Janet Mendler at the MPA Foundation; [janet@michiganpress.org](mailto:janet@michiganpress.org) or call 517.552.2811.

