

Montana Report

March 11, 2021

MEMBERSHIP

- Although Montana has always reported a small but relatively stable membership, interest in attending and participating in fall/spring meetings/contests has continued to diminish. The number of returning members has stayed basically the same.
 - Although retiring advisers and cuts in co-curricular programs have impacted the number of programs available, the number of new advisers seeking membership in JEA has started to encourage the MJEA board. Currently, MJEA has 25 members, which is a minor increase from last spring, and although we have recently had an addition of two new JEA members, these advisers have not joined MJEA. A few of these members will need to update their membership in March.
 - The number of JEA members, 14, has remained stable since last spring in 2020.
- The gap left in MJEA's executive board continues to not be filled. We encourage younger members to become engaged in MJEA. However, Montana journalism programs have continued to undergo dramatic turnover with new advisers taking the helm of journalism programs in many of the small, rural as well as larger high schools. It is obvious that younger advisers need to find reasons to be professionally involved with our organization to revitalize what MJEA can offer to a diverse state membership in these challenging times of virtual learning.
- MJEA's highly motivated and action-orientated president. Beth Britton, CJE, the CMR adviser of the Stampede and Russellog from Great Falls, MT, continues to diligently work to assist the state's journalism advisers through the dissemination of information and resources, working closely with the University of Montana School of Journalism and JEA's state director Linda Ballew. She continues in her eighth year as MJEA president.
- Both Beth and Linda continue to request input on how to reorganize the association as well as what kind of resources would assist Montana advisers more effectively. Advisers are willing to use the resources Beth and Linda provide; however, they are not willing to engage in working within the framework of the organization. Our action plan has been to reach out with information, curriculum, and additional resources. We have even tried to encourage a book exchange, free yearbooks/textbooks, supplies and encouragement.
 - To gain a better understanding of this issue, we have reached out to former members and high school journalism programs throughout the state with surveys, emails, letters and requests to submit and participate in adding content and providing suggestions for updating mjeajournalism.com
 - This website, provided by SNO, allows us to provide information and resources to our members. It has been a vital link in our messaging and communication with members. Updated regularly, it is an aspect of the organization of which our members speak highly.
- Covid-19 has taken a toll on co and extra-curricular programs. Britton and Ballew have reached out to many advisers who are now taking on the roles of both newspapers, online and yearbook programs by themselves. Remote learning has made these productions a challenging new adventure, but overall, advisers are working to rise to the occasion.
- Maintaining and expanding MJEA and JEA membership continues as always to be a top priority.
 - Britton and Ballew continue to email advisers encouraging them to communicate with us, retain membership in MJEA and JEA and participate in adding content and discussion to mjeajournalism.com
 - Britton and Ballew have continued to send resource materials and membership forms in the mail encouraging communication and membership in MJEA and JEA.
 - Yearbook advisers comprise a majority of MJEA's membership. Britton and Ballew have decided to take on more responsibility for the state journalism contest to ensure that yearbook programs as well as social media programs will continue to have critique and contest services as



well as the current newspaper and online publications. These continue with an emphasis on broadcast workshops as this is how our advisers will be able to apply for CTE in Montana.

- mjeajournalism.com
Information regarding the JEA spring convention, the MFPE Montana Teacher Convention and additional workshops can be found on our website along with resources from the New York Times, various articles and a look at an amazing multimedia project are only a few of the posts to mjeajournalism.com. This site continues to provide resources and information. **Britton has also requested and encouraged participation with the following from our members and state advisers encouraging them to post to the site:**
 1. Photos of their students in action, their classrooms, guest speakers, etc.
 2. Short opinion pieces written by advisers. Britton would like to have their voices on the site.
 3. Ideas for other advisers – lessons, celebrations, classroom set-up...
- We had a small presence at the virtual 2020 Montana Teachers' Convention this last fall. However, we will expand our presence now that the hybrid convention has invited us to again participate as a co-curricular group at the Convention in Great Falls as well as with a virtual presence at the 2021 MFPE Montana Teacher Convention.
- Developing interest in JEA membership has also been encouraged by pointing to the value of JEA's dynamic journalism curriculum. This continues to perk interest in JEA. Advisers express their appreciation for the thorough and in-depth lessons, rubrics, Common Core Standards' alignment and assessments that they can access for both in their classrooms as well as with administrators who want advisers to demonstrate curricular accountability. Thank you for the consistent addition of vital virtual teaching methods as well as other additions to the curriculum portion of the jea.org site. This is refreshing, current and relevant to the issues teachers and advisers now face.
- So too are the Zoom video events/workshops and webinars. We so appreciated Joe Humphrey's enthusiasm in presenting JOY not only at the convention, but also, on ZOOM meetings.

- **AWARDS**

Meet the 2021 Montana Journalist of the Year: Madison George

Madison, the editor in chief of the Russellog from C M Russell High School, has earned a \$1,000 scholarship provided by the Montana Newspaper Association. She will represent Montana in the national JOY competition.



HAPPENINGS

- **The School of Journalism's High School Journalism Day is back!**

The School of Journalism professors will host a virtual day of learning for all interested on Friday, April 2, 2021.

- The day will consist of workshops focusing on print, broadcast, photo, news literacy and data visualization. They have asked their instructors to provide a lecture portion of each workshop, along with a hands-on activity to get students involved in the process of creating journalism.
- **Please save the date! Friday, April 2.** RSVP information and a detailed schedule of events will be provided in the next few weeks. We as well as the j-school at the U of M, look forward to reconnecting with advisers and their students through this event.
- Cameron Bucheit is the contact for this event.

- **The university would like to schedule a summer camp at UM.**
 - We are hoping they will conduct the workshop this coming summer, 2021. The Journalism School cancelled the workshop this past summer because of Covid-19 restrictions. They aim to teach classes on design, photography and various kinds of journalistic writing and podcasting.
- **Britton and Ballew will invite advisers to present a class/workshop at the 2021 Educators' Convention in Great Falls on Oct. 21-22, 2021.**
 - We are hoping to find instructors who will share their expertise in writing, editing, design, broadcast, yearbook, podcast, photography... Ideally, the class would be well suited for teachers in several curricular areas.
- **We extend the invitation to a membership meeting during the Montana Teachers Convention.**
 - **At that time, Linda Ballew will announce her replacement as the Montana State JEA Director. Ballew will resign this position after the fall 2021 JEA conference.**
- Britton and Ballew will continue to provide "care packages" to mail to advisers, using some of the money from the MJEA account.

FOR THE JEA BOARD

- **The JEA office** has been an essential asset because of the wonderful people in the office. Thank you, Lindsay for your assistance with video workshops during the fall convention. Your talent, grace and work ethic has made you an indispensable part of our family.
- The staff continues to help advisers by sending to MJEA, support materials as we try to enlist new members. The staff has also been essential in helping with materials that reinforce classroom procedures and deadlines.
- The virtual workshops extended from the HUBB platform as well as those provided as ZOOM meetings and webinars/podcasts by Joe Humphrey and other board members on a variety of topics have clarified information, taught advisers and staff, and encouraged JEA members. Thank you for the innovative contact and support. We appreciate all you do... Thank you so much!

From MJEA president, Beth Britton, CJE

“The publication of newspapers and upkeep of web sites has slipped at many Montana schools during the pandemic. Even before COVID-19 remote learning and the challenges that the pandemic presents to journalism advisers kicked in last spring, Montana's high school journalism community was struggling to remain relevant and strong.

Too few schools offer journalism classes, and for many schools -- even the largest AA institutions -- a yearbook class or club is all that is offered. There are several schools, however, across this vast state that set themselves apart with a small but growing broadcast program, a strong print and/or online newspaper, and electives including Introduction to Journalism and graphic design.

The main goal for the Montana Journalism Education Association is the continued development of a support system and useful website for Big Sky Country advisers and students, even if we are physically located hundreds of miles apart.” **Please visit mjeajournalism.com**

Respectfully submitted,
Linda M. Ballew, MJE