

# Pressing through adversity

By Ron Wilson,  
Huck Boyd Institute

"Stop the presses!" Okay, maybe that phrase is never heard anymore except in old movies. But other newspaper traditions, such as covering breaking news, focusing on local coverage, and producing a newspaper on time, still remain in rural Kansas. Today we'll meet a newspaper publisher who rose to the best traditions of Kansas journalists while facing a tremendous challenge: her newspaper office was totally lost in a fire.

Linda Mowery-Denning is editor and publisher of the weekly Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter. Linda is from Indiana originally. Through a friend in Topeka, she came to Kansas and ultimately got a job at the Salina Journal where she worked for nearly 27 years, covering news stories in communities around Salina.

One of those communities was the rural town of Ellsworth, population 2,946 people. Now, that's rural. This town had a shock when its long-time newspaper publisher, Karl Gaston, was killed in a tragic auto accident. Townspeople grieved for the family, and then worried about the sale of their local newspaper.

"A friend of mine and I got the crazy idea that we would try to buy the newspaper," Linda said. They made a bid but a company from Georgia named Morris Multimedia bought the paper instead. Still, Linda and her friend were so intrigued by the community that they decided to create a competing newspaper to serve Ellsworth. The Ellsworth

County Independent was born. "The workload was incredible and the competition was stiff," Linda said. Ultimately, Linda's partner went back to Salina but Linda continued to produce the paper. Then she was approached by the owners of the newspaper chain about a merger, which was finalized in 2001. Linda became editor and co-owner of the Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter.

"They've been great," Linda said of Morris Multimedia. "They don't interfere and they've been very supportive." Then came Sunday, June 19, 2011. Linda was home when she got a call from her business manager, whose husband is a firefighter.

"I think she was trying to ease me into what had happened," Linda said. "She told me, 'There's a fire downtown at Douglas and Second Street.' I was trying to think, 'Hmm, what building is that?'" And then it hit her - that's her own newspaper's building.

By the time Linda got downtown, there were smoke and flames shooting through the top of the newspaper's building. An attorney in the next block was carrying files out of his office in case the fire spread.

But firefighters came from all over and contained the fire. "The firefighters did a remarkable job," Linda said. For the newspaper staff, this was not only a huge loss, it was a news story to cover.

Linda and her staff swung into action, taking pictures and interviewing people. Meanwhile, Linda was thinking about

how to produce a newspaper. Her first call was to the school superintendent to ask about using the high school journalism department, and he didn't hesitate to agree. Fortunately, Linda had the page templates on her laptop computer which she had with her at home.

The next morning, the executive director and the president of the Kansas Press Association were in Ellsworth to help. Offers of assistance came from all over. Remarkably, that week's edition of the Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter was produced on time, as it has been ever since.

"I'm so proud of our staff," Linda said. "There was never a thought that we wouldn't put out a newspaper that week. And I can't say enough good about the support we have received from the community."

"Linda's coverage of her community is amazing. I am especially impressed with her positive attitude - even through a very challenging year," said Gloria Freeland, director of K-State's Huck Boyd National Center for Community Media. "Linda has provided leadership for other community newspapers through the excellent example she sets for her own."

"Stop the presses!" Okay, maybe that phrase isn't used any more, but the traditions of local coverage and on-time publication still remain. We commend Linda Mowery-Denning and all those involved with the Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter for making a difference by demonstrating that, in rural Kansas, even a fire isn't enough to stop the presses.

# Winners named in annual Cookie and Treat Contest



Collin Simmons



Tana Breiner



Hallie Brooks



Coral Stewart



Shawn Schock



Beverly Kindler

Thanks to generous donations and an assortment of delicious treats, the Norton Telegram recently donated \$832.30 to God's Pantry to help needy families this holiday season.

The 2011 Norton Telegram Cookie Contest was held Friday with seven entries of cookies, cupcakes and other treats for the public to taste and vote on. The entries included fudge, sugar cookies, cupcakes, truffles and other tasty treats.

Members of the public were able to cast votes for the treats for 25 cents each, with all proceeds from the contest going to God's Pantry. The votes generated \$332.30 for God's Pantry. An anonymous donor also contributed \$500 for God's Pantry, totaling a donation of \$832.30 for

God's Pantry.

There were four entries in the children's division of the contest, with all four children taking home prizes. First place went to Collin Simmons, 5. Second place went to Tana Breiner, also 5. Hallie Brooks, 4, took third place and Coral Stewart, 8, earned Honorable Mention in the contest.

Two adults entered the contest with both winning prizes. First and second place went to Shawn Schock and third place went to Bev Kindler.

Sponsors of this year's cookie and treat contest were Stitch Up A Storm, End Zone, Destination Kitchen, the Norton Theatre and the Norton Telegram.

## SCHOOL MENU

### Norton Jr.-Sr. High Schools Menu

#### Monday, Dec. 19

Breakfast-Pizza squares, fruit or juice, or choice of assorted cereal, toast w/margarine and jelly, and milk.

Lunch-Cheese hamburger, lettuce and tomato, corn, peaches, chocolate pudding, or chef salad, and milk.

#### Tuesday, Dec. 20

Breakfast-Breakfast burrito, hash brown patty, fruit or juice, or choice of assorted cereal, toast w/margarine and jelly, and milk.

Lunch-Pigs in a blanket, peas, broccoli and cauliflower salad, peaches, rosy applesauce, or chef salad, and milk.

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

Breakfast-Long John, fruit or juice, or choice of assorted cereal, toast w/margarine and jelly, and milk.

Lunch-Chicken strip sandwich, lettuce and tomato, baked beans, orange halves and peaches, or chef salad, and milk.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school----winter break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school----winter break

### EES Menu

#### Monday, Dec. 19

Breakfast-Applesauce muffins, peaches, grape juice, and milk.

Lunch-Macaroni and cheese, little smokies, mixed veggies, rosy applesauce, french bread, and milk.

#### Tuesday, Dec. 20

Breakfast-Warm pumpkin bread, rosy applesauce, orange juice and milk.

Lunch-Sloppy Joe, homemade bun, corn, potato salad, strawberry fruit cup, and milk.

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

Breakfast-Golden waffles, warm maple syrup, fruit cocktail, apple juice, and milk.

Lunch-Peanut butter/honey sandwich, cottage cheese, warm peas, Mandarin oranges, ice cream, and milk.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school----winter break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school----winter break

### Northern Valley Menu

#### Monday, Dec. 19

Breakfast-Pancakes, syrup, ham, hashbrowns, applesauce, or choice of assorted cereal.

Lunch-Chili soup, crackers,

carrot sticks, cheese sticks, and cinnamon roll.

#### Tuesday, Dec. 20

Breakfast-Cinnamon roll, eggs, sausage, diced pears, or choice of assorted cereal.

Lunch-Monterey Jack sandwich, french fries, pork-n-beans, and applesauce cake.

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

Breakfast-Breakfast pizza, hashbrowns, grape juice, or choice of assorted cereal.

Lunch-Parmesan chicken, whole wheat roll, buttered broccoli, and sliced peaches.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school----winter break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school----winter break

## CHRISTMAS CANDY CAROUSEL

749 3<sup>rd</sup> STREET PHILLIPSBURG, KS

(The Bill Clark Building on West side of the Square)

DECEMBER 21<sup>st</sup> 12:00 - 6:00 PM

DECEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup> 12:00 - 8:00 PM

Let us do the work for you. We'll do the baking and prepare the platters with assorted Christmas candy/cookies so you can sit back and enjoy the holiday season. All proceeds go to support Options and their mission. Team up with local volunteers to help Options continue vital, life-saving services in the Phillips and Norton County area. Contact Tiffany Pakkebieer at 785-622-8433 for more information.



Options: Domestic and Sexual Violence Services provides services to persons who have experienced domestic, sexual, interpersonal violence or stalking in the 18 Northwest Kansas counties. Services include:

- 24-hour toll-free Crisis Line: 800-794-4624
- 24-hour crisis intervention
- Personal, confidential, non-judgmental support
- Safety planning
- Safe Shelter
- Community Referrals
- One-on-One Peer Counseling
- Support Groups
- Personal Advocacy
- Community Education
- Education Programs

Contact 785-625-3055 or 800-794-4624 for more on Options services. You can also find more information on our website @ [www.help4abuse.org](http://www.help4abuse.org) or check us out on Facebook.

## Accident Report

On Dec. 13, a dark blue 2004 GMC Envoy, driven by Lilla Gonzalez of Garden City, was traveling east bound on Highway 383 when a deer came out of the south ditch onto the roadway. Gonzalez was unable to avoid striking the deer causing over \$1,000 damage to the vehicle. Sleet and foggy conditions existed at the time of the accident. No injuries were reported. The accident was investigated by Norton County Sheriff Officer Larry Land.

For help with your advertising needs please call Dana at 877-3361 email: [dpaxton@nwks.com](mailto:dpaxton@nwks.com)

## Open House

at the Norton Animal Health Center  
Wed., Dec. 21 - 10 a.m.-2 p.m.



Giving Thanks for You, Our Customers During this Christmas Season

Come See What We Have to Offer—  
Cake, Cider and Door Prizes

**Norton Animal Health Center, LTD**

801 W. Holme, Norton, Kansas  
Phone: 785-877-2411

Aaron R. White, DVM • Sarah Ketterl White, DVM  
[www.nortonanimalhealthcenter.com](http://www.nortonanimalhealthcenter.com)



## SCHOOL CALENDAR

### NCHS

#### Monday, Dec. 19

SEMESTER FINALS: ELECTIONS, A.P.

Student focus group, A.P.

Post prom committee meeting-cafeteria, 5:15 p.m.

FFA Christmas party, 7 p.m.

#### Tuesday, Dec. 20

SEMESTER FINALS: SCIENCE,

Java Jive auditions

Jay Singers, 7:30 a.m.

JV/V basketball at Cambridge, Neb., 5 p.m.

Wrestling vs. Phillipsburg, 6 p.m.

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

SEMESTER FINALS: MAKE-UP

School dismissed at 2:30 p.m.

Java Jive auditions

Blood drive: JH Gym, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school-Christmas break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school-Christmas break

### NIHS

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

School dismissed at 2:30 p.m.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school-Christmas break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school-Christmas break

### EES

#### Monday, Dec. 19

Music rehearsal at east campus, 8:30 a.m.

Vocal and band concert at east campus, 6:30 p.m.

#### Tuesday, Dec. 20

Grade 1 Gingerbread houses-cafeteria, 1 p.m.

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

School dismissed at 2:30 p.m.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school-Christmas break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school-Christmas break

### Northern Valley

#### Monday, Dec. 19

HS dance team Christmas party, TBD

NVEA Christmas party at Almena, 6:30 p.m.

#### Tuesday, Dec. 20

7th-12th Christmas program in Almena, 7 p.m.

#### Wednesday, Dec. 21

End of 1st semester-dismiss school at 1:15 p.m.

#### Thursday, Dec. 22

No school-Christmas break

#### Friday, Dec. 23

No school-Christmas break