

# Good Ideas

## in Newspaper Diversity

**Tips from winners of and nominees for the  
Robert G. McGruder Awards  
for Diversity Leadership**

compiled by  
the Freedom Forum

# Robert G. McGruder Awards for Diversity Leadership

The first *Robert G. McGruder Awards for Diversity Leadership* were presented to Don Flores, editor and executive vice president of the *El Paso (Texas) Times*, and Jim Strauss, executive editor of the *Great Falls (Mont.) Tribune*.

The editors were recognized for content that accurately reflects diverse communities and leadership in recruiting, developing and retaining journalists of color.

The awards are given by the Associated Press Managing Editors and the American Society of Newspaper Editors in partnership with the Freedom Forum, which administers and funds the awards. They are named for the late executive editor of the *Detroit Free Press*, a diversity champion. Each honoree receives \$2,500.

Nominations are accepted in early September, and recipients are announced at APME's October convention.



*Don Flores*



*Jim Strauss*

# A Commitment to Diversity

“**T**O TRULY foster diversity, you have to hold it high as a standard always – whether hiring, mentoring, developing company policy or developing news.”

Janis Besler Heaphy, president and publisher of *The Sacramento Bee*, wrote these words in nominating her executive editor, Rick Rodriguez, for the first Robert G. McGruder Awards for Diversity Leadership.

His nomination and those of 26 other editors and newspapers illustrate how small and large newspapers across the country make diversity a priority.

A commitment begins when diversity is part of a newspaper’s mission.

At the *San Jose Mercury News*, this mission is printed each day on Page Two: “Two stories are central to our mission: the impact of technology and the changing demographic landscape of America. These two stories create powerful connections between our community and others, both domestic and international.”

A commitment continues when the newspaper takes a leadership role on diversity in its community. At the *Yakima (Wash.) Herald-Republic*, a “One World, One Valley Award” honors everyday people who give of themselves to build cultural bridges in the community.

Between mission and community leadership, there are day-to-day newsroom practices that help staffs ensure that diverse voices are part of newspapers every day. We compiled this list from nominations for the 2002 Robert G. McGruder Awards for Diversity Leadership and contest judges. To find out more about a practice and how you might try an idea in your newsroom, contact the newspaper’s editor.

## DIVERSITY IN CONTENT

### Reaching Diverse Voices

- **FLORIDA TODAY** in Melbourne formed a 16-member Multicultural Community Advisory Board to “enable leaders of diverse community groups to help the newsroom shape effective strategies for covering diverse communities and issues.” The board has influenced newspaper content by offering opinions on coverage strategies, evaluating the quality, relevance and responsiveness of editorial-page content, helping the newsroom analyze census data and providing feedback on the diversity within the community.
- At **USA TODAY**, the Money section’s diversity committee created a diversity library on a desk in the newsroom that contains minority-business periodicals and minority source books. The group also created a resource site on the newspaper’s Intranet, which contains links to minority Web sites and organizations.
- **The Detroit News** posted its minority sourcebook – created to make it easy for reporters to find diverse sources with expertise in various fields – on its Intranet site. In a column, the newspaper’s public editor solicited additional minority sources from readers.
- The **Great Falls** (Mont.) **Tribune** has an annual newsroom training session on diversity and invites guest speakers to discuss topics such as how to be culturally sensitive when interviewing Native Americans.
- The **Greeley** (Colo.) **Tribune** created and publicized a newsroom telephone extension for Spanish speakers, and translated engagement, wedding, anniversary and obituary forms into Spanish and distributed them in neighborhoods with large Hispanic populations.
- The **Lincoln** (Neb.) **Journal Star** called on a resource at another newspaper – the publisher of **Viet Mercury**, a **San Jose Mercury News** product – to train its staff in how to better cover its emerging Vietnamese-American community.



- The *Times* of Shreveport, La., asked all editors to attend an event in a minority community or one put on by a minority group when strategizing ways to improve the inclusion of people of color in everyday coverage.
- At the *San Jose Mercury News*, a team of five reporters and an editor and a supplemental group of 20 journalists representing all departments make up the race and demographics department. They meet weekly to discuss coverage issues and opportunities for diversity in all sections.

## Mainstreaming Coverage

A newspaper reflects its complete community when the voices of minority experts, professionals and real people are included in all aspects of coverage – not only in coverage of minority communities. Some newspapers call this practice “mainstreaming.”

- The *El Paso* (Texas) *Times* each day reviews how it reflects its community in coverage, looking for stories on diversity and at how well minorities are mainstreamed into coverage. Editors provide daily feedback about efforts to staff.
- At the *Great Falls* (Mont.) *Tribune*, the executive editor meets monthly with all newsroom managers to discuss efforts to ensure coverage is inclusive.
- At *FLORIDA TODAY* in Melbourne, diversity in mainstream news coverage is a tenet outlined in the newspaper’s mission. A newsroom diversity committee reviews examples from all sections of the newspaper monthly to determine how well the newspaper is meeting its mission. The results help determine future training and other diversity initiatives.
- At *The Detroit News*, examples of how people of color are included in the mainstream of coverage are posted regularly on a centrally located bulletin board, and members of a mainstreaming committee conduct discussions for new staffers on the reasons behind the newspaper’s mainstreaming and diversity approaches.
- The *Poughkeepsie* (N.Y.) *Journal* seeks a diverse range of experts as columnists in all sections. Its editorial page has eight wire columnists who are people of color, and the newspaper seeks out diverse viewpoints in local opinion pieces.
- The *San Jose Mercury News*’ art department and designers include women and people of color in illustrations whenever the topic is generic to ensure that the entire community is reflected in the newspaper.

## Specialty Content

- The *York* (Pa.) *Daily Record* responded to the 25th Annual Conference on Black History in Pennsylvania by publishing 25 profiles of black achievers. The newspaper's managing editor wrote a book on the county's black history, and excerpts were published in the newspaper and on its Web site.
- The *Poughkeepsie* (N.Y.) *Journal* publishes a monthly "Cultural Calendar" in its Life section that focuses on current and historic events of interest to diverse communities.
- The *Record-Journal* in Meriden, Conn., sponsored a community roundtable on issues of race in response to a controversial Connecticut Supreme Court ruling in a desegregation case. It also published a transcript of the roundtable.
- *Lee Newspapers* employs a reporter who covers Native American issues, based at the *Lincoln* (Neb.) *Journal Star*. The *Bellingham* (Wash.) *Herald* and the *Great Falls* (Mont.) *Tribune* created beats in which Native Americans and reservations are the focus. Editors at Bellingham and Great Falls newspapers visited reservations in their areas, attended tribal programs and spent time talking about journalism careers with Native American students. The *Herald* editorial board meets twice a year with tribal leaders.
- Some newspapers recognize that parts of their communities prefer content in a language other than English. *La Estrella* is produced independently and distributed twice weekly to supplement coverage by the *Star-Telegram* in Fort Worth, Texas. The *San Jose Mercury News* produces *Viet Mercury*, a weekly publication in Vietnamese, and *Nuevo Mundo*, a Spanish-language weekly. The *Californian* in Salinas produces *El Sol*, a Spanish-language weekly.

## DIVERSITY IN STAFFING

### Recruiting

- The *Star-Telegram* in Fort Worth, Texas, is working to "foster a work environment that values diverse opinions and input." Hiring decisions are made by a nine-member committee, which includes four women and two people of color.

■ **FLORIDA TODAY** in Melbourne created a retention and recruitment strategy that includes diversity and named a manager to supervise its efforts.

■ The **El Paso (Texas) Times** has a “grow your own” program that identifies university, community college and high school students with an interest in journalism and places them in part-time journalism roles at the newspaper. As students develop their journalistic skills, they are given additional responsibilities. Once they graduate from college, they are approached about entry-level positions.



■ The **Great Falls (Mont.) Tribune** has a minority-apprentice program in which high school students learn about opportunities in journalism by spending time at the newspaper.

■ The **York (Pa.) Daily Record** uses a technique it calls going “one up” to bring a promising prospect on staff until a position opens. The person either is added to the staff in an extra position or takes on a long-term internship until a permanent position becomes available. The newspaper uses savings from vacancies throughout the year to pay the salary of the extra employee.

■ The **Star-Banner** in Ocala, Fla., and a number of other nominated newspapers participate in the Freedom Forum’s Diversity Institute, which trains diverse mid-career people in journalism. A participant in the inaugural Diversity Institute class now is a reporter covering an area of Ocala where she previously was a circulation district sales manager.

■ The **Commercial Appeal** in Memphis, Tenn., in collaboration with Memphis City Schools and the University of Memphis, created **The Teen Appeal**, a citywide high school newspaper written by students for students. For incoming **Teen Appeal** staff, the newspaper sponsors an annual weeklong journalism camp, which has trained 400 students. Thirty-four

former staff members are majoring in journalism at schools across the country, and seven former staffers have worked at the *Commercial Appeal* as interns.

- The *Star-Telegram* in Fort Worth, Texas, has partnered with a high school that had not had a newspaper in more than three years. Staffers help students write and edit stories, take photos and design the newspaper.
- *FLORIDA TODAY* has a High School Journalism Excellence program, an awards contest and reception, workshops for students and coaching for struggling school-newspaper staffs.
- *The Times* in Shreveport, La., regularly invites high school and college students of color into its newsroom, and *Times* employees serve on the board of the Young Journalists Mentoring Program, which helps develop high school journalists.
- The *Sacramento* (Calif.) *Bee* presents journalism scholarships to minority students. One early scholarship recipient now is an editor at the newspaper.
- *The Bellingham* (Wash.) *Herald* teamed up with Western Washington University's journalism department to create a class devoted to producing a 12-page broadsheet section profiling the Latino community.
- The *Ledger* in Lakeland, Fla., in partnership with *The New York Times* and Regional Newspapers, offers a two-year program for a copy editor of color. College graduates and those with experience are considered, and the opportunity for permanent employment exists after two years.
- *The Press & Sun-Bulletin* in Binghamton, N.Y., participates in the ASNE/APME Fellows program, designed to lure journalists of color to newspapers under 75,000 circulation.

## Internships

- The *Lincoln* (Neb.) *Journal Star* and a number of other nominated newspapers tap Chips Quinn Scholars as interns and has recruited three graduates of the scholarship program for full-time work.
- The Blethen Family Internships for Minority Journalists offer entry-level positions through three intern programs at *Seattle Times Company* newspapers in Washington state and Maine.



- The *Landmark* Scholars program provides minority college sophomores with a scholarship and two summer internships. After graduation, scholars are offered a one-year internship at a Landmark newspaper and the possibility for continuing employment.
- The *Record-Journal* in Meriden, Conn., recruits at local high schools and colleges and links the opportunity of full-time employment at the newspaper to its minority internships and scholarships. Five current staffers joined the newspaper as a result of the internship program.
- The *Star-Banner* in Ocala, Fla., has developed a strong relationship with its local community college, offering workshops and critique sessions for students. The newspaper has a standing paid internship for a student of color from the school.

## Staff Development and Retention

- The *Seattle Times* offers a fellows program, which provides mid-career, inter-departmental development opportunities, principally for minority employees.
- The *Star-Telegram* in Fort Worth, Texas, launched a company strategy to identify strengths and talents, “making us better able to provide opportunities for minority journalists in the newsroom to use and develop their skills.”
- The *Record-Journal* in Meriden, Conn., offers flexible work arrangements for employees pursuing formal education related to journalism. Two journalists of color have taken advantage of flextime to attend college and do graduate work.
- The *Roanoke* (Va.) *Times*’ Diversity Committee created “Diversity Alert,” in which newsroom employees can relay a concern or a comment about diversity issues.
- *The Times* in Shreveport, La., includes a discussion of diversity in all employee training sessions. It also created a Newsroom Leadership Development program, a yearlong series of classes for emerging newsroom leaders, and ensured that there was diversity among participants.
- The *Press & Sun-Bulletin* in Binghamton, N.Y., hosted in-house workshops to raise the staff’s awareness of issues in the African-American community.

- The *Yakima* (Wash.) *Herald-Republic* offers in-house Spanish-language classes to all employees, and the *Greeley* (Colo.) *Tribune* arranged with a local community college to offer free Spanish classes for employees. *Californian* Managing Editor Scott Faust in Salinas, who also supervises a Spanish-language publication, is studying Spanish at a local community college so “he can be both a better content editor and a community spokesman on behalf of the paper.”
- Individual editors – including Richard Kipling, editor of the Orange County edition of the *Los Angeles Times*; Merv Aubespin, retired associate editor of *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Ky.; and Mark Russell, assistant managing editor/metro of *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland – take a leadership role in serving as mentors to young journalists of color.

## Diversity Committees

Diversity committees are at the heart of many newsrooms’ diversity practices.

- At *The Ledger* in Lakeland, Fla., the newspaper’s nine-member diversity committee has created a source list of minorities in the community, coordinated participation in the ASNE/APME Timeouts for Diversity, discussed the newspaper’s use of certain terms and added information on people who speak foreign languages and use sign language to the in-house phone list to better serve customers. The committee also sponsors a monthly Diversity Award.
- At the *Press & Sun-Bulletin* in Binghamton, N.Y., the diversity committee encouraged the newspaper to produce an annual diversity tab, “Who Are We?” The newspaper reached out to schools and children to produce the 2002 tab, which focused on changing families.

## Additional Freedom Forum initiatives that encourage newsroom diversity

- American Indian Journalism Institute
- ASNE/APME Fellows
- Chips Quinn Scholars
- Diversity Directory
- Diversity Institute
- Mid-level editor training
- Native American Newspaper Career Conference

To find out how you can participate, visit [www.freedomforum.org/diversity](http://www.freedomforum.org/diversity).

Or contact us at [partnerships@freedomforum.org](mailto:partnerships@freedomforum.org); 703/284-3932.

## Other Robert G. McGruder Award nominees

### Over-50,000 circulation

Derek Osenenko, executive editor, *FLORIDA TODAY*, Melbourne

*Fort Worth* (Texas) *Star-Telegram*

Hearst Newspapers Journalism Fellowship Program Steering Committee

Kathleen Rutledge, editor, *Lincoln* (Neb.) *Journal Star*

Richard Kipling, editor of the Orange County edition of the *Los Angeles Times*

Rick Jensen, executive editor, and Gary Graham, managing editor, *Press & Sun-Bulletin*, Binghamton, N.Y.

*The Buffalo* (N.Y.) *News*

*The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tenn.

Merv Aubespain, retired associate editor/development, *The Courier-Journal*, Louisville, Ky.

Diversity Committee, *The Ledger*, Lakeland, Fla.

*The Morning Call*, Allentown, Pa.

Mark Russell, assistant managing editor/metro, *The Plain Dealer*, Cleveland

Lawrence Young, managing editor of *The Press-Enterprise*, Riverside, Calif. (deceased)

*The Roanoke* (Va.) *Times*

Rick Rodriguez, executive editor, *The Sacramento* (Calif.) *Bee*

Judy Pace Christie, editor, *The Times*, Shreveport, La.

### Under-50,000 circulation

*Ocala* (Fla.) *Star-Banner*

*Poughkeepsie* (N.Y.) *Journal*

*Record-Journal*, Meriden, Conn.

Evan Miller, managing editor, *The Bellingham* (Wash.) *Herald*

Scott Faust, managing editor, *The Californian*, Salinas

*The Greeley* (Colo.) *Tribune*

Randolph Brandt, editor, *The Journal Times*, Racine, Wis.

Sarah Jenkins and Bob Crider, *Yakima* (Wash.) *Herald-Republic*

*York* (Pa.) *Daily Record*

The Freedom Forum, based in Arlington, Va., is a nonpartisan foundation dedicated to free press, free speech and free spirit for all people. The foundation focuses on three main priorities: the Newseum, First Amendment issues and newsroom diversity.

The Freedom Forum funds two independent affiliates – the Newseum, the interactive museum of news being planned for Washington, D.C.; and the First Amendment Center, with offices at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., and in Arlington.

The Freedom Forum was established in 1991 under the direction of Founder Allen H. Neuharth as successor to a foundation started in 1935 by newspaper publisher Frank E. Gannett. The Freedom Forum is not affiliated with Gannett Co. Its work is supported by income from an endowment of diversified assets.



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