



National Newspaper Association
309 S Providence Rd
Columbia, MO 65203
573.777.4980 Fax: 573.777.4985

**Emma C. McKinney Memorial Award
2014
NNA Checklist**

Nominee Name: Connie Wagner

Newspaper Name & Location: The N'West Iowa REVIEW, Sheldon, IA

Nominated by: Peter W. Wagner

NNA Membership Information: Member through 4/30/2015; verified 5/12/2014

Year Nominated/Last Year Eligible for Award: 2014/2016

Completed Nomination Form?: Yes

Completed Nomination Letter?: Yes

Documentation Supporting Nomination Criteria to Support the Areas Below? - Yes

- Professional Achievement
- Community Leadership and Service
- NNA/National Involvement

Biographical Sketch of Nominee?: Yes

Three Letters of Reference?: Yes: 4: Ken Fuson, Gretchen Bartelson, Bob Eschliman, Amy Duncan

Photo Included?: Yes

Emma C. McKinney Award

2014 Nomination Form

Nominee Name Connie Wagner

Position Co-Founder and Co-Publisher

NNA Member in Good Standing?

Newspaper The N'West Iowa REVIEW

Address PO Box 160

City, State Zip Sheldon, IA 51201

Phone 712-324-5347 Fax

E-mail cwagner@iowainformation.com

Nominator's Name Peter W. Wagner

Position Co-Publisher

Affiliation The N'West Iowa REVIEW

Address PO Box 160

City, State Zip Sheldon, IA 51201

Phone 712-324-5347 Fax

E-mail pww@iowainformation.com

Professional Achievement: Describe the nominee's professional background, achievements, awards, and activities, which illustrate how the nominee exemplifies the best in journalism and serves as an inspiration to others. (Overall career achievement summary).

See attached _____

Community Leadership and Service: Describe how the nominee is an advocate for his/her community; how he/she serves the community on a local, state and/or regional level. Provide specific examples of projects in areas of community service, and outcome. (Highlight nominee's leadership and service in her community – outside as well as within their newspaper... describing community projects instigated by the newspaper and/or nominee).

See attached _____

NNA/National Involvement: Recognizing that a nominee may have moved beyond local or state involvement to a broader level, include service to NNA and other regional/national/international service organizations or causes in which the nominee has been involved. Evidence of NNA service required. (e.g. serving on NNA board; NNA committee; serving as NNA state chair, regularly attending NNA conferences, active in communicating with elected officials on issues championed by NNA....)

See attached _____

Please return (1) this form and (2) letter of nomination by May 1, 2014 to:

McKinney Award
National Newspaper Association
PO Box 7540
Columbia, MO 65205-7540



NOTE: If your nominee is among the top five candidates selected by the judges, you will be contacted and asked to submit the following documents: (1) Three [3] letters to support the nomination from community leaders and/or professional peers; (2) Documentation to support nomination criteria; (3) Biographical sketch of nominee; (4) Photo (if available).

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

The Honorable Nominating Committee
The Emma C. McKinney Memorial Award
The National Newspaper Association

Please consider this nomination for Connie Wagner, co-founder and co-publisher of The N'West Iowa REVIEW, Sheldon, Iowa, for the Emma C. McKinney Memorial Award.

Under her leadership, sometimes working 18 hours a day, The REVIEW grew from three paid subscribers the first week into the largest paid circulation publication, weekly or daily – 6,400 circulation – in the seven county area.

Connie has done it all. She has served as a reporter, ad sales person, hand's-on advertising layout, page layout, the women's section editor and for the last 20 years as the paper's most admired columnist.

To put it bluntly, without her vision and support there wouldn't be a REVIEW. But don't take my word for it. Here are some letters of support from other Iowa journalists and community leaders.

Respectively submitted,
Peter W. Wagner
Co-Publisher
The N'West Iowa REVIEW
Sheldon, Iowa 51249
pww@iowainformation.com

BIO

Connie Wagner was born in Yankton, SD. She began her media career at WNAX 5-State Radio located in that community. While there she met and eventually married her husband Peter W. Wagner.

In 1962 Connie and Peter founded their first publication, The Golden Shopper. Over the past 52 years the paper has grown from a 3,000 circulation local advertising publication serving the community of Sibley to an 18,000 regional shopper covering the majority of four counties.

In 1972 Connie, now the mother of two sons, joined Peter in founding the N'West Iowa REVIEW. The first issue was delivered to 3 paid subscribers and 4,997 sample homes. Over the past 40 plus years The REVIEW has won over 250 Iowa Press Association and National Newspaper Association awards of journalist excellence including Best Newspaper in Iowa (weekly or daily) 17 times and NNA General Excellence in its class at least 20 times. Today the newspaper at 6,600 is the largest paid circulation publication in the adjoining 12 counties.

During her career Connie has served in almost every area of community publishing: reporter, editor, favored columnist, ad sales person, advertising designer, accounting manager, creative director, circulation manager and co-publisher. When her two sons were still in grade school she would regularly drive the two of them to a different far away game so Jeff, the oldest, could take game pictures and Jay, the youngest, gather information for the game story.

Connie has served on a number of NNA committees including convention planning and foundation fund raising. She attended over a dozen NNA conventions and help represent NNA at more than a hundred various state press association meetings and conventions.

Along with her daughter-in-law, Myrna, Connie is fifty-percent owner of White Wolf Web, a regional printing facility that prints over 50 community papers in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota each week. She has served as president since the plants founding over 20 years ago. When the firm's facility was burned to the ground by an arsonist last June she and her daughter-in-law dug in their heels and built an entirely new plant. The new operation, which goes into production in late June, is upgrading from a 13 unit Harris to 6 Harris Heidelberg Mercury four high towers with two folders.

This past February Connie was presented the state association's Distinguished Service Award by the Iowa Newspaper Association.

Ask Connie what she thinks was her greatest accomplishment during her years in the newspaper industry and she'll tell you it is her two sons. Jeff, the oldest, oversees the daily operations of both the family owned Iowa Information (which publishes 13 publications on a regular schedule) and White Wolf Web Offset Printers. Jay, who moved on to positions with the Sioux Falls Argus-Leader and the Des Moines Register died of cancer five years ago.

But Connie is more than just a newspaper publisher. She is also an individual committed to her community – a community that covers four counties. For extensive details regarding her many community activities I recommend you read the supportive letters from the individuals below.

Respectively,

Peter W. Wagner

The N'West Iowa REVIEW

From Ken Fuson, former Des Moines, IA, Register reporter and educator

Many of you remember Jay Wagner. I believe he is the only person to have won the Young Journalist Award and the INA's Distinguished Service Award.

Before Jay died, I conducted a series of interviews with him. We talked about many things, including his love of Iowa, newspapers and the State Fair.

We also talked about the N'West Iowa REVIEW in Sheldon, the newspaper owned by his parents. I thought it was incredible that such a small, weekly newspaper could routinely be named Iowa Newspaper of the Year and compete well in other regional and national contests.

"What was the secret?" I asked Jay.

"It's my Mom," he replied. "She has never received the credit she deserves for the quality of our newspapers."

This seems a great time to rectify that and award Connie Wagner NNA's McKinney Award.

Peter and Connie Wagner have had a true partnership when it comes to the newspaper company. Connie has played a pivotal behind-the-scenes role in every single department, from helping to write stories to making sure the papers were delivered on time.

During all of this, Jay told me, she insisted on maintaining the REVIEW's high standards. It would have been easy in a small town with almost no competition to slide by; she wouldn't allow it. The results speak for themselves: The Review now holds the highest paid circulation of any weekly in the state. It continues to perform well in state, regional and national contests.

I know that were he alive, Jay would be writing this nomination letter for Connie – not because she was his mother, but because she represented everything that he held dear about Iowa and newspapers.

It's always a great moment at the annual convention when NNA rewards excellence. Connie Wagner has been a mostly quiet participant in one of Iowa's great journalism success stories. I believe this would be a great time to recognize her achievements, and it's an honor to nominate her for the McKinney Award.

Sincerely,
Ken Fuson
Des Moines, Ia. 50312

From Gretchen Bartelson, Northwest Iowa Community College

Dear NNA Committee Members,

It is with great pleasure that I am writing to nominate Connie Wagner for the NNA McKinney Award, an honor that she richly deserves. The challenge will be to document the respect that Wagner has earned in a letter rather than a major tabloid section in one of the excellent papers she and her husband publish. While I am writing the letter, I have sought comments from others who have known and benefited from her generous spirit. And so, let's begin the challenge of condensing the contributions of the warm, caring friend and colleague into a single letter of nomination.

In order to make this nomination as concise as possible, and yet thorough, it has been divided into spheres of influence. Hopefully it will be possible for you to gain a sense of the breadth of her commitment to serving others. As you will see, she has committed time, passion, her home, economic resources, talents, and enthusiasm to many people and is richly deserving of this award. Northwest Iowa is a better place to live, work and raise our families because of Connie Wagner.

Northwest Iowa Community College

Community Colleges thrive when they are supported by the communities they serve. Connie Wagner has worked closely with Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) for several decades. According to NCC President, Dr. Alethea Stubbe, *"NCC is honored that Connie Wagner puts so much of her time and effort into supporting our students, and our college. We have all benefited from her creativity and her generosity."*

Currently Wagner is on her third term as a member of the NCC Foundation Board of Trustees. As a board member she has helped to organize fund-raisers, and has held more than one special event in her home. She provides leadership on committees, and assists with Foundation fund-raising activities. Her creativity and hard work have greatly enhanced Foundation efforts to support the students of NCC.

Wagner donates her expertise to the publication of NCC products in the N'WEST Iowa Review, area mailings and specialty publications. Her expert eye for layout and design enhance the efforts of the College publications staff.

She also works on two major events at the College that are not part of the Foundation, but are joint efforts between NCC and area businesses. The first is the All-Academic Team which recognizes the best and brightest graduates from area high schools. The second is the "20 Under 40" event which honors 20 young adult leaders in our communities under the age of 40. Each of the activities are evidence of her support in recognizing the hard work and talents of others.

Business Communities of Northwest Iowa

The Wagners have been strong supporters of the business communities in the towns that their newspapers serve. Connie has attended more than one Chamber of Commerce meeting in more than 50 years of publishing. One thing that many people value in Connie is her creativity in helping promote small town business and life. It is more than advertising when Connie joins a community development group; it is about the particular needs of the businesses and the friendships she engenders.

First Presbyterian Church, Sibley Iowa

From the first time that I met Connie Wagner it was evident that she was committed to her faith and to the church. Every congregation yearns for the type of leadership she delivers. She is truly a servant leader. Currently she and Peter attend Sibley First Presbyterian Church. ***“I know if I ask Connie to do something, she will come through and I don’t have to worry about it. That is a quality very hard to beat. She is very faithful, very committed”*** said her pastor Terry Simm.

Currently Connie is serving on her second three-year term on the Session.

Has been the president/chair of the Christian Fellowship couples Group.

Served multiple times on the Mission and Nurture committee.

Is involved in attending and leading women’s circles and Bible study groups.

Delivers Meals on Wheels for the church.

Served on past pastoral nomination committees.

Is a tireless worker at all church functions, benefiting all with her exceptional skills as a hostess and cook.

Republican Party of Iowa

No matter which political persuasion you hold, any party would be delighted to have Connie supporting their efforts. She is a true supporter, no matter the outcome of any election. Fellow Republican Cindy Kemp said, ***“Connie has been a loyal, tireless member of the Osceola County Republican Central Committee for many years. She has not only attended and participated in every meeting, caucus and event including many district and state conventions, but has hosted countless county meetings and candidate fundraisers in her home”***.

Member of the Osceola County Central Committee for many years.

Organizer and host of many Republican rallies and get-togethers.

Served as a delegate to Iowa State Republican convention.

Encourages voter registration and voting on all elections, and supports local voting initiatives.

Other Community Influence

I would now like to gather together a loose association of other community service activities. Connie does not know how to tell her friends no – and for that we are very grateful. Small towns rely on volunteer labor to accomplish all kinds of activities and events. Where would any of us be without the friend that always says yes, and then helps to celebrate our successes?

Off-Off Broadway is the name of the local dinner theater group that has been in existence since the 1970’s. Connie has contributed her ‘quiet’ talents to the group by being on the executive committee and as the secretary of the group. Not an on-stage sort of person, she nonetheless has made it possible for many productions to delight theater goers through the years by working tirelessly backstage.

30 years ago Connie’s husband helped initiate the “Osceola County Good Friday Passion Play”. When I became the director 25 years ago I turned to Connie for help with the publicity for the event. Every Good Friday the churches in the county come together to produce the play and more than 1,500 people attend. Connie helped us to develop the publicity in those early years, and continues to support our efforts in that area.

Connie has written a newspaper column for many years, and don’t tell the rest of the editorial staff, but it is the general favorite. She has a delightful way of celebrating all

the joys and sorrows of small towns. Anything that her friends, family, neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances do to promote the welfare of the area, are celebrated in the words she puts on paper each week. I know she has had often wanted to quit, but the clamor for more keeps her at her computer each week! Not many columnists have that legacy. Her friend and neighbor Lois Van Diepen said, ***“She shares os much of herself through her column that when we gofor coffeeor shopping someone will often comment on how much her column has meant to them. She has an impact onothers through her writing.”***_

Personal Note

On a more personal note, I would like to add that Connie is a great friend. She has supported me personally and professionally. ‘Wags’ is one of those rare people who are always there to rejoice when you rejoice, and to cry when you need to cry. Although our busy lives often take us to opposite ends of the globe, and time may pass between meetings, she would go to the end of the world to support the people she loves. I am privileged to be one of those people.

I sincerely hope you are able to present this award to Connie Wagner, I think you will agree that she is very deserving.

Gretchen Bartelson
Dean of the Center for Teaching and Learning Northwest Iowa Community College
Sheldon, Iowa 51201
gbartelson@nwicc.edu

From Bob Eschliman, a former employee

Newton Daily News

200 First Ave. E. • P.O. Box 967 • Newton, IA 50208 • p: (641) 792-3121 • f: (641) 791-7104

Bob Eschliman
Editor
Newton Daily News
Jasper County Tribune
P.O. Box 967
Newton, IA 50208

Distinguished Service Award
Nominating Committee
National Newspaper Association

Committee Members:

I'm writing to you today to support the nomination of Connie Wagner to receive the McKinney Award. I've known Connie and the entire Wagner family for more than 10 years, and I know of few people more supportive of the mission of NNA and newspapers.

I've had the privilege of working for many fine newspapers over the course of my nearly 15-year career. Arguably the finest among them is the N'West Iowa REVIEW in Sheldon. Frequently, the newspaper is lauded for its content, its overall appearance, and for the many award-winning journalists who have worked there.

Peter Wagner, his sons Jeff and Jay, and editor Jeff Grant have been given much of the credit for The REVIEW's success over the years. And, I think every one of them has earned that credit. But, I also think we should recognize the important role Connie Wagner has played in the paper's success over the years.

Creative/composition departments play a tremendous role at successful newspapers. No newspaper can long survive without serving its advertisers as well as its readers. Conveying the advertisers' messages to the readers is how newspapers generate the revenue they need to keep operating.

How they convey that message, however, is what will keep their advertisers coming back.

In Sheldon, the responsibility for ensuring every advertiser's message is conveyed most effectively has fallen upon Connie and her department. Connie's philosophy, which she has passed on to the graphic designers who work for her, is that every ad gets the same attention.

A 2x2 ad is just as much a masterpiece as a 3x10 or full-page ad. As a result, the ads her department creates, and how they are packaged, are the envy of many Iowa newspapers. But, it's hardly a trade secret that Connie keeps hidden in a vault.

No, just as The REVIEW frequently shares its editorial and revenue-generating special section ideas with anyone who asks, Connie and her staff also share the tricks and tips of their creative efforts. All you ever have to do is ask.

The goal is simple: "raise the bar" of journalism, not just in N'West Iowa, but for all community newspapers.

2
But that's not all Connie does for The REVIEW. She also writes a weekly column, which I believe is the paper's most popular. It is through her column that you see N'West Iowa as she sees it, and you soon understand why she loves it so much.

When new journalists come to work for me, and express an interest in writing columns, I often turn to a few copies of The REVIEW and show them Connie's column as an example of how to write with impact without alienating some readers and "preaching to the choir" to the rest.

Connie may have come to N'West Iowa with Peter because of the radio business. But, together, they have stayed and made a tremendous impact because of the newspaper business.

Peter has been well rewarded by the NNA for his impact. Now, I think it's high time we recognize Connie's, as well.

Bob Eschliman
Editor
Newton Daily News
Jasper County Tribune
(641) 792-3121, ext. 423
beschliman@newtondailynews.com

From Amy Duncan, another Iowa publisher

To Whom It May Concern:

When I first started going to Iowa Newspaper Association events almost 30 years ago, it was easy to miss Connie Wagner. Her husband, Peter, and sons, Jay and Jeff, were the outgoing, chatty ones. Connie was quieter and tended to stay in the background. But when I went to visit to the N'West Iowa Review to write about the paper's position as one of the best papers in the state for a master's thesis, it was easy to realize how wrong that impression was.

Connie may have been quiet, but she was a quiet power in that newspaper office, and I suspect still is today. Connie ran the composing department at the time, but that was far from her only job. It was clear during my visit that she was an integral part of running the newspaper, whether it was keeping an eye on what was happening in news, helping out in the front office or working with designers to make sure advertisers were kept happy.

As I visited with staff and family members, it became clear that the Review could not have existed without Connie. Peter perhaps had the big ideas, Connie provided the foundation to make them real.

Over the years after that visit, I read Connie's column each week and was struck by how often she spoke up and told the story of community organizations and groups that needed to be higher on the community's radar. Connie was the voice of the Review, and still is in many ways.

Connie Wagner has served her newspaper, the industry and her community greatly. She is deserving of Emma C. McKinney Award.

Sincerely,
Amy Duncan
Publisher
The Record-Herald and Indianola Tribune

