

SEE PAGE 6



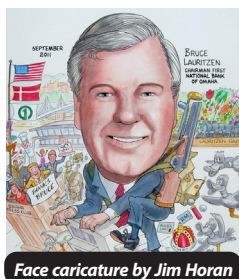
SEE PAGE 6

*Was 130th Face on Barroom Floor in 2011*

## Legendary OPC supporter, Bruce Lauritzen, dies at age 80

**By Tom O'Connor**  
Communications Committee

**W**ith the Omaha Press Club located on the 22nd floor of the original First National Bank of Omaha Tower for more than 50 years, it should come as no surprise that one of the club's biggest supporters was Bruce Lauritzen, the legendary banker and community leader who died Feb. 21 at the age of 80.



Face caricature by Jim Horan

Steve Villamonte, executive director of the OPC, remembered Lauritzen fondly.

"Bruce did not dine often at the OPC restaurant, but he and his son, Clark, definitely supported the club. About two or three times a week, Bruce would order a turkey sandwich on wheat bread with lettuce, tomatoes and Swiss cheese, light mayonnaise and a side of fruit.

"Michael Fryer would deliver the meal to the kitchen on Lauritzen's floor on the new First National Bank Tower. Bruce would go into the kitchen and ask Michael how things were going – Michael called it 'chit chat.'"

Villamonte said Lauritzen was "humble and genuine" and his incredible support of the OPC during the COVID pandemic was key in allowing the club to survive.

"When COVID hit the restaurant, we had to close for months," Villamonte said. "When we did open, we had no sales. We did not pay rent for several months, but First National continued paying dues for its employees. This allowed both Christine and I to continue collecting a salary.

"At the time, Christine and I were offered a great deal on taking over a country club with the opportunity to purchase the club at a great price. After all the bank had done for us during these difficult times, there was no way our moral conscience would allow us to take the deal.

"In the end, the bank waived rent for all the months we were delinquent. Christine and I were both in tears when we learned the bank was going to continue paying its dues and not charge us for rent."

In 2011 – the 40th anniversary of the OPC atop the First National Bank – Lauritzen was a fitting honoree as the 130th Face on the Barroom Floor.

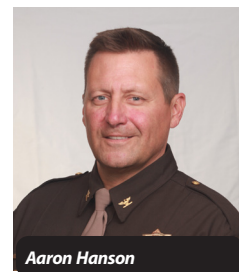
Attorney Woody Bradford, a longtime friend of both Lauritzen and the Press Club, was emcee for the roast.

*Continue on Page 5*

## Sheriff Hanson will address March Forum

**By Gary Willis**  
Communications Committee

**A**aron Hanson served 26 years in the Omaha Police Department. Now he has completed his first year as Douglas County sheriff, commanding more than 250 employees in Nebraska's most populous county.



Aaron Hanson

What has Hanson learned about the county, its nearly 600,000 residents and an unincorporated population of 90,000 for which his office has primary law-enforcement responsibilities? He'll present his impressions at the March 21 Noon Forum.

In 1996, at age 22, Hanson was sworn in as an Omaha police officer. During his career in the OPD, he served as a patrol officer and police service dog handler before being promoted to sergeant in 2014.

As a supervisor, Hanson was assigned to the Uniform Patrol Bureau's Northeast Precinct, the Criminal Investigations Bureau, and Special Operations Division supervisor of the North Gang Suppression Squad. Hanson is currently a member of the State of Nebraska's Sentencing Reform Task Force.

*Continue on Page 5*

## All OPC members invited to New Member Reception on March 7

**A**ll members of the Omaha Press Club are invited to a New Member Reception at the club on March 7. While the event is designed to help new members learn more about the Press Club and how to be more involved, it is open to all OPC members.

The event is Thursday, March 7 from 4:30-6 p.m. The cost is \$10, which includes hors d'oeuvres, a drink ticket, and a raffle ticket. Social time and networking will be

from 4:30 to 5 p.m. The presentation and raffle drawing will begin at 5 p.m.

OPC committee chairs will introduce their committees and provide an overview of how to get involved in their committees. Members can also network with other OPC members and board members.

The raffle ticket will give attendees a chance to win a \$50 Omaha Press Club gift card. Registered attendees who check in prior to the raffle drawing will be eligible to win.

The drawing will be held between 5 and 5:15 p.m., and ticket holders must be present to win.

Reservations for the reception can be made online at the OPC website or by calling 402-345-8008. If reserving online, choose "Make an Event Reservation" and then select "March 7 New Member Reception (\$10)" from the "Event Name" menu.

Questions about the event? Email Hunter Samuels at [hsamuels@rmhcomaha.org](mailto:hsamuels@rmhcomaha.org).

# OPC in 2024 seeking to build on 2023's successes

By Gary Willis  
Communications Committee

Officers were elected for 2024, club operations were reviewed for 2023 and Steve Villamonte provided an excellent assortment of hors d'oeuvres enjoyed by everyone who attended the Omaha Press Club Annual Meeting on Jan. 25.

## Outgoing President Angella Arndt

Angella expressed her thanks for the opportunity to serve as president this past year. She was thankful for the mentorship, support and friendship of so many others who contributed to the success of the Omaha Press Club.

Angella said because of the tireless dedication and commitment of those who serve on the board and committees, volunteers and OPC staff, the club has celebrated many special moments, endured some hardships, and continued to thrive as an organization. She said our board and committees continued to work on several important projects, including strategic planning, website redesign, and updating membership and marketing materials. We also hosted a New Member Welcome Reception to raise awareness about the club's activities and committees.

During the past year, the club hosted five Face on the Barroom Floor dinners, eight Noon Forums, special events, holiday celebrations, and many private events. Angella gave thanks to the volunteers and OPC staff for their hard work behind the scenes, and special thanks to Steve, Christine, Michael, Ron and Bill for their tireless devotion and service to the club.

## Education Dr. Robert Meyers

The Education Committee was pleased with the programs that were presented last year and are appreciative of the relationship with KIOS-FM 91.5 as it continues to record and replay our events.

The committee meets on a regularly scheduled first Thursday of the month. In 2023, the committee continued to provide informational learning presentations for nine months of the year.

The Noon Forum programs began in February, due to the annual club closing in January, with an outstanding presentation by Jeff Koterba. Jeff is the Press Club's "Face on the Barroom Floor" caricature artist.

April featured Nebraska's astronaut, Clayton Anderson, who spoke about his space experience and his role as CEO of the SAC Museum. In May we welcomed representatives of Omaha's newest Sister City, Carlentini, Sicily, and June brought a discussion of the latest in online newsgathering featuring the Flatwater Free Press and the Nebraska Examiner.

UNO's radio station, KVNO-FM, was featured in July, with Sherry Kennedy Brownrigg sharing information about Classical Music Radio and KVNO's approach to the genre. September's forum presented Dr. Michael Forsberg, who spoke and shared his conservation photographs.

October's presentation was by Eileen Wirth, speaking about her book, "The Women Who Built Omaha." November's



Outgoing President Angella Arndt and Past President Hunter Samuels. Photo by Kurt Keeler.

presentation featured Wendy Townley, CEO of the Omaha Library Foundation, who gave an update on Omaha's new library.

There were no Noon Forums in August or December, and March's scheduled forum featuring the Project Harmony staff was postponed to April 2024.

Plans for 2024 forums include Douglas County Assessor Walt Pepper, President and CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Heath Mello, Douglas County Sheriff Aaron Hanson, Project Harmony, and award-winning blues artist Hector Anchondo.

Members of the Education Committee are Angella Arndt, Bob Coate, Rod Howe, Gary Kerr, Joshua Labure, Jeremy Maskel, Mike McKnight, Bob Meyers, Gary Willis, Connie Winkler, and our newest member, John Wyvill.

The Education Committee is composed of dedicated members who work hard to find topics of interest for Press Club members and the public at large.

## Marketing/Membership Bridget Weide Brooks

The Marketing and Membership Committee tackles a variety of wide-ranging tasks throughout the year to support the club.

The top priorities for 2023 were helping to organize and execute the 2023 Hall of Fame event Sept. 9, inducting seven new members. The committee also provides hospitality for OPC events, all five Faces on the Barroom Floor as well as for the Hall of Fame. The committee also held the first new member welcome event in August and has another one scheduled in March. It was a great opportunity for new members to network and learn more about opportunities to get involved in the Press Club.

The top priorities for 2024:

- Working with the past president, Angella Arndt, to execute the 2024 Hall of Fame event scheduled for Saturday, June 8.
- New member onboarding. A continued priority for 2024 is to get more people involved with events, committees, and the board of directors is essential, and getting new members engaged early on can contribute to this process.
- Membership materials and website updates. A new member online membership application form has been created for the website. The committee will take accountability for ensuring the website is updated in 2024, working in conjunction with the Communications Committee and Steve.

A thank-you went out to the committee members: Angella Arndt, Allen Beermann, Roger Humphries, Dr. Robert Meyers, Hunter Samuels, and Gary Willis, plus new members Danielle Jensen and Tali Washburn, plus Mike McKnight and Anne Walsh. An additional thank-you went to members who helped with the hospitality outreach, including Woody Bradford, Gil Cohen, Liz Hruska, Chris Christen, Kurt Keeler, and Marie Meyers.

## Communications Angella Arndt & Gary Willis

The committee meets monthly except July to plan the OPC newsletter. The issue for July/August covers two months. We had to get off our normal meeting schedules a couple of times due to schedule conflicts of members.

Thanks go out to Don Summerside, our

Continue on Page 3

copy editor who compiles all the information, and Sandra Tursi, graphics and layout editor. We are so fortunate to have proof-readers Bridget Weide Brooks, Elaine Allen, Anne Walsh, Hunter Samuels, and Tom O'Connor.

We are also thankful for the committee members, Elaine Allen, Anne Walsh, Hunter Samuels, and Angella Arndt, who faithfully report on club events. Elaine Allen resigned from the committee in May due to her move out of state, but she has still stepped in and wrote articles remotely.

We welcomed Joshua Gear, a new club member who joined the committee. Roger Humphries, Kurt Keeler, and Gary Willis also pitch in to photograph the events. We are still looking for members who are writers to help with all the events we have throughout the year.

The Communications Committee also lends a hand to the OPC Hall of Fame Committee when needed. Todd Andrews for the past three years has done an excellent job as emcee for the Hall of Fame.

Thanks go out to all the committee members, co-chair Angella Arndt, Elaine Allen, Todd Andrews, Bridget Weide Brooks, Jon Brooks, Joshua Gear, Roger Humphries, Tom O'Connor, Hunter Samuels, Sandra Tursi, Don Summerside, and Anne Walsh.

And we can't thank Christine Villamonte enough for lending her support and attending our meetings when she is able.

### Hall of Fame Hunter Samuels

Hunter said it was his honor to chair the Hall of Fame Committee in 2023.

We had a wonderful event on Sept. 9 where we recognized seven new members of the Omaha Press Club Journalists of Excellence Hall of Fame. Those honored: Wally Dean--WOWT, CBS News; Ronald Kaplan--SKAR Advertising Agency; Edward "Buddy" King--Freedom Broadcasting Network, KMTV, KOWH; Todd Lempke--Omaha Magazine; Hugh Reilly--Omaha World-Herald, Boys Town, University of Nebraska Omaha; Robert Reilly--Creighton University, University of Nebraska Omaha; Sue Baggarly Seline--WOWT, Boomer Radio.

It was a well-attended event with around 150 attendees, and plenty of stories told. It was great to see so many media and journalism legends reconnecting and taking photos together.

Hunter thanked everyone on the committee who took part in selecting the honorees, as well as those who nominated folks, and the crew in charge of making the event such

a huge success.

The 2024 event is moving back to its original June timeframe, so the call for Hall of Fame nominees is open and you can submit those nominations on the club website.

### Face on the Barroom Floor Roger Humphries

Roger stated that we had a successful year for Face on the Barroom Floor events. The committee offered five events, which included one in December. It was feared that attendance might falter due to all the seasonal activities, but we pulled it off.

The Faces on the Barroom Floor that were honored in 2024: Steve Lundy, Van Deeb, 311, Clete Blakeman, and Willie and Yolanda Barney. 311 is the first time a band has been honored, thanks to Tom O'Connor.

Roger thanked the Face Committee for its input and support. John Ewing joined the committee and has been a great addition.

Roger also thanked Steve, Christine and the OPC staff for all their hard work in making the Face on the Barroom Floor such a great event for the club and the Omaha community.

The committee is in the process of finalizing the inductees for 2024.

### Strategic Planning Hunter Samuels

Our Strategic Planning Committee met three times in 2023 in May, July and October. The focus of this committee is on big-picture stuff, carrying on with the work done during the board's strategic planning process in 2022, and one of the biggest areas of that work was in regard to new member onboarding.

The staff is really the lifeblood of this club, but we also rely on membership to bring in business, be a part of committees, and handle so many other things crucial to the success of the organization, so we want to make sure every member knows what they have access to here, as well as the different ways to get involved.

To that end, in August, we hosted a new member welcome event where folks who joined the club in the last year-plus had an opportunity to learn about the various committees and get to know existing club members. If you're a new member and you weren't able to make it to that event, or if you joined after August, we'll be hosting another one of these happy hours on March 7.

As we shift our attention to 2024, we're excited to keep working on making the Omaha Press Club a valuable membership for people from all walks of life and making sure all of Omaha knows about it. Part of that is in the launch of our new website, so

be sure to check that out. We'll be getting into a regular habit of updating content so you can find what you need and share what you want when it comes to all things Omaha Press Club.



Incoming President Robert Meyers. Photo by Kurt Keeler.

### Incoming President Dr. Robert Meyers

Dr. Meyers accepted his nomination with pride and humility. Joining this group of leaders is not only humbling, but also a bit scary, he said. He is thankful that the board of directors is composed of a group of dedicated individuals who will shepherd him through the year and provide great support of the tasks that face us in 2024.

He remarked that we are in a time in history when the importance of free press has never been more important. There are those who decry the mainstream media as "fake," politically biased and unethical. There is also the importance of having serious investigative and analytical reporting by well-educated ethical journalists in print and broadcast media.

If we are to remain a functioning democracy, it is essential that a free press continue to present the news and investigate corruption wherever it is found, whether that be in business, the justice system, politics, religion, or in journalism itself.

That is the mission of the Omaha Press Club: "Promoting excellence in communications and media professions through fellowship, education, and advocacy of freedom of information."

The challenges facing journalists today are recognized by Omaha Press Club members and the board of directors, and it is part of our responsibility to help ensure there is a place where journalists know they are respected, and their work appreciated.

Dr. Meyers pledged to do his utmost to represent the club, its mission and its members in a manner that respects the traditions and history of this outstanding organization.



# Chamber's Mello outlines push for more workers in urban core

By Elaine Allen  
Communications Committee

**T**he Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce's new chief executive officer, Heath Mello, spoke to the Omaha Press Club's Educational Forum on Feb. 15 about economic development and the challenges of changing demographics on the region's workforce.

He outlined the details of the chamber's Urban Core Strategic Plan to add 30,000 jobs and increase the number of residents by 30,000. The urban core is the area bordering 48th Street to the west, Leavenworth Street to the south, Cuming Street to the north and, on the eastern boundary, Dodge Park in Council Bluffs.

Several development and reconstruction projects will be key to reaching that goal by 2040, he said, although not all of the projects will be completed by then. He cited three already-announced projects as examples:

- First, complete the streetcar line from downtown to the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus.
- Second, remove the Interstate 480 30th Street exit to Dodge Street and change the traffic flow to develop that green space into a residential and business park.
- Third, lower the elevated I-480 freeway through downtown Omaha and reconfigure it in order to develop more street-level businesses and residential areas.

Mello also touted the chamber's talent attraction and retention initiative: Commitment to Opportunity, Diversity and Equity (CODE). Employers are looking for ways to attract a more diverse workforce because of the changing demographics of a younger and more ethnically and racially diverse population, he said.

During the Q&A portion of the forum,

Mello was asked what the chamber's stance was on the Nebraska Legislature's LB 1330, which would ban Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs in Nebraska's colleges and universities. He said the chamber opposed the bill because of its goals to attract a more diverse workforce.

"In our viewpoint, it's not about political controversy. It's basic math to recruit more black, more brown, and more women" into the region's workforce.

Mello described what he called "the quagmire of economic development" in the eight-county Greater Omaha area: the "brain drain" of young adults who are leaving the state. The chamber will work with its 3,000

member organizations to "focus on attracting primary, high-paying and high-skilled jobs that are driving the economy across the entire region," he told the luncheon audience.

"We simply will not have the talent and the individuals to do the work because they are leaving for other cities" such as Austin, Chicago,

Kansas City and Atlanta.

He highlighted Offutt Air Force Base as a great regional asset that attracts the kind of businesses with jobs that the chamber wants to grow.

Mello was also asked about the chamber's stance on immigration reform. He said the Greater Omaha Area Chamber is partnering with the Lincoln and Nebraska chambers to build a broad coalition of interested stakeholders who want to see some progress on the issue.

"This coalition is not just business," he said, "but includes labor, civil rights, and faith organizations to have a broader, overarching coalition to provide our federal delegation with some options to address the immigration hurdles we're seeing."

Mello invited anyone who is interested in getting the chamber's monthly newsletter by signing up on the Contact Us page: <https://www.omahachamber.org>



Heath Mello. Photo by Gary Willis.



DOUGLAS COUNTY  
ASSESSOR • REGISTER OF DEEDS

## Assessor explains valuation process

By Dr. Robert Meyers  
Education Committee



**W**alt Pepper, Douglas County as-

essor and register of deeds, focused on assessment and the impact of property taxes at the Jan. 25 Noon Forum.

Many property owners in Douglas County have complained about their higher valuations which result in higher property taxes. Pepper told the audience that there are 265,000 parcels to be assessed, and the assessments are done every three years. Assessments are done more frequently if there are many properties sold in an area of the city during a specific time period.

Pepper was asked why assessments are not completed on a yearly basis. He explained that in order to do so, the department would have to assess more than 800 homes a day in order to complete the task.

Pepper further explained that of all the parcels in Douglas County, about 9 percent fall into the agricultural or rural qualification. The percentage is decreasing every year because of new construction of homes.

Pepper also discussed the way property owners can protest the assessment of property. He explained that assessment department personnel will meet with owners to discuss their concerns. Pepper said about 80 percent of those protesting the evaluation of their property obtain some relief. He provided handouts that explained the evaluation process and the protest process.

Pepper holds a Nebraska Professional Real Estate and a Nebraska County Assessor Certificate. He assumed office in January 2023.

Mogens Bay, CEO of Valmont Industries, noted that Lauritzen was royal Danish consul for Nebraska. He said, "That ticks me off that he is the consul, and I am the one with the accent."

Lauritzen's son-in-law, Nate Dodge, president of NP Dodge Management Co., focused his remarks on Lauritzen's legendary inability to perform household chores.

"When Bruce and Kim were newlyweds," Dodge said, "she was mounting a ceiling light in their apartment and asked Bruce to get her a Phillips screwdriver. 'Sure, honey,' Bruce replied. 'But where do the Phillips live?'"

Face artist Jim Horan pictured Lauritzen scaling the First National Tower. Horan joked, "It was how he got to work until he found out that building had elevators." Lauritzen's alpine backpack was depicted overflowing with golf clubs, his favorite shotgun, bank credit cards and the crown he wore as king of Ak-Sar-Ben.

Sculptures of geese from FNBO's Spirit of Nebraska Wilderness Park and Pioneer Courage Park are seen flocking around Lauritzen. In the background are the Lauritzen Gardens.

Next door in the drawing, the original First National Bank Tower is rocking with a Press Club party, a 40th anniversary cake and Executive Director Steve Villamonte is seen waving a "Thanks Bruce" sign.

Bruce Lauritzen was the second family member to be honored as a Face. His father, John, was Face No. 50 in 1992. John Lauritzen and Bruce's uncle, John Davis, were instrumental in the club's opening in 1971.

Under Bruce Lauritzen's direction, First National Bank of Omaha became one of the nation's largest family-owned banks and a major national player in several banking segments, including the credit card business. FNBO's assets exceed more than \$30 billion, and the bank operates in eight states with more than 100 branches.

Downtown Omaha received a huge boost when Lauritzen and FNBO invested hundreds of millions to stay downtown and build Omaha's tallest building, the 45-story First National Tower at 16th and Dodge streets.

The decision to build downtown helped spark a wave of development in Omaha's central business district and along the riverfront. Other key construction projects followed, including the convention center and arena, several performance venues and new parks on the riverfront. Today, Mutual of Omaha is poised to complete Omaha's tallest skyscraper in about two years.

"Bruce had a quiet leader style and friendly manner and was very persuasive," said Bradford, an Omaha attorney who was a friend of Lauritzen since childhood. "I believe he acted not only in the community's best interest, but his customers' best interest."

After earning a master's degree in business from the University of Virginia, Lauritzen joined FNBO in 1967 and was named president in 1987. When his wife, Kimball, became ill in 2000, Lauritzen retired from many of his executive duties at the bank. He remained as chairman of FNBO until 2013 and chairman of the bank's holding company until 2020. In all, he served with the bank for 55 of its 166 years of existence.

In 2001, Lauritzen was named the honorary king of Ak-Sar-Ben. He was inducted into the Omaha Business Hall of Fame in 2004. In 2015, he was named "Midlander of the Year" by the Omaha World-Herald.

Lauritzen and his family have supported a long list of civic and charitable groups in the community. He served on the boards of Ak-Sar-Ben, Creighton University, Heritage Services and the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation. In addition, the Lauritzen family was the lead donors for the \$70 million Lauritzen Outpatient Center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Lauritzen was a past director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Omaha branch, and a past member of the Federal Advisory Council to the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, D.C.

He also was president of the Omaha Development Council and Foundation,

Located on 100 acres at 100 Bancroft St., the Lauritzen Gardens have become one of the premier botanical gardens in the country. The gardens were founded by Lauritzen and are still sustained today by his family and friends.

Kimball Lauritzen died in 2008. She and Bruce had a son, Clark, and two daughters – Meg Lauritzen Dodge and Blair Lauritzen Gogel. Lauritzen also is survived by his second wife, Gerry, whom he married in 2011.



Bruce Lauritzen at his 2011 Face induction.

## Scholarship Brunch is set for April 20

**M**ark your calendar for Saturday, April 20, for the Omaha Press Club Foundation's annual Scholarship Awards Brunch.

The event recognizes more than 20 college sophomores and juniors studying journalism, broadcasting, advertising or public relations. The foundation is awarding \$52,000 in scholarships and grants in 2024.

The brunch begins at 10:30 a.m. at the Press Club. OPC Foundation President Brian Norton and scholarship committee chair Henry Cordes will award the scholarships.

Scholarship recipients and their family members are invited to attend. In addition, OPC members and the general public are also welcome to attend.

The cost is \$30 per person, including tax, tip, and gratuity. (Scholarship recipient registration fees are covered by sponsors.) Call 402-345-8008 for reservations, or RSVP online at <https://bit.ly/opcbrunch2024>.

### The Omaha Press Club Scholarship Awards Brunch

Saturday, April 20, 2024  
10 a.m.

\$30 • Children \$17

Chicken Crepes Supreme  
Fresh Fruit  
Pecan Cinnamon Rolls

### Hanson story; continued from Page 1

Hanson was elected sheriff November 2022 and assumed his duties Jan. 6, 2023. He succeeded Sheriff Tim Dunning, who retired.

Lunch service for the Noon Forum begins at 11:30 a.m. for \$19 per person. The program starts at noon and concludes at 1 p.m. Reservations (requested) are through the [www.omahapressclub.com](http://www.omahapressclub.com) site, upper left corner, or 402-345-8008. Everyone is welcome, including non-OPC members.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

**A**s you have read or heard, our First National Bank landlord and longtime friend, Bruce Lauritzen, recently passed away. All of us at the Omaha Press Club want to express our deepest condolences to the Lauritzen family. There is a lovely article in this newsletter that tells of the love he had for the club and downtown.

I have been with the club for a long time and got to know him a little with his gentle and approachable demeanor. At the funeral, his son, Clark, was very eloquent with stories of his entire life. He will be missed more than words can say. Please read Tom O'Connor's story on Page 1 of this issue.



Christine Villamonte

March seems to be the month to spring forward. New members, please visit us on the 7th for a welcoming reception and a full briefing on the club, and meet some of the board members, longtime friends, and our team.

St. Patrick's Day brunch is on Saturday, March 16. After the downtown parade, we will be here for a dinner buffet from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Green beer is optional.

Bourbon, bourbon and more bourbon will be served on March 22. Come unwind at the Omaha Press Club's Bourbon Tasting and expand your knowledge of the American whiskey. Our favorite sommelier, Mr. Mark, will switch his focus from wine to whiskey and give you up-close knowledge of the distilleries and their background stories. There will be hors d'oeuvres to pair with the sips and the stories.

Easter, March 31st, is earlier than normal.

Every year, the club has three brunches. Easter is one of them (Mother's Day and Santa the other two) with two seatings, 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Why not enjoy this special dress-up day with us? There are dining options for all; see the menu below for a preview.

Noon Forums on the third Thursday of the month present a lively variety of topics and speakers. Our Education Committee has a fascinating schedule in coming months: Douglas County Sheriff Aaron Hanson in March, Project Harmony in April, and in May, Hector Anchondo, Omaha's award-winning blues guitarist.

See you this spring!

– **Christine Villamonte,**  
Restaurant and Events Manager

## WOWT investigative reporter Mike McKnight will be May 4 Face on the Barroom Floor

**M**ike McKnight, longtime reporter at WOWT 6 News, will become the Omaha Press Club's 177th "Face on the Barroom Floor" on May 4.

McKnight has spent more than 47 years reporting at WOWT, including 10 years as State Bureau chief in Lincoln in the 1980s.

The honors and awards have been numerous along the way for McKnight, including Nebraska Associated Press Investigative and General News honors, two regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, the Midwest Broadcasters Association Severeid Award for investigative reporting, and several Nebraska Broadcasters Association Gold Awards. Working most of his career as a one-man band, Mike was also named Nebraska News Photographer of the Year in the mid-90s.

McKnight is also in the Omaha Press Club Hall of Fame and a Distinguished Alumni of Lincoln Northeast High School.

Mike has covered stories from Central America with the Nebraska National Guard during the Contra/Sandinista conflict and re-

ported from Saudi Arabia for Desert Shield/Storm.

He also has covered most of the major news stories in Nebraska and southwest Iowa during the past four and a half decades. They

include reports on all major natural disasters since 1977, such as floods and tornadoes.

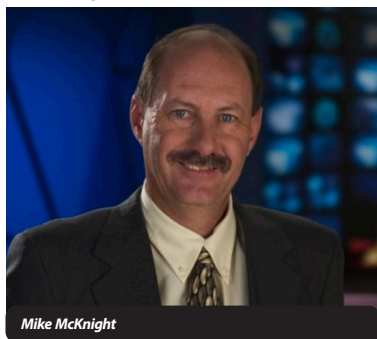
For the past 34 years, Mike's focus has been on "Six On Your Side" reports, exposing scams and rip-offs while helping viewers with issues involving government and business.

He also was part of the Channel Six Sports Husker

football game day coverage team, shooting end zone highlights for 36 seasons. Included were trips to most of the Husker bowl games, including those for national championships.

Mike is a 1976 graduate of the UNL School of Journalism. He and his wife of 37 years, Carla, have two sons, Eric and Brent.

Look for more details, including the list of roasters, in the April newsletter.



Mike McKnight

### Face on the Barroom Floor Mike McKnight

**Saturday, May 4, 2024**

**Members \$90 • Non-Members \$100**

**5:30 p.m. social, no-host bar**

**6:30 p.m. dinner**

#### *Hors d'oeuvres*

Buffalo Chix Bites  
Assorted Carpaccio

#### *Salad*

OPC Thunderbird

#### *Dual Entrée*

OPC Signature Filet Maitre D Butter  
Breast of Chicken with  
Gorgonzola Hollandaise  
Garlic Buttered Asparagus

#### *Dessert*

OPC's Signature Chocolate  
Mousse Framboise

# Project Harmony will headline April 18 Forum

By **Angella Arndt**  
Communications Committee

A team from Project Harmony will speak at the OPC Noon Forum on April 18. Opened in Omaha in 1996, the child advocacy center's mission is to end child abuse and neglect.

Law enforcement, medical professionals, and social services work collaboratively in one location, communicating and coordinating care as a team. Project Harmony provides response, prevention, and early intervention services. The organization annually serves more than 9,000 children in the community.

The Forum presentation will focus on Project Harmony's missing youth and anti-trafficking programs. The Omaha Police

Department's Missing Person Unit collaborates with Project Harmony to identify youth at risk of being sex trafficked. The unit takes preventive steps to reduce high-risk behavior that leads to trafficking and assists those being trafficked so they may get out.

Project Harmony's Anti-Trafficking Youth Services Program identifies and serves high-risk youth and youth survivors of sex trafficking.

Three speakers will participate in the forum:

- Angella Roeber, senior director of communications, has more than 18 years of marketing and communications experience, primarily in the nonprofit industry. She plays an integral role in planning, directing, and coordinating the organization's marketing and communication efforts.

- Sgt. Brett Schrage, Omaha Police Department-Missing Person Unit, is a 13-year OPD veteran. His unit oversees missing person investigations and juvenile sex trafficking cases.

- Taylor Newton, program manager of Anti-Trafficking Youth Services, has been with Project Harmony for six years and helped establish the program he manages.

Lunch service for the Noon Forum begins at 11:30 a.m. for \$19 per person. The program starts at noon and concludes at 1 p.m. Call 402-345-8008 for reservations. Or go the OPC website, top right side RSVP tab. Reservations must include an OPC member number or credit card. Non-members are welcome.

## Wine Dinner showcases seafood

By **Angella Arndt**  
Communications Committee

Approximately 30 guests attended the Winemaker's Dinner on Feb. 9. The elegant five-course dinner showcased seafood.



Sommelier Mark Surprenant and Angella Arndt.

Diners began their culinary journey with Prosecco, smoked salmon, and shrimp cocktail. Next, a creamy shrimp artichoke spinach dip was served with lavash. The salad course featured the classic Thunderbird salad with garlic-sauteed scallops, a delightful twist.

The Monterey-encrusted, garlic-buttered salmon with risotto and julienned bell peppers created a delectable melody of flavors. A French chocolate mousse with fresh fruit topped a memorable meal.

Mark Surprenant, sommelier, highlighted white wines that complemented the seafood dishes. And speaking of wine, Mark introduced a new wine list. Club patrons may enjoy wine by the glass and purchase their favorite selections.

Thank you to Steve, Christine and the OPC staff for providing an enjoyable and delectable evening.

**PHONE 402-345-8008 FOR RESERVATIONS**

### St Patrick's Day Buffet

Saturday, March 16, 2024

4 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Members \$22

#### All-You-Can-Eat Buffet

Fresh Corned Beef

Boiled Cabbage

Irish New Potatoes

Dark Rye Bread & Butter

#### Dessert

Frosted Brownie

#### Beverage

\$2 Green Beer

### Easter Buffet

Sunday, March 31, 2024

Two seatings: 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Adults \$35 • Children \$17

#### Carving Station

Prime Rib of Beef

Whiskey Pepper-Glazed Ham

#### Entrées

Chicken Bourguignon

Lemon Pepper Butter-Baked Tilapia

Eggs Benedict

Lyonnais New Potato

Biscuits & Sausage Gravy

Seasonal Vegetable

Build-Your-Own Omelet

Multi-Topping Buttermilk Pancakes

#### Salad Display

Thunderbird Salad, Chef Salad, Creamy Dill Cucumber Salad, Potato Salad, Deviled Eggs, Smoked Salmon, Chaud-Froid,

Continental Fruit Display

Continental Cheese Display

#### Desserts

Pastries, Sticky Buns,

Chocolate-Dipped Driscoll Strawberries

& Homemade Coffee Cake, Cheesecake

### Bourbon Tasting

Friday, March 22, 2024

5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Members \$55

#### Charcuterie

Cheese

Assorted Nuts

Assorted Dried Fruits

Crackers & Croustades

Ham Salami Pepperoni Prosciutto

Chocolate Petit Fours

## 2024 - 2025 Officers

**Dr. Robert Meyers**  
President  
Retired

**Mike McKnight**  
President-Elect  
WOWT

**Dale Ervin**  
Treasurer  
First National Bank

**Jeremy Maskel**  
Secretary  
Omaha Public Schools

**Angella Arndt**  
Past President  
Freelance Content Contributor

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Todd Andrews  
Liz Hruska  
Roger Humphries  
Hunter Samuels  
Gary Willis

Salvation Army  
Catalyst Public Affairs Analyst  
Roger Humphries Photography  
Ronald McDonald House  
NP Dodge Real Estate

### (2024-2026)

Allen Beermann  
Woody Bradford  
Bridget (Weide) Brooks  
Todd Lemke

Retired  
Houghton Bradford Whitted  
Image Building Communications  
Omaha Publications

## Communications Committee

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Todd Andrews • Jon Brooks • Angella Arndt  
Anne Walsh • Sandra Tursi • Elaine Allen

## Committee Chairs

**Communications** Gary Willis, Angella Arndt  
**Education** Dr. Robert Meyers  
**Executive Committee** Dr. Robert Meyers, Angella Arndt,  
Jeremy Maskel and Dale Ervin  
**"Face on the Barroom Floor"** Roger Humphries  
**Hall of Fame** Hunter Samuels  
**Marketing / Membership** Bridget (Weide) Brooks

## OPC Foundation

<b>Brian Norton</b> <i>President</i>	<b>TRUSTEES</b> Josh Bucy
<b>Melissa Matczak</b> <i>First Vice President</i>	John Chapman
<b>Maria Marron</b> <i>Second Vice President</i>	Chris Christen
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	Wendy Townley
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	<b>TRUSTEES EMERITUS</b>
	Elaine Allen
	Steve Jordon
	Howard K. Marcus

**WE'RE ONLINE! READ YOUR OPC NEWSLETTER AT [OMAHAPRESSCLUB.COM](http://OMAHAPRESSCLUB.COM)**

**Every Thursday**  
Prime Rib Night  
5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

**Thursday, March 7**  
New Member Reception  
5 p.m.-7 p.m., drink ticket  
and light hors d'oeuvres  
Reservation required

**Saturday, March 16**  
St. Patrick's Buffet  
4 p.m.-8 p.m. dinner  
\$22

**Thursday, March 21**  
Noon Forum  
Douglas County Sheriff Aaron Hanson  
11:30 a.m. lunch, \$19  
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker

**Friday, March 22**  
Bourbon Tasting  
and hors d'oeuvres  
5 p.m.-7 p.m.  
\$55



### Sunday, March 31

Easter Brunch  
Two seatings:  
10 a.m.-noon, 12:30 p.m.-2 p.m.  
Adults \$35, children 3-10 \$17

### Thursday, April 18

Noon Forum  
Project Harmony  
11:30 a.m. lunch, \$19  
Noon to 1 p.m. speaker

### Saturday, April 20

OPC Scholarship and Awards Brunch  
10 a.m. brunch, 10:30 a.m. program  
\$30

### Saturday, May 4

Face on the Barroom Floor  
Mike McKnight  
5:30 p.m. social  
6:30 p.m. dinner, roast  
Members \$90, non-members \$100

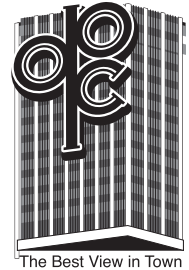
### Saturday, June 8

Hall of Fame

## Hours of Operation

**LUNCH**  
Monday - Friday  
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**DINNER**  
Thursday - Saturday  
5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.



## OMAHA PRESS CLUB STAFF

Executive Director  
**Steve Villamonte** ..... [opcdirector@gmail.com](mailto:opcdirector@gmail.com)  
Restaurant and Events Manager  
**Christine Villamonte** ..... [opcchristine@gmail.com](mailto:opcchristine@gmail.com)

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Restaurant ..... 402-345-8008  
Website ..... [omahapressclub.com](http://omahapressclub.com)

## NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Sandra Tursi ..... Graphics Editor  
Tom O'Connor ..... Proofreader  
Don Summerside ..... Copy Editor

**Submissions for the April issue  
are due on or before March 20.**

Are you looking for a perfect party setting? A lunch surrounded by brilliance?  
A dinner your guests will always remember? Keep the OPC in mind.

**CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.**