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## McCartney ending KETV career, but not his passion for journalism

By Joshua Gear

Communications Committee

**A**sk Rob McCartney what he envisions retirement looking like and you'll get an extremely honest answer.

"Well, I should probably figure this out!" the longtime KETV anchor said in the weeks leading up to his retirement. December marks the close of his four-decade career in news, 33 of those years sharing stories at Channel 7. Announced in December, McCartney is honest about his uncertainty about the life change ahead.

"There's not trepidation, it's more like 'Holy cow, this is real,'" McCartney said about concluding his time in television journalism. "My wife — she's a smart woman — she's said, 'For you, it's never been a career, it's been a calling.' It really has — ever since I was a kid, I've always wanted to be a journalist. Now, it's a new chapter. I don't know what that chapter is, but it really is different."

One constant McCartney says will remain steadfast as ever is his passion for the Omaha Press Club. A longtime member, committee collaborator and board representative, he called the organization's efforts to encourage journalistic excellence just as valuable as the day he joined. (See McCartney's appeal for student journalists and the OPC Foundation on Page 3.)

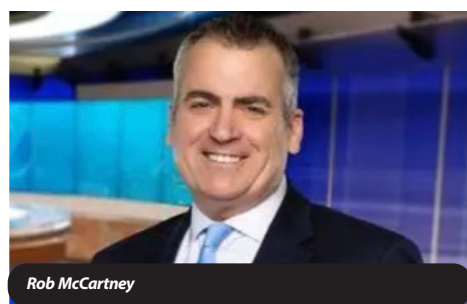
"I so strongly believe in local journalism. That's why the Press Club is so beautiful for the mix of my mindset," McCartney said. "It's not just print, it's not just broadcasting, it's not just digital, it's everything. And it's not just reporting, it's the private sector and the commercial sector, PR and that. It's all about communication and that's what brings us all together."

McCartney's communication efforts at KETV are countless, serving as the face of the operation's political coverage, as well as leading the station's longtime Crime Stoppers effort, collaborating with law enforcement to highlight fugitives, more than 2,500 stories in total.

Reflecting on his Press Club connections, McCartney took time to remember lessons learned from several friends and collaborators.

"Susan Eustice was great, Susan was

amazing. She was well organized and had a great idea of what was needed for the club, keeping a finger on the pulse of what was happening in the community," McCartney remembered. "Gary Kerr, Dale Munson and Hugh Cowden from my time on the Education Committee. These guys were old school, but their knowledge was always vital."



Reflecting further, McCartney credited lessons learned from Judy and Jim Horan, including their tireless efforts to celebrate the Omaha Press Club and its mission.

"She (Judy) was one of these people who knew all the players in the city and drew on that knowledge to bring voices in on important conversations," McCartney said. "Jim

was the gentlest guy I ever met. The artwork he would do, it was just incredible. The amount of years they donated to the Press Club, I can't even begin to guess."

Reflecting on the evolution of local news in Omaha, growing from just a few newscasts a day to continuous staffing and hours of daily content, McCartney said he's confident in the future of coverage in the community, thanks to the efforts from new and traditional outlets towards relevant, quality journalism.

"From the idea of how valuable local news is, I think that's fabulous. It's great that we're still doing great work," McCartney said of KETV's efforts in the digital space, alongside work from traditional and newer journalism outfits. "What Matt (Hansen, Flatwater Free Press editor) and Aaron (Sanderford, Nebraska Examiner editor-in-chief) are doing at Flatwater and Examiner, I think that's fabulous. I wish them the most success, because the more viewpoints in media means better journalism for viewers and readers. It gives me faith that there will be news coverage for years to come."

McCartney's final day at KETV is Thursday, Dec. 18.

## Annual Meeting will be Jan. 8

By Gary Willis

Communications Committee

**M**ark your calendars for Thursday, Jan. 8, the date of the Omaha Press Club Annual Meeting.

A 5:30 p.m. social featuring complimentary hors d'oeuvres will precede the 6 o'clock call-to-order. The meeting will include reports from the outgoing president, Mike McKnight, and the OPC's executive director, Steve Villamonte, plus the annual reports from committee chairs.

Also on the agenda is the election of 2026 club officers, including:

**President:** Joshua Gear, Lozier Corporation

**President-Elect:** Keith Station, Mayor's Office,

**Treasurer:** Hunter Samuels, Ronald McDonald House

**Secretary:** Jeremy Maskel, Omaha Public Schools

**Immediate Past President:** Mike McKnight, WOWT

Board members up for election:

Allen Beermann

Woody Bradford

Bridget Weide Brooks

Todd Lemke

Board members continuing their terms are Todd Andrews, Angella Arndt, Rod Howe, Liz Hruska, Roger Humphries, and Dr. Robert Meyers,

For those who wish to vote but are unable to attend the meeting, a proxy ballot is on page 5. Please mail the ballot to the Press Club or email it to [opcchristine@gmail.com](mailto:opcchristine@gmail.com).

## Providing support to women leaving incarceration

# Q.U.E.E.N.S. shares stories of success at Noon Forum

By Joshua Gear

Communications Committee

**D**emetrius Gatson has many incredible abilities, including a knack for quickly building connections.

"My friends call me Dee Dee, so if you call me Dee Dee, that means we're friends!" the social worker and community activist told November's Noon Forum gathering. The founder and executive director of Q.U.E.E.N.S. Butterfly House, Gatson said her vision for the group came from one of the toughest points of her life.

"I am formerly incarcerated," Gatson said. "While incarcerated, I saw many women who would return while I was still there. I would ask, 'why are you coming back, you have children, what's going on?' They would say, 'we don't have a place to live.'"

The legal system faces a unique challenge for incarcerated women, with the female prison population growing nearly 600 percent over the past 40 years, according to The Sentencing Project. On reentering society, Gatson found work with Omaha's RISE Academy, a 12-week education program designed to give formerly incarcerated the tools and knowledge to build a business, while also learning workforce development, family wellness and job skills.

Working there for four years, Gatson developed a plan specifically for women making that transition, dedicating her life to ensure everyone receives support and

encouragement. A chance meeting with Warren Buffett led not only to funding for RISE, but a lasting connection, with the Sherwood Foundation providing financial support to Gatson's mission starting in 2023.



"We're on a quest," Gatson said of the group's name and mission. "We're on a quest to understand, educate and empower noble sisters."

Q.U.E.E.N.S. offers a variety of services and support solutions to women using the transitional housing, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation, personal and professional development, wellness experiences and cognitive behavioral therapy. Known as the Butterfly House, the home has four living spaces with accommodations for two women in each room.

Noon Forum guests in attendance shared their excitement and encouragement for Gatson and her efforts, with questions focusing on the hurdles of starting a nonprofit along

with the added challenges of being an active parolee for her white-collar crime.

"My biggest obstacle didn't have anything to do with funding or the home itself. It had to do with the Department of Corrections actually allowing people to come to the home," Gatson said. "My goal was to help women coming out of incarceration, but the Department of Corrections said 'we can't let women come there because two people on parole can't have contact with each other. We can't pay you to house women because that's a conflict of interest.'"

As a result, Gatson dedicated herself to lobbying, proposing two bills to allow the formerly incarcerated to receive grants and funding from the State of Nebraska and for felons who finished their probation and parole to be able to vote. The Legislature passed both bills in 2024.

With the ability to connect directly with women leaving the correctional system, Q.U.E.E.N.S. crafted messaging that showcases their transitional housing, feeding into what they need as they reenter society, while encouraging them to research their opportunities to the fullest.

"There's someone there who has been exactly what you've been through who will be able to help," Gatson said. "Those who were once part of the problem are closest to the solution."

To learn more about Q.U.E.E.N.S. and the Butterfly House program, visit [www.queensbutterfly.org](http://www.queensbutterfly.org)

## Past presidents gather for food, fond memories

By Gary Willis

Communications Committee

**T**all tales were traded by former presidents at the annual OPC Past Presidents Dinner on Nov. 13. Everyone was treated to a delicious surf and turf meal that was cooked to perfection.

Some of the highlights of the evening included the history of the Press Club and how the club on the 22nd floor was established in 1971. Press Club memories have a heritage stretching back nearly 70 years to the OPC's official founding in 1955 and its first president, Wayne Bradley.

The remembrances recalled a past president dinner in 2011 when the late Howard

Silber first talked of his first date with his future wife, Sissy. Silber, an Omaha World-Herald reporter and OPC president in 1973, had planned the occasion with her, but was interrupted with a call from the newspaper that he was to cover Vice President Spiro Agnew's 1972 visit to Omaha. Instead of cancelling the date, Howard took Sissy with him, and she was notably impressed that he was taking her to meet the vice president.

Another remembrance that is always mentioned was when Warren Buffett's caricature came up missing when we moved back into the renovated Press Club from the temporary location at the Joslyn Castle. The Buffett Face was eventually found after the story made national news.

OPC's current president, Mike McKnight, will be succeeded by Joshua Gear in 2026.



Past presidents, front, from left: Anne Walsh, Woody Bradford, and Chris Christen. Back: Sean McGuire, Mike McKnight, Roger Humphries, Dr. Robert Meyers, and Gary Willis. Photo by Kurt Keeler

# More than ever, OPC Foundation needs support for student journalists

**By Rob McCartney**  
OPC Foundation Honorary Chair

**F**orty years goes by in a flash. It's been my honor to serve as a journalist in Nebraska during that time. I've had the pleasure of covering so many important news stories at KETV and am humbled you've trusted me to bring you so many stories.

Many of you may also remember that I, along with my colleagues, used to "perform" (I use the term loosely in my case) at the Omaha Press Club Gridiron Show. That show raised critical funds for the OPC Foundation, which in turn provides scholarships for young journalists-in-training. It was a way for us to help preserve the future of the Fourth Estate.

For me and many of my colleagues, journalism is a 'calling,' not a 'career.' Ever since I was a student journalist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I've known the power and importance of journalism. I wouldn't have been able to succeed without the education I received at UNL.

I've made it a point throughout the years to never ask people for money. I don't want them to think they've "bought" the media. Today, because we live in a time when the media is constantly under attack, I AM asking. I want you to consider financially supporting the OPC Foundation as it helps develop future journalists and media professionals.

The OPC Foundation has supported journalism students in Nebraska for more than 50 years. Each year, the foundation

awards more than 20 scholarships of \$2,500 each. Thanks to the generosity of donors, the foundation awarded more than \$50,000 in scholarships to students at Creighton University, the University of Nebraska Omaha, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln this year. Students from the University of Nebraska at Kearney were awarded Jim Denney "Good News" Scholarships.

Your gift supports the next generation of students pursuing careers in radio, television, print, public relations, and new media. Please consider a gift for the 2025 annual campaign by visiting [opcfscholarships.org](http://opcfscholarships.org).

Forty years does go by in a flash. Just slightly longer than my request in this letter! But seriously, this is the time we have to step up and think of our future. I'd appreciate anything you can do.

## Omaha Press Club Reciprocal List 2025

### Colorado

Denver Press Club  
1330 Glenarm Place  
Denver, CO 80204  
Ph: 303-571-5260  
[denverpressclub.org](http://denverpressclub.org)

### District of Columbia

National Press Club  
529 14th St. NW 13th Floor  
Washington, DC 20045  
Ph: 202-662-7500  
[press.org](http://press.org)  
[members@press.org](mailto:members@press.org)

### Iowa

Des Moines Embassy Club Downtown  
666 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Ph: 515-244-CLUB  
[embassyclub.com](http://embassyclub.com)

Des Moines Embassy Club West  
520 Market St.  
W. Des Moines, IA 50266  
Ph: 515-244-CLUB  
[embassyclub.com](http://embassyclub.com)

Council Bluffs Country Club  
4500 Piute St.  
Council Bluffs, IA 51501  
Ph: 712-366-0525  
[cbccountryclub.com](http://cbccountryclub.com)

### Kansas

The Petroleum Club of Wichita  
Nations Bank Building  
100 N. Broadway, Ste. 900  
Wichita, KS 67202  
Ph: 316-262-6471  
[petroleumclubwichita.com](http://petroleumclubwichita.com)

### Missouri

The University Club of MU  
University of Missouri  
704 Conley Ave.  
Columbia, MO 65211  
Ph: 573-882-2586  
[uclub.missouri.edu](http://uclub.missouri.edu)

Saint Louis Club  
7701 Forsyth Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63105  
Ph: 314-726-1964  
[Stlclub.com](http://Stlclub.com)

### Nebraska

Fremont Golf Club  
2710 N. Somers Ave.  
Fremont, NE 68026  
Ph: 402-721-6641  
[fremontgolfclub.org](http://fremontgolfclub.org)

Lochland Country Club  
601 W. Lochland Rd.  
Hastings, NE 68901  
Ph: 402-462-4151  
[lochlandcc.com](http://lochlandcc.com)

Oak Hills Country Club  
12325 Golfing Green Drive  
Omaha, NE 68137  
Ph: 402-895-3636  
[oakhillscountryclub.org](http://oakhillscountryclub.org)

### New York

Overseas Press Club of America  
40 W. 45 St.  
New York, NY 10036  
Ph: 212-626-9220  
[opcofamerica.org](http://opcofamerica.org)



## A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

see green and gold for the holidays here at your club.

It's the classics all the way this year. The fireplace is on, and good libations are ready for the holidays. What is your choice: bubbles mixed with your favorite liquor or perhaps a sipping bourbon to warm the stomach? The club is offering some new bourbon additions to please your palate.

The annual Santa Brunch, on Dec. 14 with two seatings, will present a classic menu with more than 30 options to check out. Then end the year with our New Year's Eve trio buffet and fireworks.

The new year will bring a bourbon tasting on Jan. 30. Then the first Face on the Bar-room Floor event of 2026 will honor Police Chief Todd Schmaderer on Feb. 19. To reserve a spot remotely, go to [omahapressclub.com](http://omahapressclub.com), top right corner, and tap RSVP.

And don't forget the Thursday night prime rib dinners. Pick your event and enjoy



Christine Villamonte

your membership.

On the administrative side: Quarterly minimums are due by Dec. 31. Be sure to spend at least \$40 per quarter or that amount will be charged to your account. If there is a medical or health issue, please call to discuss your options.

Also, late fees will be resumed next year for delinquent accounts if the board gives its approval at the January Annual Meeting. Your monthly invoice or statement will list any past-due amount. A base late fee of \$25 was halted in March 2020 when the Covid epidemic restricted OPC operations.

A reminder on your options for bill payments:

Go to our website, [omahapressclub.com](http://omahapressclub.com), top right corner RSVP, and follow the prompt. You must know your member number and the amount owed. Note: the payment is processed through PayPal, so there is a 5% processing fee.

Call us with a credit card number, and we will process your payment manually (4% processing fee). This can also be an automatic monthly card on file, which we run at the end of each month for the balance.

On your invoice (not statement), on the left-hand side there is a link to pay. The ACH system. You can set this up with a voided check from your bank account. You also can give us the routing and account numbers with the basic information to match the account as well.

And one more reminder: Free two-hour parking for OPC members is validated only for the Doubletree, 16th and Dodge Streets. The parking garage elevator is accessible weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. If you visit the club during the weekend or after 7 p.m., use the main entrance of the bank building on the northwest corner of 16th and Dodge. The access box at the door connects to FNBO security to let you in. The process is simple; tell them you are going to the Omaha Press Club.

Hope to see you soon!

**-Christine Villamonte**  
Restaurant and Events Manager

## PHONE 402-345-8008 FOR RESERVATIONS

### Santa's Brunch

**Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025**

**Two Seatings: 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.**

**Price: Adults \$35 • Children \$17**

Bring a new, unwrapped toy to donate to the Salvation Army

#### Buffet

Steamship Round of Beef  
Baked Ham with Maple Whiskey Sauce  
Chicken Crepes Supreme  
Baked Tilapia Lemon Butter  
Lyonnaise Potatoes & Gravy  
Seasonal Vegetables  
Build-Your-Own Omelet a la Carte  
Multi-Topping Pancake Bar  
Salad Display, including Thunderbird Salad  
Salmon Chaud Froid & Fresh Fruit  
Fresh-Baked Pastries, Tortes & Cheesecakes  
Chocolate Driscoll Strawberries  
Deep Dish Apple Crisp  
Brandied French Vanilla Ice Cream  
Spiked French Vanilla Eggnog

### New Year's Eve

**Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2025**  
**6 p.m.**

**\$100 per Person**

**Tax & Service Fee Included**

#### Buffet

Continental Cheese  
And Salmon Chaud Froid  
OPC Famous Thunderbird Salad  
With Sauté Toppings  
Peruvian Clam Chowder

**Prime Rib of Beef**  
Au Jus & Chantilly

**Chicken Marsala**  
Sautéed in a Sweet Marsala Wine  
With Mushrooms & Bordelaise

**Blackened Tilapia**  
Topped with a Black Bean & Corn Salsa  
And Lemon Buerre Blanc  
Dauphine Potatoes & Asparagus Citron

**Dessert Choice**  
Cherries Jubilee, Brownie Ala Mode,  
Blackstone Cheesecake

**Live Music**

## Reaching for the Clouds

OPC's "best view in town" includes a unique perspective of the newest addition to the city skyline. Construction on Mutual of Omaha's headquarters building has reached Level 44, which will be its highest occupied floor, making the building now the tallest in Nebraska.

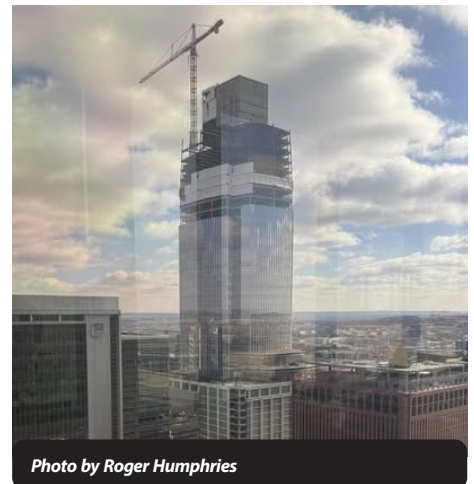


Photo by Roger Humphries

# OPC MEMBER PROXY BALLOT

Members not attending the annual meeting Jan. 8 may vote by returning the ballot below to reach the Omaha Press Club by 4 p.m., Wednesday Jan. 7. See instructions below.

## OFFICERS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Joshua Gear      For      Against

Allen Beermann      For      Against

### President-Elect

Woody Bradford      For      Against

Keith Station      For      Against

Bridget Weide Brooks      For      Against

### Treasurer

Todd Lemke      For      Against

Hunter Samuels      For      Against

### Secretary

Jeremy Maskel      For      Against

### Immediate Past President

Mike McKnight

**Board members continuing their terms:** Todd Andrews, Angella Arndt, Rod Howe, Liz Hruska, Roger Humphries, Dr. Robert Meyers

Fax this completed ballot to (402) 345-0114 or mail to the Omaha Press Club, 1620 Dodge St. 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Omaha, NE. 68102-1561. Absentee ballots **MUST** be received by 4 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 7.

**NOTE:** *If you plan to attend the annual meeting, do not return this proxy ballot.*

## 2025 - 2026 Officers

**Mike McKnight**  
President  
WOWT

**Todd Andrews**  
President-Elect  
Salvation Army

**Hunter Samuels**  
Treasurer  
Ronald McDonald House

**Jeremy Maskel**  
Secretary  
Omaha Public Schools

**Dr. Robert Meyers**  
Past President  
Retired

## Board of Directors

**(2024-2026)**  
Allen Beermann Retired  
Woody Bradford Houghton Bradford Whitted  
Todd Lemke Omaha Publications  
Bridget (Weide) Brooks Image Building Communications

**(2025-2027)**  
Liz Hruska Catalyst Public Affairs Analyst  
Joshua Gear Lozier Corporation  
Angella Arndt Freelance Content Contributor  
Rod Howe Retired  
Roger Humphries Roger Humphries Photography

## Communications Committee

Don Summerside • Gary Willis • Josh Gear  
Roger Humphries • Tom O'Connor  
Bridget (Weide) Brooks • Hunter Samuels  
Todd Andrews • Angella Arndt • Anne Walsh  
Sandra Tursi • Elaine Allen • Katie Raine Thomas

## Committee Chairs

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

## OPC Foundation

<b>TRUSTEES</b>	
Henry Cordes	
Erin Grace	
Aaron Hegarty	
Mehrnaz Khanjani	
Chris Machian	
Tracie McPherson	
Brian Norton	
Aaron Sanderford	
Danelle Schlegelmilch	
Matt Wynn	
<b>TRUSTEES EMERITUS</b>	
Elaine Allen	
Chris Christen	
Steve Jordon	
Howard K. Marcus	

Melissa Matczak  
President

Maria Marron  
First Vice President

Tom Shaw  
Treasurer

Lei Guo  
Secretary

**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.

**Sunday, Dec. 14**  
Santa Brunch  
Two seatings:  
10 a.m. to noon  
12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Adults \$35, children \$17

**Wednesday and Thursday,  
Dec. 25 and 26**  
Closed for Christmas holiday

**Tuesday, Dec. 31**  
NEW YEAR'S EVE!!!!  
Trio Buffet  
\$100 (inclusive)

**Wednesday, Jan. 1**  
Closed for holiday

**Thursday, Jan. 8**  
OPC Annual Meeting  
5:30 p.m. social, 6 p.m. meeting

**Week of Jan. 13-17**  
Annual winter closing

**Thursday, Jan. 16**  
OPC Annual Meeting  
5:30 p.m. social, 6 p.m. meeting

**Friday, Jan. 30**  
Bourbon Smoking/Tasting  
5 p.m.-7 p.m.  
\$55

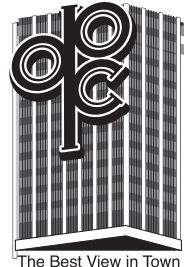
**Save the Date:  
Thursday, Feb. 19**  
Face on the Barroom Floor  
Police Chief Todd Schmaderer  
\$90 members, \$100 non-members

## Hours of Operation

1620 Dodge St., Omaha NE 68102

**LUNCH**  
Tuesday- Saturday  
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Closed Mondays

**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)

Office ..... 402-345-8587  
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 January issue  
are due on or before December 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.**