

# SUMMER CONFERENCE

**May 17-19,  
2026**

**Wilmington,  
NC**

**Lumina  
Wrightsville  
Beach  
Hotel**





**THANK YOU  
TO OUR  
PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

**CHAIRS**

**Vicky Janowski,**  
*Greater Wilmington  
Business Journal*

**Rob Kaiser,**  
*Greater Wilmington  
Business Journal*

**EDITORIAL**

**Renee Cordes,**  
*Mainebiz*

**Arthur Thomas,**  
*BizTimes Milwaukee*

**Cece Nunn,**  
*Greater Wilmington  
Business Journal*



**SALES**

**Craig Snow,**  
*Greater Wilmington  
Business Journal*

**Angeal O'Kray,**  
*Insight on Business*

**Marsha Luedtke,**  
*Corridor Media*

**INNOVATION**

**Michael Curran,**  
*Ottawa Business Journal*

**Marty Goodnight,**  
*Springfield Business Journal*



## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE



### SUNDAY, MAY 17

1:00PM	Registration Opens
1-3:00PM	Board of Directors meeting
3:30-5:00PM	<b>Magazine Roundtable Discussion</b>
5-5:30PM	Newcomer and Rising Star Networking
5:30-7PM	Opening Reception at hotel



### MONDAY, MAY 18

8-8:30AM	Group Breakfast
8:30-8:45AM	Opening Remarks
8:45-9:45AM	<b>Keynote with Tom Morris</b>
10-11:00AM	<b>SESSION 1</b>
11-11:30AM	Refreshment Break and Network with Exhibitors
11:30AM-12:30PM	<b>SESSION 2</b>
12:30-1:30PM	Group Lunch and Network with Exhibitors
1:30-2:30PM	<b>SESSION 3</b>
2:30-3:00PM	Refreshment Break and Network with Exhibitors
3-3:45PM	<b>SESSION 4</b>
3:45-4:30PM	<b>SESSION 5</b>
5:30-7:30PM	<b>Offsite Party</b> at Little Drum Landing



## TUESDAY, MAY 19

<b>8-8:30AM</b>	Group Breakfast
<b>8:30-9:30AM</b>	<b>Keynote with Jacquelyn Cameron</b>
<b>9:30-10:30AM</b>	<b>SESSION 6</b>
<b>10:30-11:00AM</b>	Refreshment Break and Network with Exhibitors
<b>11-11:45AM</b>	<b>SESSION 7</b>
<b>11:45AM-12:30PM</b>	<b>SESSION 8</b>
<b>12:30PM</b>	Boxed Lunch or Lunch on Your Own
<b>12:30-5:30PM</b>	Afternoon to Explore
<b>5:30-6:30PM</b>	Awards Cocktail Reception at hotel
<b>6-7:00PM</b>	<b>Awards Banquet Dinner</b>
<b>7-9:00PM</b>	<b>Awards Presentations</b>



## SUNDAY ROUNDTABLES

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**3:30-5:00 PM**

### **Magazine Roundtable**

A roundtable discussion for magazine members to share tips, best practices and ask questions of each other.

Moderated by **Christine Perez, D CEO**

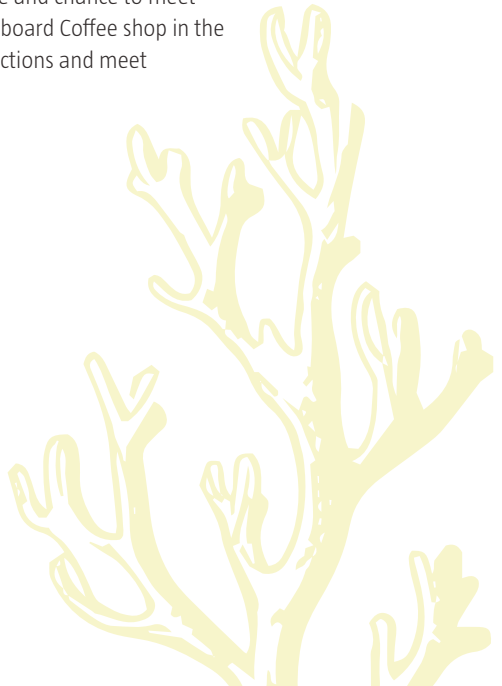
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**5-5:30 PM**

### **Newcomers and Rising Stars Networking with the Board of Directors**

A pre-reception welcome takes place for first-time and still-new conference goers as well as this year's Rising Star recipients to give them an overview of the conference and chance to meet other AABP members. Meet at the Longboard Coffee shop in the hotel lobby to get a jumpstart on connections and meet other AABP members.

Hosted by **AABP board members**



# DRINKS ON THE RIVER

AABP **SUMMER 2026**

**MONDAY,  
MAY 18**

**5:30-7:30 PM**

**Little Drum Landing,  
2 Ann Street**



Join us for drinks, apps and stunning views along the Cape Fear River in downtown Wilmington. From there, take a stroll down the Riverwalk for numerous dinner options.



## KEYNOTES

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**MONDAY, MAY 18**

**8:45-9:45 AM**

### **True Success: The Art of Achievement in Times of Change**

What does it take for new levels of success in the face of challenge? From 40 years of research across global wisdom traditions and modern forms of success, Tom Morris, author of “True Success,” “The Stoic Art of Living,” and “The Art of Achievement,” has identified seven universal conditions for sustainable achievement. His “7 Cs of Success” have fueled results in personal and professional success across industries around the world. In a talk Morris has delivered to global client firms and CEOs, he shares fundamental tools for personal, team and organizational achievement and provide a practical guide for their use every day.

**Tom Morris** of the Morris Institute for Human Values

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**Tom Morris** is chairman and CEO of the Morris Institute for Human Values. Tom, who lives in Wilmington, has given over 1,200 presentations in the U.S. and globally including companies such as General Motors, Deloitte and Bank of America. The author of more than 30 books, Morris speaks on change, leadership and innovation.



## KEYNOTES

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**TUESDAY, MAY 19**

**8:30-9:30 AM**

### **The Nichification of News**

In an era of fragmented audiences and AI-driven disruption, Axios has built a growth strategy rooted in focus, premium audiences, and bold bets on local journalism. In this keynote, Jacquelyn L. Cameron, Chief Revenue Officer of Axios, shares how the company is navigating the splintered media landscape – from niche audience strategy to rethinking revenue and redefining its role in an AI-shaped future.

**Jacquelyn Cameron** of Axios

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**Jacquelyn L. Cameron** is the chief revenue officer at Axios. In her role, Jacquelyn oversees all revenue within the organization, including building complex and performant partnerships with brands, and driving consumer revenue through ticketing and membership. She also oversees the Axios Local division, which boasts local news coverage in 34 markets (Chicago, Miami, Denver, etc.). Previously, Jacquelyn was senior vice president at the WP and global head of the public affairs division at the *New York Times*. Jacquelyn worked alongside Axios founders Jim VandeHei, Roy Schwartz, and Mike Allen during the first six years of POLITICO.

# EDITORIAL



## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 AM

### Narrative Newsletters: A case study

**Ashley Fahey** of *The Charlotte Ledger*

The Charlotte Ledger's managing editor, Ashley Fahey, offers insight into how the publication has built a loyal readership through its narrative-style newsletter. Founded in 2019, The Charlotte Ledger was created with a focus on delivering deeply reported, context-rich business journalism in a format designed for direct engagement: the inbox. Rather than relying solely on traditional article structures, the Ledger leans into storytelling—often weaving together reporting, analysis and voice in a way that feels closer to a conversation with readers than a standard news brief.

## SESSION 2: 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

### Digging Into Bankruptcies

**Maria Chutchian** of Bloomberg News Industry Group

All you need to know to cover bankruptcies, from finding the documents you need to identifying the key people involved and getting information from them. Plus, how to cover local and regional angles for reporting on large retail bankruptcies.

## SESSION 3: 1:30-2:30 PM

### Best Ideas

Moderated by **CeCe Nunn** of *Greater Wilmington Business Journal*

Share your Best Ideas from the past year with your peers. Please submit a best idea in advance to participate in this session so we get ALL of the best ideas. Forms will be emailed to attendees.

## SESSION 4: 3-3:45 PM

### Where Business Meets the Beat

**Jessica Quinn** and **Greg Bordonaro** of *Hartford Business Journal*, **Mitch Bettis** and **Hunter Field** of *Arkansas Business* / Moderated by **Peter Van Allen** of *Mainebiz*

Learn how top business publications blend smart business strategy and journalistic excellence. From awards to power lists and other revenue-generating initiatives, panelists from two publications will share how to balance business goals with editorial priorities — even when tensions arise — to produce great journalism and foster connection. This discussion will set the stage for an interactive session on best practices and concerns.

# EDITORIAL

## **SESSION 5: 3:45-4:30 PM**

### **Making Big Topics Feel Local**

Moderated by **Arthur Thomas** of *Biz Times Milwaukee*

Affordable housing. Workforce shortages. Trade and tariffs. These issues affect every community, yet coverage can feel repetitive or stalled. Learn new ways to localize major topics, uncover fresh angles and make slow-moving stories relevant right now. Also: When the national spotlight turns on your region, how do you cover it?

## **SESSION 6: 9:30-10:30 AM**

### **AI Editing Tools for Journalists**

**Mike Reilly** of *The Journalist's Toolbox*

Free editing tools to boost efficiency. Work with prompts for Large Language Models (LLMs) and Custom GPTs to clean up copy and write SEO-driven headlines. Hands-on session with take-home exercises to bring back to staff and practice with.

## **SESSION 7: 11-11:45 AM**

### **Data Journalism**

**Mike Reilly** of *The Journalist's Toolbox*

Data scraping web pages with Google sheets, scraping PDFs with Tabula and PDF to Excel, building graphics with Flourish studio. Interactive workshop on laptops.

## **SESSION 8: 11:45 AM-12:30 PM**

### **Whiteboard Session**

Moderated by **Brad Kane** of *Worcester Business Journal*

Set the tone for the editorial track sessions by sharing your questions and answers on what's working, what's not working and what's next! Prompts could include the best operational tips and tricks.

# SALES



## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 AM

### Recruiting and Retaining the Next-Gen Sales Workforce

**Robert Hawthorne** of Hawthorne Search

Executive recruiter Robert Hawthorne of Hawthorne Search will share insights on hiring trends shaping media and publishing, with a focus on attracting, hiring, and retaining Gen Z talent. The session will also feature a panel of Rising Star sales professionals who transitioned into media from other industries, sharing what helped them ramp up and succeed. Attendees will leave with practical ideas to strengthen their recruiting pipeline and build next-generation sales teams.

## SESSION 2: 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

### How a Consultative Sales Approach Helps Media Sales Teams Win

**David Arkin** of David Arkin Consulting

The most successful media salespeople don't start by pitching products. They start by understanding what the advertiser is trying to accomplish. In this session, we'll talk about why a consultative approach works so well in local media and how asking better questions can lead to stronger relationships and better campaigns.

## SESSION 3: 1:30-2:30 PM

### Leading High Performance Sales Teams

**Eric Mayberry** of Smart Tech Digital Agency

In this session, veteran media executive Eric Mayberry, formerly of Lee Enterprises, will share practical leadership strategies for building and sustaining high-performing sales teams. From communication plans that clearly define messaging and expectations to the authentic conversations that shape strong sales cultures, Mayberry will outline approaches leaders can implement immediately. Attendees will gain practical insights they can apply right away to improve performance, strengthen communication and accountability, and change the culture within their sales organizations.

## SESSION 4: 3-3:45 PM

### How Sales Teams Are Using AI to Work Smarter

**David Arkin** of David Arkin Consulting

Many of the most useful applications of AI have nothing to do with writing content but are rather fits for sales teams who can use the tools to manage leads, prioritize prospects, understand their sales funnel and follow up with advertisers more effectively. The focus will be on simple workflows and ideas that sales teams can start using right away, regardless of what CRM or systems they use.

# SALES

## **SESSION 5: 3:45-4:30 PM**

### **AI in the Day-to-Day: Streamlining Sales Processes & Sales Marketing**

**Angela O'Kray** of *Insight on Business*

How are sales teams actually using AI in their day-to-day work? In this practical panel, sales leaders from AABP member publications will share real examples of how tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini help streamline proposal creation, customize pitches, and automate repetitive tasks. Attendees will gain honest insights into what's working and simple AI workflows they can start using right away.

## **SESSION 6: 9:30-10:30 AM**

### **Leading without Losing Yourself**

**Bonnie Jacoby** of *Arkansas Business*

Sales leader burnout is very real in media organizations, especially for directors carrying revenue pressure, team emotion, market change, and constant forecasting stress.

## **SESSION 7: 11-11:45 AM**

### **Best Ideas**

**Craig Snow** of *Greater Wilmington Business Journal*

Our most popular session of the conference! Hear from your fellow AABP sales staffers about the best ideas from the past year! Attendees are strongly encouraged to submit an idea in order to attend this session as we want ALL of the best ideas. Leave this session with a digital copy of the 2026 Best Ideas Book.

## **SESSION 8: 11:45 AM-12:30 PM**

### **Sales Whiteboard: Challenges & Opportunities**

**Marsha Luedtke** of *Corridor Business Journal*

This interactive session invites attendees to bring their current sales challenges and opportunities to the table for open discussion and peer problem-solving. The group will brainstorm ideas, share experiences, and capture key insights live as themes emerge. Participants will leave with practical solutions, fresh perspectives, and stronger connections with peers across the industry.

# INNOVATION



## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 AM

### The Power of Partnership

**Tom Morris** of the Morris Institute for Human Values

Tom takes us back to some important ancient ideas about the transformative power of partnerships, some of which animated the great founders of our nation and that we need now more than ever. This talk is full of insights to help you make both your business and your community more creative and healthy places of positive partnership, where people work together creatively for the greater good.

## SESSION 2: 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

### Best Ideas

Contribute your innovative ideas around events, audience development, cost savings or something else your company has created!

## SESSION 3: 1:30-2:30 PM

### Roundtables for the Win!

**David Denor** and **Michael Curran** of *Ottawa Business Journal*

Several AABP publications have evolved roundtable discussions to serve as flywheels for intriguing editorial content, new sponsors and deeper relationships with top executives.

## SESSION 4: 3-3:45 PM

### Reinventing Events

**Marty Goodnight** of *Springfield Business Journal* and **Suzanne Fischer-Huettner** of BridgeTower Media

A deep dive into how you can potentially do less events with more impact to your audience and bottom line.

# INNOVATION

## SESSION 5: 3:45-4:30 PM

### Leveraging Leadership

**Vicky Janowski** of *Greater Wilmington Business Journal*, **Jim Kirk** of Crain Communications, **Chris Conetzkey** of *Des Moines Business Record*

A roundtable discussion with several AABP publications that have significantly enhanced their offerings and diversified revenue by running leadership programs for their communities.

## SESSION 6: 9:30-10:30 AM

### Rethinking the Metrics That Matter for Audience Growth

**David Arkin** of David Arkin Consulting

Changes in search and social algorithms are reshaping how audiences discover journalism, making traditional traffic metrics less reliable as the primary way to measure success. In this session, we'll explore what those shifts mean for publishers and how media companies can start focusing on the right things to measure. We'll look at the metrics that matter today — including engagement, loyalty and direct audience relationships — and how editorial teams can align around them.

## SESSION 7: 11-11:45 AM

### Digital Metrics and Paid Subs: Finding Growth

**Michael Curran** of *Ottawa Business Journal*, **Leah Allen** and **Eric Shanefelt** of Nearview Media

Get access to new AABP digital benchmark data. Listen to AABP members share their paid subs growth stories. PLUS, expert tips related to automations and other growth hacks.

## SESSION 8: 11:45 AM-12:30 PM

### Re-Engaging Legacy Categories: How We Repositioned Healthcare to Grow Our Top Advertisers

**Marty Goodnight** of *Springfield Business Journal*

Hospitals are a core advertising category for many business publications—but in many markets, those relationships have plateaued or become transactional. This session will walk through how *Springfield Business Journal* (and other markets) re-approached the healthcare category with a fresh perspective, leading to meaningful growth from our top one and two advertisers.

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