

# FSPA Today

FLORIDA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION



2008 - 2009

[www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa)

December/January

## Jepson thanks J teachers for being "practical"

Congratulations to all you journalism teachers, administrators, and parents out there who cared enough to email Todd Clark at the DOE asking that practical arts credit be restored to journalism I class. We are successful!



By **DEB JEPSON**  
FSPA PRESIDENT  
[djepson@bellsouth.net](mailto:djepson@bellsouth.net)

In December, DOE will finalize the classes to receive practical arts credit and journalism I is on the list. There are no more public hearings scheduled. Soon, your guidance counselors will be provided with this list to help students choose classes for next year.

When I wrote my letter to Mr. Clark, I wanted to let him know that journalism teachers are probably the most "practical" arts teachers in any high school. I started to list the skills that we teach and then I had to stop. The list was too long, way too long. No one would read it.

Then I thought about my former students who use those skills. I remembered my editor, David Lehmann, class of '88, who went directly from journalism IV to the Jewish Heritage Press in Orlando where he has been laying out that paper for over 20 years.

I remembered Rachel La Corte, class of '92, who

graduated from UCF and FSU and went to work for the Associated Press and now is the AP correspondent in the state of Washington. When Rachael was on staff, she investigated child labor law violations in the Oviedo area and after her story was published, the state sent investigators down who eventually made some arrests.

And then there's Scott Fritchen, who wrote a book about our winning boys basketball team when he was on newspaper with me, now assistant editor for the Powercat Illustrated, a sports magazine about Kansas State sports. And Samatha Reipe, another former editor, who works at the Miami Herald as a writer and illustrator.

I had to stop. This list grew longer and longer. With specific descriptions, it had the potential to be longer than my list of skills—a book perhaps. I had writers, designers, attorneys, a member of Eartha Kitt's publicity team, ad people, salesmen, etc. Journalism touched so many lives in so many ways I couldn't possibly list them all.

So I quit...sent my letter to Mr. Clark with three fine examples and called it a day. You must have done the same.

And thank goodness for that. Together we have heard. Go out tonight and celebrate.

FSPA is now on Bulletin Board...  
Join to connect with advisers!



learn more from Office staffer Sam Rogers on page 3

# FSPA Wants You!

**YOU MUST BE AN FSPA MEMBER TO  
ATTEND CONVENTION IN APRIL**

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR  
TO JOIN FSPA!**

**REGISTER NOW FOR \$50!**

registration forms are available at  
[www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa)

# VP Announces Convention Keynote Speaker

I can't remember the first time I read Pulitzer Prize winner Leonard Pitts Jr.'s writing, but as an avid vinyl record collector, I suspect the piece was something he had written for the Miami Herald during his music critic days in the early 90s. I can, however, recall the moment I tapped into Pitts as source of challenging cultural and political discourse. It was on the morning after the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. I was searching for a way to convey what America was feeling in order to inspire my journalism and mass media classes to come together in that time of crisis. Television already had provided us the immediate, the horrific, the raw emotion, but I sought understanding, context and interpretation in the place I had found it throughout my life, in the company of writers — specifically newspaper columnists. Some of what I found was trite, some insightful, but one piece stood out. It began this way: "It's my job to have something to say. They pay me to provide words that help make sense of that which troubles the American soul." In the words that followed, Pitts indeed had something to say, and he said it with verve and eloquence on behalf of millions of reeling Americans.

In 695 words he spoke for those of us who struggled to grasp those terrible moments that changed our notion of security on one sky-blue Tuesday morning. Pitts' column spoke of rage and sorrow — but most of all, it spoke of our nation's resolve. Reading aloud that day, my students were moved in various ways. Some shed tears, some raised their voice in rage and still others quietly reflected on America's reaction put to words. Everyone agreed that of the three columns we read that day, Pitts best reflected what

they were feeling. Everyone that is except senior Ellen Morton, who took exception to what she called a beat-the-war drums tone.

But that's the point. Columnists should be there to provoke thought -- to get us to look hard at the issues of the day and our personal relationship to those issues. In the years since, I have read Pitts on a weekly basis, sometimes in The Orlando Sentinel or Florida Today where his syndicated columns often appear. But if I can't find him there, I visit the Miami Herald's website. See, although I've never personally met Leonard Pitts Jr., I have come to think

of him as a friend. And with all friendships, sometimes we're on the same page and sometimes we couldn't disagree more. But always, Pitts encourages me to inspect inconsistencies in my world view — or in his.

I'm sharing my thoughts on Pitts with you because he has graciously agreed to be the keynote speaker at the FSPA convention in April. One of the most widely read syndicated columnists in the United States, Pitts has a trophy case of awards to stand alongside the Pulitzer he won in 2004 including two Pulitzer Prize nominations, the National Association of Black Journalists award of excellence in commentary and the National Society of Newspaper Columnists Columnist of the Year award. Some of his best columns have been collected in "Forward from this Moment." Pitts also has written such acclaimed books as "Becoming Dad: Black Men and the Journey to Fatherhood" and "Papa Joe's Boys: The Jacksons Story."

I'm looking forward to finally meeting my old friend at the FSPA convention in April, and to introducing him to each of you.



By **MARK SCHLEDORN**  
FSPA VICE PRESIDENT  
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The 2009 FSPA State Convention  
will proudly feature

# Leonard Pitts Jr.

as the featured  
Convention Keynote Speaker



2004 Pulitzer Prize winner  
for Commentary  
and Nationally-syndicated Columnist

# FSPA

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[www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa)

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**FSPA TODAY**

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**UF** UNIVERSITY of  
**FLORIDA**  
The Foundation for The Gator Nation

# FSPA Bulletin Board Connects Advisers throughout Florida

BY: SAMANTHA ROGERS  
FSPA Office Staff

The FSPA Bulletin Board is up and running as of December. The bulletin board can be a place where advisers of FSPA member publications can discuss the state of scholastic journalism today and other issues facing advisers.

The Bulletin Board has different forums on topics like general information about FSPA, journalism topics and the upcoming convention.

Advisers can post questions or information on topics that other advisers may find helpful. A search feature allows members to find all posts on a related topic.

"Ideally, it will become a real-time network of all the active members-- a place where advisers can converse from Pensacola to Miami," said Casey Peterson, FSPA office manager.

**"Ideally, it will become a real-time network of all the active members -- a place where advisers can converse from Pensacola to Miami."**

All and any adviser of an FSPA member publication can register on the Web site at <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa/bb/>. Click on "Registration" found on the right side of the screen and entering your information.

An administrator reviews each request for approval to ensure that only advisers are able to join and to avoid spam.

Advisers can subscribe to RSS links to forums or topics so that advisers can stay up to date with new information.

[www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa/bb/](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/fspa/bb/)

## Are you interested in presenting a session at the 2009 FSPA Convention?

Sign up online and share your interesting, energizing, innovative ideas at the 2009 FSPA convention.

**Link on the FSPA Web site or**

[www.tinyurl.com/fspa-present](http://www.tinyurl.com/fspa-present)

*Sign up now*

## Evaluations, individual contest deadlines fast approaching

Greetings. Now that schools have been in session about three months, I hope that your publications are in full swing.

The newspaper and broadcast contests will be here before we know it. The upcoming newspaper, broadcast and individual contests are for current

members only. So, if you have not updated your membership (November 2008-2009), please do so.

Both newspaper and broadcast contests are due by January 9, 2008.

At this time, forms should be on the web site. Just click on



By **JANE ROBBINS**  
EVALUATIONS COORDINATOR  
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the "evaluations" button. If the deadline crowds your back to school responsibilities, I suggest that you submit your publications before you are released for winter break. That way you will not have to pay the penalty of \$20 for late submissions, or at least submit a check requisition for the evaluation fee.

OK, OK, whip me a thousand times with a wet noodle for adding one more onto your "to do" list of finals, grades and late deadlines. And, PLEASE, either pick up the check from your bookkeeper yourself or make sure it is sent to my address rather than the FSPA office.

The last reminder is for the Individual Contests applications, which are due January 23. Those

forms will also be on the web site. The form is changed slightly with yearbook, newspaper, broadcast, and literary magazine information on separate pages. All of this information will be blasted to members as reminders prior to the deadlines. If you don't get it, write me at [jprob212@aol.com](mailto:jprob212@aol.com).

In closing, I wish you easy deadlines and few errors.



# FSPA BOARD VOTES NOT TO EXTEND INVITATION TO JEA/NSPA

BY: JUDY ROBINSON  
*Executive Director, FSPA*

At the 2008 Winter Board Meeting, the FSPA Board voted unanimously not to invite the Journalism Education Association (JEA) and the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA) to Florida for a convention.

National organizations JEA and NSPA have wanted to come to Florida and host its convention in Orlando. You should understand some of the reasons why it would harm FSPA if the national convention were held in Orlando.

This past summer when the finance committee met, it agreed unanimously that FSPA needs our undivided attention.

During the November, 2008 JEA/NSPA convention in St. Louis, Linda Putney, Logan Aimone, Julie Dodd (former FSPA Executive Director)

and I met to discuss again.

There are several of the things you should know about how FSPA would be impacted if JEA/NSPA were to come to Florida. The three areas that need to be taken into consideration:

1. FSPA members' efforts
2. Timing of the convention
3. Finances to keep FSPA services

**Three areas to be considered:**  
**1. FSPA members' efforts**  
**2. Timing of the convention**  
**3. Financial stability for FSPA**

## **Effort**

FSPA is fortunate to have hard working board members. It is a significant commitment to direct a district workshop in addition to advising and

teaching full time. Then, our district directors come together at the Winter Board Meeting and prepare for a large convention in the Spring. The reward of the time and effort

put in is a convention that runs well, with excellent speakers, excited students, and successful experiences in contests.

But our FSPA workers will tire if we overtax them. Would it be fair to ask the people who work so hard to take on one more convention?

Some will say, It could be different people who do the work. Most certainly it would be members of the future. Should FSPA commit future board members to the work of a second convention?

## **Timing & Financial Stability**

JEA/NSPA indicate the convention would be held in the Fall (November) because typically the convention is in the East in the fall and the West in the Spring. If this convention were to come in the fall, should we not have FSPA fall workshops?

FSPA office, which processes memberships, prepares the newsletter, maintains the Web site, and facilitates communication on issues related to scholastic journalism operates with the help of volunteer and paid student staff. Their salaries come from district workshops. Likewise the salary of the coordinator for FSPA's evaluation service comes from workshops. If we did not have workshops in the fall, or if they were impacted by the national convention, should we close down the evaluations service and the office? Research shows that one year can take the wind out of the healthiest of organizations.

Organization such as SIPA (Southeastern Interscholastic Press Association), have considerably lower attendance at their convention in March when the national convention has been held in Atlanta.

Another alternative is to have JEA/NSPA come to Florida in the Spring. It would be pointless to have two conventions running at the same time. Right now and for the past 5-6 years the FSPA convention has run at exactly the same time as the JEA convention.

Should the JEA/NSPA convention replace FSPA for one year? What would happen to FSPA? Could we rebound the next year? Would



Members of the FSPA board met at the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg for the Winter Board Meeting. Photo by Judy Robinson.

we hurt a tradition we have maintained for 63 years? Would we be able to make enough money to keep the organization running until Fall workshops the next year – evaluation service and all?

If you look at the locations where JEA/NSPA hold conventions you will see a pattern. It is highly likely that once JEA/NSPA comes to Florida, it will return in 5 or 6 years. If FSPA hibernates for a year to accommodate the JEA/NSPA convention, will it be healthy to hibernate every 5 years?

Like all organizations, JEA/NSPA want to increase their membership. Would a convention in Florida increase membership for JEA, NSPA and FSPA? If 3,000 students attend FSPA fall workshops and 1,000 attend the Spring convention, will those numbers increase with a JEA/NSPA convention?

FSPA has one of the best convention rates in the country. A publication can join FSPA for \$30, while an adviser's membership in JEA is \$60. Registration for FSPA convention in Spring 2009 is \$75. That includes a T-shirt, banquet, and luncheon for advisers. In Phoenix, Spring 2009, the JEA/NSPA registration is \$85 for early bird members; non members \$105. If you want to attend an advisers' luncheon you pay \$35. T-shirts \$10.

JEA/NSPA typically pay money to the local organization of the state they visit. That amount is \$1.50 per attendee. So, for example for 4,000 paying attendees the local group would make \$6,000. This is the amount one fall workshop, District 6, brings in for one workshop. FSPA fall workshops altogether bring in \$17,000 - \$20,000 in a good (no hurricane) year and that is the money that pays for FSPA's evaluation service, newsletters, membership processing, Winter Board Meeting and more.

What work would the local group do? It prepares goodie bags, helps run the more than 40 contests, recruits contest judges (including local industry experts) helps set up break with a pro (career advice), recruits issues seminar speakers, recruits local speakers, helps coordinate tours on area properties, and arranges transportation and tour guides. For additional money, local/state committees can conduct silent auctions, raffles, or sell T-shirts.

An organization like FSPA requires ongoing momentum. When I took this job as Executive Director three years ago, I met with the accountant who said that FSPA could be bankrupt in three years if we continued as we had been going. It is now year 3 and many people have worked hard to turn things around. Continued vigilance for our growth -- both in membership and finances -- is important.

## Receive FSPA updates on Twitter

BY: SAMANTHA ROGERS  
*FSPA Office Staff*

FSPA will now send "tweets" across the state. Announcements could reach subscribed advisers within seconds of posting, thanks to a Web 2.0 service called Twitter.

Twitter is a social networking site that allows its users to send and receive text messages, or "tweets".

Some people call it "micro-blogging".

FSPA will be posting reminders for deadlines and announcements for its community. Everyone that follows FSPA on Twitter will be notified in via Twitter on the Web or in a text message on your cell.

"Twitter is a quick way to send out notifications to everyone who wants them," FSPA Executive Director Judy Robinson said.

Users can choose who they want to follow and who they want to receive posts from. Each post can have a maximum of 140 characters.

To become a follower of FSPA on Twitter, go to <http://twitter.com/>. After registering, search for FSPA and then "click to follow". If you want to receive the messages on your cell phone, click on "Settings", and you can enter your cell phone number to receive texts.

## Willing, able and talented

BY: JUDY ROBINSON  
*Executive Director, FSPA*

You'll know what I mean because you work with your own staffs on a daily basis. Your staff can be the best part of your job. You know when you enjoy your staff you are fortunate. The proverb "many hands make light work" is never so true as it is in the FSPA office with the staff of 2008-09.

The FSPA office staff is a group of talented, energetic Gator undergraduates. What makes the group special shows up when they are together and solve issues together. There is the teasing and exchange of

wit, but there is also genuine interest in supporting FSPA and understanding how their individual parts come together to help the organization.

Many of you have had e-mail or telephone exchanges with the office staff. You'd be surprised how well they know you, from databases, exchanges, photos and brief meetings at workshops or convention. Some of these students were on their school publications and attended the state convention.

Now, all of them are learning and contributing to helping FSPA function more smoothly and enjoyably.



The FSPA Office Staff: (left) Casey Peterson, Sarah Jones, Ryan Arens, Sarah Watson, Victoria Rich, Kristina Martin Absent: Samantha Rogers

# FSPA DISTRICT DIRECTORS RECAP WORKSHOPS

## FEATURED ARTICLE

BY: VICTORIA RICH

Ryan Arens and Sarah Watson, FSPA Office Staff, contributed to this report

Each year, thousands of students across the state travel to their district workshops in hope of gaining new insight into journalism and discovering ways to improve their school publications.

On Oct. 17, District 2 hosted its first workshop since 2005. More than 80 students attended the workshop held at the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications, said Steve Lindgren, the district's newly elected director.

Students attended a variety of sessions including trends in design, media law and how to succeed in college journalism. There were also interactive sessions teaching Adobe InDesign, Photoshop and Podcasting.

"The speakers, and especially the students, worked very hard to make the workshop a rewarding day," Lindgren said. "I was very proud of the level of the performance and professionalism displayed by everyone involved."

While District 2 was just getting back on its feet, District 7, under Director Steven Jay Thor, hosted nearly 1,300 students at its workshop held at Deerfield Beach High School on Sept. 27.

According to Thor, one of



Steve Lindgren, District 2 Director, (left) with his editor, Alex, pose in Weimer Hall after a successful district 2 workshop.



Susanne Griffith discusses with her group what their next activity might be at the District 2 workshop. Photos by Julie Dodd.

the workshop's highlights was a presentation by the mayor of Deerfield Beach, Albert Capellini, declaring Sept. 27 as "Journalism Day in Deerfield and Broward County."

"It was a banner year for FSPA District 7," Thor said.

The workshop held more than 60 sessions including an opening speech by Jacqui Birch of ABC News and two "Makeup for Broadcast" sessions.

"I hope that everyone left the workshop with new ideas and techniques to their schools and staffs," said Mike Naughton, student convention co-chair from District 7. "I know that every time I

participate in district [workshops] I always learn tons of new things."

The District 6 workshop held at Florida International University on Oct. 11 broke district records with more than 500 students in attendance this year, said Director Mary K. Sullivan. The district also used online registration and communication to reduce the amount of paper used.

The workshop featured three interactive sessions, two for students and one for advisers, about media convergence.

"In the four years I've done it, every year gets better and better," Sullivan said. "But next year, I'd like to really lighten things up a bit and have some fun!"

Although District 4 didn't have an official organizer for the event, the workshop was still a success, said Tiffany Baricko, District 4 director.

"We had some last minute planning with a group that pulled together to make the workshop happen," Baricko said. "Despite that, there were several students

**We are there to take down history as it happens.**

**Liz Godwin,  
Student Co-Chair and  
District 1 Student, said.**

in attendance and many submitted great contest entries and participated in our on-site contests

District 3 will add more variety to their sessions at next year's workshop, said Director Dianne Burd. We plan to offer more broadcast journalism sessions and interactive classes to enhance student's journalism skills.

With these goals for next year's workshop, Burd said she felt this year was a success and students left satisfied with their experiences.

"My favorite part, since this was my first one in planning, was watching everyone arrive and get excited about being there, ready to learn," Burd said.

The earliest district workshop, hosted by District 1 at the University of West Florida on Sept. 26, felt the impact of budget cuts and new school schedules, said director Katie Lane.

Despite these roadblocks 213 students from District 1 attended the workshop's sessions, which student co-chair Liz Godwin said taught her and other students a lot about the journalism field.

"I believe the students always get the same satisfaction out of workshop, by knowing that being a part of press, media, or any type of journalism is a way of life and many would be lost without them," Godwin said. "We are there to take down history as it happens."



Victoria Rich (left) and Sarah Watson assist students in the hands-on workshop on InDesign at District 2 workshop.

Check it out

Florida High School Writers Workshop  
Saturday, Feb. 21, 2009

For more info:

[www.poynter.org/highschoolwriters](http://www.poynter.org/highschoolwriters)

## Poynter Institute hosts Florida High School Writers' Workshop

BY: WENDY W. WALLACE

*Director of High School Journalism Program at Poynter*

I asked school media advisers the biggest obstacle that stood in the way of excellence in their work. I expected technology issues to top the list and it did. Declining enrollment in journalism and the competition for good students also ranked high. So did funding the paper.

What I didn't expect were the advisers' concerns about writing.

"My staff this year is immature and struggling with writing," one adviser wrote. "I'm having trouble accepting the decline in quality of the paper."

The soul of a yearbook, newspaper or online newspaper must be the content -- in words, images and, increasingly, sound and interactivity. Media advisers and others gathered at Poynter in November for the FSPA Winter board meeting and offered these suggestions for boosting students' writing:

1. Introduce students to the 300-word story. Google "Brady Dennis 300 words" for ideas and inspiration.
2. Read well-written stories aloud so students can hear them. Consider excerpts of winning stories from the Best Newspaper Writing books.
3. Help students practice using the "50 Writing Tools" of Poynter's Roy Peter Clark ([www.poynter.org/writingtools](http://www.poynter.org/writingtools))
4. Sign up for the New York Times for your classroom.

I applaud these teachers' passion for writing, and I add one suggestion to the list: Come to Poynter in February for our one-day Florida High School Writers Workshop. Learn interviewing techniques. Focus your writing. Enliven your leads. Enjoy a day with peers from across the state who like writing as much as you do.

The challenges you face in journalism classrooms are many, from prior review and censorship to finding the money for a decent digital camera. You can't do it all, so set priorities and goals. Harness technology to tell stories in interesting, compelling ways. Find students with a passion for journalism and story-telling to bring your school communities to life for readers. Sell ads or candy bars to pay for the newsprint or put your energy behind a well-promoted, interactive Web edition that costs less to publish.

Do what you can. But most of all, tell the stories only your students can tell.

# Journalism 1 restored to proposed practical art credit list

BY: ANNE W. ANDERSON

On again. That's the latest word from the Florida Department of Education about Journalism 1 and the list of courses proposed to receive practical arts credit.

Administrators from around Florida had plenty to say, either in person or via conference call, at the September 30 DOE Rules Development Workshop about both the process and the initial draft list. Industry representatives also attended and spoke.

Carl Leiterman, workforce education director for the Escambia County School District, said the list seemed the result of an electronic word search looking for key terms. Leiterman called this a "restrictive methodology."

Leiterman and others also said more practical arts educators needed to be involved in the

determination process.

Journalism 1, an English elective, has been listed since 1994 as one of about 1,100 Career and Technical Education courses meeting the practical art requirement. The so-called A++ legislation of 2006 removed the practical arts option, requiring all high students to take a fine or performing arts course instead.

This past May, Senate Bill 1908 restored the practical arts option, but defined practical arts courses as being only those Career and Technical Education courses which "incorporate[s] artistic content and techniques of creativity, interpretation, and imagination." A DOE committee determined 98 CTE courses qualified – not including Journalism 1 – and scheduled a public hearing about the list.

As a result of the September 30 workshop, a new advisory group met October 14 and selected 215 CTE courses that will count toward the practical art credit. There will be no further workshops or public input. The list will be presented to the DOE Board at its December meeting.

FSPA president Deb Jepson said members will discuss ways to monitor legislation and improve communication among members about such issues at the FSPA meeting later this month.

*Anne W. Anderson is a freelance journalist and recent Knight Fellow master's graduate of the University of Alabama's journalism program. Learn what Indiana's SPA did when confronted with similar problems in this Poynter JE blog entry, also by Anne W. Anderson.*

