

2015 Women of Influence Nomination

Name of Nominee: Chris Mudge
Company Name: Iowa Newspaper Association
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Briefly describe why this person should receive the award:

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Chris Mudge, Executive Director of the Iowa Newspaper Association, for the Business Record's 2015 Women of Influence Award.

Chris's influence is far-reaching, impacting not only the newspaper professionals, employees and legislators she works with directly but also hundreds of communities across Iowa. INA member newspapers are passionate about quality, success, community development and preserving a free press. They take pride in making a positive difference and improving the quality of life in Iowa. It has been Chris's mission to protect, promote and foster newspapers-- because healthy newspapers protect, promote and foster healthy communities. Chris's success, and subsequently the Iowa Newspaper Association's success, is matched only by her passion for maintaining a future for strong newspapers and her commitment to open meetings, open records and transparency in government.

She began her career and her dedication to the ideals of the INA in 1983 and in 2016 she will retire. She is a rare individual whose personal and professional mission over the course of a career has not wavered. While the media industry has transformed itself, Chris has transformed INA. She believes strongly that "success is what happens when preparedness meets opportunity." To that end, she has always made sure that the INA has been prepared, staying ahead of the industry trends and driving strategic planning with its boards of directors. While most press associations have been downsizing, the INA is growing in staff, in services to its members, in member engagement and in revenues that are reinvested into training and development for future leaders and the communities they serve.

The Iowa Newspaper Association, along with its related foundation and advertising agency, is one of the three top press associations in the country in every measure-- from sales, to membership, to conference attendance. Chris does it all, every day, with 100 percent commitment to being a strong, ethical and driven leader. She stands head and shoulders above her peers across the country and is frequently looked to for advice and guidance.

Beth Bennett, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, wrote:

"There are many admirable qualities that can be assigned to Chris Mudge, both as a professional and as a friend. First, and foremost, Chris is highly respected by fellow state newspaper association managers and a dedicated champion of press rights. Under Chris's direction the INA built one of the most successful state press association

advertising agencies in the country. Customized Newspaper Advertising, the sales arm of the INA, is responsible for placing millions of dollars in newspapers nationwide each year. Chris is respected by her associates and staff for being a person of strong personal and professional conviction. The newspaper industry and the many people that Chris comes in contact with regularly are the beneficiaries of her dedication to the profession of journalism.”

Mike Ralston, President of the Iowa Association of Business and Industry and Iowa Newspaper Foundation Board Member, wrote:

“Chris and her team are forceful advocates for the newspaper industry and that’s just one of the reasons they make Iowa better. But what INA members and others may not know about Chris is her leadership in the association community. Her reputation, her success, her commitment to serving members and to serving our state, are all things that others in association management look to and honor.”

Her leadership within the organization is amazing. I’d like to word it in a more professional way, but the fact is she is an amazing leader. Her entire team respects her, considers her a role model and follows her lead. Her passion is contagious. Her moral compass is always pointed to true North and frankly, she is an extremely strategic thinker. She loves and appreciates the association’s members, the communities they serve, customers and employees. She’s the real deal.

On her 30th anniversary with INA, an employee wrote,

“Chris, you’ve been a wonderful leader during my years at the INA. I have learned more and enjoyed more than I thought possible for nine short years. Thank you for your continued dedication and passion for the industry and for what you do; it makes us all want to try harder and be better at what we do. My goal is to be like you when I grow up. ☺”

Another employee wrote,

“No matter the situation, you are always a picture of strength and leadership. I appreciate everything you have done for the Iowa Newspaper Association, the newspapers of Iowa and for me personally. You have made my time at the INA more enjoyable and you are one of the many reasons I continue to love and appreciate my job every day.”

Chris’s impact in Iowa will live on for years to come with the nearly 300 successful newspapers that she provides guidance to and advocates for every day. During the legislative season, she wears out the path between her office and the capitol, advocating on behalf of these newspapers and of the citizens of Iowa. It should be comforting for Iowans to know that when the special interest organizations are working their contacts and leads during the legislative session, Iowans have Chris Mudge working for them.

Notable Accomplishments:

- Under Chris's direction, Customized Newspaper Advertising increased advertising revenues from less than one million in 1983 to over \$13 million in 2014. Chris Mudge was the first salesperson and only salesperson for the Iowa Newspaper Association in 1983, and went on to lead its growth and directed its success as Marketing Director, Assistant Director and eventually as Executive Director.
- Online Media Campus, a partnership between the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and the Iowa Newspaper Foundation, was launched in 2010. It has provided high-quality, low-cost online training to nearly 18,000 media professionals across the United States and Canada. This training offers newspaper staff access to cutting-edge information they can use to improve their publications in today's evolving media landscape.
- The Iowa Newspaper Association Convention and Trade Show is annually among the largest state press association gatherings in the country. Approximately 700 Iowa newspaper employees and journalism students gather for two days of training, networking and awards presentations.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me directly.

Susan Patterson Plank | Sales & Marketing Director

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Employment Timeline

Chris Mudge

Executive Director, Iowa Newspaper Association

In 1982, fresh out of the Drake journalism school, Chris accepted a sales position at what was then the Iowa Daily Press Association. When IDPA and the Iowa Press Association merged in 1983 to become what is now the Iowa Newspaper Association, Chris became the first and (at that time) only sales representative. Chris quickly demonstrated her zeal for the business and within two years was named Marketing Director. Shortly thereafter, in 1985, she became Assistant Executive Director. In 2009 Mudge was named Executive Director.

Today Customized Newspaper Advertising, the INA's sales arm, is among the top three state press association ad services. CNA advertising sales volume to Iowa newspapers and newspapers across the country has grown from less than one million in 1982 to as much as \$15 million annually in recent years.

In 2008, CNA became the sales, planning and placement arm of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association and of the Michigan Press Association in 2013. Partnering with other state press associations to provide one of our core competencies (advertising sales) provides additional revenue to CNA to grow business for Iowa newspapers and has been a strategic goal of the INA Services Co. Board of Directors for several years.

Since taking the helm of the organization, Chris has turned her attention to protecting newspapers in the legislature, ensuring the future of our industry through the work of the Iowa Newspaper Foundation and exploring alliances with other organizations that enhance the programs and services the INA offers its members.

In 2010, the foundation launched Online Media Campus, a partnership with the Southern Newspaper Publishers' Association, providing training for newspaper representatives in over 40 states. A couple of years later, in response to the boards' focus on ensuring the future of the industry through connecting with the next generation of journalists, the INF hosted its first journalism summer camp for high school students, in partnership with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry.

And, in 2012, after advocating for six years for the creation of an agency to enforce Iowa's open meetings and open records laws, the legislature created the Iowa Public Information Board. This enforcement agency enables any Iowa newspaper, local government official or citizen to file a complaint when it believes there has been a violation of Iowa's sunshine laws.

"I have been blessed to work in a state with a strong newspaper culture and with some of the most committed people I've ever known," said Mudge. "The INA has grown to be among the top state press associations in the country because of the dedicated, visionary leaders that have served, and continue to serve, on its three boards of directors and its many committees."

A high point of Chris' career came when she contributed \$5,000 to the Iowa Newspaper Foundation, and was recognized as a Heritage Club Member, joining many others whom she respects and admires.

Board members over the years have been quick to praise Chris as being "ethical, customer service oriented" and note her uncanny ability to surround herself with great employees and then to help them succeed.