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**Altoona Mirror Publisher Ed Kruger  
to receive PNA Benjamin Franklin Award for Excellence**

HARRISBURG, Pa. (March 5, 2020) — The Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association (PNA) is proud to present the 2020 Benjamin Franklin Award for Excellence to Ed Kruger, publisher of the Altoona Mirror. The Benjamin Franklin Award was established in 1998 to recognize outstanding service that reflects positively on the news media industry in Pennsylvania.

Former Altoona Mirror General Manager Ray Eckenrode wrote in his nomination letter, “Ed came to Altoona after the Mirror was sold by Thomson Newspapers and purchased by Ogden, intending to stay for a year or two as a transitional publisher. Equipped with the two mantras that had served him well in his career – ‘Newspapers make everything better’ and ‘The speed of the leader is the speed of the team’ – Ed dug in and immediately changed the culture in Altoona.”

Mike Christman, regional publisher for Ogden Newspapers, wrote, “Ed has been with Ogden Newspapers for 60 years and he can still run circles around most younger publishers and employees. Every newspaper that Ed has led was left better than when he arrived. Everyone who was anyone in the community knew Ed Kruger and Ed knew them, including their families. Most importantly, Ed knew the lady behind the dry cleaner’s counter and their family.”

In addition to challenging the newsroom to move beyond crime and courts to find stories, Kruger inspired the sales staff to put down the phones and step into the community and local businesses. Managing Editor Neil Rudel wrote, “Ed Kruger came to Altoona in 1998 and changed the culture of the Mirror. He stressed community involvement, broke down past walls and created an air of approachability in enhancing the Mirror as a community newspaper.

“Among his newsroom contributions: He added a daily community page, a weekly Religion section and a 16-page Penn State football Gameday tabloid during football season. He stressed having a place for everything – even if a chicken dinner didn’t belong on Page 1, it could be placed without journalistic compromise in the community section.”

According to Operations Manager Dan Slep, Kruger coordinated meet and greet luncheons with advertisers, community leaders and readers. “This was very helpful for all of us as we found out what was important to our advertisers and readers. In some cases, we realized we weren’t doing enough for both and changes were put into effect as we became more local, local, local.”

Eckenrode noted that branding became an obsession for Kruger. He placed thousands of coffee mugs in local diners and restaurants across a five-county region emblazoned with his favorite marketing slogan “Making It Happen For You.”

“Mirror employees chuckled, at first,” Eckenrode wrote. “What was “it” exactly and how do we make it happen? But as proved to be the case with many of Ed’s best ideas, what seemed a little crazy at first revealed itself to be inspired over time. ‘It’ was that intangible thing a newspaper brings to a community. It was the pride on your face when your son’s picture was on the Little League page, the melancholy you felt reading a long-lost classmate’s obituary and the pride that surrounded reading a review of a performance by the local symphony.”

Kruger has been instrumental in numerous Altoona Mirror initiatives, including establishing a page devoted to “‘chicken dinner news’ – the community items with the faces and names of reader after reader” and working with the Chamber of Commerce to develop a monthly business publication. He oversaw the expansion of the company’s Yellow Pages division, Ogden Directories. In 2011, he created a digital agency in Altoona, which has grown to \$3 million in sales nationwide. He led a push for public records, including going to court to gain access to coroner’s reports. Under his leadership, the newsroom has received more than 100 awards in PNA contests.

Slep closed his nomination letter by stating, “In the 20+ years he’s spent in Altoona, Ed’s remained true to his vision of a local, local, local newspaper that values its employees and a fun work place atmosphere. At 78, he brings more enthusiasm to the job every day than many 28 year olds. He’s truly deserving of recognition for his contributions to the Mirror and newspaper industry.”

The award will be presented at the PNA Annual Dinner on Tuesday evening, March 31 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center in Hershey, Pa.

**About PNA:**

The PNA, founded in 1925, is the nonprofit trade association for print and online news media in Pennsylvania. Its mission is to advance the business interests of Pennsylvania news media organizations and to promote the importance of a free and independent press. It has more than 300 newspaper and media-related members, including daily, weekly and collegiate newspapers and online news publications.

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