

Holiday Special Sections Combine Traditional and Native Advertising to Produce \$18,000 Revenue

A long-running special sections program focuses on local kids, businesses and events for a hometown holiday feel.



➤ Check out the Ruston Daily Leader "Season's Greetings" section

Ruston Daily Leader
Ruston, Louisiana



➤ Check out the Ruston Daily Leader "Shop Local" section

CREATE: For years, the Ruston Daily Leader's "Shop Local" and "Season's Greetings" special sections have been successful staples of their Christmas season advertising program. The articles in their "Shop Local" section incorporate traditional and native advertising with helpful input from a variety of area business owners. For instance, a local restaurant and bakery share how their businesses can help feed a holiday crowd, while a local boutique owner adds her take on holiday decor trends. The section also includes a holiday calendar featuring local events from the downtown community. The newspaper's "Season's Greetings" section is anchored by letters to Santa from area kids, and includes a wealth of greeting ad templates from local businesses. Publisher Celeste Holley sends deadlines and requirements to area schools for the publication's "Dear Santa" pages a month ahead of publication. She says schools allot specific times for the students to participate, and the paper offers to pick up the letters to Santa.

SELL: The Ruston Daily Leader offers a discount to advertisers if they participate in both of the holiday sections. Holley says they use Metro templates and images to create spec ads for the publications. She explains, "This helps us close faster because advertising executives do not have to wait on our graphics team to create the ad. Our sections feature a good mix from our staff writers as well as Metro."

PROFIT: Holley reports that "Shop Local" and "Season's Greetings" generated combined revenue of \$18,000 for the paper last year.

Celeste Holley
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Ruston, Louisiana
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Did You Know?

Metro's Holiday Advertising Service includes three new turnkey special sections that are ready to publish in print and online, plus access to additional sections from the Holiday archive.

Learn more about Metro's Holiday Advertising Service by hovering over the Holiday tab along the top of our website. Learn more about Metro's Themed Special Sections program by hovering over the Learn More tab along the top of our website, then look for Themed Special Sections listed under Metro Advertising Services.

Three-Tier Advertising Package Program Brings in \$30,000 Holiday Revenue

A local newspaper's highly successful selling strategy combines traditional print and digital ads with direct mail and special section advertising.



Niagara Gazette
Niagara Falls, New York

CREATE: To revitalize their holiday season revenue strategy, the Niagara Gazette created a holiday package deal that offers local businesses print and digital ads, direct mail marketing, and special section advertising using Metro's turnkey Themed Special Sections. Their three-part package includes a predetermined amount of print and digital newspaper space, which advertisers use at their discretion throughout the season; online-only quarter-, half- or full-page ad spots in four holiday special sections; and direct mail advertising. Publisher Cheryl Phillips explains, "The unique factor is that the Metro sections are 100 percent online. It allowed us to offer a three-tiered package price and coincided with quarter, half and full pages in the special sections. It really is a great program since it checks off all the boxes and we get more of a business's holiday advertising budget because of all the options included."



> Check out the Niagara Gazette Holiday Gift Guide

SELL: The team starts planning their holiday program in late August, reps begin selling the packages by October, and they launch the digital special sections throughout the month of November in advance of the holiday buying season. They typically publish one online section per week, beginning with the first week of November. Phillips notes, "We promote the holiday sections as 'Holiday Headquarters' in print, on our homepage and through social media channels. All of the advertisers have live hyperlinks to redirect to their websites. The digital versions become a destination for readers to digest all the holiday content at their leisure, and it creates an immediate buying opportunity should they click on an ad."

PROFIT: Phillips reports that over the last three years, the publication has averaged about \$30,000 to \$35,000 in revenue each year. She adds, "The Metro sections allow us to use content that is appealing to our readers and create a vehicle to give added exposure and value to our advertisers."

Cheryl Phillips
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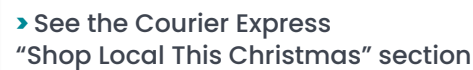
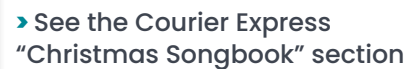
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With a Fun-Filled Holiday Program That Sustains Community and Advertiser Engagement All Season

Courier Express DuBois, PA



SELL: Advertising Director Carolyn Skaggs says the team starts planning and selling holiday projects and special sections in September. Sales reps are able to selectively bundle advertising at a reduced rate for regular advertisers. Skaggs says advertisers are quick to reserve space in their full-color glossy holiday tri-folds, which include upcoming holiday events that give the product a longer shelf life. She says they also produce two Christmas Songbooks due to this section theme's popularity. They include recipes, coloring pages and holiday planning tips in these Songbook sections, so there's something for everyone. She adds, "Our 'Who's Your Santa' contest is a reader favorite because everyone loves the chance to win lottery tickets. Our advertisers like the contest because it drives new customers to visit their business to drop off the entry form." The contest runs as a collective full page with entry forms for each of the 10 participating businesses. Bonus ads run ROP during the contest as part of the package.



Who's Your
Santa?

The Courier Express and Tri-County Weekend and these local businesses!

Carolyn Skaggs
Advertising Director
Courier Express/Tri-County Weekend/
Jeffersonian Democrat/Leader
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"Who's Your Santa" runs for a two-week period in November, with four different contests in four publications, each with 10 contest participants. One random winner from each participating business wins a stocking stuffed with \$90 in PA Lottery tickets. Advertisers pay one price for the contest box to collect the entry forms and for inclusion on all promotional ads for the contest.

“Letters to Santa” Edition Unites Community & Advertisers

The Prairie Press wraps up ad sales from more than 60 local businesses with an annual tradition that presents letters to Santa from their community’s kids!

The Prairie Press
Paris, IL

CREATE: The Prairie Press publishes their Letters to Santa edition just ahead of Christmas each year. To gather submissions, their team reaches out to educators across the county at the start of the school year. Letters are collected through mid-November, then formatted by the Prairie Press editorial team. Letters to Santa 2024 featured 24 pages of letter content from local kids, alongside holiday greeting ads from local businesses. The team used a Metro cover design to introduce this keepsake section, as well as a variety of ad templates and images from Metro’s Holiday Advertising Service.

The Prairie Press
101 North Central Avenue
Paris, IL 61944
(217) 921-3216
www.prairiepress.net



SELL: Cliff Macke, Director of Sales and Marketing, notes that the publication signs up many of their clients for opportunities throughout the year in January, including advertising in Letters to Santa. Sales efforts are ramped up considerably as they enter the final quarter of the year.

PROFIT: Last year’s Letters to Santa edition produced ad sales from more than 60 advertisers. By partnering with educators, kids and families to publish hundreds of letters from kids around the county each year, it also brings about a wealth of reader and community engagement.

AD SALES FROM MORE THAN **60 LOCAL BUSINESSES!**



View the Entire Prairie Press "Letters to Santa" Section Here

Create your own Letters to Santa feature using the Metro cover designs, page templates, promotions and images included with your subscription!

[> Access Your "Letters to Santa" Content](#)

'Elf magic' can be a great tool to boost your holiday ad sales

Byline: Robert M. Williams Jr., NNA director of creative resources

Editor's Note: This column first appeared in the April 2025 issue of Publishers' Auxiliary, the newspaper of the National Newspaper Association Foundation. NNA members have access to the Great Ideas bank online at <https://www.nnafoundation.org/great-ideas>

Being creative is a vital key to boosting your local ad sales revenue! And Deborah Farmer, ad sales manager for the Adel News Tribune in Adel, Georgia, has two extraordinary, innovative ideas that have produced consistent popularity and extra revenue in her rural market deep in South Georgia.

The first is a 24-page soft cover booklet themed around the Christmas holidays. It was inspired by a Metro graphics promotion featuring a holiday elf. The Adel News Tribune built upon the Metro idea in grand fashion by bringing the cartoon elf to life! Farmer's son was a good sport and dressed up in an elf costume and posed for photos with business owners and employees. It was just the right touch to spark extra sales for the holidays.

This Metro Creative Graphics promo section was the spark that helped Georgia's Adel News Tribune bring 'Itsy the Elf' to life and boost their holiday ad sales.

To show more creativity, Farmer wrote a story of her community's history, as told to the elf, and created even more local interest! The newspaper also provided 2,000 extra copies to the local elementary and primary schools.

Here's how Farmer describes it:

"The story was written to educate the children, and the parents who read the story to them, on the history of Cook County, and just how our City of Adel got its name," says Farmer.

"We used Itsy the Elf and Bitsy, his dog, as the main characters in our first books, but in our latest book, we introduced his Grandpa Jack, who told the history lesson to Itsy."

Deborah's second innovative idea is a calendar featuring locally contributed photographs that not only showcase the local community and its people, but also the significant photography talent in Farmer's small community.

The local hospital and related facilities bought the back cover of the calendar.

Here's the story of the Adel News Tribune's successful calendar promo in Deborah Farmer's own words:

"We always get hundreds of submissions for the contest each year," Farmer explains.

"The photographs must be taken in Cook County and by Cook County residents. Each submission is sent via email to me, and they provide me with the location where the photo was taken. We have the photos judged by an independent photographer not in our area to make it fair.

"I am the only one who knows who sent what group of photos. We had to start limiting them to five submissions per contestant. I list the submissions with and without the names, and provide the list without names to the judge.



"The winners have their photo with photo credit placed on a particular month on the calendar, and there is also a separate winner for the cover, as well. I offer advertising space to customers on a first-come, first-served basis for their choice of a particular month they want their ad placed.

"This causes a 'rush' to commit, and customers who own businesses such as jewelry, floral, etc., like specific months according to holidays, and their ads reflect the same. The hospital, school board, city, county offices and domestic violence centers like to be on a page where we provide local contact phone numbers.

"This is a very popular calendar, as some of our businesses pay extra for additional copies to hand out to their customers, since their wholesalers no longer send them stacks every year like they used to.

"So this is a win-win for both our local businesses and their customers, local community support, subscription/rack sales, and advertising revenue."

Creative thinking makes money in Adel, Georgia! Such innovative ideas can make money in your town, too!

Robert M. Williams Jr. is a longtime community newspaper publisher from Blackshear, Georgia. He was NNA president in 2013-14 and is now acting as NNA director of creative resources. He is available for consultation on how to create more revenue, help you deal with inevitable newspaper issues or be a sympathetic ear for NNA members looking for an experienced publisher to listen. Email him at robert@nna.org or call at (912) 281-5438 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. ET, Monday-Friday.



This four-part Itsy the Elf Special Section storybook series is included with Metro's Holiday Advertising Service!

To learn more, click on the **Holiday mega menu tab** at [MetroCreativeConnection.com](https://www.metrocreativeconnection.com).

Holiday Gift Guide Wraps Up \$80K in Advertising Revenue

My Horry News Horry County, South Carolina

Winning formula for a successful Holiday Gift Guide puts local advertisers and events in the spotlight.

CREATE: Last holiday season, My Horry News customized and expanded on a Themed Special Section from Metro to produce a successful 71-page Holiday Gift Guide packed with festive features and local touches. In addition to Metro editorial features, their section included upcoming concerts and community events, a variety of engaging contests, and plenty of local advertising. Contest promotions ran in the print and digital section, as well as on social media, driving traffic to the publication's website for online entry.



Shari Harms, Advertising Director, My Horry News
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SELL: Advertising Director Shari Harms says the publication packages their printed Holiday Gift Guide with holiday contests, digital products and social media promotions each year to get people excited about the holiday season. The sales team uses the previous year's gift guide as a selling tool for new and returning advertisers, and publishing the section the week before Thanksgiving gives them another selling point: Harms says clients appreciate that their advertising is not lost among inserts from the big box stores that come out the week of Thanksgiving! My Horry News starts promoting and selling the section about two months before publishing. In addition to running the section as an insert and online, the publication delivers at least 10 copies of the Holiday Gift Guide to every advertiser for distribution at their business.

PROFIT: Last year's Holiday Gift Guide featured over 100 advertisers, plus contest and event sponsors. Harms says that readers and advertisers alike look forward to receiving the guide each year, and it typically produces over \$80,000 for the publication, including the print, digital and contest components. Harms adds, "Metro content is a great help for our small publication. We don't have a budget for content curators, so your templates and content help keep our Holiday Gift Guide fresh and up to date."

Metro's Holiday Advertising Service Includes FOUR THEMED HOLIDAY SECTIONS!

To learn more, call 800.223.1600, email service@metro-email.com or browse Services from the Learn More tab at MetroCreativeConnection.com.