

Nebraska Press Women Fall Conference
Oct. 10-11, 2025

From Dynamic to Deserted: Nebraska's Evolving Newscape

Hotel Garber
346 N. Webster St., Red Cloud



Photo Courtesy willacather.org.
Ashley Olson

Red Cloud has used its history to help ensure its future. National Willa Cather Center Executive Director Ashley Olson has been a key part of that effort. During Olson's tenure, the center's assets have grown by more than \$13 million. Other achievements include construction of a museum and archive in the Moon Block building; a permanent exhibit, "American Bittersweet: The Life and Writing of Willa Cather;" and securing a National Park Service grant to restore Cather's childhood home.

Olson will offer insights on how Nebraska communities can promote themselves as vibrant business hubs and discuss how Cather's journalism experience shaped the author's creative writing.



Photo by Lori Potter

A larger-than-life-size statue of author Willa Cather at the National Cather Center in Red Cloud is one of many attractions on pre- and post-conference tours.

For tour details, see PAGE 3.

As newspapers and local broadcast stations close and newsrooms downsize, much of Nebraska has become what professor Jessica Walsh of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln calls a "news desert." Walsh will share her research that shows what's happened to Nebraska's news industry in a session that also looks at communities suffer from being in a news desert, and what some Nebraska journalists have done to keep local news in their communities.



Photo Courtesy unl.edu
Jessica Walsh

Walsh will also participate in a panel discussion about the future of local news and the ways Nebraska journalists are addressing their communities' need for news. Her news map can be found at newsmap.unl.edu.



(From Left: Karen Nelson, founder of the Bertrand Town Square; Shannon Siebert, owner and editor of the Heartland Beat; and Brian Neben, editor and director of digital content for Central Nebraska Today).

three central Nebraska innovators in a panel discussion about the future of local news and their efforts to address the challenges posed by news deserts.

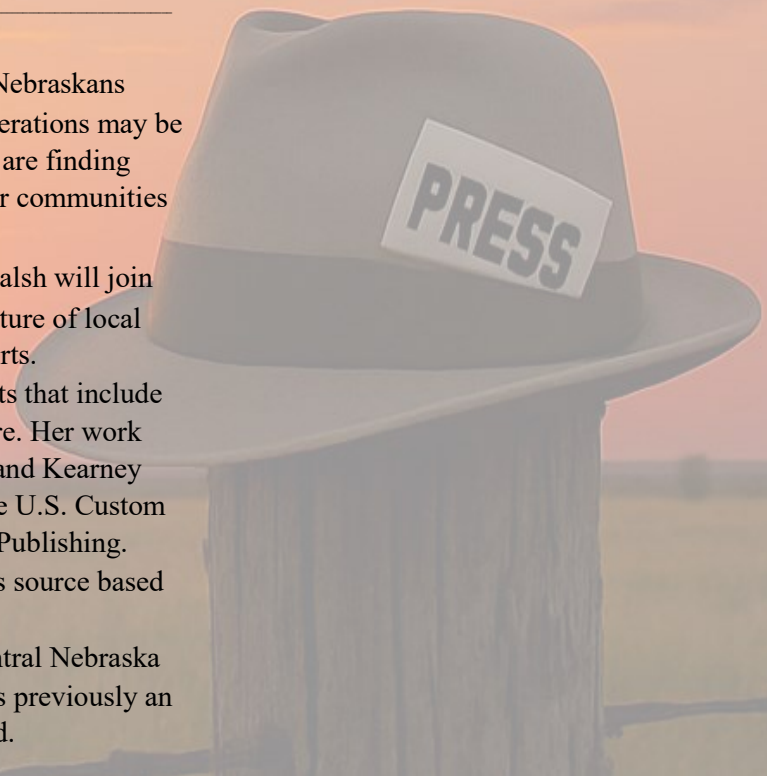
Karen Nelson is a freelance editor and designer of print products that include the tiniest (probably) newspaper in Nebraska, Bertrand Town Square. Her work experience includes editing and design for the Bethany Messenger and Kearney Hub newspapers; Harvest News, a magazine-style newsletter for the U.S. Custom Harvesters; and Connections Online, a Lutheran magazine by Sola Publishing.

Shannon Siebert owns and edits Heartland Beat, an online news source based in Henderson, which she founded in 2010.

Brian Neben is the editor and director of digital content for Central Nebraska Today, a news website founded by a branch of NRG Media. He was previously an award-winning reporter and editor for the Lexington Clipper-Herald.

The news sources Nebraskans have turned to for generations may be fading, but journalists are finding new ways to keep their communities informed.

UN-L's Jessica Walsh will join



Conference Schedule

Friday, Oct. 10

(Pre-tour and supper only available with conference registration by Saturday, Sept. 22)

Noon — Lunch on your own. Subway, The Palace, Juan's Bar and Grill, and Alley Cats are downtown options, or bring a picnic lunch to eat in the nearby park.

1:30-4 p.m. — Guided tour starting at the National Willa Cather Center, 413 N. Webster St. Carpool visits to Cather's childhood home, Burlington Depot and Grace Episcopal Church.

4-5 p.m. — Glassblowing demonstration (limited to 15 registrants).

6 p.m. — Supper at Hotel Garber lower level. Open to conference registrants for \$18 per person.

7 p.m. — Board meeting at Hotel Garber third-floor loft, followed by hospitality and networking time.

Saturday, Oct. 11

All events in Hotel Garber's lower level conference room, 346 N. Webster St.

9-9:30 a.m. — Registration

9:30-10:30 a.m. — NPW membership meeting

10:45-11:15 a.m. — "Packaging the Prairie" presentation by Ashley Olson on promoting hometown attractions and activities.

11:15 a.m.-noon — "From Reporter to Author: Cather as a Journalist," presentation by Ashley Olson.

Noon-1:30 p.m. — Communicator of Achievement lunch in Hotel Garber breakfast room.

1:45-2:30 p.m. — "Nebraska's News Deserts" presentation and Q&A with Jessica Walsh.

2:45-3:30 p.m. — "Tomorrow's Newscape" panel discussion on ways to bring local news back into deserted areas.

3:30 p.m. — Post-convention tour of a new exhibit on Red Cloud's early history and pioneers at the Farmers & Merchants Bank building, next to the hotel.

Historic and Creative Red Cloud



Photo Courtesy visitedredcloud.org

The Cather family place of worship from 1922, Grace Episcopal Church was restored by the Willa Cather Foundation. Cather donated the stained glass windows in honor of her parents and the communion rail in honor of her brother.



This formal parlor (left) is part of Willa Cather's childhood home, which was recently restored and is a National Historic Landmark.

Visitors also see Cather's attic bedroom, which she is believed to have wall-papered herself. She describes the home in her novel "The Song of the Lark."



Taylor Moore (left), a Kearney artist who specializes in glassblowing, has opened a workshop in a former drive-in restaurant in Red Cloud. He will demonstrate glassblowing technique for a small group of conference participants at his business, The Shape of My Space.

Photos courtesy Lori Potter

Red Cloud loves to show off. The home of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather, the town is full of historical and artistic treasures.

Guided tours of the town's best-known attractions are available only with conference registrations paid by Sept. 22. The pre-tour will include stops at the home where Cather grew up, the restored train depot and Cather's family church.

The first 15 registrants will also see a glassblowing demonstration by Kearney artist Taylor Moore, who helps keep Red Cloud's creative tradition alive.



Willa Cather boarded trains at the Burlington Depot when traveling to and from Red Cloud, which was on the mainline of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad. At one time eight passenger trains a day passed through.



At left are the Hotel Garber and Farmers & Merchants Bank, the sites for NPW's fall conference and post-tour. The bank (on the right), was built in 1888 by former Nebraska Gov. Silas Garber. An exhibit about Red Cloud's early years recently opened in the bank's lower level.

2025 Fall Conference Registration

Registration Deadline is Monday, Sept. 22

Name:

Address:

Contact (phone and/or email):

_____ Member full registration - \$40

_____ Non-member full registration - \$50

_____ Saturday lunch only - \$20

NOTE: A full registration includes Friday afternoon's pre-tour and Saturday afternoon's post-tour. The tours, which are covered by a sponsor, are ONLY for paid conference registrants, who must indicate below if they will participate.

CHECK box or boxes that apply to you:

_____ Attending pre-tour

_____ Attending glassblowing demonstration (limited to first 15 registrants, who will be notified)

_____ Attending post-tour

FRIDAY SUPPER: The pre-board meeting supper is open to anyone with a reservation by Monday, Sept. 22. The \$18 cost per meal must be paid to the NPW treasurer, who will write one check for all meals.

_____ I will attend the Friday, Oct. 10, NPW supper.

_____ I will NOT attend the Friday, Oct. 10, NPW supper.

SEND this form and registration payment by Monday, Sept. 22 to:

NPW Treasurer Lori Potter

4437 Parkwood Lane

Kearney, NE 68845

*******Or register at nebraskapresswomen.org*******

HOTEL GARBER ROOMS

ROOM RESERVATION DEADLINE: The NPW block of rooms will be held until Wednesday, Sept. 10.

NPW has reserved 20 rooms in downtown Red Cloud's new Hotel Garber for Friday, Oct. 10. There are 13 with two queen beds and a rate of \$159 plus tax per night, and seven with one king bed for \$149 per night. Those rates also will apply to NPW members for the night of Saturday, Oct. 11, depending on room availability.

A hot breakfast buffet served in the hotel's lower level creative space room is included.

RESERVATION LINK: <https://resnexus.com/resnexus/reservations/group/D0EF5644-1E8E-461A-8577-0E3FA30ACE5E?GID=3b5cf992-feef-4089-8986-55bd1ef9a1eb>

CONTACT: info@hotelgarber.com or 402-746-2545.