

For Immediate Release

Press Club will provide funding for enterprise stories

As the industry wonders who will pay for great journalism, the Press Club steps up to the plate.

The Press Club of Metropolitan St. Louis has established a fund to spur enterprise reporting in our region.

Fellowship awards of up to \$10,000 will be given to journalists who propose stories that will shine a light on an under-reported community topic. The project may be investigative or explanatory in nature and must be published in print, online or broadcast locally. The money can be used to cover expenses, travel or simply pay for a reporter's time in preparing the story.

The fellowship program is offered at a time when the region's media outlets are suffering through the worst recession in decades and have cut their staffs and reporting budgets.

“With each passing day, we see journalistic resources drying up in this community and we want to help,” said Press Club President Dick Weiss. “We all have a stake in maintaining a vibrant press.”

Weiss and his wife, Sally Altman, provided \$5,000 to kick off the fellowship effort in memory of Weiss's late parents, Richard M. and Helen Weiss, both of whom were active in local media. The Press Club matched that amount with \$5,000 from its own treasury. The club also plans to raise more money for the program through fundraisers and solicitations. Weiss said he would like to see grants amounting to \$50,000 in the first year – perhaps spawning as many as a dozen groundbreaking stories.

“Great journalism is both labor intensive and at times costly,” Weiss said. “If we want to see reporting that genuinely improves and enhances civic life, we will have to find a way to pay for it. One way to do that is to reach into our pockets and make a donation just as we do for other civic assets, such as the Saint Louis Symphony, Art Museum, and Forest Park. In this case, the assets are our region's talented journalists.”

All journalists in print, broadcast, and online are eligible to submit a story idea and apply for a grant. The program is open to both full-time employees at any one of the area's media outlets and to freelancers.

Weiss said the fellowship program could be a boon to journalists who have been recently laid off from their jobs and others who have been asked to take furloughs. “We will also consider applications from full-time journalists who know their employers would not

otherwise be able to give the time to do an ambitious story,” Weiss said. “Our goal is simply to increase the number of enterprise stories readers and viewers will see in local media.”

Applications from area journalists will be reviewed by a Press Club committee. Selection criteria will include the applicant’s demonstrated commitment to reporting stories with a strong local interest, the impact the proposed story will have on the community and a determination of which candidates most need the resources.

Proposals will be considered as they are submitted so that the stories can be produced on a timely basis.

More information on how to both donate to the program and apply for fellowships can be found on the Press Club’s website at stlpressclub.org