

Journal announces two promotions, new staff members - SENECA

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SENECA - The Journal announced two promotions and three recently hired employees this week.

Riley Morningstar has moved from reporter to news editor, and Larry Davidson has been promoted from advertising representative to The Journal's new advertising director.

MORNINGSTAR PROMOTED TO NEWS EDITOR Morningstar joined The Journal staff in August 2018 and has covered a variety of beats in Oconee and Pickens counties. A 2018 graduate of Clemson University, he married his wife, Abby, in May. They live in Seneca.

In addition to his role as news editor, Morningstar will also continue covering a variety of beats for The Journal, including Oconee County government.

"Riley has been with us since 2018. He's done everything we've asked of him and he has earned this opportunity," said Hal Welch, general manager for Edwards Publications, which owns The Journal. "We could not be more proud of his growth and maturation during this process, and we are looking for big things from him and the entire staff."

Morningstar said he is enjoying the new challenge.

"I'm so grateful to have been given the chance to head up The Journal's editorial team," he said. "I have a lot of people to thank and will never take this opportunity for granted. For nearly three years, I've grown as a person and reporter in a community that my wife and I care deeply about. I look forward to building relationships with people I know and look forward to meeting many others. As far as I'm concerned, the editor's office door is open at all times to our readers and the public."

Morningstar can be reached by email at rmorningstar@upstatetoday.com or by phone at (864) 973-6685.

DAVIDSON NAMED NEW ADVERTISING DIRECTOR A native of Detroit, Davidson has worked in newspaper and magazine advertising sales for 24 years, including 17 years in his home state. He also worked in Wichita, Kan., and Springfield, Ill., before coming to Seneca in 2015.

He was also trained as a chef in classic French cuisine and was the banquet chef at The Palace of Auburn Hills - former home of the Detroit Pistons - for two years. "Larry has been with The Journal for over five years now in our advertising department," Welch said. "I'd asked him to take the director's role a few years ago, but he declined. This time when it came open, he stepped up, and we're glad he did. His leadership and experience are exactly what we needed in that role."

Davidson said his experience has prepared him for the job.

"I feel that 24 years in the newspaper business has given me the tools to be successful," he said. "Having an experienced and talented sales staff certainly helps in this fast-paced industry. I enjoy the day-to-day environment - no two days are alike. I am very happy to have landed in Seneca and look forward to continuing the success of such a great local newspaper."

Davidson said one of his goals is to "bring more awareness to our Keep It Local program and our Celebrate Community program."

"I am a firm believer in supporting locally owned shops," he said. "The Celebrate Community program, also known as 'Good Works,' provides sponsors with an opportunity to donate to local charities and nonprofits. We recently awarded over \$20,000 with funds gathered during 2020. With a few more sponsors, we could do so much more for our local charities."

Davidson can be reached at (864) 882-2375.

OTHER RECENTLY HIRED EMPLOYEES Lauren Pierce is a reporter covering Walhalla and West Union, along with the Oconee County Planning Commission, Oconee County Parks, Recreation and Tourism and other beats. She is a graduate of the University of Central Florida, where she covered everything from campus news to feature stories and worked for a couple of magazines in the Orlando area. Before joining The Journal, Lauren was a freelance writer for the newspaper and its sister publication, Upstate Lake Living magazine.

Pierce "Lauren was writing for us on occasion as a contractor, and when we had a position come open, it just seemed like a natural fit to ask her to fill it," Welch said. "She brings an energy and enthusiasm to the newsroom that is refreshing."

Jerry Beard joined The Journal as staff photographer in April. A native of Pennsylvania, he said he was inspired by the movie "Under Fire"

and began taking pictures as a stringer for newspapers in the early 1980s after attending a two-year technical school in Philadelphia for electro-mechanical design.

He served in the U.S. Merchant Marine onboard the RV Knorr - best known as the ship that supported researchers as they discovered the wreck of the Titanic - as communications and electronics officer off and on from 2004 to 2015.

He returned to photography in 2018, shooting food and architecture for several European-based

Beard companies, obtaining a freelance contract with the Associated Press and working for Sun Media Group in Florida.

"Jerry has a professional portfolio that would rival anyone, and we're lucky to have him," Welch said. "We look forward to getting the rest of his family moved up from Florida as soon as we can."

Keith Fricks joined The Journal staff in May as the new classifieds manager. He was born in Georgia, but has lived in Westminster since he was 2 years old. He attended Tri-County Technical College, where he studied business. He worked in the finance industry before coming to The Journal.

"Keith is new to the newspaper business, but he's adapted very quickly to a fast-paced, high-pressure environment," Welch said. "His customer service skills have been on display since day one, and we look forward to his growth in this role."

Fricks

- **Caption:** Davidson Morningstar. Pierce. Beard. Fricks.

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