



National Newspaper Association  
309 S Providence Rd  
Columbia, MO 65203  
573.777.4980 Fax: 573.777.4985

**Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award  
2014  
NNA Checklist**

Nominee Name: Melissa Hanna

Newspaper Name & Location: Aiken Standard, Aiken, SC

Nominated by: Ellen Priest

Age: 37

NNA Membership Information: Member through 6/30/2015; verified 5/4/2015  
~~6/30/2014; verified 5/12/2014~~

Year Nominated/Last Year Eligible for Award: 2014/2016

Completed Nomination Form?: YES

Completed Nomination Letter?: YES

Documentation Supporting Nomination Criteria to Support the Areas Below? -YES (Included in letters/form)

- Professional Achievement
- Community Leadership and Service
- NNA/National Involvement (Note: evidence of NNA service is not required)

Biographical Sketch of Nominee?: YES

Three Letters of Reference?: YES - 4: Scott B. Hunter, William C. Rogers, Keith Wood, Representative Bill Taylor

Photo Included?: YES (digital pic on file)

# Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award

## 2014 Nomination Form

Nominee Name Melissa Hanna  
Position Executive Editor  
Newspaper Aiken Standard  
Address P.O. Box 456  
City, State Zip Aiken, SC 29802  
Phone 803-644-2364 Fax 803-649-1404  
E-mail MHANNA@AIKENSTANDARD.COM  
Nominee's Age 37

Nominator's Name Ellen Priest  
Position Publisher  
Affiliation Aiken Communications, Inc.  
Address P.O. Box 456  
City, State Zip Aiken, SC 29802  
Phone 803-644-2345 Fax 803-649-1404  
E-mail EPRIEST@AIKENSTANDARD.COM

**Industry Leadership:** Describe the nominee's activities and achievements which illustrate how the nominee serves to strengthen the newspaper industry through his or her leadership in the state press association.

Melissa is a strong believer in the SC Press Association. In her first full year as executive editor, she came home from the awards ceremony with a first-place in General Excellence for the Aiken Standard and a second place for the Star, our weekly newspaper. She is a strong advocate of using FOIA requests and has a strong relationship with both Bill Rogers executive director and Jay Bender, attorney for SC Press.

**Community Leadership and Character:** Describe and provide examples of how the nominee is well-respected in the community, of good reputation and integrity, and how he/she provides active leadership in serving the community on a local, state and/or regional level.

Melissa is a strong leader both in our news organization, but in our community. We have a young newsroom who responds well to her leadership skills. She is well-respected in the community as a fair and balanced leader of our news organization. I have heard time and again in the community that they know our coverage will be fair, even if they don't agree with it.

**NNA/National Leadership:** Describe nominee's involvement in national organizations, such as NNA, or other national/international service organizations or causes in which the nominee has been involved. (Evidence of NNA service is not required)

Please return (1) this form and (2) letter of nomination by May 1, 2014 to:

Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award  
National Newspaper Association  
PO Box 7540  
Columbia, MO 65205-7540



**NOTE:** If your nominee is among the top five candidates selected by the judges, you will be contacted and asked to submit the following documents: (1) Three [3] letters to support the nomination from community leaders and/or professional peers; (2) Documentation to support nomination criteria; (3) Biographical sketch of nominee; (4) Photo (if available).

**S** A I K E N  
**Standard**  
Your Local Source

April 29, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to respectfully submit the Aiken Standard and North Augusta Star executive editor, Melissa Hanna, as a nomination for the Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award.

When one thinks of Melissa Hanna, one word comes to mind: dynamo. She flies around the newsroom, coffee in hand, working with inexperienced reporters, checking in on copy editors, and answering questions related to social media and web posting, all within a matter of minutes.

Melissa is well-respected as a journalist and a manager. The community knows that our news stories will always be written in a fair and balanced manner. She understands how important a multi-media approach is in today's newsroom. Under her leadership, we have grown our multi-media presence and our website. We have seen growth of over 25% in page views and unique visitors just in the last few months.

Melissa understands the importance of our press associations to our organization. She came to us, while still in college, with a SC Press Association intern scholarship. We hired her full-time when she graduated. She flourished in Athens and then came back home to us a few years later to take on a leadership role in our newsroom.

This past year, Aiken Standard won first place in General Excellence in the South Carolina Press Association news awards for the first time in ten years. The North Augusta Star, our weekly newspaper, took second place for the first time in many years. These were both under Melissa's first full year as leader of the newsroom.

It is an honor to come to work each day with this young dynamo and I look forward to seeing her continue to thrive as a leader in our organization in the weeks to come.

Sincerely,



Ellen C. Priest  
President and Publisher  
Aiken Standard and North Augusta Star

## BIO

Sherry Melissa Hanna was born March 1, 1977. She graduated from North Augusta High School in 1995 and received a degree from USC Aiken in Communications in 2000. She received a SC Press scholarship while a student at USC Aiken and worked that summer for the Aiken Standard as an intern. While at USC Aiken, she served as Editor in Chief (1999), Managing Editor (1998), and Business/Advertising Manager (1997) for the Pacer Times, the USC Aiken weekly student newspaper. Hanna worked for the North Augusta Star as a staff writer from 1997-1998. She began her career at the Aiken Standard in 1999, where she served as a reporter, copy editor and copy desk chief. Hanna then left Aiken in 2004 to work at the Athens Banner-Herald in Athens, Ga., serving a seven-year span as the assistant news editor, multimedia director and, ultimately, executive editor before returning home in 2011 to serve as the multimedia director at the Aiken Standard. She was promoted to executive editor of the Aiken Standard and North Augusta Star in January 2013.

April 29, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I don't really think of Melissa Hanna in ROI terms, but boy did our small investment in her years ago pay off!

We met Melissa when she earned one of the scholarships we provide at USC Aiken. She also served an internship with us while in college.

After her graduation, we quickly hired her in our Newsroom. Despite her young age, she quickly became a leader.

We understood when it came time for her to grow further by moving to a larger paper. And indeed she did grow. She quickly rose to the executive editor's position at the Athens (Ga.) Banner-Herald.

Unfortunately, her tenure in Athens coincided with a time of great downsizing. Certainly, that was discouraging for her. When we learned that she planned to leave the business, we stepped in and brought her back "home."

Our Newsroom is somewhat non-traditional, including the web and even a TV channel, but Melissa's intelligence, versatility and willingness to work very hard made her a perfect fit.

Two years ago, I asked Melissa to serve as our executive editor. As they say, that was a good day's work on my part. She is a great leader, as was evidenced in the Aiken Standard winning first place in General Excellence in the S.C. Press Association's annual awards contest.

I am very proud of Melissa and am honored to support her for the Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award.

Thank you for considering her.

Sincerely,

Scott B. Hunter  
Retired Publisher and Editor of the Aiken (S.C.) Standard



April 25, 2014

Dear NNA Selection Committee:

This letter is to recommend Melissa Hanna of the Aiken Standard for your Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award.

Hanna was named executive editor of the Aiken Standard in 2013. She also serves as editor of The Star, a weekly newspaper in North Augusta. In her role, Hanna leads the content and staffing efforts for both newspapers. During her time as editor, she has expanded the newspapers' Web coverage and social media engagement. She is a staunch advocate for open government in her community and the state. She has a strong history in public service reporting through her newspaper's coverage.

Hanna has 16 years of newspaper experience and began her career at the Aiken Standard in 1999, where she served as a reporter, copy editor and copy desk chief. Hanna then left Aiken in 2004 to work at the Athens Banner-Herald in Athens, Ga., serving a seven-year span as the assistant news editor, multimedia director and, ultimately, executive editor before returning home in 2011 to serve as the multimedia director at the Aiken Standard.

I can attest that Ms. Hanna is well-respected as an aggressive and versatile newspaper editor. I certainly think she is qualified for the Phillips Award.

Sincerely,

William C. Rogers  
Executive Director

P.O. BOX 11429  
COLUMBIA, SC 29211  
(803) 750-9561  
SCPRESS.ORG

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RANDALL L. SAVELY  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

SHARON A. BAILEY  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE



May 1, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

It is my privilege to recommend Melissa Hanna for your Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award.

I have known Melissa since her return to Aiken from Athens, Georgia. During this time I have seen firsthand her work as Editor and Executive Editor of the Aiken Standard. She has elevated the Aiken Standard's reporting of local government and other local issues to improve the coverage in the Aiken CSRA. She is a respected journalist and her reporting is sound, fair, and balanced.

Melissa is constantly working to understand and report on a major beat, the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site. A beat that is bureaucratic, difficult, and complex. Under her tenure, the coverage of the Savannah River Site beat has increased with more depth and substance which has improved the content for a majority of the Aiken Standard subscribers.

She is well respected in the Aiken community. Her approach to enhancing the content and coverage on all topics does not go unnoticed by the Aiken community leadership and subscribers.

It is a pleasure to know Melissa and work with her in her position as Executive Editor of the Aiken Standard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Wood".

Keith Wood

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R. Keith Wood  
Director, Public Affairs  
106 Newberry Street SW  
Aiken, South Carolina USA 29801  
Phone: (803) 502-5748  
Fax: (803) 502-5702

**BILL TAYLOR**  
District 86 - Aiken County  
P.O. Box 2646  
Aiken, SC 29802  
Cell: 803-270-2012  
Email: Bill@TaylorSCHouse.com



416 Blatt Building  
Columbia, SC 29201  
State House: 803-212-6923

**Committees:**  
Education & Public Works

## South Carolina House of Representatives

May 1, 2014

Dear NNA Selection Committee:

Based on my more than 40 years of experience as a reporter, news director, and news consultant I would like to recommend Melissa Hanna for the Daniel M. Phillips Leadership Award.

Melissa's service to both the Aiken Standard and the Star show her extraordinary leadership abilities. She is well respected as a journalist and editor. She understands the importance of a multi-media approach and under her leadership The Aiken Standard and The Star have both received awards.

Under Melissa's leadership The Aiken Standard's coverage has expanded its positive impact on Aiken County. I feel that she is most deserving of the Phillips Leadership Award.

Thank you for your consideration of Ms. Hanna.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Taylor", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Representative Bill Taylor  
House District 86



