

***Smoke Signals* Submission Guidelines**

January 2014

Defining news

- According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “news is a report of recent events; previously unknown information; something having a specified influence or effect; matter that is newsworthy.” For *Smoke Signals* and Smoke Signals Online, that means new information of interest to the broadest number of readers in and around Big Canoe.
- Things that are not news: advertising pitches and information that belongs in an advertisement; information of interest to a very few people; and old, rehashed stories.

Getting started

- Know your audience and their interests.
- Consider what you want to achieve with your article: for example, publicize an event, encourage membership in an organization or increase an organization’s name recognition.
- Identify the who, what, where, when, why and how of the activity/story.
- Provide contact information, including names, emails, phone numbers, hours of operation, etc., where applicable.
- Double-check all information for accuracy.
- Please understand editing your article may be necessary, for content, length and conformity to the style used by *Smoke Signals*.

Getting your article noticed

- Use interesting photos; see section on photos below for details.
- Be creative.
- Find a unique angle.
- Be concise.

Preparing an article for *Smoke Signals*

- Use Microsoft Word software, 12-point type, Times New Roman font, single-spaced.
- Avoid bold type and placing entire words in caps or italics as these must be removed to conform to Associated Press style.
- Minimize use of underlining and exclamation points.
- It is not necessary to indent paragraphs – the editor will take care of this – but a line of white between paragraphs eases the editing.
- Write short paragraphs; long ones will daunt the reader.
- In the upper right corner of the first page, place a “slug” to identify the article. The “slug” should include the article topic, your name and contact information, the word count and the month and year of the edition you want this to appear in *Smoke Signals*.
- If pictures go with the article, add “4 images attached” or “3 images to come” under the “slug.” See section on photos below.
- You don’t need to include a headline, but if you have one in mind, go for it.

Determining section (News, Living, Outdoors or Arts & Entertainment)

- News and Letters to the Editor, Barbara Schneider, bschneider@bigcanoenews.com.
- A&E, Melissa Lowrie, m_lowrie@bigcanoenews.com.
- Living, Anita Rosen, arosen@bigcanoenews.com or rosensw@tds.net.
- Sports & Outdoors, Melissa Lowrie, m_lowrie@bigcanoenews.com and Anita Rosen, arosen@bigcanoenews.com or rosensw@tds.net.
- Do not send your article to more than one editor. If you are not sure which section it belongs in, let the editor know and a placement decision will be made by the staff.

Writing guidelines

- *Smoke Signals* uses the Associated Press Stylebook to determine writing style.
- There are a few exceptions, but, in general, write out numbers one through nine and use Arabic numerals for 10 up.
- Write times as 7 a.m. and 8:30 p.m., using the lower case for ante and post meridiem abbreviations.
- Use one space after the punctuation at the end of a sentence.
- Use standard state abbreviations such as Ga., Ariz., Calif., not post office abbreviations like GA, AZ or CA.
- Capitalize geographic divisions, such as the South and the Midwest but not points of the compass, such as "...turn north at Steve Tate Highway," or "Jasper is west of Big Canoe."
- Capitalize a person's title only when it appears before the name. For example: Chairman John Joiner but John Joiner, club chairman.
- Use the full name on first reference and the last name thereafter for news articles. There is more leeway in feature stories, and it occasionally may be appropriate to use the first name on second reference.

Photo information

- Photos need to be sent as .jpg attachments of at least 500 kbs to reproduce in print. Most modern equipment has settings you can adjust in the image quality menu to medium or high to achieve this size. Set your camera to the highest image quality setting, which may sometimes be written as "fine."
- Don't send embedded photos, copies of something off the Internet or anything using a program (like Picasa) that shrinks the photo for fast transmittal.
- Include who took the photo and a suggested caption including names of any people in the photo, left to right.
- Occasionally a photo release is needed. The guideline to use is if a photo is taken in a public place, including within a gated community like Big Canoe, for news purposes, a release is not needed, even if it is a single child. However, if the photo is for advertising/commercial purposes, a release is needed. Please contact us if you need a release or are confused.

Thanks; we look forward to hearing from you

- If you would like to receive a monthly reminder of upcoming deadlines for a section you contribute to frequently, please let that editor know. Deadlines vary by section.

Letter to the Editor Guidelines

Smoke Signals welcomes letters written to the editor. Letters should address issues and ideas, not personalities, and must include the writer's name, address and phone number for submission verification.

Smoke Signals reserves the right to accept or reject submissions and edit grammar and spelling. Personal attacks and obscenity are prohibited, and writers can be asked for necessary revisions. Letters about political candidates will not be accepted after qualification ends. **The publication of any letter does not indicate that *Smoke Signals* agrees or disagrees with any statement of fact or opinion. The letters are intended to allow the author to state his/her views.**

Maximum length is 450 words, and letters should single-spaced with indented paragraphs. To make room for more opinions, writers can submit letters as often as every other month. Letters may be deposited in the *Smoke Signals* box at the Big Canoe Postal Facility or emailed to editor@bigcanoenews.com as body text or a Word attachment. The deadline is the 12th day each month. Publication of Letters is subject to these regulations and space available.

For additional information, please email your questions to editor@bigcanoenews.com.

January 2014