‘Face’ event for Jeff Zeleny on Sept. 27 features all-star slate of roasters

By Tom O’Connor
Communications Committee

An all-star quartet of roasters should provide plenty of laughs for the Sept. 27 “Face on the Barroom Floor” roast for Jeff Zeleny, one of the most accomplished journalists to ever come from Nebraska.

A native of Exeter, Neb., Zeleny currently serves as CNN’s senior Washington correspondent and has been with the news network for the past four years. He is a 1996 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he studied journalism and political science. While at UNL, he was editor of the Daily Nebraskan and played trumpet in the Cornhusker Marching Band.

Zeleny’s diverse group of roasters includes an ESPN reporter, his brother, a former “Face on the Barroom Floor” and a college professor/author.

Paula Lavigne, an investigative reporter for ESPN since 2008, will serve as emcee. She has been recognized for her investigative journalism with multiple awards, including a Gracie Award for her investigation of the Baylor football program. She also co-authored a book on how Baylor University handled sexual violence among students. A Gretna, Neb., native, Lavigne is a 1998 UNL graduate who worked with Zeleny at the Daily

‘24th & Glory’ book signing at Press Club on Sept. 18

“24th & Glory: The Intersection of Civil Rights and Omaha’s Greatest Generation of Athletes” tells the story behind one incredible neighborhood that produced so many world-class athletes in the 1950s and 1960s.

Author Dirk Chatelain will be at the Press Club for a luncheon book signing on Wednesday, Sept. 18. Chatelain — the 2017 and 2018 first-place winner of the Associated Press Sports Editors contest for project reporting and a five-time Nebraska sports writer of the year at The Omaha World-Herald — spent 13 years conducting oral interviews and doing exhaustive research for the “24th & Glory” series in the World-Herald and the subsequent book.

Hear the stories he uncovered, and a few of the athletes featured in the book may be present for the book signing. The program will run from noon to 1 p.m., with lunch service beginning at 11:30 a.m. The price is $17, and non-OPC members are welcome. Call 402-345-8008 for reservations.

Books will available for sale for $19.95.

Noon Forum to help KIOS celebrate 50th anniversary

KIOS, celebrating its 50th anniversary as Omaha’s public radio station, will be the subject of the Noon Education Forum on Thursday, Sept. 19.

Started at Omaha Central High School at 91.5 on the FM dial in September 1969, KIOS was the educational extension of the Omaha Public Schools and became a charter member of NPR, National Public Radio, in 1971.

Today, KIOS provides news, information, jazz and entertainment programming to about 60,000 listeners each week. KIOS broadcasts programs from

We want your feedback

We are always working to add value for our members and improve the OPC experience! Your feedback is critical in that effort. Please take a few moments to complete our 2019 OPC member survey. It should take fewer than five minutes. Enter this address into your web browser to complete the survey: https://bit.ly/320PnkV.
“It will be great to be back home in Nebraska,” Zeleny said. “I’ll be bracing myself. These roasters know way too much about me. I have no doubt it’s going to be a fun evening at the Omaha Press Club.”

Zeleny interned at several newspapers during college, including The Wall Street Journal. His work resume includes positions with:

- The Des Moines Register, where he covered state politics and the Iowa caucuses;
- The Chicago Tribune, where he was a member of the reporting team that won a Pulitzer Prize in explanatory journalism for documenting gridlock in the nation’s air traffic;
- The New York Times, where he covered Barack Obama’s first years in the White House; and
- ABC News, where he served as senior Washington correspondent.

Since joining CNN, Zeleny covered the 2016 presidential election – his fifth presidential election – and has reported extensively on the first three years of the Donald Trump presidency.

Nebraskan.

Zeleny’s other roasters include:

- His brother, Mike Zeleny, chief of staff and associate to the chancellor, UNL;
- Allen Beermann, who is retiring in 2020 as executive director of the Nebraska Press Association after 25 years. Beermann previously served as secretary of state for Nebraska for 24 years. In 2009, he was honored as the Omaha Press Club’s 121st “Face on the Barroom Floor”; and
- Joe Starita, a journalism professor at UNL who has written three critically acclaimed books examining the vital role of Native Americans in American history.

Zeleny covered the Obama campaign and his first years in the White House.

The holiday reservation book fills up quickly at the club, and the early birds get the prime dates.

Seriously, as fall approaches it’s never too soon to make plans for your holiday and year-end events at the Omaha Press Club.

Remember, your OPC membership gives you a free rental for your private party with the best food, best service and best view in town.

The holiday reservation book fills up quickly at the club, and the early birds get the prime dates.

So check your calendar and call or email Events Manager Christine Jones Villamonte – 402-345-8008 or opcchristine@gmail.com. She’ll help you with food selection, decorations, room setup and much more.
Noon Forum hears the Tri-Faith story

By Jon Brooks

On July 18, the Omaha Press Club hosted representatives from Omaha’s Tri-Faith Initiative as part of the club’s Noon Forum series of educational events.

Omaha’s Tri-Faith Initiative campus — located at 132nd and Pacific streets — brings together Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths in one campus setting. It is the only Tri-Faith Initiative of its kind in the world.

The project has its roots in the post-9/11 world.

In 2005, Temple Israel had outgrown its location near 72nd and Cass streets (next to the Omaha Community Playhouse). Many of the synagogue’s members had moved to Omaha’s western suburbs, and church leaders were exploring a parcel of land near Boys Town.

The synagogue had forged a relationship with local Muslims after 9/11. According to Tri-Faith Initiative Interim Director Wendy Goldberg, Temple Israel leaders were trying to find a way to “build on that relationship.”

That mindset led to several meetings between the disparate interests. It also led to a search for a Christian partner to participate in the effort.

Early on in the process, the Episcopalian Church in Nebraska was involved, but ultimately didn’t have the capacity to move the project forward. The Catholic Diocese was also approached, but it was in the middle of a leadership transition at the time and unable to take on the “audacious task.”

The search eventually led to Countryside Community Church, a member of the United Church of Christ. The church had a building that was 100 percent funded and needed no major repairs. They were healthy in their place. It was a challenge to make a move merely out of a sense of “mission.”

The Rev. Dr. Christine Alexander — an associate pastor with Countryside Church — said the church wanted to build a venue where members could “come together and have conversations.” She acknowledged that the process was challenging and that the congregation lost some members. The church didn’t need a new building, but “felt called by God to do this ministry.”

Congregants of Countryside Community voted in favor of participating in the project.

According to Imam Mohamad Jamal Daoudi from the American Muslim Institute, the goal of the project is to bring the three Abrahamic faiths together to create a culture of understanding between the faiths. “We never dispute with our neighbors on the basis of faith,” he said.

While all three religions are housed on the same campus, each is separate when it comes to practicing its respective faith.

The participants work together in areas of common interest. For example, they have educational programs dealing with topics such as family issues, infusing perspectives from all three faiths. They also have “Tri-Faith picnics” where members of the community come together for food and fellowship.

“These opportunities to learn are so exciting to me,” said Temple Israel’s Cantor Joanna Alexander, who recently came to Omaha from New Jersey.

The Tri-Faith Initiative raised $70 million for the 38-acre campus. Temple Israel moved in during 2013, the mosque opened in 2017, and Countryside Community Church opened May 19, 2019.

The group has no plans to include other religions within the campus setting (there are differing perspectives within the Tri-Faith Initiative as to whether or not additional faiths should be included). That said, the group continues moving forward with its goal to foster understanding among various faiths.

“Unique religious experiences are an asset,” said Goldberg. “When we are diverse, we are better.”

For more information on Omaha’s Tri-Faith Initiative, visit trifaith.org.
**OPC parking reminder**

As the “second season” begins following the summer break at the Omaha Press Club, OPC members are reminded that they receive up to two hours of free parking in the Central City Garage, directly west of the club at 122 N. 17th St., during the workday and free parking in the evenings from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. with validation.

Club members also receive up to two hours of validated parking in the DoubleTree Hotel garage from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. No validated parking is available in the DoubleTree garage after 5 p.m. However, you may still park in that garage in the evenings if you wish to self-pay.

In the Central City Garage, members may park free in any space on the rooftop level at lunchtime, and in any space from #142 on up after 5 p.m.

To reach the OPC, take the Central City Garage elevator to the basement level (marked B on the elevator). Follow the signs east and proceed through the tunnel into the First National Bank and just a few steps more to the elevators. After workday hours, press the new security buzzer for admittance into the bank building.

**Important:** Bring your parking ticket to the club for validation.

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**OPC president takes OPS job**

Omaha Press Club President Jeremy Maskel will be the new Omaha Public Schools spokesman.

Maskel will replace Monique Farmer, who had held the position since 2016. Farmer is pursuing teaching and research opportunities at the university level.

Maskel starts Sept. 9 as OPS’s executive director of district communications. He spent the last three years as the external relations and engagement director for Ralston Public Schools. Before that, he spent seven years as a reporter and producer at KETV.
Eustice event salutes the life of a PR legend

By Todd Andrews
Communications Committee

Hundreds gathered at Founders One Nine in downtown Omaha on July 13 for a celebration of the life of Susan Eustice.

Hosted by the Eustice family, the event drew friends, family members and colleagues from around the metro — and out of state, too. Among them were prominent business leaders, philanthropists, attorneys, advertising executives, academics and journalists.

Eustice, the longtime spokeswoman and public relations chief for the Omaha-based Salvation Army Western Division, died May 11 after a brief illness.

At the July event, attendees had the opportunity to share their memories of Eustice, who was widely regarded in media circles as a legendary figure in the public relations field. Family members led an open-mic sharing session that was set in front of a slideshow projection of archival photos of Eustice at work, at home and at her family’s treasured Okoboji getaway over the years. Numerous friends and associates took to the mic, telling stories that sparked laughter, smiles and tears among the assembled crowd.

Eustice’s extensive involvement with the Omaha Press Club was strongly evident around the venue. Many current and former OPC board and committee members were in attendance. Their stories about Eustice’s professionalism, positivity, generosity and community-mindedness reflected the spirit of the occasion: Susan Eustice made Omaha a better place for everyone — a life accomplishment definitely worth saluting.
CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.

Monday, Oct. 14
Columbus Day
Club closed

Thursday, Oct. 17
Noon Education Forum
Noon to 1 p.m.
Trev Alberts, UNO
Director of athletics
$17, Noon to 1 p.m.
Noon to 1 p.m.
Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.
Open to the public, $17

Friday, October 25
OKtoberfest Beer or Wine Dinner
6 p.m. hors d’oeuvres
6:30 p.m. multi-course dinner
(Pairing of beer or wine with RSVP)
$55 OPC members, $65 non-members

Thursday, November 7
Past Presidents Dinner
5:30 p.m. social, 6 p.m. dinner
$35 per person

Friday, Nov. 22
"Face on the Barroom Floor"
Jim and Todd Murphy
Universal Information Services
5:30 p.m. reception, 6:30 p.m. dinner
and 8 p.m. roast
$55 for OPC members
$65 for non-members