

# Neal Patten comes to UNG as community reporter

## New Community Reporter for Verona/Fitchburg

**NEAL PATTEN**  
*Unified Newspaper Group*

Neal Patten has joined the staff of Unified Newspaper Group. He will be the new community reporter for Verona and Fitchburg.

Patten moves to the Madison area from Dubuque, Iowa, where he had been the director of marketing and public relations at Shalom Spirituality Center. Shalom, owned and operated by the Sisters of St. Francis in Dubuque, is a former Catholic convent that has been turned into an interfaith retreat center. Patten helped to promote the center's spiritual programming such as yoga, tai chi,

prayer and mindfulness.

A Southwest Wisconsin native, Patten attended the E.W. Scripps School Of Journalism at Ohio University. For two years he studied advertising before having a change of heart at the end of his sophomore year, which led him to pursue magazine journalism instead.

During college, he and a friend co-founded Brick Beats Magazine, which covered local music and area concerts. He was editor-in-chief for three issues, before stepping-down to become the Lifestyles and People section editor at College Green Magazine, a student-run environmental

journalism blog.

Patten has past history with Woodward Communications. In high school, he wrote weekly movie reviews for three years for the now-defunct Weekender, a feature-based community paper in Platteville. In 2009, Patten was the recipient of the Telegraph Herald Scholastic Journalist Award, granted annually to two students active in the editorial aspect of newspapers. Patten was the first Wisconsinite to win the award in its then 16-year history.

He fulfilled his senior year of high school job shadow requirement by spending a day at the TH in 2008.

Patten also spent a year in AmeriCorps, stationed in Decorah, Iowa. His term had him serving as a member of Green Iowa,

headquartered out of the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education.

Patten and other service members provided energy usage audits and in-home weatherization services free to the elderly, the mentally/physically differently-abled, veterans and low-income individuals. He was the marketing coordinator, helping promote this service to the Northeast Iowa region.

In his free time, Patten loves hiking in the woods, lifting weights, going to concerts and studying the history of animated films/cartoons. He also enjoys creative writing, particularly children's books. He helps out during summers at Lake Joy Campground, located between Belmont and Mineral Point, which

his family has owned and managed since 2001. Patten can be reached at neal.patten@wcinet.com.



Patten

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# Hickman joins UNG as reporter

**She will be covering Stoughton and Verona**

**RENEE HICKMAN**  
*Unified Newspaper Group*

Renee Hickman has joined the staff of Unified Newspaper Group.

Hickman, who was born in Missouri but raised in Rome, Georgia, has a master's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri and an undergraduate degree from the University of St. Andrew's in Scotland.

Most recently, Hickman lived in Ukraine covering politics and culture while completing a Fulbright scholarship, and she has covered politics and agriculture policy at NBC News and Bloomberg, respectively. She also covered state government for the Columbia Missourian and local

news at KBIA, the NPR station in Missouri.

Before starting in the journalism industry, Hickman previously worked as a fundraiser for nonprofits.



Hickman

Hickman is taking on beats held by two reporters. She will be covering the City of Stoughton, taking over for Amber Levenhagen, who died in August, and the City of Verona, taking over for editor Jim Ferolie, who has covered the beat for 13 years and will be taking on more administrative responsibilities.

She will be working alongside fellow local government and education reporters Kimberly Wethal, Emilie Heidemann and Scott De Laruelle, with

coverage of the communities of Stoughton, Verona, Fitchburg and Oregon.

*Renee Hickman can be contacted at [renee.hickman@wcinet.com](mailto:renee.hickman@wcinet.com).*

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