

There are times a person doesn't need to do anything to be a part of something great—just stand close, share the aura and be in the midst of someone else's charm, talent or recognition.

That's how I felt at the 136th annual Nebraska Press Association convention Saturday night.

The Tribune won three awards, and three times I felt a surge of excitement when our newspaper was in the top category of the best of the best in the state.

I did not personally create the ad that won or lay out the pages that reaped the awards—but I felt the pride as if I had.

Two other newspapers owned by our publisher were also present. Two of the staff from our sister paper sat at our table. They achieved greatness from the judges in many categories—it made me proud to be in their circle, to be their friend, to share the moments of recognition.

It wasn't only about the awards and the kudos handed out during the banquet—I was proud by association of being a small piece of the press and what it stands for. Publishers, editors, writers, photographers—we all do what we do because it's a fever, a passion.

Johnson Publications, Inc. owns four newspapers whose staff are proud to be affiliated with each other, and Johnson Publications is very well known around the state by colleagues in the newspaper business, which makes all of us proud to be a part of that.

Something else gave me pride over the weekend.

Tribune employee Ashleigh Noyes and her husband Jason, a local fireman/EMT, were on their way to Kearney to the convention Friday night when they came upon a mini-van which had just rolled with eight on board.

They both knew how to react—he as an emergency responder, she as a first responder's wife.

The proud association by knowing and working with these two individuals is felt by both my husband and me. My husband, also a fireman/EMT, works closely with Jason, and of course I work daily with Ashleigh. She and I are proud to be firemen's wives—because no one knows better than we do how passionate they become when the pager goes off and they respond to an ambulance call or to a fire.

So...Jason's passion kicked in when they came upon the wreck. Some of the passengers were very young children. Being the first on scene, Jason triaged the adults, some of whom were injured, and Ashleigh huddled around the little ones, who weren't as badly hurt, mothering them in their state of panic, tears and shock.

None of the accident victims spoke English, complicating matters for everyone.

When other emergency personnel from departments along the interstate arrived, they didn't aggressively take over the situation—because Jason seemed to be the one with the most knowledge and the best training to handle this chaotic scene. He got the injured back-boarded and loaded onto waiting ambulances. Ashleigh continued to comfort three kids who stuck to her like glue.

With the victims finally taken care of, the couple proceeded to Kearney where they wearily checked in for convention in bloody clothes and disbelief at what had just happened to them on their getaway for the weekend.

I'm proud they are a young couple in our community who contribute in many ways, definitely making a difference in some people's lives Friday night.

The convention culminated with the banquet. It was time to relax and have fun. A year of hard work paid off and our paper was recognized for that work.

I didn't have to do anything except eat, talk, laugh, and enjoy my husband, my friends and peers—and bask in how blessed I am to have association with people who make a positive difference in the world.

Jan Rahn