

For More Information:
Ed Pecoraro
205-540-6642

For Immediate Release
September 1, 2009

Verna Gates Nominated for National Communicator of Achievement Award

Birmingham, Ala. --- Being on the business end of a shotgun held by a pig farmer while exposing the underbelly of barbeque and industrial animal farming won Verna Gates her first national reporting award for a Business Alabama Monthly story. Gates has been nominated for the Communicator of the Year Award by the National Federation of Presswomen, their top national honor for journalists.

Since her pig expose, Gates has won many more awards for topics such as Judge Roy Moore and the Ten Commandments; teenage church arsonists; convicted CEO and TV preacher Richard Scrushy; claimed JonBenet Ramsey killer; and dating on the internet. She was recently nominated for an Asia-Pacific Rim Travel Journalism award.

Alabama Media Professionals, an affiliate of the National Federation of Press Women, named Verna Gates as its 2009 Communicator of Achievement. The award is given to a member based on professional achievement (60 percent), community service (20 percent) and service to AMP and the National Federation of Press Women (20 percent).

As the state winner, Verna has been nominated for the national award – NFPW’s Communicator of Achievement. She is one of 15 finalists. The national winner and runner-up will be named at the NFPW National Convention in San Antonio in September. Verna’s career began as one of the original 50 employees of CNN who launched the news network. She worked for CNN as a writer/producer for four years. A freelance journalist for 26 years, Verna writes for national, regional and state publications. She is a regular contributor to TIME magazine and London-based Reuters International Wire Service. Her office walls are filled with writing awards including many from NFPW.

Besides her demanding writing schedule, Verna maintains a high profile in the community. She is an active board member for several organizations related to the arts, nature and the environment. She is the founder and executive director of Fresh Air Family, a non-profit organization dedicated to outdoor education. Launched in 2006, FAF has grown to 10,000 members. Fresh Air Family recently received a \$750,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Education.

On March 4, 2009, a front page story in *The Birmingham News* featured Verna’s Fresh Air Family education program. She recently started a junior journalist program for the organization and posts student writings on www.al.com.

An NFPW member for more than a decade, Verna has recruited many affiliate members including three of the past five presidents. She speaks at AMP meetings and workshops on writing techniques and the business side of freelancing.

####