

NorwichBulletin.com

Posted 7 minute(s) ago

Goodbye Norwich

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.



By JAMES CRAVEN

Well, the news is not new. Most readers of The Bulletin and The Day know that the company that owns the former – Gatehouse Media – recently decided to cannibalize the newspaper.

I say cannibalize because The Bulletin is reported to be a profitable member of the aforementioned company. However, in today's market, being profitable does not afford the protection that it once did. Those portions of the company on the lean side, decided to devour those doing better.

Because that protection is gone, the most recently ordered layoffs will sap The Bulletin of nearly 20 percent of its newsroom staff. That will, of course, allow the president of Gatehouse Media to follow up on his \$750,000 bonus to himself with an equally staggering and incongruous gratuity this year. Merry Christmas Mr. President.

The result is that seven people, most living in the **Norwich** community, will be without jobs today. That is not what is really important here, however. What is important is what is happening to news gathering organizations in this community, and in communities around the country.

Newspapers and the reporters who work for such organizations make for an easy target. There is an old saying that if a reporter (or newspaper) is not vilified by at least half the people in the community, then they are not doing their job. Given that criteria, I like to think that I did my job well.

On Monday, when the newly reduced newsroom begins its day what will be different for readers in **Norwich**, or for any of the surrounding communities, for whom coverage must decrease because of the physical limitations of a reduced staff?

Not much.

The thing about reduced community coverage is that you do not notice it while it is happening. It is, if I may be so bold, like a cancer. It works below the surface, until one day when suddenly it becomes all too apparent. There will be referendums that may not be covered as fully. Some school functions – that first grade play that in the past featured your son or daughter – will be bypassed. On holidays, like Veterans Day, decisions will be made to forfeit coverage in some communities because there just is not an extra reporter.

That is not to say that the reporters and editors at The Bulletin want to reduce their coverage. Most of the reporters that I have known would work 16 hours each day for the chance to cover the news on their beat. They know it is important and they want their readers to have that access. At 58, I am old enough to remember when reporters were given free rein to cover their beats, but then the bean counters took over and decided that allowing overtime while great for coverage was not conducive to upper-management bonuses.

News took a backseat to money, which allowed for decay in the news-gathering process.

The late Philip Meyer put it best when he observed that the decay of newspaper journalism creates problems not just for the business but also for society. The problem is basic: to make democracy work, citizens need information.

“Knowledge will forever govern ignorance,” warned James Madison, some 200 years ago. “And a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”

The end result, if you will, is that as news staffs are cut, the responsibility for staying informed will fall more to you – the reader. If a reporter cannot be at a Harbor Commission meeting, a Finance Commission meeting or even a meeting of the City Council, then you – Joe Citizen – will have to be there.

Follow This Blog RSS

About this blog

> I'm James Craven, and I cover **Norwich** for The Bulletin. Contact me at 860-425-4231 or email me at jcraven@norwichbulletin.com.



No more watching Dancing with the Stars, taking time to read a good book or spending time with the youngsters. After work, you will have to head for those civic meetings where decisions are made that might change your life, because, if you do not go – who will?

Good bye **Norwich**. It's been a pleasure.

« Back to blog

Loading commenting interface...