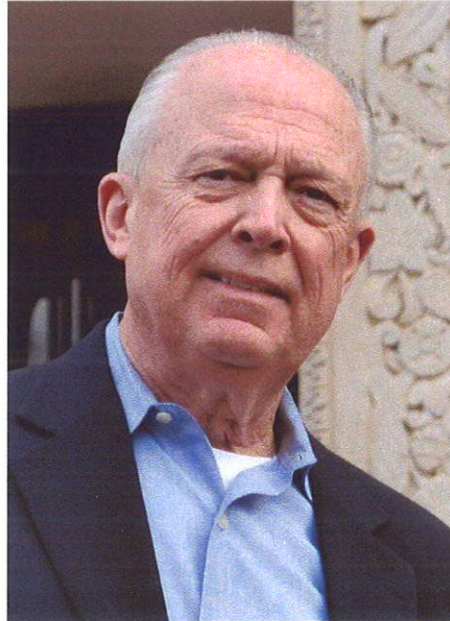


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## GUEST EDITORIAL: Small newspapers make a big difference

Richard Eckstrom Feb 7, 2018 Updated 1 hr ago



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Of the many factors that contribute to a community's quality of life, one that's often under-appreciated is the local newspaper.

Small, weekly (or non-daily) publications are a form of public service. They bring us "good news" and recognize the efforts of hometown people who make a difference. On their pages you're likely to find news about youth achievements, civic club projects, charity fundraisers and church events that larger media outlets don't carry.

They knit the community closer together and help instill a sense of local pride.

Community newspapers boost the local economy. They offer low-cost advertising, which can be vital for smaller and independently-owned businesses. They showcase local merchants; and with ecommerce giants such as Amazon grabbing more and more of the retail market, it's important to

remember all that our hometown shops and stores have to offer.

Importantly, community newspapers help make local government more transparent. We're bombarded daily with headlines out of DC, and there's ample coverage as well of goings-on at the state capital. Yet the actions of your town council, county council and school board – which tend to more directly impact your daily life – usually receive far less attention from the large media outlets. Many community newspapers step in to fill the gap, covering meetings of local boards or councils or publishing columns from local officials.

Some serve as “watchdogs” that hold public officials accountable... the “eyes and ears” that provide much-needed scrutiny and sound the alarm when something's amiss.

Many are forums for expression. By allowing residents to sound off on local issues, they help foster a civil exchange of ideas.

They nurture their communities and help foster citizen involvement. Communities thrive when regular folks get involved in some way – volunteering for a nonprofit, serving on a local board or commission, or expressing a grievance at a local government meeting. A lot of times citizens only learn about these opportunities through the local newspaper.

Small, community-based newspapers develop a level of trust with their readers that the national media lacks. The people who operate these newspapers live and work in your community. They're your neighbors. They share your values. They understand the issues and challenges you face, because they face them too.

The publication you're reading strengthens your hometown in ways that are often overlooked. Readers who want to return the favor can do so by supporting the businesses that advertise on these pages. And however you get your news, make sure your community newspaper is always in the mix.

Small newspapers make a big difference.

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