

Your newspaper will be there for you

By Ron Dzwonkowski

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We can get our national news on cable television, catch the weather on local broadcast stations, listen to talk radio on the AM or FM dial and follow our favorite blogs on the Internet, but where do we turn for local information that directly impacts our daily lives?

More often than not it is community newspapers.

Technology has transformed how we gather information in the 21st Century. Newscycles run 24/7, tablets and laptops are becoming smaller and smart phones keep getting smarter.

As a result most traditional large newspapers are struggling to stay alive—they are more and more frequently printing only two to three times a week, personnel and content are shrinking like never before, and more information is shifted to online editions.

Yet local community newspapers are thriving because they have persistently weathered the storm year in and year out to remain a fixture in our everyday lives.

As our societies become more complex and diverse with growing numbers of ways to obtain information, the role of local newspapers in informing our communities becomes even more significant.

We count on them to regularly check in with the courts and police stations.

They print announcements on births, deaths, engagements, marriages, anniversaries, church news, job openings, school information and service club endeavors.

They publish notices of local municipal meetings. They print tax increases, millage initiatives, notices of changes in laws and property rezoning—all issues that most directly affect our pocketbooks by determining how our hard-earned tax dollars are spent at the local level and how are local officials are representing us.

They help run the local economic engine and provide a marketplace for the community.

They offer local small businesses with an effective and affordable means of connecting with local consumers. They print sales at the supermarket, coupons for discounts at local stores, real estate listings, and classifieds for everything from a used car to a neighbor's garage sale.

It's also personal. Communities feel a sense of ownership in their local newspaper, and the people that report the news are often our friends and neighbors down the street.

News aggregating websites such as Drudge Report and the major news blogs are great at offering up major national and international news and analysis, but they simply do not provide the information on issues that impact us at the local level.

It is especially true for the elderly and those with low incomes who often have less access to computers and transportation.

They normally only publish once a week, but community newspapers remain the one constant source of local information.

In good times and in bad, they stay focused on us as a community.

Now more than ever, community newspapers are an important binding thread of our cities and towns.

