

Sunshine Week 2024

Community newspapers share aversion to darkness

By Richard S. Whiting

Your Palmetto State newspapers — the small community daily and weekly papers and the larger ones that serve a broader audience alike — do, to a certain degree, compete with each other. In some cases our reader and advertising audiences overlap, which can make competition a little more fierce.

And yes, our newsrooms do strive to be first with news. There's always been that element of competition. Be first *and* be correct. Not unlike other competitions, be they sports rivalries, races of all sorts and even politics, we can and do come together and share a common purpose, a common bond: shedding light on darkness as we strive for transparency in what our elected and appointed officials are doing.

That is not to say that our state is daily riddled with matters that harken to the days of Nixon and Watergate. Accountability and transparency can and often do come in its simplest form when reporters regularly attend government and school board meetings. By keeping their fingers on the pulse, they keep elected and appointed bodies in check. Doing so certainly can and often has led to unearthing graft and illegal or questionable activity among those entrusted to do the people's business, to be stewards of the people's tax dollars.

Newspapers large and small are committed to such coverage of their communities. They are as duty-bound to provide such coverage as they are to cover high school sports teams and the community's arts and entertainment arena.

Providing transparency and keeping readership abreast of what their governing bodies are doing is usually accomplished within the silos of each community's newsrooms. However, more recently in the Palmetto State, newspapers' newsrooms have had cause to share resources in tackling larger stories that have a broader impact across the state and that reveal to readers just how varied and widespread graft and corruption can be. Such shared work not only heightens awareness, but also serves to validate the role community newspapers serve.

This is Sunshine Week, here in South Carolina and all across the nation. This is a good time to remind readers that supporting your community weekly and daily newspapers through your subscriptions and advertising helps them keep elected and appointed officials from operating in a cloak of darkness.

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