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# An email cry for help saves 138-year-old newspaper

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Friday, October 13, 2023, was a scary day for the citizens of Meeker, the largest town in Colorado's Rio Blanco County, nestled on the Rockies' western slope, with a population of slightly over 6,500.

It was on this day that Niki Turner and Caitlin Walker, the mother and daughter owners of the area's primary local news source, the Rio Blanco Herald Times, sent out an email with the subject line: "Crisis alert: Save your community paper." Within this ominous message, Niki and Caitlin revealed to their community the harsh realities of local news publishing and their own newspaper's critical financial status. They admitted that the operation only had enough money left to publish two more issues of the weekly newspaper and stated that they would shut down on October 26.

Unlike most businesses (and newspapers) who would fear revealing such a poor bottom line to their customers, these publishers decided that an honest, open, truthful message was the right thing to do as a warning that Rio

Blanco would soon be a "news desert," like so many other small communities throughout the U.S.

Niki and Caitlin informed the public that the newspaper's reach was at an all-time high, stating that: "Readership numbers continue to grow, with the Herald being read by more than 2,200 people every week. On top of that, 1,600 of you get our weekly email, 3,000 visit the website each week, and we have excellent social media engagement." They went on to say that: "We will be letting our only full-time reporter go. We are cutting the number of papers we print and distribute to the bone. We are cutting every other extraneous expense we can think of, including our own paychecks. As a last resort, we'll try cutting the print edition entirely and go digital-only.

Then came their plea for help, frankly asking that the citizens of Rio Blanco County "help to save your community newspaper."

On October 19, Niki penned her weekly printed editorial with the headline: "If a town loses its paper, it's less of a town," a quote

borrowed from Al Cross, Director emeritus of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky. She wrote, "When we became aware of a precarious financial situation last week, we went into emergency mode. As 'keepers of the flame' — stewards of a community newspaper that's one of the oldest businesses in the county — and as journalists who believe strongly in the free press and the need for independent local news, we're not willing to go down without a fight."

By the end of October, the Herald Times had an additional \$33,000 in their bank account from over 200 people donating to the cause, which helped keep "the presses rolling.

The October 26 front page displayed a red headline: "This would have been the last edition of the Herald, ever." The 1st paragraph of the article proudly stated: "The Herald is ecstatic to announce 100% funding, 100% from Community Supporters, through the end of 2023. That is a VERY long way from where we were two newspapers ago."

## Letter

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once great newspapers with vibrant teams of journalists that are now down to that one reporter in the newsroom tasked with covering the entire community.

This is not the direction this fourth generation family-owned newspaper has chosen or plans to choose with its commitment to our community, but with this pledge we have had to take a very hard look based on the effects of recent inflation that have some of our costs as high as 40 percent and the change in workforce dynamics that has happened in the last three years. Our last two years, we have had to pull from our reserves to sustain our operation. We know we cannot go on like this forever, but please know we have prayerfully been patient in determining what direction we must take in implementing change for changing times.

Effective January 1, 2024, The News will discontinue its publication of its Monday print edition. Our new print schedule will become Tuesday through Saturday. Home delivery prices will not change; they will remain where they have been since 2017. An annual subscription will come with 258 newspapers per year delivered to your house or business for right at 52 cents per delivery. At no additional charge, a print subscription also includes access to thebrunswicknews.com, The Brunswick News app, 26 issues of Coastal Illustrated, 12 issues of Discover Downtown, the dining guide Coastal Cuisine, the medical directory Doc and a minimum of five special sections per year including — Locally Owned, Honor

Flight, Hurricane Season, Friday Night Lights and Georgia-Florida.

This cost for this amount of information still stands as one of the strongest values in our industry, particularly in the face of a multitude of newspapers that have cut print days down to just one or a few days per week — while significantly raising prices.

The Brunswick News still has its own printing press and is committed to our print product, the printing of other independently owned papers, but the 6-day-work cycle has become a major challenge for employment from our production team to the newspaper carriers delivering 6-days-per-week to your homes.

A major part of this decision will be the savings The News can realize to gain firmer footing financially, but an even bigger piece is the wellbeing it brings to our workforce. Many newspaper carriers along with our production team members are sincerely grateful to know they will be able to have two days in a row off on the weekend and what that will mean to spending more time with their families after a long dedicated run of working many years 6 days on and 1 off. This change provides a stronger foundation to maintain a committed and valuable workforce. Thank you to our team that has delivered and produced newspapers at this rate for many years.

Of importance to you — our loyal reader and advertiser — our news coverage will not diminish. The newsroom will continue to operate seven days a week, and we will be adding a weekend assignment reporter that will pick up planned news coverage during the weekend that will start our week in Tuesday's

paper with photos and story coverage.

Our weekend reporting of major breaking news will continue to be available online, published when it is first reported. We will be promoting and encouraging our print readers to make sure they take advantage of their free online news access and subscribe for free to our email newsletters.

Our Monday business page will move to Friday, and we will plan to add a weekly local business news story. We will be bringing back our real estate transactions in Friday's newspaper and some form of sports box scores and sports television scheduling that we lost when we changed our outside news services. Our television section for Monday will be placed in Saturday's paper and include some additional types of puzzles and games.

Please contact us with any questions you may have related to these upcoming changes.

We sincerely thank you for your dedication to The Brunswick News. We again ask for your loyal support and pledge back to you our standing commitment to remain Local, Local, Local.

In closing, a committed local newspaper is very effective in making a difference across a community from the individuals who read it to the government entities it covers to the nonprofits and to the businesses that advertise in it. I encourage you to follow our Local Matters Campaign we started in the last few weeks. Please let us hear from you. We would love to feature you or your business or entity in relation to your positive experience with your local newspaper — The Brunswick News.

Sincerely,  
C.H. (Buff) Leavy IV

## READERGuide

Your News contacts:  
**PHONES, EMAIL**  
• Newsroom and advertising: 912-265-8320  
• Circulation: 912-265-1104  
• News fax: 912-280-0926  
• News email: news@thebrunswicknews.com  
• Obits email: obits@thebrunswicknews.com  
**OFFICES**  
• Business office hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays  
• 3011 Altama Ave., Brunswick, GA 31520  
**ONLINE**  
• thebrunswicknews.com

• facebook.com/thebrunswicknews  
• Twitter: @brunswick\_news  
**LOCAL NEWS**  
• Buddy Hughes, managing editor: 912-265-8320, ext. 213  
**PEOPLE NEWS**  
• Lindsey Adkison, lifestyle editor, for bridal, clubs, churches or awards: 912-265-8320, ext. 346  
**SPORTS**  
• Derrick Davis, sports editor: 912-265-8320, ext. 319  
**ERRORS, COMMENTS**  
• If you think a story contains an error or to comment on The News, call Buddy Hughes, managing editor: 912-265-8320, ext. 213

**ADVERTISING**  
• Business advertisers with questions about advertising programs may call: 912-267-5983. Individuals wishing to place birthday, anniversary or in-memoriam ads may call classifieds: 912-267-5991  
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Subscription rates, with tax, inside Glynn:	
3 mos.	\$37.81
6 mos.	\$72.40
1 yr.	\$134.00

## Kettle

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Salvation Army in Brunswick, said her goal is to have the bells manned fully by volunteers, although the paid ringer opportunity provides jobs to those who need one.

Bell ringers can now complete the sign up process fully online at registertoring.com. For those who need assistance getting signed up, McNeal is available to help them through the process.

This year's kettle campaign began a little early on Nov. 18 and will run through Dec. 23. Ringers are out Monday through Saturday at Belks, Chick-fil-A, Hobby Lobby, Sam's Club, Walmart locations and Winn Dixie stores.

The fundraising goal this year is \$80,000.

"That's a little bit more

than what we did last year," Dillingham said. "But not only am I the administrator of the Salvation Army, I'm also the senior pastor here. And I believe God is way bigger than our goal."

Donating to the Red Kettle campaign is a way to give to those less fortunate, he said.

"I'm reminded by one of my favorite artists who is Maya Angelou, and she made a statement that 'People will forget what you say and people will forget what you do, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'" Dillingham said.

It's been a rough few years for many families, he added. The economy has been rocked, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take its toll, and many are still without jobs.

"We're Americans, and we take care of our own," he said. "... It's an awesome feeling to be able to share

our love with someone that doesn't know us."

McNeal added that she regularly hears donors say they support the Salvation Army because they see how conscious the organization is about using donations well.

"This is a very, very giving community," she said. "People, when they find out about it, they want to help."

The community is also invited to support the Angel Tree program. Angel Trees are set up at Glynn Place Mall, Walmart and Sam's Club and angels are still available for adoption.

"We're so grateful to all the citizens of Glynn and McIntosh for... (making) sure that people that have no hope have hope this Christmas," Dillingham said.

For more information or to support the Salvation Army, call 912-265-9381 or email jim.dillingham@uss.salvationarmy.org.

### State Brief

#### Georgia again collecting gas tax

Georgia's on-again, off-again gasoline tax suspension is back off.

Gov. Brian Kemp and the General Assembly allowed the latest temporary suspension to expire on Wednesday. That means the state Department of Revenue will resume collecting 29 cents per gallon from motorists.


Kemp reinstated the temporary suspension in September. Since then, prices at the pump have fallen to an average of \$2.79 in Georgia, third-lowest in the nation according to AAA.

With Georgia sitting on a huge budget surplus, the state has been to afford temporarily suspending the gas tax. But with prices dropping so significantly, the governor and legislature opted not to continue the suspension at this time.

— Capitol Beat News Service

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# LOCAL MATTERS

Why do you choose Your Local Newspaper, The Brunswick News for your marketing?



The Brunswick News is a fantastic way to connect with the community. It has definitely helped accelerate our growth locally, provided edification of our Royal-EV brand and Golf Cart Factory. You can't say you're doing everything possible to promote your brand if you're not advertising with our local newspaper. It's definitely a must have for any business.

It's argued, and I can agree online marketing is very cost effective. The difference with using the newspaper is your ad shows up to everyone in the community that reads it. Online marketing only

shows up to targeted audiences or who the algorithm feels is the best suited to see your ad. When you need everyone to see your product, local print is the top choice.

The entire team at The Brunswick News is fantastic. I never feel like a number or faceless customer as I do using social/online marketing platforms.

Golf Cart Factory's partnership with The Brunswick News aligns our success with theirs. Thank you BNP for supporting our brand.

— Erik Sims,  
Dealer Principal

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