

EDITOR'S COLUMN

"If a town loses its paper, it's less of a town."

~ Al Cross, Director emeritus of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky

By NIKI TURNER
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Thanks to the generosity and love and support of our local Meeker community, that quote is not going to be true here.



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. We've endured too much in the last seven years personally and professionally, and we have too much respect for those who built the foundation on which this business/public service rests to quietly close the doors. As we've said all along, since my first column in this space seven years ago, this isn't our newspaper, this is the community's newspaper. With that in mind, we reached out for help.

Our community, as it always does in time of crisis, rose to the occasion, bringing in enough money in less than a week to keep us above water while we jettison some extra weight, shore up some leaks and trim the sails. We're currently developing a plan for

sustainability that will ensure the viability of this newspaper for the future, increase community engagement, and establish an improved business model. Details of that plan will be shared as they are confirmed, but rest assured, thanks to all of you, we're not going under at the end of the month as we feared.

Changes that should have been made a long time ago are underway. These are business decisions, made in light of where our funding comes

from and what our responsibilities are as publishers of a 138-year-old newspaper. Some of those decisions are difficult and painful, but they're necessary.

All week I've been trying to figure out how to say "THANK YOU" in a way that expresses the depth of gratitude we feel toward this town. The best way I can think of is to keep its newspaper alive and well, so that's what we're going to do.

LOOSE ENDS

Please don't stop the presses

By DOLLY VISCARDI
Special to the Herald Times

There is an old slang expression that seems to be used a lot during lately in a new way — all in. Whether someone uses a different version, such as "count me in," these two words convey more weight. It becomes apparent that the person offering their support and help is willing to actually take action. People who have been sitting on the sidelines socially are getting involved, online especially. Emojis and memes have taken over much of our daily communications. More active supporters are using the websites quite effectively to communicate their opinions.

Obtaining all of our information online without being aware of the source before we come to a conclusion about what is really happening is not enough. I am "all in" has taken

on new life in these times. For those of us who continue to read written materials in the hard copy format, the void created by getting rid of the local newspaper will make it difficult to find out the real facts tangled up with false information. An online local paper cannot do it all.

The Meeker community has also gone "all in" for getting their news delivered for more than 138 years. The print edition of the Rio Blanco Herald times will end soon, if supporters of our own local newspaper don't try to help them keep making a weekly road trip to meet their deadline for getting it published in time for the weekly edition. This new deadline will be met if the complacency and an unwillingness to face something that has been taken for granted all these years will cease to exist. Please don't stop the presses!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

After

Dear Editor,

Our community suffered a tragic loss this weekend. I have only lived in Meeker for three years and did not have an opportunity to interact with the boys. I do know that in this town most of you are family or friends or both. While I am not qualified to counsel for grief or give solace through religion, I would like to pass on some thoughts that I wrote long ago as part of a memorial service for a fourth grade boy in Westminster.

He was not a kid everyone knew well. He was being raised by a single mother just scraping by. Often he was unsupervised. I came to know him through our church's AWANA program for kids. He went to Adams Elementary school where I was volunteering for a reading program. The principal there was a kind-hearted lady who went out of her way to find counseling and organize a fund for the boy's funeral. The family had no means to bury the boy. The school

closed for an entire afternoon so that students and teachers could attend the funeral. I wrote part of the eulogy, but was unable to read it. My voice tightened and tears flowed at the thought of it. The pastor had to read it for me.

I am telling you this story only because death at a young age affects a family, school and community in a different way than the passing of old friend of 96. Teenagers in general feel that their whole life is just waiting to start. At that age I felt invincible, immortal and reckless. The sudden death of a child is horrible shock to schoolmates. It is often their first realization that they are not immortal, that life and death are not "fair."

As family, friends, and our community struggle to cope with this loss, we will all ask the universal questions: Why this child? Why now? What God would inflict such pain on those left behind? We may not verbalize it but parents should not be forced to outlive their child. I offer this to you all, to ask

God "why" is normal. Everyone seeks meaning to life and death. I also believe that expecting an immediate answer is just going to frustrate you. In my experience, His answer may not be revealed for years, or never. To quote, "His ways are not our ways." We are not equipped to understand His infinite knowledge. Theologians have spent millenia trying to understand only the small portion that He has revealed to us through His Word.

Whatever your beliefs, I would like to offer the community one comfort. Together we can support each other, console classmates, family and friends. Stop asking God "why?" and concentrate the next weeks on what we can do! We can watch others for indications of stress and offer a shoulder. Grief bottled up can be destructive personally and to those around us. We can set aside our differences and world situations long enough to come together as a community.

Ed Peck
Meeker

Merry
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+ SHOP @ HOME

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\$400 ~~\$125~~ in Chamber Bucks

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Watch for more details in the HT!

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+ encourage SHOPPING LOCAL
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Email sales@ht1885.com or call
970.878.4017 for details.

PIONEERS
MEDICAL CENTER

During the month of October
(with a physician's order),
Pioneers Medical Center is offering
a \$120 mammography*
for self-pay patients.
Please call (970) 878-9269
to schedule & learn more.

*The reading of the mammography is an additional cost which is **not** a part of the discount.

If you are uninsured, and live in Meeker, Pioneers Healthcare Foundation may be able to help with the cost of your mammography. Please call (970) 878-9261 for more information.

October is
Breast Cancer
Awareness Month

100 Pioneers Medical Center Drive
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