Nonprofit takes ownership of Fauquier Times

A little over three years ago, a group of local citizens led by George Thompson of Marshall purchased the Fauquier Times and Prince William Times, forming Piedmont Media. The idea was to preserve these local papers in a world where newspapers are in peril.

These local citizens believe in the importance of local journalism to the residents of Fauquier and Prince William counties. They know that strong newspapers help people stay connected to one another in an increasingly disconnected world. And they know how important it is to have an informed citizenry — and that democracy works better in the light.

This week, after more than three years of hands-on experience publishing award-winning newspapers, the paper’s investors, under President Landon Butler’s leadership, have agreed to a major structural change that will better position us to weather the storms that continue to ravage community journalism.

In brief, the newspaper’s owners have approved the transfer of ownership to the Piedmont Journalism Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization created last year to support community journalism in our area. This change is consistent with strategies being employed by publications both large and small all over the country, as they seek to strengthen their financial position and generate greater community support.

See FAUQUIER TIMES, page 9

OPIOID RIPPLES:
The stubborn stigma of addiction

By Randy Rieland
Piedmont Journalism Foundation

It was a cry that captured a crisis. “I’m a heroin addict. Nobody cares. Nobody cares!”

Maj. Amanda Lambert watched the slight young woman screaming in anger and despair not far from where Lambert stood on the front steps of the Prince William-Manassas Regional Adult Detention Center. She couldn’t look away.

“She was maybe 90 pounds soaking wet,” recalled Lambert, director of support services at the jail. “My heart melted for her. I don’t know why. I’d never seen her before.”

The shouting continued after Lambert led the 23-year-old woman into a room at the jail. “I’m a heroin addict,” she raged. “You don’t care about me. No one gives a s—-.”

Her distress was so intense she was put in restraints to prevent her from hurting herself. Lambert said.

Lambert spent two hours talking with the woman, then showed up in court the next day and sat next to her during her arraignment on a disorderly conduct charge. The judge released her, but Lambert managed to keep her at the jail until she could meet with Katrina King, one of the jail’s “peer navigators” who helps addicts get into treatment. See OPIOID, page 6

Opioid Ripples: What we’ve learned
See the findings from this six-month project on page 7

Culpeper County set to create drug court

‘What we’re doing isn’t working’

Andrew Lawson runs down a list of Culpeper County statistics.

“From 2016 to June 2019: 39 fatal overdoses, 199 heroin overdoses,” he says, then moves on to overdose revival efforts from 2015 to 2018. “240 units of Narcan administered by our paid EMS crews. And they spent more than 279 hours responding to overdoses.”

Finally, he shares data from Culpeper Human Services: Of the 41 children placed in foster care this year, almost half were because their parents were substance abusers. It’s a grim record that strengthens his resolve to try something different when it comes to how opioid users are treated in the criminal justice system. “What we’re doing isn’t working,” he said. “We’re prosecuting a huge number of people because they have an addiction.” See DRUG COURT, page 6

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Nonprofit

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involvement in preserving and improving local journalism.

We believe this move will improve the financial stability of the paper, as it will enable the Foundation to seek charitable funding from local individuals and local and national foundations for the work of the paper.

The Foundation in the last year has already financed in-depth journalism on two local subjects — the regional opioid crisis and broadband and cellular service in Fauquier County — and now will be more directly able to support the papers’ journalism efforts.

Bo Jones, director and president of the Piedmont Journalism Foundation, said the 501(c)(3) will be able to raise money to help with seasonal fluctuations, to provide a cushion for the newspaper. He said, “Like every newspaper in the country, the Fauquier Times has large fixed costs. We can help with those.”

He added, “The newspaper and its web presence are very important to the community and we want to make sure it continues to thrive.”

This completes the transition begun three years ago from a paper owned by one individual to a true community paper, owned and operated for the public good of the county’s residents. We believe this is an exciting change with much promise for the future and look forward to partnering with you — our readers — to make the paper even better than it already is.

The new owner has asked management of the paper to remain in place.

Next week’s edition will carry a more detailed report on the Piedmont Journalism Foundation and the reasoning behind this transition of ownership.

Catherine Nelson
Publisher
Piedmont Media

Fauquier High

SPAKER, from page 5

‘off script’ and made comments that made many feel uncomfortable and, in some cases, angry. We do not condone, encourage, or support these types of comments nor is it representative of the beliefs of Fauquier High School or Fauquier County Public Schools.

“Ms. Buchanan was given specific talking points with the expectation that she align her comments in accordance with school board policies …”

“This event was not a Veteran’s Day assembly. The goal of the assembly was to encourage students to become young leaders and to find ways to give back to their community. Due to scheduling issues, the speaker was only available on November 11. The intent was to provide a message that was positive and appropriate for all. Moving forward, Fauquier County Public Schools will ensure that guest speakers adhere to school board policies. We offer our sincerest apologies for the outcome of this assembly and its impact on some of our students.”