

Paper Mache for 3-7-25 by David Read

So how do you get information about what's going on in the community? Well, you're reading this article so clearly you care enough to subscribe to the Appeal Democrat, our almost daily newspaper. Do you ever look at the weekly Territorial Dispatch? What about listening to local radio stations like KKCX Country, KUBA 70s/80s classic hits, or 93Q community radio? They all offer snippets of local news and interviews. I have appeared regularly on these three stations for years talking about all things arts and culture. As we all know, we live in an era dominated by social media and digital news, but local media outlets like newspapers and radio stations still play an essential role in communities worldwide. While social media offers instant updates and widespread access to information, local newspapers and radio stations provide a level of depth, accuracy, and community engagement that digital platforms often lack. Local media is vital for preserving democracy, fostering civic engagement, and ensuring that communities stay informed about the issues that directly impact their daily lives.

One of the main advantages of local newspapers and radio is their commitment to accuracy. Unlike social media, where misinformation spreads rapidly, professional journalists are trained to verify facts, seek reliable sources, and follow ethical guidelines in reporting. Local journalists are accountable to their communities. They live in the same neighborhoods as their readers and listeners, making them more invested in truthful reporting. I was thinking about this a lot lately following the final broadcast by the morning radio team, Dave & Briggs, last Friday. They had been a fixture on 103.1 for over 20 years and did a great job covering local news stories and hosting in-studio interviews. They were also fixtures at local community events doing live broadcasts all over Yuba-Sutter. They have been replaced by a pair of syndicated broadcasters out of Nashville, another blow to locally based reporting.

Unlike national news outlets, which focus on large-scale issues, local newspapers and radio stations prioritize stories that directly affect residents. These include city council and school board meetings, crime reports, and local business developments. For instance, if local governments propose tax increases or service reductions due to budget shortfalls, local newspapers or radio stations are likely to cover the issue in depth. On social media, such a story might get lost in an ocean of unrelated content. Without local media, many of these issues would go unnoticed by most of the population, weakening civic engagement.

Hometown papers and radio provide a platform for voices that might otherwise be unheard. Local media gives community leaders, small business owners, artists, and activists a space to share their perspectives, engage in discussions, and raise awareness about issues specific to our region. Local media also plays a crucial role in supporting the local economy. Many small businesses rely on local newspapers and radio stations for advertising. These businesses may not have the budget for large-scale digital campaigns, making local media one of the most effective ways for them to reach customers. Additionally, our newspapers and radio stations preserve and celebrate cultural identity. They cover local events, sports, and arts in ways not otherwise possible. While social media serves as a valuable tool for sharing information quickly, it is not a substitute for professional journalism. Despite its rise, local newspapers and radio stations remain essential pillars of informed societies. They provide accurate, community-focused reporting, amplify diverse voices, support local economies, and hold power to account in ways that social media cannot. As digital platforms continue to evolve, it is crucial to support and sustain local journalism, ensuring that communities remain engaged, informed, and connected.