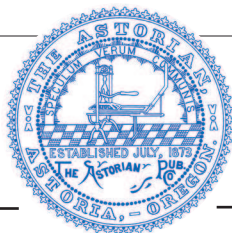


OPINION

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THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

THE PRESS IS NOT THE ENEMY

A child looks at four crosses and a Star of David representing slain journalists at a makeshift memorial outside the office building housing the Capital Gazette newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland.

AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana

The press is not the enemy, despite what President Donald Trump has said.

In fact, it is the news media's responsibility to make life uncomfortable for people in power — to be a watchdog on potential abuses of that power. It's no surprise that the politically powerful have long responded by accusing the press of being inaccurate, unfair or unpatriotic.

Vice President Spiro Agnew in 1970 famously referred to the news media as "nattering nabobs of negativism." Two years later, President Richard Nixon said in a taped White House conversation, "The press is the enemy," a phrase Trump adopted early in his presidency.

Even President George Washington "expressed dismay that his farewell address might not receive adequate press coverage," according to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

As for Washington's predecessors, the colonial governors allowed no freedom of the press. Criticizing the British monarchy was a crime. That is why the press was included among the five freedoms inscribed by our founders in the First Amendment.



Jay Reed/The Baltimore Sun

Current and former Capital Gazette staff members march in the Annapolis Fourth of July parade.

And so, as the nation returns from its Independence Day celebrations and vacations, it's worth reflecting on the role of the press in our country and our community.

It would be extreme to somehow blame Trump's exhortations against the media for the mass shooting late last month at a newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland.

As is often the case in workplace violence, this apparently was the work of a deranged man carrying a grudge. Something sent him over the edge. His long-festering com-

plaint had been that the newspaper had written — accurately, according to the courts — about his legal troubles for harassing and threatening a woman.

It is deeply unsettling that, along with a great outpouring of community support, the Capital Gazette has now received additional death threats and communications celebrating the slaying of its five newspaper employees.

Yet even in that environment, even amid the tragedy of losing colleagues in a senseless shooting, the newspa-

per continued publishing.

Because that's what journalists do.

Journalism is a calling. It's telling stories about crops and canneries, community festivals and classroom projects, and all sorts of groundbreaking and fresh starts, both in construction and in life. It's about crime and punishment, probing the deep underbelly of society and alerting the public not only to what went wrong, but also revealing when things go right. It's about going alongside first responders into the winds and wildfires when others are fleeing.

On the opinion pages, it's cheerleading at times and challenging the community at other times. And, yes, holding the powerful accountable.

It's about seeking truth as best we can and sometimes making mistakes — we're human and fallible despite our best efforts every day — but promptly correcting our factual errors. And it's about always giving readers the last word through letters to the editor, as we have for generations.

People can and will disagree. But that should not make any of us enemies. This is our community and our country — they belong to all of us.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Partnership to bring wheelchairs to the beach

Seaside will join Manzanita and Cannon Beach as the third coastal town with free wheelchair access for visitors.

The program, which will offer wheelchairs to the disabled at no cost through the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, was inspired by Seaside resident Randy Anderson.

"I would like to propose to the city of Seaside to begin a long-needed service in a 'free of charge' beach wheelchair program to help people experiencing mobility disabilities to be able to safely and easily access our beaches," Anderson said in a City Council presentation in June. "Typical wheelchairs and sand do not mix."

The beach wheelchairs are designed with "fat balloon tires" to provide easy access and mobility on the sand.

"I've walked down the Prom and seen people with mobility issues looking out at the beach wishing they could get out there," Anderson said. "It's just heart-breaking to see."

Anderson, whose daughter has a disability, said he is a "huge advocate" for all people experiencing mobility challenges.

Anderson researched the Cannon Beach wheelchair program initiated in 2017 by the Haystack Rock Awareness Program and the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce.

The chairs may be checked out at Cannon Beach City Hall. Anderson met with outreach coordinator Pooka Rice, who helped initiate the program.

From Jan. 1 through June 18, Cannon Beach has accommodated 84 requests for the use of their wheelchairs, Anderson said.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Denise Duhachek, Patrick Duhachek, Randy Anderson and Skyler Archibald demonstrate a beach wheelchair.

'Good partnership'

Anderson brought his concept to Russ Vandenberg, general manager of the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

With construction underway at the convention center, Anderson's first choice — storage of the wheelchairs at a city location close to the beach — was impractical.

Vandenberg encouraged Anderson to talk with Skyler Archibald, executive director of the recreation district.

Archibald saw it as a "good partnership" and brought the proposal to the district's board of directors for consideration.

The program got an added boost when Patrick and Denise Duhachek, owners of Wheel Fun Rentals in Seaside, agreed to donate two wheelchairs.

The Duhacheks had provided wheelchairs to visitors at no cost through Wheel Fun, but will transfer storage and administration to the district.

The wheelchairs, which run about \$1,800 to \$2,200 each, will be available for free from the district at the Bob Chisholm Center on Avenue A.

"I'm thrilled that they're going to take it over," Denise Duhachek said. "But now that they (the wheelchairs) are actually going to leave, it's kind of sad. We've gotten so many letters



Cannon Beach

A window sign provides information about beach wheelchairs in Cannon Beach.

of gratitude. We're going to miss the interaction."

Looking to expand

The audience at the City Council meeting in June greeted Seaside's new program with applause.

"I thought it would take some time and I was really pleased how little time it took," Anderson said after the meeting.

With a council endorsement, Anderson plans to purchase and donate a third wheelchair, he said.

If successful, he said he will apply for grants or solicit donations to expand the program.

The city of Gearhart has shown interest in creating its own wheelchair loan program, he added, with details to be presented at the city's Thursday council meeting. The effort was also spearheaded by Anderson.

Wheelchairs are available from the recreation district, Archibald said. "The only challenge we're working through is our proximity to the beach, which is not as great as it could be."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.