

Why locally owned and created news matters

I’ve embarked on quite an adventure this fall. I joined the new Pine Knot News community newspaper, published in Cloquet and serving all of Carlton County. I had no idea what I was getting into. A group of us convened this fall, united in our dream of having a local newspaper with a local office and local journalists.


Thus, the Pine Knot News was born. We published our first issue October 26. We leased and re-opened the shuttered newspaper storefront and ordered a new banner on the awning from the local sign shop. We furnished the office with items we could all do without at home and three rocking chairs we bought at the DAV rummage sale.

I learned so much from the other members of the team. Sometimes I felt like a kid in a candy shop! Except for high school and college part-time jobs, I’d never worked for a small company. I couldn’t believe the

expertise around the table. Peterson brought deep understanding about what a newspaper serving a regional community needs to cover, staff roles (e.g. editor, office manager, layout person, advertising manager). She needed intelligence on the business side. What are reasonable expectations for subscriptions, for advertising revenue? Where should we go for printing and how much would that cost? How to truck and distribute the papers? What kinds of businesses in our region would advertise in our paper and how do we approach and work with them?

We also had aesthetic challenges. Should we go with the large layout of major papers or go to a smaller, more compact format? What colors should we use on the front page (we opted for a woody brown that I love). How could we make our storefront attractive and inviting to people?

At times, I wondered what I



Community Columnist

Ann Markusen

was doing there. I didn’t seem to be talking much. I was writing for the Pine Knot, part of my commitment to columns that celebrate the strengths of our community and present fact-based opinion pieces about major political economy issues (like “Why I don’t mind paying taxes,” “Why we need consumer protection,” and “Why the Foxconn deal is bad for Wisconsin”). But I didn’t think I was pulling my weight.

One day, we talked about the natural beauty of our space, with its gorgeous multi-colored brick wall extending from front to back. Pictures, someone suggested. A gallery, I said. We could host area artists’ work — for sale

if they wished — along the wall. Everyone liked the idea.

I asked Wrenshall’s Anne Dugan, who recently stepped down from running the Duluth Art Institute, to consult on gallery design. I also invited Cloquet artist Ken Hanson, whose inventive work documenting our region’s natural setting in his acrylics I’d seen hanging in his studio. I had envisioned a mish-mash — something from each of the many artists around us. They counseled doing “one-person” shows. I asked Ken if he’d be willing to be our first artist. Yes, he said, enthusiastically. He ended up hanging the show himself in time for our open house the following week. Last week, we hosted an artist reception for Ken and his work. Both events were well-attended.

I’m enjoying the public feedback we’re getting. Informative coverage of everything from local government to sports, schools, culture and nature.

There are all the usual things you’d want in a paper: notice of upcoming events, coverage of controversies, profiles of people and companies doing good things for the community, obituaries.

I’m enjoying working on the Pine Knot News. I’m thrilled by the grit and courage of our editor, and by our staff and board members’ energy, knowledge and willingness to share. People across the region tell me they are thrilled with the breadth and depth of our coverage and with our local embeddedness. That they find the quality of our writing is exceptionally high. And they know that what they pay for subscriptions and ads goes back into our communities.

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Pine Knot News

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CONFUSED ?

ABOUT YOUR LOCAL PAPER

YES, there are two newspapers covering Cloquet and the surrounding communities. NO, they are not the same.

Pine Knot News

- **Locally** owned
- **Local** office at 122 Avenue C, Cloquet, MN
- Carlton County resident writers include:

Jana Peterson

Parnell Thill

Justin Krych

Denise Hammond

Kerry Rodd

Dwight Cadwell

Jennie Hanson

Pete Radosevich

Ann Markusen

Uriah Wilkinson

Bret Baker

Jake Kachinske

Dan Reed

Local pastors... and more

- Unique stories from Carlton County
- **Local** editor
- **Local** publisher
- **Local** decisions
- Your subscription and ad dollars go into the **local** economy
- Pine Knot News **will refund** unused subscription dollars

Pine Journal

- Owned by Forum Communications, Fargo, ND
- Office at 424 W. 1st Street, Duluth, MN
- A handful of Carlton County resident writers
- Includes recycled stories from the Duluth News Tribune
- Duluth editor
- Duluth publisher
- Corporate policies
- Your subscription and ad dollars go to ?
- The recent Pine Journal promotion says “subscriptions are **non-refundable**”

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