

# COMMUNITY REPORTING ALLIANCE

*Annual Report 2015*



**Mission: The Community Reporting Alliance was formed as the local news universe was shrinking and news deserts were growing. It was formed with a commitment to local news reporting and especially to those underserved communities who needed news more than ever.**

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### The Community Reporting Alliance

is unlike many of the other not-for-profit news projects that have sprouted up. It neither reports stories nor aggregates the work of others, nor does it advocate for one “type” of news delivery system or another.

In 2015, The Community Reporting Alliance launched our third youth-led local news publication, The Ferguson Phoenix, out of Ferguson, MO. *The Phoenix's* first edition is a modest four pager that is poised for growth in the coming years.

*The Phoenix* joins *Coal Cracker* and *Manor Ink* in the family of youth led local news publications incubated by the Community Reporting Alliance. *Manor Ink* has become self-sustaining and offers a key model for other youth led publications.

The Community Reporting Alliance continued our fiscal sponsorship of The Watershed Post, a website that serves New York state counties. We discontinued our financial support for Community Film Depot in light of New York State law that requires every public meeting be videotaped. That law diminished the Community Film Depot's role of watchdog in videotaping government meetings in Sullivan County.

In December 2014 Community Reporting Alliance also said farewell to Executive Director Meg McGuire, and welcomed new Executive Director Garry Pierre-Pierre, who is also a CRA board member. Pierre-Pierre is a former reporter with the New York Times and founder of *The Haitian Times*, a Brooklyn based publication serving the Haitian community.

# FERGUSON PHEONIX



*The Ferguson Phoenix*, a new youth led and written newspaper hit the newsstands on December 28, 2015 with an accompanying website. This milestone was the culmination of nearly a year of planning.

CRA received a grant from the Sparkplug Foundation to launch this project, one of many positive initiatives helping to move the region forward since the fatal shooting of Mike Brown in August 2014. That incident became a flashpoint for race relations in the United States and has garnered international coverage.

Working with the St Louis chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, the CRA solicited resumes to be the local

mentor and selected Robin Boyce a multi-media journalist with a solid marketing and advertising experience to manage the project. Ms. Boyce, in collaboration with the local library branch, recruited youth in Ferguson over the summer and fall to write about what's going on in their communities.

Seven writers ages 12 to 18 years old were assembled to work out of the Ferguson Library. They bring a wealth of ideas and varied experiences to the newspaper that will provide the youth and the community in the North St. Louis with a fresh local perspective. The young people will not only write for the paper, they'll also solicit advertisements and set up distribution points.

*The Ferguson Phoenix* provides the young people first-hand experience building a business from the ground up. In keeping with CRA's mission, the youth will not only learn journalism skills, they'll have the opportunity to grow a business that can help employ, strengthen and inform their communities about vital local issues.

Boyce has set ambitious goals for the upcoming year, including doubling the newspaper's page count from four to eight and updating the website regularly. Boyce will also mentor the youth in advertising sales and other fundraising activities. The newspaper hopes to be self-sustaining within three years.

# MANOR INK



Iris and Ron Gillingham



Carolyn Bivins



Barbara Gref

*Manor Ink* is the Community Reporting Alliance's first project and remains the standard bearer, winning several awards for its work in Sullivan County. In addition, it is profitable and self-sustaining.

However, *Manor Ink* has been in a re-organizational period this year with many of the original members "graduating" out of the program combined with a dearth of "new active membership."

In contrast to years past, in 2015 *Manor Ink* struggled to continue its monthly production schedule. On a positive note, it is getting done.

The paper prints and distributes 1,500 copies with an average page count of 16.

The staff remains active in the community and has made presentations to the Livingston Manor Rotary Club about ways in which *Manor Ink* is vital to the community.

In the past year, *Manor Ink* covered stories on flood mitigation, new business openings, school activities, the growing problem of heroin addiction and how to combat it, town building moratoriums and more.

# COAL CRACKER

2015 has been a big year for Coal Cracker. The Coal Cracker staff held an Editorial Board meeting with State Senator David G. Argall on January 8, 2015. Sen. Argall invited *Coal Cracker* to meet with him based on the publication's in-depth coverage of neighborhood blight. Staff photojournalist Elizabeth Matz captured close-ups of the event. The Coal Cracker journalists came prepared with questions about the quality of Pennsylvania roads, rising autistic spectrum disorders, why people choose a particular political party. They also asked questions other topics such as Medical marijuana, Student loans and the importance of local government.

In mid 2015, *Coal Cracker* launched its website allowing the staff to post news and photos on the site in a more timely way as work progresses as on the print edition.

## COAL CRACKER AT THE YOUTH SUMMIT



Coal Cracker reporters Joei and Emma Shaller with PA Auditor General Eugene DePasquale (left) and County Commissioner George Halcovage (pictured above).

In addition in March of this year Coal Cracker Reporters Joei and Emma Shaller attended the third annual Schuylkill County

Youth Summit at the Penn State Schuylkill campus. The summit brings together students from all county high schools.



The Coal Cracker journalists came prepared with questions about the quality of Pennsylvania roads, rising autistic spectrum disorders, why people choose a particular political party. They also asked questions other topics such as Medical marijuana, Student loans and the importance of local government.

LAUNCHED COALCRACKERKIDS.COM

# THE WATERSHED POST



The Watershed Post's mission is to provide quality journalism in the rural Catskills. It aims to be sustainable and self-sufficient. The media outlet was active in 2015 and continues to be a model of how to run and manage a profitable local news organization.

## Here are some journalistic highlights:

- **Islamberg:** Published a series of stories and a short documentary about Islamberg, a Muslim African-American community in Delaware County that has been threatened repeatedly with violence by various anti-Muslim

groups and individuals around the United States.

- **Esopus tubing fatality:** Published an investigation into the death of a 14-year-old girl who drowned while tubing on the Esopus Creek on Labor Day 2015. The Watershed Post's reporting was reprinted by numerous other news outlets, was featured in a Sunday print edition of The Daily Freeman and led to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's decision to use special emergency powers to clear debris from the stream where the girl died.

- The Watershed Post was cited as a successful local news project

by several prominent writers and researchers in the world of independent local news media.

- The Watershed Post's two annual print magazines were discussed in a report on best practices from the Tow-Knight Center, "Making Print Products Work For Digital News Organizations."

The publication grew revenue 8 percent year over year. The Watershed Post soft launched a reader support program through which they are soliciting and receiving individual donations. The plan is to expand on this in 2016 to generate more revenue.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

### ASSETS:

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$28,185
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	356

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<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$30,542</b>
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### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS:

Accounts Payable	4,504
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$1,234</b>
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### NET ASSETS:

Net Assets, beginning of the year	33,095
Change in Net Assets	7,907

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<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$18,891</b>
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$30,542</b>
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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

### OPERATING REVENUE AND SUPPORT:

Corporations	\$15,377
Foundations	35,000

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<b>TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$50,377</b>
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### OPERATING EXPENSES:

Program Services	\$31,537
Management and General	26,746

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<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$58,284</b>
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<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$7,907</b>
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# LOOKING AHEAD

## 2016 AND BEYOND

The last three years The Community Reporting Alliance has undergone rapid growth and we intend to continue this trend. The James B. Ottaway Foundation has given us some seed money to start another project in Brownsville, Brooklyn, an urban enclave whose challenges – high unemployment rate, deep poverty and health disparities - are similar to our rural projects.

We've set up several meetings with local branch officials in Brownsville to discuss the logistics and modality of the project. As we did with Ferguson, we intend to work with the New York Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists to help find a project leader for Brownsville. Meetings have also been set with officials from Brooklyn Breweries about funding the Brownsville initiative.

Our primary goal this year is to increase our fundraising activities and ensure that the projects are well funded. We've identified the following sources for potential funders:

- Citibank Foundation
- Bank of America Foundation
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation
- TD Bank Foundation



**Editorial Board Meeting w/ Pennsylvania State Senator David Argall**

The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development is pumping more than \$30 million in Ferguson to address some of the racial disparities that were exposed in the aftermath of the unrest. We intend to make the Phoenix a centerpiece of the effort and we will submit a proposal to fund the project with a \$100,000 request over two years.

We will also submit another request to the Sparkplug Foundation for a grant of \$20,000 for two years. We believe these two grants, if approved, will strengthen the Phoenix's nest and allow it to fill its mission and recruit more staff to work on the project.

In 2016, we plan on increasing our public relations efforts. Garry Pierre-Pierre will lead an initiative to increase The Community Reporting Alliance's social media pages. We've submitted pitches to a couple of library journals to bring attention to the work we do with the libraries. We will also pitch stories to local media outlets in communities we serve.

As our projects mature we plan to increase training for the staff. In late January, Garry Pierre-Pierre led a workshop on "Using Smart Phones to take Smart Photos" for the staff of Coal Cracker. The students will learn how to shoot, edit and post pictures and videos for their website. Workshops on reporting, writing and editing are planned for Livingston Manor and Ferguson, MO.