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STUDENT VOICE OF YSU SINCE 1931

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The Vindicator closed its doors on Aug. 31 after 150 years of printing. Photo courtesy of **Bill Lewis**

RACHEL GOBER, ALYSSA WESTON AND AMANDA JOERNDT

The sun set on The Vindicator for the last time.

The once bustling newsroom at The Vindicator now has an eerie feeling. Reporters are no longer on their daily beats, editors aren't reviewing copy — The Vindicator is closed.

Although employees had two months to revise their resumes for new job applications or prepare for retirement, there was no way to sufficiently brace themselves for the end of their careers and the end of a Youngstown legacy.

"It's like watching your ship sink while attending your own funeral," was one way William Lewis, former photojournalist at The Vindicator, described the last two months working in the newsroom.

Lewis said the final days inside the newsroom were challenging. Staff spent time reminiscing on some of the big

stories they'd worked on during the last night of publication for The Vindicator.

According to Mark Sweetwood, former managing editor of The Vindicator, emotions in the newsroom were varied in the couple of months leading to the last printing day on Aug. 30.

"The emotions ran from disbelief, to panic, to people who were crying," he said. "When I told Mark Brown, our general manager, what my new job was going to be, I suddenly got emotional. It was the first time in seven or eight weeks of this that my guard went down a little bit."

To Mark Brown, whose family owned The Vindicator for 137 years, the closing was personal.

"It's like when someone is dying when you know they're going to die, and they hang on for six months, and you say at least you're prepared. But when they die, it doesn't matter. You still fall apart," Brown said to The Plain Dealer.

Graig Graziosi, a former news reporter at The Vindicator,

said the fear he had wasn't for his job.

"I'm still relatively young; I can bounce back. I could even retrain if I want. The thing that started eating away at me, even on the first day, was seeing the response from my older colleagues who don't have the luxury of 20 or 30 more professional years before they have to retire," he said.

Samantha Phillips, also a former news reporter at The Vindicator, said she hopes people realize the importance of good journalism.

"They're going to feel the loss of a good, in-depth watchdog that covers every meeting that citizens can't go to and that is the eye of the community," Phillips said. "I think people are going to realize how much they should have just paid the subscription and supported local journalism."

Although the last edition of the newspaper was picked up

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VINDICATOR STAFF REFLECTION: FROM THEIR FIRST PUBLISH TO FINAL PRINT

The Vindicator staff gathered Friday, Aug. 30 to print the last edition of the newspaper. Photo courtesy of Bill Lewis

ALYSSA WESTON

When The Vindicator published its last edition on Aug. 31, 2019, the city lost its voice and 140 employees lost their jobs.

“I hid from the world. I went into a bunker. I didn’t want to talk to anybody,” Mark Sweetwood, former managing editor of The Vindicator, said about the initial news of the newspaper’s closing.

But while this Youngstown staple is concluding, The Vindicator’s staff will hold on to their fondest memories.

For Sweetwood, who worked for newspapers in New York, Illinois and Florida before landing at The Vindicator, there were many satisfactory moments in the newsroom.

Sweetwood recalled his favorite memory in his years of working at Vindy was when Joe Gorman, former Vindicator crime reporter, called Sweetwood to tell him that Robert Seman, a man accused of triple murder in Mahoning County, jumped to his death from the fourth floor of the Mahoning County Courthouse.

“We’ve had a few crazy news days, but that one was special because it falls under the category of you never know what’s coming next,” he said.

According to Sweetwood, Gorman was the reporter to break the story.

“There was only one reporter in the courthouse on his beat when Robert Seman jumped,” he said. “Will that mean next week that no one will be in the courthouse on a beat when that happens? Could be.”

Julie Zuckla, former newsroom and society clerk at The Vindicator, spent her days at the newspaper doing many tasks, including answering phones, writing daily announcements and entering data into the Vindy website.

But within her six years at The Vindicator, some of Zuckla’s favorite memories were meet-and-greets with radio personality Louie B. Free’s guests.

“I have a lot of selfies with the movers and shakers of this area,” she said.

When former general manager Mark Brown informed the staff of the newspaper’s closing, Zuckla said they knew they’d receive bad news, but the employees didn’t think it was going to be a “worst case scenario.”

“It was terrible, and I hope I never have to go through something

like that again,” she said. “A Youngstown without The Vindicator is inconceivable.”

The pain resurfaced for Vindy employees when there was mass confusion in the community after The Tribune Chronicle bought The Vindicator name, website and subscriber list.

“[People] congratulated me on getting to keep my job, and they were relieved that the Vindy was saved. Neither of those things were true. It was like yet another punch to the gut,” Zuckla said. “But I do wish the Mahoning County edition of The Trib the best.”

In Zuckla’s opinion, Brown and The Vindicator’s former publisher Betty Brown Jagnow handled “one of the most gut-wrenching decisions of their lives” with dignity and grace.

“Not only did Mark deliver the news of The Vindicator closing to his staff personally in meeting after meeting that June day, but then he faced television interviews that night. It was a lot. It was painful to watch, so I can only imagine how he felt,” she said.

Alex Migletz, former information systems specialist at The Vindicator, served as the first point of contact from a technological standpoint during his time at the newspaper.

Migletz said he knew The Vindicator’s chapter was closing last summer when Brown entertained potential buyers. In his opinion, the newspaper failed to “keep up” with advancements in technology, which he believes could’ve factored into its downfall.

Migletz said during the last workday, the staff felt like a family and reminded him of the last night before high school ended. For him, the most memorable moment was on the last print day as he watched the press machine run for the last time.

“When I was there I knew [the newspaper] would shut down, but I never thought I would be there to experience it,” he said.

In Sweetwood’s opinion, The Vindicator is part of a chain reaction of newspapers closing, and he is unsure of what journalism will look like in the future.

“We all want everything in bite-sized pieces and doses, and really good journalism is not often available in that format,” he said.

Sweetwood also believes many people think news is a brand, which he believes contributes to the shift in the journalism industry.

“[Consumers] treat [news] not like information but like comfort food,” he said.

For former Vindicator editor Todd Franko, his start in journalism

was an unlikely coincidence, but ultimately landing at Vindy was no fluke.

“I loved the set up, loved the university town, loved the family-owned operation. It was a good-sized paper, product and newsroom,” he said.

Throughout his 12 fruitful years at The Vindicator, Franko had an indication that the end was near.

“If you’re trained to always look for the ‘next’ in our industry and especially in our product, you can see that ‘next’ was not going to be good because the advertising just wasn’t there,” he said.

According to Franko, there were a series of conversations on how to cut costs, including cutting print days and staff, before the ultimate decision to close the paper entirely.

“We’d seen [other newspapers] cutting back on two or three days a week. Nobody was closing. So that was never on my horizon,” he said.

What Franko thought would be a funeral for the 15 or so employees he predicted would lose their jobs soon became a funeral for the entire community.

“We’re all in this together. It’s not just [Vindicator employees] it’s 220,000 to 300,000 people who digest The Vindicator over the course of the week,” he said.

On the last day, Franko described the atmosphere as a typical active newsroom during any big story, but it was their story.

“Nobody expected to be covering our funeral,” he said.

Franko is unsure of what the future of journalism will be in the Valley. But, he applauds the other local media who has stepped in to “spackle some of the cracks.”

“I’ve told everyone to subscribe to the [Tribune Chronicle’s Vindicator edition],” he said. “I plan to subscribe.”

Franko is saddened by the idea that a child in Youngstown may never know what it’s like to be on the front page for an accomplishment; he said the recognition is important in a young person’s career.

Although The Vindicator’s printing press had its final run, the employees’ memories from their days in the newsroom will last forever, as will the impact of the stories they told.

“At this point, I’m still working through my sadness of it being over, but I am so thankful that it happened,” Zuckla said.

THREE YSU PROFESSORS SHED LIGHT ON THEIR 76 COMBINED YEARS AT VINDY

AMANDA JOERNDT

As one door closes for three former Vindicator employees, another door opens. Whether that be retirement or a position at another media organization, new and invigorating opportunity is on the rise in Youngstown.

Although each opportunity may lead down new roads, there was one facet these three former “Vindy enthusiasts” all have in common: their passion for teaching students authentic journalism.

Richard Logan, Mark Sweetwood and Bill Lewis all grew stronger and wiser after dedicating years of their professional career to teaching students about the ever-changing and competitive field of journalism at Youngstown State University.

RICHARD LOGAN

Logan, adjunct journalism professor at YSU and former news editor for The Vindicator, has taught various journalism classes, such as news reporting, editing and design, editorial writing and opinion writing. He has also taught freshman composition classes.

In Logan’s opinion, working at The Vindicator for 31 years and being a professor at YSU for 33 years went hand in hand.

“The two work together very well, particularly when I’m teaching journalism classes. It keeps my mind fresh and on the current trends and changes,” Logan said. “The skills you’ve needed in 1986 by and large are the same skills you need today except you need a whole other skill set in the technological trappings.”

Logan said although some people visualize journalism as a “dead art,” it is still alive and needed now more than ever.

“Staying on top of the trends in the professional world can be carried into the classroom very easily,” he said. “Oftentimes, I would

bring in examples from that day’s publication. Keeping students aware that journalism has evolved and continues to evolve is crucial.”

One aspect of journalism Logan has seen evolve while teaching has been the perspective of what it takes to be considered a “well-rounded journalist.”



Photo by Heather Newsome/The Jambar

“I admire students today,” he said. “They need to be not just focused on one area of the journalism profession. You’ve got to be skilled at narrative storytelling, print design publication, digital skills, videography and photography.”

Logan is grateful for the opportunity to guide students throughout their academic career and help them find satisfaction in the field of journalism.

“It’s a symbiotic relationship, and they both pull on one another and are mutually beneficial. So, I would consider myself blessed,” he said. “If you could find work that really satisfies you, that’s really hard to do. I wouldn’t change my world for a minute.”

Fortunately, Logan’s journey doesn’t end at the original Vindicator publication.

“I’m hoping the new Vindicator operated by the Tribune, which I will be starting [at on Sunday], does a great job in continuing that tradition.”

BILL LEWIS

Lewis, former adjunct photojournalism professor at YSU and former photojournalist for The Vindicator, started at the newspaper in 1985 and has captured memorable moments throughout Youngstown’s history since.

From covering every presidential elections dating back to Jimmy Carter’s presidential campaign to Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini as an amateur and professional boxer, Lewis is known for his monumental photography.



Photo courtesy of Bill Lewis

He began his teaching career at YSU in 2008 and ended in 2015 when he taught an introduction to photojournalism class in which he instructed students on how to capture compelling and meaningful photos.

“I was scared to death the first class, and after a few minutes I realized this was great fun,” he said. “I don’t think any of them went on to become award-winning photojournalists, but most of them were writers, and I was able to impart to them how important a good photo was to tell a story.”

Lewis said being able to share his knowledge and perspective on how to take the best photos possible was a joyful experience.

“It was just a wonderful experience, and I think I learned more from the students than they did from me,” he said. “It was very rewarding to be able to take the knowledge I’ve acquired from decades of working in the industry and share it with my students.”

Having a valuable news source such as The Vindicator in Youngstown helped students at YSU learn more about the city as a whole.

“I think having a newspaper right around the corner from campus was a great thing for all students learning more about the community and what’s happening daily,” Lewis said.

Lewis ended his photojournalism career after 34 years at The Vindicator with plans to retire. But, during his free time, he plans

to go sailing regularly in Ashtabula Harbor and take snapshots of people and events throughout the community, thereby doing what he loves.

MARK SWEETWOOD

For Mark Sweetwood, adjunct journalism professor at YSU and former managing editor at The Vindicator, the journey has just begun as he hopes to continue his journalism and academic career after the original Vindicator has closed its doors.

Sweetwood started at The Vindicator in 2008 and began teaching at YSU as a journalism professor in 2013, guiding students through courses on news reporting, advanced reporting and magazine writing.

He said he taught his journalism classes at YSU with caution, knowing the end was approaching for The Vindicator.

“I taught the News Reporting 1 class as the managing editor, but very cautiously said, ‘Hey look, this is closing down.’ And now the next time I teach that course, I’m going to be the former managing editor,” he said. “I’ll be teaching it as, ‘Look what happened,’ because this journalism went away and it’s going to have an effect.”

Sweetwood noticed a transition in his approach when teaching his classes. He started with about 20 journalism students several years ago, and it changed to two or three majors with the rest consisting of anthropology, education and nursing students.

“I had to change my focus by being truthful to them, saying journalism is not going to be your future but being able to be the most educated person about gathering and fact-checking news,” he said. “At the end of the day, people need to know what journalism is, why it’s important and why it’s necessary for a thriving democracy.”

One lesson Sweetwood hopes the student body at YSU learns from watching the original Vindicator’s extinction is that journalism is a vital part of living in society.

“Too many college students assume newspapers are something their grandparents read and TV news is something mom and dad watches,” he said. “You can’t be an informed voter, informed citizens and can’t do much good to society if you’re in your own little news bubble.”

Sweetwood has yet to announce where he will be working next

but is considering enrolling as a graduate student at YSU.

“I do plan to go back to YSU next semester, and I’m probably going to enroll as a grad student in the spring in communication,” he said. “I still feel that I have many things to share.”



Photo courtesy of Bill Lewis

FORMER JAMBAR REPORTERS MAKE THEIR MARK ON LOCAL JOURNALISM

RACHEL GOBEP

From investigative reporting to stories on education and local government, two Youngstown State University graduates told Youngstown's narrative while working as news reporters at The Vindicator.

Samantha Phillips and Graig Graziosi were trained as journalists at YSU's student-run newspaper, The Jambar.

They remained at The Vindicator until its final hours.

GRAIG GRAZIOSI

Graig Graziosi was teaching English overseas when he realized he needed to finish the journalism degree he started 10 years prior.

Graziosi got caught in the Arab Spring riot in the Maldives — he was coincidentally one of the first Western journalists on the ground.

He reported on his experience during the anti-government protest and interviewed government administrators.

"While I was there, I was in the crowd and I was videotaping stuff and getting notes. One of the Maldivians asked me, 'Woah, are you a journalist from America?' And, I technically was. I wasn't there for that purpose, but I was a journalist. I was from America," he said.

This meant the story was going to be told on a broader stage than the local news in the Maldives.



Photo by **Rachel Gobep/The Jambar**

When Graziosi got back from the Maldives, he went to San Diego for a short time before moving back to Ohio. He resumed classes at YSU.

Graziosi attended the university to obtain a journalism degree in 2005 but wasn't satisfied with his experience in the program. He thought he would be able to pursue creative writing, which is something journalists need to work toward.

"I was very young, I was 17 at the time ... So, I didn't really have an understanding of the industry," he said.

Graziosi also had an odd experience with The Jambar during his first stint as a journalism student.

"I worked for two issues. The first issue, they ran my story without my byline, and the second issue, they ran my byline, but no story ... So, at that point, I was like, 'You know what? I think I'm done.'"

He started writing for The Jambar when he came back to YSU — where he reported on breaking news, in-depth investigative stories,

union negotiations and even a story about a man who dresses like a cat.

He felt a need to come back and tell the stories of Youngstown because he grew up in and around the city.

Graziosi's first job at 13 years old was as a paperboy for The Vindicator, and he wanted his first three years as a journalist with a degree to be spent at the newspaper.

"I thought it was gonna be on my time frame and not the paper shutting down, but it did. I was here for three years, and now I'm looking to move and go to a larger market, but I mean, that was ultimately what kinda kept me here ... I wanted to work for Youngstown," he said.

Graziosi said he enjoys writing long-form narratives and storytelling, and his favorite story was written at the end of his time at The Vindicator.

It was about a Jamacian immigrant, William Johnson, who lives on the South Side.

"[I wrote about] his story of getting here and using his skills and his tenacity and his drive to take an otherwise forgotten section of the South Side that has been basically abandoned by anybody except for the residents there and trying to start a community for himself there," he said.

Johnson has renovated houses, brought other Jamacians into the community, helped his neighbors and built an aquaponic center on his own property.

"Working with Johnson was kind of just a modern story of that force that really made Youngstown great in its hey day, and he's still doing it today," Graziosi said.

He said he believes his most important stories were reporting on Lordstown General Motors and land contracts, which is something real estate companies use to prey on poverty-stricken people.

SAMANTHA PHILLIPS

On Samantha Phillips' fourth day at The Vindicator, she reported on the death of Justin Leo, a Girard police officer.

Leo was shot and killed in 2017 while responding to a domestic disturbance.

"He was shot Saturday night and died Sunday morning," Phillips said. "So, I came to work that Monday, [and] I spent the entire day trying to gather information to find out what happened and what was gonna happen next."

At the end of the day, her editor told her she needed to talk to Leo's parents.

"That is a terrifying request for not just a young journalist who's just starting out but for anybody because these poor people had just lost their son, and he was young. So, I sucked it up and I knocked on the door and talked to them, and we had this nice interview

about their son and we kind of cried together. They really opened their heart to me."

She described this experience as a "crash course in journalism."

Phillips later wrote several stories about fundraisers to create scholarships in Leo's memory and the community response.

"I still think that initial story is kind of what got me fired up to be a journalist," she said.

Phillips said her coworker said, "That's when I knew you had ink in your blood."

She studied communication at YSU, and she always knew that she wanted to be a writer in some way.

"That was always really important to me, but I wasn't sure exactly what kind of outlet I was going to be writing for or in what capacity I was gonna be writing, but I figured that because I always loved reading newspapers, that might be an avenue to take," she said.

Phillips then began working at The Jambar.

"I wasn't necessarily trying to get into journalism. I just thought it would be a good way to start writing regularly ... Very quickly I kind of got bit by the journalism bug. I kind of fell in love with the aspect of being able to tell stories," she said.

Phillips reported on crime, local government, education, breaking news and investigative pieces at The Vindicator. Although she began her journalism career in Youngstown, she always knew she was going to leave the city.

"I'm definitely not one of those people that feel committed to Youngstown, but I wanted to start my career off locally, and it was mostly because a lot of my Jambar friends actually worked for The Vindicator, so it felt like a natural transition," she said.

Phillips moved to Washington, D.C., on Wednesday morning. She will be working as a senior communications coordinator at the Edison Electric Institute.

"It's scary because I've done journalism for the past two years at The Vindicator. I did it for two years at The Jambar, but I think that it's a good fit for me, and I think that with the skills I have gained as a journalist, I'm going to be just fine."

She said she wouldn't discourage people from going into journalism, but would discourage people from going into print journalism at this time.



Photo by **Rachel Gobep/The Jambar**

A WATCHDOG LOSES ITS BARK: YSU COMMUNITY REACTS TO THE VINDICATOR'S CLOSING

BRIANNA GLEGHORN

Paul Sracic was traveling to Youngstown when he discovered The Vindicator, which provided him with valuable information on his future hometown.

"When I first flew into Youngstown for my interview for the job [at Youngstown State University], I remember on the plane there was a newspaper ... and it was The Vindicator," Sracic, the chair of the Department of Politics and International Relations, said.

According to him, The Vindicator was a much-needed watchdog for the local government as the Youngstown area is well-known for corruption.

"It's just unfortunate that we always seem to make the national news for the wrong reasons," Sracic said.

During a time of transition for the media culture in Youngstown, YSU faculty and students are naturally affected by the ever-changing times.

According to Mary Beth Earnhardt, there can be no replacement for what The Vindicator has provided for the community.

"A part of the identity of the city is going to be lost by this, but Youngstown's resilient; they've come back from a lot of bad things in a good way," Earnhardt, director of the Anderson Program in Journalism, said.

She said while the newspaper is important for informative reasons, it also brings value to its readers by supporting the community.

"I want my kids to grow up in a house where every morning there is a print newspaper coming in," Earnhardt said. "I think it signals something to them about the importance of community engagement and being a part of the world around you and a good citizen of the world."

She said it was hard to process the idea of the The Vindicator closing being true.

"I thought in some place in my head that maybe it wasn't true and that there was going to be a sell," Earnhardt said.

While it was expected by some who work in the field, this expectation didn't lessen the hurt readers felt.

YSU President Jim Tressel read The Vindicator every morning in his office.

"It was kind of the heartbeat all year-round of what was happening in our Valley," he said.

Tressel said the coverage from the paper not only showed what the university did well but also what it struggled with.

"I used to always tell my football kids that, you know, you can make the front page when you do great things, but you can also make the front page when you don't," he said. "So, you better make sure that you're making the front page for the right reasons."

For Lori Factor, director of community engagement and events at YSU, reading The Vindicator was second nature for her throughout her childhood and in her personal and academic life.

"I have fond memories of reading the paper every day, watching my dad read it, plus I was The Vindicator Spelling Bee champ in 1977," she said. "I went to Washington, D.C., and competed, proudly representing Youngstown. While I did not win, the experience has stayed with me for a lifetime."

According to Factor, the current and upcoming news outlets in the area won't miss a beat and will keep Youngstown citizens on their toes.

"I am very confident that we will provide news releases to current contacts as well as to cultivate our new contacts so that information gets out to the public, and our attendance at events will be as robust as ever," she said.

Factor said those concerned about how to navigate upcoming performances in Bliss Hall should not be alarmed.

"Those who enjoy a print delivery will have that information, while those who prefer social media or digital news will be able to find information there," she said. "We will monitor this to see if we have to make changes, and adjust accordingly."

Jessica Weetman, a junior political science major, was raised in the Youngstown area and grew up seeing the paper scattered around her house.

"Seeing The Vindicator close brings up bittersweet feelings. It is always sad to see something from my childhood come to a close," Weetman said.

Weetman's parents delivered the newspaper for years, and her family would occasionally help their parents out on deliveries.

"The Vindicator was a big part of my family," Weetman said. "Not just throwing the paper, but the excitement to look at the thick stack of Christmas ads in the Thanksgiving edition, the semi-funny cartoons, and when I was in the paper growing up, I felt like some big-time celebrity."

Weetman said the paper gave a big voice to those who felt small in Youngstown.

Additional reporting by Rachel Gobep and Amanda Joerndt.



Betty Brown Jagnow glances over to read the final edition of The Vindicator. Photo courtesy of **Bill Lewis**



Vindicator Publisher Betty Brown Jagnow walks with her son, General Manager Mark Brown on Aug. 30, the last night of printing. Photo courtesy of **Bill Lewis**



The Vindicator ceased publication on Aug. 31. Photo by **Rachel Gobep/The Jambar**

**Board Names Dr. Coffelt President—
Pugsley Resigns at YSU**

(Continued from Page One)

ibilities as vice president for administrative affairs but will also devote as much time as possible to familiarize myself with all facets of the university's operation."

A native of Neosho, Mo., Dr. Coffelt came to YSU from his post as vice chancellor for research and planning of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

A veteran in the field of higher education since 1948, he received his bachelor of science in business administration degree from the University of Denver in 1948; his master of arts degree from Colorado State University in 1951; and his doctorate in education from the University of Colorado in 1962.

Among his numerous duties as vice president for administrative affairs at YSU, Dr. Coffelt was responsible for assisting the president in his contacts with members of the Ohio General Assembly, coordinating all reports submitted to the Board of Regents, supervising the activities of the dean of admissions and records, the dean of student affairs, the placement office, the director of the counseling center, the director of institutional research and the director of the university union for program development.

Dr. Coffelt has served as director of accounts, records and registrar at State Teachers College in Dickinson, N.D. in 1948-52; director of research, Colorado State Department of Education, 1952-56; executive director, Colorado School Board Association, 1956-58; director, Colorado Legislative Commission on Education Beyond the High School, 1958-61; coordinator of research, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, 1961-63, and as vice chancellor since 1965.

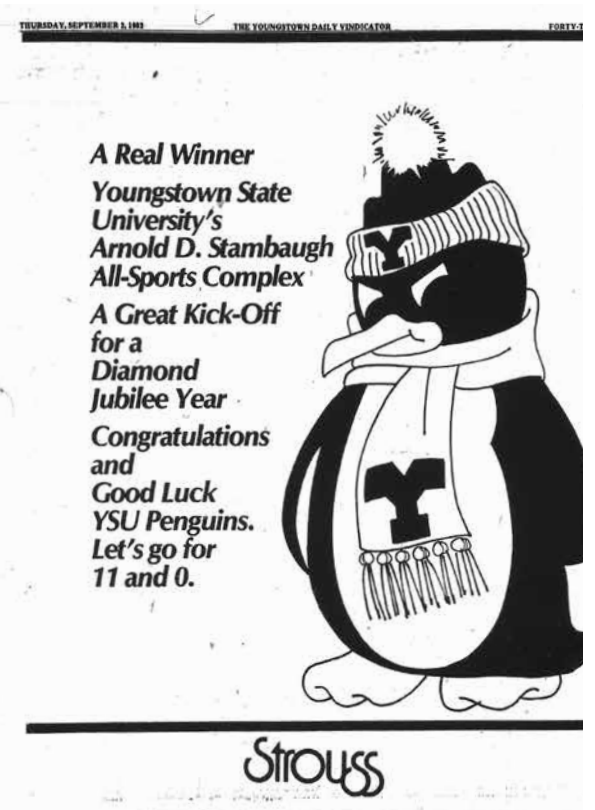
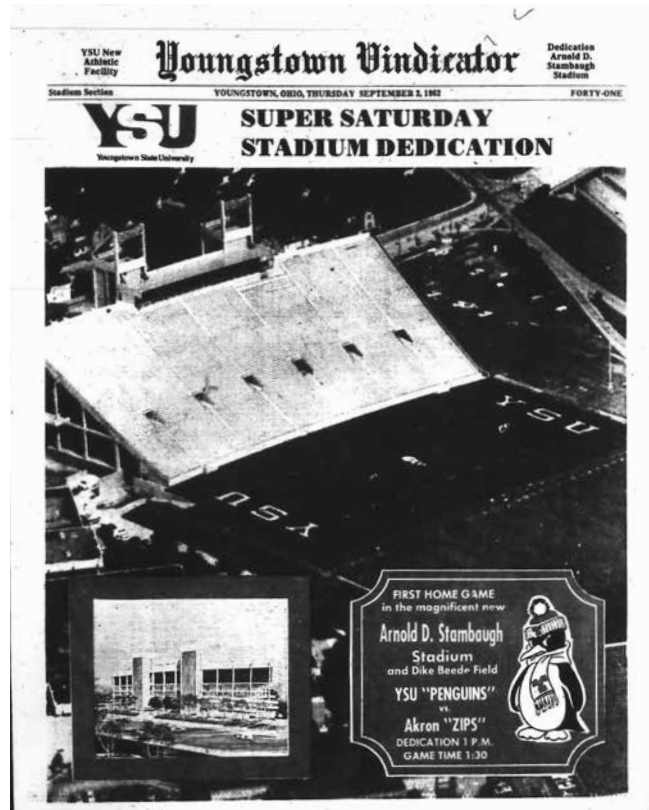
Field Is Administration

Dr. Coffelt's major field of research is administration and public school administration. He has written numerous articles for the Colorado State Department of Education, the Colorado Legislative Commission on Education Beyond the High School and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Dr. Coffelt is a member of the Oklahoma and National Education Association, Association for Institutional Research, Association for Higher Education, Society for College and University Planning, Phi Kappa Phi national honor society, Alpha Kappa Psi commerce and business fraternity, Phi Epsilon Phi law society, Phi Delta Kappa education honorary, and Lions International. He is presently second vice president of the Downtown Youngstown Lion Club.

He and his wife, the former Anna Marie Nelson have four children: Mrs. Robert (Susan) Lyon, 24, of Buffalo, Mo.; Mrs. Duane (Margaret Jean)

"It is appropriate that here on Wick Avenue, in the most pivotal spot on Youngstown State University land, this handsome building has been raised up and named in honor of one of the most pivotal and remarkable personalities who ever lived and served in this community."



Sept. 2, 1982

"As one cruises down Interstate 680 in either direction toward the downtown area of Youngstown, the new Arnold D. Stambaugh Stadium can be readily seen as it towers over the relatively small structures of the city, sitting on a hill surveying its domain."



Oct. 14, 2007

"Leafing through a stack of old newspaper clippings and historical documents, he pointed out that Youngstown State University got its start from educational programs launched by the YMCA."



July 14, 2013

"If you have a date at 8 and don't want to be late, you could buy a clock from slate."

THE VINDICATOR SHAPED THE ARTS IN THE VALLEY ONE STORY AT A TIME

FRANCES CLAUSE

Large orchestral performances, theatrical productions and recitals of world-renowned artists found a home in the DeYor Performing Arts Center and Stambaugh Auditorium, two “cultural hearts of the Mahoning Valley.”

But entertainment in Youngstown has come a long way from Dec. 6, 1926, when the Monday Musical Club presented Stambaugh’s first concert, featuring humorist Will Rogers.

The opening of the Covelli Centre on Oct. 29, 2005, marked the day when Youngstown would start to experience continuous growth in its entertainment scene. The first sold-out performances were two concerts by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra on Nov. 12, 2005.

The orchestra that has pushed the boundaries of rock will return this year on Nov. 15 to take the stage at the Covelli Centre.

But coverage of the event may not feel the same to those used to picking up *The Vindicator* and flipping to the entertainment section with their morning coffee.

With Guy D’Astolfo’s first story for *The Vindicator* being the opening of the Covelli Centre, his job as entertainment editor since August 2005 began when Youngstown’s entertainment world really picked up.

In recent years, D’Astolfo saw the rise of bands and musical artists that he has covered from the beginning of their careers, including *The Vindys*, *JD Eicher* and *Red Wanting Blue*.

“When I started at *The Vindicator*, everything changed in terms of entertainment,” he said. “I’ve kind of had a front-row seat to the renaissance, this era of national entertainment and touring acts, and it’s only gotten bigger.”

The growth was proven from the moment positive feedback was received for the Covelli Centre. Inspiring more entertainment in the Valley, the Ford Family Recital Hall opened for small theater

needs.

And most recently, the Youngstown Foundation Amphitheatre, which D’Astolfo believes to be one of the best entertainment features in the area, has already hosted several national acts.

But the reliance on D’Astolfo and other *Vindicator* reporters for event coverage does not end at larger venues.

The Rust Belt Theater Company feels the loss of the newspaper that reported its opening in June 2010 and that continued coverage in a recent article promoting its original musical, “*Franken Fabulous*,” in August.

Robert Dennick Joki, founder of The Rust Belt Theater Company, said his heart dropped when he heard about the closing because *The Vindicator* has been dedicated to covering local artists.

“I worked at the Oakland Center for the Arts for about 12 years downtown before I started The Rust Belt Theater Company,” he said. “When I started this company, [D’Astolfo] kind of followed me here, and he’s honestly been one of our biggest cheerleaders for the last 10 years that we’ve been doing this.”

Nicole Zayas, who has performed in numerous shows with the theater at the Calvin Center, said she immediately emailed D’Astolfo to express her condolences about *The Vindicator*.

“We’re a community theater, and we survive off the ticket sales of the members of our community,” she said. “So, it’s very important that the newspaper highlights the local actors so that it can encourage us to keep performing, and it also gives us publicity for all of our shows.”

Before each show, Zayas always gives a curtain speech, where she tells the audience to look in *The Vindicator* for the theater’s upcoming projects in their advertisements.

Zayas said the audience was deeply affected when realizing the newspaper would no longer be mentioned in these speeches.

Whether it was pictures, articles or reviews, *The Vindicator*

contributed to the theater’s success. Zayas was concerned that information about their shows would not reach as broad of an audience without it.

“Without the newspaper, there’s really only social media, and there’s a lot of people who still don’t partake in social media,” she said.

Anyone familiar with The Rust Belt Theater Company’s shows know drag queens are featured in many performances. To raise money for the theater’s first season, a show called “Fundraising is a Drag” brought the Calvin Center to life.

As more drag performances followed, Zayas believes *The Vindicator* played an integral part in one of their biggest shows, “How the Drag Queen Stole Christmas.”

“When we started doing this show 13 years ago, we never thought we would be accepted as a bunch of outsider drag queens in the city of Youngstown,” she said. “So for us, [*The Vindicator*] has helped our community to develop an understanding of a subculture of drag performers and LGBTQ people.”

Joki said he hopes other news outlets are able to pick up the slack with entertainment coverage.

As for D’Astolfo, his entertainment journey will continue with *The Business Journal*, and he believes the future looks bright for the Valley as other outlets begin to fill the void.

“I’m just looking forward to the future,” he said. “I think the entertainment scene in this area is going to continue to grow.”

And growth is already happening. With the Youngstown Foundation Amphitheatre’s continuing performances and the Robins Theatre scheduled to open January 2020 in Warren, D’Astolfo believes it’ll be a lot to take on, but it’s nothing Youngstown can’t handle.



The Youngstown Amphitheatre during the Michael Stanley and Donnie Iris concert. Photo courtesy of **Guy D’Astolfo**



Guy D’Astolfo stands in his cubicle at *The Vindicator* newsroom. Photo courtesy of **Guy D’Astolfo**

FORMER VINDY SPORTS EDITOR LOOKS BACK

BRIAN YAUGER

Former Vindicator sports editor Ed Puskas said he is a better person after walking out of the doors on the last day of printing than when he first started at the paper.

"A better writer, a better boss," Puskas said. "I learned a lot of things about the business. Experiences that are only going to help me down the road."

Like many others, what Puskas will miss the most about The Vindicator is the relationships he's built in his seven years there.

"I'm going to miss my friends and colleagues," Puskas said. "They're more like family. We were in a situation where I spent more time with Tom [Williams], Brian [Dzenis] and Dan [Hiner] than I did with my family."

In Puskas' time covering Youngstown State University sports, specifically football, he saw the last years of YSU's dynasty under Jim Tressel, bearing witness to the 1997 national championship win and the 1999 runner-up seasons.

Puskas noted that there was something special about those teams.

"It always seemed like Jim Tressel had some divine intervention," Puskas said. "A kicker would be lining up for a game-tying or game-winning field goal for the other team, and his plant foot would slip out from under him and the kick would miss."

This isn't just an observation about the Penguins team. This actually happened when YSU faced the University of Montana in the 1999 playoffs.

With 12 seconds left, Grizzlies kicker Kris Heppner lined up for a field goal from 34 yards out to tie the game. The kick went wide left and YSU came out on top 30-27.

"I saw it happen with my own eyes in Montana," Puskas said. "There was one spot on the field where you couldn't plant your foot, and that's right where the kicker's foot was."

Tressel said his relationship with The Vindicator goes back to about 33 years ago when he became YSU's fourth football head coach.

"Most of my relationship for the first 15 years was from a sports standpoint, and they were always covering

us," he said. "One of the neatest things that I found was that maybe two or three years into my time here, they agreed to sponsor the male and female Vindicator Student Athletes of the Year, which is a big deal for our student athletes."

Tressel said he was constantly in contact with Vindicator reporters.

"We had press conferences, and we had all those championship times together. I worked with The Vindicator day and night ... Really, we felt like they were our biggest cheerleaders," he said.

Now, as someone who has spent the last 24 years covering Youngstown area sports, Puskas has come to a conclusion.

"You won't find a better sports town than Youngstown for its size," Puskas said. "I firmly believe that. People are so passionate about sports here. I think that's what drew me."

This is true not just in the fandom but also in the vast amounts of local talent.

"All the sports are so good," Puskas said. "Once football season is over, there's basketball. We've had multiple state champions in baseball, softball and track and field. You just knew there wasn't going to be a lull."

That's why Puskas believes covering sports is so important. It bridges almost every divide and reaches many types of people.

"Sports cuts across a lot of different boundaries and different people," Puskas said. "You might be a baseball fan. You might be a football fan. You might be a YSU fan, or you might be a guy who is following Mooney football. They all came to us, and that's why it was so important. We weren't just a football section. We wanted to make sure every reader had something."

Puskas' sentiment extends especially to high school sports. Many local papers release a special football season preview edition, and The Vindicator was no different.

In its prime, it covered all 45 football schools in Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties. While staff limitations may keep them from visiting all 45 throughout the season, they made sure every team got their time to shine in the preview.

"The Boardmans, the Austintowns, the Canfields

are always going to get coverage," Puskas said. "In our approach, especially in the preseason, we try to do as much as we could to get to every team and treat them the same. At least in that football preview because for a lot of those teams it's the only coverage that they may get."

As for the people taking the reins of Valley coverage, Puskas left some advice.

"My hope is that the people taking the baton from us appreciate that they've now been entrusted in covering the best sports town for its size in the country ... There's so much here; I would hate to see those stories go untold," he said.

While he doesn't yet know what the future holds for him, he does know writing will remain in his life.

"I've been writing since I was a kid," Puskas said. "So, I have every intention of continuing. Whether I get a 9-to-5 or something in the business, I'll still write on my own. Writing is a part of my life, and I don't see that changing."



Pictured: Ed Puskas, former Vindicator sports editor. Photo courtesy of Ed Puskas



THE FUTURE OF YOUNGSTOWN JOURNALISM: WHAT'S NEXT?

The final edition of *The Vindicator* runs down the printing press for the last time. Photo courtesy of **Bill Lewis**

J. HARVARD FELDHOUSE

The recent closing of Youngstown's only daily newspaper, *The Vindicator*, marks the end of an era for storytelling in the Mahoning Valley.

To many, *The Vindicator's* closure represents the potential downward direction that journalism is headed in and the consequences news organizations suffer when they fail to adapt.

About 20% of the nation's newspapers have either gone out of business or merged in a little more than a decade, according to Tim Franklin, senior associate dean of the Medill School of Journalism and director of the Medill Local News Initiative at Northwestern University in Chicago.

"The old business model has completely collapsed," Franklin said.

But many pose this question: Why is the industry falling short?

According to Franklin, approximately two-thirds of advertising revenue at newspapers has "vaporized" in the past decade, when that revenue constituted about 80% of income for a majority of news organizations.

"When you lose two-thirds of your primary revenue source, you're going to have problems," Franklin said.

With advancements in technology, the news industry had to adapt to fit the consumers' needs.

When news media first appeared on the internet, news organizations used the same advertisement revenue model they used for print. But now, online ads don't pay.

"Google and Facebook are sponging up, by some estimates, 70% of all new digital advertising revenue, so there's not much left on the table for local news organizations as a result," Franklin said.

Mark Brown, former general manager of *The Vindicator*, also named Google and Facebook as contributors to the loss of ad revenue in a *Business Journal* article from June.

Brown said *The Vindicator* lost revenue in 20 years out of the last 22 years.

"I must say that it really took us by surprise that it would shut down the way it did," Dan O'Brien, associate editor of *The Business Journal*, said. "I think everyone had suspected that either they would eventually sell the publication or ... trim down the delivery and publication of the newspaper to maybe two, three days a week or something of that nature and the rest of it migrating to an online edition."

Brown tried to sell the paper, subcontract work and draw in printing business with a new press, but it wasn't enough. The digital disruption in the news business forced *The Vindicator* to fold.

Many organizations in the industry, like the Medill Local News Initiative that Franklin directs, are researching sustainable news models to deal with the digital disruption.

These range from organizations selling shares to community members, co-ops, subscriptions and donations.

"More and more news organizations are putting up paywalls or metered paywalls and are realizing that they're going to need revenue from their readers to support the journalism that's happening in their communities," Franklin said.

Some local news organizations and online-only news websites are aiming to fill *The Vindicator's* void.

Four local initiatives have already adopted or are working toward sustainable news models in the area.

The *Tribune Chronicle* bought *The Vindicator* masthead, subscriber list and URL and printed a Mahoning County edition called *The Vindicator*.

The *Tribune* still follows what is considered a "traditional" print news model: They sell print subscriptions and advertise online.

WFMJ, WKBN and other local news broadcast stations do not solely rely on advertisement revenue like print publications do.

According to Jack Grdic, general manager of WFMJ and WBCB, the broadcast TV ecosystem is completely different than print.

"We work in terms of our over-the-air viewership but also through our distributors," he said. "When our product is carried, repackaged and sold through cable companies ... we are compensated for that.

We receive a per-subscriber fee."

The Business Journal expanded its investigative and arts and entertainment coverage because of *The Vindicator*. Advertisements, sponsorships and print subscribers keep *The Business Journal* running because they're a small, niche publication.

"We have essentially two products: We have our print edition, which comes out twice a month, and our online edition, which is daily," O'Brien said. "We don't have the overhead of a large printing press to take care of — we outsource printing capabilities here. As a result of that, we have worked diligently to both maintain our costs and build advertising revenue with new customers."

The Business Journal also formed a partnership with ProPublica to receive grant money that will fund its new investigative reporting endeavors.

Additionally, a new online-only news organization by McClatchy, *The Compass Experiment*, will launch in Youngstown soon. Mandy Jenkins, general manager of *The Compass Experiment*, said the goal is to explore different sustainable news revenue models.

"Our first focus is working on digital display advertising and sponsorship," Jenkins said. "Then we'll be adding a few more things over time. It's about getting to know the market and getting to know the area. What are some creative ways that we can be making money, working with local businesses, working with local sponsors and finding local partners?"

The Compass Experiment has intentionally not specified what kind of news it will report in Youngstown because it's waiting to find out what's left.

"For us, it's about figuring out what are the things that aren't going to be covered once this all happens," Jenkins said. "What are the things that our really small team can do to make a big difference?"

The future of local news in the digital age will continue to be uncertain, but the will of the remaining local news organizations to tell every story, despite the digital disruption, is certain.

GOODBYE

Continued from Page 1

from newsstands on Aug. 31, The Vindicator's history will forever be etched in stone.

A 150-Year History

The Vindicator launched in 1869 with the first issue of the weekly Mahoning County Vindicator. It was renamed the Youngstown Vindicator in 1876.

William F. Maag Sr. purchased the paper's nameplate and remnants of the North Phelps Street print shop in 1887 after a fire destroyed it earlier in the year.

The family remained in the newsroom for four generations and closed under Publisher Betty Brown Jagnow and General Manager Mark Brown.

The Vindicator later shifted to a daily paper in 1889. It became the first paper in the United States to publish a colored photo in 1901, according to The Vindicator's last print edition.

Historically, the newspaper is known for its reporting on Valley corrupt officials, the mafia and the Ku Klux Klan.

Its final edition states The Vindicator bought The Telegram after public disapproval of its KKK favoring, which was a "key date in The Vindicator's decadelong battle against the Ku Klux Klan."

This battle included KKK members protesting outside of William F. Maag Jr.'s house.

According to a Guardian article, about 70 politicians, businessmen and mafia members were convicted of criminal acts in the late 1980s as a result of the paper's reporting.

How Did We Get Here?

When The Vindicator made the public announcement that the newspaper would cease publication on Aug. 31, many news readers around the nation posed this question: How could this happen?

With digital advertising coming from sites such as Facebook and Google taking over the news realm, a lack of advertising was the main culprit.

According to Brown, former Vindicator general manager, the newspaper's most profitable year was in 1989, with a 17% to 18% profit margin.

Fast-forward to the early 2000s, popular internet domains started booming with advertisement sales, along with creating a successful location for citizens to obtain daily news.

The Vindicator released their first website domain in January 2000 and soon after started using social media platforms to distribute local news to the community.

In 2004, Vindicator employees went on strike for unfair wages, health care, sick leave and bidding rights, according to an article in People's World.

The strike was held with the hope that The Vindicator would lose out on profiting from advertisements during its prime time of the holiday season. That turned into a reality. Subscribers and advertising revenues fell after the nine-month strike ceased, financially hurting the publication.

A database system by the University of North Carolina Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media shows there has been a 50% decrease in daily newspaper circulation from 2004 to 2019.

The Vindicator falls in line with thousands of newspaper publications across the nation closing their doors due to the online advertising empire growing with new, innovative strategies that can't compare to print journalism.

In 2010, The Vindicator took one final swing at building their online advertising and news domain by installing a \$10 million press system with advanced technology and a restructured newspaper that formats the original masthead.

With no luck coming from the renovated press system, it was only a matter of time before Brown knew he had to make the "toughest decision he's ever had to make," according to a Vindicator article.

On June 28, Brown made the announcement to The Vindicator staff that the end was near for the 150-year-old newspaper.

Richard Logan, former news editor for the newspaper, said he has heard the phrase, "When a newspaper dies, a little bit of democracy dies," several times throughout his career and believes it to be true.

"One thing you don't get from all of those other sources is the strict watchdog rule over local government, in-depth coverage, enterprise and investigative reporting that keeps our government on their toes," he said.

Adam Earnhardt, chair of the Department of Communication at Youngstown State University, said he was shocked but not surprised about the closing.

"Some of us knew that day was coming. I just don't think that any of us realized it would be that fast, that soon," Earnhardt said. "I think that there was writing on the wall about how long The Vindicator had left, but many of us thought it would be years, not months."

He said the journalism industry in Youngstown will be forever affected and the closing will change the perspective of how news is gathered and delivered for years to come.

"News is forever changed; journalism is forever changed," Earnhardt said. "We are part of something that could be much bigger, and we could be a staging area for what journalism should look like in this century."

Other local and national news outlets are stepping up to the challenge of being the voice of the Valley.

The Tribune Chronicle of Warren, Ohio, purchased the newspaper's masthead, web domain address and subscription list, with plans to expand its coverage throughout Mahoning County.

In hopes to fill the void, ProPublica, a nonprofit investigative news platform, selected the Business Journal, a multimedia publication that is published twice a month, to be a partner of its' Local Reporting Network.

Other recognizable digital news mediums, such as The Compass Experiment founded by McClatchy and Google, will be launching their first digital-only news operation and will hire local reporters and editors to cover news across the region.

Although the sun set on The Vindicator, those attempting to fill the news gap are hoping coverage for the Mahoning Valley does not go dark.



Betty Brown Jagnow (left) holds a copy of the last edition of The Vindicator with her son, Mark Brown. Bertram de Souza (back) glances at the copy. Photo courtesy of **Bill Lewis**

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Thank You Vindy

The members of The Jambar Editorial Board have each been affected by The Vindicator seizing publication in unique ways.

From early childhood memories of Vindy news clips taped to grandma's refrigerator, to Vindicator employees teaching each of us how to structure a news story in our journalism classes, all of our lives have been touched by The Vindicator's impact.

The Youngstown State University journalism program teaches its students how to write in-depth print newspaper stories. Between classes and working at The Jambar since I was a freshman, print journalism has been instilled in my blood. In my mind, I thought I would be working for a newspaper after college. Reality hit me when The Vindicator announced it was closing. Sadly, the journalism world is morphing into something new, and journalists have to adjust. I just didn't think this would happen in Youngstown, a city that has a history of corruption. I hope the watchdog reporting in the area does not come to a halt now that Youngstown's greatest watchdog has gone dark.

Rachel Gobep
Editor-in-Chief

Working at my local newspaper was a dream I have had since I was young, with high hopes of applying to Vindy in the upcoming months after graduation. When I heard The Vindicator was closing, I thought it was a rumor. How could it be? But once reality set in, it was obvious that it wasn't just me (or any other average journalism student) that would be affected by the closing, but all of Youngstown. The city is losing its heart, its memory keeper and its storyteller. But as this door closes, I'm hopeful new ones will open. I'm scared but excited for the future of journalism in the Valley.

Alyssa Weston
Managing Editor

From a young age, I've always had a drive and passion for sharing people's stories and helping them have a "voice" of their own. Growing up in the Youngstown area, I remember seeing editions of The Vindicator sitting on my coffee table and glancing over the front page stories. As I developed more of my high school and college education, I started to discover where I fell on the journalism spectrum and what I can offer to the community. Being able to shadow The Vindicator's reporting style, technique and physique has really helped me develop my journalistic voice. I have all of the confidence in the world that the media culture in Youngstown will thrive and keep the community on their toes. Nonetheless, there will be an unspoken silence and grief knowing the original Vindicator will not be present in the community. I can only hope that I can report to the best of my ability as a student journalist and help fill the "Vindy void."

Amanda Joerndt
News Editor

The Vindicator's "Vindy Blitz" football stories was one of the reasons I wanted to start writing for a newspaper in the first place. Losing it still hasn't sunk in for me just yet. I'm hoping the other papers around here can begin to fill the void, but the local sports scene has taken a major loss. I want to thank the sports staff at The Vindicator for taking me under their wings as a young writer and helping me grow. While I'm nervous for my future as a journalist, I know that there's plenty of doors for me to walk through.

Brian Yauger
Sports Editor

The Vindicator and the arts in Youngstown always had an important relationship that brought the community together - not only with bigger acts that would perform at Stambaugh or the DeYor, but with hardworking high school marching bands, middle school orchestras and art shows that include the work from students as young as 6 years old. I didn't realize its importance when I first picked up an instrument at the age of 10, but now I realize having that coverage of an upcoming band concert or even a photo of someone proudly standing next to their blue-ribboned art in the newspaper is crucial. It validates and reassures us that we've reached our goal, and that goal is to bring happiness and inspire the community through our performances or creations.

Frances Clause
A&E Editor

I had three reactions, all within three hours, when I heard about The Vindicator closing. First: How dare the world fall apart within the nine hours I was working? It left me reeling at 10 p.m. Second: How will this affect my future? I want to go places, like any young journalist, but I knew I'd have to start small. The Vindicator situation made me fear that I picked the wrong field to study. Third: What can I do to help? Once I rationalized my fear for my future, I started analyzing and problem-solving myself. I wanted to go into the school year as enterprise editor, a brand-new position, and really make a difference in this time of need.

J. Harvard Feldhouse
Enterprise Editor



MEN'S TENNIS GETS INTO THE SWING OF THINGS

Joao Garretto fires a shot for the Penguins in their match against Toledo in February. Photo courtesy of **YSU Sports Information**

NATHANAEL HAWTHORNE

Youngstown State University has a reputation of championship-winning athletic programs. One of those teams with a pedigree of success is the men's tennis team.

Last year, the Penguins had a successful season with an overall score of 12-8 and 5-1 in the Horizon League Conference. The team lost in the semifinals of the conference championship tournament.

The Penguins took last year's loss as fuel for their training regime and focused on physical and mental training for the season ahead.

"We worked on our conditioning and our strength with our conditioning coach," junior Vasilis Vardakis said. "We worked on our mental game as well."

Now, they are motivated and ready to take on the 2019

season.

"Everyone came back with a lot of positive vibes," senior Joao Garretto said. "Everyone is willing to work hard, and I'm really looking forward to [the season]."

The Penguins lost a couple of players from last year, but according to Vardakis, the new players recruited will be important assets to the team as it attempts to get back to the conference playoffs.

"These two recruits give us great options and will leave us in a great situation for the conference," Vardakis said.

Freshman Laurentiu Mandocescu, one of the newest additions to the Penguins, was excited to see the hard work and dedication the team has to their sport.

"The first thing I saw when I came here was that everyone was so dedicated and motivated to do something better," Mandocescu said. "I saw the dedication to the cause of winning

the conference."

Another important factor for the team is the chemistry exuding in practices.

"The strongest aspect is just us," Vardakis said. "We have the mindset that we have to work to get our game back. Through this work, we're going to try to gain confidence."

The right mindset, team chemistry and motivation will lead the Penguins to success on the court. The leadership of the upperclassmen also plays a large role in the team's attitude.

"We have a lot of experience on this team now," Garretto said. "We have a lot of players that were here for three years, so we're going to help the freshmen and [underclassmen] become better players and hopefully can help us in the conference."

As the team looks toward the approaching season, it expects one thing: a conference championship.

The Penguin's first invitational is Sept. 20 in Toledo, Ohio.

SPEND SOME TIME GIVING BACK

MAC POMEROY

When students start college, getting into the rhythm of a steady schedule can seem impossible.

If you aren't used to the amount of work required, it can seem like you don't have time for anything else. It's easy to forget about life outside of your obligations.

When I began college, I spent a lot of time by myself preoccupied with my work. It felt like I didn't even have the time for my family and friends.

This cycle was broken when the owner of Diva Donations, a family friend, offered me the opportunity to volunteer for her organization.

Diva Donations is devoted to supplying girls with formal dresses for special occasions at almost no charge. When the owner contacted me, she had a large group of girls coming in

and needed all the help she could get.

Since it was on a Saturday, I agreed to volunteer. Sure, it was a long day on my feet, and by the end I was exhausted, but the experience opened my eyes to how ignorant I'd become to others' needs.

Volunteering is a great way to serve the community. You can recruit friends and family to join you and spend time together while giving back.

By learning about others' problems, you can put your skills toward a solution. It doesn't have to be often; it doesn't even have to be for long. An hour or two per month will suffice.

I enjoy volunteering at Diva Donations, but there are so many organizations you can volunteer at that serve different interests, including animal shelters, homeless shelters and tutoring services.

There are even organizations on campus that take great pride in giving back to the community, such as the Honors College and Greek Life.

Even now, I have weeks where I find myself consumed with work and school. I absolutely love what I do, but it is still easy to lose myself in my work.

I don't get to volunteer as often as I'd like to, but when I have the opportunity to help a girl find the perfect dress at Diva Donations and see her smile with confidence, I'm reminded of what makes it all worth it.

That is why I am always happy to keep going back.

Regardless of how stressed you are, seeing people you've helped makes getting through the week worth it. That's what matters most.



PENGUINS EXCITED FOR HOME DEBUT

Joe Alessi tears through the Samford defense in their season opening win. Photo courtesy of **YSU Sports Information**

BRIAN YAUGER

A week and a half removed from their season-opening win, the Youngstown State University football team looks to continue that momentum when it takes the field Saturday for its home opener against Howard University.

"We had a platform to build off from the first game, so we're comfortable getting this bye week and going into Howard," safety Zaire Jones said.

YSU started their opening game trailing 7-0, but Nathan Mays' touchdown pass set up the Penguins to go on a tear. The Penguins scored 31 unanswered points to take down the Samford University Bulldogs 45-22 in the Guardian Credit Union FCS Kickoff Classic.

"It gave us a start," Penguins coach Bo Pelini said. "That's what we needed, and we got the win. We did some good things; there's some things we needed to work on. We just need to keep grinding it out and get better."

In addition to winning on the field, showcasing the team in

front of a large audience was a win off the field for the Penguins as well.

"We got a lot of positive feedback on social media and from recruits," Pelini said. "A lot of people saw our team and our program and what we're about. It's good for the university, good for the area, good for our team and good for the program."

YSU has already matched its interception total from last season, picking off the Bulldogs three times. That's also the highest number of interceptions in a game since 2009 when the Penguins played Indiana State University.

In his debut with the program, Jones intercepted two passes and made five tackles. Jones joined the team after transferring from Vanderbilt University.

"I think the win built our confidence going forward into the season," Jones said. "Getting that first win under our belt and getting some trust in each other and believing that we have a great team."

The opposing Howard Bison dropped their season opener 79-0 to the University of Maryland, but that doesn't mean the

Penguins are taking their opponent lightly.

"It's hard to win a game no matter what," center Matt Jones said. "It's college football. Every game won is an accomplishment so getting confidence is a big one."

After last season's home-opening loss to Butler University, their first home opener loss in 23 years, the Penguins are looking forward to getting their 24th win in 25 years and avenging last season's loss.

Coming off a 4-7 record, the Penguins are looking to improve drastically, and Pelini knows there's more work to do. It won't take one game to get the team on the right track going forward.

"We have to use each day to get better," Pelini said. "I think our kids are bringing a great energy to the practice field. They're working hard at it; they understand that we have a long road ahead of us as far as what we have to do, how we have to work and how much we have to accomplish."

Kickoff against the Bison is set for 2:05 p.m.