

[print](#)

## What are you positive about?

---

by Nathan Orme

10.10.09 - 06:34 pm

News is known for negativity. Death, tragedy, controversy are all known for being “the day’s top story.” The reason for this is no mystery: it sells. People thrive on others’ misfortune. How else do you explain reality TV?

While the old adage “If it bleeds, it leads” still and will always hold true in the news business, many media outlets have made concerted efforts to put out some good news to quell the criticisms of only reporting bad news. Some have been so blatant as to publish a section literally titled “good news.”

Though I have not conducted a scientific analysis of the good vs. bad news coverage in the Tribune in my two-plus years here, I like to think we do a good job of balancing. Being the “community newspaper,” good news is a large part of what helps us survive and stand apart. I receive a lot of information by phone and e-mail about charitable work and student accomplishments and generally positive things happening in the community.

As much as we try our best to dedicate time and space to such things, serious subjects often take precedence. So, when I received word about this year’s Accentuate the Positive event put on by the Truckee Meadows Tomorrow organization, I thought it would be a good chance to promote some positive.

But I won’t lie: Going in, I was a little cynical (all news people have a big fat cynical streak running through them). I half expected to meet a lot of overly smiley people wearing rose-colored glasses while passing out rainbows. So I went in armed with a couple of questions: Why should we “accentuate the positive” and why should news people be there for such an event?

I posed this question to Steve Mulvenon, president of Truckee Meadows Tomorrow. But before I get to his answer, a quick explanation of the organization. In their own words, “Truckee Meadows Tomorrow (TMT) is a community-based, non-profit organization whose vision is to enhance our community’s ability to continually improve the quality of life in the Truckee Meadows.” TMT measures quality of life in the area using specific indicators: arts and cultural vitality, civic engagement, economic well being, education and lifelong learning, enrichment, health and wellness, innovation, land use and infrastructure, natural environment and public well being. The group organizes efforts to enhance these areas and honors those who work to enhance quality of life. To get all the dirt, go to [www.truckeemeadowstomorrow.org](http://www.truckeemeadowstomorrow.org).

Back to Mulvenon. There are so many individuals and organizations that firmly believe they have a personal stake in the area’s quality of life, he said, that they feel compelled to go the extra mile to improve that quality.

“Truckee Meadows Tomorrow thinks they deserve the spotlight shined on them to acknowledge the work they’ve done,” he said. “We just want to say thanks, good job and keep it up.”

And why should the media care?

“There will be about 500 people here today,” he said of Friday’s event at the Peppermill, “but this needs to be appreciated and understood by more than those who will be here today.”

Being that Mulvenon is this year’s president of TMT, his answer is necessary for a story but needed to be substantiated. So, I decided to ask some of the Sparks groups that were honored for their contributions to the area’s quality of life. The Sparks Chamber of Commerce was recognized for contributing to the area’s economic well being, so I asked the chamber’s executive director, Len Stevens. If any of the quality of life indicators has taken a hit this year, it has been economic well-being. What can there be that’s positive about that?

“Because you don’t want to dwell on the negative, even though we’re having hard times,” Stevens said. “We are going on 13 or 15 percent unemployment, that means 87 or 85 percent of people are still working.”

A true statement, though kind of difficult to remember after talking to so many people desperately waiting in line at job fair after job fair hoping for a chance to earn a paycheck, pay their bills and feed their families.

“If that is a true statement,” Stevens said when I asked him about the media dwelling on the negative, “then it is important for you to be able to live this experience and see all the processes of those who combat the negative in the community.”

This year was the second time Sparks Christian Fellowship was recognized for combating the negative by TMT. Rich Shannon, a pastor at the church, told me he had never even heard of the Accentuate the Positive honors the first time, which was a real indication of the altruistic motivations behind the church’s work.

“We found out (TMT) is working for the betterment of the area, which is something we’re big on,” Shannon said. “Our emphasis is about meeting basic human needs, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked.”

So here is this congregation, minding its own business of helping its fellow man, and out of the blue they get a plaque for it. A nice honor, but certainly not their greatest reward.

“It’s what Christ called us to do,” Shannon said.

From fishers of men to just plain fishers, the Sparks Rotary Club was recognized for its annual free kids fishing day at the Sparks Marina. Rotarian Michael Day recognized that it’s in human nature to dwell on the negative and that by doing so we often bring ourselves down. But, he said, it’s well worth the time to look for the good.

“There are a lot of positive things out there,” he said. “We need to tune into those things to help us through the day and make life worth living.”

After soaking all this in and pondering my career choice, it occurred to me that even when I report on something negative it is with the hope that in some way telling the world about it will bring about some change for the positive. Journalists have to deal with the negative — that's the nature of the beast — but we're also residents of the community and we wouldn't be doing what we do if we didn't think our work was going to somehow make life better. Of that I'm positive.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I am off to search for rainbows.

Nathan Orme is the editor of the Sparks Tribune. He can be reached at [norme@dailysparkstribune.com](mailto:norme@dailysparkstribune.com).

---

© dailysparkstribune.com 2009