

MPA Kicks off 150th Celebration of Newspaper Tradition

By Julie Stafford, Greenville Daily News

The first edition of anything resembling a newspaper in my hometown of Greenville, MI appeared in 1854. It was a single sheet of paper and was written and printed anytime something deemed newsworthy happened.

The Montcalm Reflector, as it was called, went on like this for two years before the business was sold and became a more official and frequent record of happenings.

Today, The Daily News, which can trace its roots back to that single sheet publication more than 164 years ago, publishes a six-day-a-week daily newspaper both in print and online. It has been my family's business for 67 years. Our mission is about as basic as it was all those years ago – to inform our readership of local newsworthy events and people from throughout Montcalm and Ionia counties.

This is a big year for newspapers in Michigan. That's because this year, during a time when news agencies and outlets are increasingly challenged with political push back to report the news, we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Michigan Press Association, or MPA as we know it.

According to a publication titled "Celebrating Two Centuries of Michigan Newspapers", the MPA formed shortly after the Civil War in an effort amongst editors to try and be more courteous to each other. In fact, an MPA official document penned in 1868 stated that the purpose of the organization "should be good general welfare of the Michigan Press."

Today, sprinkled throughout the entire state of Michigan, there are 308 members of the MPA, 204 of which are newspapers – 158 weeklies and 46 dailies. My family's newspaper is one of 126 in the state that are still independently owned and operated.

No matter our size, or frequency or ownership, we are a strong organization united by our mission to defend free speech, to promote open and responsive government and to foster informed readers.

Your local newspaper is still the one place you can go at the end of the day to find a record of decisions being made at all levels of local government, as well as notice of events taking place, babies being born, and those who have passed.

In today's world, you can get up-to-the-minute reports about what's going on, be it on the other side of the world or down the street, from a variety of sources – television, smart phone, radio. But when it comes to the details of what makes your town, your county, your state tick, your local newspaper is still the source you can rely on to put it all together and deliver it to your front door.