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EDITORIAL: Mission remains the same for the Gazette

Niagara Gazette Editorial Board
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Change is part of any business.

This has been especially true where the newspaper industry is concerned.

The rapid advancement of technology has changed the way news is gathered and distributed.

Information moves in a flash these days, however it's not always been such a good thing as verification of accuracy has, in some instances, given way to "fake" news and outright distortions.

The availability of free media in all of its modern forms has led to the demise of many newspapers across the nation, some of which enjoyed decades of history and success.

In Niagara County, we like to think residents have been fortunate to have not one, but two newspapers bringing them reliable, local news they can depend on.

As the Niagara Gazette and the Lockport Union Sun & Journal send off one publisher while welcoming in another, it's a good opportunity to reflect on where both publications have been and where they plan to go from here.

The Niagara Gazette, founded as a weekly newspaper in 1854, published its first daily edition in 1893. The newspaper's pages have literally covered all of the major historic events in the Falls area since the day of its first edition.

The same holds true for the Lockport Union Sun & Journal, which traces its roots as New York's 22nd oldest paper back to the Niagara Democrat, a publication established in 1821. Again, under various names and in its various forms, Lockport's newspaper, which formally began as the Lockport Union Sun & Journal following a merger of two existing newspapers in 1915, has helped mark the time in the eastern end of Niagara County for decades.

Both the Gazette and the Union Sun are now owned by Community Newspapers Holding Inc. (CNHI), with its headquarters in Alabama.

Earlier this week, the two newspapers announced a transition as outgoing Publisher Chris Voccio made his retirement official and, in the process, handed off oversight duties for both operations to his replacement, the new publisher of the Gazette and Union Sun John Celestino.

As Voccio heads off for the next exciting chapter in his life, Celestino arrives on the job with 30 years of experience in the newspaper business. Celestino's career started in 1985 at the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News, where he spent 14 years in advertising sales and marketing. He later served as director of advertising for the Philadelphia Metro paper, and director of advertising and circulation at The Press of Atlantic City, New Jersey, for a dozen years before joining Brainworks Software, a company that supplies computer software to newspapers for advertising, circulation and content management systems.

Robin L. Quillon, senior vice president of operations for CHNI, said Celestino's extensive print and digital experience will prove valuable to the staffs, readers and advertisers in both markets.

"The communities served by the Niagara Gazette, and the Lockport Union-Sun & Journal are getting a high energy publisher who understands the need for local focus and quality content in print and online," Quillon said.

There used to be an old adage about newspapers being only as good as what was in them the next day.

Today, news organizations, ours included, are more often judged by the quality of the information they provide on their websites, Facebook pages and through other forms of social media.

As a new publisher steps in, both the Niagara Gazette and the Lockport Union Sun & Journal remain committed to the same mission we've had for decades now: delivering community news, information and related services to our valued customers in Niagara