

[https://www.niagara-gazette.com/opinion/scheer-debate-was-well-worth-the-effort/article\\_43ca4e9c-2f17-5a39-93bf-0acba3f47318.html](https://www.niagara-gazette.com/opinion/scheer-debate-was-well-worth-the-effort/article_43ca4e9c-2f17-5a39-93bf-0acba3f47318.html)

## **SCHEER: Debate was well worth the effort**

Oct 29, 2018

---



Mark Scheer



Whew!

I have to say I'm really glad our debate featuring the candidates for the 144th state Assembly District and Lockport mayor is over.

During the hectic process of finding a venue, handling the criticism of the venue and finding an alternate venue in an effort to satisfy some of the concerns of the critics, I thought to myself "I'm never going to try to pull something like this together again."

Standing on the stage at the amazing Taylor Theater at the Kenan Center and looking out at the assembled crowd, I couldn't help but think, "wow, our newspapers should do stuff like this more often."

Not necessarily political debates, mind you, just events that help bridge the gap between our newspapers — the Lockport Union-Sun & Journal and the Niagara Gazette — and the communities they serve.

At a time when members of the media are being likened to the "enemies of the state," reminding people that we are people too can be a good thing.

Nothing is set in stone, but I'd like to see more community forums hosted by our newspapers on other topics, say quality of life issues or even just the state of the media in general.

I'd like for our readers to view us as involved and interested.

What better way than to invite them in for a casual talk about what they see as problems or assets in their own neighborhoods?

As for the debate, which was held on Wednesday inside the Taylor Theater at the Kenan Center in Lockport, I just want to once again offer my sincerest thanks to those who made it possible.

First, thank you to Beverly Federspiel, director of the Lockport Public Library.

Before we decided to move to the Taylor Theater, Beverly and her staff were prepared to accommodate our debate inside the library's community room.

When we said we were moving to a larger venue, Beverly was very understanding and encouraging.

As for the Taylor Theater, what a great place!

I was never there before and it is a quaint space with real character.

Kenan Center Executive Director Susan Przybyl and her assistants, Maxanne Rees and former US&J staffer Rikki Cason, made sure we had what we needed on very short notice to help make our debate a success.

We thank them and could not have done it without them.

I'd also like to thank the members of my staff who honestly and truly bailed me out by getting together the microphones and the security and the video and all the other stuff I could not have pulled together on my own.

As are so many other things at our small newspapers, we needed a real team effort and got it thanks to Managing Editor Matt Winterhalter, Features Editor Michele DeLuca, reporters Rick Pfeiffer and Connor Hoffman, editor Joyce Miles who stayed back at the office to help produce both newspapers on deadline and our boss, publisher John Celestino, who backed us with whatever we needed.

Lastly, I want to thank the candidates, including state Assemblyman Mike Norris, his challenger Joe DiPasquale and all three Lockport mayor hopefuls — Keith McNall, Michelle Roman and Wade VanValkenburgh.

It's not as easy to put yourself out there as a candidate for public office and it can be a bit nerve-wracking to be asked to intelligently answer questions on the fly while sitting on a stage in front of members of the media and invited guests.

All of the candidates conducted themselves with civility as did all of the audience members, proving that it is still possible for people to gather in a public space and talk politics and government for a couple of hours without a fistfight breaking out.

Next up comes the most important part.

There's still some time left to familiarize yourselves with the backgrounds and beliefs of all the candidates involved in all of the races this year.

On Nov. 6, pick whoever you want, just make sure you get to the polls and vote.

Contact Regional News Director Mark Scheer at 282-2311, ext. 2250.

---

Trending Video