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Contra Costa Community News Group (CCCNG) unfolds in East Bay

By Peggy Spear



From left: Denise Rousset (Valley Sentinel), Elena Hutslar, Rebecca Coburn (Community Focus), Wendy Scheck (Lamorinda Weekly) and Tamara Steiner (Clayton Pioneer and Concord Pioneer) Photo Rochellez Photography

Lamorinda Weekly, agrees. "As all of our papers are written and printed with significant costs and delivered free to all the single family homes in each of our communities, by forming this group and making it easier and more efficient for regional and national advertisers to place media buys with us, our newspapers will be stronger financially -and that means we can continue providing the local coverage our communities have grown accustomed to." The Lamorinda Weekly debuted in March, 2007.

Each of the papers will continue to cover local stories in their communities, with little or no overlap in news coverage. The nearly six-year-old Community Focus will also expand its coverage to include Walnut Creek.

The newspaper scene in Contra Costa County has undergone big changes in the past decade as the Contra Costa Times - part of the Bay Area News Group - covers more Bay Area-wide news in its daily newspaper. It still operates a handful of community weeklies, but in recent years, more competing weekly, bi-monthly and monthly publications have sprung up. Several online sources have also attracted more readers, if not advertisers.

"It's pretty clear than the big, urban daily is a dinosaur," Steiner says, who has operated the Clayton Pioneer since 2003 and in September launched the successful Concord Pioneer. "The print newspapers that will survive and succeed are the local papers. People read them and keep them. They stay around for weeks on kitchen counters and coffee tables. They line the birdcages with them. If advertisers want Contra Costa reach, we have it."

Steiner says that the new CCCNG is "simply a way to get us in the game. Our circulation now makes us pretty attractive to regional and national advertisers who want saturation in the demographically diverse and rich Central Contra Costa."

CCCNG is unique because the independent publishers will still own their papers, but with a

The media landscape in the East Bay is shifting again, as five local community papers are banding together to create the new Contra Costa Community News Group.

Publishers from the Clayton Pioneer, Concord Pioneer, Lamorinda Weekly, Community Focus and Valley Sentinel launched the new CCCNG late in 2014, mainly as an avenue to attract national and regional advertising. The combined circulation of the new enterprise is 150,000 with free delivery to homes and businesses.

But the founders of the new association say the end result will be better coverage for readers.

"CCCNG can help strengthen our community newspapers mainly with revenue," says Community Focus publisher Elena Hutslar, who runs the Pleasant Hill-based paper with Jennifer Neys and Rebecca Coburn.

That revenue, according to Pioneer Editor and Publisher Tamara Steiner, will result in better papers. "More revenue means more resources for more and better news coverage."

Wendy Scheck, associate publisher of the

common goal - to use the large combined circulation numbers to attract large advertisers that are looking for a way to saturate the community, Hutslar says. "Some would think we are competitors but we respect each others' publications and learn from each other. It is nice to work collaboratively."

Denise Rousset, who has run the venerable Valley Sentinel for 20 years, agrees. "The collaboration is invaluable."

Going up against the more established local daily, Steiner says, is a "David and Goliath thing."

"But, with our circulation of 150,000," she notes, "one might ask 'who is David and who is Goliath?'"

For more information on the CCCNG, visit its website at www.lamorindaweekly.com/cccommunitynewsgroup or call 844-457-7665.

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[back](#)

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