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Message from Executive Director

When we launched Cardinal News in September 2021, we wanted to tell the types of in-depth, impactful stories that the region’s legacy newspapers had abandoned. Our initial goal and bank account were modest. We did not foresee that by the time we completed our first full year that we would have outpaced our 5-year start-up plan and be ranked in the top 10% of Institute for Nonprofit News’ members.

We engaged in strategic planning in 2023. We came to the consensus that we were quickly becoming the lead news agency for Southwest and Southside Virginia, and that we would embrace that role. We will focus on excellent journalism and on delivering our stories to people in the forms and on the platforms where they seek to read them.

During 2023, we began using video storytelling. We launched specialty newsletters. We hired another editor and five additional reporters. We also began to build our operations and development staff by hiring a sponsorship manager and development director.

By December, we had doubled the number of readers to our newsletters, and doubled the amount of the support from recurring reader donations. We had increased traffic to our website, ending the year with more than 3.2 million page views.

We’re just getting started.

We have been lauded by our national peers for our achievements and our financial stewardship, but we truly would not be able to do this without having such strong support from our fellow Virginians who understand the role independent journalism plays in strong communities.

We are very grateful to our financial supporters and our readers, and especially so to those who are both.

Luanne Rife
Mission and Values

Cardinal News is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan news site that serves Southwest and Southside Virginia. Our mission is to report the untold stories of Southwest and Southside Virginia, and strengthen the voices of the people in our communities who have been sidelined in the commonwealth’s political, economic and cultural conversations simply because of where they live.

We believe people need independent, unbiased information about their communities in order for their communities to be vibrant. Access to our stories is free, as we do not believe one’s financial means should create a barrier to independently gathered information.
Board:
Chair Caroline Glickman
Debbie Meade
Chris Turnbull
Quinn Graeff

Leadership:
Executive Director Luanne Rife
Executive Editor Dwayne Yancey
Managing Editor Megan Schnabel
Volunteer Accountant Tonya Hart

Staff:
Politics and State Government Markus Schmidt
Business Matt Busse
Technology Tad Dickens
Education Lisa Rowan
Health Emily Schabacker
Danville Grace Mamon
Martinsville Dean Stephens
Bristol Susan Cameron
Audience Engagement Editor Brooke Stephenson
Development Director Dutchie Jessee
Sponsorship Manager Sherry Quinley
Copy Editor Erica Myatt
STORIES WITH IMPACT

Courtesy of the Danville Historical Society
The first Black speaker of the House of Delegates takes pride in his rural roots

I consider this an important piece, not just because it’s a very personal look at the first Black speaker of the House of Delegates in its 405-year history, but it also says a lot about a man and his relatability to our readers, and his incredible story of redemption.

Markus Schmidt
This story came about after a reader wrote to us wondering what was going on with that project, which was announced to great fanfare in 2021 but has yet to begin hiring the 2,500 promised jobs. We were the first to report that the business is struggling financially. Other newsrooms, including NPR and The Washington Post, later followed with their own stories. I’m proud of this story because Cardinal News scooped the national news organizations, but more importantly we were able to find answers for the readers we serve.
‘An antidote to so much of what ails culture’: A Virginia Tech fellowship aims to bring humanities to tech leadership

In a world where technology is increasingly dominant, people are still in charge. A former top executive at Google and Twitter is working at Virginia Tech to make sure that tech professionals have a grounding in humanities. With controversies across social media and the emergence of AI, Rishi Jaitly felt the time was right to develop the Leadership in Technology fellowship.
VMI alumni association suspends members who it says misused thousands of email addresses

When it comes to impact, my favorite story is definitely the VMI alumni suspension story. I spent so many hours tracking the events and personalities related to the alumni rift at VMI, and am grateful that I had the time to do that background work over the span of 10 months. The political climate at VMI is just an example of battles over diversity, equity and inclusion happening at colleges around the country.

Lisa Rowan
Virginia’s health insurance marketplace debuts with some hiccups, but higher enrollment

This story gave me my first opportunity to talk with locals since moving to Virginia. Their experience with enrolling in the state’s new health insurance marketplace brought a voice to the consumer experience. Including local voices in news allows us to pinpoint the gaps in government assistance, educates us and helps us better understand the communities we live in.

Emily Schabacker
Cardinal’s coverage of Bloody Monday included a historical overview of Danville’s civil rights movement and interviews with members of the city’s Black community who participated in the protests when they were teenagers 60 years ago. We also created a collection of other resources and media from the movement, including a gallery of never-before-seen photos of the protests, microfilm of court documents, recordings of testimony from protesters and police officers, an interactive map, and a timeline of events. This project was impactful because the story of Danville’s civil rights movement was not discussed by the community in a meaningful way for decades afterwards, and it was also often passed over by institutional historians. Today, there is more of an effort to keep these stories alive as the people who experienced the movement in person grow older, and Cardinal’s coverage has aided that mission.

‘We’re trying to let those voices be heard’: Recordings bring Danville’s civil rights court cases to life

Grace Mamon

Courtesy of the Danville Historical Society
This story places a spotlight on one of the city’s most readily apparent problems that it hasn’t done much to address until recently. Since the publication of this story, the city has done more to, at the very least, acknowledge there is a housing and homelessness problem and I’d like to think this story played a role in that.
The ‘crazy FOIA lady’ used state law to dislodge public records — and improve emergency response times and finances in her town

This story received the most attention of any story I did last year. People seemed to connect with Laura's story and her persistence. As a reporter, I use and appreciate FOIA and it's great to see a citizen use it to bring about so much needed change. Not only did she get what she was seeking, a change that meant faster response times during emergencies in her town, but all the town council members and some of the town officials left as a result. It seems like the new government is a lot more transparent.

Susan Cameron
The Roanoke County School Board

We tell our stories on Instagram because we know we reach a different, younger audience on that platform. It’s also a very shareable format — we often see about 10% of the people who engage with our reels share them with friends. In this way, our posts become a quick way to introduce people to our stories and our organization.

The Roanoke County school board story was an important story to cover. There’s an impression that trans issues are an urban problem. Telling this story makes it clear there are trans kids in Southwest Virginia and these debates exist here as well. This story is a microcosm of a larger statewide and national issue.

Finally, there were lots of folks in Roanoke and beyond who were passionate about the story, which makes it 1) easier to find an audience for and 2) worth telling if no one else is doing it like we can.
New population figures show Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads losing population, parts of rural Virginia gaining

This column on Virginia’s demographic trends probably produced more reaction than any other column I wrote. The demographics columns consistently get lots of traffic and I hear lots of comments about how they are re-shaping how political and business leaders think about the state.

Dwayne Yancey
New features and products

Cardinal 250: Cardinal News is embarking on a three-year project to tell the little-known stories of Virginia’s role in the march to independence in advance of the nation’s observation of its 250th anniversary, or semiquincentennial.

New stories are published monthly to the website and released in a special Cardinal 250 newsletter.

The project is made possible in part by funding from the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission.

Obituaries: Free to families and made possible through a partnership with Regional Obituaries. Published on the website, with listing in the daily newsletter.

Events Calendar: Providing a sortable list of events throughout the region that is hosted on the website. A curated list is sent in The Weekend newsletter.

Sponsorships: Our five newsletters, including West of the Capital — a weekly political insiders newsletter launched in 2023, and website are now available.

Notable Collaborations

The Cardinal Way: Civility Rules: Cardinal News was selected by the American Press Institute to participate in a nationwide project to promote civic discourse. We partnered with the Roanoke Collaboration Project to give people in our demographically and politically changing communities the tools to engage in constructive dialogue.

Institute for Nonprofit News Rural News Network: We were part of a cohort with the Texas Tribune, Mississippi Today, Shasta Scout and KOSU to explore the realities rural students face in higher education.

University of Missouri School of Journalism: Audience Team surveyed our readers so we could know more about them.

Virginia Tech School of Communication: Taped and broadcast Candidate Forum.
Awards

**Institute for Nonprofit News**
- Startup of the Year
- Finalist INNovation Award

**LION Publishers**
- Financial Health Award, medium to large tier
- Finalist Business of the Year
- Outstanding Coverage
- Public Service
- Product of the Year

**Local Media Association**
- Digital Innovation: Best Event, second place

**Virginia Press Association**
- 21 journalism Awards, including Best in Show for writing to **Megan Schnabel** and **Markus Schmidt**.

![Image of Megan Schnabel and Markus Schmidt]
In 2023, our major new expenses were adding 7 new positions during the year, with 5 on the editorial side, and investing in a strategic plan with a focus on financial sustainability.
Our 2024 plans include investing in:

**Journalism:** Add a Roanoke reporter and copy editor. Invest in staff development, listening tools and increase impact stories.

**Products:** Add an App and launch Cardinal News 250 podcast.

**Audience Growth:** More outreach, branding, engagement and new opportunities to convert readers to donors.

**Sponsorships:** Create more opportunities for businesses and nonprofits to support Cardinal News and our growing audience.

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### By the Numbers

**Annual Page Views**
- 2021: 290,406
- 2022: 2,102,128
- 2023: 3,2 million

**Stories**
- 2021: 343
- 2022: 1,583
- 2023: 1,665

**Newsletters Subscribers**
- 2021: 12,245
- 2022: 21,020
- Growth in 2023: 71.66%

**Annual Visitors**
- 2021: 176,337
- 2022: 1.2 million
- 2023: 1.9 million
# Donors

## Donor Count by Category

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Total 2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Assistants</td>
<td>1,774</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correspondents</td>
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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>$1,294,772</td>
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## Publisher’s Circle: $100,000 and above
- Danville Regional Foundation
- Dominion Energy
- The Genan Foundation
- The Harvest Foundation
- The Secular Society

## Above the Fold: $50,000 - $99,999
- Carilion Clinic
- PATH Partnerships / Virginia Funders Network
- Verge/RAMP

## Muckrakers: $10,000 - $49,999
- Ballad Health
- Ben and Betty Davenport
- Dodson Brothers Exterminating Co, Inc.
- W. Heywood Fralin
- Fund for Nonprofit News at The Miami Foundation
- Scott and Quinn Graeff
- Baron P. Schwartz and Lynn Rainville
- Walter and Sally Rugaber
- Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission
- David Wine
**Newshounds:** $5,000 - $9,999
- American Press Institute
- Anderson Investment Co. LLC Tristate Gambling
- Brewer Amusement Company, LLC
- John Buress III
- Anna Lawson
- Debbie Meade
- Morris Family Foundation

**Pundits:** $1,000 - $4,999
- Steven Agee
- William & Ellen Baumann
- Ernest Bentley
- Daniel Brown
- Diana Christopulus
- Robert Clark
- J. Clements
- Warner and Barbara Dalhouse
- Dwayne Yancey Facebook Fundraiser
- James Elmore
- Nancy Finch
- Beverly and Shirley Fitzpatrick
- G. Franklin Flippin
- Marvin Gilliam
- Richard Gilliam
- Karli Griffeth
- Michael Hemphill
- Institute of Nonprofit News
- J&L Service Company
- Mary Ann H. Johnson
- Starlette Johnson
- Nancy Kaylor in memory of Steven Kaylor
- Andy Kegley
- John and Mary Jean Levin
- John Milliken
- Jeffery Mitchell
- Thomas Morris
- Elizabeth Obenshain
- Beth and Mike OBrochta
- Robert Peck
- Michael Quillen
- Luanne Rife
- Edward Gralla and Randye Schwartz
- Trevor Smith
- Raymond Smoot
- John Tedesco
- The Grymes Fund
- The Pozen Spraker Charitable Fund
  (Jonah Pozen and Jody Spraker)
- Linda Thornton
- Alex Trower
- Christopher Turnbull
- F. Roger Vaden in honor of Joe Stinnett
- Venco Business Solutions
- Virginia Credit Union in honor of Rob Jones
- Virginia Highlands Leadership Fund
- John and Judy Walker
- Richard Wells
- John Williamson
- Barry and Libba Wolfe
- Wendy Zomparelli
Correspondents: $250 - $999

Richard Adams
Rebecca Adcock
Nancy Aden
James and Lisa Alderman
William Amos
Stephen Andes
Charles Andrews
Timothy Andriano
Jacqueline Archer
Frank Atkinson
Fred Augustine
Jacob Bacharach
Stephen Beck
Laura Benjamin
Nathaniel Bishop
The Blackbaud Giving Fund/Patrick Dixon
Erv Blythe
Barbara Bockner
Lynne Bolton
Tom Bondurant
Jeffrey Bowling
John and Matilda Bradshaw
Bette Brand
Bill Broadhurst
Burgher Family Charitable Fund
E Carlisle
Jason Carter
Francesca Caruso
Ann Cassell
Larry L. Lackey & Karen Cavanaugh
Pearl Chiu
Timothy Clark
George Clemo
Stephen Clinton
Lisa Collis
Don Creamer
Steven Critchfield
Dennis Cronk
Daniel Culkin
Jeffrey Culverhouse
Rupert Cutler
Janet Davis
Sandra Davis
Amy Dawson
Brad and Anita Denardo
Henry Dentdy
Jean Denton
Thomas Denton
Robert Denton
Robert & Kathy-Lynn Devereaux
Ruth Dickerson
Ruth Doan
Michael and Kate Downey
Jane Dure
William Elliot
Stephanie Elms
Dawn Erdman
Executive Leadership Forum
Joseph Ferguson
Michael Finnin
Diane Flynt
Keith Franklin
Barbara Fried
Susan Friedman
James Frith
Connie Froggatt
Rodney Fultz
Lisa Garcia
Ray and Jane Garland
Caroline Glickman
Quinn Graeff
David Grant
Harold Greer
Hunter Gresham
Marcella Griggs
Nancy Griggs
Gordon and Velva Groover
Walter Hadlock
Barbara Hairfield
John Hall
Tonya Hart
James Hartley
Carey Harvey cutter
William and Sudie Heartwell
John and Ann Hess
John Henry & Joy Peterson Heyrman
Anna Marie Hicks
Larry Hincker
Greg Hodges
Latala Hodges
Garrett Hollingsworth
Jeremy Holmes
Anne Holton
Peter Howard
Nancy Hulan
David Hunt
Robert Hunt
Susan loove
Daphne Jamison
Anne and James Jennings
Ben Jennings
Cal Johnson
David Johnson
Kay Johnson
Steve Jones
Rosalee and Andy Kaplan
Robert Kegley
J. Keith Kennedy
Brad Kerchof
Frank Kilgore
Stephen King
Bill Kirk
Anne Kohinke
Edward Kohinke
Brian Konkel  
Jeffrey Krasnow  
Michelle Krocker  
Paul Lancaster  
Celeste Land  
Debra Landgraf  
Mark and Cynthia Lawrence  
Kenneth Lewis  
John Light  
Donna Littlepage  
Marjorie Marcy  
Martha Martin  
Rich Martin  
L. Richard Martin Jr.  
Nancy McDaniel  
Matthew McKimmy  
McNeil Roofing Inc  
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Clifford Nottingham  
Molly O’Dell  
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Kimball & Leslie Payne  
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John Pendleton  
Daniel Perrault  
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Thane Pressman  
J Pugh  
Linda Pulliam  
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Carleton Reed  
Norma Reed  
Richard Reynolds  
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Arlene and Michael Riley  
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Virginia Association of Health Plans  
Melinda Wagner  
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Wendall Walker  
Jack Wall  
Douglas Waters  
Mary Waters  
Linda Webb  
Terri Webber  
Brian Weigand  
Frances West  
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Joseph Wright  
Nancy Yost

Editorial Assistants: $1 - $249

To see a complete list of the **1,774 donors in 2023**, please visit our website. Together these donors - many of whom contribute **$15 a month** – have given **$176,240**.
Ways to Give

There are many ways to support our paywall-free, nonprofit journalism.

**Through our website:**
https://cardinalnews.org/support-our-publication/

**Vehicle donation:**
Make sure to send a picture of your donation to dutchie@cardinalnews.org.

**Sponsorships of our newsletters and website pages:**
Contact sherry@cardinalnews.org

**Stock donations:**
Contact luanne@cardinalnews.org.

**Yes, we do accept checks:**
Mail to Cardinal Productions Inc., P.O. Box 4455, Roanoke, VA. 24015.

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