



April 7, 2024

Dear Montgomery County Council –

You all certainly know the broad value of Montgomery Community Media to our community: News, public information, education and more.

Let me share another reason it is a treasure: It's helping train new journalists and, by extension, maintain our democracy.

As independent local news reporting continues to wane, more and more universities and their students are stepping in -- holding municipal governments and officials accountable, recording the history of communities, and informing residents of news that is closest to home.

At the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, we require all our undergraduate students to participate in a professional journalism internship for a least one academic period – summer, spring or fall. Montgomery Community Media has provided consistent, real-world opportunities for our students year-round.

In the past two years, I've monitored at least 35 students who contributed reporting to the organization's website under the patient tutelage of editor Joe Yasharoff, MCM's director of content. Each of these students has written dozens of stories a semester.

***Doing the rough math, in the past two years, well more than 1,000 stories have been published by our students – all for the benefit of Montgomery County residents.***

You may have seen some of their bylines on stories about you, but they have also covered sports, businesses, schools, weather – if it's happening in Montgomery County, Merrill College students are covering it via MCM. You will eventually see these names in the Sun, the Banner, the Post, the New York Times, producing or anchoring your local or national news, announcing your favorite sport, or sharing news from the world's most dangerous war zone.

Time management, interviewing, news judgment, public policy and fairness are among the foundational skills our students are putting into practice beyond our classrooms in College Park. Learning by doing is the only way to become a trusted professional journalist. Journalists' work is a keystone to our democratic process. That starts with editors like Joe Yasharoff and organizations like MCM.

Thank you for your robust support of Montgomery Community Media.

Sincerely,

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