



June 2024 Newsletter

As we approach the mid-point of the year, and our fiscal calendar close, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to give you an update on how things are going with the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation. Also, I asked some of our media partners to provide their own “state of the state” perspective. I hope you enjoy hearing from them about the challenges and successes in local media.

The “State of the State” for CVJF is strong and growing

Here are some interesting facts:

- CVJF is quickly approaching 750 donations since we launched in September 2020.
- Donations have been received from more than 350 individuals or organizations, with many of our donors giving more than once. Donations range from \$10 to \$10,000. We are truly a grassroots organization.
- Each year our fundraising has grown, and 2024 is on track to be our best year by far.
- While we rely on grassroots support, we also want to recognize our growing number of major supporters:
 - We have 12 donors who have given CVJF more than \$5,000.
 - We have 29 donors who have given CVJF more than \$1,000.
 - We have 28 donors who have given CVJF more than \$500.
 - We have 25 donors who have given CVJF more than \$250.
 - That’s 94 major supporters --- **we just need six more to top 100!**
- We hosted the inaugural Coachella Valley Media Hall of Fame event in February, where we netted more than \$20,000 after expenses. Planning is underway for the 2025 event.
- We had a successful fundraising campaign as part of Coachella Valley Giving Day. We raised almost \$8,000 and won a \$5,000 bonus prize from the Desert Community Foundation and First Bank by attracting the second most unique donors.
- We hosted our first successful community event – The History of Editorial Cartoons and Opinion Pages in America – in partnership with the Rancho Mirage Library Foundation. More than 100 people attended. We have several more events in the planning stages for late 2024 and into 2025.
- For the fourth year, we underwrote the opinion editor position at The Desert Sun. We believe opinion content provides a valuable forum for community discussion. During the past 12 months, The Desert Sun has published 642 opinion pieces – editorials, letters from readers and guest columns. This public-engagement content has generated

528,000 page views and engagement with 382,000 site visitors. The most popular post was an item advocating for high-speed rail transportation between Los Angeles and Palm Springs that was viewed 2,340 times.

- For the past three years, we have provided grants to hire interns in local newsrooms. We started by funding two interns in 2022, and each year we have been able to fund one additional intern. In upcoming newsletters we'll introduce you to the four up-and-coming journalists working for four different news organizations. Your support is making this investment in the next generation of journalists possible.

Media Partners Share Their “State of the State”

The Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation created an advisory board more than a year ago, so that we could best understand the challenges facing our local news organizations. The advisory board is comprised of the leaders from various new teams, and we meet several times a year to listen and learn about their needs. For this mid-year report, I asked some of them to share their thoughts on how things are going.

Jerry Upham

General Manager, Gulf California Broadcast (KESQ, Fox 11, CBS Local 2, CW5, Telemundo)

2024 is looking to be both a challenging but possibly lucrative year: challenging because our “core revenue” continues to be in a very low growth mode (as is the case with traditional media across the country), but potentially lucrative because political advertising should be strong. That will be missing in 2025 as we revert back to “challenging,” especially depending on what happens with the economy.

The landscape for hiring young, new talent both behind the scenes and in front of the camera has become more difficult. Fewer candidates are applying for open reporter and producer positions and keeping them is proving difficult as they opt for other positions either in or outside our industry, often after a very short time with our stations. The lure of the new media and social components that the younger generation uses can be difficult to compete with.

With that said, we are ultimately optimistic that local television news will continue to have a strong role with the local community. Our goal is to be the most trusted resource for stories that affect the people who live in the local area -- reporting on the local news, weather and sports of the day, but also going in-depth on subjects that play a role in the future of our valley.

Our partnership with CVJF has already had a positive effect on our coverage, as shown by the funding for our crew to attend the Burn Pit legislation (<https://kesq.com/news/2022/08/10/local-veteran-remembered-as-president-biden-signs-pact-act-into-law/>) and the staffing of an intern to assist with our daily coverage -- both on-air and online. CVJF has made a strong impact on journalism in our valley in a short amount of time, and we will continue to support and partner with them in upcoming years.

Jimmy Boegle**Founding Editor and Publisher, Coachella Valley Independent**

The year is off to a fine start for the Coachella Valley Independent. Editorially, we've done some great work, most recently [a compelling story on the recovery of the businesses near Vista Chino and Date Palm Drive that were devastated by a mud flow during Hurricane Hilary](#). We've launched a new events newsletter called [11 Days a Week](#), that has been very popular, thanks to the diversity of valley-wide events featured by our writers.

That aforementioned story on the recovery of the businesses harmed by the mud flow was written by Haleemon Anderson, who is the Independent's [California Local News Fellow](#). While the state is paying most of Haleemon's salary, the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation helped the Independent pay our portion of her salary.

While the Independent's revenue is stable, if not necessarily growing, we are dealing with all of the same challenges as other news media sources: Printing costs are up; heck, ALL costs are up, and we've been working to increase our staff and freelance pay so our CVI family can better deal with rising costs. We don't charge for our news -- our monthly print edition is free, and there are no pay walls or story meters at CVIndependent.com -- so we depend on voluntary reader support to help keep the figurative lights on. If you can help, learn more at www.CVIndependent.com/supporters.com..

Mark Talkington**Editor and Founder, The Palm Springs Post**

Now in its fourth year, we are excited to see The Post's audience continue to grow, and we are fortunate to be accepted as a part of the media landscape here in the desert by both the community and our colleagues. We're particularly proud, and appreciative, that editor/reporter Kendall Balchan was among two journalists recognized as a rising star at the Coachella Valley Media Hall of Fame event earlier this year. We're also excited to be welcoming our first ever intern this summer – made possible through a grant from the CVJF that would not have been available without generous supporter donations.

Kate Franco**Executive Editor, The Desert Sun**

With “high season” behind us, The Desert Sun is gearing up for summer, which often is a chance for reporters, photographers and editors to make some significant progress on our most ambitious projects that we will publish this year. Newsroom leadership will turn our focus to planning for the second half of the year and shoring up our staff. Recruiting and hiring is underway for several key newsroom positions. In May, Sam Morgen joined our staff as our reporter covering Palm Springs, meaning Paul Albani-Burgio will now move full time into the growth and development beat. We expect to make several more hires – an editor and two to

three reporters – over the course of the summer, and we will welcome a summer/fall intern thanks to the generous support of the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation.

I will be working with our partners on fundraising efforts to support the grant-funded positions in my newsroom. The Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation has supported The Desert Sun for the past few years with funding for an opinion and engagement editor. Thanks to donors, we are able to convene a vibrant community forum each day -- both in the print pages of The Desert Sun and digitally -- that tackles the complex issues facing residents and leaders across the Coachella Valley. Especially in this pivotal presidential election cycle, we are grateful for the ongoing support from the community in our mission to both inform and engage the electorate. If this is important to you, please consider a new or additional gift to CVJF. I am also working with the Inland Empire Community Foundation on fundraising to support our Desert Scene and Giving section, which shines a bright spotlight on the vibrant philanthropic scene in the desert. If you are interested helping us secure the future of this important community service, please reach out to me at kate.franco@desertsun.com and I can help facilitate gifts with IECF.

Time to brag a bit: The California News Publishers Association in May announced finalists for its annual journalism awards, and The Desert Sun is a finalist in an impressive 14 categories, including general excellence, public service reporting, environmental reporting, music reporting and coverage of youth and education. Winners will be announced in July. The Desert Sun also was a finalist in Gannett's journalism contest in the breaking news category for its coverage of Tropical Storm Hilary and its wide-ranging effects on the Coachella Valley. We were honored to have two current Desert Sun staffers and one alum honored at the CVJF's Media Hall of Fame event in February. Former Desert Sun arts and entertainment reporter Bruce Fessier was part of the inaugural class inducted to the Hall of Fame, and current Desert Sun photographer Andy Abeyta was honored with the "rising star" award. Reporter Chris Damien was a runner up for journalist of the year. Speaking of Chris, he is participating in a year-long prestigious investigative fellowship with The New York Times. While there, he will be investigating the Riverside County Sheriff's Department as it faces a probe by the California Attorney General's Office. All of Chris' work will be co-published in both The Desert Sun and the Times.

We want to thank our media team leaders for providing insights into the newsrooms. Next month we'll introduce you to some new CVJF board members and talk about our plans for the last half of 2024.

Randy Lovely, Board President
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To donate go to our website and click the donate button using a credit or debit card or send a check to the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation to PO Box 207, Palm Springs, CA 92263.