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As Insider Louisville folds, U of L's student newspaper still fighting for survival

Ed Green Opinion contributor

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These are truly trying times for journalists. In newsrooms across this state and country, teams of editors, reporters and publishers strive daily to find better ways to serve readers while fighting for financial survival.

Just last week, the [online news organization Insider Louisville](#) announced that it will [cease publishing on Aug. 7](#). Its message to more than 200,000 monthly readers? The cost to operate even an online, streamlined media organization was “too great to overcome.”

The situation is no less true for student journalists than for the professionals they hope to become.

At the University of Louisville’s independent student newspaper, The Louisville Cardinal, student journalists, staff and board members understand the pressures of trying to preserve the Fourth Estate. Given the paper’s own financial challenges, they are working to ensure this is not the last year the paper operates.

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Losing The Louisville Cardinal would leave U of L as the only school in the Atlantic Coast Conference without a student-run newspaper and with no place for budding journalists to prepare for careers in the profession. It also would leave U of L without a reliable, trusted source of news — a place where independent, student journalists

learn to think critically, ask the hard questions and tell the important stories that otherwise might be missed.

The past year was one of transition for the student paper, which has served the U of L community for nearly a century.

After U of L announced in late 2017 that it would drastically reduce its support for The Cardinal, the organization's staff and volunteer board launched a series of initiatives to save the paper. The board has recruited new board members, conducted fundraising activities for the first time and worked with staff to streamline costs without jeopardizing the quality of the news product.

Over the last year, the paper raised nearly \$30,000 — primarily by reaching out to donors who support its editorial and educational missions. Major donors have included U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth and former U.S. Ambassador Matthew Barzun. To its credit, U of L also stepped up and provided \$25,000 in advertising support last year, but that's less than half of the university's historical support for the paper. And the staff found new advertisers outside the U of L community. This allowed the paper to complete a successful newsgathering year with some remaining reserves.

The coming year will be tenuous. The paper's budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year banks on even higher fundraising and a moderate uptick in advertising sales. Even if those assumptions materialize — no sure thing — the paper still will deplete much of its reserves.

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In short, without increased support from donors, a boost in advertising sales and/or draconian cuts to its operating budget, The Louisville Cardinal could face the same fate as Insider Louisville.

The situation seems dire, but the students, staff and board know there is hope. Many alumni and community leaders have responded to the calls for help. However, to survive, the newspaper needs more community and business leaders to step up.

The Louisville Cardinal is where I started in journalism, launching a 20-year career as a writer and editor here in Louisville. There are many other examples of former Cardinal staffers who went on to successful careers inside and outside journalism.

There can be many more success stories at the paper as young journalists hone their talents and make U of L a better place by providing thoughtful and thorough news coverage.

For those who can help, I urge you to support the cause by donating at louisvillecardinal.com. The Louisville Cardinal is worth saving!

Ed Green, vice president of C2 Strategic Communications, is the 2019-20 board chair of The Louisville Cardinal Inc., an independent nonprofit newspaper serving the University of Louisville. He can be reached at ed@c2strategic.com.

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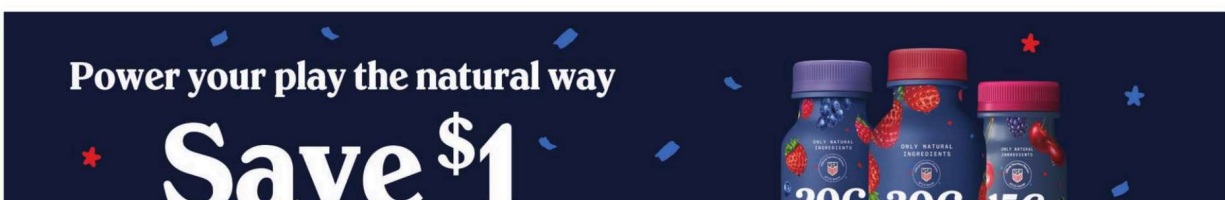


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