

In Case You Missed This!

RUTGERS

Joseph C. Cornwall Center
for Metropolitan Studies

School of Public Affairs and Administration | Newark

Roland V. Anglin
Director
The Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies
47 Bleeker Street
Newark, NJ 07102
www.cornwall.rutgers.edu
<https://www.facebook.com/CornwallCenter>

Our Vision

The Joseph C. Cornwall Center strives to be:

-A key resource in the production of "usable" knowledge for the public, private, and nonprofit sector development in Newark, the northern region of New Jersey and beyond.

-A central force convening key civil society individuals and institutions as they engage in and pursue the economic, political, and cultural revitalization of Newark.

-A forceful agent for the economic and administrative coordination and cooperation of Newark and its surrounding communities.

-A national model for what a university-based center can accomplish working with regional, local, and community partners.

From the Director's Desk

Friday, January 25, 2013

Greetings,

This is an interesting and innovative idea that Detroit's stakeholders are using in encouraging the revitalization process. Food for thought...

All the best



January 13, 2013

In Beleaguered Detroit, a Media-Wise Group Shows Reporters the Brighter Side

By JENNIFER CONLIN

In September, a group of nearly 40 journalists and bloggers, some from well-known news organizations like Forbes, Bloomberg, The Wall Street Journal and Reuters, boarded a bus in downtown Detroit and headed for one of the most run-down neighborhoods in the city. As they peered through the windows at block after block of dilapidated, abandoned homes, a young community organizer spoke eloquently about the area's revitalization efforts.

The bus tour was part of a day-and-a-half press event organized by the [Detroit Regional News Hub](#), a media organization that has been working closely with journalists since its founding in 2008. Its aim is to present a more balanced view of the city's challenges.

Initiated by a group of Detroit business leaders in conjunction with local reporters and editors, the Hub, as it is known, is an unusual collaboration between civic leaders and journalists, two groups that tend to be adversaries.

In addition to the bus tour, journalists (including this one) were taken on a Detroit River cruise with officials and organizers, ushered around a renovated theater that now houses start-up companies, and introduced to social activists and entrepreneurs working in areas as varied as literacy and microlending.

But even though the Hub readily acknowledges that its goal is to obtain more evenhanded coverage of the city, it doesn't try to hide the most blighted areas.

"Abandonment is an issue we can't ignore here, and we know journalists can't ignore it when reporting on Detroit," said Marge Sorge, executive director of the Hub and a former automotive journalist who was on the committee that formed the original idea. "But everyone on that bus also learned we have people working hard on solutions."

Julie Halpert, a freelance reporter for Reuters who took the bus tour, said: "It was pretty savvy of them to get out in front of a story like that. It was hardly image-polishing."

In a sense, Detroit's Hub acts like overseas "fixers" — combined translators, taxi drivers and journalists often hired by foreign correspondents for their local knowledge and contacts.

Kinda Jayoush, a freelance journalist in Montreal who often works with the Middle East Broadcasting Center, contacted the Hub last November when her supervisors in Dubai could not find a crew for a report she was preparing on Detroit's Arab-American community. She contacted the group on a Sunday morning, and by that afternoon it had found her a cameraman for the next day.

"They were incredibly professional, helping me find sources and shots and stories over three days in Detroit," she said. "They knew exactly what I needed as a journalist."

The Hub's beginnings can be traced to an economic growth initiative six years ago called the Road to Renaissance, which looked at potential solutions for many of Detroit's problems, including its negative press image.

"Back then, every article about Detroit read like an obituary," said Cynthia J. Pasky, chief executive of Strategic Staffing Solutions, headquartered in Detroit, and chairwoman of the Renaissance's communications committee. "The press would come in, take their 'ruin porn' pictures of the abandoned Michigan railway station or Packard Plant and then leave. We knew we had to do something to try and change that."

Another committee member, Mary Kramer, the longtime publisher of Crain's Detroit Business, learned that Pittsburgh faced a similar problem decades ago, but had transformed itself from a declining Rust Belt city into one that made Money magazine's "Ten Best Places to Live" list in 1989. One contributing factor was the Greater Pittsburgh Office of Promotion, which worked hard to lead reporters to more positive stories.

"They were far more P.R. than journalistic, but still had integrity as brokers of information," Ms. Kramer said, adding that the Hub was "inspired" by the Pittsburgh group but did not want to try to orchestrate coverage as it had done.

"Our hopes with the Hub were simple," said Ms. Sorge, who by then had left journalism and worked both in corporate communications and for Jennifer Granholm when she was Michigan's governor. "Give them access to the right facts, and more balanced stories will emerge about Detroit. But whitewash our problems, and it will fail from the start."

Ms. Sorge's career experiences also guided her actions. "As a former journalist, I could not have done this any other way," she said. "I see my job as connecting reporters to sources and data that they might not otherwise find. But it would never occur to me to try and influence what they report."

To avoid ethical conflicts, the Hub was set up as a nonprofit and does not market itself to journalists. "The media has to find them on their own," said Ms. Pasky, who still leads the Hub's board of advisers.

Though initial financing of \$600,000 was provided primarily by the Renaissance group, and later by the Downtown Detroit Partnership, a newer consortium of area businesses, Ms. Sorge said she had never felt pressure from business leaders to promote a specific agenda. "They know we don't work that way," she said, adding that she was looking for additional financing.

Ms. Sorge works with another former journalist and an array of bloggers with various backgrounds in journalism and public relations. The bloggers provide content for [Detroit Unspun](#), a social media program the Hub began in 2010 that includes a weekly compilation of links to articles written about Detroit by professional and citizen journalists. They also publish original coverage of what they call underreported stories.

The Hub now assists some 2,000 reporters and bloggers a year, and the city's efforts at revitalization have resulted in cover articles in Forbes, National Geographic Traveler, The Christian Science Monitor and Delta Sky Magazine. There have also been a number of articles in newspapers and online chronicling the migration of young artists and entrepreneurs to the city. In May, Salon.com called Detroit one of the new "[Rust Belt Chic](#)" places to live.

But the future may lie in Youth Neighborhood News, a broadcast journalism education program the Hub began in 2010 for Detroit students ages 11 to 18. "We teach them to report objectively, ethically and articulately," Ms. Sorge said. "They are hopefully tomorrow's journalists shaping the views on Detroit."