

Wasilla newspaper expands to serve growing community

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Barry Johnson/KTUU

Wasilla, Alaska - It's been nearly six decades since The Frontiersman started reporting Mat-Su news and events. Now the newspaper is getting ready to expand, with its own printing press and distribution center.

"I like their Sunday paper, too," says Woody Hise, a Valley resident for 30 years.

For 30 years, he's been reading The Frontiersman. "We get a better of sense of what is local, more so than with the other newspapers," he says. "So we kind of like it better because it gives us better local news."

It's a newspaper with a hometown feeling that newcomer Debbie Maxwell says she was looking for. "It's really made me feel at home, because coming from Spokane, that's a big city and I loved reading my Spokane paper," she says. "And I know that it's just so helpful when you move to a new city to know what's going on, and I have found out a lot about this city just reading the paper."

Wasilla is a city that just keeps growing. In fact, its population has increased 7 percent a year for the last four years.

"That is quite an astounding rate of growth for any community and it makes us one of the fastest-growing communities in the state," says Sandra Garley, Wasilla city planner.

Now The Frontiersman is expanding to keep up. "The Frontiersman does have plans to continue growing with the community," says publisher Kari Sleight. "We've taken several steps over the last couple of years. In fact, we added a Sunday edition two years ago."



Groundbreaking for a new publishing, pre-press and distribution building kicked off this week. When the building is complete, it will be 9,600 square feet and hold The Frontiersman's first printing presses.

"We'll be able to bring all that home to the Valley and keep it here," says Sleight. The newspaper started as a weekly but later began

publishing twice a week, and in August 2002 added a Sunday edition, which many Valley residents say they really appreciate. Sleight said it's too early to know if the paper will start publishing daily.

"All you have to do is come to the lakes to see the kids playing, we have the new sports complex with the ice rink, and you can see that there is a quality of life here in the Valley," says Garley. "And that's what we want to share with our new residents, and we want to be able to share that with our new residents 20 years from now."



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The newspaper's top priority is providing Valley residents with local news. "We have no wire copy, and at this time, we have no intention to add wire copy unless we do make the step to become a daily newspaper in the future," Sleight says.

"We're really excited about the opportunity and very thankful that the community has supported us for the last 57 years and allowed us to grow," she says.

Soon it will be hot off the presses, a hometown newspaper that's in the Valley to stay. "I read it every day," says Maxwell. "I love it."

The Frontiersman is planning an official groundbreaking ceremony at 11 a.m. Tuesday, July 13.

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