

Local blogging network growing

By Liesel Nowak

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Thursday, December 29, 2005

On his cvillenews.com, local blogger Waldo Jaquith is celebrating a milestone: the creation of 100 Charlottesville blogs.

One year after Merriam-Webster announced "blog" as its "Word of the Year," the Internet Web log is growing locally, and is using the international online community to better link Central Virginia residents.

A list of local blogs that Jaquith has posted at cvilleblogs.com shows the variety of Web logs that are maintained by area residents. The subjects range from politics to computers to cooking.

A blog, as defined by Merriam Webster, is "a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer."

"You'll find Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians and Greens talking about politics," Jaquith said. "You'll find food bloggers. You'll find people talking about local music. A lot of people are blogging about computer programs. Some are really boring. Some are really fascinating. Some are dedicated to an individual's life. Sometimes you don't know anything about their lives."

Blogs are instrumental in linking people all over the world who have common interests. Throughout the relatively short life of the blog, technology has evolved to link them by interest into a "blogosphere," like those for Republicans, single parents or fans of "The Apprentice."

In Jaquith's estimation, it is imperative to link those interests within the same community. That's why he started cvillenews.com, a blog that contains local news posts.

"Linking in the local community is more important," Jaquith said. "I think blogs are really beneficial to the community because it forces readers to leave their traditional social circle," Jaquith said. "By reading [local] blogs we really see a pretty good cross section of Charlottesville."

Rick Sincere, a local freelance writer and public relations specialist, has been blogging for a year.

His blog, "Rick Sincere News and Thoughts: Political notes and cultural commentary from a gay, libertarian, Catholic, Republican author and theater critic?" contains commentary on current events.

"My initial impulse was to use a blog to post articles I'd already written for other publications. It turned out to be very different," Sincere said.

In writing about local political and cultural events, Sincere has supplemented coverage by local media by covering events such as the Virginia Film Festival, and, as a member of the city's electoral board, hosting debates about electronic voting.

"I think that blogging has its greatest impact locally," Sincere said. "Blogs are replacing the cultural and political events that used to be covered by newspapers. We're the people who can go to a Chamber of Commerce breakfast. We are on the spot when [traditional media] can't be there. Blogs are quite valuable in bringing communities together."

On cvillenews.com, Jaquith has said he'd like to see more area businesses taking advantage of the blog.

"I want a Plan 9 blog, where employees tell me what they're listening to," Jaquith said, "and while they're at it, what sales are on at Plan 9. I want a Market Street Wine Shop blog. ? I also want wine recommendations, I want to know what great port they just got in and how it was with dinner last night. I want a Cary's Camera blog, which would feature photos by some of their customers, advice on their techniques, explanations of some of the work they do and technical tips on photography. And so on."

With his blog "Central VA real estate news, trends and opinions," Jim Duncan seems to be taking advantage of the idea that blogging can bring a local business success.

"I post anything that can remotely be related to real estate, land use, taxes, a lot of politics," Duncan said. "I focus as much as possible on local issues. It's where I live and where I can have an impact."

Duncan created the blog earlier this year. He maintains it himself, gathering interesting news bits and discussions from all over the Web.

"I'm constantly striving to improve, constantly looking for technologies," he said, adding that his blog receives about 1,000 hits a month.

"I like to think that it gives me an edge over my competition if for no other reason ... than I'm well informed," Duncan said, comparing his electronic wooing of potential clients to an online dating service. "Finding a real estate agent is kind of like dating. You have a small window to make an impression and then you're with that person for a long time."

Jaquith said he hopes more local blogs come to overshadow his.

"Locally, I see more blogs, inevitably, in the months and coming years ahead," Jaquith said. "I hope that we'll see more Charlottesville blogs that talk about Charlottesville, that are looking inward instead of looking out at the world. I forecast a strong blogging community in Charlottesville. And I think we'll have a stronger community for it."

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