

Using WordPerfect[®] to publish a growing community paper

Overview

Name: Louise Stennes

Company: Black Bear Press

Location: Blairsville, GA, USA

Industry: Newspaper

Product: Corel[®] WordPerfect[®] Suite

The editor of the Black Bear Advertiser is quick to point out that she's not producing a newspaper. The tabloid format paper doesn't publish news in the traditional sense, and the staff has a policy to avoid controversial and divisive issues. The goal of the Black Bear Advertiser is mainly to entertain its readers by providing funny, inspirational and thoughtful articles, commentaries, poetry and trivia. The articles are often brief and the tone is casual.

"I started the Black Bear Advertiser four years ago as an attempt to get my tax preparation business noticed, and to generate a bit of extra income after I retired," says editor and founder Louise Stennes, age 69, from her home office in Blairsville, GA. "I've received more positive feedback than I could ever have imagined. I'm not getting any younger, but this project has not only been very successful, it has also become an excellent brain exercise for me!"

The paper's target audience is mainly the relatively large population of retirees living in northern Georgia and the surrounding areas.

"Yes, you could say we have a mature audience. I tried to introduce a coloring contest for the kids last year, but I got only two entries," recalls Louise Stennes. "In most other aspects, reader feedback has been overwhelmingly positive."

A subscription to the Black Bear Advertiser costs \$25 per year, but the paper is freely distributed in the tri-state area so the staff relies heavily on revenues from corporate advertisements and the classified ads. The larger ads feature local businesses, real estate agents, contractors, restaurants, churches and much more. According to Louise Stennes, most of the collected money is needed to cover the significant printing costs.

"I started out in 2001 printing just 500 copies to be distributed locally, but the demand grew every year and we're now at 10,000 copies and well over 600 subscribers across the country, including some in Hawaii and Alaska," says Louise Stennes. "Printing costs are by far our largest expenditure."



Ms. Stennes decided to use her favorite application to design and produce her community paper – WordPerfect. The application was easy to use and had all the features she needed. Since she was able to produce a high quality PDF file directly from within the program, she was able to send the final file to her printer without purchasing an application like Adobe[®] Acrobat[®].

"My contact at the print shop told me that the paper looked very professional. He's never had any problems with my files. Of course, when I told him I used WordPerfect to produce the entire paper he almost fell over. He tried to convince me to go out and buy QuarkXPress, because in his opinion this project was too complicated for WordPerfect. Balderdash. I actually purchased a copy of QuarkXPress but it has been sitting unused on the shelf ever since. I don't need it. WordPerfect has all the features I need."

Last year someone suggested Ms. Stennes use Microsoft[®] Word instead of WordPerfect to publish the Black Bear Advertiser. She snickers: "Oh, I've tried it, but Microsoft Word doesn't handle heavy documents very well. The native WordPerfect files of the Black Bear are quite large. I believe the exported PDF for the May 2005 issue was around 22 MB. Microsoft Word seemed to crumble under the pressure and became slow and unstable. Frankly, it felt like a Mickey Mouse application to me."

When Louise Stennes started the Black Bear Advertiser in 2001, she was still running Skeenah Services, her small desktop publishing and income tax return business in Blairsville, GA. She spent some time thinking about a good name for the new community paper.

"I live off Skeenah Gap Road and Skeenah is the Cherokee term for a black bear, and it seemed like a natural fit for a paper distributed in this mountainous area of the country," says Louise Stennes.

Skeenah Services still provides some layout and subscription services, but as the project grew, Ms. Stennes and her partners

