

KEEP RAISING THE BAR



Maurice A. Jones, President and Publisher

My six-year-old daughter and I swim at the Downtown Norfolk YMCA on Saturday mornings. Lately, we've been playing a simulated basketball game while in the pool. We use a lightweight, buoyant ball as a basketball and a hula hoop as the basket.

As always, my daughter sets the rules. And when she desires to change them, I am notified, not asked for consent. Lately, her main standard has been: when Daddy makes a shot, move the basket farther away from him to make his next shot tougher. Each time we play, I get better. I make shots that are farther away. However, you can guess how this story ends: she always wins; and we always have a great time!

The pool game reminds me of a lesson that seems particularly relevant during these tough economic times: striving to be excellent is about eternally raising the bar. This unprecedented recession is the longest on record since the Great Depression. To remain competitive, most businesses have had to do more with less, reduce costs, eliminate waste and be more creative. The Virginian-Pilot Media Companies is no exception.

Despite revenue declines, we continue to strive to be your No. 1 source for local news, information and commentary. Our goal is also to remain the most effective advertising choice, bringing together buyers and sellers throughout Hampton Roads. And we are hustling to provide unparalleled customer service by delivering our products to your doorstep, mailbox, street box, retail outlet or computer before you rise in the morning and throughout the day.

Solid business results are the prerequisite to achieving the public service goals mentioned above. "No margin, no mission!" So, we are continuously looking for ways to align our expenses with the reduced revenues available in this economic climate.

The latest change in this pursuit is the reduction in width of The Virginian-Pilot by one inch. We will start this change next Sunday and complete it by mid-month. When it is done, the width of The Pilot will shrink from 12 ½ inches to 11 ½ inches. This small change will save us money on the costs of newsprint. This will help us keep the business healthy, so we can continue to provide you with news, information, commentary and advertising that you value.

Newsprint savings will not diminish the quantity or quality of news we provide. We will continue to report on state and local governments, offshore drilling, education, transportation, health and safety. Investigative reporting and the good deeds of others remain a priority. The amount of coupons and other advertising content will also be preserved.

However, we will raise the bar on our editing efforts. We will have to edit our paper smarter and harder. But you have my word that we will do our best to make the transition seamless.

While doing this, we will continue to produce PilotOnline.com; HamptonRoads.com and HamptonRoads.tv, the most visited local Web sites in the region. We will continue to publish 20-plus niche publications like Inside Business, The Apartment Book and The Flagship. And we will continue to offer targeted marketing solutions via Pilot Direct, our direct marketing business.

Signs of economic recovery are all around us. Housing prices are beginning to stabilize. Auto sales show modest gains. And jobs are not being lost at the rates that we saw earlier in the year.

These facts are a tribute to the people and institutions in our region. We're all a little leaner and meaner. Our futures remain bright because we continue to raise the bar.

Thank you for reading us, viewing us, advertising with us and providing us with feedback to help us get stronger. Your partnership is indispensable to our growth. If you have any questions, advice, criticism or other feedback, please visit our blog at <http://hamptonroads.com/blogs/pilot>, email me at maurice.jones@pilotonline.com or call (757) 446-2056.

“Newsprint savings will not diminish the quantity or quality of news we provide.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maurice A. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maurice A. Jones
President and Publisher