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Neighborhood News Bureau Provides Real-Life Experience For Journalists

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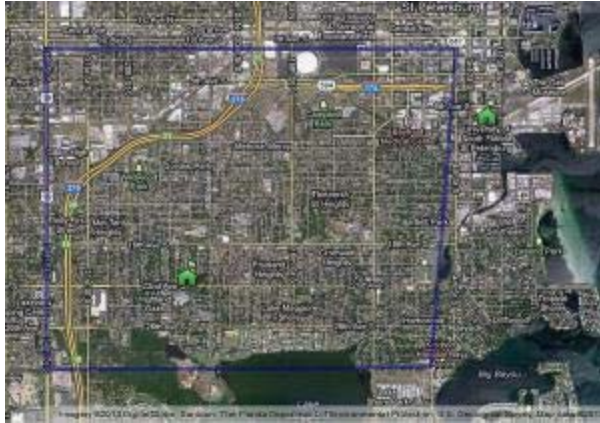
Many of my fellow classmates, including myself, are intimidated by one required course in the Journalism and Media Studies program – Neighborhood News Bureau. After completing the course, some journalism students feel the same about NNB, and some students have a new outlook on the class.

Neighborhood News Bureau is a class dedicated to beat reporting. The beat students cover at NNB is the Midtown area of St. Petersburg. Midtown is a 5.5 square-mile area between Fourth Street South and 34th Street South and Second Avenue North to 30th Avenue South. The demographic of this area is mostly African-American, with most residents living at or below the poverty level.

Located off the main USFSP campus, students report and write from the Neighborhood News Bureau at the James B. Sanderlin Family Service Center located at 2335 22nd Ave. S.

“Working as a reporter in Midtown was a good experience. It helped me become familiar with an area of St. Pete I probably wouldn’t have ventured into on my own,” senior Meaghan Habuda said.

This is one of the main purposes of NNB – to get students out of their comfort zone.



Map – Midtown St. Petersburg

Students can fall into a pattern of writing stories about topics that interest them, interview people that look like them, and report about communities that they live in or are familiar with. In the professional world, these circumstances are hardly the reality for a journalist or reporter.

Students have to get out and “walk their beat,” meet and interview Midtown residents, identify sources, and delve into public records for stories about people, issues, and trends relevant to the area.

Personally, I had a fear of approaching members of the community – I felt that they wouldn’t be receptive to me. I quickly found that I was wrong. Every person I interviewed was courteous and open, willing to answer any question I had for them. All of the people I had the chance to speak to were excited that their voice was heard and impressed that NNB was dedicated to the Midtown area.

Stories will be pitched to The Weekly Challenger, the Neighborhood Times and the Crow’s Nest. Stories will also appear on the NNB website, nnbnews.com.

The Midtown neighborhood received local news coverage earlier this year when the Midtown Sweetbay closed its doors. I decided to cover this story, and an interview with St. Petersburg Mayor Bill Foster was necessary. Politicians can be intimidating, and interviewing one was terrifying to me. Just like before, I found that I had nothing to be afraid of, and it took NNB for me to realize this. My story turned out great, and it was published in The Weekly Challenger. I was finally a published journalist!

“It was one of the best hands-on experiences I’ve had in the entire program,” senior and journalism major Larry Pugliese said. “We had to go out in the community and meet the people we were writing about, which made our writing better...it just made it real.”

About the blogger



Hello! My name is Jaclyn Cayavec and I am a senior, graduating spring '13. I am majoring in Journalism and Media Studies, and I have an A.A. degree in Psychology. I am a chronic news-watcher - if I don't watch at least 3 newscasts each evening, I feel out of the loop and lose sleep over it!