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**YOUNGSTOWN  
PRESS CLUB**

# **NEWS FLASH**

## **Youngstown Press Club News Briefs**

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## **Members' Corner**

### **Bright Spots Shine Through in Journalism**



With the belittling of journalists by elected officials, attacks on press freedom at the national and state level, shuttering of newspapers across the country, and declining news consumption, it's easy to take a dim view of our industry.

But the news isn't all bad. In fact, there's much reason for optimism.

According to "[Bright Spots in the Local News Landscape](#)," in the Northwestern Medill Local News Initiative State of Local News 2025, "Standalone digital outlets increased from 661 in 2024 to 685 nationwide. Digital network groups producing original reporting more than doubled, to 52 from 23 in 2024. And there are about a hundred more individual digital news sites, up from 742 in 2024..."

In fact, we can find examples of that not so far away. While Mahoning Matters morphed into something different from the local news site it started as, Signal in Akron and Cleveland offer comprehensive and hard-hitting online daily local news of those markets. And the Marshall Project – Cleveland uncovers abuses in the criminal justice system in that city.

To be sure, the Mahoning Valley media landscape looks much different than it did 10 years ago, but we still have three television news stations, one of which is locally owned, a daily newspaper, a newspaper and digital news site that specializes in coverage of the minority community and a daily online and twice-monthly business news publication that's also locally owned. Plus, we have weekly community papers and several daily papers throughout Columbiana, Mercer and Lawrence counties.

That's a lot more than many communities are able to say.

Just as importantly, journalism continues to make a difference – both in people's lives and in their communities. From something as simple as dissecting how much a new tax will cost a homeowner to allowing the mother of a murder victim to share her child's story or even highlighting how a local business expansion will provide jobs, our work matters. And we're the only ones with the compassion, dedication and expertise to do it.

Denise Dick, YPC Board Member

## The Press Club Welcomes Eric Garcia

Journalist and author Eric Garcia will join the Youngstown Press Club for “A Conversation with Eric Garcia” on Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 6 p.m. at the Tyler History Center in downtown Youngstown.

Garcia is the Washington bureau chief and senior Washington correspondent at *The Independent* and the author of the book, "We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism

Conversation." He previously worked as an assistant editor at *The Washington Post's* Outlook section and an associate editor at *The Hill*, as well as a correspondent for *National Journal*, *MarketWatch* and *Roll Call*.

Garcia shares what it's like to be autistic in America today. Frustrated by persistent myths and narrow media portrayals of autism, he set out to tell a fuller, more accurate story—one grounded in lived experience. Garcia is Latino, a graduate of the University of North Carolina and a journalist covering politics in Washington, D.C. His work challenges the idea that autism needs to be “fixed,” instead affirming it as a vital part of identity.

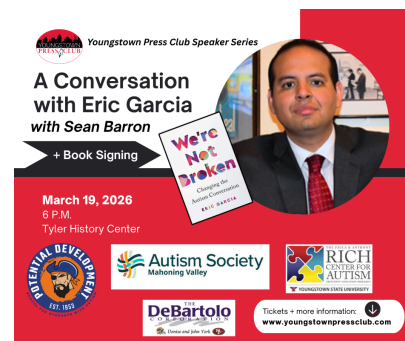
As Garcia writes:

*“This book is a message from autistic people to their parents, friends, teachers, coworkers and doctors showing what life is like on the spectrum. It's also my love letter to autistic people. For too long, we have been forced to navigate a world where all the road signs are written in another language.”*

The conversation will be moderated by Sean Barron of *The Vindicator* and followed by a book signing. Potential Development School for Students with Autism, the Autism Society of Mahoning Valley, Rich Center for Autism and Denise and John York and The DeBartolo Corporation are sponsoring the event.

The event is free, but registration is encouraged.

[Sign up.](#)



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## Apply for a YPC Scholarship

The deadline is approaching to apply for a YPC scholarship. If you know a young journalism or communication major who's from the Mahoning or Shenango valleys, urge them to apply.

The Youngstown Press Club has awarded \$20,000 in scholarships since its scholarship fund began three years ago. YPC scholarships go to college students about to enter their sophomore, junior or senior year, who live in the Mahoning and Shenango valleys and are majoring in journalism, broadcasting, public relations, communications, marketing, advertising or a related field.

The Youngstown Press Club raises funds throughout the year for its scholarship fund. A portion of any profits from YPC events goes directly to the scholarship fund.

This year, the press club will award \$4,000 scholarships to up to four students. **Applications for the 2026 scholarships are due by April 1.**

[Learn more.](#)

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## Student Journalists Observe Press Freedom

Youngstown State University journalists presented, "Student Journalism: For the Present and the Future" Feb. 25, marking Student Press Freedom Day.

It was the third annual Youngstown observance and included speakers from YSU's *The Jambar* and Jambar TV, the student newspaper and television station, respectively, who spoke about the impacts of artificial intelligence, the importance of editorial judgment, the different aspects of sports journalism and more.

Attendees learned that the future of Mahoning Valley journalism is in good and capable hands.

The gathering was part of a national observance designed to raise awareness of student journalism, the challenges it faces and the contributions it makes to schools and communities.

Event sponsors were Andrea Wood publisher emeritus of *The Business Journal*, the Anderson Program in Journalism at YSU, WKBN-TV News, Denise and John York and the DeBartolo Corp., *The Jambar*, Jambar TV and the Youngstown Press Club.



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## Club Spotlight

### Member Profile

**Michael Stepp**, Strategic Communications Officer, The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County

**Hometown:** I live in Boardman, but I grew up in southern West Virginia and spent about 15 years working in Washington, D.C., before moving back to Youngstown.

**Your job:** I lead strategic communications, media relations and public messaging for a countywide library system serving Mahoning County. My work focuses on translating complex public issues into clear, accessible messages that connect people to essential services at the library.



**How long have you been a YPC member and how have you benefitted?** I've been a YPC member for about a year and a half since moving back to the area, and it's been invaluable for building relationships with like-minded people who believe in Freedom of the Press and information access in our country. I have always had enormous respect for people who work in journalism.

**What's the best career or journalism/communications advice you ever received and from whom?** The best advice I have ever received is not to make assumptions about what people will think of your message and to be willing to be surprised.

**What's your favorite book?** My background is in political science and history, but I like to read about subjects I find relevant to today in some ways, sometimes not obvious. I am currently reading "1688: The First Modern Revolution" by Steve Pincus.

**What's something most people would be surprised to learn about you?** I have played tournament chess since I was in high school. And I studied Cold

War History as a graduate student and continue to read about the subject whenever I get the opportunity.

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## Coming Up...

We have speakers and activities throughout the year. Sign up, register and check back here to learn more.

- March 19: 6 p.m. Speaker event with journalist and author Eric Garcia at the Tyler History Center. The main program will be followed by a book signing by Eric of his book, "We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation." Books will not be for sale at the event. Sponsored by Potential Development, the Autism Society of Mahoning Valley, the Rich Center for Autism, and Denise and John York and The DeBartolo Corporation. Learn more and [register](#).
- April 13: 5:30 p.m., Annual Meeting and Dinner featuring Youngstown Mayor Derrick McDowell, Stambaugh Auditorium Christman Hall. [Buy tickets](#).
- May 3: noon, World Press Freedom Day, Butler Institute of American Art.
- June 18: noon, Speaker Event: Lunch with Atty. David Marburger.
- Aug. 7: Members' Mixer.
- Sept. 23: 5 p.m., Hall of Fame and Awards Dinner, Stambaugh Auditorium.
- Oct. 26: Speaker Event with the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections.
- Nov. 30: 5 p.m., YPC Members' Holiday Party, Avalon Downtown.

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## YPC Mission

The Youngstown Press Club's mission is to support journalists and communicators in the greater Mahoning Valley by:

- Honoring past excellence in journalism and communications through our Hall of Fame, Excellence in Media Award, First Amendment Award and Medal of Merit.
- Supporting working journalists and communicators by championing First Amendment and press freedom causes, and providing speakers and events that help them to hone their craft.
- Investing in the future of journalism and communications by offering scholarships, mentoring and support for student journalists and communicators.

Interested in supporting YPC? Learn about becoming a sponsor or scholarship donor. [Support us](#).

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The Youngstown Press Club is proudly supported year-round by our Platinum Sponsors, **Denise and John York and The DeBartolo Corporation**.

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*Denise and John York*



Founded in 1902 and re-established in 2018, the Youngstown Press Club promotes journalism and related professions in the Mahoning Valley.

[www.youngstownpressclub.com](http://www.youngstownpressclub.com)

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