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ABOUT US

[M. Monica Bartoszek](#)
Sr Editor/Operations

Has held a variety of jobs in the newsroom since joining the paper in 1988 when the Knickerbocker News closed.



[Rex Smith, Editor](#)

Named editor in 2002. He joined the paper as Managing Editor/ News in 1995.



[Mary Fran Gleason](#)
Managing Editor

Joined the paper in 2001 after 12 years with the Syracuse Newspapers.



[Rex Smith: Xctasy's tale is more than facts](#)

July 29, 2006 at 6:53 am by Rex Smith, Editor

A little girl's eyes are drenched in bleach, her thin bones shattered, her skin charred by a hot cigarette. You cannot hear these details about the torture of Xctasy Garcia, just 4 years old, without being moved –to tears or rage or revulsion.It's our job to report what happened to Xctasy, to give you a clear account of the charges now facing her mother and her mother's boyfriend. But to anyone who in some other context has asked for just-the-facts-ma'am journalism — for us to leave values behind when we step inside the newsroom — Xctasy shows why that's not enough.

Who, what, when and where carry a story only so far. You need the "why," and getting that requires reporting beyond what's immediately visible.

Six weeks ago, the front page of the Times Union revealed the abuse of Xctasy and the arrests of Jose Munoz and Delia Hernandez, both 26. The couple was living in a Schenectady welfare motel with Xctasy and Hernandez's two other children when the horrible incident that led to their arrest took place.

But anybody with even passing exposure to domestic abuse knows the behavior typically is repeated over and over. As we picked up more information about Xctasy's life, a broader story emerged that wasn't just horrifying, but also important.

Reporters Mike Goodwin and Anne Miller, who cover Schenectady County, took what they were hearing to their editors. Times Union Senior Editor/Investigations Bob Port saw the facts as indicating a breakdown in government systems that are supposed to protect children from abuse.

Our newsroom was ready to try a joint investigation with local television journalists, and we saw this story as one that could be told effectively both in print and in video. So we went to WNYT NewsChannel 13, where we knew we would find a strong advocate for serious journalism in News Director Paul Conti. We sketched out the story as we knew it, and Conti quickly gave the green light to producer Kathy Barrans and co-anchor Jim Kambrich. Each news team shared everything it picked up.

The stories that emerged this week were powerful on newscasts and in the paper. We revealed a chronology of miscues — police twice missing a chance to lock up Munoz, a convicted felon and fugitive, and county workers twice failing to respond to reports of a child in trouble at the motel. In exploring Xctasy's life in Massachusetts and in Schenectady, we uncovered a tragically classic tale of poverty, abuse and missed chances to avert disaster.

The day our story was published, government officials promised to take steps to prevent similar situations in the future. The Schenectady County Legislature ordered a hearing into how its social services workers had handled the complaints. State legislators vowed to introduce bills to open lines of communications between New York's registry of child abuse and those across state lines. Coincidentally, a new federal law Thursday authorized a national database of child abusers. If it had been in place this year, local officials might have known the abuse history of the adults who put Xctasy's life at risk.

This investigative reporting, in other words, yielded immediate results that wouldn't have happened if we had stopped with a recitation of the facts originally given to reporters.

There is a cost to this sort of reporting. During the weeks that Goodwin and Miller were working on the Xctasy investigation, for example, we surely missed some other stories in Schenectady County that they would have covered. That sort of trade-off is weighed by every editor who commits staff to deep reporting. We have to choose the reporting priorities that might yield the greatest results for readers.

Now we'll continue to cover the issues raised by Xctasy's story. We will track changes in county policy, in Schenectady and elsewhere, remind state legislators of their promises, check in with other officials who ought to be paying attention and stay on top of the fight for federal funds needed to set up the database of child abusers. Does that put us near the line of advocacy journalism? You bet it does.

But there is no such thing as value-neutral reporting. Every story choice involves a decision about what is important for our journalists to look at and what we think our readers need to know. It's more than just the facts, ma'am.

Rex Smith is editor of the Times Union.

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