James Best

Prof Fink

Internship Program I

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Resist AIM hosts Say NO Say Yes Fest in Peekskill to stop Algonquin Incremental Market Project

Earlier in the semester when I started my internship I mentioned to my supervisor, Martin Wilbur that I was taking a Psychology of Civic Engagement course and that I would like to attend events that have to do with the great and wonderful things Westchester County is doing to help the environment. I then realized that not only was I able to gain experience as a journalist through my journey with the Pleasantville Examiner, I was also able to learn a little bit about environmental protection and the value of protecting natural research. During the Resist AIM and Say No, Say Yes Fest in Peekskill, NY, just about 20 minutes north of Pleasantville, many members of the Northern Westchester Community gathered to help stop Spectra Energy’s Algonquin Incremental Market (AIM) gas pipeline project. The project that was approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is expected to be 10 feet from the Indian Point power plant in Buchanan, NY just south of Peekskill. When I attended the event the planners welcomed me and connected me to one of the non for profit organizations tabling at the event. One of the organizations was the Grassroots Environmental Education organization. (GEE) I met Ellen Weininger who spoke with me about the dangers of having a pipeline so close to a power plant. Here’s the thing about being a journalist. When you have the opportunity to attend community events such as this one where people want the media to come and want to share their story they tend to give you so much information, almost too much information. I ended up conducting an over 30-minute interview with Weininger with tons of background information. As much as I love talking to people and hearing their story there is only so much that I can fit into a maybe 500-700-word article. So in essence I have to cut down on the conversation leaving out more than half of what she is telling me. But still I know that is my job to capture the most important things that she said to me in those 30 or so minutes. What I realized is that she helped provide some context to the reason why the AIM pipeline was so dangerous to the residents in Peekskill. I wanted to focus on why it effected this community so that in the newspaper residents could read what is happening around them and care. She told me that the situation that was happening was similar to the 2011 Fukashima Daiichi nuclear power plant meltdown. Because of her mentioning that moment in history that I vaguely remembered I was able to do research on just how devastating the Tsunami that devastated the nation of Japan was. From there I was able to connect the situation to what may occur in the town of Peekskill and magnify the impact for views. That was my objective and I was able to take parts of what she said and put into the context of the direction I wanted this article to go in. I realized that the reader needed to understand how the radioactive waste that comes from a nuclear power plant can cause cancer and that cancer is the worst thing imaginable. That magnifies the danger. After conducted one of the longest interviews ever the event actually was on an intermission. This is when I learned the hard parts of being a journalist. I wanted to leave so bad after getting so much information from that one person. However, I remembered the things I learned from my Ethics in the Media class and the fact that relying too much on one source leads to an article that is not credible. So even though I wanted to leave and not stay there for 5 to 6 hours, plus I had work later that afternoon. I knew that I had to stay and I came back to watch a movie. I got the opportunity to interview an Oscar Nominated Director, and anti-fracking activist Josh Fox. Fox showed his new documentary “How to Let Go of the World (And Love all the Things Climate Can’t Change)”. The 2 and half hour film focused on the rapid heating of the Earth climate and included interview with climate experts about the dangers that may occur if the Earth’s climate increases. It was interesting to see this because I felt as if I was not only covering an event but learning more about the earth and climate change as a whole. I took this event as an educational experience rather than an event and that’s what made me understand the magnitude of the event. In conclusion this event which went on longer than the 6 hours I stayed captured the importance again of a community standing together to make a change. It is a common theme I see in many of my articles. Overall this is what journalism is all about. Its long hours, hard work and multiple interviews. The important thing is finding the most interesting part about the event and putting it front and center. That’s what I hoped to do and eventually when It was printed it turned out to be a pretty cool article in the Northern Westchester Examiner. I hope someone reads it and understands the magnitude of how great of an issue this is and reaches out to these people that are fighting for change in their community.