

Nick McCrea

Your occupation and employer now and how long you've been there:

Managing Editor, *The Times Record*, 1.5 years; prior to that, reporter, *Bangor Daily News*, eight years

Hometown:

Orrington, Maine

College: University of Maine, B.A. Journalism

Syracuse University, M.A., Magazine, Newspaper, Online Journalism

Why did you want to be a journalist?

My interest in journalism sparked during high school. The 9/11 attacks happened on one of my first days of class, and I remember being absorbed by the coverage and the changes in the nation and world that followed. Later, I contributed to the high school paper, opinion pieces and coverage of student government.

In hindsight, those early stories were bad – at best – but I loved writing them. I was a shy kid, and journalism forced me out of my comfort zone by requiring me to start conversations. Journalism is a license to engage people from all walks of life and ask them questions you wouldn't otherwise get the chance to. That's what hooked me.

Tell us about your most memorable assignment – and why it has stayed with you.

It wasn't my most difficult or most groundbreaking assignment, but it's the one I take the most pride in. I wanted to know what it was like to live on an isolated Maine island in the dead of winter, when all the tourists and summer folks disappeared. [I took a photographer on the mailboat to Isle au Haut in the middle of January.](#)

We stayed the weekend there, spending time with most of the dozen residents who toughed out winters. I spoke to both students at the one-room schoolhouse about how they entertained themselves. I spoke with a man whose ancestors settled the island more than 200 years ago. More importantly, I talked to residents about their worries. The number of year-rounders is dwindling as more people are moving off island, putting the future of the entire community in question. It was a fun, gritty story with people and their relationships and the hardships of remote life.

How has Maine shaped your view of the world or perspective as you do your work?

Maine is all about its people. There are so many incredible characters with stories to tell. They take great pride in their state but have their own strongly held beliefs about how to move it forward (or keep it from changing too fast). It can be a challenge to balance those beliefs, especially when facing a crisis.

Thankfully, Mainers are seldom afraid to let you know how they feel. If there's anything this state has taught me, it's that behind every policy decision, every municipal budget, every disaster, every development, there's a person who will help you better tell the story.

Why is journalism important today?

Journalism is vital because the truth has started to lose its power. The tenor of conversations has changed over the past decade. Some have started to discount science, cherry-pick facts and discredit any information that goes against their worldview as "fake news." A journalist's job is to strive for and defend truth, getting around the loud voices spreading disinformation.

What is your advice to future Gannett scholars?

Strive for the truth. Never stop learning, reading or asking difficult questions. Once you've asked those questions, push to find the answer – especially if it's hidden.