

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contacts:
Nolan Stout, organizing committee member
919-548-6120 (cell)
nstoutdnr@gmail.com

Charlottesville, Virginia - Warren Buffett told the world a few months ago that local newspapers are “toast.”

The award-winning journalists of The Daily Progress disagree. Buffett and his BH Media Group have owned the Daily Progress for seven years. In that time, the newsroom has shrunk and resources dwindled. At the same time, the need for strong, local journalism continues to grow.

That’s why the journalists of the Daily Progress announced today that they are forming The Blue Ridge Guild, a unit of The NewsGuild-CWA’s Washington-Baltimore Local.

“Forming a union will ensure journalists have a voice in the workplace to preserve jobs and advocate for the resources they need to tell the stories of the communities they serve,” said Meghin Moore, the newspaper’s digital content coordinator.

Through unionizing, The Daily Progress staff hopes to make this paper a vibrant place to work not only for themselves, but for future staff members.

“By getting a union contract, we will ensure that the staff of The Daily Progress is no longer just a cog in the BH Media system,” the Guild wrote in its mission statement. “We want to be treated like people, rather than just a number. We deserve fair wages, severance and appropriate benefits. We want the staffing we need to report on our community and hold the powerful to account. New employees and veterans alike should feel they have a long-term future in the Charlottesville area.”

Progress staffers are part of a wave of unionization among print and digital journalists across the country. The Progress is the third BH-owned publication to form a union, following in the footsteps of Buffett’s flagship newspaper — The Omaha-World Herald in Nebraska. Last September, The Virginian-Pilot and the Daily Press also unionized, making The Daily Progress the third NewsGuild paper in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Reporters, photographers, copy editors and other staff of The Progress have asked BH Media Group to voluntarily recognize the union. They plan to file cards with the National Labor Relations Board.

If the company doesn’t voluntarily recognize the Blue Ridge Guild, the staff looks forward to winning recognition through a NLRB-monitored election. If a majority of those voting cast ballots in favor of unionizing, the newsroom staff of 19 will begin working with BH Media to negotiate a first labor contract.

Employees are concerned with insufficient resources, increased workloads and stagnant wages.

Many employees rely on a second income to live in the area and others live paycheck to paycheck after years with the company.

The average salary for reporters is in the low \$30,000 range, a far cry from the \$45,840 annual salary needed to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Charlottesville or Albemarle County, according to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition.

"Ironically, the reporters covering the area's affordable housing needs don't even make enough to live here," said Nolan Stout, the paper's Charlottesville government reporter.

"The journalists of the Progress are determined to advocate for the resources we need to hold local government and businesses accountable and to win decent pay and benefits for ourselves so that we can continue careers we love," said Katherine Knott, the paper's K-12 education reporter.

Employees will be gathering in the parking lot for a celebration and camaraderie at 2:30 p.m. in The Daily Progress parking lot at 685 W Rio Road on Monday.

Photos are available upon request.

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-- Interviews with our digital content coordinator Meghin Moore and reporters Katherine Knott and Nolan Stout can be coordinated by contacting Nolan Stout at 919-548-6120 or nstoutdnr@gmail.com.

--The Guild organizing campaign at The Daily Progress can be found on Twitter and Instagram at [@blridgeguild](https://twitter.com/blridgeguild) and blueridgeguild.org

More information about BH Media and Lee Enterprises: Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway company reported a net income of \$21.7 billion for the first quarter of 2019 and \$5.56 billion in profits. A year ago, Buffett outsourced management of his dozens of newspapers to Lee Enterprises, a company with a history of cutting people and papers.

In the last fiscal quarter, Lee received \$4 million in that management agreement and a total of \$7.8 million in the last year.

About Blue Ridge Guild and NewsGuild-CWA:

The NewsGuild-CWA is the largest union of communications professionals in the country, representing more than 20,000 journalists and other news industry employees in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico. The Communications Workers of America, representing more than 700,000 members, is one of the largest and most active unions in the country.