

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

For someone who has been in the business since he was 10 years old, **John Druckenmiller** isn't one who can be easily accused of being "old school." In fact, Druckenmiller's internet news site, *Hometown Headlines* (www.hometownheadlines.com), has been a major catalyst for the growth of local news websites that many in the younger demographic segments prefer.

But Druckenmiller is far from the stereotypical fly-by-night internet blogger. He owns a journalism degree from the University of Florida and spent his entire career at traditional newspapers before moving to the electronic world. His writing career really goes back much further than his college days.

"I've been 'reporting' since the fourth grade at 'my' St. Mary's School in Rockledge, Fla.," Druckenmiller said. "I wrote for student newspapers in all phases of my education."

He said that upon registering at UF, he planned on majoring in political science and minoring in journalism, but the requirement of adding Latin as a language concentration to a political science major helped him realize that journalism may indeed be his calling.

Thirty years later, Druckenmiller is still following that call, which has taken him to newspapers in Lakeland, Fort Myers and Cocoa, Fla.; Fresno, Calif.; as well as *USA TODAY*, not to mention in-state publications such as *The Times* in Gainesville, *The Daily Report* in Fulton County and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, before coming to Rome.

Druckenmiller, his wife Jean and their son Jack moved to Rome in 2002, when he went to work with the *Rome News-Tribune*. He also worked at former Rome radio station *K98*.

Now, he's the owner and operator of *Hometown Headlines*, focusing on bringing Greater Rome important news and information as accurately and quickly as possible. Its success has spawned other websites competing for a piece of the local news pie, and Druckenmiller is fine with that.

"Some would say all the competition in town is a challenge," Druckenmiller said. "It is, but in a good way. Competition keeps us focused." In fact, Druckenmiller often offers praise to his competitors – by name – on his own site. That sense of community has made Druckenmiller and *Hometown Headlines* a favorite for advertisers and readers.

"We wouldn't be doing this today without a very generous group of advertisers and very involved readership," Druckenmiller said. "From news tips to taking a gamble on an upstart media concept, we've been supported, bolstered, fortified – whatever you wish to call it – we've had a lot of support along the way."

The biggest scoops usually come from casual conversations at local retail establishments. The **Rome Braves** and **State Mutual Stadium** have also been major players.

"We did more business – news tips, ad sales, etc. – at the stadium in 2004 than anywhere else," Druckenmiller said. "If you're looking for the neighborhoods of yesteryear, go sit in section 206 at a game this year. You'll find it there, and just about anywhere else in the stadium."

"Without the community's help, we would have unplugged two years ago. As it stands, we've recorded nearly 14 million hits in 39 months. We have websites featuring Floyd, Bartow and Gordon Counties. Our niche sites, *Hometown Kids* and *The Dining Guide*, are doing great. Now we're bringing a hard-news magazine, *The Druck Report*, into play. The websites and the magazine will be total synergy."


The *Druck Report*, a monthly publication focusing on local business, health, politics media and trends, premieres in May.

Druckenmiller credits his Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce membership for part of *Hometown Headlines'* success.

"Contacts, networking, exposure and solid people" associated with



Over the course of his career in journalism, John Druckenmiller, Hometown Headlines, has worked in the newspaper and radio industries before launching his popular website geared toward Rome/Floyd County news, and upcoming magazine, The Druck Report.

the Chamber all add to his business, Druckenmiller said. "A lot of that business starts at the corner of Broad Street and Riverside Drive. "We've made good friends and good contacts thanks to the Chamber." 

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PINNACLE POINTS

> Congratulations to *Floyd County* and **Brent Poplin** and his staff at *The Forum* for hosting a great weekend of high school basketball during the state tournament in March.

> The *Rome International Film Festival* gained national exposure recently when it was featured as a "Festival of the Week" on *Moviemaker Magazine's* website.