

Narrative: Hart Fowler, Publisher and Editor of *16 Blocks Magazine*

Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewers: Cotter Spratley, Guy LaVigne

10/11/2010

I'm the publisher and editor of *16 Blocks Magazine*. I founded the magazine three years ago and the new organization we are working on, 16 Blocks: Creative Labs, was just established last week. The reason I partnered with Tyler to work on the Creative Labs is to expand regionally, specifically in Roanoke.

I was born and raised in Radford, Virginia, and my family has always lived in this area. I came to Blacksburg to study Communications and English at Virginia Tech. My interest in art was sparked by my mother, who was an art major at Virginia Tech. Seeing so much art around the house gave me an appreciation and fondness for art that has carried on into my career.

One of the things that I like most about my job are the daily rewards that come from helping give people a forum to express themselves. The shoebox coming out of the attic kind of story, discovering artists who otherwise have no other opportunity to display their work. It's a true pleasure to see how many people come out of the woodwork sometimes and submit inquiries to write with us.

One of the things that is most misunderstood about magazines is that the cover price mainly handles distribution. The free magazine model is not something we created at all. It's inspired by *The Hook*, up in Charlottesville, *The C-Ville Weekly*, and *The Brick* in Richmond. *Creative Loafing* is a great example and it's basically called a city mag model.

I believe in the American dream. I am a patriot and I really disbelieve what the TV guides tell me. Listening to newscasters like Jon Stewart gives me peace. I enjoy listening to journalists that don't have an agenda. I feel like as the magazine grows, we're going to have a stronger take on politics. We've really evolved a lot from our beginning to where we can be an authority, or a forum to discuss what's going on. I believe in America, and it's a hard time to.

One of the things I would like to say about the internet is that the new reporter is not manned with a notepad anymore. You're a shooter, you're a photographer, you're a videographer as well. That's one of the ways that journalism has changed. It's not devaluing print because doing a q&a on video does not correlate to a writer writing about the scene that he's around at all. One of the beauties of journalism is you put your time in the hands of a writer who will take

you through a story. Just putting a microphone and video and talking to someone in a q&a, web presentation format, is different from a print presentation of an interview.

One piece of advice I would give someone who wanted to work in a career like mine is: don't be an editor unless you're a writer. If you aspire to be an editor-in-chief or a publisher please love writing first, unless you're a businessman that just wants to acquire things. You're not an editor without knowing how to write. Being able to do that is invaluable, whether you're printing on web or printing in print. That's kind of a nuts and bolts thing, you don't teach a short stop to hit home runs before he can field a ground ball, or so to speak.

To read the complete conversation, please see the transcript. See also the interview of Tyler Godsey, general manager and creative director for 16 Blocks Magazine: Creative Labs.