Community & People

ECM Publishers and ABC Newspapers acquired by Adams Publishing Group

Published August 10, 2016 at 9:31 am

By ECM Publishers

Coon Rapids, MN–Aug. 10, 2016–ECM Publishers Inc., parent company of ABC Newspapers, announced today that it has entered into an agreement to be acquired by Adams Publishing Group of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. ECM, founded by former Gov. Elmer L. Andersen in 1976, is one of the larger publishers of weekly newspapers in the country, with 50 individual publications reaching more than 600,000 households across central Minnesota and western Wisconsin. ECM’s coverage spans 26 counties, encompasses a large share of the Twin Cities metro region and also includes 23 websites.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Andersen founded ECM with the purchase of two competing weekly newspapers in Princeton, Minnesota, about 50 miles northwest of Minneapolis. The Princeton Union and the Princeton Eagle were quickly merged to create the Princeton Union–Eagle. With these acquisitions came six shares of the Princeton web printing plant, a facility now wholly owned by ECM. The date of the acquisition was June 9, 1976, and the first edition of the Princeton Union–Eagle appeared on June 17.
What will it be like? …My first priority is to build the finest possible weekly newspaper to serve the city of Princeton. My second priority is to those associated in the enterprise -- to make it materially rewarding, but even more to provide them with a sense of excitement and accomplishment. I like to be in a group where everyone feels that he is an important part of a worthwhile activity. The economic success of the company is essential, but third on my priority list. My experience has taught me that if you serve your customers well, and build a strong organization internally, the economic success is assured. Elmer Andersen, Editorial in the first issue of the Princeton Union-Eagle, 1976

In four decades of consistent growth, ECM has developed strong, meaningful bonds with its readers and advertisers. A sense of mission and business priorities has allowed ECM, and its nearly 400 associates, to flourish and play an important role in the communities it serves. Local involvement is something current CEO Julian Andersen has continued to foster in his 21 years of leadership of the Coon Rapids-based media company.

“The success and adventure of ECM Publishers has always been rooted in the exemplary skills and dedication of each ECM associate,” said Andersen.

ECM President Marge Winkelman said the sale brings strength and a progressive outlook for the future.

“This is an exciting opportunity for ECM to join the Adam's Publishing Group. The merger will add incredible synergy to the marketplace for our readers, advertisers and associates,” said Winkelman. “We have been very fortunate to have had the Andersen leadership the last 40 years, first with Elmer Andersen and the last 20 years with Julian Andersen. We look forward to our transition into another highly regarded family-run organization and working closely with Stephen and Mark Adams.”

Adams Publishing Group, a family-owned media company headquartered in St. Louis Park, produces community newspapers, events, digital products and specialty magazines serving communities in Wyoming, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maryland, Idaho, Michigan and Ohio.
The Adams family also owns radio stations, outdoor advertising companies and Camping World/Good Sam, a national distributor of recreational vehicles and camping related products and services.

“We are excited to welcome the ECM associates to our APG team in Minnesota,” said APG Chairman Stephen Adams. “Our company is headquartered here, and my family has a long newspaper history in the state of Minnesota. ECM has done a fine job navigating through difficult times, and producing the highest quality print and digital products. We commend them for their efforts, and wish the Andersen family the best in their future endeavors.”

APG’s publishing operations include 63 community newspapers, 18 shoppers, 20 specialty publications and 81 associated websites.

Owen Van Essen of Dirks, Van Essen & Murray, a merger and acquisition firm based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, represented ECM Publishers in the sale.