

By Johnny Isakson

I don't know what I would do on Sunday mornings without my morning ritual of walking to the end of my driveway, picking up my copy of the *Marietta Daily Journal* and taking it inside to my favorite chair to read it front to back with my cup of coffee.

The newspaper has been part of my life for almost 50 years. I rely on my community newspaper because it has its finger on the pulse. For anyone who is in public life, community newspapers are absolutely essential.

My staff and I scour the community newspapers of Georgia first thing each day to ensure that I'm up-to-date on the latest news so that I can do my job effectively. Community newspapers also are crucial in helping me get my message out to Georgians so that I can hear back directly from them and continue to serve them effectively.

I have saved hundreds of newspaper clippings throughout my career. I recently sorted through boxes and boxes of these clips in preparing to send materials to the archives at the University of Georgia, my alma mater, and it was a wonderful walk down memory lane.

For local merchants, placing an ad in a community newspaper is an invaluable tool. As a businessman in the real estate industry for many years, I always relied heavily on newspaper advertising to promote the houses my agents were hired to sell.

Our newspapers give our communities an identity. Newspapers serve as a mechanism for people to speak out on local issues that affect them, their families and their businesses. Many would have no voice for dialogue, debate and commerce without them. Newspapers encourage community involvement and serve as a record for where we've come from, where we're headed, and who we aspire to be.

I appreciate our community newspapers and their ability to survive and thrive throughout changes to our state, to our big cities and small towns, and changes in technology. This column is a way to say "thank you" to all the newspapers across the state, in addition to the *Marietta Daily Journal* and the other community newspaper to which I subscribe, *The Clayton Tribune*. Your contributions to my daily life are worth far more than the newsstand price.

Johnny Isakson represents Georgia in the United States Senate.