

# S.W.I.N.G. Southwest Iowa Newspaper Group

PUBLISHER OF: Valley News Today • Weekly Times • Essex Independent • Valley News Life • Today's Action

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Valley Publications  
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am the managing editor of the *Valley News Today* in Shenandoah, Iowa. MediaNews Group, Inc., a corporation based in Denver, Colo., purchased the Shenandoah paper in May 1998. MediaNews is the seventh-largest newspaper chain in the United States.

For the past four months, Debra Lucht and I have worked together as a management team to produce and publish the *Valley News Today*, which covers the southwest corner of Iowa and penetrates into northwestern Missouri. It has a daily circulation of about 4,000.

During that time, Debra Lucht has faced many challenges as she has been responsible for overseeing the total operations of the daily newspaper.

Those challenges have included creating a budget for the current fiscal year and addressing other budgetary matters. Part of her duties have included coordinating the flow of information and delivery of publications including the weekly shoppers between the cluster of newspapers owned by MediaNews in Clarinda, Council Bluffs and Denison communities. She has also been responsible for the hiring and firing of all personnel – sometimes very difficult tasks.

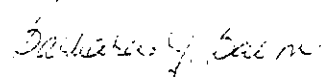
Since the acquisition of the Shenandoah newspaper happened so rapidly and the previous owner gave no indication to his employees that the sell was pending, many issues arose. Change is difficult for everyone, but especially for employees who have been regulated to a certain slot for several years. Debra Lucht addressed inter-office problems as quickly as possible and brought most of the situations to a satisfactory outcome for everyone involved.

Cross-training and streamlining of office operations were top priorities. Duties were reassigned or realigned where it was deemed appropriate to address time management problems and better utilize office personnel. Some employees did not wish to change and opted to seek employment opportunities elsewhere.

In the course of her administrative duties, Debra Lucht has tapped into existing resources such as the Iowa Newspaper Association and others as she encouraged employees to seek additional training sources to improve their job performances and expand their career horizons.

During Debra Lucht's time in Shenandoah, she has taken an active role in the community and belongs to the Rotary Club and the Shenandoah Chamber and Industry Association. She also has taken a leadership role on several committees.

Respectfully,



Barbara J. Balm,  
VNT Managing Editor,

cc/file

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