Resolved: Be more positive

By Don Huebscher
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People who know me agree I'm a glass-half-empty kind of guy.

I'd like to blame it on my line of work, where one of my daily tasks is to decide whether to play the story about the latest murder, rape, drowning or fire on Page 1A or 1B. It's nothing like actually being at these events like law enforcement officers, EMTs and emergency room staffers, but the never-ending drumbeat of tragedy does tend to wear one down.

Truth is, though, I've always been that way. I tend to be a perfectionist, and the world just isn't that way and never will be. Neither will the Green Bay Packers, which is why I'm such a pain to watch a game with.

Still, I've always enjoyed the feeling of New Year's Eve, even though as I've gotten older as often as not I'm sound asleep by the time the ball drops in Times Square, which of course is 11 p.m. here.

New Year's Eve is as close to a communal celebration of life as we've got. What, after all, are we celebrating? Mainly that we've survived another year, and that for a few hours we can share laughs and toast the new year with the hope that it will bring better fortune.

My hope for 2011 beyond the obvious desire for everyone to enjoy good health is that people stop arguing so much. It seems we argue about everything. Differences of opinion are unavoidable in our system of self-government. It's the meanness I can do without, starting with bone-headed politicians from both parties whose apparent mission in life is to demonize the other side. I really wish they'd grow up.

Another thing I hope for is that our relatively safe patch of the planet be safer in 2011. There were too many murders in our area in 2010, each as hideous as the next. Why can't angry men just walk away or get a hobby? Why do they have to end another person's life? Are they that insecure and stupid? Apparently.

But just as I'm hoping for a better 2011, where so many people aren't losing their homes to foreclosure or otherwise facing financial hardship, I also want to dwell on some positive things that happened in
2010 when we weren't arguing about health care, urban chickens, health care, raw milk, the size of the
deer herd, health care, trains, and whether UW-Eau Claire needs a mascot, and if so, what or whom.

Despite a crummy economy, 2010 saw the largest private and public building projects in Eau Claire's
history come to fruition. The (not to exceed) $59.1 million jail/courthouse project has begun, and
Luther Midelfort is in the process of opening its $118 million addition. Both will serve our
communities for decades to come.

Both UW-Eau Claire and UW-Stout celebrated building projects too. UW-Eau Claire is getting a new
$48.8 million student center, and UW-Stout is getting a $19 million renovation to its student center,
both paid for by student fees. UW-Stout also celebrated the $43.2 million addition and renovation of
Jarvis Hall, and UW-EauClaire is poised to get state approval in 2011 for a new education building.

Speaking of building, the North Barstow Redevelopment District continues to sprout up new
structures, bringing renewed life to a formerly blighted area. Contrary to what you often hear, the
public and private sectors can work together for the common good.

On the sports front, the Eau Claire Express brought a Northwoods League championship to Carson
Park in August, which for us baseball fans gives us warm memories to get through the cold days
ahead. And while they're not a local team, all of Wisconsin is proud as the Badgers prepare for the
Rose Bowl.

OK, the outcome of a football game isn't that important compared with good health, financial security
and all the other things that keep us awake at night. But we all need our diversions, otherwise we can
get overwhelmed by negativity.

Take it from me — I've been there.

Happy New Year!

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