

## Baristanet.com - Media Giraffe Profile

### **Baristanet.com**

Debra Galant - Editor-in-chief/founder



"Like my father, I'm a publisher. But I'm not sure I'm a journalist. Journalism is nonfiction. It belongs with history and politics and business and current affairs. I read, and write, novels. I'm more interested in why the pool is closed tight on a sunny day than in the town government's master plan. I'm more interested in a little girl's enchantment by the National Press Club 40 years ago than I am by the powerful men and women of the National Press Club today, and the powerful men and women they cover."

*From "The Walter Winchell of Montclair," by Debra Galant, at PressThink, Jan. 16, 2006"*

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## About

### UPDATES:

Sept. 14, 2007: Organizers of an Oct. 10, 2007 conference at City University of New York produce a word portrait of the Baristanet site and business.

Feb. 1, 2007: Baristanet says it is ignored by Newark daily

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After abdicating her position as a New York Times columnist, Debra Galant missed the thrill of writing for her New Jersey community. After hearing of the new wave of popular websites called hyperlocal blogs, Galant says, "I decided to be entrepreneurial and do it myself." Barista of Bloomfield Ave. or Baristanet.com was born.

It may have started out as just a way to get the news out to the three local towns in Northern New Jersey, but, with 4-5 thousand hits a day, it's become something much greater.

Since it's launch in mid-2004, "every month has been a growth month," says Galant. The site survives on ad revenue, and Galant says Baristanet does "well" for a blog-based site, making enough to keep the site going and to have a talented team of writers (including her partners, Liz George and Annette Batson) and business managers. Despite the popularity of the site that highlights the local news in small NJ suburbs, Galant and Co. are "still trying to fine-tune it."

"We want to expand (the site)," she says, "We want it to be more business-like. We'd like to make it more sense financially, and we want it to be more economically successful. But, we're working on it, and we want it to reflect the work we put into it."

Baristanet.com stemmed from Galant's desire to take control of her writing. "When you're working for someone else, you're at the whim of an editor," she explains. She wanted the ability to write about her neighborhood in a "sophisticated and not bland" way, and, as a result of her innovation, other papers are picking up some of their stories. She says: "Writing about your own hometown is interesting. We're leaders in the field, and we like that. Our fans are so dedicated, and the idea of walking away from this is impossible."

Galant urges other people to get involved in this evolution of citizen journalism. "People like this stuff," she says, "People know that we're the place to send pictures and stories. Before, they had nowhere to send it to." She also thinks that more neighborhood-oriented blogs will emerge. "We have already been others" inspiration. There's a lot of interest in this field."

While also working as a novelist, Galant hopes to see Baristanet become better as it progresses. She is adding more substance to the site, while also sticking to the editorial content that made the page so successful.

*(Profile by Jen Thomas)*

## OTHER RESOURCES:

Debbie Galant's personal blog site.

Galant's post to Jay Rosen's "PressThink" blog

Steven Baker responds to the PressThink article, wondering about the future of newspapers.

A mini-discussion on Baristanet and the implications on real local newspapers

### ADDITIONAL PHOTO:

<http://www.debragalant.com/images/image-bio.jpg>

## Links

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