Often we think people know what we mean when nothing could be further than the truth.
In the newspaper business, a good reporter checks their facts with reputable sources. In other instances, we rely on what we hope are dependable, honest and accurate accounts from the public.
In some cases, facts can't be checked so they are omitted. The last thing a reporter wants is to have inaccuracies in their story. It makes the reader question the integrity of the piece and perhaps, their whole body of work.
There are times when someone will provide inaccurate information and it finds its way into print because the person is believed to be credible. Sorry, it happens.
A lot of what is published in The Herald comes from you, the reader. Meeting minutes, photos, etc. come in to the newsroom all the time. We take them as accurate because they are submitted by the secretary or another officer of the club or organization who was at the meeting or gathering. Who should know better what went on?
The most important aspect of these items is a contact for the sender. E-mails can be replied to; things dropped off in person can be questioned at the time; news delivered by mail usually has a return address to start the query process if needed. Most items are signed, as they should be. Then there are the silent drop-offs in the mail slot that often contain at least a name if a question arises.
The final animal is the anonymous letter, note or voice mail. We will try to find an additional source confirming or denying the information but if we can't, nothing will be done.
Would you give much attention to a letter that arrives in the mail that has no return address and is unsigned? Do you give credence to phone messages that have a voice you don't recognize and don't identify the sender?
How many of you screen your home phone calls? I often don't pick up for a "not provided" or "out of area" call because I have a list in my head of people whose names or numbers will appear that I want to talk to.
The same goes for unsigned letters and correspondence, phantom voice mails from unidentified persons and little slips of paper with items I cannot confirm.
When I get an unsigned Letter to the Editor, I often don't even read it. It goes straight in the trash. If you didn't feel passionately enough about it to sign it, I don't feel passionately about it enough to read it and neither will anyone else.
We at The Herald want to provide accurate, detailed information to the public. If something is wrong, please let us know but also let us know who you are and how we can get in touch with you so you can tell us how it should be, not just that it's wrong.