

Amy Goodman encourages young journalists at First Amendment celebration

“Media can be the greatest force for peace on Earth.”

That is what Amy Goodman, host of the award-winning program “Democracy Now!” told a group of more than 150 people at special Gateway Journalism Review event March 29.

Goodman and Gateway Journalism Review supporters came together to raise money for the publication and to celebrate the First Amendment. The event took place in the Edward Jones headquarters in Des Peres, Mo.

Goodman said the world needs an independent media, where people can speak for themselves. She added that some see this type of media system as dangerous, which leads them to supporting a more corporate structure.

“It speaks to the importance and power of media today,” Goodman said. “It is how we learn about the rest of the world and they learn about us. It should not be through a corporate lens.”

She noted that she believes there is not a silent majority, but a “silenced majority” in the United States.

“It has been silenced by corporate media,” she said.

Goodman discussed her belief that most “mainstream” media are wielded as weapons of war, and that they promote pro-war attitudes. She encouraged audience members to think about how they use language and the affect word choices have on an issue.

Speaking about war coverage, Goodman said she believes that

embedded reporting, which can be traced back to World War II, has “brought media to an all-time low.” It is a public relations tool crafted by the Pentagon, she said.

Earlier in the day, Goodman spoke to a group of nearly 30 high school and university journalists.

“I really liked that she encouraged us to do small and big stories in our student newspaper,” said Katlyn Kreie, a junior from Kirkwood High School. “She said we should try to do more news in the paper, and to look at our school’s issues.”

Goodman also spoke about corporate ownership and its impact on media with the students, said Trevor Currie, a sophomore from Kirkwood.

Kreie, Currie, and Bridget Randazzo, a junior, will all be on the editorial board of Kirkwood High’s newspaper, the Call, next year. All three said Goodman’s talk sparked their interest in going back and looking at the school administration’s involvement in their newspaper’s publication.

The event was largely sponsored by the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts of Southern Illinois University.

“We are very pleased that Amy Goodman, who has an honorary degree from SIU, is here and had time to meet with students,” said interim dean Dafna Lemish. “It is so important for them to hear firsthand advice. It is not every day they get to talk with someone of this caliber.”

Added Lemish: “At times of major changes in journalism, it is important for students to have an ethical role model, and to bring this type of speaker to our students is invaluable.”

There were many members of the St. Louis media community in attendance at the event. Kay Drey and Wayne Goode served as honorary co-chairs of the event.

Ray Hartmann, a longtime broadcaster, served as the master of

ceremonies.

“We are here tonight to celebrate the St. Louis Journalism Review and the Gateway Journalism Review, and the legacy of Charles Klotzer,” he said.

Hartmann read a bit from the first issue of St. Louis Journalism Review. Klotzer, the founder of the publication, had given each attendee a copy of that 1970 issue.

Goodman recounted many of her experiences for the audience. She noted how her news team’s approach to coverage is usually different than that of what she called “network” media. She spoke of the importance of the Internet for disseminating “Democracy Now!” coverage.

During the Egyptian revolution in 2011, the “Democracy Now!” correspondent was one of the few journalists who were able to get stories filed. Those stories were then picked up by the “network” media. Goodman called this “trickle up” journalism.

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