SOUTH CAROLINA PRESS ASSOCIATION

2026 CONTEST RULES

FOR ASSOCIATE & INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Entry Deadline: Dec. 4, 2026

scnewscontest.com

Recognizing the best journalism in South Carolina

CONTEST DEADLINE | Friday, Dec. 4, 2026

CONTEST PERIOD | Nov. 16, 2025 – Nov. 15, 2026

CONTEST DIVISION | Associate and Individual Members will compete in Division G. Your division will auto-fill in the online contest platform. If you are not listed in Division G, contact SCPA immediately.

SCNEWSCONTEST.COM | Each member will be given a username/password for scnewscontest.com. You are welcome to share this log-in info with fellow staffers so they can upload their entries.

ELIGIBILITY | This contest is open to all current Individual Members and full-time, part-time and regular contributors of Associate Member organizations and their publications. Entries must be staff-produced.

AI | Every entry submitted in this contest should be produced by human contestants as listed under the eligibility rule above. Entrants must disclose and explain any use of generative AI in an entry (e.g., data collection, research and analysis). You may not enter anything created, produced or altered primarily by AI, including graphics, photographs, illustrations, stories and videos. AI-generated content may be used if the use of AI is the point of a story, package or project being entered, or if AI is used as an analysis tool (such as use of AI to summarize or identify noteworthy material in a collection of records), but in such cases the AI use must be labeled and explained for the judges. All entrants using AI-generated materials must respect copyright and data ownership.

NUMBER OF ENTRIES | Unless otherwise specified, each entrant may submit as many entries in each contest as desired. However, no individual entry may be entered in more than one contest.

MULTIPLE BYLINES | Entries that are the work of more than one person may be submitted as a single entry unless otherwise noted.

NUMBER OF ENTRIES FOR COMPETITION | There must be a minimum of six entries from at least two separate member organizations for judging to occur. If not, the SCPA Co-Executive Directors and judges reserve the right to judge the category as is or to declare the category null and return the entry fee.

DISQUALIFICATION | Entries that do not meet contest criteria may be disqualified and entry fees will not be returned. All participants agree to accept as final the decision of judges recruited by the contest committee. Any entry may be disqualified that does not, in the opinion of the judges, comply with the rules.

ENTRY FEES/PAYMENT | A fee of $20 will be levied for each entry. On the Entry Report page, you will see a list of submitted entries. No fees will be displayed. Instead, SCPA will ensure that your entries are correct and contact you with an invoice.

AWARDS | Unless otherwise specified, awards will be made for first, second and third places. Awards will be presented at the Annual Meeting to be held on March 12, 2027, at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center in downtown Columbia.

FILE TYPES ACCEPTED | All print design contests must be submitted as PDF files. All photography contests must be submitted as JPG files. All online contests must be submitted as URLs. Writing contests can be submitted as full-page PDFs or as a URL to the story on your website.

LETTER OF EXPLANATION | Some categories require that a letter of explanation be included with each entry. Please upload the letter as a separate PDF file when you upload your entry.

FILE NAMES | When uploading a file, any file name can be used.

TITLE/CUTLINE | In the Title/Cutline box, enter the headline as it appears on the page. For categories that require more than one example per entry, you may use the series/topic title. If you think judges might have a hard time finding your entry, you can mark the headlines and jumps in Adobe Acrobat with an arrow or box.

NEED HELP? Call Jen Madden at (803) 750-9561 or email jmadden@scpress.org.

PDF INSTRUCTIONS

COMBINE MULTIPLE PDFS INTO ONE | **EACH ENTRY SHOULD CONSIST OF ONE PDF FILE WHENEVER POSSIBLE.** If a category calls for more than one piece, combine the pieces into a single file. It is especially important that jumps are included! Using Adobe Acrobat, open the first PDF that you want in your entry and save it with a new name. Open the new PDF, go to the "Document" menu and choose "Insert Pages." Navigate to the next PDF that you want in the entry and select it. Continue until you have inserted all of your pages. In the "Pages" panel, you can rearrange the PDFs in the order you want the judges to see them. Save the new PDF.

MARKING AN ENTRY | Within Acrobat, you may mark your entry with an arrow or box so judges will know what to judge. This is especially important if you have more than one story per page.

MAKE PDF FILES 100 MB OR SMALLER | Changing the resolution and changing the CMYK color mode to RGB are the two most effective ways to reduce file size without sacrificing the screen viewing quality.

HOW TO ENTER

1 | Acquire your log-in information from SCPA. Contact Jen Madden at jmadden@scpress.org.

2 | Log in at scnewscontest.com. You will see a page showing any entries you have already submitted. Complete rules for the contest are available above.

3 | Click on the "Add New Entry" link.

4 | On this page, select your organization, newspaper or name. A lot of information, including your division, will autofill. If this information is incorrect, please contact SCPA. Fill in the preparer's name. (The preparer is the person uploading the entry into the online contest platform, not the staffer that will be credited for any award.)

5 | In the Newspaper Group drop-down menu, select Associate/Individual.

6 | Select the contest category from the drop-down menu. When you select the category, special instructions will appear below it. This field will clear each time you save an entry, so you must select a category for each new entry.

7 | Enter the title/cutline for your entry. If uploading full-page PDF files, make sure the entry name matches the headline on the page so the judges can find it easily.

8 | Include the name of the person or people who should be credited for any award. This is generally the writer, photographer, graphic artist, etc.

9 | Add your file or files. You can drag and drop files or use the "Add files" button to navigate your files. Upload as many files as necessary to complete your entry but refer to the special instructions for any limitations.

10 | If you are submitting URL(s), enter each URL in a separate box.

11 | WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR SUBMISSION, CLICK THE "SAVE" BUTTON.

12 | To submit another entry, click "Add New Entry." Start at Step 6 again. You may log out and log back in later to continue adding entries. You will need to select your newspaper name each time you log in.

13 | Click Entry Report for listing of entries submitted. No fee will be displayed. Instead, SCPA will ensure your entries are correct and contact you with an invoice that can be paid by check or credit card.

CONTEST CATEGORIES

100. NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE PUBLICATION | This contest is for newspaper and magazine publications of SCPA associate and individual members or their staffs. Judging will be based on writing, design and use of graphics and photography. Content topic will not be a factor. **For this category, an entry is two separate editions of your publication.**
Submit: URL to e-edition viewer or upload all full-page PDFs from each edition.

101. NEWS REPORTING | This contest is for the best single news story, including breaking news. Criteria include quality of news reporting and writing, effectiveness in explaining the issue and editing.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

102. REPORTING-IN-DEPTH | Entries may consist of a single article or articles appearing in one or more editions, on a single subject. Criteria include significance of the subject matter, writing quality and thoroughness. Judges should evaluate the comprehensive coverage of a single subject that goes beyond routine reporting and demonstrates resourcefulness, innovative approaches and clarity. Series and investigative pieces may be entered into this contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) to article(s). Enter the headline or topic into the Title/Cutline box.

103. BUSINESS REPORTING | This award is for the best single business story. Criteria include enterprise, timeliness, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining business matters.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

104. FAITH REPORTING | This award is for the best single faith/spirituality/religion story. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining matters of faith.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

105. FEATURE WRITING | This award is for the best single feature story. Entries in this contest should demonstrate strength in feature writing, editing, originality and creativity.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

106. COLUMN/EDITORIAL WRITING | This award is for best single editorial, column or opinion piece. Criteria include writing quality and the writer's ability to provoke thought or laughter, or to inform the reader.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to piece. Enter the headline into the Title/Cutline box.

107. SPORTS REPORTING | This award is for the best single sports story. Criteria include reporting, writing quality, effectiveness and editing. Spot sports, sports features and sports enterprise stories may be entered.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

108. NEWS PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph of a breaking or scheduled/organized news event. Criteria include quality and impact of the image.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

109. FEATURE PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph, usually of a "found" situation, with strong human interest. Criteria include quality and impact of the photo.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

110. SPORTS PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single sports photograph. Sports action (game photos) and sports feature (reaction shots and profiles) may be entered into this contest. Criteria include quality and impact of the photo.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

111. PAGE DESIGN | Each entry shall consist of a single full page print design, including but not limited to front pages, news pages, sports pages or feature pages. Criteria include effective use of photographs, graphics, typography and other design elements, as well as creativity and effective communication to readers.
Submit: Upload one full-page PDF. Enter page date into the Title/Cutline box.

112. WEBSITE | This contest is for websites produced and operated by associate and individual members. It will be judged on the usefulness of the website to the user, quality and quantity of content and ease of navigation and accessibility. This is not a design-based contest. Judging will be template-neutral and instead will look at how an organization uses its digital platforms (including desktop websites, mobile sites and apps) to share content and engage with users. Submit a letter of explanation describing how the organization utilizes the site to share information and engage users. Traffic analytics should be included. Entries will be live judged during the judging period.
Submit: Enter the URL to your site. Upload your letter of explanation as a PDF file.

113. NEWSLETTER | This contest is for best staff-produced email newsletter. Each entry shall consist of three editions of a flagship or topic-specific newsletter. There is no limit on the number of entries you may submit in this contest, but each topic-specific newsletter must be submitted as a separate entry. Criteria include quality of content (writing, photography, graphics and use of links), editing, design and efforts to engage your audience. Entries must be accompanied by a letter of explanation describing concept, strategy, audience, frequency, engagement and reach metrics (new subscriber acquisition, open and click-through rates), as well as promotion efforts and impact.
Submit: Enter URL(s) to your campaigns. Upload your letter of explanation as a PDF file.